

Tuesday Reflection 28 September 2021

This last weekend there was a Parish Retreat led by Fr Dermot Byrne. The focus was on St Joseph, who is our Patron and Patron of the Church, and to whom this year is dedicated.

In an inspiring yet gentle way, Fr Dermot succeeded in transforming Joseph from a rather two-dimensional background figure into a fully-rounded three-dimensional man, a just man, a listener and man of faith, a worker and family man and a lover and dreamer.

So what did I take away from the retreat that will have an impact on my life?

What struck me most was the image of Joseph as a man of compassion motivated by a concern for others.

As chance(?) would have it, this weekend I also came across a piece written by Matthew Fox some 25 years ago on compassion, which he calls “the world’s richest energy source” but one which we are sadly neglecting. Fox writes: “in human history of late ... compassion appears very far away and almost in exile”.

As a human being, and as a Christian in particular, I am coming slowly to the realisation that any talents I may have are free gifts from God which I have done nothing to deserve, and that I am where I am because of the care, compassion and concern shown by others, again through no merit of mine. I am called to express my gratitude by actively living compassion and concern for others as I try to help them in their striving to be the best they can be - and that does not only apply to my interactions with other human beings.

I write these words against the background of the upcoming CAFOD Harvest Fast Day which is dedicated to those who live their concern for nature and the environment, especially the indigenous peoples of Amazonia.

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