

The cover of the Fairacres Chronicle magazine features a vibrant photograph of several bright orange poppies in full bloom, with several green buds still on their stems. The flowers are set against a background of a blue corrugated metal building. To the left, a set of wooden stairs with a black metal railing leads up to an entrance. On the right, a portion of a green and yellow scaffolding structure is visible. The overall scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

FAIRACRES CHRONICLE

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Cover photo: Poppies thriving outside the site office beside the new building at Fairacres; photographed by the architects.

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COMMUNITY NOTES

Dear Friends,

The Community had hoped that by the time this Chronicle reached you we would be safely moved into our new and newly-refurbished buildings. Unfortunately, the first thing I must report in these notes is another delay in our move back to the Convent. Building projects rarely seem to run to schedule and ours is no exception: currently we



hope that the works will be completed at the end of July. I am aware that there are a number of you who would like to come and visit us in our new guest accommodation as soon as is possible, and we look forward to welcoming you; but realistically it is going to be a while before we are established back in the Convent and ready to open our doors again.

In the meantime, our circumstances mean that we have needed to be creative in how we carry out various procedures. At the beginning of June, we held the Election for a Reverend Mother. Our normal practice is to hold the election in Chapel with all the Community present, but social distancing made that impossible. Instead, Sr Judith travelled by bicycle to our different houses with the ballot box in her basket to collect the votes, ending in our temporary Chapel, where our Warden, Fr Andrew Teal, counted the votes.

The result was my re-election as Reverend Mother for another term of office. Our next challenge will be holding the Installation, which is to be on 29 June, the Feast of St Peter and St Paul. Again, this would normally be in our Chapel, but instead we will be holding the service at a local Church, St Alban's. We look forward to welcoming our Bishop Visitor, Bishop Michael Lewis, for the occasion and wait to see what



Sr Judith transporting the ballot box

the impact of any remaining COVID restrictions will have on the format of the service!

Earlier in the year we managed to hold a Rogation Service in the Convent Garden: using a variation on our usual Rogation Service, a group of Sisters blessed the garden with holy water, including a heap of topsoil awaiting re-distribution as the foundation of landscaping around the Convent buildings. An unexpected part of the proceedings was our discovery of a bee swarm at the bottom of the garden! One of our local beekeepers was able to catch and re-hive the swarm successfully.



Sisters gathering in the garden

There have been sad losses to the community: Sr Barbara June in January (her funeral address is printed here) and Sr Tessa of the Love of God, who died on 22 June, just as we were going to press. We will say more about her in the next Chronicle; meanwhile please remember her in your prayers. Our Oblate Sisters form an important part of the life of the Community, and I note with sadness the deaths of Jean of the Love of Jesus (Jean Hennig-Baarson) on 10 December 2020, Evelyn Silouana of the Cross (Evelyn Born) on Christmas Day 2020 and Sheila Margaret of Christ the Servant (Revd Sheila Whittle) on 11 February 2021.

Like all other Religious Communities in the Church of England we have been reviewing our Constitution in preparation for submission to the Advisory Council for Religious Communities in response to the recently adopted Canon DA1 on Religious Communities. This is the first time that Religious Communities have been included in the Canons of the Church of England and will ensure both accountability and support. This is a significant moment for Religious Communities and emphasizes our place within the Church as a whole. The opening of the Canon states that:

The Church of England affirms that, since the time of the early Church, there have been Christian people who, in response to God's call, have

committed their whole lives to God in the religious life, a radical commitment, shaped by the evangelical counsels, marked by consecrated celibacy, poverty and obedience, and fulfilled as a member of a community where the religious life is lived in common or as a solitary ...

It is over 150 years since the religious life was re-established within the Anglican Church, and for some it is perhaps still the Church's 'best kept secret'. We are now also in a time when many new and fresh versions of religious life, lived both in common and in dispersion, are developing. Relationships between traditional and new communities are important as both forms of community discern their way forward. Even though there seems to be a shortage of new vocations to the traditional religious life, communities continue to look to the future in hope and faith.

This is one of the areas in which our Associates and other readers of the *Fairacres Chronicle* and our other publications are of such importance. We are grateful for your support of us; please tell others about the religious life when the opportunity arises, and about our forthcoming publication, *Vocation*, written by Sisters of the Community, and describing aspects of our life and commitment to a monastic rule (see p.50 for details).

These events have kept us busy during the past months, but at the same time we have been reflecting on our return to the Convent. After well over a year apart in small groups we will be returning to the Convent of the Incarnation as a community. We have the opportunity of a fresh start but also the challenge of learning to live together again under one roof.

As I write, the country is waiting to hear from the government whether the lifting of lockdown restrictions on June 21st will take place as hoped or not. We are all in a place of uncertainty and emerging from an experience that will have changed us profoundly. There has been a hope that the 'new normal' will be different to the 'old normal', and that the experience of pandemic and lockdown will lead us to reflect on how and why we do things and perhaps make changes. Many of these questions are echoed in the questions posed to the Community as we prepare to move.

In such a world of change and uncertainty, where does our hope lie? Of course, it lies in God. We have just come out of the season of Paschaltide

and have celebrated that wonderful Feast, Trinity Sunday, bane of many a preacher called to preach a sermon on its inexpressible mystery! We are often not comfortable with the mysterious and especially the uncontrollable. A wonderful quotation from Mr Beaver about Aslan, in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* by C. S. Lewis, puts it well:

“Safe?” said Mr. Beaver; “don’t you hear what Mrs. Beaver tells you? Who said anything about safe? ’Course he isn’t safe. But he’s good. He’s the King, I tell you.”

We do not have a God who is ‘safe’, but we do have one who is good, and our faith in him enables us to live in the uncertainty of our world. A ‘safe’ and comprehensible God would be one made in our image; but God is greater than ever we can imagine.

Earlier, I quoted from the new canonical affirmation of the Religious Life. I will re-quote part of it here:

[Those who] in response to God’s call, have committed their whole lives to God in the religious life, a radical commitment, shaped by the evangelical counsels, marked by consecrated celibacy, poverty, and obedience, and fulfilled as a member of a community ...

The Canon goes on to say that members of religious communities have:

... responded to the same call, fulfilling their baptismal promises through particular forms of public commitment and of accountability in obedience to Christ ...

The description is that of religious communities, but the call to radical commitment is shared by us all. As the Rule of the Community puts it: ‘All Christians are called through Baptism to sanctification in a life of total commitment to the service of God.’ (Chapter 1)

That is lot to ask, but perhaps in this pandemic time of change and uncertainty, when our world is shaken by events, its necessity becomes clearer. Left to ourselves we cannot solve our world’s problems, but through discipleship and prayer we can seek the will of God for the world. The Feast of Pentecost reminds us that we do not do this alone; we live out our Christian journey enabled by the indwelling Holy Spirit. Fortunately, we do not

have a God who is 'safe' and easily definable but one who is mysterious and unpredictable and above all 'he's good. He's the King, I tell you'.

The Sisters join me in prayer for all of you, and we thank you for your prayers for us. God Bless.

Clare-Louise SLG



New cloister quadrangle



New wing South elevation and cloister



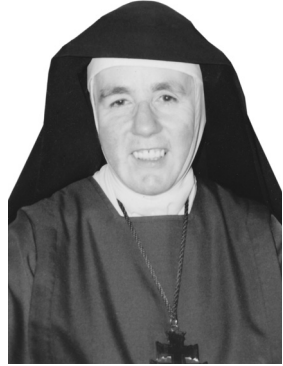
Guest cottages with 'living roofs' seeded and growing

SISTER BARBARA JUNE OF THE LAMB OF GOD
(BARBARA ANNE JUNE KIRBY)
24 JUNE 1934–8 JANUARY 2021

Homily at the Requiem, 26 January 2021

SISTER AVIS MARY SLG

I first met Sr Barbara June in 1977, when I was a visitor. Grabbing my hand, she took me at speed to a room at the opposite end of the Convent from where we were, announcing that she was the Novice Mistress. Fourteen months later I entered the Community, and she was my Novice Mistress for four-and-a-half years. It was a testing and challenging time for both of us, but it created a deep bond, that came to the fore in her later years, when it was she, in turn, who needed help and support.



Barbara Anne June Kirby, called ‘Juno’ by her family and ‘Barbara’ by friends, was born on 24 June 1934 at the Eden Hospital in Darjeeling, India, in the foothills of the beautiful Himalayas, to Scottish parents, Douglas and Anne (who was known as Nancy). Her father was a tea planter in Darjeeling and she grew up there with various family members, especially her first cousin Julie, who was like a sister to her.

After the war she came to England with some of her family and received a sound grammar school education in Southampton. There followed reading for an arts degree at the University of St Andrews. She had lasting friends from her St Andrews days who, like so many others, would have loved to have been able to attend her funeral.

She entered the Community in Oxford in 1955, after her graduation. It was hard for her family, and the pain she felt in that separation surfaced in her later years. She had to promise her father that, should anything happen to him, she would leave the Community and care for her mother and young sister, Priscilla. He did die young, a couple of years later, and she left. Her fortitude in providing for her family is impressive. She began

teaching: supply teaching at first, then she taught in Swanage. In 1959 she went to St Mary's School, Gerrards Cross; two years later she had a phone call from Pris to say that their mother was dying in hospital. Sr Barbara June resigned immediately and returned to Southampton and cared for Pris. The following year she was able to gain a post at St Swithun's School, Winchester. Only in 1966, with Pris now married with a young child, Mark, did she again enter the Community. Tragically, Pris was killed in a road accident in 1978; Sr Barbara June's nephew, Mark, is settled in Sweden. Mercifully, memories of this trauma did not seem to plague her last years; Pris was born after her earliest formative years, and most of all she missed her parents and cousin Julie.

Sr Barbara June perhaps had three 'vocations': her first and last as a nun; her second as a teacher; and her third as an ordained priest. A teaching friend from St Swithun's, says, 'She was an inspirational teacher; and the girls loved her.' I can recognise it from her Novitiate classes and one-to-one teaching and support. At the care home, she often said, 'I just long to have a class ...' She loved children, and her longing for the presence of babies and children remained strong. If anyone brought children to visit, she was always first there.

She would say sometimes: 'I was a much better teacher than I am a nun ...'! But from what I have seen in these past years of diminishment I doubt that. She dealt bravely and courageously with everything being taken away: her health, sight, hearing, mobility, in the end her speech and her ability to make sense of the world. I could not even, to help her, feed back to her the spiritual counsel I had received from her, since, as I discovered, that kind of counsel is based on abstracts. Only love and death now remained as abstract realities for her. The depth of her prayer and commitment shone forth; for a long time, when she was still articulate, she prayed what had become her version of the Jesus Prayer: 'Jesus loves me, this I know; for the Bible tells me so ['but not often!'] she would interject]. Little ones to Him belong; we are weak, but He is strong.'

Her third vocation was her pastoral ministry and her ordination to the priesthood took place on 29 September 1997 in our Chapel; her ordination

stole, made by Sr Christine, was placed on her coffin at the funeral. She trained at the local parish of Cowley St John and was based, very part-time, from 1996 to 2014 at the daughter church of St Alban's. Her sense of call to ordination had evolved over many years and she became a priest just three years after the first women were ordained in the Church of England. Not all of us in the Community were in favour of the ordination of women; then, as now, we embrace a variety of views. This caused suffering for her, and for us. She longed for her ordained ministry to be accepted by all her Sisters, but it was not to happen as she had hoped. Her last regular celebration of the Eucharist was in February 2014; the next month she fell and broke her hip, after which it was no longer physically safe for her to celebrate. She did some preaching and minor services, her ministry of 'seeing people' continued, and she kept in touch with colleagues and support groups. The Chrism Mass in Holy Week at the Cathedral meant much to her. How great was her joy if one or other of us Sisters was able to be with her too!

Her first major pastoral responsibility in the Community came towards the end of the 1970s, when she became Novice Mistress, at which time she also became a Bishops' Selector for Ministry. Then came a couple of years at our house in Kent, where she provided pastoral support to some of the guests. Next was what seemed to me a wilderness time for her, as Editor of SLG Press, as she longed for other things. Nevertheless, she did a fine, steady job, producing good publications and continuing the tradition of SLG Press. Some years as Oblate Guardian followed.

In her last years in the care home, she recalled participating in marriage preparation while at St Alban's, saying that preparing couples was the thing she had loved most about her ministry and she longed to do it again. She even asked one of her carers if she were planning to get married soon! Some evenings at the home she agonised that she had not been able to help anyone all day; that she had not done any good turn. Yet she gave far more than she knew.

She used to say: 'I only have one sermon, the words of the Shaker song, "Tis the gift to be simple, 'tis the gift to be free.' Near the end of her life,

she developed a new ‘only sermon’, simply that birth and death are very close together, and that in the end it is all about love. One of the funeral readings tells us: ‘Faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love’ (1 Cor. 13:13). She valued the Community’s dedication to the Love of God, speaking often of someone being ‘a Sister of the Love of God’, rather than just ‘belonging to SLG’, or ‘being a Sister’.

Sr Barbara June’s birthday was the Feast of the Nativity of St John the Baptist. Her dedication, ‘of the Lamb of God’, reflects John’s words in the Gospel, ‘Behold the Lamb of God’. She also drew deep meaning from Andrew bringing Simon Peter to Jesus at the end of this Gospel. It reflected her pastoral ministry. When she came to the Community the second time, she was clothed, professed and life-professed on the Feast of St Andrew. She loved the idea of John being just the ‘Voice’, who pointed to Jesus. John was not the Bridegroom, but the Friend of the Bridegroom, a text that has been used as a model of the Novice Guardian’s role. The Friend of the Bridegroom rejoices because of the Bridegroom’s voice, ‘He must increase, but I must decrease.’ (John 3:30).

But, it has to be said, she was not always easy to live with: she could be moody, weepy, unyielding, exasperating, rebellious whilst outwardly toeing the line, even illogical (and that despite having studied some logic at university!). As dementia claimed her, she struggled to remain in control of her life and reality, to maintain her ‘territory’. Despite a seeming outward confidence, she kept a lot of herself hidden and was painfully aware that not absolutely everyone found her easy, or wanted to be her friend.

One of her best-kept secrets, though, was the deep extent of her prayer for, and identification with, those she cared about; how much she loved them and suffered with them, something I only really got to understand in the last ten years or so. Despite any inner uncertainties and vulnerabilities, she was a big personality, and popular; a gift for the Community.

With her strong visual sense she loved pictures and outward symbols suggesting deeper realities, including religious ones. One image that meant a lot to her, for instance, was that of having ‘empty hands’. If we are clenching our fists around something, then we cannot be free to hold something new.

I am very thankful that in her last days, having a hand to hold, not to grasp—denied her for so long with the pandemic—was given to her again.

One huge theme of Sr Barbara June's life was her love of things German and her friendship with the late Sr Anke and with the Sisterhood of Ordo Pacis in Germany. This would make for an entire story in itself, so I will simply acknowledge the life-giving importance that this was to her.

She loved joining in fun activities, and she inspired fun. We had some happy Novitiate parties: at one, we decided we would wear fancy dress based on Lewis Carroll's Alice books. After the rest of us were in place, Sr Barbara June made a grand, hilarious entrance as the Caterpillar, having borrowed the Garden Sister's bright green nylon over-jacket and trousers. As we were still laughing, she entertained us by perching on a high stool and 'smoking' a 'hookah' (a pipe she had improvised from a long tube of rubber, with a bowl).

She went to a short counselling course at St John's Theological College, Nottingham (also yielding lasting friendships), and we Novices produced something for her journey, gift-wrapped in paper and string. On her return she told us how by lunchtime on the outward train journey things had become very crowded and wretched. She had said to herself: 'Whatever that present is, I need it now.' In her cheery, confident way, she unwrapped her present in front of many passengers who had eyes glued to this strange Nun. We had intended to make her some nice Paddington Bear sandwiches, with fresh bread, butter and marmalade, but our calculations went awry, and we had made an enormous, unappetising doorstep of a sandwich, probably three inches thick! Being Sr Barbara June, she sat there and ate all this up happily, notwithstanding her audience; it cheered her and made her feel better. Almost forty years later, in the home, the carers learned that to entice her to eat, they needed to make marmalade sandwiches and tell her they were 'Paddington sandwiches'. Her Paddington Bear kept close company with her in her very last hours.

She was gregarious and enjoyed being around people. She enjoyed holidays and days out and was a wonderful companion. Even when nothing was possible any longer, she still longed to go to India to see her first

hometown again, or to Scotland to visit her family, or just into the garden at Fairacres. As an exceptional permission, she and I spent some lovely hours in London in 1980. A most remarkable example of instant obedience took place: at Marble Arch, she had stepped quickly into the road and was in the path of real danger from unnoticed speeding oncoming traffic. Despite my Novice-status, I yelled fiercely, ‘Sister, come back here, at once!’ She responded instantly and, astonishingly, was back in seconds—and safe—and then, as I was, very relieved! It was testimony to her gut instinct to respond to a real need and call without question.

So, from that particular call, to her last call, over forty years later, to her last hours, when all she could do was hold hands, sleep, or look at her icon or crucifix on the wall. Perhaps her various vocations were revealed most in the depths of her love and courage in submitting to utter helplessness; going forth from this world and realising in herself words that meant much to her, a verse from Robert Bridges’ version of Paul Gerhardt’s hymn ‘O Sacred Head, sore wounded’.



*My days are few, O fail not,
With Thine immortal pow’r,
To hold me that I quail not
In death’s most fearful hour:
That I may fight befriended,
And see in my last strife
To me Thine arms extended
Upon the Cross of Life.*

Amen.



MINDFULNESS OF GOD IN MEDITATION

ANDREW NORMAN CJN

Prayer is a journey. I remember how as a young theology student preparing for ordination I first discovered that our challengingly obligatory times of meditation before Mass each morning were opening up a completely new kind of inner experience. Many years later, retired now from parish ministry and working instead as a counsellor, I have been drawn to a daily practice of mindfulness-based stillness meditation. *Meditation: An In-depth Guide* by Ian Gawler and Paul Bedson has been most helpful.¹ Over the years silence has had a compelling quality. Then latterly I turned gratefully to the Quakers. Able to become a Friend myself while still a parish priest allowed me some respite from churchy bureaucracy and all that had come to feel a nominally ‘performative’ spirituality. I think now it was a way to manage what was actually borderline burn-out. However, moving to a different part of the country in lockdown, I could not easily transfer my Quaker commitment and also began to realise how much I depended on the sacramental economy. But silence and stillness still beckoned. Perhaps it was reviewing the twists and turns of spiritual experience that brought me back to mindfulness. I am also seeing how aspects of my journey can now inform my practice, especially the life and *Showings* of Julian of Norwich,² the English contemplative tradition as represented by *The Cloud of Unknowing*, and the Religious Society of Friends.

Mindfulness practice typically starts with a conscious bringing of the physical body into awareness and purposefully relaxing. So each morning I wake up, shower and then, sitting still, allow my bodily awareness to awaken. I know that all the expectations I bring to prayer can be frustrated through simply ignoring and neglecting my physicality. In his poem ‘Pax’

¹ Ian Gawler and Paul Bedson, *Meditation: An In-depth Guide* (Allen & Unwin, 2010).

² The text I find most useful is Sheila Upjohn, *All Shall Be Well: The Revelations of Divine Love of Julian of Norwich*, abridged and arranged for daily reading (Darton, Longman & Todd, 1992, re-issued 2021).

D. H. Lawrence writes:

All that matters is to be at one with You, the living God;
to be a creature in Your house, O God of Life!
Like a cat asleep on a chair
at peace, in peace
at home ...

Julian of Norwich is sometimes pictured with a cat, such companions often being allowed to anchorites in their cells. COVID-isolated in my home I have been wondering what it was like for her. Was the cell warm? Were her daily meals sufficiently satisfying, her bed not too uncomfortable, nor the street outside too noisy—so that it all formed an environment that was reasonably conducive to a regular, prayerful rhythm of life?

I guess that retirement from the parish has given my body a break. Now I usually get a decent number of hours in bed, and no longer typically rush in for supper at 10 p.m. So I think of how Julian acknowledged our physicality as human beings when she rather startlingly wrote:

A man walks upright, and the food in his body is sealed as in a well-made purse. When the time of his necessity comes, it is opened and sealed again most properly. And that it is God who does this is shown where he says that he comes down to the lowest part of our need. For he does not despise what he has made, nor does he disdain to serve our humblest earthly needs. For he loves the soul he has made in his likeness.
(Chapter 6)

Surely Julian had been a mother, changing nappies, cleaning out the latrines and caring for the bodily needs of elderly members of the household? But it is clear in her *Showings* that this opened her to the spiritual insight that if God made us body, mind and spirit then he keeps us and loves us eternally as such. ‘Our Lord is everything that is good and comforting to us. He is our clothing. In his love he wraps and holds us. He enfolds us in love and will never let us go.’ (Chapter 5) Julian encourages us to love ourselves because God does. So are we to be kind to ourselves in our very physicality as holistic beings. It is a blessing to be able to devote some moments at the beginning of the day to checking out our bodies. It is good to notice the firmness of the ground beneath our feet, the cushion we sit on, and then to look

for any aches and pains that might also be there. This is how I am, this is what there is for me to accept and live with kindly, because the mystery of God's love lives with me in it all. To tense and hold and then release the various areas of muscles, working up from the feet through the stomach and chest and shoulders to the top of the scalp is good. Then to breathe is to feel the Spirit in me, to breathe deeply, hold, and release.

Mindfulness is 'the ability to notice and pay attention to what is actually happening around and inside of us at each moment'.³ So an awareness of the body can helpfully prompt some attention to the feelings and thoughts that are there. It is not about straining to empty oneself of them in order to achieve a totally clear mind and calm state. If only! Rather it is to recognise what is there, to be curious about those dominant feelings and passing thoughts, and simply to befriend them.

In the strange new freedom of retirement I slowly settled into a regular morning practice of mindfulness-based stillness meditation. I realised that the practice itself was freeing me to explore and to be spiritually open. Yet, paradoxically, the primacy of the sacramental economy and the catholic continuum returned. Carefully praying the Office, and keeping with the Eucharist, whether online or in church when they were open, became key parts of my personal coping strategy during COVID-19 and retirement weirdness. But it was the daily mindfulness practice that I felt most connected me with the mystery that the framework mediates.

Gawler and Bedson say that:

If we think of spirit as being immanent or dwelling in the world, then mindfulness meditation is a wonderful way of turning our attention towards spirit. Mindfulness pays attention to what exists, here and now. It shifts attention away from memory, imagination, ideas and concepts.⁴

In meditation I felt presence and even intimacy. I was relieved that the drastic clear-out of my books had left me with a copy of *The Cloud of Unknowing* as simplified by Elizabeth Obbard, for it explains,

³ Gawler and Bedson, 109.

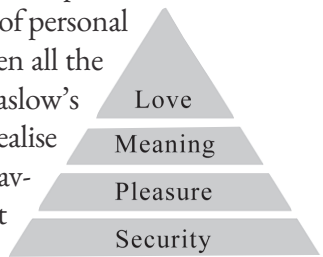
⁴ Gawler and Bedson, 354.

You see, no one can actually think of God as we think of created things. All God's works are not Godself. You have to leave them aside and move beyond thought. Why is this so? God can only be held close by means of love, not thought.⁵

Likewise Gawler and Bedson observe,

... when we stop trying, when we remain alert and pay attention to thoughts, and let go of judgement and reaction, everything changes. The thoughts do clear and we do experience stillness. A natural, peaceful, calm and deeply reassuring stillness.⁶

Towards the end of my early-morning mindfulness meditation, often I open my eyes and for a moment just rest in feeling part of all that is. Maybe I am aware of the central heating clicking or of raindrops on the window. That is enough. I have come to think of a hierarchy of personal homeostasis—creating a stable equilibrium between all the different parts of our mind and body—a bit like Maslow's pyramid of the hierarchy of needs. I am coming to realise how the pull of each one has an effect on my behaviour: so that sometimes one may contradict what another prompts. I can even see how my daydreams while meditating relate to the concerns of these different aspects.



I usually follow meditation with the saying of Morning Prayer. That allows me to feel safe and secure because it is what I am 'supposed' to do as a priest. Though, to be honest, while attending to my prayer book I am already looking forward to the pleasure of eating breakfast! Later on I may have a client booked for a counselling session. This work is a focus of the meaning I now feel priestly vocation to have for me, in which Julian is the motif of good listening: to others, to myself, to the world and to God. Needing security, desiring pleasure, and looking for meaning ... but at the very top of my mountain is love. Mostly it is a love that is wreathed in the cloud

⁵ Elizabeth Ruth Obbard, *The Cloud of Unknowing for Everyone*, simplified and illustrated (New City, 2007), 28.

⁶ Gawler and Bedson, 216.

of unknowing. But continually it gently cascades down the slopes, washing and purifying all the meaning I can understand, trickling delightfully through all that brings pleasure, and reassuringly flowing around the foundations of security. Homeostasis is achieved when the love can flow freely through, and without being obstructed by, the desires for meaning, pleasure and security.

It is the love that can redeem it all, and that wants to be in it all. God is love, love is my god. That awareness was the movement in my spirit that brought me into being a Quaker. Within the Religious Society of Friends there is an ongoing vital debate about the place for them of belief in God. I understand that to be the questioning of belief in a transcendent, personal God who is out there and who has everything mapped and under control. What seems to me without dispute for Quakers is a vital heart-connected conviction of the inherent potential for goodness in the world. The Quaker pioneer George Fox describes his experience of conviction in 1648 thus: ‘Now I was come up in spirit through the flaming sword into the paradise of God. All things were new, and all the creation gave another smell unto me than before, beyond what words can utter.’ This calls out to us: ‘Take heed, dear Friends, to the promptings of love and truth in your hearts, which are the leadings of God.’⁷ I see this expressed in the basic testimonies of equality, peace, truth, justice and simplicity. The quietness of the Quaker meeting for worship is for me essentially a tuning into that potential; that which we might name as the immanent presence of God.

It is that presence which, or rather, *who* holds me in mindfulness meditation, inviting me to live more mindfully: simply honouring my physicality while acknowledging all that I am and experience as part of all that is. But the journey has already moved on—because that is what prayer is.

Fr Andrew Norman served as a parish priest in the Guildford and Canterbury dioceses and is the author of *Learn to be at Peace: The Practice of Stillness* (SLG Press, 2010). He is now working as a counsellor in private practice and the voluntary sector. He is also a co-chaplain for Green Christian. He and his wife are now sustained by the Devon coast and countryside.

⁷ *Quaker Faith & Practice: The Book of Christian Discipline of the Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain* (Quaker Home Service, 5th edn 2013), Chapter 1 ‘Advices and Queries’. <https://qfp.quaker.org.uk/chapter/1/> (accessed 7 June 2021).

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE EXPERIENCE OF ST TERESA OF AVILA

EMMANUEL KANIYAMPARAMBIL OCD



St Teresa of Avila's Vision of the Dove, print by Pieter van Schuppen (1672–1702) after the painting by Rubens (1577–1640), from The Elisha Whittelsey Collection, The Met, New York.

In 1614, Peter Paul Rubens, the famous Flemish painter, created the beautiful painting of St Teresa of Avila with the Holy Spirit fluttering over her as a dove. The painting is a realisation of the vision that St Teresa of Avila describes in her autobiography, the *Life*: on the eve of Pentecost 1563, the Holy Spirit appeared to her in the form of a brilliant dove with wings like mother-of-pearl.¹ In the painting St Teresa is depicted wearing

¹ See *The Book of Her Life* (38:9 ff.), the full passage is quoted below, p, 24.

the habit of the Carmelite order, kneeling, with her hands held out in ecstasy, transfixed by the dove.

Certainly, St Teresa lived an intense experience of the Holy Spirit, and she writes about it in the context of her raptures or special mystical experiences. This brief study of St Teresa's profound experience of the Holy Spirit seeks to discover what we can absorb for our prayer life from this great mystical 'Doctor of Prayer'.

Lord, Give Me that Water

In the *Life* (30:19), St Teresa writes that she recalled the words of our Lord to the Samaritan woman in John 4:15 several times: 'Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty.' She writes that she is very fond of this Gospel passage and that she liked to drink from the fountain of the Lord; she often begged the Lord to give her that water. She also refers to this in *The Way of Perfection* (19:2ff.), where she explains that prayer is to thirst for the water that the Lord offers.

In the Bible water is a preferred image for the Holy Spirit: in prayer it is the Holy Spirit who satisfies the thirst of the soul for God; being in the Holy Spirit means being immersed in God, as the Spirit himself is God; higher experiences of prayer describe being filled with the Holy Spirit. Without the Holy Spirit no one experiences God and God's love. As we think of the biblical imagery of water therefore, we can imagine that the Holy Spirit is the Living Water from heaven.

St Teresa understood this truth and she explained that the true living water is from heaven, brought by the Lord to the soul to drink, and to enjoy the true love of God.² However, in the *Life* we do not find St Teresa identifying the Holy Spirit explicitly as the living water. Rather, she recognized that her deeper experiences of the love of God were filled with the presence of the Holy Spirit. She did not necessarily use explicit language when discussing her experiences, so when she speaks of her thirst for the living water, we can understand that as her desire for the Holy Spirit.

² Cf. *The Way of Perfection* (19:4).

Come, Holy Spirit

Growth in prayer is a gift of the Holy Spirit: God gives the soul many gifts and favours, while the soul learns courage to act out of love of God. The soul may not realize this but an experienced spiritual director can discern the progress of the soul to God under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. St Teresa had such an experience, which she mentioned in chapter 24 of *Life*. It was her spiritual director and confessor, the Jesuit Fr Juan de Pradanos, who assured St Teresa that her experiences were from the Spirit of God. Fr Juan led St Teresa further to greater perfection. He asked her for more total detachments, like abandoning friendships that are not harmful, but nevertheless are not helpful for pleasing God. St Teresa could not fully understand this and it was at this point that Fr Juan told St Teresa to commend the matter to God for some days and to recite the hymn *Veni Creator* so that God might provide illumination about a course of action. As a result of this invocation from the Holy Spirit St Teresa was led, for the first time in her life, into a rapture in prayer, a great gift of God. She wrote about this event as follows:

One day, having spent a long time in prayer and begging the Lord to help me please Him in all things, I began the hymn; while saying it, a rapture came upon me so suddenly that it almost carried me out of myself. It was something I could not doubt, because it was very obvious. It was the first time the Lord granted me this favour of rapture. I heard these words: “*No longer do I want you to converse with men but with angels.*” This experience terrified me because the movement of the soul was powerful and these words were spoken to me deep within the spirit.³

Immediately following this she described the effect that this special favour of God had on her:

³ *Life* (24:5), my italics. Quotations from St Teresa use the English translation of Kieran Kavanaugh ocd and Otilio Rodriguez ocd, *The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila* (ICS Publications, 2nd edn 2019), vol. 1: *The Book of Her Life; Soliloquies; Spiritual Testimonies*; vol. 2: *The Way of Perfection; Meditations on the Song of Songs; The Interior Castle*.

These words have been fulfilled, for I have never again been able to tie myself to any friendship or to find consolation in or bear particular love for any other person than those I understand love Him and serve Him; nor is it in my power to do so, nor does it matter whether they are friends or relatives. ... *From that day on I was very courageous in abandoning all for God ...* ⁴

This story is narrated in the context of Teresa's special prayer to the Holy Spirit, so we can attribute this great courage to abandon all for God to the special intervention of the Holy Spirit. However, there is no further explanation or discussion by St Teresa of the origin of this gift.

It was evidently in the light of her own experiences that St Teresa taught her sisters to pray and progress in prayer, and we find her explicitly inviting her sisters to consider the Holy Spirit in prayer. While commenting on the Lord's Prayer in *The Way of Perfection* (27:7) she wrote that 'the Holy Spirit must be present between such a Son and such a Father, and He will enkindle your will and bind it with a very great love'.

These words appear at the end of her first reflection about who the heavenly Father is and how such a great and loving father should have given us His own Son. Here she introduces an image of the Holy Spirit as a conduit: for St Teresa, in order for our love to reach the Father and the Son, it must pass through the conduit of the love of the Holy Spirit. Without the Holy Spirit, who enkindles the human will with deep love, there cannot be a true experience of the Father. In fact, whenever St Teresa experienced the Holy Trinity, she noted that it was always kindled by the Holy Spirit whom she experienced in the form of a dove or cloud.⁵ These two representations of the Holy Spirit are found in the gospels.⁶

In her *Meditations on the Song of Songs* (5:5) Teresa described the Holy Spirit as a mediator:

⁴ *Life* (24:6–7), my italics.

⁵ Cf. *The Interior Castle* (VII:1, 6); *Spiritual Testimonies* (13:4).

⁶ See for example Matt. 3:16; 17:5.

It seems to me the Holy Spirit must be a mediator between the soul and God, the One who moves it with such ardent desires, for He enkindles it in a supreme fire, which is so near.

This realisation appears without preparation in the context of her reflections on the love of God; no further explanation is added about the Holy Spirit. However, these few words reveal her profound understanding of the Holy Spirit and its action in the soul. For St Teresa, the Holy Spirit is the one who moves the soul with ardent desires for God. When the soul is under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the soul is set on fire by God's love; the soul is closer to God.

Holy Spirit Lord, Continue to Enkindle Me with the Love of God

According to St Teresa the Holy Spirit transforms us to receive and understand the love of God. Without the Holy Spirit that love can never reach its perfection in our lives. She explained her understanding of this idea briefly while expounding her concept of the soul's union with God in prayer in her book *The Interior Castle*. In its 'Fifth Mansion' she deals with the effect of the soul's union with God by using the image of the ugly silkworm that is transformed into a beautiful butterfly:

This silkworm, then, starts to live when *by the heat of the Holy Spirit* it begins to benefit through the general help given to us all by God and through the remedies left by Him to His Church, by going to confession, reading good books, and hearing sermons, which are the remedies that a soul, dead in its carelessness and sins and placed in the midst of occasions, can make use of.⁷

According to St Teresa, the efforts of the individual to die to self (by using prayer, penance and obedience to detach from self-love and earthly attachments) bear fruit only when the Holy Spirit touches the soul and transforms it through its heat, which is the ardent love of God.⁸ Mere detachment is pointless unless it is replaced and transformed by the presence

⁷ *The Interior Castle* (V:2–3); (II:342), my italics.

⁸ See *The Interior Castle* (V:2, 6).

and love of the Holy Spirit who is responsible for joining a soul to God. Although not referred to specifically by St Teresa, this recalls Romans 8:13, ‘If you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.’

St Teresa explains in her *Soliloquies* (her meditations or exclamations to God in prayer) that the enkindling love of the Holy Spirit is what transforms a soul to enter deep into God’s presence and union with Him:

O my soul: Consider the great delight and great love the Father has in knowing His Son and the Son in knowing His Father; and *the enkindling love* with which the Holy Spirit is joined with them.⁹

Therefore, if the Holy Spirit is like the bond of love between the Father and the Son, the same love is indispensable for the soul to reach God. Moreover, that same love of the Spirit must be the joy and delight of the soul too. It is in learning to enjoy the Holy Spirit that the soul reaches out to union with God.

Indirectly, St Teresa warns us that without the Holy Spirit and His enkindling, transformative love, every striving of a human soul for perfection may be in vain. Ascetical practices and efforts to change our moral behaviour bear fruit only to the extent that the Holy Spirit enters that person’s life.¹⁰ The presence of the Holy Spirit must be continuous in the life of the soul on the path to perfection and union with God.

Holy Spirit Lord, Lead Me into Heaven

St Teresa had exceptional spiritual experiences during the higher levels of prayer, but the particular vision of heavenly secrets and her perception of being granted great blessings were on the occasion of Pentecost. This led her to reason that the Holy Spirit is the one who leads the soul into the

⁹ *Soliloquies* (7:2); (I:380), my italics.

¹⁰ This insight into St Teresa’s spiritual realization is discussed by today’s moral theologians examining the issue of how to recover the guidance and gifts of the Holy Spirit in the moral obligation of a Christian. See for example, Charles E. Bouchard, ‘Recovering the Gifts of the Holy Spirit in Moral Theology’, *Theological Studies* 63 (2002), 539–58.

mysteries of heaven. She describes a *remarkable fortitude of soul* that was created in her that strengthened her spiritual life.¹¹ (We may remember that fortitude is one of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit.) This singular Pentecostal experience was extremely vivid and had a profound impact on her thinking. She writes, describing the eve of Pentecost on 29 May 1563:

One day on the vigil of Pentecost I went to a secluded spot after Mass where I often prayed, and I began to read about this feast in a volume by the Carthusian. Reading of the signs beginners, proficients, and the perfect must have in order to recognize whether the Holy Spirit is with them, it seemed to me that by the goodness of God and insofar as I could make out *He was not failing to be with me*. I praised Him and remembered that once before when I read the passage I really lacked everything; I had realized this very clearly, just as now I understood the opposite about myself. So I knew that what the Lord had granted me was a great favour. Thus I began to consider the place I had merited in hell on account of my sins, and I gave much praise to God because it didn't seem I recognized my soul by the change I saw. While I was reflecting on this, a great impulse came upon me without my understanding the reason. It seemed my soul wanted to leave my body because it didn't fit there nor could it wait for *so great a good*. The impulse was so extreme I couldn't help myself, and it was, in my opinion, different from previous impulses; nor did my soul know what had happened, nor what it wanted, so stirred up was it. Although I was seated, I tried to lean against the wall because *my natural power was completely gone*.

While in this state I saw *a dove over my head*. It was very different from doves on earth since it didn't have earthly feathers, but the wings had little shells that gave off *great brilliance*. *It was larger than a dove*. It seems to me I heard the noise it made with its wings. It fluttered about for the space of a Hail Mary. My soul was already in such a condition that in losing itself it lost sight of the dove. The spirit was quieted by *so good a guest*; for, in my opinion, a *marvellous favour* like this should have frightened and disturbed it. And when it began to *enjoy the guest*, the *fear was taken away* and the *joyous quietude* began while the soul continued in rapture.

The glory of this rapture was extraordinary. I remained for the rest of Pentecost so stupefied and stunned I didn't know what to do with myself, or how I had the capacity for so great a *favour and gift*. I neither heard nor

¹¹ See *Life* (38:8).

saw, so to speak, but experienced *wonderful interior joy*. I noted from that day the *greatest improvement* in myself brought about by a *more sublime love of God* and much *stronger virtues*. May He be blessed and praised forever, amen.¹²

There is no doubt in St Teresa's narrative that this experience came directly from the Holy Spirit. If we look closer we may be able to see more clearly what her experience was and the effects it produced in the soul: first of all, she explains that the presence of the Holy Spirit within the soul is a *great favour*; a *great good*; a *marvellous favour*; a *gift*. Indeed, the Spirit of God and His gifts must be received as a benefice from above. St Teresa understood that by the reception of this gift of the Holy Spirit, her natural grace was replaced with a *divine power*. The Holy Spirit took total control of her soul, and she felt the stirring of a completely new experience. She also describes seeing a dove above her head and the explanations that she gave about the dove are not found elsewhere.

The Holy Spirit is described as a *good guest* within her soul and its presence gives rise to a great sense of calm. This made her experience a 'wonderful interior joy' that banished all fears and filled her with an intense interior certainty. It is apparent that joy is the fruit of the Spirit and that fear is the absence of the Spirit of God (cf. Gal. 5:16ff.). 'God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us' (Rom. 5:5); the Spirit is therefore given to *remain* within us, not touch us and then leave.

St Teresa believed that a more sublime love of God had reached her soul and her spiritual life had been strengthened in virtue by the presence of the Holy Spirit. In her writings she recalls her singular Pentecost experience again and again: she refers to it in her *Spiritual Testimonies* (36:5) when, in desiring to please the Holy Spirit, she made a vow of obedience to her confessor Fr Jerome Gratian, an act that brought special happiness and satisfaction into her life.¹³ Although, as St Teresa explained, she feared such a vow of obedience would curtail her freedom, the opposite was the case:

¹² *Life* (38:9–11), my italics.

¹³ For details, see *Spiritual Testimonies* (36).

she felt more freedom and inner light as a result of this act of love of the Holy Spirit.

Holy Spirit, Unite Me with the Father and the Son

Mystical union with God is experiencing the Holy Trinity in a special way: the three Divine persons become a reality in the life of a mystic. The special touch and presence of the Holy Spirit led St Teresa, the mystic, to reach greater heights of union with the Trinity. As she narrated in her *Spiritual Testimonies* (10), one day Jesus reassured her, telling her:

... do not be disturbed of anything; rejoice in the good that has been given you, for it is very great; *my Father takes delight in you, and the Holy Spirit loves you.*

It is thus clear that what the Son wants is the unity of a soul with the Father and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit comes to open the way to the Father and to the Son. The Father draws the soul to Himself and bestows the Son and the Holy Spirit. This is what St Teresa described in *Spiritual Testimonies* (21:2):

... the Person of the Father drew me to Himself and spoke very pleasant words. Among them, while showing me what he wanted, He told me: ‘I gave you My Son, and the Holy Spirit, and this Blessed Virgin. What can you give me?’

This particular experience of St Teresa was in the context of a vision of Our Lady, emphasising the importance of the intercession and presence of the Beloved Mother Mary in reaching for the Trinity.

St Teresa’s prayer life took on a new dimension when she began to call intensely upon the Holy Spirit. Once she advanced into mystical levels of prayer experience it was the Holy Spirit that led her to the mystical union with the Trinity; she described this as the ‘mystical marriage’.

The experience of St Teresa teaches us that there is no true experience of God without the Holy Spirit. It is only in and through the Holy Spirit that we have access to the Trinity and the intensity of a complete love of

God. Once the Holy Spirit touches the soul with His love, the soul is then on fire; as Aelred of Rievaulx had written four hundred years earlier:

That a person may love himself,
the love of God is formed in him;
that one may love one's neighbour,
the capacity of one's heart is enlarged.
Then as the divine fire grows warmer
little by little
it wondrously absorbs the other loves into its fulness,
like so many sparks.
And so it leads all the soul's love with it
to that supreme and ineffable good
where neither self nor neighbour is loved for self or neighbour
but only insofar as each fades away from self
and is borne totally into God.¹⁴

St Teresa's life is an elegant witness to this truth of our Christian faith.

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¹⁴ Translated in Esther de Waal, *The Way of Simplicity: The Cistercian Tradition* (Orbis, 1998), 147.

LLANGASTY ASSOCIATES RETREAT 2021

This will proceed with restrictions on numbers and is now
fully booked.

An Oxford Retreat for Associates is not scheduled
for 2021 due to closure during building works.

I CAN'T BREATHE

WALTER HANNAM

The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit. (John 3:8 KJV)

I can't breathe

On a muggy summer afternoon in 2014, 44-year-old Eric Garner uttered these words eleven times as an NYPD officer restrained him in a choke hold. 'I can't breathe,' he said, again and again. One hour later he was pronounced dead. The New York medical examiner ruled Garner's death homicide, citing '[compression] of [the] neck (choke hold), compression of [the] chest and prone positioning during physical restraint by police' as causes of death.¹

That December a grand jury failed to indict the officer who had restrained Garner. Many who had felt empathy for Garner as they watched him die on social media platforms became outraged and took to the streets, risking the same fate as Garner, through tear-gassing and other so-called 'non-lethal' crowd control methods, in the hope of change.

I can't breathe

On 25 May 2020 a white police officer in Minneapolis knelt on the neck of 46-year-old George Floyd for an interminable eight minutes and forty-six seconds, even after Floyd had become non-responsive. 'I can't breathe', Floyd cried, at least sixteen times. 'Please, the knee in my neck, I can't breathe.' 'Please don't kill me.' Less than an hour later George Floyd was pronounced dead in a Minneapolis Emergency Room.

I can't breathe

Two weeks later Dr Erica Farrand, a pulmonologist and critical care physician living in California, wrote a heart-rending opinion piece for CNN,

¹ *New York Times*, 1 August 2014.

explaining why those words, *I can't breathe*, have become so deeply personal for her. 'Like many brown and black skinned children in this country', she writes,

I was raised to dream big and aim high ... just with a caveat. Whatever I thought it would take to accomplish my goals, I would have to work harder and be better. That message was internalized so early on in childhood, that although I can recall questioning its fairness, I never questioned its truth. It was in fact self-evident.²

Dr Farrand tells of her experiences as a woman of colour making her way in a world of 'classrooms, lecture halls, and then conference rooms where few people looked like me'. She tells of her recent realisation that, in order to make her way in that world, she had learned to hide her experiences from her colleagues and friends: the experience of being 'mistaken for a member of the custodial staff, food services, patient transport, and interpreter services, all the while dressed the part of a doctor', all because of the colour of her skin. She tells of her work during the COVID-19 pandemic, of her discoveries of the racial inequities of the system to which she has given her life, and of the anguish she experienced in the time following the death of George Floyd as any hope that the world in which she lived had made any progress in the fight for racial equality were shattered.

But most beautifully and compellingly, Dr Farrand writes of the effect on her of the utterance of those three words—'I can't breathe'—by a black man under her care during the COVID-19 pandemic.

So triggering are those three words for me, that as a new physician, I left my job in primary care, moved my family across the country, and signed up for three more years of training as a pulmonary and critical care doctor. So triggering are those three words for me, that even though I now hear them daily, their utterance stops me in my tracks and launches me into action. So triggering are those three words for me that when that patient whispered them, my immediate response was, "I promise you are safe."

² <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/06/04/opinions/black-doctor-i-cant-breathe-deeply-personal-farrand/index.html> (accessed 1 June 2021).

With such eloquence Dr Farrand's words utter the clear, yet unspoken, rhetorical question: 'How could the speaking of those three words, *I can't breathe*, fail to trigger *any* living, breathing, human being?' How can any one of us remain indifferent to their sound and their meaning? Our very life is in our breath! 'And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.' (Gen. 2:7). Why has this verse spoken so deeply to generations of the faithful? It is because it speaks of a creation so intimate, so real to our lived experience.

Which of us can hold our breath for more than a minute without being overwhelmed with a sense of panic? Which of us has not, at some point, had the breath knocked out of us, or has not sucked in some water while swimming, or choked on a crumb of bread or on our own breath, and not had the terrible sensation of becoming the centre of the world's gravity? Which of us, in possession of that first-hand experience, has not imagined the horror of suffocation, and felt panic overwhelm us?

And yet some who have sworn to serve and protect have been unmoved by these words, uttered at least sixteen times over eight minutes and forty-six seconds. Perhaps we ourselves have been unmoved. And we wonder why the world is furious? How can *anyone* fail to be triggered by these words, so universal, so clear and uncomplicated in their meaning?

I can't breathe

The wind—the spirit—bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth. The breath breathes where it will.

On Trinity Sunday we turn our thoughts to the central mystery of our faith, to the perfect and all-sufficient life of the triune God, who is the object of all our worship and the source and stay of all life.

Christians have been given, uniquely, a glimpse into the Divine Life, which no one knows but the three Persons who share it. In our Lord we see one of those Persons living a life like our own, speaking the Life of God, as it were, in our own language.

The twentieth-century Anglican philosopher-theologian Austin Farrer put it like this:

The disciples who were present at the [Last] Supper saw and heard Jesus Christ making eucharist to the Father over the bread and the cup. They were witnesses of the intercourse between the Eternal Son and his Eternal Father.³

Mortal ears and eyes at that moment perceived the movement of speech and love that passes in the heart of the Godhead; human minds entered into that converse of the Divine Persons that is the life and happiness of the Blessed Trinity.

The triune Life, you see, is not some strange theory made up by early Christians and sustained by academic theologians to overcomplicate the simplicity of the Gospel. The triune Life is God Himself, and it is known, in the first instance, not by abstract thought, but by the experience of hearing the words of Jesus the eternal Son pouring out His eternal love for His Father in our hearing by His human breath. For the breath is not merely the material sustainer of our human life, it is also the chief means of human communication and commonality; it is the articulator and bearer of human words. ‘Lord, to whom shall we go?’ asked Simon Peter; ‘thou hast the words of eternal life’ (John 6:68). But had Jesus been unable to breathe ...

Day by day we who have not seen and yet have believed, gaze upon the Word made flesh, we listen to His words, and in each action, in each word, He shows us the inner life of God: the Father pouring out the Son in eternal love, the Son returning to the Father in eternal love, and the Holy Spirit, the love that is this great exchange itself. Once, only once, in the world’s history, was it given to the breath of life—to *human* breath—to reveal entirely the inner life of God.

But our Lord has come for more even than this. He has come that we might share that life, that our human lives might be found as moments within that Divine Life itself. ‘I am come that they might have life’—that

³ Austin Farrer, *The Crown of the Year: Weekly Paragraphs for the Holy Sacrament* (Dacre Press, 1952), 37.

is, a share in the divine life—'and that they might have it more abundantly' (John 10:10).

It is of this sharing in that Divine Life that John 3:1–17 speaks so clearly. 'Except a man be born again-from-above,' (*anôthen*) says our Lord to Nicodemus, 'he cannot see the kingdom of God' (v. 3).

Jesus comes that we may have life; that we might share in the eternal life of the triune God, and that life is in Himself. In baptism, the new birth from above, God Himself—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—comes to us and makes His abode with us; *in us* the Father eternally begets His only-begotten Son; *in us* the Son is eternally begotten and worships the Father eternally; *in us* the Holy Spirit is breathed forth as the mutual love of Father and Son, uniting them eternally in the bond of infinite Love that is Himself, and by His operation we are held within that eternal triune Life.

Again, Father Farrer puts it so simply: 'Belief in the Trinity is not a distant speculation,' he explains; 'the Trinity is that blessed family into which we are adopted'.⁴

The Spirit bloweth where it listeth ...

There is, however, a further significance to the great mystery to which we turn when we think of the Trinity, and it is this: insofar as we allow ourselves to be placed definitively in Christ, we acknowledge that He dwells, not in ourselves alone, but in *every other* human being. To be found in Christ is to dwell in our neighbour, for it is to dwell in the One who dwells both in us and in them.

Which means nothing less than this: that, for the Christian, it is sheer hypocrisy not to recognise the sufferings of others. We cannot remain indifferent when our brother cries out 'I can't breathe' without hypocrisy, because insofar as we are in Christ we dwell as much in our neighbour as in ourselves.

Perhaps the greater difficulty for the Christian though is the hypocrisy of blaming others for the great injustice and the hatred that plagues our poor world. Insofar as I am in Christ, I am also in the one who cannot breathe; but insofar as I am in Christ, *I am also in the one who remains indifferent*

⁴ Farrer, *The Crown of the Year*, 37.

to his pleas. In myself, at a level so deep that perhaps I have never even been aware of it, I am just as disordered as that.

What else but this knowledge, vague perhaps, but certain, draws us to make our daily confession that ‘there is no health in us’? What else are our obvious sins—those frustrating sins that plague us, those sins so seemingly impossible to eradicate—but the outward manifestations of the deep disorder of our inmost souls? So long as we treat our spiritual lives as merely the process of removing from ourselves the sins that we already know and hate, we will never see it for what it really is: a life of deep disorder that only God dwelling within us, more intimately present to us than we are to ourselves, living His entire Life in us, and conferring that Life upon us, can ever remedy.

Yet—thanks be to God!—‘the Spirit bloweth where it listeth’. And, the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God. (Rom. 8:26–7)

By the operation of the Holy Spirit in us we have been born again from above in Christ. ‘God has asked us into his house, he has spread his table before us, he has set out bread and wine. We are made one body with the Son of God, and in him converse with the Eternal Father, through the indwelling of the Holy Ghost’.⁵ This and this alone is our hope, and this alone is the hope we proclaim to the world.

Collect for Trinity Sunday (1662)

ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, who hast given unto us thy servants grace, by the confession of a true faith, to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity, and in the power of the Divine Majesty to worship the Unity: We beseech thee, that this holy faith may evermore be our defence against all adversities; who livest and reignest, one God, world without end. Amen.

The Revd Dr Walter Hannam is vicar of St Bartholomew’s Church, Regent Park, Toronto.

⁵ Farrer, *The Crown of the Year*, 37.

GOD IN PESTILENCE

ANDREW TEAL

During the shock of the first lockdown last year, my wife and I, suffering from the COVID-19 infection (though it was only mild for me, and moderate—if long-term—for her), were exhausted and felt rather sorry for ourselves. Despite the virus, I at least enjoyed the warm weather and the opportunity to say the Offices of Lauds and Vespers in the garden. I cannot say what a shock it was to sit outside to pray, under my olive and fig trees, as the garden grew through spring and summer. I learned that stability and consistency were necessary to care for a garden properly. As daily ploughing through the Psalms, readings of the saints and Scriptures, allowed something transforming to seep into me, I began to understand that the work of God is silent, and the eternal Word takes time to bear fruit. Rather than looking for an instant answer to each day's questions, one has to live with the long story of God's love for his creation. A one-off encounter with God is not enough for us really to comprehend the magnitude of the improbable wonder of God's love for us. We, who can be as violent and self-motivated as any Canaanite or Israelite army, as abusive of our power or entitlement as King David when consumed by lust, are still longed for by the Lord. The Daily Office in the open-air warmth rather than in a chapel reminded me that an empty and locked building is not the exclusive Church. God is here.

When the regulations began to be relaxed, in the Community we took the challenge of 'eating out to help out'—with the Eucharist celebrated sometimes in the gardens of the houses into which Sisters were scattered. The participation of creation in the Mass touched me deeply—the cat, Rita, bouncing onto the lavender next to the outdoor altar, or Oscar (also feline) getting stranded on the roof and joining the acclamations in the Eucharistic prayer. The Church's banquet still nourishes and sustains us—and includes all creation—even when it is a picnic.

We have been grateful to our Bishop Visitor, Archbishop Michael Lewis of the Province of Jerusalem as well as bishop of his own diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf, for granting his licence so that we could celebrate

the Lord's Supper under his authority. That in itself was a humbling and inspiring reminder that we only ever *offer* the Eucharist, rather than it becoming our possession, and we offered it for our own community, city, and nation; for Oblates and Associates, in communion with the whole world, especially the poor and most vulnerable people and communities, not least in the Lord's own Holy Land.

Alongside pondering this truth, in my pigeon-hole in the open part of the convent I found Mario I. Aguilar's *After Pestilence. An Interreligious Theology of the Poor* to be reviewed for the SLG Chronicle. The author, who is director of the Centre for the Study of Religion and Politics at St Andrew's University, found himself locked down in a poor area of Santiago in Chile. Very aware of the advantages he still had there: a secure apartment, money, a radio and a means of communication, he was shocked to find himself ministered to by the poor around him, who saw him not as someone to be feared or resented, but one worthy of protection and love. It reminded me vividly of my discomfort when as a young, newly-married priest in one of the poorest and most deprived parishes in England, Sheffield Manor, my wife became ill and was in hospital for about ten days. Every night when I returned to the vicarage, someone had made a hot meal for my return. I was moved but also appalled: the people who had done this would not have had any disposable income. It took me a while to see beyond my guilt at being part of a society where the poor are crushed. It took me longer to comprehend that society had not crushed the dignity of these kind people, who reached beyond reason into the impulse to be generous and loving. As we grasped that, and allowed our fellow Christians without the financial resources that we had to be generous to us, I think only then did I really become their priest. Only by allowing the people of the parish who had been there long before us (and many of whom are still there long after we have moved) to serve us generously from their poverty, could I really be their pastor; by allowing them to move me nearer to becoming a Christian.

In his book, Aguilar bears witness to a similar journey: he relates a Copernican revolution in his visceral perception of what he knew intellectually. The style of the book has the characteristic hallmarks of being

the fruit of a Scottish academic institute, but it is also marked by a dramatic acknowledgement that theology is secondary to the mystery of faith active in love:

Theology is not a first act for a theologian; the first act is clearly faith, expressed in prayer and commitment within the Christian community.
(p. 7)

Living the Christian narrative is made manifest through a rule of life. The whole social life of humanity, for all its bloodiness and politics, is a sign of the Lord's solidarity with us. The liberation theology of Gutiérrez and others which has been so formative in Aguilar's thought, intellectually moves our ideas about God's transcendent majesty to an incarnate Lord at one with the poor. The experience of lockdown among the poorest people in South America relocates a Christian emphasis on holiness away from any pietistic morality, to an incarnate life of struggle, love and surprising joy amid poverty, pain and isolation. Though he admits that terror invaded him as he saw the layers of vulnerability he now shared with his poor hosts, away from the securities of the 'first' world, Aguilar discovers that for all the minutiae of detail and text, theology is really concerned with addressing the question of 'where is God in this?': 'And I asked myself, what kind of God is speaking to us among the poor and within the pandemic?' (p. 15).

The book becomes increasingly tender without losing focus on the uncomfortable truth of God's real presence in COVID, just as it had been in the Holocaust, in historical inquisitions, in the AIDS crisis, in

Whatever is counter, original, spare, strange;
Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)
With swift, slow, sweet, sour, adazzle, dim;
He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:
Praise him.¹

So it was that Aguilar was pursued by the BBC and other media outlets to speak his wisdom as their correspondent from his experience during the pandemic. In July of last year, as we were celebrating the Eucharist among

¹ Gerard Manley Hopkins, 'Pied Beauty'.

lavender bushes humming with bees (and cats), he composed theology as prayerful poetry for the World Service:

Lord, I am fed up (16.7.2020)

Lord, I am fed up.
Is this what you wanted for us?
Are you walking with us today?
Because we are not walking.
We are stuck inside without permits.
How I long to see you in the streets.
Now four months on my own.
I have taken this time as the desert.
A preparation for what is to come.
As a retreat for the public message
That will follow: You are alive.
You are present in the poor and those who suffer.
Our reliance on prosperity has been crushed.
The values of the Gospel of service are here.
Liberation and the social justice of God are here.
(pp. 87–8)

The Sisters, like most of us from time to time during the lockdown, have known frustration; yet in the UK we have relied on ‘key workers’, some of whom are among the poorest-paid and least-appreciated members of our society. Their livelihoods are least secure, be they London bus drivers disproportionately affected through exposure to the virus; nurses so under-valued in contrast to other professionals; or the humble Amazon or Deliveroo delivery person labouring to fulfil the spending whims of so many of us, putting themselves at risk to keep us entertained or fed. We can all be overwhelmed by self-absorption. This book shakes our selfishness until our teeth rattle and rejoices in a God unwilling to abandon the dignity of the humble, or to write off the sinful even in our tears or arrogance or confusion. Thus understood, the pandemic can expose us to the shocking truth of God in our midst:

Human beings are not “chemical scum of an average-sized planet, orbiting around a very average-size star, in the outer suburb of one of a million galaxies”. We are summoned to an encounter that will fulfil all

our hunger for some plenitude of meaning, which embraces all the small ways in which we make sense of our lives.²

Mario I. Aguilar, *After Pestilence. An Interreligious Theology of the Poor* (SCM Press, 2021), 196pp. ISBN 9780334060352. Paperback £16.26, eBook £15.45.

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AUTHENTIC IMAGINARY LITURGY

DANIEL LLOYD

How many golf balls can you fit into a school bus? How many streetlights are there in Manhattan? These and other seemingly irrelevant questions are said to be interview favourites with big banks and wild-eyed Silicon Valley technology companies, though how widespread they are may belong to the realm of urban myth. The point is not for the sweating interviewee to know the answer, but to form a hypothesis and to work out what information might be necessary in order to test it. In that light, consider this question: how would you conduct a wedding in pre-Reformation Scotland? You might consult the *Catalogue of Liturgical Books and Fragments in Scotland before 1560*, in which you would discover about 200 books and fragments of books fitting that general bill. You might also be aware that there are different kinds of books for different occasions, and that by no means all of those 200 would have what you needed. In fact, to

² Tim Crane, 'Reduced to Clear: What Happens when a Religious Leader Takes on Consciousness', *Times Literary Supplement* 27 July, 2018, p. 12, quoting Stephen Hawking.

cut the process short, you would find that, of all the books for use between the mid-twelfth century and 1560, there is precisely one that would tell you what was done at a wedding; that it is called the *Rathen Manual*; and that, although there exists a printed edition of the text made in 1905, no one knows where the original manuscript is. Such is the nature of research into liturgical history. We have to contend not only with the kinds of books that these manuals were, but also with the fate of so many of them. Manuals, or Rituals, before printing, were working books for clergy, hand-copied, extensively used. They were among the equipment that a parish was canonically supposed to provide for its clergy, and the readiness of such provision would inevitably be connected with the generosity or parsimony of those who wielded the purse-strings. Moreover, they were subject to the treatment, at the hands of those who used them, which such books not infrequently receive. Leaves from these books sometimes turn up in the bindings of other books, and unlike the *Pontificals*, prestigious manuscripts for cathedral use, or books of hours for use by pious individuals or families, they are rarely of artistic interest. To these already inauspicious circumstances is added the wholesale destruction of many such works during the Reformation. Sally Harper's *Music in Welsh Culture Before 1650* (Routledge, 2007) records visitations conducted at the cathedrals of Llandaff and St Davids in the reign of Mary I (1553–1558), which noted that, at the former, 'God cannot be there served for lack of books', and at the latter, 'all the ancient missals of the Cathedral Church' had been destroyed (pp. 169–70).

Of the various flavours of liturgical form and custom extant in the British Isles before the Reformation, there are a fairly large number of printed books, from various different editions, surviving in various libraries and collections, but these numbers are not indicative of the size of print-runs, and it is far from easy to find out who bought and used the books we no longer have. The Preface to the 1549 Book of Common Prayer refers to the uses of 'Salsbury, Herford, Bangor, Yorke, and Lincolne', but how tightly those uses can be defined—and even, in the case of Bangor, whether they existed at all—is a matter of scholarly debate.

The work of Richard Pfaff, among others, shows clearly that, while there may be continuity and relative uniformity in the texts of prayers, for example, much of what survives in rubrics and similar directions is almost inextricably linked with the particular architecture, staffing, and resources of the individuals, cathedrals, or churches for which it was written down in the first place, of which the Salisbury (or Sarum) Use is probably the most obvious example. The idea that everyone is working from the same book and can buy the same materials, or indeed that rubrics are written for transferable use between the grandest cathedral and the humblest chapel-of-ease, emerged from a confluence of developments in technology and ecclesiastical governance that simply had not happened before the early modern period. Nevertheless, even if they are no longer extant, and even if it is hard to see to what extent they were conceived of as being prepared for simultaneous use in quite different places, there were comparatively many books in circulation on the eve of the Reformation. This was partly because, in order to perform the necessary liturgical offices, a variety of books was required, including: missals, breviaries, psalters, homiliaries, antiphoners, processionals, books of epistles and gospels, and manuals or rituals. Each of these discrete classes of texts contains more or less the same thing, but the vagaries of copying, and of adaptations to local usage, mean that, within a selection of ostensibly the same kind of book from more or less the same period, there may be variations of different kinds.

The story told by Erasmus, of the Mass-priest who had prayed the words *quod ore mumpsimus*, instead of *quod ore sumpsimus* for twenty years, and refused to be corrected, should not only be taken as a jibe at clerical ignorance, but as a reflection of what can happen when, for whatever reason, variations stick around. William Smith's compendious work on the Use of Hereford notes, for example, that a manuscript version of the marriage service says that, at the beginning of a wedding, in front of the church door, the man stands to the woman's right, which is also the case in the Sarum texts.¹ A later printed version reverses the positions. Given the scarcity of

¹ William Smith, *The Use of Hereford: The Sources of a Medieval English Diocesan Rite* (Ashgate, 2015), 211.

source material, is this a local custom, a distinct variation to which interpretations may be attached, or a mistake made by a distracted cleric, copyist or typesetter? And whichever of those it may have been, we cannot know the significance of this spousal reversal, because our records are so scarce.

Further scholarly gnashing of teeth may be provoked by the fact that many of these books are light on rubrics, the directions that tell you how to perform the ritual actions in question. An edition of the Roman Missal printed in 1474, generally regarded as the first printed *Missale Romanum*, is markedly short on rubrical direction in comparison with its successors of a century later. Here, the Order of Mass informs us that the priest ‘censes the altar’, but not how this is to happen. It is assumed that the celebrant knows. In the Missal of 1570, much fuller direction is given, and later on there are printed intricate diagrams to show which swings of the thurible should be directed where. The 1474 Missal concludes the Order of Mass by jumping straight from the final prayer in the sequence of those said during the purification of the vessels to the words ‘having finished the Mass and given the blessing, the priest bows at the middle of the altar and says the following prayer’. Again, it is assumed that the celebrant knows how this is done. Not an entirely straightforward proposition, in fact, given that in the 1570 Missal (but only at a Solemn Mass with deacon and subdeacon) the priest is to bless the people saying ‘the Father’, and making the sign of the cross at one side of the altar, ‘the Son’, with another sign of the cross in the middle of the altar, ‘and the Holy Spirit’, a final sign of the cross at the opposite side of the altar. By the next edition, that of Pope Clement VIII in 1604, this was removed, together with one or two other rubrical and textual features. That these missals were now printed, and their printing regulated, meant that such changes could be introduced and enacted much more easily than in the days of hand-copied books. But if we were in the same position regarding the post-Tridentine Missal as we are with much that came before it, then the fact that the blessing rubric was thus altered, and persisted in its altered form, might not be readily obvious to us if we had three or four full and handsome copies of the 1570 text to look at, and one and a half dogeared versions of the post-1604 Missal, and not a great

deal else. Happily for those of us who appreciate institutional continuity of style, the modern Roman liturgy can lapse into a laconic mode of rubrical expression. At the end of the mass for Corpus Christi, the most recent edition of the Missal informs us that

It is desirable that a procession take place after the Mass in which the Host to be carried in the procession is consecrated. [...] When the Prayer after Communion has been said, the Concluding Rites are omitted and the procession forms.

We look in vain in the Missal for further instruction: what is this procession? Where does it go? Where does it stop? We have simply to *know* that, as the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales's Liturgy Office website informs us, 'The Church's guidance for such processions is given in the ritual book *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass* (part of the *Roman Ritual*).' This, it promises, can be downloaded from a link which is then given. We follow the link and discover that 'The page you are looking for has moved.' Unlike the *Rathen Manual*, though, we are still able to find the original: we need only use the search function to see that, indeed, the text is on the website, but stored somewhere else. It goes without saying that the chain of ideas and notions that leads to this conclusion is not one that maps easily on to the ideas of shared knowledge and culture suggested by surviving pre-Reformation material.

How helpful it would be to have all this information in one place! And, for the medieval texts, how useful if someone could comb through what survives and put together a straightforward rendition of text, gesture, and the rest, for the various rites of the Church. Such work was undertaken from the nineteenth century on, with scholars like William Maskell (1814–1890), W. G. Henderson (1819–1905), and F. E. Brightman (1856–1932) doing sterling work with transcriptions and tables galore. Societies like Durham's Surtees Society and the Henry Bradshaw Society published their work (any similarity between Bradshaw, as in interest in liturgical books, and Bradshaw, as in knowledge of railway timetables, is entirely in the mind of the reader). But their work was only as good as the sources available to them, and only as reliable as their bias. For many scholars, as

Anglican clergy, their relationship with historical liturgy was conditioned by their relationship with contemporary liturgy. Attitudes towards the Book of Common Prayer, or to the post-Tridentine Roman Missal, shaped the conclusions they drew about continuity or rupture, and about the uses to which their work could be put.

Percy Dearmer's 1899 *Parson's Handbook* was intended to provide (as its subtitle explains) 'Practical Directions both for Parsons and Others as to the Management of the Parish Church and its Service according to The English Use as set forth in the Book of Common Prayer'. It contains sound advice on building cupboards in vestries, and splenetic anti-Romanism. Dearmer resorts when it suits him to the 'spirit of the Prayer Book', and at others times discusses at length a variety of liturgical options that would seem not only to be absent from, but actively forbidden by the plain letter of the Book of Common Prayer; here he will usually—but not always—advise as 'safer', 'stick[ing] rigidly to the letter of our rubrics, if only to avoid giving a false impression of disobedience to those who are ignorant of liturgical science'. Elsewhere, he rails against 'the fancy "Sarum use" that nineteenth-century theorists have compiled'. The reader is left with the impression that, if Dearmer does not care for something, it is either Roman or fancy; if he wants something that the rubrics forbid, it is owed careful consideration; if what he wants and the rubrics coincide, it is obviously the best possible liturgical decision in the best possible taste.

Which brings me to R. J. Urquhart's *Ceremonies of the Sarum Missal: A Careful Conjecture*, published in 2020. I must state here categorically that I am not comparing Urquhart's book with the *Parson's Handbook*, but there is an underlying similarity in that both are putting together a type of work that was not really in existence at the time from which much of the information it contains is drawn. There were of course customaries and consuetudinaries and other texts that tell us what was done (which I think can usefully, if finely, be distinguished from how to do it). Urquhart has a wealth of sources on which to draw, and acknowledges that he has taken decisions about what fits, what is lacking, and where he might look to find information that bridges the gaps. Moreover, his introduction

builds very carefully the case for why he thinks the book is useful, and why, despite his argument that it ‘has the potential to acquire a degree of spiritual and pastoral relevance unsuspected since the passing of pre-Reformation English Catholicism’ (xiii), ‘neither the pious author nor the pious reader would wish to see this work used to put on celebrations that contradicted the mind of the Church’ (xviii). He addresses also the academic pitfalls to which I have already alluded: ‘it is not the author’s purpose to produce a work of textual criticism or to reconstruct an imaginary ‘authentic’ liturgy through a collation of editions, disregarding the wide differences in practice between different churches’ (xix). To an extent, of course, he has had to do just that: we have already seen how and why this book cannot simply be a reprint of an exactly equivalent pre-Reformation text. But there is not a falsely authoritative authorial presence at work here: instead, there is an attempt to answer the question of what was done, more or less, in England, on the eve of the Reformation, in terms of gesture, posture, and interpretation surrounding the texts of the Missal.

If it is accepted that such a question is valid, and that what we have available to us can be enough to answer it, then this book answers it very comprehensively. Its subtitle is ‘A Careful Conjecture’, which means that it is entirely possible that what is set out here corresponds to no single liturgy ever celebrated in any church. It is also possible that it would be recognised as familiar enough: a liturgical equivalent of what is called *Bühnendeutsch*, or ‘stage-German’ (an attempt at a standardised set of pronunciations for use in theatre performed (and involving actors from) across the German-speaking world, with its variety of accents and dialects; I suggest this as a comparison rather than Received Pronunciation, because RP came to have an association with socio-economic class which *Bühnendeutsch* does not share).

Urquhart’s book, richly footnoted, deals with the Missal: Low Mass, High Mass, ‘Special forms of Mass’ (such as for the dead or at weddings), and elements of the liturgical year. It is based, in style and execution, on the Roman Catholic ceremonial manuals (in the sense of ‘How-to’ books). Those familiar with Fortescue (and its iterations, Fortescue & O’Connell,

and Fortescue-O'Connell-Reid) will recognise the style instantly.² It lacks Fortescue's more outré footnotes (those expressing a dislike of certain writers on ceremonial as virulent as Dearmer's dislike of the entire Roman Catholic Church; footnote 1 on page 243 of the first and second editions, revealing that 'it is impossible to genuflect on the top of a ladder'). As well as the intricacy of the ceremonial, Urquhart reveals the enormous number of bodies required on the most solemn of days. The Palm Sunday procession, as illustrated, involved twenty-five participants with specific jobs, not counting choir or congregation. It has been estimated that, in 1300, the proportion of clergy in England (of various degrees of holy orders) was one in seventy, working out at four or five clerics per church. Given this, the 'Sarum' life that Urquhart presents is one which had very significant involvement in the liturgy (for men and boys at least) built into it in a way we might be surprised at today. At every step, the grounds for directions and suggestions are given in footnotes, which enables those who know the sources to see how they are used, while not impeding the flow for those who are reading it to try and work out what would have gone on in their medieval parish church.

Urquhart's 'careful conjecture' affords us a glimpse of liturgy as a community pursuit, in a way many parish clergy would love for it to be seen today. Antiquarianism and reconstructions do not, in the end, get us very far, because they fall short of a living and authentic liturgical life in the Church as it is today. Louis Bouyer once wrote that the desire of some in the early twentieth-century liturgical movement was to bring back to life the women and men who lived in the historical periods in which they happened to be interested: this done, all would be well. Urquhart's approach is not, however, an antiquarian exercise in costumed interpretation. It helps those who are already involved in liturgy to get to grips with what can sometimes be obscure ideas, in part because it uses an approach that is already understood. That approach inevitably projects back on to the historical-sources ways of reading and interpreting them that are

² Adrian Fortescue, J. B. O'Connell, Alcuin Reid, *The Ceremonies of the Roman Rite Described* (Burns & Oates, 15th rev. edn, 2009).

anachronistic: but, given the book Urquhart set out to write, it is difficult to see how it could have been done more effectively.

This book will naturally be attractive to those interested in liturgical history. It ought also to be read by anyone in the humanities working on medieval life and culture, not only because it is so thorough and has a good bibliography and good footnotes, but because, read from beginning to end, it dispenses with the idea, which is sometimes regrettably encountered, that liturgy as practised in the Middle Ages is something restricted to that time and has nothing to do with anyone or anything in the present. I have heard the idea of indulgences described (by people who ought to know better), as a weird medieval corruption permanently done away with by the Reformation: meanwhile, a plenary indulgence for the 150th anniversary of the proclamation of St Joseph as the Patron of the Universal Church was announced in December 2020 and is in operation as I write.

In the end, one cannot read this book without noticing that a great deal of what is described continues to happen, albeit in some very different ways, today. The way Urquhart explains things, the sources and interpretations to which he points, are not and cannot be solely those of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. So much of this continues to be engaged with, enacted, performed, lived, today. Prayers prayed then, rituals experienced then, music sung then, ideas engaged with then, are still known by real people today, and are part of their—our—lives.

R. J. Urquhart, *Ceremonies of the Sarum Missal: A Careful Conjecture* (T&T Clarke, 2020), 304 pages. ISBN 9780567694263. Hardback £80.99, eBook £76.94.

Revd Fr Daniel Lloyd is parish priest of Hinksey in the Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth, and a priest of the Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham. He is a PhD candidate in Liturgical Studies at the University of Vienna, and works on marriage rites.



+ IN MEMORIAM +
THE REVEREND ANN GURNEY
(1927–2021)

Ann Gurney dedicated her life to God through church work from an early age: at eighteen she trained as a deaconess at Gilmore House in Clapham, that, until its closure in 1970, trained women for parish work. Education was her particular ministry: from 1956 to 1959 she was Warden of Berridge House College of Education, then from 1959 Principal of Gilmore House. After the legislation to allow women to be ordained as deacons in the Church of England she was ordained, or re-ordained as she put it, as a deacon on the eve of her retirement. Before the service she handed over the New Testament she had been given when made a deaconess and said, ‘Give me that again. I don’t want another one.’ In 1994 she was one of the first women ordained by Southwark Diocese and in 1995 she asked to be one of our Priest Associates, the only woman so far who has asked for this. Until she retired at the age of 90 her ministry continued as an Honorary Assistant Curate at Holy Trinity, Eltham, where she was affectionately known as ‘Mother Ann’.

MARY HANSBURY
(1942–2021)

Mary Hansbury was an experienced translator of Syriac monastic texts, publishing translations of St Ephrem, Jacob of Serug, Symeon d-Taibutheh and others, including in recent years *The Dialogue on the Soul* by the fifth-century author John the Solitary (also known as John of Apamea) and the recently discovered ‘Third Collection’ of Discourses by St Isaac the Syrian. During her PhD work in early Christian studies in a world religions context at Temple University, Philadelphia, her thirst for a broader understanding of her subject led her to undertake additional work in Jewish studies at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and in Syriac at Princeton. She studied in China for a semester researching the contact between the East Syrian tradition and Buddhism during the Tang dynasty. She

taught at La Salle University in Philadelphia and at Bethlehem University in Palestine, while more recently she was researching at the St Ephrem Ecumenical Research Institute, the Syriac centre in Kerala, India. Mary loved art and music and was a trained iconographer who presented her work to family, friends, and institutions around the world. Three of her translations of shorter texts are published by SLG Press: *Hymns of Saint Ephrem the Syrian* (2006), *The Prayers of Jacob of Serugh* (2015) and *Shem`On the Graceful: Discourse on the Solitary Life* (2020). She was a determined author who prepared her texts meticulously and did not brook editorial interference.

THE REVEREND JOHN DUDLEY DOWELL PORTER

(1933–2021)

Ordained priest in 1960, for most of his long ministry Father John Porter served in parishes in Litchfield Diocese, with a tour of duty as a chaplain in the RAF from 1965 to 1969. From about 1979 he came regularly to Fairacres for retreat, and in 1982 joined the Fellowship of the Love of God. He would usually celebrate the Eucharist when he stayed, and we remember these occasions especially for the depth of prayer expressed in and through them. He and his wife retired to northern France where for a couple of years he helped with the Anglican chaplaincy at Pas de Calais and assisted ecumenically in the local Roman Catholic Parish. During this time, he wrote the Fairacres Publication, *Being There: Caring for the Bereaved* (2009, 2nd edn 2010), an expression of his understanding of what it means to be there for others in their grief, arising out of his own following of Jesus, the man for others.



NEW PUBLICATIONS FROM SLG PRESS

Ælred Partridge OC, *Poet of the Word: Re-reading Scripture with Ephraem the Syrian*, Fairacres Publications, 187 (2020), 36 pages, £6.50.

Ronald Partridge (Br Ælred OC) is a retired Anglican priest and a solemnly professed brother within the Anglican Order of Cistercians. He read Theology and Humanities at Bristol Baptist College and London University, before training for the priesthood at Cuddesdon College, Oxford.

Early Christians read the Bible somewhat differently from their modern counterparts. For example, St Ephraem's layered approach to interpreting Sacred Scripture, especially the Old Testament, led him to delve below the literal words of the texts to uncover the rich vein of symbolic allusions that lay within them. Woven together, they formed a tapestry of spiritual wisdom. Ephraem transformed this tapestry into vibrant poetry in hymns, homilies and biblical commentaries that gesture towards the unfathomable mystery of God revealed in Christ. This short study examines the principles that guided Ephraem's manner of biblical interpretation (his hermeneutics) and reveals why he is a 'Poet of the Word'.

Alan Griffiths, *Identity and Ritual*, Fairacres Publications, 188 (2021), 32 pages, £5.00.

Alan Griffiths is a priest of the Roman Catholic diocese of Portsmouth. He has worked as a teacher of liturgical studies and translator of liturgical texts. His writings on the liturgy have been widely published.

In two thought-provoking essays Canon Griffiths reminds us that our identity as Christians is expressed through our language and focussed by the patterns of liturgical ritual that are in turn reflected in the architecture of the Christian church. Christian identity is particularly evident in the Eucharist and in our historical urge to keep watch in prayer, the practice of 'vigil', that plays such a prominent role in contemporary culture. By understanding our identity and our use of rituals we are able to step outside the constraints of time and proclaim that we are ready to respond to God when He reaches out to us.

Andy Lord, *River of the Spirit: The Spirituality of Simon Barrington-Ward*, Fairacres Publications, 189 (2021), 44 pages, £6.00.

Andy Lord is vicar of All Saints' Church, Didcot in the Diocese of Oxford. He has written widely on spirituality, church and mission including the books *Transforming Renewal* (2015), *Network Church* (2012), *Spirit-Shaped Mission* (2005) and *Spirit, Kingdom and Mission* (2002).

In this study of the spirituality of one of the Anglican Church's great spiritual leaders, Andy Lord considers the ways in which spirituality can represent our patterns of life with God that merge experience, prayer, community, theology and mission. Each chapter focuses on aspects of the great Easter and liturgical themes of life, death, resurrection and outpoured Holy Spirit. The image of the river of the Spirit provides a practical way into living with Christ, shaped by His passion, for the transformation of the world. It is a way that draws together different traditions in a world embracing spirituality embodied in, and beyond, the Jesus Prayer.

Sisters of the Love of God, *Vocation*, Fairacres Publications, 200 (2021), 70 pages, £7.00.

Written by Sisters of Fairacres past and present (Sr Susan SLG, Sr Clare-Louise SLG, Sr Judith SLG, Sr Eileen Mary SLG, Sr Isabel SLG, Sr Rosemary SLG), and with an introductory chapter by Rowan Williams, this small book seeks to explain both the call of monastic life and what it means to live by a Rule within a community. The chapters examine Poverty, Chastity, Obedience, Contemplation and Enclosure, and the Cell, and conclude with a personal testament from one of the community.

From within a Christian context, we truly follow a vocation when we hear the call of God in our lives and obey. As we try to live out our Christian vocation we operate in the times and places where love intersects with action. We therefore anticipate the Holy Spirit prompting us to love as Jesus would love, but in the places God has chosen for our love to operate. This book describes the choice of living in community as the place in which to live out the love of God, and the things that are joyous or difficult in that choice.

John Barton, Daniel Lloyd, James Ramsay, Alexander Ryrie, *Prayer and the Struggle Against Evil*, Fairacres Publications, 190 (2021), 90 pages, £7.50.

John Barton is emeritus professor of the Interpretation of Holy Scripture at Campion Hall, Oxford and author of numerous books and articles on the Bible and biblical interpretation. Daniel Lloyd is a Roman Catholic parish priest in Oxford researching the history of the wedding liturgy. James Ramsay retired from his ministry as a Vicar in East London and now lives in Norfolk. Alexander Ryrie is a Priest Associate of the Community of the Sisters of the Love of God, and author of a number of books about prayer.

This book provides a view on things that we often find too distasteful to discuss or are afraid to address, as if by not speaking about evil, somehow it will not exist. However, terrible situations exist and horrific events happen in the world around us: we need only to open our newspapers or turn on our televisions to hear of war and violence, situations of injustice and oppression, and acts of crime or terrorism. When we are confronted by such things, we sense that events and situations of this kind are not just unfortunate and regrettable: they have a different character that we can only describe as ‘evil’. Such evil deeds and situations have been a part of human life throughout history, and we seem to be unable to do anything about them. We can, and indeed should act, however, and we can pray. This book asks us to confront the reality of evil in the world and use our ability to change the world around us with the power of prayer.

SLG Press books are also published as eBooks, available worldwide from Amazon (Kindle) and Google Play (other devices).



REVIEWS

Luigi Gioia OSB, *Saint Benedict's Wisdom and the Life of the Church* (Liturgical Press, 2020), 223 pages. ISBN 9780814688083. Paperback £10.45, eBook £4.79.

First published in Italian in 2017 when the author was a Benedictine monk, this book invites readers to pay careful attention to Scripture, to our immediate context and to the challenge and support that is to be found in the Rule of St Benedict. As the title indicates, it is wide in its scope and, in that sense, it is a big book but compressed into a relatively small compass (223 pages); it deserves slow and thoughtful reading.

In the first ten chapters we sit at the feet of Benedict guided by one who has been both a novice master and an abbot, but Gioia is not only or primarily addressing monastics. As an academic who has taught and studied in Rome, Oxford, Cambridge and the USA, and as an experienced author and international retreat-giver, he speaks to anyone concerned about the crisis in the contemporary church. He asks bluntly, 'Why—despite an abundance of financial and technological means, numerical strength and enormous institutional weight—is the witness of Christianity, and Catholicism in particular, in the midst of such a serious crisis today?' (p. 32). He requires us to engage with this question by intelligent thought and by prayer and conversion to Christ. He reads St Benedict in the light of Scripture and, following his own advice to complement the Rule with a variety of other Christian texts, he draws on such authors as René Girard, James Alison and, extensively, on Karl Barth as well as *Lumen Gentium* and other documents from the Second Vatican Council. In the concluding chapters on 'Reform' and 'A Spirituality for the Church' the voice of Pope Francis is heard very clearly. The book is dedicated 'To Rowan, who taught me the value of patience in the hard work of sustaining difference as the form of ecclesial love'; Gioia's respect and admiration for Rowan Williams is evident throughout the book. In 2018 his *Say it to God* was the Archbishop of Canterbury's Lent book. Gioia is now a priest in the Church of England, on the staff of St Paul's, Knightsbridge, in London.

Given Gioia's concern for the life of the church, the chapters on leadership (chapter four) and forgiveness (chapter five) may be considered the heart of the book because both are seen as essential to genuine community; to life together locally and globally. 'Leadership' is prefaced by a quotation from p. 81 of Rowan Williams' *The Way of St Benedict*: '[The Rule asks:] how does authority operate to set us free from fear of each other, of our own weaknesses and limitations, of our inability to satisfy what we fantasize to be the demands of a distant God?' and opens with Gioia's comment that 'We can never pay enough attention to the topic of governance in the church.' Citing Scripture, he goes on to discuss the hierarchical structure of the Catholic Church before moving to look in detail at an example from the Cistercian community of Tibhirine in Algeria in 1996. This occupies the rest of the chapter. What happened when that community met to decide what to do in the face of likely death (well depicted in the subsequent film, *Of Gods and Men*, 2010) demonstrated the complexity and cost of authentic Christian leadership. Br Christian, the prior, was a man of exceptional vision and strength but that was 'not enough' when he met with opposition from his brethren. The wisdom of St Benedict, a schooling in humility and reality, ensured the community decided *together* whether or not to stay: 'Unknowingly, both the prior and the community undergo a fundamental discernment at this juncture, that turns their decision to remain despite the danger into authentic martyrdom.' (p. 72).

The following chapter, 'Forgiveness', prefaced by a quotation from James Alison, explores with telling realism the interpersonal issues and failures that arise in any community, bringing light to bear upon them by a detailed reading of some gospel texts. Under the heading 'A shared endeavour', he examines Matt. 5:39–41 and 44, 48 where Jesus sometimes uses 'you' in the singular, and sometimes 'you' in the plural. He comments:

This suggests that forgiveness is possible only within a community, only with the help and support of a community. Forgiveness depends not only or even principally on an isolated 'I' but also on a 'we'. It is something that can blossom and grow only with a community where love and forgiveness are cultivated. (p. 80)

As a good Benedictine, Gioia takes community—living together in brotherly and sisterly love—as axiomatic. It is where Christian maturity happens, and this is true whether for a few monks in a small monastery or in the church in its many different expressions. But community is not the goal either for the monastic or for the church. The goal is the glory of God, best expressed in the *opus Dei*, the work of God: as Gioia expounds it, the work that *God* is doing, in and beyond what we offer *to* God in worship and liturgy.

Chapters seven and eight are entitled respectively ‘Simplicity and Prayer’ and ‘Experiencing God’ and these are the chapters of the book that I personally found the most interesting—as well as disconcerting. In a digression Gioia contrasts modern ‘interiority’ and ‘spiritualism’ with earlier Benedictine wisdom that is ‘totally at the service of an objective spirituality’; St Teresa and St John of the Cross do not escape criticism on this score. A quotation from Hans Urs von Balthasar credits them, and Francis de Sales, with a mysticism ‘of subjective experience, individual states ... the accent is always on experience rather than on God’¹ which does not seem fair either to von Balthasar or to St John of the Cross and St Teresa. But the point is well made that we moderns are too often beguiled and mesmerized by our inner personal experience and trapped in it, as if it alone is the determinant of what is real and praiseworthy. At the same time, Gioia is at pains to hold together the well-grounded disciplines laid down by St Benedict in his Rule and ‘the inexpressible delight of love’ set before us in the Prologue.

There is much more in this book for readers to discover and explore for themselves. It is much praised by Benedictines, and by theologians, both Catholics and Anglicans, but the message is simple and for everyone: step away from egoism into community and communion. Or as St Teresa tells her Sisters at the start of her Carmelite reform (*Way of Perfection*, chapter 4), humility, love for each other and freedom from attachment are the life-giving essentials.

SISTER ROSEMARY SLG

¹ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Explorations in Theology I: The Word Made Flesh* (Ignatius Press, 1989).

Fr Ivano Millico, *Seeing the Pandemic with the Eyes of Faith: Seven Prophets for Our Time* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 2021), 84 pages. ISBN 9781784696542. Paperback £6.21, eBook £4.79.

In the light of the continuing COVID-19 pandemic many writers have offered theological and spiritual reflections on our experience as Christians and as human beings at this time. This short book by Fr Ivano Millico approaches our current experience through the eyes of seven of our saintly and biblical predecessors.

Fr Millico reminds us that to make sense of our experience we need to learn to see how God might be at work in our current situation. The danger is that we see COVID and its effects simply as a problem to be solved and miss the opportunity for transformation; or that we long for a return to the ‘old normal’, where things end up the way they were before, and we miss the lessons to be learned. As Fr Millico says:

The transition between the night of this pandemic and the dawn of a new day is not so much a chronological one, COVID and post-COVID—no; it is to do with whether or not we are able to discern the presence of God and his action in the present. (p. 15)

He illustrates this by reflecting on figures who knew great suffering and were able to find a deeper meaning behind events.

There is no glorifying of suffering here. The saints chosen include St Charles Borromeo who ministered to the people of Rome amid an outbreak of the plague in 1576, St Thérèse of Lisieux who faced a profound crisis of faith in her final months, and Job the biblical figure who lost family and possessions and argued his case with God. Another example is the moving story of the Abbé Huvelin who suffered mental and physical ill-health throughout his life, yet was esteemed for his gifts in spiritual direction and the care of souls—the ‘priest who had the miraculous illness’ as he was described (p. 49).

Fr Millico describes all these figures as ‘prophetic’, in the sense that the office of a prophet is ‘to discern the presence and action of God in the often opaque and painful history of a people’ (p. 11).

There is always a risk that great world events will overwhelm us and leave us lost and bemused, but reflecting on the chapters of this book shows us how the saints, who were really people just like us, can teach us to look more deeply at the circumstances of our lives. As we seek to make sense of our world both during and after COVID, this book reminds us to look with eyes of faith for the presence of God in history, and thus be part of his transforming action.

SISTER CLARE-LOUISE SLG

Simon Cocksedge, Samuel Double and Nicholas Alan Worssam, *Seeing Differently: Franciscans and Creation* (Canterbury Press, 2021), 192 pages. ISBN 9781786223005. Paperback £16.99, eBook £14.49.

Three Franciscans, one a member of the Third Order and two First Order brothers, come together to offer this book delving into the way in which the charism of St Francis of Assisi reveals insights of profound importance into a subject that is relevant to our times and critical to the survival of humankind and all life on planet Earth.

The tap-root of Anglican Franciscan life is sunk deep into the soil and landscape of rural Dorset and the time Br Samuel SSF spent there as Guardian in the 1990s helped alert him to the reality of our need to take seriously the last of the Church of England's five *Marks of Mission*: 'To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth.' Against a background of a post-industrialized world whose relationship with nature has disintegrated and conversations with ordinands whose theology questioned this 'mark', the book sets out to show how St Francis can help us to see differently.

Simon Cocksedge TSSF draws on stories about Francis and creation, offering an in-depth view of the great 'Canticle of the Creatures', reminding us of the centrality of praise in the message of St Francis. Nicholas Alan SSF introduces a number of early Franciscans (including Clare, Jacopone da Todi, Bonaventure and Angela of Foligno) whose lives reflect deep facets of Franciscan spirituality in relation to creation. Samuel Double SSF concludes with accounts of how Franciscans today bear witness to this spirituality through

their lives. In the final chapter two leading UN climate scientists who met with religious leaders in 2017 assert that our ecological crisis is as much spiritual as technological. While there was a brief mention of the Eucharist, my one criticism would be that the book ignores the many important writings of St Francis that suggest his profound veneration of the Body and Blood of Christ must have informed his veneration for God in matter.

This is a highly commendable book offering important contributions to the present debate concerning our response to the climate emergency, revealing how St Francis offers valuable, yet unknown or ignored insights. Christianity has unique gifts to offer that can easily be overlooked at a time when many are seeking to ‘do’ something. In looking beneath the surface, St Francis’ heart was moved to joyful praise and profound penance as he realised God in all things. As each chapter ends with reflective questions this book could be used as a study guide for individuals or churches and needs to be read by a wide audience.

JOHN-FRANCIS FRIENDSHIP

Bruce Carlin, ed., *In Concert Sing: A Mirfield Bedside Book* (Mirfield Publications, 2020), 166 pages. ISBN 9780902834514. Paperback £8.50.

I am always cautious of a book with ‘bedside’ in its title, regarding it as being lightweight, trite, designed to relax the mind for swift entry into sleep. So it was with some caution that I began to read this book at bedtime, knowing I was to review it. Very quickly I realised that, although there are some amusing lightweight entries, it was a far more serious book than appeared at first sight, and I was reading it compulsively in every spare moment I could find. It is not long at 166 pages, but the amount of archival work required to produce it has been great. It covers the history of the Community of the Resurrection from its foundation, with vignettes of the founders, and memorials of community members over the years. There are vivid descriptions of their work in the United Kingdom and Africa and their ecumenical and inter-faith links. Much of the text is taken from the *CR Quarterly Review*, but there are personal memories and anecdotes,

written for the book. Archival photos illustrate some of the people and places described. The blurb describes it as a ‘gallimaufry’ a mixture of many ingredients to make a whole, which it does well, arising from a great love of the editor and contributors for the life and witness of the Community. This book is worth having by your bedside to share in its richness, but don’t expect to fall asleep reading it.

SISTER CHRISTINE SLG

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