

St Mary's, Inverness

The RC Diocese of Aberdeen: SC005122]

The Year of St Ignatius

20 MAY 2021 >31 JULY 2022

FORTIETH REFLECTION

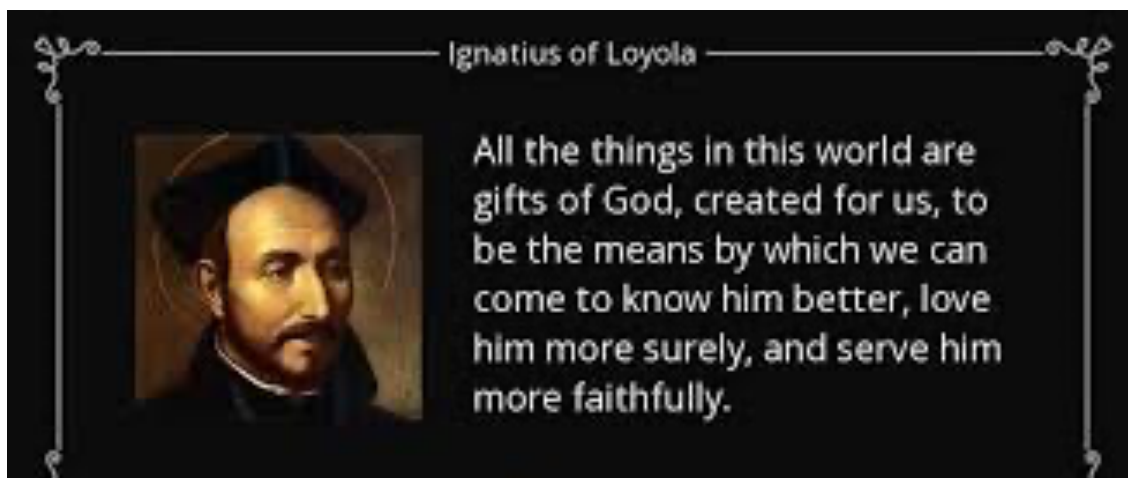
Ignatius : Finding God in all things



Ignatian Spirituality encourages us to care for the whole person giving each person, alive in God's world, a truly listening ear, an attentive mind and a willing heart.

We are each 'particular' and 'personal' -that understanding is essential as we grow in dialogue with each other. We too are part of a whole, 'Our Common Life in the Body of Christ'. On that secure foundation we are free to attract and build-up the Body of faithful followers of Jesus. At the heart of this way of belonging is the conviction that God is at the very core, the hub, of our individual existence and experience. Growing in the dialogue with God and each other, 'heart to heart', is the experience of the practice of the Presence of God. We open out from the 'quiet place' of our own reflective

hearts and minds to see where God is present around us. We imagine and reflect upon the Creator God who brings order out of the chaos at the earliest beginnings of the world and brings into being a wonderland of created delight : oceans, rivers, mountains, forests, meadows.



The Ignatian insight that we may find God in the circumstances of everyday life were well developed in the spiritual writings of a French Jesuit priest, Jean-Pierre de Caussade (1675-1751). As the Spiritual Director of a community of nuns he shared with them his insights on life. About one hundred years after his death his written notes were published under the title, ***Self-Abandonment to Divine Providence***. This has become a classic in Ignatian spirituality.

Fr de Caussade demonstrated the many ways that God speaks to us and to others ***'in the present moment'***. This appreciation has a strong sense of the sacred in our everyday experience and so we may think of this as ***'the sacrament of the present moment'***. God speaks to us through the external signs and our senses. Fr de Caussade expresses the view that the Christian has a dynamic dimension. The Holy Spirit is leading the Christians into Truth. We are challenged see that from out of the New Testament we should learn to read ***"the book of life"***. In this unfolding story we can trace the imprint of God in his world. Each of us is particular and personal in our relationships with one another and with God. Each of us is created with a divine purpose,

we are in effect writing our own life-story in Christ, ***"in the plot of the Holy Scripture which unfolds every day."***



Jean-Pierre de Caussade's teaching that God has already graced "all things" embodies Ignatian spirituality.

"The present moment is always full of infinite treasure. It contains far more than you can possibly grasp. Faith is the measure of its riches: what you find in the present moment is according to the measure of your faith. Love also is the measure: the more the

heart loves, the more it rejoices in what God provides. The will of God presents itself at each moment like an immense ocean that the desire of your heart cannot empty; yet you will drink from that ocean according to your faith and love."

This 'incarnational' approach is carried through in many subsequent Christian poets and writers. ***"All things bright and beautiful, all creatures great and small the Lord God made them all"***. The 'imprint' of God may be seen in every creative endeavour, in our work, in our relationships.

Cecilia Frances Alexander [n. Humphreys]

was born in 1818 in Dublin. Known as 'Fanny' to her family and friends she became a writer of religious verse. Her poetry was influenced by clergymen, particularly the Rev. D. Walter Farquar Hook, himself a poet, and the Rev'd John Keble an influential Anglican priest - a leader of the Oxford Movement, a friend of John



Henry Newman. Fanny dedicated her first book to Keble and approached him to write a preface for *Hymns for Little Children* (1848), which included some of her most famous hymns including ***"All Things Bright and Beautiful,"*** This poem is a lucid exploration of finding God in all things.

***"All things bright and beautiful,
All creatures great and small,
All things wise and wonderful:
The Lord God made them all.***

***Each little flower that opens,
Each little bird that sings,
He made their glowing colours,
He made their tiny wings.***

***The purple headed mountains.
The river running by,
The sunset and the morning
That brightens up the sky.***

***The cold wind in the winter,
The pleasant summer sun,
The ripe fruits in the garden,
He made them every one.***

***He gave us eyes to see them,
And lips that we might tell
How great is God Almighty,
Who has made all things well."***

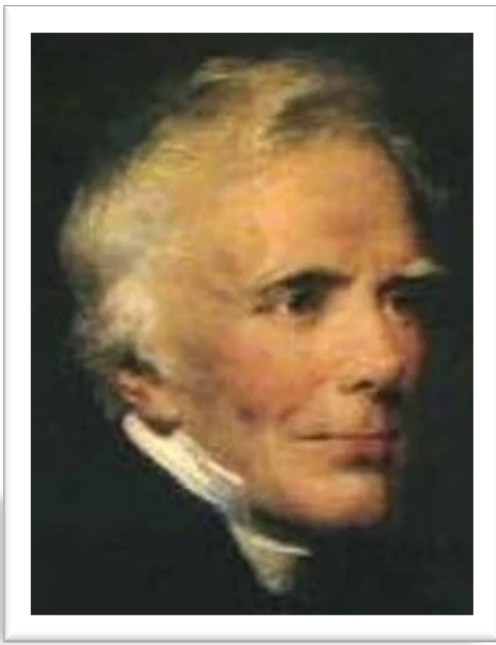
Clearly the verses reflect the opening lines of the Apostles' Creed.

***I believe in God,
the Father Almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,***

Some words from a verse from *'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner'* by Samuel Taylor Coleridge may also be in the imaginative hinterland: ***"He prayeth best, who loveth best; All things great and small; For the dear God who loveth us; He made and loveth all."***

Whatever the course of our lives, through our joys and sorrows, tears and smiles we can be aware that ***'God is working his purpose out as year succeeds to year'***.

Even in the routine of our daily lives we find traces of God. In the Ignatian way of living we become equipped to ***"find God in all things"***. In this way we find that everyday life becomes suffused with a new splendour. In the routines and in our daily encounters there is God. St Ignatius wrote : ***" God's love is poured forth lavishly like a fountain spilling forth its waters into an unending stream"*** The generosity of God's blessings to us comes as gifts, Such loving-kindness evokes the response of worship, reverent love. A felicitous exponent of this way of living in God's world was the Anglican priest and poet John Keble.



John Keble, captures these insights in the poem:

*New every morning is the love
our wakening and uprising prove;
through sleep and darkness
safely brought,
restored to life and
power and thought.*

*New mercies, each returning day,
hover around us while we pray;
new perils past, new sins forgiven,
new thoughts of God,
new hopes of heaven.*

*If on our daily course our mind
be set to hallow all we find,*

*new treasures still,
of countless price,
God will provide for sacrifice.*

*The trivial round,
the common task,
will furnish all we need to ask,
room to deny ourselves, a road
to bring us daily nearer God.
Only, O Lord, in thy dear love
fit us for perfect rest above;
and help us, this and every day,
to live more nearly as we pray.*

A younger contemporary of Keble and Newman, Gerard Manley Hopkins, wrote out of his life experience and his sensitive insights. He was, as a Jesuit priest, steeped in Ignatian spirituality. He was also influenced by the thought of the Scottish Franciscan, John Duns Scotus whose particular insights into the created world engendered in Hopkins a radical contemplation of the natural world and human experience.



In Hopkins' poem, 'As Kingfishers Catch Fire' we find insights into the gifts of God in nature and in our way of living. We need to form the words with our lips and almost inhale them to find the rhythm and the stresses that carry us into understanding:

**“As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame;
As tumbled over rim in roundy wells
Stones ring; like each tucked string tells, each hung bell's
Bow swung finds tongue to fling out broad its name;
Each mortal thing does one thing and the same:
Deals out that being indoors each one dwells;
Selves — goes itself; *myself* it speaks and spells,
Crying *Whát I dó is me: for that I came.***

**I say móre: the just man justices;
Keeps grace: thát keeps all his goings graces;
Acts in God's eye what in God's eye he is —
Chríst — for Christ plays in ten thousand places,
Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his
To the Father through the features of men's faces.**

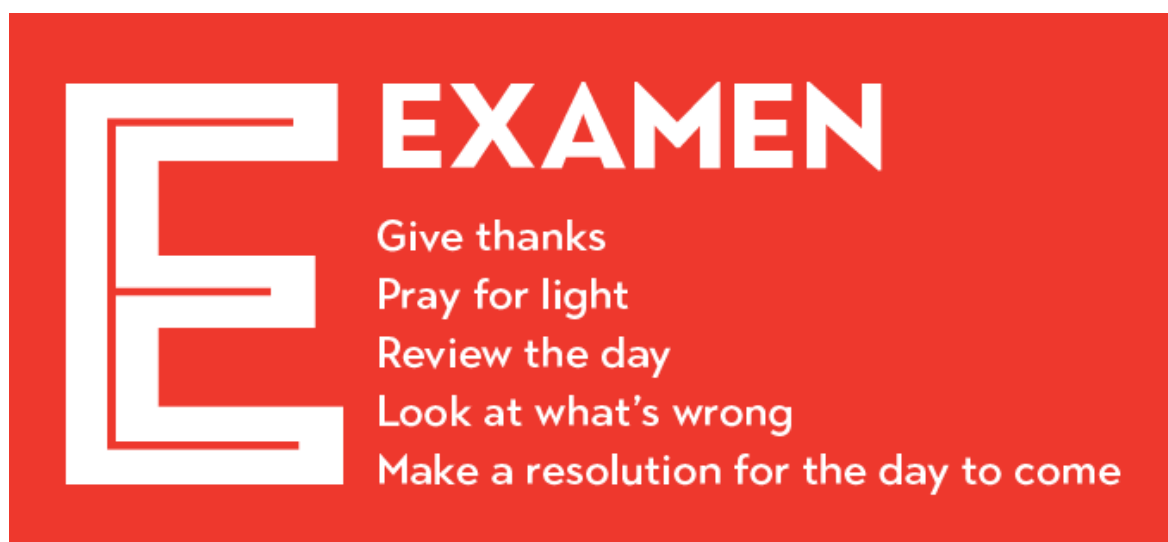
This poem of Hopkins illustrates some of the innovative aspects of his writing style in which the rhythm springs along and the particular force of his descriptions derive from what he called 'inscape' [a kind of inverse 'landscape', a way in which the inner uniqueness of all that is within offers a harmony]. The more we learn to look deeply, and imaginatively at each thing [kingfisher, dragon-fly, each mortal thing, ourselves] the more we are drawn into reverence and awe at a world of infinite complexity, solid simplicity, and

an interior recognition of purpose and design. Even in a bird or a stone, in man or a meadow, there are enough signals of the Divine largesse in creation to draw out the impulse of Holy awe. Truly with eyes to see and ears to hear we can begin to find God in all things.

Points to ponder:

- Finding God in all things, particularly in the warp and woof of ongoing creation, draws us into a relationship with God's created Delight. How conversant are we with the destruction of the fragile earth and have we prayerful obligations that move us to action?
- *The trivial round, the common task, will furnish all we need to ask, room to deny ourselves, a road to bring us daily nearer God.* Do we think of God in a recollected way even in the mundane things of work, housekeeping, gardening?
- Should we perhaps 'jot down' our insights, our feelings, our recollections of God alive in our world? Where? When? With whom?
- Do we have any creative responses to our awareness of God-in-all-things? Poetry, lyrics, drawing, painting – is it time to be expressive?

Looking at ourselves:



Scriptural Reflection

Preparation for Scriptural Reflection :

- *We place ourselves in the presence of God – short prayer of devotion: 'My Lord, and my God'*
- *We open up to God, expressing our sorrow for sin and our gratitude for our blessings*
- *We ask God to receive our lives, our hopes, our best intentions and our prayers*
- *We begin to read the passage of Scripture slowly. It helps to say the words, even silently.*
- *We think imaginatively trying to see ourselves in the scene of the Scripture : what we see, what we hear, what it feels like, what we smell, what we might taste.*

Passage for Reflection :

Matthew 6:25-34 [NIV]

"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labour or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendours was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field,

which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."



Some points for reflection on this Teaching of Jesus from the Sermon on the Mount.

- We need clothes, shelter, food and water as basics. We look for much more – education, work, stability, freedom from violence and fear, recreation, the freedoms to marry, travel and enjoy a family life. Getting the balance right in our everyday lives is where we may find God- do we ask, seek and knock that God's perspective may take shape in our lives?
- Can we converse about these things with those whom we live?

- It is difficult to find God in human misery, but he is there – we need to seek and see. In the Pandemic many people have been 'saintly' and not all of them Christians. The Divine Mercy flows from heart to heart.
- **A Period of Silence** in which we pray with St Ignatius, talking conversationally to God as Father : seeking understanding and insight, ever searching, ever finding, always willing, and Loving.

'Suscipe' Prayer of St Ignatius

Take, O Lord, and receive my entire liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my whole will. All that I am and all that I possess, Thou hast given me: I surrender it all to Thee to be disposed of according to Thy will. Give me only Thy love and Thy grace; with these I will be rich enough and will desire nothing more. Amen.



The Lord's Prayer

Jesus Mercy, Mary Pray.

Thank God Always