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Daniel's Reflection for week beginning 19th May –

To be treasured and transformed

'He bears us on his shoulders ... With tenderness he restores our daily joy ... God loves us first, beyond each person's faults and failings ... the attraction of his love ...' (EG 3, 44)

Pope Francis holds that you cannot change the way God is in love with you, that his love flows all around you, and through you, and in you, and as you. You cannot lessen the divine love that is already and always, no matter what, wrapped tightly around your heart. You might as well try to separate the water from the wine. 'You cannot diminish God's love for you,' said Richard Rohr in one of his Daily Meditations. 'What you can do, however, is learn how to believe it, receive it, trust it, allow it, go with it, and celebrate it, accepting the Trinity's whirling invitation to join in the cosmic dance.' . . .

We do not need to become more loving to make God love us more. It is because God first loves us that we become loving in response. It is not because we pray more, become more religious and celebrate more sacraments that God looks at us with a greater love; nor is it because we go to confession that our sins are forgiven. Every single grace, every blessing of total love and forgiveness bestowed on us, no matter what efforts we make to earn it, deserve it, merit it, always and only spring from the unconditional divine love that created us in the first place. We have been loved from the beginning. Nobody was ever driven from a perfect garden. There was no primal 'original sin'; nor was it ever mentioned in the Christian scriptures. We seem to have missed out on the initial blessing that we are now, and always have been, and always will be . . .

The Pope longs for us to actually feel the gift of being utterly loved even in the midst of our winter of self-doubt; of being touched by the dawn while it is still midnight; of feeling comforted by the actual experience of our closeness to God. When describing the Eucharistic moment of receiving Holy Communion Pope St John Paul II speaks of 'a physical embrace'. At times we need more than words, he says. Our very human senses come into play even at this most sublimely divine moment. Notice Pope Francis's repeated use of fleshy words such as 'touched by', 'the comfort and attraction of God's saving love'. Only then will we be his saving presence for others. God needs us to keep incarnating divine love.

(An Astonishing Secret)