

Already Within

SAMPLE

Dedication

*I dedicate Already Within to you,
the community of souls who have touched my life –
and changed everything.
May you continue to love our damaged hearts and our damaged
world into their true beauty.*

SAMPLE

**DANIEL
O'LEARY**

Already Within

DIVINING THE HIDDEN SPRING





Published in Australia by Garratt Publishing
32 Glenvale Crescent
Mulgrave, VIC 3170
www.garrattpublishing.com.au

Copyright in this work remains the property of the contributing authors.

This edition © 2018 Garratt Publishing published by arrangement with Columba Press, Ireland.

Copyright © 2007 Daniel O'Leary

First published in 2007 by Columba Press.

All rights reserved. Except as provided by the Australian copyright law, no part of this book may be reproduced in any way without permission in writing from the publisher.

Cover design by Lynne Muir

Cover painting by Leigh Fraser.

Leigh is a Victorian artist who resides in South Gippsland. His landscapes are painted in the 'Tonal Impressionist' style.

All rights reserved.

ISBN 9781925073713



A catalogue record for this book is available from the National Library of Australia

The authors and publisher gratefully acknowledge the permission granted to reproduce the copyright material in this book. Every effort has been made to trace copyright holders and to obtain their permission for the use of copyright material.

The publisher apologises for any errors or omissions in the above list and would be grateful if notified of any corrections that should be incorporated in future reprints or editions of this book.

Contents

Introduction	1
--------------	---

JANUARY – BEGINNINGS

Blessed are the Fearless	2
<i>You will fear no more once you have faced your own death</i>	
Never Too Late to Begin	6
<i>Every new start is an experience of God in our lives</i>	
Glad New Day	10
<i>Each morning we can choose the quality of the day ahead</i>	

FEBRUARY – PARADOX

What is it About Joseph?	14
<i>There is often one person in our lives who carries the key to salvation</i>	
Forging in the Smithy of the Soul	18
<i>Sometimes we must sweat blood to stay faithful</i>	
With My Body I Thee Worship	22
<i>Only in the truest emotions of our hearts is God revealed</i>	

MARCH – TEARS

Wisdom in a Kiss	26
<i>How a tiny baby's embrace made sense of the cross</i>	
On the Pulse of Our Wounds	30
<i>'In the middle of my winter I discovered an invincible summer'</i>	
The Mothering Landscape	34
<i>The sacramental view from a Mass on a mountain</i>	

APRIL – BREAKTHROUGH

Easter at the Forge Cross	38
<i>Resurrection is about the passion for the possible in our everyday lives</i>	
A Hard Line Won't Do	42
<i>'Tenderness comes from long looking'</i>	
Caught Between Earth and Heaven	46
<i>The astonishing story hidden in the Silent Saturday</i>	

MAY – IMAGINATION

Protected by an Embrace	50
<i>God is as accessible as our next chat over a cup of coffee</i>	
Against an Infinite Horizon	54
<i>Every human heart, religious or not, is on a universal pilgrimage to God</i>	
Home's a Holy Place	58
<i>Whether in ecstasy or agony, married life remains an epiphany of God</i>	

JUNE – HUMAN HEARTS

Anger of a Struggling Heart	62
<i>When clerical masks fall and human tears flow</i>	
Memories on a Breeze	66
<i>The heaven of childhood haunts and disturbs our hearts forever</i>	
Touch of the Divine	70
<i>There is a raw and physical reality about a God who became human flesh</i>	

JULY – HUMAN BODIES

At the Heart of Our Lives	74
<i>Skin needs to be touched. At Mass God holds us until we stop crying</i>	
Everywhere in Chains	78
<i>The pathos of our trapped lives, yearning desperately for the light</i>	
Catching the Rhythm of Things	82
<i>Our bodies resonate with the pulse of the earth. Nature is our spiritual guide</i>	

AUGUST – PRESENCE

The Infinity of Now	86
<i>There is a divine horizon and vision around our most menial chores</i>	
Our Precious Oasis	90
<i>The small sabbaths we need to face the intense, urgent truth of our lives</i>	
Blessed are the Reconcilers	94
<i>If we don't transform our hurts, we project them on to a cycle of negativity</i>	

SEPTEMBER – SOUL-SPACE

Beauty and the Priest	98
<i>We ache for beauty. For beauty we are created. It is the sacrament of God</i>	
Goodbye is a Small Death	102
<i>The necessary losses that lead to abundance</i>	
Echoes of Intimacy	106
<i>We reveal and reflect their creativity to Mother Earth and Mother God</i>	

OCTOBER – MYSTERY

Does Darkness Win?	110
<i>Christ, no stranger to desperation, rushes to embrace those who commit suicide</i>	
Tyranny of Perfection	114
<i>To be excessively anxious is to miss the whole point of Salvation</i>	
Is Anybody There?	118
<i>Do we feel the presence of our departed loved ones – waiting for us?</i>	

NOVEMBER – DESIRE

Seeds of Desire	122
<i>Made in God's astonishing image, we can never settle for less</i>	
Horizons of the Heart	126
<i>We are called into the deep by God's dream for us</i>	
Space for Grace	130
<i>'Out beyond right and wrong, there's a field. I'll meet you there'</i>	

DECEMBER – VULNERABILITY

The Face of a Baby	134
<i>If you dare to love, be prepared to grieve</i>	
This is What Love Does	138
<i>God's passionate longing for human intimacy</i>	
Breeze that Blows Open the Heart	142
<i>A sacramental vision sees every moment as a tiny incarnation of Heaven's promise</i>	

Introduction



There is another way of seeing everything, another way of living our days on this troubled earth. Surprisingly, this vision, this way, is as close to us as our breathing, as intimate as our beating heart. It is like God's secret, unlocked by our surrender to it. It is about trusting in love – and being astonished at what happens. Above all this vision touches us deeply. It is felt in our mind, body, heart and soul.

Our humanity, like that of Jesus, is the womb of the divine. We are all God-carriers, always giving birth to a new vision, forever revealing Infinite Love in the most unlikely places. Already within us, we carry, mostly unknowingly, the fresh wells we thirst for, and the beckoning horizons for which we long. Many people have long been denied that life-changing good news. Yet it is the core of the gospel and is at the heart of our best theology and spirituality. This is a good time to tell the story once again.

The emphasis throughout is on the presence of God in the ordinary moments of people's lives. Each piece in the book begins with a real life-situation and then, at the heart of it, the compassionate presence of an incarnate and unconditionally-loving God is brought to light. This way of seeing things is called the sacramental vision. It is a graced way of parting the veils of the mystery of our complicated lives and of perceiving God at the heart of all creation. It is then we realise that we must love the world more, not less. That is how we save it. And in all our efforts, nothing goes to waste – every effort, every set-back, every daily disappointment and mistake, even temptations and sins – all are transformed. And all are safely harvested.

JANUARY – BEGINNINGS

Blessed are the Fearless

You will fear no more once you have faced your own death



Helen knew her weeks were numbered. We had chatted last August about her recurring cancer and about the young family she must soon leave behind. I carefully asked how she coped with her anxiety – and whether I could help in any way. Looking slightly surprised, she said: ‘Oh no. I have two lovely children. And a great partner. God has given me time to prepare two little boxes for my sons. One day they will ask their Dad about their mother. In the boxes, I have put a letter for each of them, together with some of my hair, and a small phial of my favourite perfume. I am lucky to have time to do all of this. So why would I be afraid or depressed?’

I often reflect on Helen’s words. They have a shocking simplicity about them. They also carry a freedom, a trust and a great courage. For a long time now, the experience of the abundant life, for me, had always to do with freedom from fear. You cannot be truly unafraid until you are unafraid of death. The ultimate courage must lie in the fearless facing of the terrifying unknown. This is why I have been so taken by the amazing words of Helen. As she spoke, the fruits of redemption were already flowering within her. A new level of living had already arrived: a more abundant life. Her essential being was not deserting her; it was being transformed. There was no fear in her face as we talked – only a gentle smile.

Such are the moments of raw courage we remember forever. When Jesus was raised from the dead, all that

remained nailed to the Cross was fear. It was fear that crucified Jesus; it is fear that crucifies us. It lies so insidiously deep within us that its compulsive influence is quite unconscious. It presents the negative in the guise of the positive. Fear, not suspicion or hatred, is the opposite to trust and love. To be able to encounter and befriend our fear is to become a new creation, to have our hidden self emerge in delighted living.

Helen left us in November. As we move on into another new year, I tell her story, for January is a month of new beginnings, new risks and resolutions, of what may be called 'courageous conversations' with ourselves and others. It is a time when we are encouraged to bring into focus the latent aspirations of our soul. Whatever relentless urging lies deeply within us, this month is a good time to reflect on what it takes to opt for growth and transformation.

Before embracing new beginnings, we need to be familiar with death. January can be called the month of fear because it is also the month of new possibility. Our inner passion for transcendence and transformation, often felt in January, also brings to the surface the existential fear that we all live with, that dogs every step of our days. Nelson Mandela believes that it is not our inadequacies that make us afraid, but the immeasurable power of our true, graced nature.

How different everything would be if we could speak, act and grow out of passionate conviction rather than stay passive and silent out of a debilitating fear! Those who have met and befriended their fear light up the room and light up the world. They set us all free; they enable us to live our dreams into reality, and, most of all, to tell the truth, though, inevitably, like the Saviour before us, they always pay the price for their courage.

In recent years, I have told the truth more often than I did before. It is a great feeling. It makes you realise how

ALREADY WITHIN

controlled you were, for much of your life, by all and sundry – by memories of your parents' warnings, your neighbours' squinting windows, your priests' sermons of caution, and, if you happen to be a priest like me, by your parishioners, your colleagues and, of course, your poor bishop. It is a pity, I now think, that, especially within our church institution, we are all so fearful of disagreeing with 'authority', of upsetting the status quo, of telling our truth. The layers of control and of internalised fear are tightened around us like an invisible straitjacket. This prison has become so familiar that we do not realise its crippling power, or even its very existence. But, strong as this force is, its opposite is stronger. A heartfelt moment of hope, a whisper of truth, an Easter candle in a window – all are subversive, invincible. Solzhenitsyn said that one courageous word would save the world. So often, however, saying that difficult word is like a mini-death.

Recently, I had the privilege of ministering to another parishioner who died just before Christmas. Edward lingered between life and death for many months. On two occasions I had the opportunity of talking to him about the moment of his imminent death. For some reason or other, I have always thought it to be supremely important for a dying person to be able freely, confidently and consciously to hand over their lives to God. Not everyone has this sacred opportunity, this blessed time, to radically surrender their lives – no matter what the sins, mistakes and failures – into the safe hands of God who cannot wait to embrace and welcome them home.

Like Helen, Edward, too, gave an unforgettable example of the miracles that happen when you face your fear. 'Yes', he whispered, 'yes, I do commit my soul to heaven. I freely trust my life to God. I am ready.' There was, I felt, something eternal, something forever true, something that made death powerless, in those few timeless seconds of no more than a dozen words.

Where does that kind of courage come from? I wondered. Where does it begin? At the hour of our death are we supported and sustained by the hours of our childhood? Do the huge graces of our first years, lost by our compromises, betrayals and original sinfulness, return with faithful destiny to breathe a new dynamic of energy and vitality into us, for another beginning, another journey? A contemporary Greek poet wrote: 'In those fields and streets where you grew up, there you will always live – and die.'

To become the child you were, in the fields and streets you once explored like a young heroine, a daring hero. Is this why Jesus summed up his teaching about eternal life in the symbol of a child? The gifts and graces of our early years are the clearest expression of the nature of God – and of heaven. Maybe, on our deathbeds, they craft the wings of our destiny, to carry us safely home, over the necessary chasms of darkness and light. And maybe, after all, it is not a bed of death, but a bed of life, when immense and unimaginable powers of transcendence are being released.

In a most moving theological poem, Karl Rahner holds that our childhood is not lived through, and cast away, like an outgrown old coat. Rather is it the perennial, eternal heart of our adult lives. We grow into the childhood we once lived through. Even more, this childhood is what we fully recover, possess and celebrate in heaven. And death is the only moment of truth for this transition to take place. 'We do not move away from childhood in any real sense', writes Rahner. 'We move towards the eternity of this childhood, to its definitive and enduring validity in God's sight – a field which bears fair flowers and ripe fruits such as can grow in this field of childhood, and in no other, and which will be carried into the storehouses of eternity.'