



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

Scribbles from the Margins 3

June 2015

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Ritual dance

Paul Hendrick

Recently I participated in a cosmology/ecology programme which further opened my eyes to the new creation story and some of its implications. The course consisted of talks, rituals, discussions, reflections, walks in the countryside, outdoor Eucharistic celebrations, art, organic gardening, cooking and ritual dance.

Being tone deaf and possessed of a dodgy back and a poor sense of rhythm, I looked forward to this last with some trepidation. However, the gentle approach taken meant that, while I can't say I ever achieved spontaneity, a lot of my foreboding was unfounded.

I thought my flirtation with ritual dance was over when I had

completed the course but I had yet to learn that the dance goes on.

It was the third time his parents had to make funeral arrangements for one of their children

Shane's brother, Peter, died tragically abroad. It was the third time his parents had to make funeral arrangements for one of their children. After the usual delays involved in inquests and repatriating the remains, Peter was laid out in the front room of their council house. Because of the tragic nature of Peter's death, Shane didn't have a chance to say a proper 'good-bye' to the brother he loved. During a lull in the

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stream of visitors who called to pay their respects, he found himself alone in the room with his brother's remains.

...to the rhythm of music which only he alone could hear.

Shane stood at the foot of the coffin and looked at the framed photograph of his brother which had been placed on the lid. The eyes appeared to be staring straight at him. After a while, he sat on a chair but the eyes followed him. He stood up again and moved about the room. No matter where he went, the eyes followed.

Some urge took over the usually shy, reserved Shane – he doesn't know where it came from. He danced around the coffin to the rhythm of music which he alone could hear. Happy memories of his big brother crowded into his head:



- Peter and himself jockeying horses along the canal bank on summer days;
- Their shared love of birds;
- Peter looking out for him when they were in prison together;
- Peter organising groups to go to the prison gym and

acting as a personal trainer for each of them;

- his own joy when Peter spent six months in a treatment centre 'down the country' and came out 'clean' for the first time in years.

The list went on and on.

At first, the tsunami of memories was reflected in the chaos of the movement. The dancer weaved, bowed, turned, twisted, jumped, skipped, walked. Gradually, the pace got slower and slower, more and more gentle. What started as frenzy became easy, flowing movement. Finally, the dancer lay on the floor, drained.



Shane stood up. The eyes of the photograph no longer followed him. Good-byes had been said. Big brother and dancer were at peace.

The ritual was over.

And the dance goes on.



Creative Writing

(On Thursday nights some of the women's group engage in creative writing sessions. The following pieces, penned by Geraldine, were inspired by the pictures and photographs which accompany them).

Invisible

"I'm here, can you see me. I'm asking for your help. Please don't pass me by. My children are so hungry. I'm not asking for much, just a few pennies to get milk and bread.

I'm here, can you help?

Oh! the shame of it, having to stand on a corner begging for money to feed my kids.



Oh God, keep them safe. I had to leave them alone in a cold house with no heating or light. I'm so sorry. I said: 'I'll be back soon, don't be afraid, mammy loves you'.

I'm here, can you see what's in my hand?

Just a few pennies that's all I need. But the people just keep walking by. Maybe I'm dreaming and I'll wake up in the morning and will

have food on the table and the lights will be on and the house will be warm".

"There you go love and I hope this will help," as the sound of money hits the bottom of the cup. "I'm here and I can see you".

This is not a dream.

Dad

"Dad can you hear me?"

"Are you here, go away son."

"Ah, so you know it's your son

Come home man, we need you in our lives, look at the state of this place and look at the state of you."

"Leave me in my thoughts son. I can't go back to that house. It has too many memories."

"If ma could see you now, feeling sorry for yourself. Do you want to drink yourself to death."

"I can't go on without her. She was my life and my world."



"Ah da, what about your kids and your grandkids? They lost one grandparent and mother. We can't lose you. We will help you. Please da, come home and we will laugh at the happy times we had with ma. Come on da. It is this place that is making you so sad

and the drink is not helping you. You're my da and I love you.

"I love you son."

"That's it Da; let's go home, home to the family that loves you"

The Tree

This will be the last time I'll come to say hello my friend as you are getting old, just like me; your beautiful bark is all cracked and breaking away just like my bones. Your beautiful branches, which once blossomed with lovely white flowers, have fallen off. As I look down at your roots I see all the grass that once covered them has faded away, just like my thoughts, my friend.



So I say to you now, good bye and when we meet again it will be in a place where we won't get old and your branches will bloom forever.

And I will stay young, my beautiful tree.

Boot

As I hear the sound of heavy boots coming up the stairs, I turn to my sister, whispering, "Wake up, wake up. Its daddy, he's home from work."

We always knew it was daddy by the noise of his boots along the landing floor. He would open the



door very slowly. I think he thought that we were asleep. He would walk to our bed to kiss us good night.

"We are not asleep da." we would say.

"And why not?"

"Your boots are very noisy da."

He would laugh. "They are heavier than me," he would say. "I must take them off when I come home from work before I come up to say good night," he would say.



In the summer of 2014 the community in Cherry Orchard appealed to the Brothers in the European Province for help with the setting up of a fund to assist with our outreach work in The North Wall and Cherry Orchard. Over €4,800 was contributed both by communities and individual brothers. We were truly delighted with the response and are most grateful.

The following is a summary of the expenses to date:

<i>Assistance with funerals (2)</i>	<i>€150</i>
<i>Contribution towards Thursday Night Adult Classes</i>	<i>€300</i>
<i>Holidays in Wexford for Cherry Orchard ladies</i>	<i>€420</i>
<i>Prison Visits (34)</i>	<i>€670</i>
<i>Day retreat in Emmaus</i>	<i>€150</i>
<i>Help with Groceries & Household</i>	<i>€300</i>
<i>Donation</i>	<i>€220</i>
<i>Bank charges</i>	<i>€ 37</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>€2,347</i>
<i>Balance</i>	<i>€2,453</i>

OUTREACH FUND

Contributions to the Outreach Fund are always welcome

Retreat/Workshop

The community here in Cherry Orchard hosted a number of Brothers and others for a six-day retreat/workshop in July 2013, in May and July 2014 and in May of this year. The theme of the retreats was: "Searching for Mystery in Marginal Communities".

It is our intention to offer another such retreat, starting on Monday, July 27th and ending on Saturday, August 1st.

The retreat, which is non-residential, begins at 9.30 each morning and finishes around 4.45 p.m. with a later finish on Wednesday and Saturday. The maximum number of participants on each retreat is ten due to the limited space available and the nature of the reflections and sharings.

The cost is €150 which includes lunches, coffee breaks and materials. If the cost is an obstacle to anyone's participation, some sponsorship is available. We hope to have a mix of religious and non-religious on each retreat.

If you are interested in participating in this retreat, or if you would like more information, please contact any one of us.

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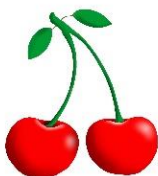
In one week around here – it's normal

Martin Byrne

"If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us walk together."

*Lila Watson,
Australian Aboriginal woman*

Neither kinship, love nor mercy are true or indicative of God if they are exercised on the basis of injustice.



In One Week Around Here - It's Normal

Gemma, heroic mother of a young family walked out of her Ballymun house
She didn't want her kids growing up as joy riders and junkies
Now she's renting in Fettercairn and is blacklisted for five years by the Council
She's struggling financially, big time, but is sleeping better
That's normal around here.

Nineteen-year-old, hooked past-pupil spent the bank holiday weekend crying
Suicidal now, beyond the ken of dissipated helping hands, in family and community
Limping interventions, in the habitual darkness and haze of addiction
"Too late now for change or hope," his pain sighs
That's normal around here.

Local school robbed, relieved of its unbolted new computers
While vile abuse is uploaded onto the invaded Facebook account of a youngster
On Tuesday I was awoken by a volley of shots aimed at a neighbour's house
Later a lad I know had his car stopped with two fellows trapped in the boot
That's normal around here.

Such wild stories affront our comfortable normality, no need for us to fire-fight.
What goes on in Cherry Orchard would never be allowed to happen in Marino
There, the poverty of Kibera or North Wall is close enough on the television screen
We prefer to talk about it, be entertained by it, and give charity to it at a distance
That's normal around here.



Jesus was about an alternative, and declared our gated, 'disengaged normal' as sin
Evacuating our 'silos of entitlement' and living in kinship as if all lives matter
Was his dream that he paid a serious price for.
"No good" he said, "wishing it were different, attending seminars or immersions"
Committed, caring, animated and angry are normal for Jesus' disciples.

The regular week in the North Wall mocks our top-down strategies and our pieties
Funding projects, love-bombing, toxic charity and desktop advocacy can harm
Few prophetic voices can penetrate our accustomed veils of indifference
And the dignity, respect, wisdom and voices of poor people are blanked
That's normal around here.

In our arrogance we may have outgrown a theistic God as our judge
But, both history and the screams of struggling people will do that job, no bother
Awareness, opportunity, charisma and comfort are millstones now around our necks
As complicit in scandal we can be crushed or creative, comfortable or Christian
This radical cross of mutual-kinship is our pricey normal path to life.

Martin Byrne

A Gift Moment

Sean Beckett

I am a volunteer in St. Ultan's Primary School, Cherry Orchard. The Aftercare Unit in St. Ultan's has a Homework/Activity Club at which I help out occasionally.

One evening in March 2015, I was on my way up to the Life-Centre for the Thursday women's group session. There were 3 young boys standing at a corner, one had his bike with him. As I passed them by, one boy says out loud to the others:

"He works in St. Ultan's Club, it's a shite club"!!

I walked on, smiled and chuckled to myself.

So I invite you, the reader to smile;

Smile at the honesty, the recognition.

Smile at the elevation and at the deflation.

Smile at the assumptions and lack of knowledge.

Smile at the gift – of humility, simplicity, frankness and grounding.

Appreciate the gift of a moment, of this moment.

Reaction on another occasion would be about self-protection, defence of my ego, a rush to defend my good name, about assuming a lack of appreciation of my generous efforts, wallowing in imaginary assault and personal hurt and of course, being disturbed by use of foul language!

Reaction on this occasion is about openness, appreciation, laughter, joy and admiration.

Thanks to those lads, (whom I don't know), for that moment, for that second

when information, feelings, opinion and reaction were freely and boldly expressed.

Thanks to those lads for unknowingly exploring the power and the poetry of language.

Thanks to those lads for instantly awakening me and taking me out of my comfort zone in a humorous way.

... and maybe some days, it feels like a 'shite club' and sometimes, I'm probably 'shite' at it!!!

...but the Club keeps going, trying, helping and supporting ... and the children keep returning, playing, studying, sharing, and adult support workers keep praising, encouraging and caring.

Gift moments come to us on many occasions. Some gift moments arrive unexpectedly and shake us up. Some are missed out totally by us in the busyness of our day. Many of them are small gestures, random encounters, surprise embraces, warm, comforting words and simple acts of kindness. When we are open, receptive and alert to gift moments in our lives, our mood, our outlook and our nature are enriched and nourished. And because of this nourishment, we can go on for another day, renew intentions and dream of

Smile at the gift – of humility, simplicity, frankness and grounding.

possibilities.

There was another gift moment offered in March by children from St. Ultan's School. It was during the Confirmation Retreat when 6th Class pupils composed their own responses to the question; "What is God's Word to us as we prepare to make Confirmation?"

This confirmation reflection was offered freely, genuinely and honestly just like the three boys above at the corner!

What is God's Word to us as we prepare to make Confirmation?



Be hopeful

Treat others as you would like to be treated

Let love begin with your family

Don't steal things

Help those around you

Have trust

Don't hurt people

Mind yourself and others

Trust

Don't worry about what others say, do what you believe in

Forgive and move on

Love your life as it is

Never give up

Care for others

Don't be the same as everyone else

Be unique

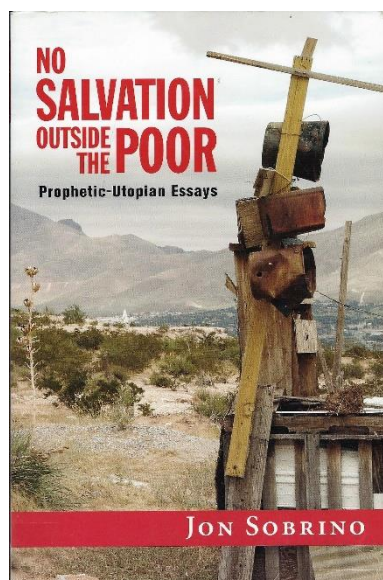
Be kind

Be happy

Suggested Reading

No Salvation outside the Poor

Jon Sobrino



In the summer of the year 2000 I attended a course on contextual theology at Maryknoll and have always been a keen admirer of their published commitment to nourish the spirit, enlighten the mind and challenge the conscience. This book of Jon Sobrino certainly fulfils that mandate. For our present sick and selfish civilisation the words of Sobrino (resonating with the utterances of Pope Francis) have the power to turn history around, subvert it and send it in a new direction. However, don't dream of lifting up this book if you do not wish to be radically challenged.

Today our civilisation and global culture are sleepwalking deeper into a dark nightmare. An example Sobrino quotes is; "In Nairobi 2.6 million people – 60% of the population live in appalling shacks. In Kibera alone 500,000 live with one sordid latrine for every two hundred people." We have not awoken from our lethargic, inhumane sleep. Sobrino asks, "Why

not, and why have so few prophetic voices penetrated our accustomed veils of indifference?"

The scandalously Christian and counter-culturally assertion at the core of this book is that hope and salvation can only be found at the underside of history. In the title of the book there is a discomfiting and perplexing wake-up call, "No Salvation Outside the Poor." Sobrino invites the reader to judge, to criticise and to expand on how the ignored, the silenced and the misunderstood save, mould, inspire and draw us into becoming an interconnected human family that cares.

In Kibera (Nairobi) alone 500,000 live with one sordid latrine for every two hundred people."

Middle-class Catholics and smug religious who live in comfort amidst the unnecessary scandal of this world's misery could do with pondering on the message of this book. Without loving engagement with the lives, cries and voices of poor people, our theological reflections are limping and our hope is hollow. We are all complicit in the global scandal of acute poverty and Sobrino's words may unsettle us enough to listen to some freeing truths. This book introduces us to people who are poor "as the world's great reservoir of human hope and spirituality." What a change!

No salvation Outside the Poor:

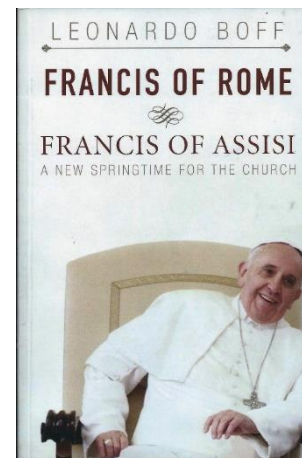
Jon Sobrino: Orbis, Maryknoll, 2008

Martin Byrne

Many thanks to Joe Connolly for the drawings which enhance this newsletter and to Jane Mellett for the layout of the panel from the Confirmation students.

Francis of Rome – Francis of Assisi

Leonardo Boff



In this book, we are taken on a critical journey into the past, present and future regarding the Church's history, traditions and structures.

We encounter Francis of Assisi and Pope Francis in their words, in their belief and commitment to a God of people and of service.

There are many questions for us in this book, such as; 'What kind of Church do we want?' and 'Where/Who do we walk with in our Church?'

This book offers a desire for new life and hope for a new direction in the Church today and into the future.

How do we sit with the following quotations;

"... the church can be saved as long as it is inspired by the traditions of Jesus, returns to drink from the well of the gospel, sets out to serve the world rather than itself, and puts the poor at the centre in a quest for liberation and social justice."

and

"... If someone always walks in palaces and sumptuous cathedrals, he

ends up thinking with the logic of palaces and cathedrals.”

Francis of Rome – Francis of Assisi
Leonardo Boff: Orbis, Maryknoll, 2014.

Sean Beckett

Scribbles Basecamp

As mentioned in our March Newsletter, we have set up a Basecamp site to further help the exchange of ideas and facilitate discussion. To date, about sixty people have asked to be included in the site and more than a quarter of these are active contributors.

If there is anyone else who would like to have access to our Basecamp site, please send your e-mail address to any one of us here in Cherry Orchard. When we have put you on the list, Scribbles Basecamp will contact you by e-mail and give you instructions about logging on and passwords.

Basecamp will send you an email every time the site is updated. The email will give you the update and also an option to [view this on basecamp](#). Click on this option.

You may be asked for your username and password. You will then see four more options:
Projects, Everything, Progress, Me

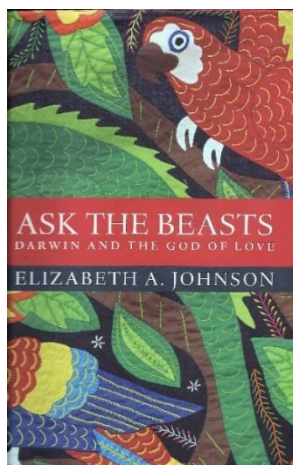
By clicking on [Projects](#) and then on [Scribbles from the Margins](#) you will have access to everything on the site and you will be able to add comments and uploads.

Sounds more complicated than it is.

Honest!

Ask the Beasts

Elizabeth Johnson



The first part of this book gives a very helpful summary and critique of Darwin’s ‘On the Origin of Species’; the remainder presents a theology of creation that integrates an understanding of evolution with a belief in the presence of God’s love and grace in the world.

But ask the animals what they think—
let them teach you;
Isn’t it clear that they all know and
agree
that GOD holds all things in his hand.
Job12: 7 - 10

What follows here is a selection of some ideas which appealed to me:-

- Language of creation signals that this finite world is pervaded with the ‘absolute presence of the living God’ who empowers its advance in the beginning, continuing now and moving into the future.

- Poetically speaking, living creatures are composed of stardust; or, in more prosaic terms, leftover products of nuclear explosions.

- The ever-creating God of life, source of endless possibilities,

continues to draw the world to an unpredictable future, pervaded by a radical promise: at the end of time, the creator and sustainer of all will not abandon creation but will transform it in an unimaginable way in new communion with Divine life.

- It is essential that a Christian Theology of evolution locate the drama of evolution within the very heart of God.

- Elizabeth Johnson’s dream is of ‘a flourishing humanity, on a thriving planet rich in species, in an evolving universe, all together filled with the glory of God’.

The foregoing probably appear unrelated and haphazard in a short book review but these and many other ideas are woven into a delightful, relatively readable tapestry by Elizabeth Johnson.

Ask the Beasts: Elizabeth Johnson; Bloomsbury, London 2014.

Paul Hendrick

A Final Note

Many thanks for the very positive response to our previous newsletters. We are grateful to those of you who took the time to contact us with comments and suggestions. Please keep up the response – it keeps us going!

Our current plan is to issue the newsletter four times each year – as long as inspiration keeps coming!

Have a good summer and look forward to the next Scribbles in September.

Seán, Paul, Martín.