The Mystery of God in Every Day

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Fr Karl Rahner SJ in 1974

Here we are again in the season of Advent. It's meant to be a time when we tune into the many ways God comes into our lives. The great Jesuit theologian Karl Rahner talked often about everyday mysticism, pointing towards the everyday presence of God to us. We can often think that mysticism is something for others, people who are special or esoteric or have visions. This is not the ordinary way that most people encounter God. Rahner insisted throughout his life and work that God is the Holy Mystery who pervades the whole of reality, the incomprehensible ground of all being. God is not one mystery among others, but the Mystery, one who can never be known or grasped. He said that the concept of God is not a grasp of God by which a person masters the mystery, but it is letting oneself be grasped by the mystery that is present and yet always withdrawing itself. This is because the human person is fundamentally orientated towards this mystery, an orientation manifest in the questioning spirit of human beings, in the human search for meaning and fulfilment. Advent is a time when we can intentionally let ourselves be

grasped by the Mystery.

In his meditations, Rahner also speaks of God as a horizon. Human beings know particular objects through and within an infinite horizon. God at once contains and transcends our questing selves, the movement that we are. All human awareness of this-worldly things is accompanied by an awareness of what is beyond the world and should by rights recognise itself as dependent on that transcendent source. If we imagine God as always beyond us, as the horizon we are reaching out towards, then this helps us to understand how God is often experienced as both present and absent. We can experience God as very present to us and at the same time always beyond our reach. This is part of our experience of the Mystery.

How, then, can human beings draw near to the heart of all things, the true heart of reality? Like many of the mystics before him, Rahner answers unequivocally, 'not by knowledge alone, but by the full flower of knowledge, love.' And this loving, experiential knowledge is transformative. In his book *Encounters with Silence*, Rahner shared something of his experience: 'It is only the knowledge gained through experience, through living and suffering, that does not in the end disappoint and turn into boredom and oblivion, but instead fills the heart with the knowing wisdom of experienced love. It is not what I have thought out, but what I have lived through and suffered through that should fill my mind and my heart. It fills the heart with the wisdom of love, instead of crushing it with the disappointment of boredom and final oblivion. It is not the result of our own speculation, but the golden harvest of what we have lived through and suffered through, that has power to enrich the heart and nourish the spirit.'

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(Encounters with Silence, p.27.)

Rahner invites us to remember some ordinary everyday human experiences where God is encountered. For example, God can be found in a state of sudden aloneness when everything is called into question in times like bereavement or illness or in a moment when the silence resounds more penetratingly than the accustomed din of everyday life, when we are surprised by someone or something. God can be found when a person is brought face to face with their own freedom and responsibility, where choices for good are made, and in a sudden experience of being absolutely and unconditionally accepted in love, which is the everyday experience of falling in love. Take time this Advent to be still and silent and become more aware of God in your everyday experience, in the cry of a baby, in the struggle of sickness, in the beauty of a newborn, in the frailty of the old, in the glow of a sunrise. It's what Advent is all about.

Childrens Pages

Spot 10 differences, follow the maze and colour in the picture!





