

'Heart and Soul'

by Frances Molloy – Pastoral Care Project Charity No 1094766

It is interesting meeting people and hearing about their Confirmation experience. Thinking about my own Confirmation fills me with a great sense of joy. In the fifties we were confirmed by the Bishop as 'Soldiers of Christ', which I couldn't really take in at the age of seven. What I did understand, though, was the beautiful experience, especially whilst singing the hymn to the Holy Spirit, *'Come, Holy Ghost, Creator, come from thy bright heavenly throne, come, take possession of our souls, and make them all thine own'* – those words had a profound effect, and still do.

Sharing this recently with a Pastoral Care Project team member she was reminded of an experience whilst leading a Service of the Word in a care home. At one point during the service her eyes were drawn to a lady sitting some distance away who appeared to be asleep. However, as soon the team began singing a hymn the lady joined in, singing the entire hymn - her eyes still closed. She sang with the voice of an angel.

The significance of music from a health perspective was brought home to me when I first met Glenys, a music therapist, working within mental health with people who had dementia. As a means of communication Glenys sang a greeting to each person beginning with their Christian name. What was so striking was her gentleness as she sang their name. I was touched by their response to her – I hadn't seen music used in this way before. After retirement, Glenys came to work with the Project, offering her professional experience and her love of God to create resources and assist with training.

One event which she was instrumental in bringing about was 'SINGING Café Sounds & Senses' seminar. This highlighted the need for a better understanding of the power of music. Its value and faith memories within a person's life story, living will, or in the case of people with learning disabilities, a passport, is important. Simply, music can disturb or comfort as a distant memory or memories are evoked. Therefore a sung word or a note of music can touch each of us at a deep level, often taking us by surprise, often resonating deep within our heart and soul. It is not surprising

that the songs and hymns learned by heart when young, flow back into the memory and re-ignite the spirit.

On reflection it seems that old memories can create new memories, by sharing how God has helped us. As in the case of a lady whom I will give the name Maria. Although Maria had short term memory loss, she still could read a little and play music from memory on her keyboard. Playing reels in perfect rhythm gave her a sense of happiness. She also liked to play hymns and would ask me to join in and sing along, which was a wonderful experience. Towards the end of my visits she was always pleased to receive a prayer card. On one occasion reading the prayer card she asked, "Who is the Holy Spirit?" She seemed to understand the explanation, but would ask again, "Who is the Holy Spirit?" This went on for a few moments, all the while the Holy Spirit was filling her and me with a deep sense of peace. She sat in silent contentment, holding the prayer card for a few moments, before asking if she could have more prayer cards; for her friends, the other residents, who were sitting nearby? These she handed round, and asked them individually if they knew who the Holy Spirit was?

This was a wonderful moment of awareness of how God continues to inspire the frail elderly to care and to reach out to others. They, like all of us, love to share their story with someone, and just may need a gentle prompting.

*How gently and lovingly you wake in my heart,
Where in secret you dwell alone;
And by your sweet breathing,
Filled with good and glory,
How tenderly you swell my heart with love.*

Living Flame of Love- St John of the Cross

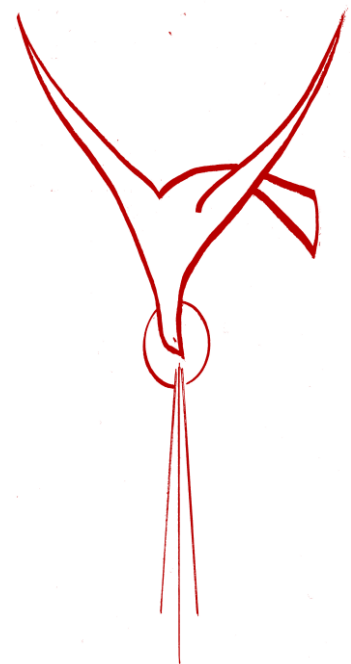


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