

Daniel's reflection for week-beginning 8th October - The World as Sacrament

From its very beginning, billions of years ago, the raw material of the world was already permeated and filled with God's subtle but powerful presence. There never was a time or space in the history of evolution when God was absent from this planet. In the person of Christ this tremendous love-story has been finally revealed. A new consciousness has enfolded the world. The human is now the home of the divine. The redemption has happened. What was begun in creation is finalised and revealed in the incarnation.

In Jesus we recognise the salvation that is already throbbing within us. It is divine power that energises our daily lives, that defines the summer of God's grace in the winters we must live through. The whole world is perceived as sacrament. This way of seeing things is called the Sacramental vision. And it is this vision of the deepest reality that we celebrate in the sacraments. Without the wider sacramental vision, the sacraments themselves would lose the true meaning and become empty or even dead ritual. Given the relentless reality of our fallen nature, this possibility is always uncomfortably close.

Because, like the disciples in the Emmaus story, we tend to forget. The heavy clouds of original sin forever obscure the clarity of the divine presence all around us. It is in the fog of this blindness that we sin. We 'miss the mark', as scripture puts it, because we cannot see clearly any more. We miss the mystery too. Our act of seeing stops at first appearances. Sin has no imagination. No longer is the smallest particle of creation a theophany of grace. No longer is every moment a revelation of eternity, of "the dearest freshness deep down things". Sin is blind. It is blind to beauty. It resists the light of openness. It controls by fear. It cannot bless or celebrate or be passionate about anything. It chooses to live in illusion and isolation. . .

We would be hard put to avoid the experience of God. It is practically inescapable. We cannot help coming into the embrace of the divine presence in all our experiences. In one of our current RE programs teachers are reminded that, "We do not sometimes have experience of love, fear, ourselves, or anything else, and then, also, have experiences of God as well. The basic, original experience of God, on the contrary, is the ultimate and radical essence of every personal experience . . ."

Teilhard de Chardin most tellingly points out: 'Through every cleft, the world we perceive floods us with riches-food for the body, nourishment for the eyes, the harmony of sounds and fullness of the heart, unknown phenomena and new truths -all these treasures, all the stimuli, all these calls coming to ours from the four corners of the world, cross our consciousness at every moment. What is their role within us? They will merge into the most intimate life of our soul, and either develop or poison it.

(Begin with the Heart pages 82-83)