

**Lecture by Jasbinder Garnermann  
Avila Spirituality Centre , Friday 23/11/18 (10am - 3pm)**

**A Brief Reflection by way of a Response**

The ego is a survival mechanism. The key to the ego is fear. Though it is a necessary survival instinct, the ego is also a predatory instinct and has no sense of boundaries. It is insatiable. Its contemporary expression is individualism. The cost is the undermining of our sense of community. For this reason it is essential that we develop a sense of consciousness and responsibility around the ego.

So, for humanity itself to survive we need to restore the ego-self axis. We need to hold in balance the satisfaction of the instinctive needs of the ego and our call to transcendence. The redeemed ego takes on the qualities of the self and adopts a servant role rather than the role of the master. In old theological language what we are talking about here is humility. Humility is about right relationships and a correct perspective and the restoration of the ego-self axis is about both of these.

Another expression of this is the holding of opposites in creative tension. A case in point, would be the tension between masculine and feminine. However, this has become politicised in our society and, so, I am not at all sure we have the balance right.

Advent is the time of year when we are challenged to address the ego-self axis. The symbolism of advent is very powerful. The symbol of the Jesse tree, traces the royal lineage from Jesse the father of King David, through multiple generations down to Jesus, it's ultimate flowering. Then, the advent wreath picks up the themes of light and darkness, of penance, joy and hope. The repentance and conversion that Advent calls for are a redirection and reorientation of life - a restoration of the ego-self axis. Advent penance, then, is an authentic suffering, an emptying of the ego, an embrace of the self.

***Denis Gleeson cfc***

