

Daniel's Reflection for week beginning 3rd March –

'The love that moves the sun and stars'

The mystery of the universe is love. Creation is of the order of love. God's love is the fundamental moving force in all created things: 'For you love all things that exist, for you would not have made anything if you had hated it.' (Wis 11: 24) Every creature is thus the object of the Father's tenderness, who gives it its place in the world. Even the fleeting life of the least of beings is the object of his love, and in its few seconds of existence God enfolds it with affection. Dante Alighieri spoke of 'the love that moves the sun and stars' [Laudato Si 77].

Isn't this breathtakingly attractive language? How can we read and believe it, and yet remain the same? It is too beautiful, too deep, too tender to take in all at once. What does Pope Francis mean by the 'order of love'? What he means is extraordinary! Love is the vital, connecting, sustaining, empowering force of all beings and all creatures and all things, for every second of their existence – whether the mayfly during its 30 minutes with us or the dinosaur during its 200 years of living. Try to remember this every time you look around you; every time you use your senses; especially when times are hard, and you do not actually feel much love where you happen to be. Try also to explore this statement – that energy itself is the movement of love. Become more conscious of this revelation regarding your own doubts about divine presence always and everywhere, even in and through what we call death itself, including the fleeting lives of stillborn babies, the tragic and abrupt ending of those who take their own lives.

American writer and naturalist Wendell Berry believes that 'the world was created and approved by love, that it subsists, coheres, and endures by love, and that, in so far as it is redeemable, it can be redeemed only by love. I believe that divine love, incarnate and indwelling in the world, summons the world always toward wholeness ...'. All creatures are woven into one community by the common thread of God's life, participating equally in the dynamism of divine being. 'Love is the very nature and shape of being,' writes Richard Rohr. 'It is the essential energy of the entire universe from orbiting protons and neutrons to the orbiting of planets and stars.'

Teilhard de Chardin believed that love is the one, essential and constant influence in this unfolding. It is the energy that empowers the process. It permeates the whole universe. He wrote, 'Driven by the forces of love, the fragments of the world seek each other so that the world may come to being ... the love of Christ is an energy into which all the chosen elements of creation are fused without losing their identity'. Iliia Delio emphasises the role of the loving cooperation we all play in the evolving and developing universe. She quotes de Chardin: 'God evolves the universe and brings it to its completion through the instrumentality of human beings ... to love God we must also love what God loves. We are called to love this created world as God loves it ... We are to help transform this universe in Christ by seeing him in the universe, and by loving Christ at the heart of the universe.'³⁹

Brian Swimme wrote his beautiful little book *The Universe is a Green Dragon* to honour his good friend, geologist Thomas Berry. They both use the lovely word 'allurement' a lot. They see it as Pope Francis sees the word 'attraction', and the phrase 'the order of love'. Everything, they are saying, is created by love. Elaborating on this insight, Swimme writes, 'This primal dynamism awakes communities of atoms, galaxies, stars, families, nations, persons, ecosystems, oceans and stellar systems. Love ignites being and, without it, all interest, enchantment, fascination, mystery and wonder would fall away, and with their absence all human groups would lose their binding energy.' And what is our fullest destiny?' he asks Berry. 'To become love in human form,' he replies. In another conversation Berry suddenly says to Swimme, 'You scientists have this stupendous story of the universe. It breaks outside all previous cosmologies. But as long as you persist in understanding it solely from a quantitative mode you fail to appreciate its significance. You fail to hear its music. That's what the spiritual traditions can provide. Tell the story, but tell it with a feel for its music.'

(An Astonishing Secret pp76/77)