

Praying the Paschal Mystery

by Brother Tom O'Dempsey

Paschal Living – Our Ascension to God IN Christ ...

Humanity uplifted to the Divine.

Br Tom O'Dempsey, now in his 70's, has been a member of a Catholic religious Order for fifty years plus, in Queensland, Australia. His life has been divided into three key ministries:

Firstly, his calling as a Secondary Teacher of religion and humanities subjects, for sixteen years.

Secondly, his calling to a full-time teaching prison ministry, with courses on self-knowledge, personal relationships, anger management, and drug and alcohol education. This was also for sixteen years.

Thirdly, a perhaps deeper call to a contemplative prayer ministry (seventeen years) – hopefully as A PRAYING HEART FOR OTHERS, *sans frontiers*.

The enduring focus of these prayer-poems is the Paschal Mystery, with a particular emphasis on Abba's EMBRACE of the Ascended Jesus – and thus, of us. This Embrace is the locus of all our prayer, of our being en-Spirited for MISSION, and of communing in the intimacy of the Fellowship within the Trinity.

*These poems are arranged chronologically: 1960 ... 2016.
apart from the first poem, No. 888 – "Faith: Our Journey into Now" (2008).*

Faith: Our Journey Into Now¹

*Faith is CO-JOURNEYING with Jesus,
Living HIS life, heartbeat by heartbeat,
As He lived it:*

*... a life, devotedly focussed, decision by decision,
On the Pass-over to His beloved Abba!*

*... Living His life, breath by breath, WITH HIM –
Not just by way of modelling it, repeating it,
But, with grace, by way of discovering and exploring it ...
Lovingly, as He did.*

*In doing so, we claim His human IDENTITY,
And crucially, His Eucharistic DESTINY –
As Abba gave it to Him,
And as HE chose to own it!
In truth, our faith-life is not our own, but HIS!
His Paschal CONSCIOUSNESS is OURS!*

*Thus, as the Creative Spirit enfleshes Jesus' Divinity
Within OUR struggling humanity ...
In faith, we too are INCORPORATED
Into the Divinely-human WONDER
Of Jesus Risen!*

*Our faith has us JOURNEY
Through Jesus' very own growth and development –
Ever growing in his single-hearted affection for Abba!
Ever maturing in the wisdom of sacrificial loving!*

*Our faith has us enter Gethsemane's garden of crisis –
Living our HIS heart's radical trusting
... Reversing, bit by bit, humanity's betrayal
In Paradise's garden, and in the unfolding human story.*

Our faith has

- *our hands RIVETED to HIS cross by our sins*
- *our lips, hoarsely entrusting our life into Abba's care*
- *our heart, slashed open and emptied of SELF,*
... yet being opened to the Spirit's entry!

Our faith has our spirits behold Abba's Easter Glory

Lighting our being from WITHIN:

- ... Divine joy, sun-shining, WITHIN us!*
- ... Divine life, thrilling, radiating, our humanity!*

Our faith has us swept up into the arms of Love!

Into the ecstasy of the Prodigal's return!

Into the Enrapture of Divine Fellowship

- *into the Father's most tender Embrace*
- *into the Spirit-who-is-Peace*
Breathing through our being!

Our faith has us – having breathed IN this Spirit –

Now breathing this Spirit FORTH into others,

Who CO-INDWELL us, IN Christ,

- *TOGETHER being swept up*
- *Into the Fellowship of Love,*
As Abba, Jesus and Loyce²
Live Their Life within us
Filling us with Their Joy!

Yet, this is not our journey's END

But its Eternal NOW

... For all things are EVER NEW in Christ

- *In Christ, who IS our journey, into NOW!*

1. Marian Valley Retreat (May), Eastertide 2008, Day 1

2. My familiar name for the Spirit who is, at once, LOVE and JOY and PEACE

True to Its Nature¹

*That crumpled piece of paper –
... How jagged it appears :
Born in complexity
Complicated chemistry,
Inorganic industry
It refuses ...
To stay crushed!*

*Cast aside, rejected,
It opens up again
To assert its inward-nature
... Of the pine tree it was before:
To again stand tall,
To unfold itself towards the sun
... To drink the light!
To rise to life!*

¹ This was my first ever poem composed as a 16 year old student in Year 11, Christian Brothers' College, Warwick

Christ Our Lord Has Come² *

*Christ our Lord, has come
The king of lowliness,
Glory be to God on high
And peace on earth to men.
Pouring forth His being
Into the hearts of men,
We now receive Christ's fullness,
As new-born sons of God.*

Refrain *O! Christ our Lord, Christ our Lord,
Christ our Lord is come!
O what peace and joyfulness
Have come through Mary's Son!
O! Christ our Lord, Christ our Lord,
Christ our Lord is come!
Obeying now the Father's will ...
Our hearts and lives He's won!*

*Budding forth as man
The fruit of Mary's womb,
Christ spreads forth His love divine
Upon the tree of life.
Just as we live and grow,
Through Christ, in Mary's womb,
We hope to die and rise in Christ,
Born glorious from the tomb!*

Refrain

² Composed in Warwick in 1961 as an 18 year old just before I left home for the Juniorate at Strathfield

* Meant to be sung. Tune: *Jingle Bells*

³*As Head, Christ came to birth,
From the altar of the cross;
The Church's birth into the world
Came forth from Christ's own side.
Christ first to Mary gave,
His flesh and blood divine
So now in Mary we all strive
To join with Christ our Head.*

Refrain

*To do, to teach, to die ...
To reveal His Father's love,
Christ came forth as King divine
As Saviour, Priest and Lord!
We learn to love in Christ
— The Father's Word of Praise —
While in the Spirit of Them both,
We love with His own love!*

³ Stanzas 3 and 4 were added in 1969 when the author was 25

Companionship with You⁴

*Dear Jesus,
Give me an appetite
For companionship with You
And your Blessed Mother.
Let me hunger for You
– To eat and drink Your Divine Body and Blood!
Let them flower into sanctity,
Within me ... every day.*

⁴ Composed as a 20 year old in 1964 in the Novitiate at Minto

Imitating You in Every Way⁵

*Jesus, I want to hero-worship You –
Imitate You in every way,
Love as you love,
Pray as You pray,
Follow Your lead regardless,
Relate and speak like You,
Act as You act.*

*Yes, Jesus, You are my hero!
I want to be in Your Presence always –
Either in Your sacramental Presence
Or Your Presence in the lives of others.
Help me yearn for You,
When, by sin or mediocrity,
I selfishly turn my back on You,
Or even crucify You!*

⁵ Written at Minto Novitiate, Sydney 1964

Cherish Me When I Suffer⁶

*Dear Mother Mary,
Keep me in close contact with Jesus
... Even as He gives His cross
To those who love.
Mary, because You are a mirror of Jesus
In your own suffering,
Cherish me when I suffer.
Let me never drink of the waters of the world;
But, in your care of me,
Nurture my vocation.*

⁶ Written in Mulgoa Second Novitiate 1965

A Single Human Cell ⁷

Realize afresh

That God became flesh:

You, my dearest Jesus

Humbling Yourself

To the confines

Of a single

Human

Cell

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⁷ Written at Mulgoa Second Novitiate 1965

A Celibate's Love⁸

*Just as
Christ bodies God for us,
And we reach out to touch, to embrace
The God we love
... So the vowed celibate
Embodies a sensitive, tender love,
That is not exclusive,
But includes all
... Bodying God to All*

*Thus by universalizing it,
Vowed celibacy enhances one's sexuality.
Both are at the service of our personality
Not vice versa;
Otherwise, the person becomes
A victim of part of himself.*

⁸ Written at Mulgoa Second Novitiate 1965

The Father Lives His Life in Us⁹

*When the Father shares His Life,
He remains the owner of it;
We share it with Him:
He lives it in us,
We live it in Him
... In His Beloved Son!*

⁹ Written at Mulgoa Second Novitiate 1965

Grace Builds on Nature¹⁰

*Grace builds on nature –
Not to cure, but to enhance,
Not to remake, but to uplift,
... To grace our nature,
To enlighten our humanity
With the Light of divinity.*

¹⁰ Written at Mulgoa Second Novitiate 1965

The Beauty of Becoming¹¹

*God loves growth;
God loves time;
God loves the beauty of becoming.
Not for us to short-circuit
This process of becoming:
God's face is revealed
In growth's evolution!
God's is the empowering!
God's, the glory!*

¹¹ Written in Second Novitiate 1965

The Earthly Soil of My Life ¹²

*Father,
May Yours and Jesus' Spirit of Love
Be 'The Praise of Your Glory' ¹³
Within me.*

*Jesus,
May Your beloved Mother lead me
To let Your Presence blossom
In the earthly soil
Of my life.*

*Spirit,
Move our hearts so that, together,
We may thirst for that love
Which unites us perfectly,
The love of a Blessed Son.*

¹² Written at Strathfield Sydney in teacher training 1966

¹³ This wonderful phrase comes from my reading of a book on Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity (Philipon), now Blessed Elizabeth. Eph 1:14

In Heartbeat Closeness¹⁴

*The Christian's desire ought to be
To experience God's love
Now
Within the present moment,
To rest in humility and simplicity
... Resting on Jesus' breast
– In the intimacy of Holy Communion –
In simple affection,
In heartbeat closeness
To the source of all vitality and love.*

¹⁴ Written at Strathfield Sydney in teacher training 1966

Loving Life into Those We Love¹⁵

*To be chaste as a vowed celibate,
Implies a loving acceptance of one's own sexuality,
And a willingness to nurture its growth
— So as to love life
Into those
We are CALLED to love virginally;
And yes! To love them with warmth and affection,
Such that our touch
Is not a taking
... But a giving one.*

¹⁵ Written at Strathfield Sydney in teacher training 1966

Wedding Us to Community¹⁶

*The Spirit longs
To wed us to community:
We need to allow the Spirit
To form us
Into the living tissue of community
– Both to welcome the attentiveness of others,
And to draw others to our hearts.*

¹⁶ Written at Burwood community during first pastoral ministry there 1967

The Father's Self Image, Come Alive¹⁷

God the Father's self imagery
... Of His wondrous goodness, knowledge and love ...
Is so perfect, it is vibrant with life itself:
Alive with life
In the very person of a Beloved Son!
Indeed, the Eternal Son is the perfect image,
The full expression of the Father's glory,
'The exact representation of the Father's being'¹⁸
... Hiddenly here, on earth,
But revealed, in full glory, eternally.

Jesus is the human face of the Father in the world
– 'Whoever sees me, sees the Father';¹⁹
He is the full expression of His Father's love in the world,
So that, when we meet Jesus, we meet the Father loving us.
For us,
Jesus is the Way to the Father,
The complete Truth about the Father,
And the life of the Father
– Offered to us and 'given for you'.²⁰
Indeed, Jesus is the full reality of the Father
Alive in the world!
... Father and Son differing only in personality.

¹⁷ Written at St Brendan's boarding College Yeppoon, 1971

¹⁸ Heb 1: 3

¹⁹ Jn 14: 9

²⁰ Lk 22:19

The Mutual Love of the Father and Son ²¹

*The Father and the Son love each other
Utterly and completely
– Their love for each other is so perfect,
It is vibrant with life:
Alive with life
In the very Person of the Living Love
Breathed forth between Father and Son
... Truly, the Spirit of Love.*

*As the personalized Mutual Love between Them
The Spirit is the Father's and the Son's
Source of unity.
Indeed, the Spirit is the Expression
Of all that They are together
... CENTERING who They are together.*

*The Spirit is ...
Their Joy!
Their Peace!
Their Beauty!
Their Glory!*

*Thus when the Spirit of Love dwells IN US,
We are at the Centre of God's Love.
We are loved by both Father and Son
With a love so perfect
We come alive in Their Love
– Given Life, as adopted sons and daughters,
Through Their Mutual Love
... The Spirit!*

²¹ Written at St Brendan's boarding College, Yeppoon 1971

With Jesus in Mind²²

*The Spirit of Love indwells us,
Only if we reproduce the image
Of being Jesus in our lives
... Only if we love as Jesus loves.
Loving thus, fits our human nature,
Because, we are made,
‘In the image and likeness of God’;²³
And, as Jesus is God’s perfect image and likeness,
It is clear that we were made WITH JESUS IN MIND
... Created with Jesus as the template,
... Patterned on His perfect humanity.
And the more we are like Jesus
The more His Father is attracted to us
And lavishes love upon us.*

²² Written at St Brendan’s boarding College, Yeppoon 1971

²³ Gen 1:26

The People of the Spirit²⁴

*When the Spirit of Love is given to us
Love, as a Person,
Is breathed forth into our person.
And, since this Loving Spirit
Is also the Spirit of Unity
Not only are we united, in love,
To the Father and Jesus,
But to all people
Within whom the Spirit dwells
We thus become one people
... The Spirit's people
– One in identity, one in heart, one in vision.*

²⁴ Written at St Brendan's boarding College, Yeppoon 1971

Being Jesus²⁵

*Being a committed Catholic,
Means BEING JESUS in our world:
... Loving as Jesus loves
... Opposing all that's un-Godlike,
Firstly in ourselves and then in others.
We strive, like Jesus,
'To hate sin, but love the sinner'
... Always avoiding hating ourselves or others
... Favouring what enhances, what is life-giving.*

*Our focus, always, is the God of Jesus
Who loves life into us and into others.
Being Jesus ...
We pray to become channels of the Father's love
– Of the divine love which enables all growth
To flourish in our lives :
... Healing the wounds with which we wound ourselves,
... Dousing the embers of enmity,
... And fanning to a flame, dreams of reconciliation
- All to the Praise of the Father's Glory!*

²⁵ Written at St Brendan's boarding College, Yeppoon 1971

The Forgiveness of Sin²⁶

*The Church wisely teaches
‘The Holy Spirit is the forgiveness of sin’.²⁷
Indeed, welcoming the Spirit’s presence into our lives
Sees sin vanish – as does night with the advent of day.
Still, while the Spirit NEVER withdraws His wondrous Presence,
Through sin, we snub God’s Presence,
Sustaining the pretence that the ever-present God is absent!
... As we, effectively, close in on ourselves.*

*We are all sinners,
And the Father of love
... Like the father of the prodigal son ...
‘Runs, throws his arms around us and kisses us tenderly’.²⁸
To avoid sin, we must pattern our life on Christ,
Of whom the Scriptures declare
‘God is a LOVER OF LIFE’.²⁹*

*Thus, to identify with Christ,
We need to become 100% lovers of life
... Loving the Father, in Christ,
With ALL
Of our heart, our understanding, and our strength,
... And loving others,
Equally
– 100%*

²⁶ Written at St Brendan’s boarding College, Yeppoon 1971

²⁷ Eastertide Mass Prayer, from Eph 1:7

²⁸ Lk 15:21

²⁹ Wis 11:26 (JB)

Our Utterly Selfless Brother³⁰

*'The life of man upon earth is a warfare,' Scripture insists.*³¹

Nowhere is it more a warfare than WITHIN US

– The warfare see-sawing between our stark selfishness

And our longing to be like Jesus

... The truly best of human beings

... And our utterly selfless brother.

This warfare surges to and fro –

Between loving with integrity, and lusting;

Between being warmly open-hearted, and being possessive and greedy;

Between empowering others, and centring all on self;

Between being caring and forgiving, and being spiteful and hard-hearted;

Between Christian social responsibility, and self-absorbed irresponsibility.

This warfare ought to sensitize us

To the Christian realization

That 'I am a sinner'

– That is, I always love imperfectly, yet need constantly to imitate Jesus;

I am attracted by sin but find it never satisfies;

I cannot trust my own strength while avoiding sin.

I therefore NEED

Christ's divinely human strength

Because Jesus is, at the same time

Both all-LOVING and all-EMPOWERING!

³⁰ Written at St Brendan's boarding College, Yeppoon, 1971

³¹ Job 7:1 (Douay-Rheims)

A Graced Change of Heart³²

*With sin, our hearts close in,
Focussing on our self ... or on one or other of God's creatures
– Failing to stay open to the WHOLE of life
To ALL God is for us!*

*With a graced change of heart,
We apologize to the Father of Love,
For our attempts to LIMIT His love.*

*Then, with hearts hopefully opened to the Spirit's Presence,
We set ourselves to re-imitate Jesus
– Both in the wonderfully integrating relationship with His Father,
And in His open, inclusive human relationships
... Ever mindful
That all such caring, healing life-choices
Are, always, gifts of the Spirit.*

³² Written at St Brendan's boarding College, Yeppoon 1971

The Transcending Gift of Presence³³

*Our own human spirit
Is that dimension of us whereby we share
In the deep personal presence of others
... Such that we entertain each other's spirit,
And, thus, numerous spirits together
– All timeless, spaceless realities –*

WITHIN our spirit.

Thus, our spirit allows us

TO BE

Our inner selves, within others

And they, within us.

*And, superlatively, transcendingly,
In a unique and transformative way
Father, Son and Spirit share Their Presence with us
In the deepest centre of our spirit.
They do so, utterly and completely,
Offering us
ALL WHO THEY ARE TOGETHER.*

*For our part, we embody our spirit's response
To Their Presence within*

*By humbly acknowledging, ALWAYS –
That all the graces we receive in this Encounter,
That all our own responses to Their Presence,
Are GIFTS*

*– Love's sheer, unconditional gifts of love,
Gifts, wondrously accompanied
By the Giver of the gifts!*

*And marvellously, this Presence, these gifts,
Enhance and dignify us
Through the whole of our life
... 'Grace unto grace'³⁴*

'Until we become, humanly, fully mature in Christ'³⁵

³³ Written at St Brendan's boarding College, Yeppoon 1972

³⁴ Jn 1:16

³⁵ Eph 1:13

Indwelling Our Whole Reality ³⁶

*Father, Son and Spirit, dwelling within us
– And inviting us to dwell, ever more deeply, with them –
Are, Mysteriously, forever beyond –
The reach of our touch,
The reach of our imagination,
The reach of our emotions,
The reach of our thinking,
The reach of our will
... Eluding all human efforts
To initiate or to control Their Presence.*

*However, even unchurched, our spirits can reach Them
Through prayer
... Graced prayer ...
Or, by sharing Their silence with Them.
By drawing us, within ourselves,
To Their silent centre,
They allow us to somehow sense
Their Presence
As They rejoice in Their Love for each other,
And for us, in Christ.*

*Wondrously, moreover, Father, Son and Spirit
... Knowing our inability to initiate any Encounter,
Also choose lovingly to DRAW us to Themselves
In a persuasive, exterioralized way
– In an outpouring of generosity –
Through Their historical self-revelation in the Scriptures,
And in Their Covenant of Election and Obligation.*

*Then, astoundingly, in a divine deluge of love,
Father, Son and Spirit
Step so decisively into our lives
... That Their Covenant of Calvary, Church and Indwelling Intimacy,
Divides our history into two ...
Around the Person of Jesus Christ
– The Sacrament of Their presence in the world.*

³⁶ Written at St Brendan's boarding College, Yeppoon 1972

*Now bodying Their Presence to us through His Church,
Their overwhelming choice of Encounter
Is to gather a People together, within Their Paschal Mystery,
Through the Ascended Jesus' loving sacramental ACTIONS
... All within the encompassing sacrament of His Church.*

*Superlatively They draw us, through the Eucharist
– Into a co-enactment
Of the WHOLE Paschal Mystery
... Culminating
In our adoption as brothers and sisters
Of the Ascended Jesus
– Through His sharing of the Paschal Spirit with us.*

*This Uplifting to the divine
Usbers in a new era for our humanity
– Individually and communally –
Wherein the Trinity of Love's
New deeply PERSONALIZED indwelling
Makes us 'sharers in the divine nature'.³⁷*

A Wedding Made in Heaven ³⁸

*Rationally, within marriage, for each to LIMIT their sharing
To a pledged 50% contribution*

... So a sense of wholeness and oneness can be arrived at ...

Can be very persuasive.

However, the folly of this earnest arrangement,

Jesus suggests,

Can be easily demonstrated:

For, as each gives 50%,

An obvious 50% is retained for one's self

– A clear recipe for a contentious, self-focussed marriage.

No, Jesus' wisdom enjoins each to give 100%

– Each to surrender themselves FULLY to the other –

Whereby 'the two shall become one' ...

For 'they are no longer two, but one body'. ³⁹

Husband and wife are united WITHIN

... Through Jesus' Spirit of Love

Because, being a SACRAMENTAL action of God,

Marriage is an enabling sign of Christ's UNITIVE PRESENCE.

This enabling Unitive Presence

Is that Face of the Paschal Mystery

Wherein the Ascended Jesus draws to Himself,

In deepest intimacy,

An ever-assembling Church, as His glorious BRIDE.

³⁸ Written at St Brendan's boarding College, 1972

³⁹ Mt 19: 5-6

A Time for Choice⁴⁰

There is a natural developmental time
– *Around seventeen or eighteen years*
 For most –
For a primal religious choice to present itself
... *With one's capacity then sufficiently developed*
To minimally grasp or at least sense –
 What it means to transcend time
 ... *To be eternal,*
 What it means to be
 All loving,
 All empowering,
 With a universal reach,
 With a heart truly open to all.

For some of these ...
 This natural development,
 Together with personal receptivity to Grace,
 Allows them, much more really, to CHOOSE CHRIST
 – *The Christ who enters our history,*
 And who draws it and our renewed humanity,
 ... *Into the centre of eternity,*
 Into the heart of God.

These young adults,
 By allowing their identities to be merged with Christ's,
 Come to share in His trans-historical consciousness,
 And, more wondrously, to share in His Paschal humanity's
 Eternalizing experience of God's Embrace.

There are those, of course, who stall in their natural development
– *Becoming locked in a mid-teen's limited spiritual horizons,*
– *Or allowing their spirit's opening to the eternal*
 To be stifled
 ... *By their confining life-choices.*

⁴⁰ Written at St Brendan's boarding College, Yeppoon 1972

*And, further, there are those who baulk
At the deeper level, unwilling to surrender their identity
To Christ :
Unable to welcome Christ to live His LIFE in them,
Unable to choose to live their life in Him.*

*In the face of all this,
Faithful spirits
Open their hearts WIDER STILL
To draw in
The grace of sweet surrender to Christ
FOR OTHERS
... All others
— So all can move
Into the full flowering
Of both their natural and Paschally graced,
Humanity.*

Being Human is Being Kind ⁴¹

*In opening to the fullness of being human,
Jesus acted justly, loved tenderly,
And walked humbly with His God. ⁴²
Jesus continues to love His humanity
And loves to walk with us as a fellow human being
... For this is His cherished yearning
— To brother us
As sons and daughters of the same wondrous Father.*

*Jesus came to show us
That being-of-our-kind
Is the CORE REASON
For our being KIND to each other.
As the perfect human,
Jesus radiated human kindness
... Showing us what it is to be essentially human.*

Jesus highlighted

- *How those who sin are UNKIND
Being what they ought not be ... un-human, inhumane.*
- *How those who WANT to be unkind,
Want to be NOT OF OUR KIND
... That is, a loner, a self-centred individual.*
- *How to be KIND
Is to be a loving family person,
To be like Himself
... The Father's BELOVED Son
... The focus of the Divine Family.*

*Most crucially, Jesus showed with His life,
That He died FOR OUR KIND,
So we became 'members of one another', ⁴³*

⁴¹ Written at St Brendan's boarding College, Yeppoon 1972

⁴² Micah 6:8

⁴³ Eph 4:25

Die My Sins⁴⁴

*Die my sins with Christ! O die!
Die my sins with Christ ... O Christ!
Pained, contorting, crucified –
With You.
Thrust them into hell, O Christ :
In the furnace of Your great torment
Let die –
All my crass desires – yes, all!
Sear self to its roots – O, yes ...
Die my sins with Christ – entomb!
Leave – just what ought to be, within ...
Christen what remains; Enthuse!
Then ... Smile ...
Rise through pain with You, and vow
Never! – sin again: God's Death –
Prevent!
Brace me with Your strength – renew;
O Spirit me Yourself, O Christ,
Breathe forth into me – not smite!
Brother all to me: blood of Yours ...*

*Mary, Mother us: Lings, Browns, Bantus too
Enfold ...
Christ's will's tongue's hand, we'll be!
Soon – Spirit us away; no – stop:
Here! Work!
Within us form Your Christ, O Spirit ...
That the Father see in us, HIS Son –
And do what's His to do –
Father children ...
Glory!
Yes! God .. Is .. Family ...
O Torrents of Joy, O Rivers of Peace –
O God – O God – O God*

⁴⁴ Written at St Brendan's boarding College, Yepoon 1972

Of the Teenage Christ⁴⁵

*O Holy Spirit of the Father and Christ,
Living deep within me,
Shine forth through my thoughts and words and actions,
So that they may become for others
– The thoughts and words and actions
Of the teenage Christ.*

*Strengthen me to respect others' feelings,
Their reputations and property,
To be pure in my friendships
And to respect myself as a home for You,
The Spirit of the Father and Christ.⁴⁶*

⁴⁵ Written at St Joseph's College community, Gregory Terrace, 1973

⁴⁶ One of six prayer-poems (29-34) composed which, with other prayers, formed a booklet for morning prayer for mid-Secondary classes which the author taught in the '70's and '80's. Some changes were made to the prayer-poems through the years.

A Teenager's Prayer to Mary⁴⁷

*Mary, virgin, Mother of God:
Let us be wholehearted in our service of God.*

*Mary, Mother of our Redeemer:
Keep us loyal to Your Son.*

*Mary, favourite daughter of the Father:
Form in us, a true respect for girls.*

*Mary, temple of the Holy Spirit:
Let me also respect myself as His temple.*

*Mary, Mother of Jesus the man:
Let me respect ALL of humanity:
Black and white, rich and poor,
Successful and unsuccessful,
Winners and losers.*

⁴⁷ Written for teenagers at St Joseph's College community, Gregory Terrace, 1973

Prayer in Paschaltime⁴⁸

*Jesus, by Your having become God-Man,
I thank You
For wanting to carry the guilt of my sins,
For being the model of our humanity.*

*Jesus, by Your Death,
Do to death
My sins of thought, of speech, my sinful actions;
Strengthen me in temptation.*

*Jesus, by Your Resurrection,
Revitalize me with Your Life,
The Life of a loving Son.
Form in me a new relationship to Creation.*

*Jesus, by Your Ascension,
In Your glorious re-newed humanity,
Unite us to Your Father
... Winning for us Your Spirit of Love.*

*Jesus, by Your Bestowal of the Spirit,
Let us shine forth that Spirit in our lives
– To form communities of love,
And my own family of love.*

*Father of Jesus,
Father us, as You Father Your Son
... With Your promised Gift,
The same Spirit of Love,
The Seal of our adoption
– Given to Him, for us!*

⁴⁸ Written for teenagers at St Joseph's College community, Gregory Terrace, 1973

Apology to God⁴⁹

*Lord Jesus Christ, I apologize and beg pardon
For my sins and failures.
I detest them, because I bring about for myself
... Eternal loneliness and misery in hell,
Because they have crucified You, my loving Saviour,
And, most of all, because they represent
My failure, in love, for You,
And my lack of concern for my neighbour.*

⁴⁹ Written for teenagers at St Joseph's College community, Gregory Terrace, 1973

Eucharistic Thanksgiving⁵⁰

Most loving Abba,⁵¹

Father of tenderness and compassion,

Fathering us within everlasting love,

We thank You for Your wonderful Gift

... The fulfilment of every human heart

— Jesus, Your Beloved, whom You love indescribably

— Jesus, our Way of Love, the Truth of love, our Life of Love.

Jesus, lover of life,⁵²

Reveal this love of life to me.

Because of my deeply rooted failings

Be my Saviour again.

Renew my joy in Your Presence

... So that I may truly glorify

And bear God in my body.

Because, brother Jesus, You do not redeem us

From our weaknesses but IN our weaknesses ...

Bring me to accept who I am in Your sight now,

And help me to bear my cross daily and follow You.

Let Your Presence blossom in the fullness of Your Spirit.

⁵⁰ Written for teenagers at St Joseph's College community, Gregory Terrace 1973

⁵¹ 'Abba' – a later editing, see note on Poem 40

⁵² Wis 11: 26 (JB)

*Holy Spirit of Abba and Jesus,
Gentle comforter in the heart,
Stir my heart to accept
With deep humility and yearning
... You, O wondrous Gift of Love
Help me to surrender myself wholly,
Through Jesus to Abba.
Flood Jesus' love for Abba into my heart,
And thus into the hearts of others.
Empower with Your guidance, Your peace and Your joy
All those who have a special claim on my love.
May you be the Praise of Abba's Glory within me. ⁵³*

Use Me to Make You Loved⁵⁴

*Jesus, may Your Spirit
Use me, to make You loved
– That my life may radiate Yours
... Even through my failures.
I need Your help, Jesus,
Your special brothering.
The world needs Your light.
May I so live
That I become a light for others,
Leading them to You
– ‘The way, the truth and the life.’⁵⁵*

⁵⁴ Written for teenagers at St Joseph’s College community, Gregory Terrace, 1973

⁵⁵ Jn 14:6

Any One of God's Faces⁵⁶

Any one of God's faces

Is the face of any other:

Be it giving, receiving, freeing ...

Be it loving, choosing, creating.

Because the Father, Jesus and the Spirit

Share all these AS ONE ...

They are utterly poor, utterly rich,

Utterly dependent on each other,

Yet utterly free.

They are creatively loving,

Yet lovingly creative.

They are communally divine

Yet divinely personal.

⁵⁶ Written at St Joseph's College community, Gregory Terrace, 1975

Our Loving God⁵⁷

*Our loving God,
Father, Son and Spirit,
ATTRACTS US
To what is of Them
... As it is beautied forth in every creature.*

Careful, lest we be captivated by the creature

*Our graced destiny
Is to allow ourselves
To be ATTRACTED
By our adorable, irresistibly beautiful God
... To behold ... to experience ...
The life-centering BEAUTY
Of Their ecstatic Communing together.*

⁵⁷ Written at St Joseph's College community Gregory Terrace, 1975

I Am Not My Own⁵⁸

*I love You, my beloved Jesus,
I love You more than myself ...
Because I am not my own
But Yours!
I repent for ever having offended You,
Because You
Are so good!
Never permit me
To separate myself from You again;
Grant that I may love You always,
And then do with me
As You desire ...*

⁵⁸ Written at Clairveaux College Community, Mount Gravatt 1976.

I was Deputy Headmaster in the mornings and three days a week, from noon into night, attended the University of Queensland for a two-year Master of Literary Studies.

A Freedom, Enshrined Eternally⁵⁹

Human nature cannot be fully explained:

It is forever OPEN

– To the Presence of God!

Moreover, while humanity's core and dignity are unchanging

– Even if not fully explicable –

We do change, in areas that are open

To human freedom

... A freedom, enshrined, Eternally

Within the freeing will of God.

⁵⁹ Written at Clairveaux College Community, Mount Gravatt, 1977

At the Service of the Community⁶⁰

Call to mind ...

One can only gift one's spouse, one's friend

With a gift of love

That is birthed in the heart of a community.

To complete the cycle,

Such love always needs, ultimately,

To be at the SERVICE

Of the community

... 'So that ALL may be one'.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Written at St Patrick's College community, Mackay, 1978. I was the College Deputy Headmaster

⁶¹ Jn 17: 22

Call Me, Gift Me, Send Me ⁶²

(AS FROM JESUS ... AND BECAUSE OF OUR ADOPTION... FROM US, IN HIM:)

O Abba,
CALL me, through Your Spirit,
That I may continue to seek Your Presence
Al through each day and night,
With whoever I am with
... Always discovering You in the present moment.

O Abba,
GIFT me with Your Spirit,
That I may ever be reconciled with You ...
Dwelling in the heart of the family or community,
And accompany You in each wounded person.

O Abba,
SEND me ... Your Spirit
– To move me to worship You
... Dwelling in the heart of a group
Gathered in Your name;
And in every open-hearted individual.
With the Spirit's prompting,
Move me, further,
To serve and tend to You,
IN them.

⁶² Written at the National Tertianship, Marsfield, Sydney, early 1980

The National Tertianship was held at Vaughan College from January through to March 1980, and comprised a group of same-aged Brothers from across Oceania. The author was aged 37 and wrote: 'This was a watershed course in two ways (1) God's key gift to me – 'God first loves me in every instance i.e., loving God is only ever a response to God's initiative and (2) I began from this time in my life to address the Father AS JESUS DID – in the second person, with the familiar 'Abba'.

