Sunday 7th of August 2022

Transfiguration Mark 9: 2-10

Today there was a choice of gospels I chose Transfiguration. The alternative gospel for reminds us that we do know not the time when Jesus will return. The themes meld well together. One gospel tells of a time when Jesus revealed his nature to Peter James and John, and the other tells us we need to be ready.

In Transfiguration gospel, three disciples are treated to a remarkable life-changing vision. Most won’t be so fortunate.

So how can we be so transformed by the power of God that we are ready to meet the Lord. The inspiring spiritual writer Daniel O’Leary tells us that it is in experiencing the on-going nature of the Incarnation that we ready ourselves because we know not the hour. [[1]](#footnote-1)

Our lives are transformed when we live our life in the presence of God, aware of God’s essence hiding below the surface of everything human and seeing our relationships and our experiences, and our sins, through the eyes and the mind of Christ.[[2]](#footnote-2) How do we do that?

It is about looking with different eyes. If we examine daily events and accept that at the heart of it all the light of a more profound presence is glimpsed. [[3]](#footnote-3) This way of seeing is called *sacramental imagination*. If we embrace this gift, our complicated and often messy lives may part to reveal a surprizing incarnate beauty in and around us. [[4]](#footnote-4) That is God’s secret St Paul writes in which all the jewels of wisdom are hidden (1 Cor 2:3) Part of the wisdom is that you are God’s poetry, written not with ink but with love from the Holy Spirit, not on tablets of stone but across the pages of human hearts (2 Cor 3). What a sublime image. I wonder if this is where you feel yourself to be in relation to your own body and mind, behaviours, attitudes and dare to use the word sin? In the sense of separation from God. Where are you?

Daniel O’Leary tells us that the work and play of faith imagination is [[5]](#footnote-5)to perceive the deeper meaning of the ordinary, to touch God in realities of our lives and to make the invisible visible.

Simone Weil wrote: we don’t have to travel far to find God -we only have to notice things. It is here that the finite and the infinite live in the same place and that the holy is laid bare. This is the daily grace we long for.

This closeness of God is something that the Thursday group on prayer has really dug into over many months. It’s been a joy to share our personal exploration of God in the ordinary. It is certainly the basis of the Ignatian approach. Now for some of you this suggestion might lack substance. How can the ordinary be of God?

The truth is that the sacramental approach that sees a beautiful vision of **the incarnation in everything**. If we accept this image of incarnation, it is within our power to bring a unique wisdom to every conversation, relationship and experience. We have snatches or glimpses of this vision as we learn more about it. It is our call to look for ways to explore this possibility. As we learn about it there are implications of this view of the incarnation. What is it the essence this way of looking? It is simple really, we have to look honestly at what is going on in our own heart. St John Chrysostom wrote whatever unlocks the human heart unlocks the heart of God as well[[6]](#footnote-6). We have to be brave enough to look into our heart, we need to be vulnerable about what we find there? Some aspects may not be positive. Perhaps we see sin. Are we able to become humble and say I was wrong, this is a poor response, I need to change? This is the place of intimacy with God. This is where even our shortfalls can bring us close to God. Can we accept that even when we know our lack, God is restorative we are loved.[[7]](#footnote-7) Here is a beautiful explanation of where we find God. The great Theologian Karl Rahner calls this way of looking at life “the mysticism of life”. All our lives and loves are the work of God in the human heart.

Now it is against the backdrop of God in everything that I was reading the book *Tracker* by Alexis Wright. Archie Roach died and the Prime Minister released the question for the upcoming Referendum. So, what did I learn from all of my reading viewed through the lens that O’Leary gives us of God in every aspect of life?

I have to say that over the week my mind and heart have been re-set. I have learnt so much about the indigenous problem that is at the heart of our country. I’ve learnt about the complexity of the definition of Aboriginality, about the enduring problem of representation, and representation has been a political tool. Now I know that some may not feel comfortable about me mentioning a political issue in a sermon. My response to that objection is that there was no one more political than Jesus himself. Reading and reflection gave me the opportunity to really search my own heart and to look at my prejudices and my sin.

So how do we hold the story of the Transfiguration and readiness to meet the Lord, in tension? With difficulty; it is a challenge to rest in sacramental imagination and not to be swept up in the world’s problems. In the face of Covid, wars and distress it appears that our world is in a mess. I ask where is God? I have an answer. In the moment, in our discussions, in our relationships, in our heart.

Our yarning circle is a wonderful opportunity for learning. For experiencing in the present moment. Can we talk across an open space without preconceived ideas?

Each of us faces a choice. We can stick with the religious outlook that has served us till now, or we can fall in behind Jesus and become radicals. In the moment when embrace sacramental imagination we will find God.

AMEN

References

O’Leary, D. An Astonishing Secret Columbia Press Dublin 2017

O’Leary, D. Treasured and Transformed Garratt Publishing Victoria 2014

Wright Alexis Tracker Giramondo Publishing NSW 2017.

1. O’Leary, D. *An Astonishing Secret* Passim. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. O’ Leary, D*. Treasured and Transformed*. Passim pp 17-22 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. O’ Leary, D. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-7)