

# *Encountering Mystery*

***God is the "bottomless encouragement to a faltering and frightened being".***

John Updike

*Love is indeed "ecstasy", not in the sense of a moment of intoxication, but rather as a journey, an ongoing exodus out of the closed, inward-looking self towards its liberation through self-giving, and thus towards authentic self-discovery and indeed the discovery of God.*

Benedict XVI

*Truth is that indestructible life that is open to us when we cease to live as private and self-determining individuals and enter the communion of God's own personal life-in-relation.*

John Zizioulas

Admitting to need seems so hard for us. Admitting that we are/can be faltering and frightened seems inadmissible. We think our personal insufficiency is unacceptable to God, but this couldn't be further from the truth. Our incompleteness, our emptiness is the other side of our longing for more, for God, and is the "spaciousness into which we can welcome the flow of grace". Finding space and letting God be an encouragement to us - endlessly, because this is a process we are invited into - is where we learn and taste the goodness of God.

Jesus said: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of God": or as Charles Williams translate that: "You are in the right place when you are poor in spirit".

Being in the right place implies being poor, gentle, mourning, merciful, peaceable and persecuted- in other words, powerless, weak and vulnerable. How can that possibly be the right place? It is the right place because it makes no claims on anyone, not even on God. And it is then that God's offer of love and wholeness for the individual and the community can be accepted. As it is accepted so the richness of the offer is revealed.

Charles Williams

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Our vulnerabilities, the places where we know only too well our weaknesses and our blindness - or in Jesus' words, "our poverty" - these are the places which are for us "the right place". Thomas Merton wrote: ***"My fall into inconsistency was nothing but the revelation of what I am. I am thrown into contradiction: to realise it is mercy, to accept it is love, to help others do the same is compassion"***.

**Being real is the only gateway into waking up to the reality of God.**

**It surprises us:**

**it often confounds us.**

**But it is "here", in the midst of our inconsistency,**

**that we discover and experience mercy.**

**Such an experience opens us up and draws us out of our narrow self-contained isolation into love,  
into the self-forgetfulness and self-giving of compassion.**

*Flawed as you are you stand on holy ground....  
This is the ground that God has cleared for you. ...  
God meets you here and nowhere else.*

*Angela Tilby*

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