

John 14. 23-29

It may seem to be an oxymoron, but in my formative years, I was raised up by *fallen* women from a *Magdalen asylum* in Adelaide, commonly called *The Refuge*. From being a maiden filly, my mother romped home winner in the fertility or maternity stakes. Beginning with twins, she had five children under the age of six years. *The Refuge* ladies stayed overnight as nannies. My father was a seldom seen over-worker. All he seemed to do was to lay the keel while Mother built and launched each ship. I felt terribly abandoned and alone at night. We lived on the corner of a busy street and car lights swirled around the room like Min Min. Monsters creaked corridor floorboards. I hoped they had already eaten the babies and wouldn't want me. It was no use crying out; the Magdalen ladies had loved the bottle too much to hear.

Being left abandoned was never Jesus' ideal. He says today "My Father and I
will come and make our home with them." (John 14.23)

At present I work in an outer-Western suburbs school where some parents have been seduced by an *edifice complex*, a craze to build mega-mansions putting bricks before babies instead of babies before bricks. With both parents working impossible hours, the love-starved kiddies claw for attention. "Father Walter, you are the best chapel man that's ever been invented," said one perceptive treasure. Another future *Lonely-Hearts* columnist asked "Can we not call you Father Walter, but Grandfather Walter?" Pre-school is available at picanniny daylight and after school. Grandparents queue enormous vehicles in an oval corral across from the school and drive in to dismount when it is their turn to collect their charges. But other children plod wearily away with a latch key to an abandoned, empty house. Jesus, who homed with us at cosy little Nazareth, never intended this.

It's a free country. We can *choose to be lonely*. We can choose to be social solitaires, sometimes existing in a state of undeclared cold war with our loved ones. Some of my family chose this path. When I allegedly excommunicated myself to a cool place in hell by leaving the one, true Church and joining what they considered to be a false faith community founded on the filthy lust of Henry V111, and worse, marrying an Anglican, not only did no one come to our wedding but some did not speak to me for quite a long time. When they did, it was to accuse "You killed our mother!" even if it took her another fourteen years to be gathered to her late husband in the sky.

Being wrought of puny brain, I had believed that, ultimately, all things work together to the good to them that love the Lord, so I left open the door to my fractured family, hoping that time, "the nurse and breeder of all good," might heal the relationship, might heal their poisoned minds. But, the more I tried to offer rapprochement, reconciliation, the worse it seemed to be. After nearly a quarter century of marriage, my Jezebel wife is still not welcome in my former home. So, nor am I. How pathetically stupid it is! Sadly there were so many years and so many joys I could not share with them. I have had to leave them to wander among the nostalgic tombs of their former hopes and dreams in having a priest in the family, because the real priest they once gloried in has become a Judas and gone over to the dark side. If she ever has business to transmit, one sister still addresses communication to "Mr. Kevin McEntee," the name I had before being given Walter in religion. While alive, our mother used cross over the street to avoid a parishioner who constantly asked how was Mrs. McEntee's "priestly son?" The friendship was so intensely superficial between the pair that my mother had never got to know her name!!

When I was tripping the light fantastic toe, riveted to steam radio's *Doctor Paul* or was it *When a girl marries*, that was sub-titled "for all those who are in love and for all those who can remember?" the tune that I then hummed was "What the world needs now is love, sweet love; it's the only thing there's too little of." Today, Jesus promises for those who are in love with him "and keep my word, the Father and I will come and make our home with them." Jesus did this. At his birth, when old Simeon took in his arms the baby bundle of Good News, he proclaimed him as "the light of revelation and consolation of Israel," the daystar to cheer the darkness.

If God had wanted to talk to possums, God would have become a possum. To speak with humans, Jesus homed in on us to take on every aspect of our human nature, in order to give us matchless, selfless responses in the language of Godself as a balm for every pressing human need, situation and wound. He came to home with us, to dispense

mighty remedies to allay the fever of folks' every trouble. He came to ennerve any spinelessness, to make us sterner than steel in our confession that Jesus is Lord, as Pentecost will prove. He came to pitch his tent with us, to show us by personal example how to make our homes a haven of intimate hospitality and welcome for outsiders and a peaceable comfort and relaxation for insiders. The image of Jesus as homemaker is, alas, not so well developed in Christian spirituality, because, for too long, too many undomesticated celibate clerics have had too much say.

Having sojourned with us, like Aslan in C.S.Lewis' *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, Jesus will go on to fulfil the great prophecies which point to both their deaths on the stone table and on Calvary. Then, both will slumber awhile only to be resurrected as foretold. Then having given his lacklustre disciples a forty- day intensive re-education, Jesus, the go-between-God, will go back to heaven to send his Holy Spirit, as an equally intimate companion to having a living, breathing Jesus, who will live in us, to show us we are no more abandoned and alone and that any feeling of separation, that God seems far away, is now an illusion. Jesus' Holy Spirit is an illuminator, a fresh lamp to our path to enlighten our darkness, a gleam to make the gloaming light, so that we may untwist the knots of troublesome perplexity, such as why should bad things happen to good people. Yesterday, the ashes of a stillborn were buried in our plot; our world is still a work in progress.

The Holy Spirit of Jesus is an unwearied comforter to console us in sad sorrow, an ever-present counsellor to guide us through heart-rending affliction and cruel adversity. The Holy Spirit comes with words to the grieving heart, like the harmony of the harps of heaven, like a divine handkerchief to dab away a mourner's tears, to give us the sure and certain hope of meeting again in a better world those we have loved long since and lost awhile in this vale of tears.

Lastly, the Holy Spirit's coming will usher in a reign of peace, well-being and inner calm. It shall not be a slumbering peace as my drink-sodden Magdalen ladies nightly knew, but an active peace, where we are called to be a replacement Jesus. Here below, he afflicted the comfortable while he comforted the afflicted. He warns us that his peace will not be as the world gives and that we must work on strenuously, unselfishly and loyally until the kingdom comes as fully on earth as it is in heaven. We will then have been a vital part of the kingdom's coming, and we cannot do much better than that, now can we?

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