



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

# Scribbles from the Margins 4

September 2015

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## Take off your Shoes

Paul Hendrick

*"Daddy, Katie didn't take off her shoes".*



*The new trampoline was being treated with the utmost respect. The two girls were strictly enforcing the 'no shoes' rule – I'm not too sure about the 'one at a time' and the 'no somersaults' rules - but shoes were definitely a 'no, no'.*

*Several times during the following few days I was reminded of the burning bush, the taking off of shoes and sacred ground.*

*We awoke on Tuesday morning to the news that a body had been found on a piece of green space in Cherry Orchard. A shotgun lay nearby. Gradually throughout the morning, news trickled through. Finally our worst fears were confirmed. Glenn, a twenty-five year old past pupil of The Life Centre, had ended his own life in the early hours of the morning.*

*We were numbed by the news. Glenn was an avid hunter and lamper<sup>1</sup>. He had a great love of*

<sup>1</sup> Lamping: Hunting after dark with the aid of a strong torch which is used to dazzle rabbits, hares and, sometimes, foxes. Once the prey is caught in the lamplight, a lurcher (typically a cross between a hound and a terrier) is released.

### Take off your Shoes

Paul Hendrick

### Poetry Behind Bars

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*animals and his back garden resembled a mini-zoo with horses dogs and caged birds. He was a wonderful father to his two young daughters and was very popular throughout the community.*

By evening time, a shrine had been erected on the spot where Glenn's body had been found. Upwards of fifty teenagers and young adults had gathered to mourn their friend in their own way. The shrine was composed of bunches of flowers,



photographs, trade mark sunglasses, a blackthorn walking stick and other memorabilia. The entire shrine was encircled by stones set out in the shape of a heart. Ballads were played over a speaker and the young men stood around drinking cans, chatting, reminiscing and sharing stories of the good times. Every now and then a burst of laughter would break out. Two horses stood calmly by as if they knew of the tragedy that had happened at that spot some hours earlier.

I stood on the periphery of the group, not wanting to intrude and unsure as to what shoes I would have to remove before entering the sacred ground of their grieving. I needn't have worried. I was welcomed in to the centre of the group and offered a can. It seems that "Come as you are" was the only requirement for entering that sacred ground.

The following morning, a different family in grief. I called to collect Tommy to take him to court. He knew a prison sentence awaited

him. I remained sitting in the car as his two daughters, stars of the trampoline, said their tearful good-byes to their Daddy and clung on for a last hug, a final kiss. I knew that there were no shoes that I could possibly remove that would allow me to intrude on the sacred ground of their leave-taking.

Today, the sacred ground was in Palmerstown Cemetery. A horse-drawn hearse, led by a lone piper, carried Glenn to his last resting place. His distraught mother dropped three red roses into the grave where two more of her sons are already buried. Balloons and white doves were released. Glen was at peace in the sacred ground.

This evening, I sat in the kitchen sharing a cuppa with Tommy's partner, Amber. The cry came in from the back garden; "Mammy, Karen didn't take off her shoes". No use appealing to Daddy – his trampoline was the thin mattress in his prison cell.

Not an easy week – but a sacred one.

Let's leave the last word to W.B. Yeats in "He Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven":

But I, being poor, have only my  
dreams.  
I have spread my dreams under  
your feet;  
Tread softly, because you tread on  
my dreams.



## Seeing Shooting Stars through Iron Bars

In February 2008, the author of these poems, a past pupil of The Life Centre, was sentenced to thirteen years in prison for gang related criminal activity.

With remission, he is due for release from the high-security prison towards the end of 2017. He will then be thirty three years of age; one of his sons will be in his mid-teens and the other will be in fifth class.

The following is a selection of poems which he has written, inspired by creative writing classes which he attended while in prison.

### A Flying Wish

When I see a shooting star  
I make a wish  
Trying to pull back from the  
darkness  
Into the light.

They've waited all this time  
Six down four to go  
I don't think about the years  
I've left  
Think about the years to come

This is what I ask:  
Am I going to catch that flying  
wish?  
Because  
it's very hard to see shooting  
stars through prison bars.

## ***Blood in ... Blood all around***



*What I have seen  
No man will dare dream;  
Rivers of red run through my  
head.  
I've been born to the darkness –  
Darkness is all around.*

*I watch as friends hit the  
ground,  
Lay them to rest  
Give them my best.*

*Put on a vest,  
Pull out the best friend to me -  
9mm.*

*Now I'm in no doubt what I'm  
about:*

*I go to war with the guys next  
door.*

*Each day the rivers run red  
Getting up to the point of my  
head.*

*Now it's time to be said that  
even my family have bled.*

*Now I've got to put all this to  
bed*

*Because I've got a life  
with a beautiful wife.*

*But still them rivers of red  
Run through my fucked-up head.*

## ***A Light of Life***

*What am I  
if not a dangerous  
man?*

*An empty vessel doing all he  
can -  
I see a flame burning in others  
And all the darkness that it  
covers;*

*I take a look inside my own self  
Just to be greeted by the void  
itself.*

*I am an empty vessel  
in a sea of light,  
a darkness that walks  
through the night  
looking deeper inside and  
through the void  
hoping for a glimmer of light or  
a hand that could pull me  
through this awful sight.*

*I've lived too long in  
The darkness and shadows  
around*

*I was the shiver that followed  
you around*

*I am a dangerous man  
doing all I can  
to reach out for the light  
because you're the one  
who can light up my life.*



## ***Happy Eyes***



*I've got pictures  
which hang on my wall;  
when I look at them  
it makes me stand tall;*

*they are priceless  
and I can never replace;  
but what I see  
makes me hesitate.*

*It's my two boys – they're  
smiling  
through their eyes  
looking at me  
from their fixed place.*

*I wonder is it me they see  
or the man I'll be?  
Will I always be Dad,  
or the man  
who made them sad  
Or a monster that was just  
caged away?*

***Two men looked out  
from prison bars –***

***One saw mud ...***

***The other stars.***



## OUTREACH FUND

Contributions to the Outreach Fund are always welcome

*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>	€300
<i>Contribution towards Thursday Night Adult Classes</i>	€400
<i>Holidays in Wexford for Cherry Orchard ladies</i>	€600
<i>Prison Visits (38)</i>	€760
<i>Day retreat in Emmaus</i>	€150
<i>Help with Groceries &amp; Household</i>	€300
<i>Donations</i>	€270
<i>Bank charges</i>	€ 37
<i>Total</i>	€2,817
<i>Balance</i>	€1,983



## ***Scribbles Basecamp***

Six months ago we 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 each 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!

If you are already on our Basecamp list, could we ask you to make at least one contribution to Basecamp between now and early December when the next ‘*Scribbles from the Margins*’ will be issued.

## *Seeing God depends upon where we stand*

Martin Byrne

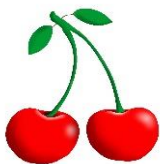
Our problem is not in seeing God but in seeing the mystery where he said he would be - in the crucified poor in every ghetto of our world. Daily the violence of poverty condemns great masses of struggling people to a slow death.

Since Auschwitz, Moltmann, Bonhoeffer, Metz, von Balthasar and others have tried to help us to see that the justice and the love needed to take the crucified down from the cross and to provoke resurrection are not cheap graces.

People who are despised, silenced and pained carry the latent, hopeful light of kinship and of judgement into history.

If we are humble and caring enough, poor people may enable the ultimate mystery of God to mould and to colour our lives.

It is only through respectful kinship with hurting humanity that the unique and irreplaceable light of God illumines our seeing.



## *Seeing God Depends Upon Where We Stand*

Looking straight into the eyes of a refugee mother and child  
The mystery we call God is projected straight into our souls  
Such disturbing ecstasy is often too much to take in.  
When engaging in the desperate ghettos of this world  
By evening time our spirit is both weary and bright.  
Tickled by warm, broad sunbeams of gritty humanity  
And crucified by rotten crossbeams of violent poverty.

When the God of the edges makes her home behind our eyes  
And we opt to stand vulnerable at the unattractive margins  
There, opening our gaze in friendship  
Our look never carries undertones of disillusionment,  
Disappointment, despair and rejection.

Rather, a mutual outburst of divine impulse, sometimes caring, sometimes angry  
Speaks of respect, change, dignity, admiration and adoration.

A firm and steady gaze at the horrors of the margins  
Softens our tears and moves our hearts, stirring us,  
Allowing us to stand long enough and absorb the horrible.  
Only with God's eyes can we penetrate the awful real  
And keep seeing the afflictions of our brothers and sisters.  
While this divine disquiet persuades us to anger and to action  
An unusual, pervading mystery reproaches and encourages.

Lord, you daily pass us on your way to the methadone clinic on Amiens Street  
And stand beside us at the dry latrine drains in Kibera's alleyways.

Our normal is thus undermined

By your presence that no eye can endure  
Through the 'misfits of infinity' you beckon us through fragments of slum-love  
And we are drawn towards the blazing, purifying light  
Where your real and total presence is scaring us shitless.



# Not Even a Kid Goat

Sean Beckett

For many years I disliked the Prodigal Son story (Luke 15: 11) because in real life, I was the older brother. I felt the story wasn't finished and the 'older son' deserved better. I was resentful at how he was treated and how the attention and appreciation was given freely to the 'prodigal son' without any expectations. It took me a long time to realize that the younger brother was not to blame for his older brother's feelings of hurt and the seeming unfairness of the situation. The younger son was trying, like anyone else, to make sense of his life, to find direction and to discover coping strategies to survive.

**If I had to choose between a wounded Church that goes out on to the streets and a sick, withdrawn church, I would choose the first one.**

*Pope Francis.*

The older son seems obedient, faithful and dependable but later in the story, I see the older son being jealous, critical, judgemental, and unforgiving. Why can't he be welcoming and rejoice over his brother's return? How difficult it is for him to let go of his anger. His stubbornness may be masking his inability to cope with his present emotions, he may in fact be unsure of how and why he feels so negative.

Perhaps this resistance on his part may cover up his fear of change, his fear of becoming independent and risking 'leaving the homestead and walking a different road'.

**"The process of change may be painful but change does and will come, for where there is no change, there is no life" <sup>1</sup>**

At the end of the story, the older son is left bitter and out on his own.

I hope I'm not giving the impression that one should live a carefree life of



alcohol abuse, gambling, exploitation of people and resources but I now see that the younger son was making an attempt in his life to risk and be different as well as have some fun and try something new.

The younger son is selfish in seeking out pleasure, desire and self-gratification but that is not the full extent of his personal journey or learnings. His loss of friendship, companionship and social excitement leads him into the experience of feeling embarrassment, isolation and betrayal. Deserted by support and lacking direction, he suffers loneliness, panic and loss. He is driven to crisis point and cries for help.

***It is better that for the church to have an accident by going out in the street than that it should be sick and suffocated from staying indoors in the temple". (Pope Francis) <sup>2</sup>***

Out of his depth of helplessness, he realises that help could be at hand if he admits his failings both to himself and to others.

***"We are all in the gutter but some of us are looking at the stars."* <sup>3</sup>**

He hopes, imagines and wishes another way of living. By doing this, he is led into arms of openness, forgiveness and acceptance.

There is the 'older son' and 'prodigal son' in all of us. I am the 'older son' when I'm dutiful, committed, loyal, trustworthy, attentive, dependable etc. and I'm also the 'older son' when I'm stubborn, resentful, ungrateful, resistant to change and having a sense of superiority and self-importance. I am the 'prodigal son' when I'm fun-loving, adventurous, demanding, self-centred, wasteful, unappreciative etc. and I'm the 'prodigal son' when I'm in despair, at rock bottom, helpless, alone, regretful and longing to make amends.

It's probably not about which 'son' I am. It's more about an awareness of which 'son' I am acting out of now, in this moment, in this situation. It is about looking at my behaviour and being on the alert that I'm acting out of the healthy, positive and fruitful characteristics of both sons – as each 'son' has an experience of life to offer me.

I'm sure you have noticed that I have not referred to the 'father' at all in the story. That can be left for another day! However, I will leave you a question: in this parable story which son has really gone on a journey of self-discovery?

Quotations:

<sup>1</sup> 'Francis of Rome : Francis of Assisi' by Leonardo Boff.

<sup>2</sup> 'Ministry at the Margins' by Anthony Gittins.

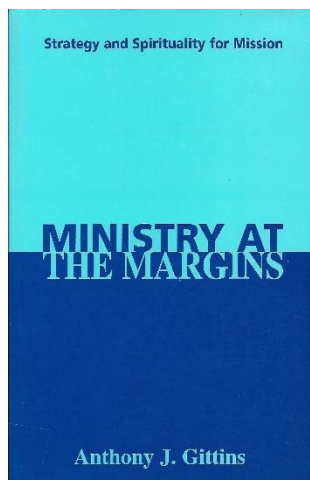
<sup>3</sup> 'Lady Windermere's Fan' by Oscar Wilde.



## Suggested Reading

### Ministry at the Margins

Anthony J Gittins



This is a challenging and thought-provoking book. This book is also a very useful and a helpful resource for those preparing for Mission Ministry. The author encourages all of us (wherever we are) to accept the challenge of “living as if Baptism really matters” and that we “undertake to carry the Good News enthusiastically, and to broadcast it in whatever way we can”.

Yes, this book has a lot to say to Missionaries and to those about to go on ministry work in foreign countries. Gittins offers them challenges, resource material, exercises and reflections in this book. However, Gittins also states very clearly that we don’t all have to be abroad in foreign countries to work in justice with people made poor. He reminds us that we meet people in need in ‘our own back garden’ or ‘just around the corner’ in our own locality and situation.

Gittins advises us to become aware of our reasons to ‘walk with’ and ‘journey with’ people in need. What are our agendas, expectations, targets etc? What do we hope to achieve? What do we know about the

expectation and understanding of those we wish to serve? How is our style of language and means of communications understood by them?

As we live and work with others in sharing the Good News, Gittins says that we must “allow the people the freedom to accept or reject”. To do this properly and wholesomely, we must become aware of our own “preunderstandings, tendencies, biases, and assumptions that we use to make sense of the world”.

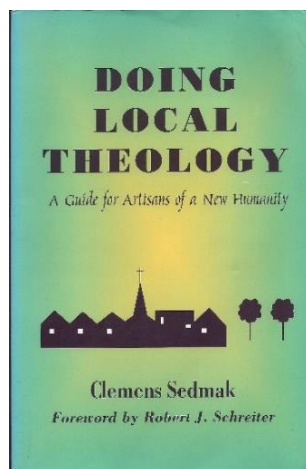
**Ministry at the Margins, *Strategy and Spirituality for Mission*, Anthony J Gittins, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 2002.**

Seán Beckett



### Doing Local Theology

Clemens Sedmak



Doing local theology is about waking up to the actions of God in our immediate, concrete neighbourhood. For far too long, talk about God was an academic exercise: at home in the university, the seminary, the retreat house and the ecclesia. However, local theology asserts that anyone speaking of God in a reflective manner, be it in the North Wall or Cherry Orchard, is somehow involved in the theological process.

One would be hard pressed in Ireland to find the voices from the margins making their way into the annual array of spiritual and theological journals, theses, or seminars. Local theology on the other hand is attentive to the cries of people and sees the world and the mystery we call God with ever new eyes. Local theology can speak of an infinite God in a local, direct vernacular that engages both the heart and the head of its hearers.

Theology at the edges of our society is a process of listening, of dialogue and of solidarity and Sedmak approaches theology not as a content to be mastered or produced but as a process. This book is a well crafted teaching aid and presents a methodological guide to support all artisans of a new humanity. The volume is built around fifty theses for doing local theology.

The real attraction and power of this book for all practitioners is the emphasis on doing theology as a way of following Jesus, doing theology as Jesus himself did, and constructing ‘little theologies’ for our times. ‘Doing Local Theology’ masterfully blends orthodoxy and orthopraxis, the theoretical and the practical, prayer with reflection, universality and particularity.

Jesus used soil, sand and saliva to do theology and this book empowers us to do likewise, reminding us at the margins that we need to live for the people around us if we intend to do theology with them. Doing Christian theology within struggling communities demands a consistent methodology, painstaking, long-term respectful engagement and a self-emptying attitude to attend to little stories.

**Doing Local Theology, *A Guide for Artisans of a New Humanity*, Clemens Sedmak, Orbis, New York, 2002.**

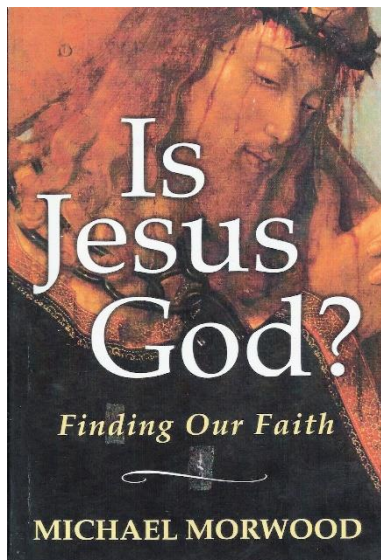
Martin Byrne





## Is Jesus God?

Michael Morwood



In this 141-page book, Michael Morwood attempts to engage basic theological questions with contemporary knowledge and information. The result is a very readable book which maintained my interest right to the end.

I took notes as I read and here are some extracts from my scribbles:

*God is present and active in all places and at all times. Nothing can exist without God's presence sustaining it in existence. God cannot be absent.*

*God came to perfect human expression in the man Jesus. Jesus incarnated the unseen and unknowable God.*

*God and heaven are not somewhere else; heaven is wherever God is and God is everywhere.*

*Death is a transformation into a completely different way of living in God.*

*Jesus' preaching reveals what has always been.*

God works in and through what God has to work with.

*Christians immersed in the belief that creation is and always has been permeated with God's presence and that God's Spirit is constantly being revealed in our midst, see no need for a God-figure to come down from heaven and restore us to God's friendship and presence.*

*The good news is that in everyday, decent, human interaction all people encounter the sacred, the Spirit of God at work. All people are God's people. If we really believed this Good News, we would look at ourselves, other people, human interactions and all of creation, differently. The urgency of Jesus' teaching is clear: this is what life is about.*

*The foundational religious insight and conviction of Christianity became: When we live in love, we live in God and God lives in us.*

*We firmly believe that God raised Jesus into the mystery of life beyond death, beyond human existence. Jesus believed that in death we meet a God, loving, compassionate and generous beyond our imagining.*

- *Jesus did not relate with the poor and the sinners on the basis that God was distant from them;*
- *Jesus did not relate with the poor and the sinners on the basis that God's forgiveness had been and was being withheld from them;*
- *Jesus never indicated any understanding of the traditional "original sin" theology;*
- *Jesus did not relate with people on the understanding that he was the mediator of God's presence for them.*

A very enjoyable, challenging book.

**Is Jesus God?** *Finding our Faith*, Michael Morwood, The Crossroad Publishing Company, New York, 2001.

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!*

*We hope to have the next issue out in time for Christmas. I hope I'll be forgiven for mentioning the "C" word in early September!*

*Martín, Seán, Paul.*

