

Daniel's Reflection for Week beginning 10th January - What Angels Look Like!

A while ago at a school assembly on a dark and dismal Tuesday morning the headmaster lit the candle and said, 'What is most important is that our hearts, too, should shine out for each other. We should be candles of love for those around us.'

Now it so happened that I was a little depressed that morning. After many draining demands, the prospect of another long day's work was getting me down. Having said the blessing, I was sitting among the gathered parents. I had my head in my hands, my shoulders hunched. For some reason I looked up. Right in front of me, tiny as a tot, her arms stretched as wide as the sky, stood a smiling 3 year old. 'Fr Daniel,' she whispered, 'can I give you a hug?' I swear I will carry that memory to my grave.

It was a glimpse of pure, spontaneous grace. I had not known Rachel before. Her teacher, Catherine, had not urged her on. On a dark and cold morning Rachel like the candle, brought light and warmth into my worried heart. I'm reflecting this evening on that special moment. I realise that this is the only way that God can reach us, touch us, console us. Since the first Christmas, God is forever committed to healing and holding us through each other. That is the real magic of the season we have just celebrated. The incarnation of God means that our deep need to be comforted can now only come in a human way. We scarcely believe how intimately God is present to us, in every one of our words, smiles, tears. There is a story about the fearful child who, during the night, called out for his mother. She came into the room and spoke to him about the protection of the angels and God all around him. He refused to be satisfied with her reassurances. 'I want something with skin on!', he blurted out. And that is what God does in becoming human.

People like Rachel are the real angels. Do you ever notice how often angels come into your life? It is God's way of using us to heal and console each other. When I become aware of those hidden surprises in my life, it is as if Someone Who loves me intensely and Who is following every move I make all day long, is trying every which way to keep me from suffering more pain than I can bear.

'So what's the big deal?' you might ask, 'coincidences like that just happen.' And maybe you're right. Maybe I am getting carried away. Maybe it is all mere happen-chance. Maybe there is no loving Presence out there, desperately seeking ways and means to tenderly hold us, to dry our tears, to hug us and to kiss away our pain like mothers and lovers do.

Let me return to Rachel. Next year Rachel will be four. I dedicate these two verses of Christopher Morley's poem about childhood to her, by way of honouring her Divinity:

The greatest poem ever known

Is one all poets have outgrown:

The poetry, innate, untold,

Of being only four years old.

And Life, that sets all things in rhyme,

may make you poet, too, in time--

But there were days, O tender elf,

When you were Poetry itself!