

Tenth Set - 2. Catching the Rhythm of Things

Relentlessly returning to re-gather along the horizon, Tonn Clíodhna, the white horses of the sea, in froth and fury, come driving fiercely towards me, only to vanish, like a breath, into the sand at my feet. This is the strand at Owenahincha, a tiny toe of Co Cork, touching the warm skin of the Atlantic.

It is easy here, in this hidden haven on the south coast of Ireland to swing and sway to the summer winds and to the rhythm of the sea. It is retreat time. I'm here with a group of people for whom the tension and intensity of their daily lives are almost too much . . . Reflecting here between our sessions, it occurs to me that too many of us are suffering from a new virus – the virus of alienation from our roots. Like swans on dry land, we are unsure and unsteady. We are no longer in our element. There is a deep orientation because the compass that reveals to us our place in the grand scheme of things is out of true. We forget we are part of the wider web. All ground is holy. The land we stand on is sacred; we are connected to it and part of it. All we need, in our fretting and worrying, is to realise this truth, to be intensely aware of the connectedness of all things. It is in this connectedness to all things and creatures that we are connected to God. That is when we find a deep peace and freedom. It is only, as Sam Keen has written, when 'the moon rises in my blood, and suns are born and burst in the atoms of my substance, and I am one body with the world; that a profound joy fills the wells of my being.

Keeping the wells clear, clean and fresh is the work of contemplation – of stilling the disturbing thoughts, of staying free of the anxious images, of becoming quiet enough to find a whole new perspective on all that is going on in our lives. It is more like a dropping downwards, a sinking below the conscious waves of tumult, than a desperate conflict at the level of endless, mental arguments. When we breathe into our restlessness and dis-ease, there is an immediate shift in our self-awareness. It can happen quite quickly. This is an experience of tangible grace; it is the inner place to which Jesus went when it all became too much for him . . . Here in Owenahincha, whether feeling the spray of the ocean during the day or hearing its unique and muted murmur at night, we all felt an affinity with mystery . . . Moving to the tempo of the tides each morning, it was easy to visualise God's healing power touching our minds and caressing our troubled hearts. From our innermost centre where the Blessed Trinity lives, and from all the mysterious love pressing on us from all around, all we had to do was surrender to the truth of reality, to embrace the present moment, to the way things are. With practice it becomes easier, this experience of our essence, this sensing of the healing heartbeat of God in the silent pulse of attentive presence – the rhythm of our breathing, the rhythm of our being, the rhythm of God.

(Already Within)