LIVE

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Where the flowers grow

I've always been intrigued by life. Where was I before I was born? Where will I be after? There will never be a scientifically definitive answer to this, which is perhaps why I love the question as it draws me into a deep sense of spirit and wonder. Our sacred texts describe these times in numerous ways, and I love how Kahlil Gibran puts this paradox in The Prophet "The owl whose night-bound eyes are blind unto the day cannot unveil the mystery of light." We may well never understand it, but in my experience pondering and working

through difficult moments around these book ends of 'life', they are worth delving into because in doing so we grow in our understanding of spirituality and in the fullness of life. In the mystery, we connect with God.

In this edition of the Australia Herald, we explore the times in our lives where loss and grief are present. These articles are faith based theological and practical reflections on common experiences in human life. They are not written as professional treatment guides, and I'd encourage them to be read in that light, and as a way to add to our community consciousness of what it means to be spiritual beings.

I was struck as a late 20-something with the knowledge that I may not be able to give life to a child. At this juncture it was these types of questions, the 'why' of life, that I was able to really examine what it meant to live, and in contrast, to lose an idea of what it meant to live. Was I here to simply re-create for perpetuity's sake? Or was there something more? Why was this situation mine to journey with, and what can I learn from this? These ponderings helped me grow to have a deeper and more complete understanding of my own existence.

There is so much in this edition! Ken Robinson takes us through some of his early memories of dealing with tragic events, and examines how each circumstance of loss, no matter how trivial it may seem, benefits from the speaking of it. Ken then interviews Adrian and Glenn O'Dea from Perth about their journey as parents, and how they navigate their lives with their son Ross who has Down Syndrome.



Anne Bonnefin explores the challenges of losing her husband, Peter, and the path it took her on in discovering the power of listening and seeing where love shows its healing embrace. Anne then shares a practice for being an intentional listener, for sometimes we need reminding and practise at this.

Helen McIlroy from Bendigo reflects on a raw and challenging time where her testimony prompts me to explore those times where I may have masked feelings in order to feel more 'comfortable'.

David Abbott shares his testimony about his volunteer work with the National Association for Loss and Grief, a powerful reminder of how being in community can assist us in these times in our lives. Kari Sutton provides several positive steps in helping children deal with grief and loss, John Rawson reveals his reflections on a song many of us know, and how there is healing in servant ministry. Finally, Wendy Ballard shares some of the aspects of grief and loss in her life, particularly losing her son, Luke.

This may well be, at least in my time, one of the most powerful and emotional editions of the Australia Herald. It highlights for me the blessings of community, and how much we can assist our neighbours going through loss or struggle by offering a listening ear and a compassionate heart. In addition, this Herald is 100% Australian content. A first in this era, and a celebration of the tremendous talent we have in this nation. I entrust it to you, our community; may you share it widely so that others may see the light they are to our sometimes night-bound eyes.

If you or someone you know is troubled by similar kinds of things to those described in this edition of the Australian Herald, you can call Lifeline on 13 11 14 or Beyond Blue on 1300 22 46 36. If things rise to the surface that you'd like to talk with someone about, any of our priesthood members are able to be a listening ear and journey with you.

May you continue to find the flowers wherever they grow is my prayer.

Ben Smith

Editorial Team Member

A BLESSING FOR TRAVELING IN THE DARK

Go slow if you can. Slower. More slowly still. Friendly dark or fearsome, this is no place to break your neck by rushing, by running, by crashing into what you cannot see.

Then again, it is true: different darks have different tasks, and if you have arrived here unawares, if you have come in peril or in pain, this might be no place you should dawdle.

l do not know what these shadows ask of you, what they might hold that means you good or ill. It is not for me to reckon whether you should linger or you should leave.

But this is what I can ask for you:

That in the darkness there be a blessing. That in the shadows there be a welcome. That in the night you be encompassed by the Love that knows your name.

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