**THE MANSION (Thoughts into Silence)**

“What’s it all about Alfie?” Is the question that you and I have probably heard a thousand times from our hospice and hospital patients… So how do we explain the Meaning of Life beyond ‘42’, the answer given in The Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy! And if we’re honest how do we explain it to ourselves unless we can begin recognise the Divine in the ordinary and in our own fragility… and unless we are awakened and begin to experience things are the *really* are.

Yes there are special moments in life, as in holding a new born baby, or at the other end of life, at the bedside of a dying friend or relative.

Then there are moments which are inexplicably much more than that… we experience, the taste, the shimmering, and the touch of The Other. But these are the moments that come fleetingly… we’ve all had them… something special happens but it fades all too quickly or it was so subtle that we almost missed it altogether… they becomes a questionable memory, as when we’ve glimpsed something out of the corner of our eye…

Somehow we know these moments of truth, yet we are not fully able enter them, and we ask ourselves this question…. **“Why do we spend so many of our waking hours living on the outer circumference of the inner richness that is this life we lead?”** We know its truth… but somehow our access to it is closed off… Now here’s the picture…!

The image is this: You have inherited an elaborately decorated mansion and during the first week you invite your relatives to come and see… the only problem is that you don’t have the key, and so you’re living in a tent in the back garden!... Now, after the bar-b-que you say to them, ‘Would you like to see the place?’….and they say, ‘Oh yes, we’d love to!’

….So you take them across to look through the leaded windows saying, ‘Well here’s the kitchen, and if you look through these French doors you can see the lounge and in the next bay you can see the library… Oh and wait a minute, I’ll get a ladder and I’ll show you the bedrooms! And they say admiringly, ‘You really do have a stunning place here.’ And you humbly reply, ‘Well, I like it!’…. but all the time you’re just living in the tent!

**Now**, imagine that you’ve actually lived your whole life ***IN*** this beautiful mansion, but through some tragic condition you believe you’re living in a tent in the back garden… !

….and every week your therapist says to you, ‘YOU’RE IN THE MANSION!’ trust me, I know..! You ARE! And you say, ‘No, no… I’m really not worthy to live there and I don’t even deserve to consider how I might get in there…

Do you see what happens to us? What we want is a habituated experience of Reality but we are, so often, covered and drowning in our superficiality or we are hypnotised by it!

Yet, every breath and heartbeat is God infinitely giving himself away constantly and inexplicably… The measure of God’s love is His ability to give himself totally….

…. **“So, why do I spend so many of my waking hours trapped on the outer circumference of the inner richness that is this life I lead?”**  What ***is*** it all about?

Thomas Merton Writes this…“What is serious to men is often very trivial in the sight of God. If we could let go of our own obsession with what we think is the meaning of it all, we might be able to hear His call and follow Him in His mysterious dance.

We do not have to go very far to catch echoes of that game, and of that dancing. When we are alone on a starlit night; when by chance we see the migrating birds in autumn descending on a grove of junipers to rest and eat; when we see children in a moment when they are really children; when we know love in our own hearts; or when, like the Japanese poet Bashō we hear an old frog land in a quiet pond with a solitary plop --at such times the awakening, the turning inside out of all values, the "newness," the emptiness and the purity of vision that make themselves evident, provide a glimpse of the cosmic dance.  
  
For the world and time are the dance of the Lord in emptiness. The silence of the spheres is the music of a wedding feast. The more we persist in misunderstanding the phenomena of life, the more we analyse them out into strange finalities and complex purposes of our own, then the more we involve ourselves in sadness, absurdity and despair.

But it does not matter much, because no despair of ours can alter the reality of things; or stain the joy of the cosmic dance which is always there. Indeed, we are in the midst of it, and it is in the midst of us, for it beats in our very blood, whether we want it to or not.  
 From Thomas Merton’s – New Seeds of Contemplation.

The invitation to contemplative living in our ordinary life is indeed finding the Pearl of Great Price even in our own frailty. It holds us until finally we know what we know and stand by what we can’t explain.

**So our thought into Silence is this:**

**‘Can we sit so still that we can sense God inviting each of us into the Cosmic dance.’**

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