

Folio Eight

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The Word – God’s and Ours ¹

*Through the Holy Spirit’s ‘presence-activity’ in Mary,
God’s own Self-Image – His Word,
Is embodied in our humanity.*

*In Jesus
– God’s Word of love for us –
God fully unveils His Desire
... Both, revealing who God Is,
And who we really are
... Freely gifting us
With a new identity
... As His children,
IN Christ!*

*IN Christ
– Our Word of love for God –
We express all whom we are to God:
Our minds, our hearts, and our very being;
And especially our new togetherness in the Beloved.
He is our PRAYER, our WORSHIP – humanity’s SONG OF LOVE!*

¹ Year 6, Prison Ministry, Woodford and Borallon, from Gregory Terrace community, 1989

Choose a Different Future ²

*We're always free ...
To change our lives:
To choose a different future
– From a different past!*

*Our memory-bank
Holds many pasts:
We've selected, and emphasized ONE ...
Why not choose a more fulfilled 'past',
So as to shape, develop and enliven
A MORE Christlike future ?*

² Year 7, Prison Ministry, Wacol and Borallon, from Gregory Terrace community, 1990. This poem is the choice I often offered the prisoners I taught.

The Christ We Nurture and Love ³

*It is the Risen Jesus
With His Emmaus intimacy, and heart-stirring wisdom,
With His warm, inclusive friendship on a dawn-lit shore
– That we HUNGER FOR in Eucharist.*

*It is the welcoming Paschal Jesus
– His face love-lit by the Presence of Abba –
Whom we care for, in others
... Nurturing, healing, educating and affectioning ...*

*Together, we take the tender care
Of His STILL WOUNDED Body;
And, together, IN it,
We, His disfigured, wounded kin,
Are lovingly cared for.*

What a loving Mystery!

³ Year 7, Prison Ministry, Wacol and Borallon, from Gregory Terrace community, 1990

Eternal Mutual Love ⁴

*When love becomes truly MUTUAL,
Jesus promises a special presence
– A Presence
That is essentially
An experience
Of Abba, Jesus, and Loyce ⁵
... Whose love is eternally mutual ...
Living Their Life of Love
Within us!*

⁴ Year 7, Prison Ministry, Wacol and Borallon, from Gregory Terrace community, 1990

⁵ Loyce (loy-cee), my familiar name for the Spirit; formed from Paschal LOVE, JOY and PEACE

At Home with God ⁶

*Prayer is being open TO God,
And being open WITH God
– The source of freedom,
And freedom's goal.*

*To be free in spirit,
Is to be truly free ...
Spirit is openness to the ABSOLUTE,
– To God ... who is ALL-FREE.*

*Thus, to be truly at home
With one's spirit,
Is to experience
Being at prayer ...
Open to God.*

⁶ Year 8, Prison Ministry, Wacol and Borallon, from Gregory Terrace community, 1991

Humanizing Emotions ⁷

*Our human emotions ...
Linked to our instincts,
Triggered by our minds,
Powerfully amplified in our bodies,
Are sub-conscious currents
Flowing, to and fro,
Between our body and mind
– MOVING US OUT of ourselves
To others, and to the world.*

*To truly humanize our emotions,
And to put them at the service
Of our values, and of humanity,
We need –
To NAME them
To CLAIM them
To TAME them
To AIM them.*

*In naming them ...
I identify how I feel,
So my choices can be
Specific and proportionate;*

⁷ Year 8, Prison Ministry, Wacol and Borallon, from Gregory Terrace community, 1991. I was moved to write this poem because of the central role of emotions, in educating prisoners. From this year, the Courses I developed and taught in my prison ministry, settled into a pattern (which continued until the end of my ministry in 1998). During my 15 fulltime years, mostly I taught 4 main courses, twice each week, each for 10 weeks:

1. Pre-release – its focus was on the emotional and social changes, and preparation needed prior to, and during, the early months of release from prison.
2. Personal Development – a program to enhance one's self-knowledge and to negotiate relationships better.
3. Anger Management – evaluation of the origins, causes and effects of one's anger problems in one's own personality, and in one's relationships, especially in the domestic violence area. How to choose and sustain change at various levels regarding anger.
4. Drug and Alcohol Management – evaluation of the origins, causes and effects of one's 'problem use' of drugs and alcohol, in one's personality and relationships. How to choose and sustain change at various levels.

*And let others know clearly, how I feel
... Relative to my thinking, duty, and so on.*

*In claiming them ...
I recognize them as MY OWN
– Welcome or unwelcome –
And take responsibility for what flows from them
... Not blaming others – ‘You make me angry’,
But exercising choice
... ‘When I hear that, I become angry’.*

*In taming them ...
I COLLECT the mixture of emotions I feel,
I CALM any contending energies within,
And CO-ORDINATE them, for self-assessment,
Or for a possible response to others.*

*And in aiming them ...
I take care in the expression of my response,
To maintain self-respect
And to ensure respect for others.*

*Overall, we need ...
To own, to value, and to celebrate
Our emotions
... And so humanize them.*

Choosing the Good ⁸

If our life

... Is BAD

We –

Love things

Use people

Lock into ideas

Chose what's safe

... Is GOOD,

We –

Love people

Use things

Expand our ideas

Choose what's challenging

⁸ Year 8, Prison Ministry, Wacol and Borallon, from Gregory Terrace community, 1991. I wrote this as a memory aide, to enhance prisoner's choices.

Walking in Their Shoes⁹

TERM 1

*Jesus, it is You,
In and through the poor and outcast,
Who comes to accompany me.
Be WITH ME
So that I ...
May listen to the poor
With a discerning heart,
And walk in their shoes.*

TERM 2

*Jesus, be WITH ME ...
As I stand beside the poor,
And identify with them
As You did.
Let me truly reflect Your Presence
With the poor,
As I render that same service
To my brothers in community.*

TERM 3

*Loving Father,
Gracing us with gifts
Far beyond our needs,
Give us that perception of material goods,
Which was in Jesus,
Who emptied Himself,
'And took on the image of oppressed humanity.'*¹⁰

TERM 4

*Edmund, as your brothers,
Help us trust in providence-as our inheritance,
Receiving all from the Father.
Lead us to do His will,
By returning all to Him
And accept our role as stewards of His creation.*¹¹

⁹ Year 8, Prison Ministry, Wacol and Borallon, from Gregory Terrace community, 1991

¹⁰ Phil 2: 7 – The Inclusive Bible

¹¹ 'partners' would be preferable to 'stewards'. These four poem prayers are part of 4 book-marks, given by me to each Brother in Queensland for use in community prayer in 1991, all focussing on the POOR.

The Uplifting Grace of Lourdes ¹²

*Following our four weeks' traverse ¹³
Through the whole of Europe down to Florence,
... The Spirit stunningly urged me
To go immediately to Lourdes,
– Not as a tourist, but as a pilgrim.
By midnight of the same day, with nil planning, I had departed
– Knowing I had the best of guides ... a Divine Companion.
On my Euro-rail journey, accompanied by a boisterous football team,
The actual pilgrimage – through Pisa, Genoa, the Riviera and Toulouse –
Deeply framed how I prayed in preparation.
I took all I encountered, ON THE WAY,
Into my heart, as one spiritual emblem
... For all those in Australia, and elsewhere,
For whom I was a prayer ambassador, a heart companion.

Finally, moving through the richly fertile upper reaches
Of its sub-alpine Pyrenees valley,
We arrived in summery Lourdes,
In the burnished glow of early twilight.
No surprise, when we alighted
At the station, entitled ... Notre Dame!*

¹² Written in Rome, in the fortnight following the author's pilgrimage to Lourdes, all part of his mid-life spiritual course, the International Tertianship, Rome, Aug to Dec 1991. As a mid-life (48 years of age) member of a religious order, stationed in Brisbane, Australia, I was selected for the International Tertianship in Rome. It was effectively a sabbatical, focussing on spirituality and renewal. A 'Tertianship' implies, in our Congregational context, a THIRD phase of spiritual formation – after one's novitiate, and various other short spiritual formation opportunities. This Tertianship needs to be distinguished from the National Tertianship I attended in Sydney in 1980 for three months. The Rome Course was, I believe, a significant turning point in my life ... perhaps reflected by the many poems I was moved to write during it. The actual Course ran from mid-August to Christmas 1991. I spiritually treasured a trip alone to Lourdes just before the Course began. Overall the Course allowed me to seriously review my life, to be open to many new influences, to share and to discern a deeper future. Besides days-off visiting the Vatican and Rome etc, I felt especially graced by a pilgrimage to Assisi, and, most significantly, by a group pilgrimage to the Holy Land for two weeks. The 'wider' Tertianship had some eye-opening, and heart-opening experiences. My friend, Br Kevin McDade, was my travelling companion. Our pre-Course travels took us from a week in China, almost two in Russia, down through Europe for two, and to Italy for three. With two history degrees, I was fascinated by the places visited. Our post-course travel included Paris, London and Southern Ireland (with 4 days of group activity there, to end the Course). It took us two weeks to return home through the US. Overall, a truly wonderful and life re-orientating experience.

¹³ 'Our' refers to Br. Kev McDade and the author

*In my lodging that night, I prayed with the Spirit
'That my Lourdes pilgrimage would be one of open faith'¹⁴
– Being with Jesus IN THE WAY He desires.
I prayed individually for my heart-companions
... That their desires be expressed by me in simplicity,
 'Through Mary to Jesus
 To Abba'
 And be given fulfilment
 Within the Mystery of the Holy Spirit
 Who takes all the considerations of our lives
– Especially the movements of our hearts –
 In EXPRESSING God's Will to us.*

*The next day – my only day there – I discovered
That August 13 was the date of France's Feast of the Assumption
And, thus, the French National Day of Pilgrimage to Lourdes!
No wonder the Holy Spirit had been so insistent on my going!*

*I wrote, 'It was a day full to overflowing
With Abba's welcoming, comforting and uplifting GRACE
... The grace of that time,
 The grace of that occasion,
 The grace of that place,
 The grace mediated through the PEOPLE there.
 And most transformative of all –
This SANCTIFYING grace was both special for me,
And INTEGRATED me with God's People,
Through the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist.'*

*'The day began as I crossed the River Gave
– Across its strong, clear, coursing, mountain water –
To the Shrine's entrance, with its Crucified Christ on a Cross.
I felt at home at once – with its REALITY.
The impact of the Cross, precisely at this point,
Brought home to me ... how ALL our blessings
Arrive through the Sign of the Cross.
This message reoccurred all day.'*

¹⁴ The extended quotes throughout this poem all come directly from the author's personal diary for this time.

*I was then, simply led along, in a pilgrim stream of hundreds,
Towards the central Lourdes' Basilica of the Rosary
– Stretching out its encompassing outdoor 'arms' to greet us.
I entered the Lower Basilica
And prayed my way around a beautiful mosaic Stations of the Cross.
Nearby, the Lourdes signature motif said simply and firmly,
Through Mary to Jesus.'*

*Feeling prompted by the Spirit,
I then headed across mown meadowland,
Once grazed by Bernadette's sheep,
Across the Gave, to the Grotto.
Sinking to my knees,
– After squeezing into a wonderful spot
Right in front of Our Lady's Grotto statue –
With simple trust, I placed in Mary's hands,
All the wishes of my heart-companions.
Knowing the unbounded capacity and intimacy
Of Mary and Jesus to respond
To each of us very personally
... Even to our unspoken, unworded desires ...
I knew simply that these wishes WERE granted
– Either fully, or in seed form, to flourish later.'*

*Promising Mary to return to the Grotto,
I re-crossed the Gave, and, by climbing a small side hill,
Gained entry to the Upper Rosary Basilica.
Here, I was gifted with a seat,
Right behind some priests, about to concelebrate Mass.
I placed my open palms upwards, on my lap, in readiness.
Just then ... and intermittently through Mass.
My Holy Spirit Companion unveiled to me,
A personal confidence concerning my future.
I heartfully thanked Abba, with the Eucharist itself.
During Eucharist, I was almost overcome
Both by Abba's astounding generosity,
And by the deep grace of feeling so at home with
The sheer faith of so many, unknown to me!'*

*I believe their faith drew forth deeper faith from me.
... Added to this was the simple kindness of so many.
Particularly touching, was the kindness and faith
Of so many young adults
Privileged to wheelchair the sick, the disabled, the helpless
To and fro, and tend to their toilet and other needs.
It seemed especially the case, on this French National Pilgrimage Day.’
‘After Mass, I was drawn to visit the Basilica’s Crypt
... The long entrance to which had been carved from solid rock,
By many early volunteers, including Bernadette’s father.
There I stayed for almost an hour
– In adoration of Jesus,
Exposed Eucharistically in an uplifting CROWN OF THORNS setting
... Against a pure gold profile of Mary and the Child Jesus.’*

*From there, Jesus’ Spirit led me back up the side hill to its top.
Bordering the wandering track, there was a beautiful Stations of the Cross
... Set against summer-time oaks and maples.
They companioned me in my long climb to the hilltop
Where I experienced a special grace of solitude
... Ironic, in view of the 40,000 pilgrims there that day!’*

*‘Descending, I visited the underground Pius X Basilica
– With its capacity for 30,000 weather-proof pilgrims –
Whose artwork and historical presentation truly inspired me.
Following a cheerful Reconciliation there,
With an Italian-American priest,
I re-crossed to the Grotto,
And to the relatively small St Bernadette’s Church.
Here, I received Communion again
... With a group of Italian, not French, communicants.’*

*I then felt powerfully urged by the Spirit,
To commit to full immersion in the Grotto’s spring water.
As I was duly led, in silence, to the pool, set apart,
I was particularly moved, by the depth of faith,
Of my two attendants, both young men.
After indicating that I kneel in the sacred water,
They then gently lowered me, backwards, into its coolness
... Up to my neckline.*

*I very much felt that it was THEIR belief, obvious in their faces,
That 'stood in' for mine!
I sensed, from them, that I was blest in that BAPTISM
... As were those, whose heart-wishes I carried.'
I believe from that time on, my life IS different
Because of the WELCOME, I now give to Jesus' GRACE.*

*I then re-visited the Grotto itself
... For Lourdes' most distinctive ceremony
– The Eucharistic Blessing of the Sick and Disabled.
It began in the Grotto, with Exposition,
And with a special Blessing there, of some disabled children.
This I witnessed.*

*Then, the Monstrance was carried in procession to the outdoor Rosary Basilica.
Here, many hundreds of wheelchair and 'lie-down' bed pilgrims,
As well as tens of thousands of others, waited.
Before I moved there, I was blest to touch Our Lady's Grotto Statue.
Singing filled the hearts of the vast congregation:
It was a wonderful stimulus to faith.
The 'individual' Eucharist Blessing was then carried out
... With the Monstrance carried very slowly down each row.
A full public Benediction concluded the Ceremony.'*

*For me, the wonder of having one's heart OPENED at Lourdes,
Arises out of this festival of faith
... This sustained festival, celebrating
The sick, the disabled, the broken, the helpless and the retarded.
It is a festival of faith focussed on them,
And draws forth graces for themselves
– And for others, for being with them –
In this Celebration of Infirmary!
It gave me, personally,
The grace to celebrate my own great limitations and weaknesses!
It made me feel blessed, because of this.'*

*I concluded, 'The one further grace
I would have loved to receive,
Was joining the candlelit devotions later in the night.'
But my 10 PM train waited to carry me
Back to Florence, via Pisa ...*

Before Reading Scripture ¹⁵

*O Abba,
You know, in Your Son Divine,
Human flesh and face – like mine!
Enfold us in this Mystery,
... As He exalts our history!*

*Three things in Your Word we see –
The God who LIVES,
The God who SAVES,
The God WITHIN
... One, never without the others be.*

*O Spirit of the Word,
O God within,
Impress Your Divine Presence
Within our spirit ...
Sing Your SPIRIT-SONG
Within ours!*

Receptive to the Spirit ¹⁶

(A Trilogy – Part 1) ¹⁷

*No one can come to me
Unless the Father who sent me DRAW him.’ ¹⁸
Abba, You draw each of us in a unique way,
Making Your Presence known,
Within our heart and spirit
... Where our feelings, impulses, urges, and desires register.
However, our sinful nature also registers
Through these as well.
Thus, our response to You, Abba,
Is to listen ...
With the ears of Jesus, the heart of Jesus, the spirit of Jesus
... To the promptings, to the murmurs
Of the Spirit within.*

*O Abba, we pray to be responsive ...
To the suggestions of the Spirit,
To the movements, the quickening, the urgings of the Spirit,
And, at the deep level of our core feelings,
In what WAYS ...
To, and with WHOM ...
The Spirit DRAWS us.*

*Abba, we ask for ever deeper receptivity to His Presence,
And that our spirits flow, with heartfelt thankfulness.*

¹⁶ Rome Tertianship, 1991

¹⁷ All three prayer-poems in this trilogy are from my Examen of Consciousness of God’s Presence

¹⁸ Jn 6:44

Consciousness of the Presence of God ¹⁹

(A Trilogy – Part 2)

*Abba, I thank You for Your presence
With me today.*

(Pause for time of reflection)

*Abba, of what parts of my life
Is Jesus not yet Lord?*

(Pause for time of reflection)

*Only Your Spirit can reveal this self-fulness,
And my sinfulness to me;
And He does so, only out of love.
I feel a deep thankfulness in my heart
For this Spirit of Openness*

(Pause for time of reflection)

*Abba, I feel sorrow,
But, much more, I feel wonder
– At being constantly brought to wholeness
In Your Beloved*

(Pause for time of reflection)

*Abba, I feel a sense of deep joy
And abiding peace
Because I have been guaranteed the victory
– Through Jesus –
Over my deep-seated sinfulness.*

(Pause for time of reflection)

*Abba, I feel a growing mistrust
Of my lack of attentiveness to Your Presence.*

(Pause for time of reflection)

*Yet, through Your grace, I have a firming faith
That I am gradually being transformed
From distracted sinner to son of God,
– In Jesus, Your lovable, beloved, and loving Son*

(Pause for time of reflection)

Present to Your Presence²⁰

(A Trilogy – Part 3)

*Abba, let me continue to share
In the deepest movements of Jesus' heart
... Through the Spirit You both share,
Moving deep within my spirit.*

*O Spirit of Presence,
Let me trust in Your timing,
The signs You give,
The people You place in my day,
And in the grace of consciousness of You;
And, especially, let me trust
In Your faithfulness.*

*Abba, I thank You for the gift
Of each person in my life:
For the Freeing Presence of the Spirit in each
(Pause for time of reflection)
And in the various communities and groups
To which I belong.
(Pause for time of reflection)*

*Mary, our Mother, God's Mother,
Show me how to live, day by day, with Jesus.*

²⁰ Rome Tertianship, 1991

*My Guardian Angel,
Re-call me always, day and night,
To the Presence of Abba, Jesus, and the Spirit.*

*St. Joseph, foster father and role-model for Jesus,
Grant me the gift of daily intimacy with Jesus.*

*St. Thomas, Apostle of humankind's encounter with the Divine,
Enable me to see and relate to Jesus, my God,
Present in every person.*

*O Spirit of Presence, gather all our families together
Within the peace of Abba's Tent;
Show each of us,
How to be 'poor in spirit', how to love. ²¹*

*O Spirit of Awe,
Transform our humble lives
So, together, as Abba's children
– Brothers and sisters to Jesus –
We become
'The Praise of His Glory' ²²*

²¹ Mt 5:3

²² Eph 1:14

Kindness²³

*‘ Ordinary? Yes, it is.
But there’s a whole world of living
In that one word.
It’s Jesus’ way of living.
We ought be kind to every man, woman, and child,
Because we’re all of a KIND.
– Each made in the image of Christ.
And be kind, especially so, in community
– Just as Jesus was
To those who walked with Him.*

*... Kind as a brother, he was;
Can we aim for less?
We truly need to be a brother, not a task-master,
To each lad we teach
– Especially for the one, ‘who’s left out’, sidelined
... Kind to each one, personally.
That’s our gift:
Never to hold yourself above anyone
... Being with each one, warmly
– As a brother.
And remember Tom, it’s the scamps
– The ones with ugly lives, or deprived lives –
Who really need us as BROTHER
... To be ‘kin’, to be kind to them.’*

²³ Rome Tertianship, 1991. From author’s drama ‘Eddy and I’, Spiritual Journal Vol 2, 29-32. ‘Kindness’ was Edmund Rice’s (‘Eddy’s’) reply to the character ‘Tom’ in Br. Tom’s drama on the Founder of the Christian Brothers, ‘Eddy and I’ – written early in the Rome Tertianship, in September 1991. Through his committed use of ‘kindness’, ‘Eddy’ was highlighting a ‘key gift’, a ‘precious grace’, that each Brother ‘needs to share in, to be one of us.’ To Tom’s musing – ‘It sounds so ordinary’ – what follows is ‘Eddy’s’ poetic explanation of ‘kindness’.

Chosen by the Trinity²⁴

Father, Son, and Spirit,

Deep down I feel

COMMITTED BY YOU

'To be in Edmund's Congregation

Eternally'

With unwavering certitude.

3 Sep 1991

Abba

Thank You for the grace of this Tertianship

And for my becoming aware

Of the stunning totality of Your giftedness

– To the Congregation, and to myself,

And for the deep joy I feel,

In expressing my 'at-homeness'

With being a Brother.

²⁴ Rome Tertianship, 1991

Discernment²⁵

*Discernment is, at its core,
Being in harmony ...
With one's own key aspirations
– The spirations of the Spirit within –
With the deep movement of the Spirit within one's group in the Church,
And with the deep movement of the Spirit within those
To whom one is sent.*

A Wedded Heart, a Father's Heart ²⁶

*Edmund brought to his VOWED CONSECRATION ...
Both a wedded heart,
And a father's heart.
These continued as living realities,
Both personally,
And within his developing family consciousness
Of the Congregation itself.
Edmund revealed all this –
In bringing a wedded sense of INTIMACY
In his personal relating to Jesus;
In being a BROTHER to his companions
– His co-visionaries IN Christ;
And FATHERING all those in need
– Especially the youth of his schools.*

Religious Life ²⁷

*The main service of religious life
Is not to provide
A specially skilled and available workforce
In the Lord's vineyard,
But to provide a community of hearts
Who are fully, humanly ALIVE
– Alive to God!*

Certainty²⁸

*Jesus' 'I am the truth'
Is His confident claim
That we can come to know
With continuing CERTAINTY
– Through Himself,
– And through His Spirit,
Of Abba's love and plans for us.*

Jesus' Love²⁹

*Promiscuous love is a borrowed love
... A love that is lent out:
Given today, and withdrawn tomorrow.
– But Jesus' love is otherwise:
 'My peace I give to you,
 My peace I LEAVE with you.'*³⁰
*This peace is THE ETERNAL KISS OF GOD
 ... Abiding with us
– The wondrous Holy Spirit of Love.*

²⁹ Rome Tertianship, 1991

³⁰ Jn 14: 27