

# ***Encountering Mystery***

***God is a beckoning word***

Gerard Hughes

Patrick White, the Nobel Prize winning Australian novelist, wrote of a defining moment in his life: “During what seemed like months of rain I was carrying a tray load of food to a wormy litter of pups down at the kennels when I slipped and fell on my back, dog dishes shooting in all directions. I lay where I had fallen, half-blinded by rain under a pale sky, cursing through watery lips a God in whom I did not believe. I began laughing finally at my own helplessness and hopelessness, in the mud and the stench from my filthy oilskin. It was a turning point. My disbelief appeared as farcical as my fall. At that moment I was truly humbled”. He later wrote in a letter: “What I am increasingly intent on doing in my books is to give professed unbelievers glimpses of their own unprofessed faith”

There is something primal about Holy Spirit: it belongs universally to the human condition. Spirit is fundamentally about an encounter or engagement with everyday reality. It comes as gift: it is not a possession. It’s an attitude, not an opinion. It’s about making “harsh and saving sense out of what we experience here and now”. We don’t make Spirit happen. We don’t tire the muscles of our mind in order to believe. “We find ourselves addressed, and in being addressed, we find ourselves”. Spirit is always relational: it is about Spirit coming into visibility: it is truly the Bread of Life.

**God is all promise, all invitation, all gift.**

**God is not a possession, a thing or an object.**

**More like a butterfly, its colourful wings caught in the sunlight,**

**luring, alluring, elusive,**

**never to be caught but certainly wanting to be experienced,**

**touching our longings,**

**meeting our pain of not-having,**

**our future that charges our present with new meaning and energy.**

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Philip Carter is a retired Anglican Priest. He was the inaugural president of the Australian Ecumenical Council for Spiritual Direction (AECSD). He ran the Julian Centre in Adelaide, an independent and ecumenical centre for spirituality, from 1997-2009.

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“Circumstances are the voice of God” (C.S.Lewis). We are not being asked to fight, fly away or freeze so much as to attend (with courage) and listen to whatever beckons, however small or tentative, in and through the circumstances we find ourselves in.

***We find ourselves addressed, and being addressed, we find ourselves.***

Sarah Bachelard

*The starting point for much spiritual development is precisely in the development of all those aspects of living which ‘take us outside ourselves’ in the appreciation of beauty, goodness and truth....[All this]...demonstrates at a deep experiential level that the capacity of the human being to transcend herself or himself, to be drawn ‘outside’....*

Vincent Nicholls

***God....***

***“will never be plain and  
out there, but dark rather and  
inexplicable, as though he were in here”.***

R.S.Thomas

***“I am beginning to experience God at the level of my identity”.***

Miriam Rose Ungenmarr Burmann

Indigenous Elder

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