



Blessed Be

April 2017

Welcome to this edition of Blessed Be, published in the Easter season. While the Easter eggs may all be eaten by now, the time for reflection on what this season means continues. Easter celebrates life rising out of dying, rebirth, new beginnings. It is no coincidence, I'm sure, that in the Northern Hemisphere, the birthplace of Easter, it coincides with spring. Hopefully this month's Blessed Be will be a source of renewal for you. Our next issue is due in August and, if you have anything you wish to contribute, we would welcome it, so please contact me at helenlmacauley@gmail.com

Tricia Gemmel has sent us an excerpt from *Life is Hard*, a reflection by Richard Rohr:

All great spirituality is about what we do with our pain...By trying to handle all suffering through willpower, denial, medication, or even therapy, we have forgotten something that should be obvious: we do not handle suffering; suffering handles us in deep and mysterious ways that ironically become the very matrix of life. Suffering--and sometimes awe--has the most power to lead us into genuinely new experiences.

As Simone Weil said, 'Grace fills empty spaces but it can only enter where there is a void to receive it, and it is grace itself which makes this void'. [1] When life is hard we are primed to learn something absolutely central. Our wounds are God's hiding place and hold our greatest gifts. It is no surprise that a dramatically wounded man became the central transformative symbol of Christianity. Once the killing of God becomes the redemption of the world, then forevermore the very worst things have the power to become the very best things. Henceforth, nothing can be a dead end; everything is capable of new meaning. We are indeed saved by gazing upon the wounded one--and loving there our own woundedness and everyone else's too (John 3:14, 12:32, 19:37). We can dare to be mutually vulnerable instead of trying to protect ourselves and impress each other. This is the core meaning of the Christian doctrine of Trinity; the very character of God is mutual deference, recognition and love, not self-assertion, much less domination or manipulation of the other.

The heart is normally opened through a necessary hole in the soul, what I call a 'sacred wound'. We see this enacted at Jesus' death: 'One of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a lance, and out flowed blood and water' (John 19:34), which I would interpret as archetypal symbols of humanity and divinity. Our wound is the only way, it seems, for us to get out of ourselves and for grace to get in. As Leonard Cohen put it in his song, Anthem, 'There is a crack in everything. That's how the light gets in'. Our wounds are the only things humbling enough to break our attachment to our false self and make us yearn for our True Self.

Followers of the Crucified One will pray for the grace to do what he did: hold the pain until it transformed him into the Risen Christ. If you do not transform your pain, you will almost certainly transmit your pain to others through anger, blame, projection, hatred, or scapegoating.

[1] Simone Weil, *Gravity and Grace* (Routledge: 2002), 10.

<https://cac.org/life-is-hard-2016-05-23/>



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From Ruth Crowe we have this poem by Bonnie Thurston:

The Myrrhbearers came
(with what fear and trembling?)
trudging along in the darkness
worrying about
the stone.

Everybody worries about
the stone,
the great impediment
between us
and what we seek,

that great burden
we carry
like Sisyphus*
labouring
up and down the hill.

The sun rose,
the women looked up,
the stone,
which was very large,
had been removed.

No wonder they ran
to tell Cephas.
Somebody should tell Sisyphus:
'Put it down, man,
and dance on it.'

(This poem is included in the book, *Lost in Wonder*, by Esther de Waal)

*In Greek mythology Sisyphus was the king of Ephyra (now known as Corinth). He was punished for his self-aggrandising craftiness and deceitfulness by being forced to roll an immense boulder up a hill, only to watch it come back to hit him, repeating this action for eternity.



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The Jewish Passover is the time of commemoration of the Exodus, when the Hebrews escaped from Egypt. With this piece, Sheila Hawthorn reminds us that there were others involved in that incident:

My tradition cherishes the legend which pictures God surrounded by ministering angels singing and dancing after the children of Israel crossed the Red Sea so miraculously. They notice that God is crying.

‘Are you not glad?’ they ask.

‘How can I rejoice?’ asks God. ‘My children also are drowning.’

(Rabbi Hugo Gryn, Gulf Virgil, BBC1, 18 January 1991).

It struck me recently that we have Lenten fasting at a time when, in the Northern Hemisphere, people were struggling to stretch supplies until the spring plantings became productive. Is this just a coincidence? I'd like to include a poem of T. S. Eliot, originally written for a Christmas card. It's a little more thought provoking than the cards you probably got last Christmas:

The Journey of the Magi

'A cold coming we had of it,
Just the worst time of the year
For a journey, and such a long journey:
The ways deep and the weather sharp,
The very dead of winter.'

And the camels galled, sore footed, refractory,
Lying down in the melting snow.
There were times we regretted
The summer palaces on slopes, the terraces,
And the silken girls bringing sherbet.

Then the camel men cursing and grumbling
and running away, and wanting their liquor and women,
And the night-fires going out, and the lack of shelters,
And the cities hostile and the towns unfriendly
And the villages dirty and charging high prices:
A hard time we had of it.

At the end we preferred to travel all night,
Sleeping in snatches,
With the voices singing in our ears, saying
That this was all folly.



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Then at dawn we came down to a temperate valley,
Wet, below the snow line, smelling of vegetation;

With a running stream and a water-mill beating the darkness,
And three trees on the low sky,
And an old white horse galloped away in the meadow.

Then we came to a tavern with vine-leaves over the lintel,
Six hands at an open door dicing for pieces of silver,
And feet kicking the empty wine-skins.

But there was no information, and so we continued
And arriving at evening, not a moment too soon
Finding the place; it was (you might say) satisfactory.

All this was a long time ago, I remember,
And I would do it again, but set down
This set down
This: were we led all that way for
Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly,
We had evidence and no doubt. I had seen birth and death,
But had thought they were different; this Birth was
Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.

We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,
But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,
With an alien people clutching their gods.
I should be glad of another death.

Alison Healey sent the following two pieces which are related to our themes of death and life:

‘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 than a sick Church’.

(Pope Francis, Letter to the bishops of Argentina, April 2013).



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WEAPON by Judith Wright

The will to power destroys the power to will.
The weapon made, we cannot help but use it;
it drags us with its own momentum still.
The power to kill compounds the need to kill.
Grown out of hand, the heart cannot refuse it;
The will to power undoes the power to will.
Though as we strike we cry 'I did not choose it',
It drags us with its own momentum still.
In the one stroke we win the world and lose it.
The will to power destroys the power to will.

(From Judith Wright Collected Poems 1942-85, with permission of the publisher, HarperCollins, Sydney)

From Helen Macauley we have Gandhi's perception of God:

God is not a person. To affirm that he descends to earth every now and again in the form of a human being is a partial truth which merely signifies that such a person lives near to God. Inasmuch as God is omnipresent, He dwells within every human being and all may, therefore, be said to be incarnations of Him. But this leads us nowhere. Rama, Krishna, etc. are called incarnations of God because we attribute divine qualities to them. In truth they are creations of man's imagination. Whether they actually lived or not does not affect the picture of them in men's minds. The Rama and Krishna of history often present difficulties which have to be overcome by all manner of arguments.

The truth is that God is the force. He is the essence of life. He is pure and undefiled consciousness. He is eternal. And yet, strangely enough, all are not able to benefit from or shelter in the all-pervading living presence.

(Mohandas Gandhi, Harijan, 22-6-1947 p.200.)

Our thanks go to Marian Kelly for her artistic input to the design and layout, Alison Healey and Anne Day for editing and proof-reading, to our contributors without whom there would be no journal, and to you readers, who have responded so positively to this publication..

