

# Prism of Love

SAMPLE

**DANIEL  
O'LEARY**

**Prism of Love**

**GOD'S COLOURS IN EVERYDAY LIFE**





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Finally, *Prism of Love* has come to birth because of the waves of compassion and wisdom that are beginning to flow, ever more powerfully, across the brave souls of those who, no matter what the cost, or what the state of our institutions, desire to live the free and abundant life promised to them by the Son of Man, the Human One.

# Your one shining moment

*Do you ever revisit it?*



Into every life, the wise ones say, comes one shining moment. It is a moment of glory. The curtains part, the vision is granted, and something is changed forever. That single experience, in one way or another, stays with us always and colours the whole of our lives. It is the timeless time when the veil is drawn from the mystery of our existence, when our essence is disclosed to us, when we discover – even if only fleetingly – who we really are. It is a highly personal ‘moment of truth’.

Your one bright and shining moment may have to do with naming what, or who, you really love; with revealing to you the job or the relationship that is slowly destroying you; with becoming aware that all your decisions and reactions spring from a deeply hidden anxiety, anger or fear; that you need no longer be afraid because you are loved unconditionally by a God who delights in you; that, without a doubt, the universe and life itself are safe places for yourself, your children and all you love; that everything that has ever happened to you was not random happen-chance but part of a carefully crafted love story; that God comes to you usually disguised as your life, in all its bits and pieces; that apart from one or two cherished beliefs, nothing matters very much; that it is in our weakness and sinfulness that we are strongest of all; that we are indestructible and untouchable as long as we remain close to God.

In his short life with us, there were many shafts of brightness, we can be sure, of immense significance for Jesus. In the dark light of his desert temptations there was a lot of shining. In his encounters with the women in his life, there was



much disclosure. We remember, for instance, his insights about the eternal meaning in the sacrificial moment of the widow's penny, his peerless communion in the transparent moment of exchange with the woman at the well, his human self-revelation in the intimate moments with Mary and Martha. He spoke of the threshold-instant when the casements of all our hearts would fly open for us to behold the traffic of angels between heaven and earth. And he certainly had an amazingly close encounter with a light from another place on the mountain of his transfiguration.

The human life of Jesus in time and space was one of the brightest shining moments in the history of creation. In the fullness and totality of his very own humanity lies the secret passage to the heart of God. And, therefore, likewise with us. It is during our most desperate, ecstatic, despairing, joyful, routine, hopeless times that those luminous moments of clarity surround us with stunning transparency. We are held in a threshold between two phases of our lives – not to do with the chronological time of years and decades but with the kairos-time of falling into mystery, of falling in love with God. These moments heal and transcend the damaging religious education of our childhood days and liberate us into the belief that we are all gods-in-the-making, that even from our murkiest and most sinful encounters with evil, God can bring light.

R. S. Thomas, one of our finest poets, died a few years ago. He wrote about life's moments. He was drawn to the story that Jesus told about the person who glimpsed a piece of the mystery – and who then went on to buy the field with the treasure in it (Mt 13:44). In *The Bright Field* he moulds and shapes into 14 lines, so much scriptural imagery, so much of our traditional Catholic theology of childhood and of the mystics' spirituality of creation. And he does this in a way that echoes all over our hearts, bringing memories of moments whose light will never go out:

YOUR ONE SHINING MOMENT

*I have seen the sun break through  
to illuminate a small field  
for a while, and gone my way  
and forgotten it. But that was the pearl  
of great price, the one field that had  
the treasure in it. I realise now  
that I must give all that I have  
to possess it. Life is not hurrying  
on to a receding future, nor hankering after  
an imagined past. It is the turning  
aside like Moses to the miracle  
of the lit bush, to a brightness  
that seemed as transitory as your youth  
once, but is the eternity that awaits you.*

# Faces of your soul

*How many of them do you know?*



Do you ever surprise yourself at what you notice going on inside you? Think of times during the past few weeks when you seemed to be a different person from your usual, familiar self. Do you remember times of sudden outrage, of deep loss, of intense delight, of hatred, of jealousy, of fear? Reflect for a moment on the strength of those moods and emotions, those highs and lows, those secret desires, fantasies and restlessness? Sometimes it seems as though there are different people living inside us.

One night a few weeks ago, for instance, I had the face of a potential killer as, in panic and fear, I chased an intruder around the presbytery. I scared both myself and the thief at the ferocity of my rage and the obscenity of my language. Soon afterwards, under a mild enough threat, I wore the face of a coward. Within days, a surge of grace had my eyes shining with hope and vision. Later again, rocked by temptation, my face was bereft of strength.

We are taken aback, even shocked, by the various characters that emerge and take their turn on the stage of each of our days. Sometimes it is the saint who comes to the fore, or the sinner, the hero or heroine, the wild man or wild woman, the hunter or huntress, the harlot, the seducer, the conscientious mother or father, the good Catholic. I have listened to parents who were amazed at the rage they felt towards their children, their spouses, even wishing them dead and then feeling guilty for ages afterwards. Holy people have talked to me about the temptations that filled their nights, the blasphemies that filled their days.

Yet all those forceful feelings are part of us. We dare not deny their existence and their influence over us. If we suppress and try to bury them, they will eventually destroy us. They are all faces of who we are. They are the community of our heart. We are called to accept them and to hold them. We bring them all – the weeds and the wheat, in the imagery of Jesus – before ourselves and before God in meditation, and before our special friends in honest intimacy. To pretend that we are all light, living perfectly in the state of perpetual grace, is to live a lie that damages our soul. The greater the gift, the greater the shadow. Enlightenment happens, not in the light, but when the darkness prevails.

Those moments when we think and act and feel emotions that are unfamiliar, out of character, alien to our normal, patterned way of life – such moments carry huge secrets to facilitate our breakthrough into the real self, into how we save our souls. In fact these are the times when we learn most about what is going on within us. The danger is, as Rainer Maria Rilke said, that when our devils are driven out, our angels leave as well. They are the supreme moments of true awareness, ready to disclose their treasures of wisdom to open hearts.

We are rarely told about how much Jesus learned from his shadow side – from the outrage, the anger, the temptations, the doubts that plagued his life. In the dark light of his desert temptations we see one of his many faces. In his encounters with the women in his life, we see many more. To Mary and Martha he revealed the face of his need for human intimacy. On his day of anger in the temple, he showed the world his face of outrage. The transfiguration provided him and us with the terrible beauty of his hidden divinity. His face of despair stares at us from the Cross.

But whatever face he showed, it was the face of God. So too with us. Because Jesus lived through all the experiences of humanity, wearing all the faces possible for a human being to wear, they are all, if we but believe it, redemptive for our souls.

## PRISM OF LOVE

We take our masks, our scars, our shadow to heaven with us. Only there, they will be shining. In the meantime, here in this world, the challenge to us is, not to do battle with our many faces, but to be aware of them. In God's economy, they too have a place in the grand scheme of things.

*For Christ plays in ten thousand places,  
lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his  
to the Father, through the features  
of men's faces. (G. M. Hopkins)*