

Come and sit with me

by Frances Molloy – Pastoral Care Project Charity No 1094766

Browsing through summer holiday photographs is a great way of remembering past experiences, even if only momentarily. As well as holiday photographs there are those photographs that remind us of faith experiences; the sacraments, pilgrimages and perhaps altar serving? Just as holiday photographs remind us of happy times spent with family so too do photographs of faith experiences. They can rekindle and stimulate precious memories.



I have come to this conclusion from many years of pastoral work among frail older people, they seem to have a sense of knowing, especially when they have a longing to go home; which is often misinterpreted. Perhaps their memory is stimulated by pictures of their family or their favourite saints, Our Lady and the passion of Christ.

There are many saints and each one of us will have our favourites. For me, one on my list is Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity who died in 1906 at the young age of 26 from Addison's disease for which there was no pain relief. She loved music which became for her another way of praying. Her prayer to the Blessed Trinity is beautiful as are her writings which testify that Christ made his home in her. Even in her extreme pain leading up to her death, her sorrow was for leaving her family whom she loved, but she was joyful because she knew the depth of Gods' love. Her last audible words before her death were, "I am going to Light, to Love, to Life."

The Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us that the Communion of Saints is a communion "in holy things" and "among holy persons" (No. 948). The Holy Father remarked at the General Audience October 2013; "Communion of Saints is the deepest reality of the Church, because in Christ, through Baptism, we are made sharers in the communion of life and love which is the Blessed Trinity. Through this fraternal communion we draw nearer to God and we are called to support one another spiritually."

This raises the question of how can we support those in our family or parish who are frail in mind or body and long to draw near to the God? How can more people be encouraged and enabled to help them?

I am reminded of a time some years ago when I was responsible for the pastoral care within St Joseph's care home in Coleshill. Whilst I was preparing for the weekly mass, the priest rang to say that he had been delayed and rather than keep the residents waiting would I take a service of

Holy Communion, which I did on occasions; the Blessed Sacrament was always reserved in the Tabernacle.

The gospel that day was Mark 6:30-44 the feeding of the five thousand, which was read by a woman which I will give the name of Mary. Mary suffered with short term memory loss but despite this she still liked to read at mass and did so with clarity.

Normally a short reflection would follow the gospel and this day was no exception. Mary who had just read the first reading said in response to the gospel, "It's new, I never heard it before" she went on to say, "we should share and not keep Jesus to ourselves". This important truth reminded me that the word of scripture is 'new' each time it is read. Mary's memory loss was not an obstacle to the Holy Spirit enabling her to share.

Afterwards I thanked Mary for her insight and how it helped me. Mary talked with me about her mother and father and how she looked forward to being with them again in heaven. What she spoke of was from the depth of her heart and is a reminder that we all need someone to sit with us, and we need to sit with God, as expressed in the following words.

I want you (insert name)
to come to Me, sit with Me but not sit
with downcast eyes but look with trust,
fully into my face to hold the glance of
My eyes because as we look at one another
you will find understanding.
Hold my hand and be intimate with Me
and you will know from the depth of My being
through the look in My eyes what I feel
and what I ask of you.

It is not My will that you are downcast
but it is My will you understand the burden I carry
and that with My love and through My love you
will shoulder it in an able way.

Written by Karin Castle and printed with permission.– Based on 'Do not be afraid, for I am with you, even if you forget I will never forget you.
Isaiah 43:5 & 49:15.

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