

A Reading from *Prayer and Holiness*

by the Romanian Orthodox mystic and theologian Dumitru Staniloae
written in 1982 (before the wide use of inclusive language)

In the person of the saint, because of his availability, his extreme attention to others, and by the alacrity with which he gives himself to Christ, humanity is healed and renewed. How does this renewed humanity show itself in practice? The saint shows us a bearing full of tact, transparency, purity of thought and feeling in relation to every human being. His consideration extends even to animals and to things, because in every creature he sees a gift of God's love, and does not wish to wound that love by treating his gifts with negligence or indifference. He has respect for each [person] and for each thing. He shows toward the suffering of any [person], or even of an animal, a profound compassion...

Such compassion reveals a heart that is tender, extremely sensitive, and a stranger to all hardness, indifference and brutality. It shows us that hardness is the result of sin and of the passions. In the bearing of the saint, and even in his thoughts, there is no trace of vulgarity, meanness or baseness; no sign of affectation, or want of sincerity. Kindness, sincerity, and transparency come to their fullness of expression in him, and are combined with purity, generous attention towards men and with the availability by which he shares with all his heart in their problems and troubles. In all these qualities is shown forth in an eminent degree the full capacity of human nature.

(Dumitru Staniloae, *Prayer and Holiness: The Icon of Man Renewed in God*. Oxford: SLG Press, 1982, 1-2.)

This Is Praise

Euros Bowen (Welsh 1904-1988)

In my day I have often heard morning and evening
the thrush's call
on the tree's high branch,
the brook trembling in the solitude
of moor-bank and marsh,
an infant's ready laughter
at his foot's first venture on the ground,
and the children's noisy fun
on the village meadow:
And when the swallow,
its diligent nesting done,
has left for the south,
I have seen summer decay
as an acorn rolls golden
into the shadow of the country's oak,
like the smile of the departed
before burial in the earth. –
Life does not die. This is praise.