

Folio Fourteen

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The Challenge of Choice ¹

*To be yourself is always to choose
The self we dream to be ...
To love life into such choices,
Is to create possibilities to be free.*

*We become more fully human
The more we own our choices,
Because we focus energy by our choices ...
Defining ourselves, identifying ourselves,
And, above all, valuing and enhancing others.
Are our choices, now, worthy of our future?*

*We can not only choose a new future
But we can choose a new past –
A new cluster of self-images out of our past.
Our compulsions do little more
Than to repeat our past ...
The challenge is self-chosen change :
To enliven the present with the choice of a new past,
And be freed for the future, by the call to change.*

*Yet, we more really become ourself
Through the other, who invites us
To dis-cover, and surface, our real self ...
Still, we only become what we think we are worth.*

*The real challenge of change is in always choosing
... A 100% to be ourself, and a 100% to be for the other.
Also our desire for human wholeness
Prompts us to create possibilities,
Not only for ourself, but for every other
... To achieve the fullness of human life.*

¹ Year 9, Prison Ministry, Wacol and Borallon, Gregory Terrace Community Oct 1992
This poem was written for use with prisoners
See Note on Poem 146

Truth, Goodness, Beauty ²

*Wherever you find truth,
Know you MEET God ;
Wherever there's good,
God ACTS ;
Wherever you sense beauty,
Enjoy your God.*

² Year 10, Prison Ministry, Wacol and Borallon, Gregory Terrace Community Jun 1993
Written in the light of my prison ministry

Crucified to Us ³

*It is not
That God does not love you
When you sin ...
Nor even that God loves you
Despite your sin ...
Rather, that Jesus
Crucified for love of us
Loves you in your sin ...
Yes! Jesus is crucified
To you, in love!*

Being with Others ⁴

A person of good self-esteem

Can truly say:

*I believe I am a worthwhile person,
I'm worth more than what I've done,
I'm worth more than what I could ever do,
I'm worth far more than my own self-estimations.*

Still the person is faced with the dilemma ...

- That to be DEPENDENT, by itself, is a limited good,
Insofar as living my life solely for others
Limits the fullness of life.*
- That to be INDEPENDENT, by itself, is a limited good,
Insofar as living my life solely on one's own terms
Limits the fullness of life.*

In integrating both these life-goods,

The truly good person

Can only conclude

That living my life WITH others

– Being WITH others –

Leaves both parties truly FREE

... Free to be themselves, 100%,

... Free to be for chosen others 100%,

- Both 100% independent, and 100% dependent, by choice.*

⁴ Year 11, Prison Ministry, Wacol and Borallon, Gregory Terrace Community Feb 1994
Written for use with prisoners
See Note Poem 146

Relationships : Source of Authority ⁵

AUTHORITY: Its primal root, the Latin 'augeo' – is to increase, to promote, to cause to grow.

*An authentic person's authority
Ought CAUSE OTHERS TO GROW as human persons.
Contrarivise, humanity generally,
Often locks into the dominant historical idea,
That authority is one directional ... like worldly power
– Travelling down the hierarchical ladder,
Such that one exercises authority OVER another.*

*In truth,
If one CAUSES OTHERS TO GROW as human persons,
Authority is thus, personal, and necessarily MUTUAL
... Whereby, if you have authority WITH another,
The other has authority WITH you.
Indeed, a young six year old girl
Has EQUAL authority with her father :
Hers is an emotional, even spiritual, authority
That does not command, but ELICITS
Loving fatherly responses ;
His authority ... EQUAL to hers,
In dignity and value,
Is a nurturing, protective,
And, at times, directive, authority
... Changing as she ages.*

*Their mutual authority WITH each other
Is immeasurably enhanced
Through their common adoption into Christ
– Wherein they become brother and sister
To each other
... So that the EQUALITY of their authority
Is radiantly revealed!*

⁵ Year 12, Prison Ministry, Wacol and Borallon, Gregory Terrace Community Apr 1995
Written for use with prisoners
See Note Poem 146

*This belief in the mutuality of authority
Parallels the elevated concept of POWER
... Wherein the true purpose of one's power
Is to EMPOWER THE OTHER.*

*Thus both beliefs
– Regarding authority and power –
Resonate with authenticity
When both are rooted ... humanly, and 'in Christ' ...
In RELATIONSHIPS
– Rooted in what happens BETWEEN people,
And this, on what happens BETWEEN God and us.*

*To relate thus – authentically,
One has to REPUDIATE the hierarchical MODEL
Of authority and power
– A model which is ultimately based on FORCE :
On punishment and rewards,
On restrictions and privileges,
On insiders and outsiders.
One also has to repudiate grading people
... Where 'higher' in the hierarchy
Equates to importance, access, and privilege ;
... And where 'lower' in the hierarchy
Equates to lesser degrees of importance, access, and privilege.
These understandings very easily deteriorate
– To equate hierarchical importance or unimportance,
To one's importance or unimportance AS A HUMAN BEING
... Reverencing them, or denigrating them.*

*Furthermore, in basing authority and power
On RELATIONSHIPS
One often needs, pragmatically,
To situate one's repudiations of the hierarchical model
Within an EXISTING hierarchy
... Operating, perhaps in one's work situation,
And in the fulfilling of one's citizenship responsibilities.*

*Thus, because ALL have authority,
One needs to be deeply, personally insistent
In treating ALL relationally
... While still conforming to hierarchical paperwork,
And to administrative demands and deadlines, et cetera.*

*Indeed, our vision ought be
... To gradually but deliberately subvert, and disempower,
The persuasive hierarchical model
– Which our warring tribal, territorial origins
Have installed as one of humanity's
Core modus operandi.*

*Thus, we owe it
To humanity's absolute CORE VALUES,
– Human equality and human dignity –
Always to relate personally to authority,
And to enhance the mutuality
Essential for true authority.*

Opening to Freedom ⁶

*It is deeply worthwhile
Always to invest our time, efforts, and passion,
In enlarging our freedom and others' freedom
For, the growth in one ...
Deeply enhances the growth of the other.
To prepare for, and deeply desire
Such freedom,
Is to already experience freedom
– To be freed from certain inner restraints,
And to be open to greater possibilities.
Moreover, the way we begin a new freedom,
Is the way it will continue.
The degree to which we VALUE freedom
... Setting our hopes on it,
... Treasuring it,
... Even reverencing it,
Is the degree, to which, it not only ENHANCES our lives,
But is a measure – a true measure,
Of how our freedom will continue to expand.
The higher we value it,
The more we place it at the centre
– The enabling, activating centre –
Of our identity and destiny:
It centres, characterizes, colours
...All we are, and do.*

⁶ Year 13, Prison Ministry, Wacol and Borallon, Victoria Street Community, Brisbane Jun 1996
An 1860's cottage in Victoria St, opposite St Joseph's College, Gregory Terrace, had been donated to the Brothers.
I lived there with Br Kev McDade, as an separate community, from Easter 1996 to Nov 1998 – a wonderful time

Deceit Always Betrays Us ⁷

*Deception by one person
Breeds mistrust in the other ...
And in those who come to know.
They, gradually lock him out of their lives,
Because he increasingly becomes
'An UNKNOWN quantity'.*

*For those who commonly lie,
Before long, they cannot differentiate
Between truth, lies, and the memory of their lies
... And so, deep confusion enters their lives
– Especially their relationships!*

*Those who lie ROB others
Of the expectation of honesty
In relationships.
It is, then, only a small step
For them to steal.
They are only an accident away
From transgressing another's very person.*

*In the more valued relationships,
Of those who steal long term
... Inevitably
Whatever they want, they take!
And in their own personality,
They become calculating and predatory,
Treating most they meet
– As 'set-ups' or with suspicion.*

*For all the above, to varying degrees,
Life becomes an increasingly adrenalized game, or necessity
– Of living their life as a succession of 'fronts'.
The more complete the 'front' they live,
When they are exposed ...
The more they will be lost, and deserted by others.
They and others won't know
Who they really ARE,
... Who to relate to,
Who to love.*

⁷ Year 13, Prison Ministry, Wacol and Borallon, Victoria Street Community, Brisbane Jun 1996
Written for use with prisoners

To Lust or To Long Lovingly ⁸

*If through lust,
You still SEEK LOVE,
Then, you act out of weakness :
Love will find you.*

*But, if through lust,
You seek ONLY sexual satisfaction,
You act out of contempt ... hidden or obvious :
Love will ELUDE you ...and, finally, you will become
The play-thing of others.*

*Not to lust at all,
But to long, lovingly,
Is, at EVERY stage,
To have the other's best interests,
Enshrined in your heart.
Love will fulfil your longing.*

Every Emotion Creates its Own World ⁹

*A hostile person lives in a hostile world *
– Their inner mind-set of unfocussed anger
Being projected, indiscriminately, on those nearby,
With the justification ... ‘They all DESERVE it!’
... So their world is peopled with victims.*

*A loving person lives in a loving world *
– Their open resolve is to ‘keep on loving’,
Finds a welcome home, in the many
Whose lives their love nourishes
... Forming a fellowship of love.*

*Those who initiate violence in a relationship
– Be that by words, actions, or omission –
Are NEVER after, told the full truth
... Fundamentally, only what they want to hear.*

*Those who threaten or menace ...
To promote a lifestyle after their own likes and dislikes,
Will, ultimately, have it DESTROYED
By threats and menaces:
By making others insecure,
Nothing that they themselves have,
Will LAST.*

⁹ Year 13, Prison Ministry, Wacol and Borallon, Victoria Street Community, Brisbane Jul 1996
Written for use with prisoners

* Both lines are from an anonymous author

To Be of Service to Your Dream ¹⁰

*To be an authentic person,
Your focus needs to be
The love and freedom in your heart :
... That you love yourself,
... That you be free within yourself.
To do so maturely,
You need CONSTANTLY to be of service
To your dream of love and freedom.
Freedom, in particular, doesn't just happen :
Love and freedom are CHOICES.*

*Of course, others also,
Can be of service to your dream
– Especially, if it is only flickering in the core of your spirit.*

*If there is to be a choice for you,
Between love and freedom
... It needs to be freedom.
The deepest of all realities
In a relationship,
Is to LOVE FREEDOM
Into the heart of the one loved!
... And the most hurtful of all pains,
Is that, with that freedom,
They might choose to reject you,
And, or, their own best future.*

*In loving freedom into YOUR heart,
Others can help to bring your dream alive :
– A dream that can
EMPOWER, ENLIVEN, and DIGNIFY you
And, best of all,
FREE you ... to be your true self.*

¹⁰ Year 14, Prison Ministry, Wacol and Borallon, Victoria Street Community, Brisbane Feb 1997
Written for use with prisoners

Moreover, *you yourself*,
In loving freedom into OTHERS' hearts,
Can yourself BE FREED
– Freed, for example,
Of being a controlling personality.
The way out of all such controlling tendencies,
Or of other common, human compulsions,
Is freedom
... Because control or compulsion is FORCE,
And their true opposite, is freedom.

No one else can make you free.
Still, your freedom partly comes
... By way of your invitation to others to motivate you,
... By way of your valuing them as guides to freedom.
But, decisively, freedom becomes yours –
By your valuing YOURSELF,
By investing value in YOUR OWN BEST FUTURE,
By continuing to MAKE CHOICES ...
To maintain or to enhance your freedom
... Most importantly, your FREEDOM TO TRULY LOVE.

The Spirit of Blessed Edmund ¹¹

*The spirit of Blessed Edmund is alive!
I feel that the call to community, to accountability,
Comes from the twinned heart of the Edmund Rice Family
... Not from the Christian Brothers alone.*

*SOME of my needs as a Family member,
I see being cared for,
From within my congregational community HOME :
Sharing faith journeys, feelings, and vulnerabilities ;
Free to relax totally, to have privacy supported ;
Trustingly open to being challenged ;
Open also to others' needs, hurts and disagreements ;
I see it as a home of 'good news' hospitality,
Where at least a few ex-prisoners
Can, as visitors, feel comfortable,
And free to be themselves.*

*OTHERS of my needs, OUR needs,
I see as more effectively cared for,
By the Edmund Rice Family :
Depthing our Gospel mission,
Celebrating our shared charism,
Having personal ministries affirmed, challenged and renewed
By OTHERS' perspectives...
Be they female, male, youth, aged, married or celibate.
Thus we gain a deeper SENSE of IDENTITY
– By reconciling together, by visioning together
And by celebrating our unity together.*

¹¹ Year 14, Prison Ministry, Wacol and Borallon, Victoria Street Community, Brisbane Aug 1997.

This poem was the fruit of my deep commitment to the Edmund Rice Family through all of the 1990's. I identified very strongly with what they stood for. The Family truly deepened the sense of Edmund's charism for me. The Congregation Chapter of 2002 widened the idea of the Family from 'dedicated associates' and changed the name to Network to reflect this. I felt something was lost.

*I feel it is from the heart of BOTH the Family and the Brothers
That the unfamilied, the broken-in-spirit, the low in self-regard,
Call to us.*

*Thus it is in Blessed Edmund's NAME
That our gospelling happens, and mutual ministering occurs.*

*It is from this newest home of Edmund's charism, the Family,
That I see myself drawing key aspects
Of my identity, pride, and motivation.
And it is into this Family,
That we invite
Those struggling ... with confused identity,
Low self-esteem and disadvantage ...
To come and see and share.*

Creative Courage ¹

*From hearts of peace,
May there arise in us
The creative courage
– To give of ourselves
... Arms, heart, and spirit open to the world...
And, in the Spirit of Christ
Open, as gift, to Abba.*

Too Humble To Be Noticed ¹

*We're so busy looking for SIGNS of God,
We fail to see God already present.
Our God, so very often –
Is too near to be sensed!
Is too available to be searched for!
Is too humble to be noticed!
And, too close to be held!*

*Indeed, to recognize God's Presence ...
And to be open to the intimacy God offers ...
Is itself God's gift to give :
God "who FIRST loves us" ²
Grants us the very receptivity
To treasure the Gift of Love Eternal!*

In the Whisper, Within ¹

*In the ordinary everydayness of life,
We fail to experience intimacy
With others or with God :
We become anaesthetized
To Presence
... In the routines, we cling to ;
To Mystery
... In the ordinariness, we get lost in.*

*We look for intimacy
In the extraordinary, in the dramatic
... When OUR feelings are heightened.
However, Love's approach---
Is like someone's affirming hand on our back,
Is in the silence of another's sacrifice,
Is in the glow of the pre-dawn,
Is in the whisper WITHIN ...*

*God makes love to us
... As EACH second ticks by.*

Paradox ¹

*All that is truly relational is generative of life –
So by being other-centred,
Gifting one's energies in an consistently personal way,
And, willing to live with the truth of the other
By an open, simple acceptance of their goodness
... Our relationships are affirmed, enriched and vitalized.*

*All that is falsely relational is abusive –
So, by using one's energies impersonally and spasmodically,
Being dismissive of the truth of the other
By using deception and manipulation
...Our relationships are undermined.*

*The paradox
Is that the 'truly 'and 'falsely' relational
Often COEXIST IN THE ONE PERSON
...So that a UNITARY description of the relationship
Does not reflect the whole reality.
Thus, there is a need for patience, compassion and forgiveness
...To both balance, and integrate, one's relating.*

Living Water ¹

*The life force of each Christian
Flows forth from Christ, our “living water”. ²
What is this divinely – human WATER
That has suffused our being?
Firstly, each of us is uniquely gifted by that Spirit
Who first “hovered over the waters”, ³
At the creation of the world.*

*That water has since become
Ocean, creek, swirling fog, winter snow and summer downpour.
It has become the life force of this earth
– The life-force of plants, trees, cereal grains and fruits.
This same water has become incorporated – quite literally,
Into the bodies
Of amoeba, jellyfish, dinosaurs, starlings and kangaroos.*

*Lastly this water has come
To live in...to enliven...and to empower
Our own Body–Spirits,
Sustaining us with life.*

*Above all, this water is also the chosen element
That, in baptism,
Mysteriously incorporated each of us
Into ANOTHER BODY
– The body of Christ.*

*Immersed in Christ
We are now cleansed and refreshed in a new way
– By sanctified water,
Which rejoices our eyes and hearts,
Because it revitalizes our SPIRITS
DIVINIZING THEM!
– With Christ “the living water”! ⁴*

*Individually, each person becomes a droplet of that “living water”
...Singularly, of little impact
...But TOGETHER, as the life-forces mingle and mix,
Capable of nurturing and enlivening others’ lives
– Indeed, of Christening them,
Of forming them into life-giving community,
En-Spirited by that Spirit
Who again “hovers over the waters”.⁵*

1 Poem 276 Victoria Street Community Brisbane, Oct 1998.

Note: Later used, in prose form, by the author at the 1999 Provincial assembly paraliturgy, using a fountain of water as a centrepiece. Each brother brought water from his own community.

2 Jn 4:10 and Jn 7:37

3 Gen 1:2

4 Jn 7:37, 38

5 Gen 1:2

General Note: “My prison ministry came to an end around September 1998, because of a Departmental state wide rationalization – SUPPOSEDLY TO EMPLOY ONLY PSYCHOLOGISTS AS BEHAVIOUR TEACHERS. They tried to RE-HIRE me, after letting many teachers go, but I decided after fifteen plus years, to explore a new direction”. Author.

Led by Mystery ¹

*True freedom lies in openness to Mystery
... To the Mystery enveloping our lives.
Openness to Mystery lies in humility and spontaneity
... In UNPLANNING our relationship with God,
To allow ourselves to be LED.*

*In this openness to Mystery, self-discovery occurs
– Because discovery desires to engage the unknown.
Then, because of our heightened awareness
Of a God wrapped in Mystery
... Of Presence greater than ourselves,
Self-surrender becomes possible.*

*Spontaneity is the activating spirit of Mystery :
It sets the formulations of happiness aside,
It always opts for openness,
It allows our spirit to be DRAWN,
And is responsive to Love's constant surprise!*

*Such spontaneity dismisses formulas, such as –
“I'll love her/him on my terms”,
Or “We'll love each other, on mutually agreed terms”
...Rather, Love itself
Invites each to enter into love's Mystery
On Love's TERMS!*

*Thus, we allow Love itself
To shape our futures together,
Discovering realities beyond our dreams
...Being led by Mystery
...Into Mystery.*

¹ Poem 277 Taringa Community Brisbane, Jan 1999.

General Note: “Our Victoria Street Community of two, was dissolved, when Br Kevin McDade was transferred to St Laurence's Community for Nursing training, and I to Taringa Community.” Author.

Who I Am ¹

*Whenever I cry out "Abba"
I am crying out WHO I AM :
God's Beloved Son!
... God's cherished daughter!
En-Spirited love.*

¹ Poem 278 Taringa Community Brisbane, Jan 1999.

General Note: "This was the first year, of what was to be discerned as my Prayer Ministry". Author.

Prelude to the Word ¹

*Prayer in tongues,
Or in everyday sighs, sounds, humming, or chuckles,
Is the Spirit's prelude
To Abba's Word
Settling in our minds
... Revealing the Divine,
Casting light on our humanity.*

Within the Flow of the Spirit ¹

*To rest in the Spirit's simplicity,
To stay open to the wholeness,
We need to surrender to the Spirit's transformative power,
To the Spirit's re-creative energy.*

*We are called, endlessly, to abandon –
Every newly exposed level of self-focussing,
And of self-directed activity
... Surrendering all initiatives of our own
Externally, internally
... Even our silence, stillness and solitude.
We leave all decisions,
Even those of prayer,
To God
... God wanting us to pray,
... God wanting to converse with us,
... Or God desiring to unite with us, in the ways God devises.*

*We are drawn...
Into that Flow of Relating
That is the Spirit...*

—