



Blessed Be

December 2016

Welcome back to the Grail's spirituality resource which we are currently circulating with the Australian Grail Newsletter.. The items in it have been contributed by various people and reflect the Grail's Christian foundation as well as its openness to the spirituality and ideas of other faith traditions. If you have anything that you wish to contribute to future editions, we would welcome it, so please contact us at helenmcauley@gmail.com

Ruth Crowe starts us off this time with two reflections included in 'Lost in Wonder' by Esther de Waal:

This flower,
this light,
this moment,
this silence -
The Lord is here.
Best because the flower is itself,
and the silence is itself,
and I am myself. *Thomas Merton*

PERFECTION

I have had it with perfection
I have packed my bags
I am out of here
Gone.

...
Perfection straineth out
The quality of mercy,
withers rapture at its
birth.

Hints I could have taken -
even the perfect chiselled form of
Michelangelo's David
squints.

The Venus de Milo
has no arms
the Liberty Bell is cracked.

A light-hearted reflection by a Benedictine Monk, Fr Kilian McDonell

Tricia Gemmell has sent us some extracts from "Advent" in 'The Reed of God' by Caryll Houselande:

Advent is the season of the secret, the secret of the growth of Christ, of Divine Love growing in silence.

It is the season of humility, silence, and growth.

For nine months Christ grew in His Mother's body. By His own will she formed Him from herself, from the simplicity of her daily life.

She had nothing to give Him but herself.

He asked for nothing else.

Working, eating, sleeping, she was forming His body from hers. His flesh and blood. From her humanity she gave Him His humanity.

All her experience of the world about her was gathered to Christ growing in her.

Looking upon the flowers, she gave Him human sight.

Talking with her neighbours she gave Him a human voice. The voice we still hear in the silence of souls saying: "Consider the lilies of the field."

Sleeping in her still room she gave Him the sleep of the child in the cradle, the sleep of the young man rocked in the storm-tossed boat.

Breaking and eating the bread, drinking the wine of the country, she gave Him His flesh and blood; she prepared the Host for the Mass.

This time of Advent is absolutely essential to our contemplation too.

If we have truly given our humanity to be changed into Christ, it is essential to us that we do not disturb this time of growth.

It is a time of darkness, of faith. We shall not see Christ's radiance in our lives yet; it is still hidden in our darkness; nevertheless, we must believe that He is growing in our lives; we must believe it so firmly that we cannot help relating everything, literally everything, to this almost incredible reality.

This attitude it is which makes every moment of every day and night a prayer.

When a woman is carrying a child, she develops a certain instinct of self-defence. It is not selfishness; it is not egoism. It is an absorption into the life within, a folding of self like a little tent around the child's frailty, a God-like instinct to cherish, and some day to bring forth, the life. A closing upon it like the petals of a flower closing upon the dew that shines in its heart. This is precisely the attitude we must have to Christ, the Life within us, in the Advent of our contemplation.

It is not necessary at this stage of our contemplation to speak to others of the mystery of life growing in us. It is only necessary to give ourselves to that life, all that we are, to pray without ceasing, not by a continual effort to concentrate our minds but by a growing awareness that Christ is being formed in our lives from what we are. We must trust Him for this, because it is not a time to see His face, we must possess Him secretly and in darkness, as the earth possesses the seed. We must not try to force Christ's growth in us, but with a deep gratitude for the light burning secretly in our darkness, we must fold our concentrated love upon Him like earth, surrounding, holding, and nourishing the seed.

Now a piece from Jillian Morrison cited on A Network of Grateful Living;

Enveloped in Your Light, may I be a beacon to those in search of Light.

Sheltered in Your Peace, may I offer shelter to those in need of peace.

Embraced by Your Presence, so may I be present to others.

Rabbi Rami Shapiro

A contribution from Sheila Hawthorn from 'Visions of a Sacred Land' by Carolyn McDade

THIS ANCIENT LOVE

Long before the night was born from darkness I
long before the dawn rolled unsteady from fire
long before she wrapped her scarlet arm
around the hills
there was a love
this ancient love was born.

Long before the grass spotted green the bare hillside
long before a wing unfolded to wind
long before she wrapped her long blue arm
around the sea
there was a love
this ancient love was born.

Long before a chain was forged from the hillside
long before a voice uttered freedom's cry
long before she wrapped her bleeding arms
around a child
there was love
this ancient love was born.

Long before the name of a God was spoken
long before a cross was nailed from a tree
long before she laid her arm of colours
across the sky
there was a love
this ancient love was born.

Wakeful our night, slumbers our morning
stubborn the grass sowing green wounded hills
as we wrap our healing arms
to hold what her arms held
this ancient love, this aching love rolls on.

A traditional Jewish saying sent by Ruth Crowe:

'On the Day of Judgement God will ask only one question:
Did you enjoy my world?'

Now two pieces from Alison Healey:

'A Church that does not go out of itself, sooner or later sickens from the stale air of closed rooms.
Even though, in going out, the Church risks running into accidents, I prefer, a thousand times over, a
Church of accidents to a sick Church'.

Pope Francis, 'Letter to the bishops of Argentina', April 2013

THE WORK OF YOUR HANDS

We are the work of your hands, O God,
You, Lord, have made us and love us.
All your power was in our creation.
All our life is your gift.
And so you will go on giving to us,
grace upon grace.

What more need we hope for from you?
This certainty, God,
is good enough for us.

Holy Spirit of God,
You are the air we breathe,
the distance we gaze into,
the space that surrounds us.
We pray to you, Spirit of God, creator,
complete the work you have begun,
inspire us toward what is good –
to faithfulness and patience,
to compassion and gentleness –
and waken in us
friendship for every living being
and joy in your gifts of life.

Huub Oosterhuis

We finish now with another piece contributed by Sheila from Yagur Veda 36:18

UNIVERSAL PEACE INVOCATION

May there be peace in the heavenly region;
May peace reign on the earth, and in the water;
May all herbs be healing, and plants be peace giving;
May there be harmony in the celestial objects;
May peace pervade the whole universe;
May that peace abide in us.
Om Peace, Peace, Peace.

My thanks go to *Marian Kelly* for her artistic design, *Alison Healey* and *Anne Day* for proof-reading and distribution, to our contributors without whom there would be no journal, and to you readers who have responded so positively to it.

Wishing you all a blessed Christmas and a fruitful New Year, *Helen*

