

AN OCCASIONAL NEWSLETTER FROM THE CHRISTIAN BROTHERS' COMMUNITY,
8 CROFTWOOD GROVE, CHERRY ORCHARD, DUBLIN 10.

Against the Tide

Paul Hendrick

Katie loves swimming. It's probably in her genes on her Dad's side – he's a natural swimmer and glides through the water effortlessly. Some of Katie's happiest memories are of going for swims with her Daddy, secure in the knowledge that she was safe while he was around.

One of the highlights of the school year for nine-year-old Katie occurs on her return to school after the Christmas holidays.

Every Wednesday, together with her classmates, she walks to the local pool for a swimming session. Wednesday is her favourite day of the week!

A few weeks ago, as she walked from her school to the pool,

holding hands with her best friend and swinging her kit bag around in circles, they spotted a drug addict on the side of the footpath, begging. The whole line of school-girls decided to give the disheveled man a wide berth and stepped off the footpath as they neared him.



To her horror, Katie recognised the man as her daddy!

The confused, embarrassed child didn't know what to do. If she had been granted three wishes on the spot, they would probably have been: that Daddy wouldn't see her, that her classmates wouldn't recognise him and, above all, that her teacher wouldn't notice what was happening.

Scribbles from the Margins 11

June 2017

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But, she couldn't just walk by her Daddy.

In front of her startled classmates, Katie broke ranks. She went over to her Daddy, tugged at his sleeve to get his attention, and begged him tearfully: "Daddy, Go home to Mammy; Please Daddy, Go home to Mammy".

Roused from his stupor, Daddy collected his few coins, gave a hug to his daughter and walked unsteadily away up the street, shouting a slurred: "I love you Katie" over his shoulder.

In the meantime, the teacher, who had been bringing up the rear, noticed the commotion up ahead and saw, too, that her strict injunction to the girls to remain on the footpath at all times was being breached. Health and safety concerns took over and the teacher strode up along the ranks to admonish the miscreants. She arrived at the scene just as the final act of the sad little drama was being played out. Her reprimand died on her lips and she merely shooed the young girls towards the entrance to the pool.



With a heavy heart, Katie put on her swim suit. For once, she took no part in the chatter and high pitched squeals which usually accompanied the ritual. She spent most of the swimming session sitting, shivering, at the side of the pool wrapped in a towel. Finally, Mammy came and brought her home. Mothering skills were going to be in big demand.

It was late that evening when I called to Katie's house. Her mother had already briefed me on the day's events.

I walked with Katie to the local shop while her younger brother

went ahead of us on the 'Space Scooter' which Santy had brought. The two children had the princely sum of two euro each to buy a treat.

Having told me the story of the walk to the swimming pool, Katie explained that: 'Sometimes when Daddies are sick they do stupid things but that doesn't mean that they have stopped loving you'. I know she wanted to believe what she was saying but the tell-tale red eyes may have told a different story.



Katie still enjoys swimming. She's improving all the time; she can jump in at the deep end now without her arm bands and she's learning to swim against the tide.



Creative Writing

On Thursday nights some of the women who attend the Women's Group in The Life Centre engage in Creative Writing classes under Martin's expert guidance.

During the current academic year the emphasis has been on poetry.

It is hoped to produce a limited-edition book of the women's work before the end of the school year. With the permission of the poets, this book will probably be available on-line directly from Martin.

To whet your appetite, what follows is a selection of poems written by the women.

The Mirror of Alzheimers

Oh mirror on the wall
 Who is that woman looking at
 me?
 Oh look behind her and see the
 room
 Is my dad there?
 And look at the woman
 She does not recognise me
 See a window, and the beautiful
 sun outside
 And see a chair and bed.
 Why is she still looking at me?
 I think I know her
 I'll wait and see
 She is very quiet
 I think we could be friends
 Oh mirror on the wall
 I think I'll wait and see.

Anita

Fuck It! Ok?

Last Thursday week I got the
fright of my life
I got up and washed and went to
brush my teeth
I realised my mouth was going
down on one side.

I was getting ready for work, so
off I went
Down at the bus stop I met my son
Graham - he drives;
He offered me a lift, so I got in.

He looked at me and said, "Ma
what's wrong with you?"
"I don't know, I might have been
lying that way in the bed"
He got a fright and thought I had a
stroke.

He drove me to the doctor who
sent me straight to the hospital
I was there for a while when the
consultant came -
He gave me a load of tests and
sent me for an MRI.

They said I had Bell's Palsy which
I hadn't got a clue about
What was he on about?
Long story - short is.

I was put on steroids for a few
weeks
I'm grand now though not
completely better
It could have been a lot worse.

When I came home from hospital
I thought, 'Fuck it, I'm still alive',
There were worse things that
could have happened.

I'm lucky
It frightened the shite out of me:
It's the not knowing.

Gwen

Just Plodding Along



I met my husband in 1964 and
after five years with him
We made a choice to get married
I'm glad we had twenty nine years
together.

I probably took many a risk in my
life
Not even aware there was a risk
involved.
Life is a risk, so I just keep
plodding along

I made a choice not to allow
people to walk all over me
It was a good choice
As I got more confident in myself

Our choices in life lead both to
happiness and to sadness
If we can see the bright side it's
helpful
Don't be afraid to choose life and
to think positive

Mary



To Hannah Rose With Love

You awoke my soul from a
slumbered space,
Now smiles and purpose are in its
place.

Your mother's silently humming
to you a sweet and loving song,

Empowering a solid unbreakable
bond, guiding you, won't put you
wrong.

The wonder as I watch her
communicate with you and play;
I could not be prouder, a magic on
display.

My first knowledge of your
creation
Fuelled fear in me
But you were in God's hand, you
were meant to be.

Your soft blue eyes, fair skin
with blonde curly hair,
Displaying a strong will,
determined to get there.

Devouring life's obstacles, truly
alive and aware;
May the gods look down on you
and shower you

With a thousand kisses and seal
your good faith.
Your courage will reward you in
abundance;
Hush now big girl, be patient just
wait.

I thank your father for planting
and sowing your precious seed;
Like a field ripe with golden corn
you are a blessing indeed.

You're so much like your dad -
with your teddy bear nose
and cheeky grin,
he loves you unconditionally,
with him you'll always win.

Your laugh is contagious, your
character magnetic
You're like honey to a bee,
honoured to be your nanny.
Thank you, universe, for choosing
me!

Siobhán

Searching for Mystery in Marginal Communities

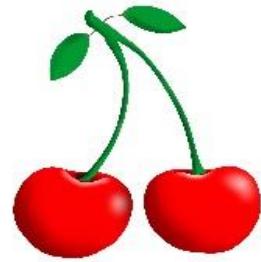
During the week beginning 22nd May, the Christian Brothers' Community in Cherry Orchard hosted a retreat with the theme: 'Searching for Mystery in Marginal Communities'.

Preparations are already under way for our second retreat from 24th to 27th July 2017. This retreat will be targeted at those who have already participated in one of our other retreats. The theme of the retreat will be 'Mystery Searching for us in Marginal Communities'.

The programme will consist of a day of reflection in Cherry Orchard, a day of engagement in the North Wall, a day of looking at life in Cherry Orchard and local prisons and courts and a final day facilitated by Fr Peter McVerry SJ culminating with Eucharist.

This retreat is completely booked out.

For further information and bookings for next year's retreats, please contact either Sean, Martin or Paul.



Outreach Fund

**Contributions
to the
Outreach Fund
are always
welcome**

Our Outreach Fund, which is now in its third year, is geared towards outreach in Cherry Orchard and The North Wall.

We started off our current financial year in September 2016 with a balance of €1,441 in the Outreach Fund.

Since then we have received contributions totaling almost €4,850 for which we are extremely grateful.

The following is a summary of the expenses to date for the period (1st Sept 2016 to 30th April 2017):

Assessment for addiction treatment	€200
Prison Visits	€350
Help with Groceries & Household	€1,220
Poulshone Holidays	€200
Others	€400
Assistance with funeral expenses	€100
Bank charges	€ 25
<i>Total</i>	<i>€2,495</i>
<i>Balance</i>	<i>€3,796</i>



Reimagining Brothering and Sistering in Cherry Orchard

Martin Byrne

Thanks be to God the church of the Cherry Orchard is not satiated
 With the spiritually well-fed and the materially suited with flashy cuff links.
 It is a community of wounds and bruises.

Around here, life is precious and broken and open and unpredictable
 And through engaging, we assume the risk of getting battered with vulnerability
 Because here, there is little space for happy, grand illusions.

A life of presence at these edges, in attempting to show that God is hope
 Demands that cages be rattled and eyes opened.
 A fairer, social order requires us to sweat the small stuff together with small people.

The self-implications of leaving our comfortable ways are painful
 Because now, with the excluded, we are jolted and drawn
 Out on to the path of personal, ecclesial and social conversion.

- . We are not too well schooled in nurturing a spirituality of consistent stubbornness
Or in developing a thick skin when deepening our roots at the margins
Through a determined resolve to be poor-people focussed.

Ah would you lighten-up on the passion and tone-down on the criticism
Go and return to the embrace of the institution and
Avoid the negative consequences of living a foolish, theo-centric quest.

A rich field of lush grasses feed an already well-nourished herd of sacred cows.
These prize animals beckon us away from the marrow of bottom-up gospel
And each subtly tries to persuade us to avoid the prophetic stance and gesture.

However, small voices with Dublin accents continue to encourage and disturb
Whispering 'to betray the Beatitudes is to extinguish the horizons of love'
'We only know that God is close when someone actually worries about us.'

At the edges, a lifestyle and a spirituality of accompaniment takes many shapes
Walking-with and listening are fundamentally sacramental acts
Suggesting everything is grace.

God's ravishing, threatening dream that Cherry Orchard be a community of dignity
With solidarity, kinship, care and justice dominating
Is happening now... and that is scary.

Stay with Cherry Orchard's gift of being moulded and humanised and divinised
Humbly walk-with here, long enough and be receptive and liberated
Of our grand plans, cheap grace, self-importance and shallow optimism.

A self-forgetful immersion into the cries and laughs of the community
Helps us to search together in a less pretentious and simpler way
Listening, failing and encountering Christ in the wisdom of the excluded.

Casting off the trappings of having kingdom answers, we empty ourselves
Within the Cherry Orchard community, practising the risky gospel of encounter
And together we converse in a bruised and dirty street theology.

Privileged to live in the kinship of mutual, robust concern in this messy world
Leads us on to the cross of sacrifice and
To the unmerited joy of a lakeside, hot breakfast with friends.

Pottering and loitering and teaching and listening and mentoring and advocating in the North Wall and Cherry Orchard come down to the quality of our relating. Our neighbours on the street form our way of being, our identity and our lifestyle. Together, compassionate presence is incarnated. Collectively through many small, mutual engagements the Reign of God is shaped and revealed. The implications can be costly and transformative. Light touch, local networks of mutual empowerment are usually where the community experiences faith, hope and love.

Insomnia Daydreaming

Seán Beckett

14th Feb '17 I had an appointment in the Mater Hospital and afterwards I went to the Insomnia Café (near the new entrance) to have coffee and pass the time until Paul could pick me up. It would be hard to miss the Insomnia sign in the café as it is quite large and it caught my attention a lot during my time there. A dictionary explains 'insomnia' as lack of sleep/inability to sleep. I hadn't slept well the night before so I was feeling tired and knew what insomnia was about.



I wondered what 'insomnia' means to the Insomnia Coffee Company. On their website it says: 'Insomnia – Love being Awake!' and it also says that the 'Insomnia Way' shows that "**we're genuine and fun lovin' with a fresh approach to enjoying the little moments of life**". The company promotes Fairtrade and recycling.

Ok, that's enough of free publicity for Insomnia!

With time on my hands I let my mind wander and daydreamed

and reflected in a kind of a way on 'little moments of life'. ... and these are my daydreams

Hospital life is full of roles and uniforms. The colour of the uniform has significance in that it seems to denote a particular job or function and the importance of that 'job' on the scale of medical duties. There is a lot of movement of feet and traffic as duties involve carrying clipboards, carrying personal identity tags and pushing lift buttons, trolleys and wheelchairs.

Little moments of life.

As I sat having my cuppa, I noticed that quite a lot of people came and went. It was good to see that those who were sick (and receiving treatment) did not come to the café alone, they were all accompanied by family/friends. As it was the 14th February, it was especially nice for me to see a young couple sitting at a table lovingly holding hands.



I think my neighbourhood may experience insomnia or, if not, some people must sleep by day and be active at night. Nights in our neighbourhood can be enlivened with sounds of dogs barking, loud street conversations, screeching of

cars, fireworks, helicopter, police siren, shotguns and not forgetting parties! (The following day two children, aged 10/11, struggled in their Maths lesson because of lack of sleep. One child told me that he had got to sleep after 1am. At the other child's apartment block there was a party next door. The father went out three times asking them to turn down the noise!)

I'm guessing that a lot of people in our neighbourhood live in the present moment. They may not know anything about Mindfulness and are probably not too worried about it. They live day to day because of circumstances and lifestyle.

I'm guessing that a lot of people in our neighbourhood live in the present moment.

They may not be too concerned with the future as their present difficulties may cloud their thinking of consequences. (Many years ago I remember attempting to reason with a boy in class after I saw him climb a very high dangerous wall. His reply to me was "If I fall, I fall"! I was really surprised with his answer, it was so direct, matter of fact and even scary with no thought and concern for the consequences or the serious injuries he may receive!)

As I enjoyed Insomnia coffee and 'its little moments of life', I let my dreaming 'deepen a bit' and asked myself; 'How alert and focussed can I be or am I in my daydreaming moments?'

In moments like this how alert am I to the call and response of God, right now?! I think of moments of quiet, spent sitting in church or at home by candle light. There are moments spent in silent prayer, journaling and reflecting on a piece of scripture. There are moments spent by a lakeside or on a woodland trail.



There are moments of friendship spent with a friend in dialogue and sharing. I think of that special moment when parents become grandparents and the beginning again of new life! There are moments spent in the company of someone who is lonely and helpless. In these moments a different type of silence, support and comfort is needed and offered.

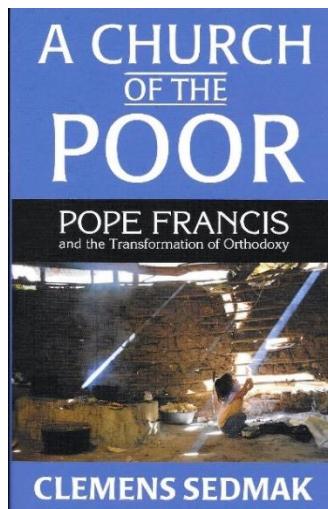
And just to add cream to your coffee, I'll offer you 'a moment's reflection' from Confucius:

"First there must be order and harmony within your own mind. Then this order will spread to your family, then to the community, and finally to your entire kingdom. Only then can you have peace and harmony."

(Irish GetUp & Go Diary 2016 pg 25)



Suggested Reading



A Church of the Poor: Pope Francis and the Transformation of Orthodoxy;

Clemens Sedmak

This book explores what it means for the Church to begin to embrace Pope Francis' vision of the poor church, stripped of its power and wealth. What are the implications of this self-emptying vision of the Christian life for personal discipleship, small Christian communities and the global Church? What will it take to become truly a Church of the Poor? For ourselves as Christian Brothers how can we begin to progress to become a congregation of the poor? This book takes us behind the rhetoric in order to explore the profound changes of outlook, ways of feeling and modes of action that need to happen. If, as people of the Gospel, we believe that the moral health and the spiritual wealth of the Church are measured by its commitment to the least among us, then we need to take very seriously the powerful reflections in this book.

Sedmak uses resources ranging from scripture to Catholic Teaching, to the Church Fathers to

argue that an authentic and faithful church is not one obsessed with dogma or ceremony, but one that is poor as Christ was poor, in the multifaceted sense of the phrase; compassionate, unattached to material wealth, focused on flourishing and right relationship with God.

This book develops its argument in five chapters. The first chapter, entitled ("The Joy of the Gospel,") offers a reading of *Evangelii Gaudium* as an invitation to a new praxis. It reconstructs the motif of "joy". The second chapter ("The Gospel of Joy") explores Jesus' efforts to build a Church of the Poor. Chapter three ("Poverty and the Wound of Knowledge") asks where the experience of poverty leads us. Chapter four explores our theological understanding of poverty in light of the Church's social teaching. The final chapter looks at the challenging issue of what it means for us to love God. A Church of the Poor will lead us to an understanding of "transforming orthodoxy."

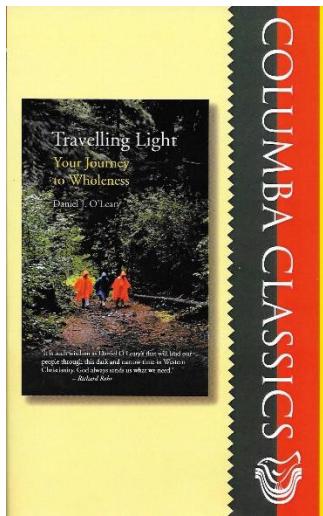
This book is clearly the product of desk-bound theology but its thesis and its questions make sense to those living at the edges and to those hearers of the cry of the poor. Pope Francis' vision of a Church of the Poor and his efforts at transforming orthodoxy, coupled with this book can act as encouraging stimuli to deepen bottom-up, local, street-level theology, so beloved by both Clemens Sedmak and our pontiff.

A Church of the Poor: Pope Francis and the Transformation of Orthodoxy; Clemens Sedmak, Orbis (2016).

Martin Byrne

Travelling Light

Daniel O'Leary



There are many beautiful images found throughout this book and I see this production as a handbook of meditations, reflections and resources. There are 29 relaxation/meditation exercises which O'Leary calls 'Breathers' and they include many references to breathing exercises, mantras and mindfulness. There is gentleness about this book, a warm invitation to engage and an encouragement to focus and become critically aware.

O'Leary tells us that the mystics "knew that we only become whole and radically holy when we learn to integrate our spiritual transcendent self with our personal, human and fleshy self". O'Leary has a sub-title to his book and this refers to '**Your Journey to Wholeness**'. This is evident as he covers themes such as our bodies, our souls, our fears, our self-esteem, our ego and our spirituality. He offers us pathways, directions, alternative routes and warning signs as we travel our journey of life.

O'Leary says that "when we believe that the body is in the soul rather than the soul in the body, and when we come alive to our senses and to our skin, and see them as guides and transmitters of energy and grace, our own lives can be transformed." In a sense he calls this the "*sacrament of the body*".

We are challenged to recognise and understand ourselves when we read; "... if we are to reach an appropriate maturity and responsible individuality, we must discern our egotism from our true self ..." O'Leary advises us that awareness is the means for us to growth in self-knowledge and spiritual consciousness. "We need to tame the tyrant-ego and nurture the co-creator-ego".

"The challenge of the spiritual life is not to make more and longer pilgrimages, to say more and longer prayers. It is to explore more deeply into what we already are so that we will live, like second nature, the good news which we already possess."

This book tells us about letting go and acceptance. It encourages us to become aware of our fears, our loss of self-esteem, our anger and depression. There is the warning about allowing ourselves become a victim, handing over to others the responsibility for our lives and giving permission to events and people to decide our moods and levels of misery.

Travelling Light, Your Journey to Wholeness; Daniel O'Leary; Columba Press, 55A Spruce Ave, Stillorgan Industrial Pk, Blackrock, Co. Dublin (2001).

Seán Beckett

MICHAEL MORWOOD

Faith, Hope, and a Bird Called George

A Spiritual Fable

Faith, Hope and a Bird Called George: A Spiritual Fable;

Michael Morwood.

In issue four of *Scribbles* (September 2015) I reviewed "Is Jesus God?" by Michael Morwood. I recently read and enjoyed this little gem, "Faith, Hope and a Bird Called George" by the same author. It goes over much of the same material but in a more accessible format – the format of a spiritual fable.

It is a simple, thought-provoking, challenging book which explores some of the topics which we often relegate to the domain of 'too difficult for mere mortals' and readily leave aside for the experts, the professional theologians.

In the story, Faith is a cat and Hope is a 79 year-old woman. George is a parrot which was formerly owned by a priest and lived most of its life in a presbytery where it imbibed all the wisdom of priestly conversations and discussions. The characters in the story lose none of their natural characteristics and this adds to the enjoyment and impact of the fable.

The book, essentially, is comprised of conversations and reflections involving the cat, the woman and the bird in which they challenge each other and think deeply about everyday things. When necessary, the woman calls on the help of her daughter, Helen and a local priest, Fr John, who is a scripture scholar.

The topics covered in the book include the following: Why do we exist? Why do we have life? What is the purpose of life? How are prayers answered? Where is God? What is heaven and where is it? Why suffering in our world? What is death? What did Jesus really teach?

The book is small format and has only 152 pages so, of necessity, none of these topics can be dealt with in depth.

The following quotations give a flavour of the approach taken:

“God is everywhere and everything gives God a way of coming to expression.”

“Well, why do we exist? Why do we have life?” Faith the cat said: “I live to be a cat; is that not enough, that I am what I am – a cat – and I try to be good at it?”

“Being human is a way of experiencing the mystery we call God.”

“I could see Faith (a cat) was challenging me to stop thinking as if the earth had been set up as a temporary home for humans until we went to where life really began – with God in heaven. This is what Jesus wanted people to understand. God’s presence is here. Act as if this were so God here all around us.”

“We are all in this together – in the constant cycle of death and new beginnings.”

“Think of death more as a change, a transformation, from the human way of living with God into some other way of living on with God.”

“I face my death mindful of life ending but trusting also that I will be transformed and will emerge into a way of existence totally beyond my human imagination.”

Many of the chapters end with the phrase “Imagine that!” and that’s probably all we can do with some of the contents of the book – imagine that!

Faith, Hope and a Bird Called George: A Spiritual Fable; Michael Morwood; Twenty-Third Publications (2010).

Footnote:

I recently rediscovered an essay by Michael Morwood titled: *“Christ? What happened to Jesus? – Rescuing Jesus from Traditional and Progressive Christologies”* (2012). It’s available on-line and worth a read.

Paul Hendrick

Prison Visits

In the context of Prison Visits (see March Scribbles), the following feedback from three of the prisoners who are being visited was passed on to us by the Prison Chaplain.

“The prison is like a village - everyone knows your business. That’s why I really like the privacy and the opportunity to talk. You just don’t get it anywhere else. It’s great!”

“It’s a nice feeling to be called for a visit which is not legal. It’s so depressing not to get a visit. I feel like I matter; that I’m not forgotten about; that someone cares about me.”

“I make sure to get myself spruced up for it so that I look well. I try to put on clean clothes and smell fresh”

A Final Note

It’s a great feeling to have another issue of Scribbles – the eleventh – put to bed.

Thankfully, while there are occasional moments of panic when inspiration appears to be scarce, we have managed to keep going!

We are grateful to our readers who support us with comments and suggestions.

The next issue of Scribbles is due out in early September.

Have a restful summer.

Martin, Seán, Paul.