

Reflection 14th July 2020

It has been suggested that some of my recent reflections have stressed commonality at the expense of the individual - which points to the whole problematic of seeing the part and the whole as a duality rather than as a unity.

The importance of the individual is encapsulated in a blessing by the Irish poet, philosopher and priest John O'Donohue:

May you have respect for your own individuality and difference.

May you realise that the shape of your soul is unique,
that you have a special destiny here.

Each of us has been created in the image of God, and presents a facet of the Divine - but it is only in the totality that the Divine can be discerned, in the totality of the whole of Creation - including its human members. Each of us is a part of the jigsaw - and there is only one gap that our particular shape will fit into, so unless we fill that gap, the jigsaw will remain incomplete.

God is love, and love is all about relationships; the 'special destiny' to which John O'Donohue refers is the way in which we perceive and act out our relationships, the way in which the 'unique shape of our soul' fits into the whole and contributes to its proper functioning. Our 'special destiny' is to work towards the common good; unless we flourish and prosper, the common good remains stunted; unless the common good flourishes and prospers, we remain incomplete. Our good cannot exist apart from the common good, and - I would suggest - part of our contribution to the common good is to help ensure that the gifts and blessings which God has lavished upon Creation - and as stewards of which we have been appointed - are more equitably distributed and used for the benefit of all.

This is a constant theme in Catholic Social Teaching and a main thread running through Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si'* with its sub-title 'Care for our common home' - of which more perhaps later.

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