

Professor David Knowles was once heard to say that quoting Aquinas was like a visit to Harrods – if you looked hard enough you would eventually find whatever you were looking for, and I've found this right by the front door:

'It would be more accurate to say that God contains us rather than that we have God within us, just as the soul more properly is said to contain the body than to exist in the body... We are, in a very true sense, wrapped around with God, penetrated by divinity, held up every instant by divine power that saturates all reality and exceeds it. God fills the world as summer sunlight floods a room. He is everywhere in the world as the soul is everywhere in the body; where He is not, nothing is. (p 13 The Summa Simplified 1952)

Which fits beautifully, I think, with the succession of ideas in today's three readings, though not necessarily in the order given, for if God is everywhere and we are in a sense 'in God' then it follows that the Word is indeed very close to us, indeed written on our hearts and indeed written on the hearts of our neighbour, and so all reality becomes a revelation of God '*where he is not, nothing is*'. So the parable of the Good Samaritan has a much wider reference to God's reality than 'merely' befriending an enemy as the hymn to the Colossians also makes clear. For encountering the lawyers legal appetite for putting things in boxes, for containing truth in yes or no categories, Jesus is also telling us a story about himself - for if I as a Jew have no boundaries with regard to love - as the story implies – then there is something greater here than the mere fact of religious difference, or any other. And later we will come to recognise that Jesus himself can be equated with the creator God who fills everything

'Christ Jesus is the image of the unseen God and the first born of all creation, for in him were created all things in heaven and on earth, everything visible and everything invisible.'
'Before anything was created, he existed and he holds all things in unity.'

Like the lawyer we may all want to justify ourselves in terms of our difference from others but what Jesus in God made human reveals is that we have no justification for citing any such difference unless motivated by love, unless, that is, it is love speaking, unless, that is, we allow the Cross to speak of God's love for all humanity and all things. It's all one – held in unity by love. So can we not also say: Where God is, there is my neighbour. I would also like to say that where Christ is there is my neighbour but those of a more legal disposition might then say (to justify their Christianity perhaps) so the unbaptised are not my neighbour – which would be to miss the point entirely.

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