

Daniel's reflection for week beginning June 10th. The breath, the heartbeat – the touch of the Holy Spirit

'Nature as a whole not only manifests God but is also a locus of his presence. The Spirit of life dwells in every living creature and calls us to enter into relationship with him.' (National Conference of the Bishops of Brazil). Discovering this presence leads us to cultivate the 'ecological virtues'. [Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'* 88]

'Nature as a whole not only manifests God but is also a locus of his presence.' This is a startlingly simple, yet profound statement from the bishops of Brazil. 'The Spirit of life (notice their deeper and wider image of God) dwells in every living creature (Creation and Incarnation) and calls us into a relationship with (and experience of) the divine' (*italics mine*). If we are ever going to access something of the mystery we are looking at here, then we need a more profound way of thinking and of seeing which necessitates our making time for the regular practice of meditation. This discipline will lead to an awareness that can only emerge from the deepest places within us, belonging to the very beginnings and consequent evolution of our being. To be sure, this transforming awareness is accessible to all of us – but it takes determination, discipline, patience and perseverance.

Pope Francis is also pointing out here that it is the Holy Spirit ('the Spirit of life'), the living energy of all things, that weaves the trillions of relationships throughout all of nature. So often the work of the Holy Spirit is abysmally misunderstood. Karl Rahner deplores the poverty of our theology of the Spirit, believing that it fails to recognise the Spirit's universal role, significance and primal potency in generating the process of evolution leading to the eventual completion of Creation. He anticipates the Pope's comments about the work of the Spirit, revealing the divine power in the deepest heart of each person, and of this earthly world.

This power is the graced centre of Creation, divinely imbued with the evolving potential to reach its completion when God will be 'all in all'. Theologian Karl Rahner writes, 'And here the earth behind her continual development in space and time, sinks her roots into the power of the all-mighty God ... his Spirit has already begun to transform the world into himself ... and the new Creation has already started, the new power of a transfigured earth is already being formed from the world's innermost heart.'

Pope Francis wants us to grasp the closeness, the unity, the intimacy between the Spirit and all Creation. They are inseparable. This is an astonishing realisation for us, and we have to truly make it our own in mind and heart if it is ever going to lead us towards the 'ecological virtues' and spiritual conversion he pleads for. Teilhard de Chardin had a unique insight into the interweaving of the evolving planet and the work and play of the Holy Spirit. His Pentecost moment came when he was inspired to recognise that all becoming and developing in an expanding universe is animated by the divine drive of the Holy Spirit. 'For Teilhard,' wrote Ursula King, an expert on the thought of de Chardin, 'the heart of God is found at the heart of the world, and the living, natural world is shot through with the presence of the divine, with what he eventually was to call "the divine milieu."

(*An Astonishing Secret* pp106-107)