

IN PURSUIT OF DIVINITY

A fire is burning on a log, with bright orange and yellow flames rising from the base. Thick, white smoke billows upwards from the fire, swirling and drifting against a solid black background. The overall composition is vertical, with the fire at the bottom and the smoke filling the upper portion of the frame.

'There is no fire without smoke' is a popular saying, indicating that if there is a fire anywhere, we can identify the place by finding out from where the smoke emanates.

Wherever there is smoke there tend to be embers covered in ashes too. If unattended the embers can slowly die off, for lack of fresh air blowing on them. When we blow on the embers, we can see some sparks coming out from the embers, and the fire blazing once again. This has been the experience of anyone who used firewood for cooking.

Being familiar with this example, I want to use this as a symbol to look at my pursuit of divinity. Deep down divinity dwells within me, - at times disregarded by me like the embers covered in ashes and emitting smoke.

The presence of the smoke is an alert sign. The smoke shows me that there is something deep inside alive, and also hinders me from understanding myself as I am, understand others as they are, and prevents others understanding me as I am. I cannot clear the smoke away as long as there is an ember within, in some way or other refusing to die off, because the one who called me to be, dwells in me. What I can do is to clear the ashes that are surrounding the ember and blow fresh air by being one with the one who dwells within.

When I am quiet, aware of my breathing with the 'You in me' and the 'I in You', with each breath, the miracle happens. The real me stares at me, giving me courage, strength and grace to move on from where I am stuck with hurts, anger, selfishness, indifference etc., to see the bit of goodness I enjoy because of my oneness with the Whole, God in me.

In Pursuit of Divinity

Sr. Victorine James
Holy Cross Convent
Beach Road,
Jaffna

Contemplation allows us to experience the reality of our participation in God's nature for ourselves. Once we plug into the Divine consciousness, God can work through us, for the good of the world'.

Richard Rohr OMI

Author : Sr. Victorine James HC
Sisters of the Holy Cross (Menzingen)
Holy Cross Convent
Beach Road, Jaffna

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With gratitude to all those who walked with me, during the last eighty years, in smoke and ash and helped me to find the live ember among the charcoal, so that I could blow on it and ignite it again and keep the fire blazing.

One song can spark a moment,
One flower can wake the dream.

One tree can start a forest,
One bird can herald spring.

One smile begins a friendship,
One handclasp lifts a soul.

One star can guide a ship at sea,
One word can frame the goal.

One vote can change a nation,
One sunbeam lights a room.

One candle wipes out darkness,
One laugh will conquer gloom.

One step must start each journey,
One word must start each prayer.

One hope will raise our spirits,
One touch can show you care.

One voice can speak with wisdom,
One heart can know what's true.

One life can make a big difference,
And to me, this life is
The person of Jesus

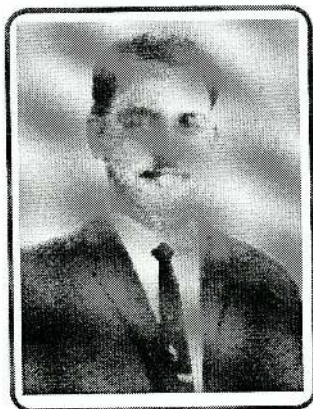
***Thank you for being my ONE
And for your call to be You.***

Dedicated

To

ANNAN

(My elder brother)



18.11.1938 - 05.07.1974

N.J.S. Perinpanathan
Affectionately called JOE

At the age of 16 when I chose to follow a different path,
you trusted me and my choice.
You cleared the way to follow my heart's desire.

Thank you Annan,

Enjoy the heavenly bliss in the bosom of the Father.

Gratefully remembering you

On the 50th year of your Home - going

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Introduction

To fall in love with God is the greatest romance; to seek him the greatest adventure; to find him, the greatest human achievement.

St Augustine

Dictionary defines pursuit as the act of trying, over a long period of time, to achieve a plan, activity or situation.

Divinity, - the state of being divine – is understood as the quality of God's being, manifested in everyone and everything. Made into the image and likeness of God, 'we are called to make choices, that reflect who we are already' (1Pt 1:16).

I believe that understanding who I am, better prepares me to recognize and remember where I truly belong to, and yearn to be there and be on the way back to my home

Holiness is having the inner strength to be set apart. My manner and behavior should reflect holiness because, I am created in God's own image and likeness.

This title - 'In pursuit of Divinity' - sits snugly in my heart and mind, and fills me with something unexplainable, for I know 'I have been pursued by Him' (Phil 3:12b). Life is all about this pursuit; that being pursued by Him we cannot but pursue Him in return. The call to pursue Divinity is in each and every one of us, at different degrees, for we are created into His own image and likeness.

'Go in, go deeper, delve within, and experience you in God and God in you', was the most heard, and most ignored calls from within. This call has been persistently vibrating deep down in me for quite a long time. The vibration was strong and discomforting, and my tendency to brush it off came partly from my fear to be different, and from my anxiety of where it will lead me to. In spite of all hurdles my heart longed for that intimacy, that oneness of God in me and I in God.

As I celebrated my 79th birthday, the urge to find all the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle of this search occupied my life, for it was like a sudden realization that the clock is ticking away and I was far behind in realizing

my real self or my true potential. It looked as if I was not in alliance with what God wants of me. So, I started resolutely to gather my thoughts, feelings, instincts and inspirations together and seriously began streamlining them in a meaningful way.

I have been also communicating with likeminded people and referring suitable writings to find more clarity for the ambiguous thoughts and seek stability in whatever I was evading. Expressing it in writing is a help to see clearly, what occupies my mind, with what I struggle, what I ignore, to what I give shape mentally, what gets ultimately engrained deep within, and accept all those as part of my search for the Divine and to understand 'who I am' today. This booklet is an outcome, a product from this attitude.

Sharing with others is definitely a challenge; could even be a risk. But I realize that it is an important step towards realization of my dreams. I sense this combination of risk and growth even at occasional verbal sharing. I also feel supported, strengthened, confirmed to continue my pursuit. To be steadfast in this journey which would unfold unknown treasures, I need likeminded people.

If prayer, meditation and other reflective activities only circle round inside us without the benefits of sharing the gifts we receive, we spiritually suffocate. Not only that, we miss the growth filled opportunities the outer world promises ourselves and others when we engage with it. - Joyce Rupp in Open the door pg. 145

So, this booklet is a reverent and grateful expression of one who is searching, wanting to delve into the heart of Love and grow as a person of love, forgiveness, compassion. I humbly acknowledge all what that stirs in me as a gift, inviting me to become one in Him.

*Deep within my heart I hear, voices whispering to me
Words that I cannot ignore, meaning that is challenging.
Calling me to be in Him, lest I lose myself in marsh,
Urging me to imbibe His Love, forgiveness, compassion.
So, I leave my known self behind
Let it be with familiar shores
Set my heart upon the deep
To be possessed by You, forever Lord.*

CONTENTS

1. The significance of 2024 for the Church
2. The year 2024, and its significance for me
3. Tiredness leads to a new way of ministry in Jesus' life
4. Down memory Lane
 - Sri Lankan Tamils here and abroad in 1994
 - Ukkulankulam, Vavuniya
 - From basic English to search for self
5. Insights from the Scriptures
 - God revealing Himself as I AM WHO I AM
 - Jesus' reminds us that He is God, with His 'I AM....' statements
 - Jesus discloses that we are all one in the 'I AM' that abides within us
 - My 'I am' statements
6. Expressing my Pursuit for Divinity as a Nurse - Midwife
 - Mary Magdalene's perseverance at the empty tomb.
 - All it needs is my faithfulness
7. How can I be transformed?
8. Learning from the life of the two, closest to Jesus
 - St John the Beloved
 - Our Blessed Mother
9. Will the pursuit ever end?

1. The significance of the year 2024 for the Church

During the latter part of 2023, the Holy Father Francis announced the year 2024, as the year of preparation for the Jubilee year 2025. We began the journey into 2024 as “Pilgrims of Hope”.

The Holy Father further said, that we must ‘fan the flame of hope’ that has been given us, and help everyone to gain new strength and certainty by looking to the future with ‘an open spirit, a trusting heart and far-sighted vision’. The spiritual dimension of the Jubilee, called for conversion, and embraced the fundamental aspects of our life in society as part of a comprehensible whole.

Along with this, there were other initiatives to remind people of the ‘Centrality of prayer’, both individual and communal. This is what the Holy Father said on Prayer. “In this time of preparation, I would greatly desire that we devote 2024, the year preceding the Jubilee event, to a great “symphony” of prayer

- ♦ to renew our desire to be in the presence of the Lord.
- ♦ to thank God for the many gifts of his love for us and to praise his work in creation.
- ♦ to express the singleness of “heart and soul”
- ♦ to make it possible for every man and woman in this world to turn to the one God.
- ♦ to be on the royal road to holiness, which enables us to be contemplative even in the midst of activity.

In a word, may it be an intense year of prayer in which hearts are opened to receive the outpouring of God’s grace and to make the “Our Father”, the prayer Jesus taught us, the ‘life programmer’ of each of us, His disciples.

2. The year 2024 and its significance for me

If the year 2024 had become a momentous year for all the Catholics all over the world, it had become much more for me personally. I want to make this year 'a symphony of grateful exploration' of how I arrived here and map out a 'one step at a time path' for the journey ahead.

During the latter part of 2023, I become alert and conscious that I am going to be an Octogenarian. And the alertness was overwhelming with the constant questioning of, how have I arrived here? What have I done? Who have I been all these years?

We are created with an inner restlessness that sends all of us looking for our True Self, whether we know it or not. There is a God-sized hole waiting to be filled. God creates the very dissatisfaction that finally only divine grace and love can satisfy. Henry Newman

There was an urgency on one hand 'to fan the flame of hope' of the length of life I was given, and look at the uncertain future with 'an open spirit, a trusting heart and far-sighted vision' The urgency was to make up for the lost time. I too wanted to embrace the 80 years of my life with gratitude and generosity.

And on the other hand the answer I give to those who inquire about my health and well-being as well as how I spent my time is different.

'Though I often wonder how I arrived here, (meaning 80) I am sure that I am in the right time, place and ministry. I do not have any strict agenda or schedule to be met. So I feel free to do things at my own pace. I do my own planning, and trust my timings, my movements and actions'.

'I have a good feeling that I am doing my best, and that I am encircled by miracles and blessings. This feeling makes me open to welcome more opportunities and blessings into my life'.

'I am confident that I am taking all the right steps towards reaching my childhood dreams and my goals. I am happy that I am healing and growing every day'.

The "Outer world"

The outer world is a reflection of the consciousness that you are holding.

It is all the situations, circumstances, relationships, experiences, and what you have and what you don't have in your life.

And the good news is that when you shift into oneness with your inner SELF, - the Divine within you, - the more the outer world will reflect the shift.

It will be easier to move forward, and to know your path.

Opportunities will come your way.

Your life will become more harmonious.

Problems will disappear.

Worry and fear will dissolve in the light of this realization and light of your SELF.

A new rhythm will establish itself in your life.

A greater clarity and understanding will be yours.

Meditation is one of the best ways to create what you want, align your energy, and connect with your REAL SELF.

And it is a great way to get beyond 'conditions' in your life and choose the way you want to create your life.

(From the Meditations with Christy)

3. **Tiredness leads to a new way of ministry in Jesus' life**

I also want to be realistic and look into the physical and mental changes that come with aging. Of course age brings with it corresponding changes physically and otherwise. Whenever I feel tired I tend to look at Jesus who too got tired along his journey of life.

The Gospel has many passages where Jesus teaches, cures, preaches, sends, prays, visits, lives together or calls, but this particular incident reveals a less highlighted aspect, - Jesus felt tired.

The Gospel of St. John 4:5-42 shows Jesus arriving at a specific place, in a specific way. This particular incident is closer to the day to day experience of people. Feeling fatigue is something quite familiar in our life

In this Gospel, I learn from Jesus, that fatigue is a good symptom of the apostolate. He also wants that I learn from fatigue, accept and continue with enthusiasm.

The Gospel gives me details:

*Jesus sits down by a well.
It is about midday
A woman arrives
"Give me to drink" - reflects Jesus is thirsty.
The process begins*

Fatigue moves us to ask for help and invites us to allow ourselves to be helped. The recognition of our need for the other is humility, the opposite of self-sufficiency. And to receive help is an expression of humility.

How often my rest isn't possible because I don't know how to ask for help or don't want to ask for it! I prefer to believe that others see me as 'almighty', self-sufficient, strong and not needy. However,

all that is a mask and also a lie, which I want to project.

Pride hinders me from seeing myself as needy and, more than that, rejects the possibility to express that need and seek help. Exhaustion confronts me with the question of 'who am I'

The Lord's exhaustion opens to the strengthening of friendship, conversion, forming an effective ministry/ missionary. Perhaps, many will come to know God through my tiredness, or rather God is witnessed even in my tiredness.

My inner feeling of 'who I am' or expectation of 'who I want to be', does not match with who I am externally. I live with this incongruence almost all through my life at a lesser or greater intensity. This dichotomy is a cause of annoyance on my on-ward journey.

But, today I look at life in a different way. For what bubbles within me I believe, come from the one who dwells in me and envelops me in His Love. And that Love (God) would not point a finger at me (Pope Francis) would not accuse me, would not change his loving, compassion even if I go astray. So, why not explore the voices I hear within, pay heed to my imagination, - some of them have their base in the Holy Scriptures – find, interpret and live them and stay calm with my on-going search.

4. Down memory Lane

My constant questioning as to 'what have I done?' 'who have I been', steered me to take a walk down memory lane. Joy, satisfaction, sense of fulfillment, guilt, loss, regret filled my journey. And the path made an abrupt stop at the eye opening year 1994, - a very significant year of my life - reminding me afresh some peak, unforgettable experiences.

In 1994 I chalked up 50 years of my life in this planet earth, and 25 years as a religious – a Sister of the Holy Cross. Both the occasions called for celebrations of acknowledgement and gratitude. As my mother and siblings were abroad I had the privilege of celebrating my 'realized dreams' and 'fulfilled desires' with them.

➤ Sri Lankan Tamils here and abroad in 1994

During the three months trip abroad, I had the opportunity to visit seven countries in the west for the first time. Coming to know the different cultures and lifestyles of the people of those countries as well as seeing how the Sri Lankan Tamils (I can only speak about my immediate and extended family members, friends and acquaintances) have adopted and adapted themselves, and lived seemingly meaningful, productive lives, without undue fear and anxiety, enjoying freedom of speech and movement was an eye opener to me. While there, my thoughts were constantly with the people in the North – the queues for passes and permissions, food items and fuel, living with embargoes of all sorts, afraid of any noise, scared to death seeing something flying over their head, etc.

On my return there was an opening to opt for something different. I grabbed the opportunity, made a 'U' turn, stepped out of the well-known hospital wards and corridors, lecture rooms and skill labs, masks and gloves, pleated dresses and polished foot wears, and moved into a hither to unknown village of Ukkulankulam in Vavuniya along with two other sisters.

➤ Ukkulankulam, Vavuniya

For the benefit of the younger generation, I would like to write a few words about the then Vavuniya. It was like a mini - country within a country with entry (check) points on three sides, Thandikulam from the North, Uyilankulam from the West and Iraterperiyakulam from the south and East. Vavuniya was completely under Military control. We needed military clearance to enter, live in, as well as to leave the area. The passes varied from temporary passes of one day, three days, one week, one month to a permanent pass and emergency pass. And the procedure to follow to get this pass, and time and energy spent at the various office was unbelievable.

What the Founder Fr. Theodosius Florentini OFMcap saw in the 1860s in Switzerland, we experienced in Ukkulankulam in 1995. The needs were too many and the small community had 'too many irons in the fire' like their founder. We were seen with people from every walk of life, without any discrimination of location, religious, educational and financial background. The presence of innumerable NGOO, gave a boost to us to associate with them in most of their activities. Recognizing God's presence and action in those circumstances, and keeping ourselves open to all the possibilities carried us forward. The great Theodosian saying 'the need of the time is the will of God' guided all our choices and gave us an impetus to accomplish whatever was within our reach.

"When one is completely engaged in one's work with a sense of Divine Love and Charity, one is engaged in mission work and building beautiful lives". It is to such a life of "mission work at all times" that the Gospel invites all of us to. After having summoned, authorized and named His Twelve Apostles, Jesus sends them ahead of Him, to the places of mission, saying "As you go, make a proclamation..." (Mt 10:7) (author unknown)

The ministry in CANARA, Ukkulankulam was a blessing for me personally. More than the joy and fulfillment, there was a feeling as if God had rekindled a spark of Himself, His fragrance, a bit of the nature of His Spirit in me anew. Something unexplainable had permeated

me and is alive in me even today.

What I imbibed from CANARA, Ukkulankulam, continues to have its impact and it is a source of nourishment and healing. To put it mildly the spark that was rekindled, the fragrance, the spirit of the ministry of Ukkulankulam, refuses to die in me, in spite of adverse conditions from outside and indifferent attitudes from my own self. I hear within myself:

You were born with Potentials

You were born with goodness and trust

You were born with ideals and dreams

You were born with greatness

You were born with wings

You are not meant for crawling, so don't.

You have wings

Learn to use them and fly. ~ RUMI

Translated into my life, the above verses spoke to me, to let the fragrance spread, to find meaning, congruence in what I am within and who I am in action.

➤ **From basic English to search for self**

From where did all these 'oneness in God' sensitivity start? Believe it or not, it was in the Pre-school, CANARA, Ukkulankulam. To anyone I am send to teach English whether a toddler in the pre-school, or school children in the surrounding areas or adults who come for 'spoken English', my first lesson is "I am.... You are..... He/she/it is...". I start it and go round giving a chance to all in the group, till they feel free and comfortable using these words among them, and are happy with their learning. For me, this was a warming up session, an opening hour, an introductory lesson, a relationship building practice – call it whatever you will, but sure it brings a rapport in the group.

The 'I am....' turned into a question, - 'Who am I?' - and led me to the next stage, of silence, search, surrender.

Who am I really? The embryo in my mother's womb? the infant on her lap? the Kindergarten Toddler? What had remained from those bodies, feelings, emotions? Even as a grown up in initial formation, learning things as they were taught, or at 50s an all-rounder at CANARA? I am not even the one who was here yesterday. From yesterday to today if I have changed, then 'who am I?'

I do not know still who I am. But one thing is clear to me that when I say 'I am.....' I am not referring to my body because the question 'who am I' has remained constant over the past many years while my body has been changing repeatedly. And I have done nothing for my body cells to grow, develop, age and discard themselves. That process is being done for me.

The 'I' who looks at me, - the ever changing body- is an infinite being having its origin in God and can I say that 'I am birthless, deathless and changeless?'

*Am I really that which other people tell of?
Or am I only what I myself know of myself?
Who am I? This or the Other?
Am I one person today and tomorrow another?
Weary and empty at praying, at thinking, at
making,
Faint, and ready to say farewell to it all.
Who am I? They mock me, these lonely questions
of mine.
Whoever I am, Thou knowest, O God, I am Thine*

'Who Am I?' by Dietrich Bonhoeffer

5. Insights from the Scriptures

‘Whoever I am, Thou knowest, O God, I am thine’ This statement from Bonhoeffer was a challenging influence for me to read the scriptures with a view to what God is personally telling me about what He knows about me, who He is to me and who I am to him. It was a never ending discovery. I began to love the Scriptures and treasure it as containing personal messages for me,- distinct messages-appropriate to given moments.

Someone had beautifully said that the Bible was not given to us to increase our knowledge, but to change our lives

➤ God revealing Himself as ‘I AM WHO I AM’

One day while spending time exploring the Scriptures, I came across Moses’ encounter with God. When God called, Moses answered ‘Here I am’, (Ex 3:4) ‘iytho Naan irrukinren’ When Moses asked God for His name, God said ‘I AM WHO I AM. (Ex 3:4,14) ‘Irrukinravaraha irrukinravar Naane’. In Tamil Moses’ reply is in verb form and God’s answer is in noun form.

When I reflected further a question came up repeatedly, “where does the ‘Irrukinravaraha irrukinravar’ dwell?.

‘The creator has planted within every creature a fragment of himself, a spark, a spirit of the same nature as himself and thanks to this spirit, every creature can become a creator. And this means that, instead of always waiting for their needs to be satisfied by some external source, human beings can work inwardly by means of their thought, their will and their spirit to obtain the nourishing healing elements they need.

Omraam Mikhael Aivanhov

I believe that God is not a being outside of me. If the spark of God in me can be expanded, I believe from being a spark I can grow into flame of goodness. And goodness is nothing but having the quality of God, of being God and even I can have the freedom to repeat what Jesus said, *'Is not written in your Law 'I said, you are all God'. Jn 10:34.* And I also believe that *'With men this is not possible, but with God all things are possible.'*

➤ **Jesus' reminds us that He is God with His 'I AM....' statements**

In the New Testament many of the significant revelations of Jesus, as who He is, is given as messages beginning with 'I Am'

In the Gospel of St John

- ♦ I am the Door. If anyone enters by me, he/she will be saved. 10: 9
- ♦ I am Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down his life for His sheep. 10:11
- ♦ I am the Bread of Life. He who comes to me shall not hunger 6:35
- ♦ I am the Light of the World. He who follows me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life 8:12
- ♦ I am the Way, the truth and the Life. No one comes to the father except through me 14:6
- ♦ I am the true Vine and my father is the vinedresser. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear even more. 15:1
- ♦ I am the vine and you are the branches. He who abides in me and I in Him bears much fruit. 15:3
- ♦ I am the Resurrection and the Life. He who believes in me though he may die, he shall live 11:25

➤ **Jesus discloses that we are all one in the 'I AM' that abides within us**

When Jesus realized that His time with his Apostles - his time of his earthly ministry - was coming to a close, He began to tell them that He is going to leave them. They were sad and unhappy to be without Him. They were even much distressed about His saying. Jesus had to assure them over and over that He will be with them in a different form to support, guide and strengthen them.

- ♦ **'I will not leave you orphans'** *Jn 14:18* - This is the depth of Jesus' commitment to them assuring them that this is not the end of their relationship with Him. They will not be abandoned or left without Him.
- ♦ **'I live and you also will live'** *Jn 14: 19* - On that day you will realize that I am in my father, and you are in me and I am in you.
- ♦ **'You in Me and I in you'** *Jn 14: 20* - Jesus has been teaching and demonstrating His own oneness with the Spirit, not to claim special powers, but encourage us to embrace our own oneness
- ♦ **'That they may be one, just as you father are in me and I in you that they also be in us'** *Jn 17:21* - We have been invited in to unity with Jesus the son, Father and Spirit. Our union in Christ, our union with one another is grounded in our union in Christ in God
- ♦ **'We will make our home in you; live in me as I live in you'** *Jn 14:23* - Just as the God of OT dwelt in the tabernacle and temple, so also the trinity will come to dwell in those who love Him and keep His word. Home is where the heart is; Home is where I am with the Lord.
- ♦ **'My own joy may be in you'**. *Jn 15:11* - Jesus tells us that the greatest and most complete Joy - divine Joy is only from Him.

- ♦ **'I am the Vine, and you are the branches'** *Jn 15:5* - Jesus is the true source of life for us and we have to be grounded in Him. Just as the branches grow out of the vine our growth or fruit bearing is in our oneness in Him.

➤ **My 'I am' statements**

All along my younger days, I have prayed to God, as one outside of me and having imagery of the three persons of the Triune God.

God the Father, a grandfather with a long white beard, holding a globe in His hands. Whenever I wished I could go and sit on His lap and play with the beard or with the globe. It never mattered whether I was good or naughty. I was always free to go and felt accepted always.

With Jesus it was a bit different. I believed that I had to be good and do something to earn His love. The Holy Spirit in the form of a dove was at my beck and call. He would sit on my shoulder and tell me what to do if and when I ask Him. Though these are childhood images, even now I derive some comfort when I am down and under.

I have prayed for many things, not material, but for some attitudes like: kindness, patience, forgivingness, compassion, etc. hoping to receive it, from outside on a dish. When I pray the innate feeling is that I am praying for something that 'I do not have' and 'I will get it'

The realization of 'God is dwelling in my heart, He and I are one' and spending time in quite breathing, taking in 'You in me' and breathing out 'I in you', and reflecting on 'I am the vine, you are the branches' have greatly influenced me to look at myself, my attitudes, and my actions differently.

We are created with an inner restlessness that sends all of us looking for our True Self, whether we know it or not. There is a God-sized hole waiting to be filled. God creates the very dissatisfaction that finally only divine grace and love can satisfy.

I live near a lagoon. I know how the water in the lagoon is. Supposing I take a bucket and fill it with water from the lagoon, the consistency of the water does not change. It does not become the water from the well or the water that runs in the pipes. This may be a narrow and negative example.

Instead of telling God that I am weak and asking Him to make me strong, I imagine myself to be filled with the strength of God who dwells in me, or who is in me. Thus my attitude will change. With Him, I am strong.

Though I am very hesitant, in my heart I feel that this can be applied to all that I want to be in God. Having given my whole self to be one with Him, and wanting to be possessed by Him I can say that:

I am Holy	I am Good	I am love
I am Compassion	I am Joy	I am forgiveness
I am Generous	I am Simplicity	I am Humility
I am Patience	I am Meekness	I am gladness

and still be filled with doubts as to what I say and feel about myself. When my inner feeling and my outward behavior and actions do not correspond to each other, I become dreadfully aware of it, and can sink into despair. At times I want to cry out with Jesus, 'Why have you forsaken me'. Yet I know Jesus was not forsaken and so I wouldn't.

God desired me so I came close.

A thousand souls hear God's call every second,
but most of them looks into their life's mirror and
says, "I am not worthy to leave this sadness."

When I first heard God's courting song, I too
looked at all I had done in my life and said,
"How can I gaze into His omnipresent eyes?"
I spoke those words with all my heart.

But then God sang again, a song even sweeter,
and when I tried to shame myself
once more from His presence
God showed me His compassion
and spoke a divine truth,
"I made you, dear, and all I made is perfect.
Please come close, for I desire you."

Adapted from a poem (inspired by Teresa of Ávila),
written by: Daniel Ladinsky

Changing Our View of God

Our faith is strengthened every time we go through a period of questioning: "Why do I believe this? Do I believe this at all? What do I base my life on?" When we are at rock bottom, everything becomes clearer: self - image, God-image, world - view.

As St. John of the Cross described, our gods must each die till we find the true God. Or as Meister Eckhart put it, "Let us pray to God that we may be free of God."

In the darkness, it's hard to feel courageous. We resist love, and want to prove ourselves unworthy. In the darkness, we usually look for someone to blame, to absolve ourselves from the problem. The shame-and-blame game is all about projecting our inner state elsewhere. We must first recognize that God has something to teach us personally, not just the group or institution.

The way through is always much more difficult than the way around. Cheap religion gives us the way around, avoiding darkness. True religion gives us the way through, stepping right into the mystery.

Darkness is sacred ground. The God who calls us into darkness will also sustain us and lead us through it. Resurrection is the one and only pattern. "Deep calls unto deep" (*Ps 42:8*). In other words, Spirit initiates deep resonance and intimacy with our spirit, as the Endless Divine Yes evokes an ever - deeper yes in us.

6. Expressing my pursuit for Divinity as

a Nurse - Mid wife

The maternal and birth imagery of scripture along with the stories of births, both miraculous and natural have become so much of our part of our religious consciousness, that I make bold to take the symbolism in detail to verbalize my experience of my search for the Divinity in me.

I am a Nurse - Midwife by profession. Glancing through my life experience being with a mother to be for 6 - 9 months or by the side of a mother giving birth to a baby for 3 - 8 hours or being with students of midwifery during their practical sessions, I can identify many similarities with my pursuit of Divinity.

A mother to be has no idea of the exact moment of her fulfillment of her desire to conceive, the time the actual conception takes place, and the time she recognizes that she is pregnant. Except for her desire to conceive and setting up a suitable environment for conception, she has no say about how the whole process happen. She cannot accelerate the process, but has a positive attitude and wait for things to move in the natural order.

If that is the plight of a woman in child bearing age, what about the midwife who accompanies her during her ante - natal as well as during the actual birthing process.

It was a great help for me to review my life experience as a Midwife, looking at the time I spent with a pregnant woman in the clinic and otherwise. Was there anything I did to hasten the process, to decide on the sex, the size and shape of the baby and the number of days required to see the fruit? Nothing, but to stay by her, check on health condition associated with pregnancy and just wait.

The same thing happens when the woman goes into a labour. Standby, support, encourage, appreciate her endurance, and wait till nature completes its process.

Looking at myself as the expectant mother, or the midwife, and the vulnerability and limitation to expedite the process, taught me very effectively the meaning of waiting for things to unfold. Pursuing something needs time and waiting - a long period of waiting - and uncertainty. The area of search is something deep and intimate and as the searcher, I am aware that I am in a vulnerable position. I have to sit down with myself, - a very difficult task for me to do - talk to myself about my experience and about the fear and doubt I have of the experience, the fear of being ridiculed inhibiting the growing flames, fear of my own reaction to others criticism and misunderstanding, the ashes I see around, the smoke and at the same time the strong feeling that the fire is not extinguished. Deep down I am certain the fire is there, waiting to blaze anew, if I am bold enough to acknowledge the Godliness, i.e. the goodness in me.

There were periods of transition. I wish the searcher in me, the midwife I was, knew exactly what was happening during those transitional periods. A part of me knew that these periods are signs of a break through and great progress. But in reality I have often felt them as a signs of failure and desolation. I feel the negative side of me taking over the situation when I am not alert.

I was one, who mostly like to do things then and there, say what I have to say without beating around the bush, and look for immediate results. Though my long years of experience as a nurse - midwife and a trainer did help me a bit about the positive results of 'waiting', my innate nature often down played my experience. And disappointments, annoyances with self, impatience with seeing no change in me has been part of my suffering.

Yes, it is easy to believe in the existence of God, but difficult to believe my true existence in God. Inner work of knowing and being known fills me with some sort of serenity. My yearning for God prompts the primary question 'who am I?' and yearning to be known, - known by Him - and to experience that knowing is almost an urgency.

Waiting!!! Waiting!!! I need to savour the waiting. I need to learn to relish the times of waiting. And be at peace, waiting.

➤ **Mary Magdalene's perseverance in waiting at the empty tomb**

The exemplar for this holy waiting is Mary Magdalene. She persevered in her waiting at the empty tomb. Her heart knew something more than what the senses told her. Looking into the Empty tomb... The tomb is not empty.... It has the proof that Jesus rose. He was not stolen. The cloths are a witness. The head cover folded correctly and set at a different place, speaks aloud.

'Why did she stoop down again, why did she want to look again? It is never enough for a lover to have looked once, because love's intensity does not allow a lover to give up the search. Mary sought a first time and found nothing; she persevered in seeking, and so it happened that she found Jesus'.

- Gregory the Great, Homily 22

➤ **All it needs is my faithfulness**

Rachel had an endearing grandfather who often brought presents for her. One day when she was four years old, he brought a paper cup full of dirt, and showed her how to put few drops of water in the cup, saying, 'If you promise to put some water every day, you may see something happen'. She promised her grandfather she would do this and did it faithfully for a few days. Seeing nothing happening she told her grandfather and wanted to stop, but he insisted that she goes on watering. Each time when she told him nothing was happening he smiled lovingly and encouraged her with the same words 'everyday' that she should water every day. One day she found two little leaves above the dirt. When she told her Grandfather about it, he explained to her, 'Life is everywhere, hidden in the most ordinary and unlikely places' She was delighted and asked, 'And all it needs is water?' Gently her grandfather touched her and said 'No, all it needs is your faithfulness'.

'My grandfather's blessings,' by Rachel Naomi Remen cited by Joyce Rupp in Prayer

To wait is part of the human condition. Like this little girl, who watered the seemingly dead soil in a little cup, I need to have a faithful disposition, to tend to my experience of 'He and I are one'. There is a tendency in me to forget, to resist this experience. I need to recognize the tiny little green sprouts for what they are and faithfully pursue my dreams.

There are no right answers, only clearer vision and ever deeper questions.

'Do not seek the answers which cannot be given you, because you would not be able to live them. And the point is, to live everything live the questions now'.

- 'Rainer Maria Rilke

'Tend only to the birth in you, and you will find all goodness and all consolation and all delight all being and all truth'.

- Meister Eckhart

'Truly, truly I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the Kingdom of God' (Jn 3:3)

7. How can I be transformed?

I believe that we humans have the ability to literally change suffering and pain by transforming our attitudes. When we consciously live from God realized perspective there are no limits as to what one can do. Of course one needs to die in order to realize one's dreams. There is a divine spark in all of us and when we allow this spark to be ignited and nourished in us, this spark is capable of conveying miracles in our lives.

With some 'ifs' and 'buts' my day to day life is good and is acceptable to me. Along with it, there is a consciousness associated to an invisible boundless energy. What I want is not more knowledge, but freedom to expand, to be free to reach out towards my dreams and imagination. Attaining or reaching my goals is not as important as to reach out to embrace the 'You in me and I in You'.

In Case You Ever Wonder...

Hello, you -

the one with that dream in your heart,

that idea on your mind,

that desire that just won't go away.

You wonder...can I do this?

You can do all things.

(Philippians. 4:13)

You ask...do I have what it takes?

You've got all you need.

(2 Peter 1:3)

Your question... is am I okay?

You're more than okay, you're His. *(Psalm 139:14)*

So go for it.

Dare to make that difference, take that step, follow that dream. God will go with you, and love will see you through.

To be transformed, the whole basis of my thoughts must change. Not by new ideas but faith in my power to make the non-existent my reality. My thoughts cannot change, unless I have new ideas, an inner knowing, along with a burning desire. These are the pre-requisites for becoming a person capable of expressing one's heart's desire. I believe that I have a burning desire, an inner flame that will not be extinguished by outer forces And I am willing and prepared to challenge and change my thoughts that impede my forward journey; my having a higher vision of myself.

My personal human transformation need to happen as my spiritual i.e. You in me and I in You' grows and takes root in me. The recognition of You and I are one, must be reflected in my day to day activities. I passionately accept and believe in the oneness with the Divine and in the same way I believe my thoughts and actions are influenced by the Divine that dwells in me.

Our Founder Fr. Theodosius, who was bent on seeing the reformation of the society had this to say: 'A reform must first transform the interior and then unfold from the inside out'.

My imagination is mine and mine alone. I must never allow anyone else's idea of who I am, or what I can do to pollute my imagination.

'Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world'.

'Logic will get you from A to B. But imagination will take you anywhere'.

- Albert Einstein

DEEP THOUGHTS

*Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.
Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond
measure.*

It is our light, not our darkness, that frightens us

We ask ourselves:

*"Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented,
fabulous?"*

Actually, who are we not to be?

You are a child of God

Your playing small doesn't serve the world.

There is nothing enlightened about shrinking

So that other people won't feel insecure around you.

*We were born to make manifest
the glory of God that is within us*

It's not just in some of us.

*It's in everyone, and as we let our light shine,
we consciously give other people permission to do
the same*

*As we are liberated from our own fear,
our presence automatically liberates others*

- NELSON MANDELA

*Let this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in
the form of God did not consider it a robbery to be equal to God
(Phil 2: 5-6)*

'God is dwelling in my heart.

He and I are one

All His joys He gives to me

through Christ His Son,

And in Jesus un my heart,

what have I to fear

For He is the living God

and in my heart He is near'

8. Learning from the life of the two closest to Jesus

a. St John, the Beloved

*From the very first day, we were there, taking it all in - we heard it with our own ears, saw it with our own eyes, verified it with our own hands. The Word of Life appeared right before our eyes: we saw it happen! And now we're telling you in most sober prose that what we witnessed was, incredibly, this: **The infinite Life of God himself took shape before us. We saw it, we heard it, and now we're telling you so you can experience it along with us,** this experience of communion with the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ. Our motive for writing is simply this: We want you to enjoy this, too. Your joy will double our joy! (1Jn1:1-4)*

'The infinite Life of God himself took shape before us. We saw it, we heard it, and now we're telling you so you can experience it along with us'

As I read, and reread this sentence, I asked myself 'what did John see hear, what is he trying to tell me? As I read the Gospel and other letters written by him my curiosity was awakened. His Gospel is full of Jesus' I am statements and shows clearly the unity and oneness that existed between Jesus and His Father. I learnt a little more of who he is and what his relationship to Jesus is.

St. John, the Evangelist (St. John the Divine, as he was called in the 1st century) is one of the first Twelve Apostles of Jesus. He is traditionally credited with writing the fourth Gospel and three New Testament epistles and the book of Revelation.

John - a Hebrew word - means 'God is gracious'. His father was a Galilean fisherman. According to Mathew and Luke, John was called or rather followed Jesus while at sea along with his brother James. They were among the first disciples called by Jesus. According to John, Andrew and the other disciple (believed to be John) were disciples of John the Baptist. When the baptizer looked at Jesus and said, 'There is the Lamb of God' the two of them just followed Jesus. Jesus' question,

'What are you looking for' and his invitation to 'come and see' have been the initial call for them to follow Jesus.

So, John the evangelist, had a background of being with John the Baptizer, and had learnt something of quiet gazing, interior silence, searching beyond etc., and it made his relationship to Jesus, his manner of perceiving things, his beliefs, his writings quite different to the other disciples.

It is obvious that the Gospel according to St. John is quite different from the other three Gospels. After a prologue in which he identifies God with the Word (Logos), he gives selected episodes from Jesus' life and ministry. The way he reveals the significance of the Son of God greatly influenced the development of Christian doctrine.

In the Gospel of John, the beloved disciple emerges as a close, personal friend of the Lord. Along with Martha, Lazarus, and Mary, John is described explicitly in this Gospel as one whom Jesus loved (*In 11:3, 5*). His position at the table during the Last Supper reflected not only honor but also closeness.

The titles used for John are: the beloved disciple, the disciple whom Jesus loved, the one who was reclining next to Jesus. There is a special bond between Jesus and this beloved disciple. As Jesus' closest disciple, he was present at some of the critical moments of Jesus' time on earth.

- ◆ witnessing the Transfiguration
- ◆ raising of Jairus' daughter
- ◆ It is through him Peter was trying to know the mind of Jesus about the betrayer
- ◆ accompanying Jesus, the night before his crucifixion in the garden of Gethsemane
- ◆ staying at the high priest's courtyard at trial of Jesus
- ◆ at his passion and at the foot of the cross.

Since he is the beloved of Jesus and vice versa, Jesus replaced his absence in the family with his beloved disciple and entrusted his beloved mother to him. He saw the empty tomb and believed the prediction of Jesus that he would be risen: At the Tiberius' appearance, it is this beloved disciple who recognizes Jesus. His deep love for Jesus sticks him close to Jesus always.

John was not only a close friend of Jesus during his time, but a spiritual teacher for the ages. Throughout his writings, one theme outshines all others: the importance of love.

As much as John was close to Jesus, he too needed, from time to time guidance from Jesus. His fiery temperament, or rather his burning evangelical zeal and extreme reactions stirred Jesus to address the two brothers as 'the Sons of Thunder' (*Mk 3:17*) When James and John heard a man casting out devils in Jesus' name, they forbade him from doing it (*Lk 9:49*). Later, when Jesus set out for Jerusalem and the Samaritans refused to receive him on his journey, James and John were incensed. 'Lord, do you want us to call down fire from heaven to consume them?' they asked. In both instances, Jesus rebuked them for their extreme reactions and unnecessary hostility. Perhaps most famously, the two asked Christ if they could one day be seated at his right and left hand - to which Jesus responded, 'You do not know what you are asking for' (*Mk 10:37-38*).

John's Gospel is Unique. He emphasizes the significance of love - Jesus' final lesson centers on love: 'As the Father loves me, so I also love you. **Remain in my love.** If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love. I have told you this so that **my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete.** This is my commandment: love one another as I love you'. (*Jn 15:9-12*)

John's principal purpose to account for Jesus' divinity, 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God'. John's Gospel also stresses the role of the Holy Spirit, mentioning that the Holy Spirit is promised by Jesus (*7:37-39; 14:16-17*),

shows truth (16:13), and enables believers to continue the work of Jesus (14:16), among other things.

John was the only disciple to pass away peacefully rather than in martyrdom. His zeal for evangelism and heart of love continue to inspire the faithful and strengthen the devotion of believers throughout generations. In his Gospel John teaches us about love and generosity, the hallmarks of Jesus' life, teaching and mission. So,

- ◆ We don't have to define love for ourselves.
- ◆ There's no limit on generosity.
- ◆ To love is to give.
- ◆ Love isn't simply a philosophy.
- ◆ Faith in Jesus, results in eternal life. 'That you may believe'

*The love of God comes first in the order of command.
The love of neighbor comes first in the order of action
(St. Augustine)*

As one of the four evangelists, his symbol is an eagle (for far-sightedness or vision).

John's understanding of love has two main foundations: Jesus Christ is the origin and example of true godly love. And without that love in us, we cannot be saved by him.

Love is obedience to God's commands. It is not a sweet and benign attitude that smiles.

b. Our Blessed Mother

“ Rejoice, you who enjoy God’s favour! The Lord is with you ”

Ever since I began to question my concept of personal prayer, my reverence and admiration of Mother Mary changed. I began to see her in a different light. She is loved, admired and looked up not only as the Mother of Jesus - Mother of God, but there was something much more in her that appealed to and changed my relationship to her.

The account in the first chapter of Luke, read and reread, showed me a quite an amazing account of her, and kept me occupied for many days and even now I wonder how I missed the significance of it all those days.

The greeting in verse 28 - ‘Rejoice, you who enjoy God’s favour! The Lord is with you’, brings out that she really was favorable in God’s sight, even before the actual ‘Annunciation’. One who ‘enjoyed God’s favour’ was undoubtedly ‘with God and in God’. ‘Mary in God and God in Mary.

The realization that the greeting - ‘The Lord is with you’, - is heard even before the actual message was given, made me explore and get to know this young woman - hitherto thought about as a pious young girl. If the Lord was already in her even before the ‘Word’ was made flesh in her, she has to be someone special, someone extraordinary, someone unique. And I wanted to learn more about her and associate with her closely in order to imbibe some of her characteristics.

Mary, a first - century Jewish woman of Nazareth, is a central figure of Christianity, venerated under various titles such as virgin, queen, mother of Jesus, Mother of God

Theotokos - ‘God-bearer’, recognized at the council of Ephesus in 431.
Aeiparthenos - ‘ever-virgin’, confirmed in the Second Council of Constantinople in 553,

Panagia meaning ‘all-holy’.

Dei Genitrix meaning Mater Dei –Mother of God used by Church Fathers and so on.

Mary, known as Maryam has the highest position in Islam among all women and is mentioned numerous times in the Quran, including a chapter named after her. Some terms of endearment related to her are 'she who confirms the truth', 'she who believes sincerely, completely', one who has been purified, one in constant submission to God and absorbed in prayer.

What Islam has to say of Mary seems much more attractive and appealing than the Proclamation of the Catholic Church on our Blessed Mother.

I understand that Mary was in God and God was in Mary even before the conception of Jesus was announced. Mary is the only human person who was greeted thus. And it is Mary who accompanied Our Lord from the crib to the cross, or rather from the womb to the tomb and who through her presence in the embryonic church continued to give witness of Him after His ascension.

What appealed to me most was that she is a woman of few words. Out of the twenty-seven books in the New Testament, only two have recorded words spoken by Mary. She was a woman of intensive, dedicated action focused on others and their well - being. She did not do these in the comfort of her home, but in being on move. She was able to look beyond herself and actively seek opportunities to serve, support and be with others. No one ever asked her for help. It is a divine quality to help others even though they have not asked for help. It becomes all the greater when helping others is challenging and risky.

This is how I picture Mary whenever I meet her in the Scriptures. Though the narratives are very short and concise they speak volumes. And I would like to give all what is in the Scriptures about Mary, and all what I learnt from her as to what one can become when one is in God and God is in one.

I find Mary as a person who reflected. I presume Mary was in a mood of quiet reflection when she heard the greeting. From her I learnt that it is in being in silence that one can listen to the deeper, higher voices speaking within, and it is in silence that one is able to differentiate the voices one hears.

Being in a mood of reflection, she was able to listen, listen in awe to the greeting, 'Rejoice, you who enjoy God's favour! The Lord is with you'. As she listened she was also aware of the doubts in her heart, one being that she is a virgin and the other as to what would become of her engagement. She was in fear and anxiety to the impossible news, 'You will conceive and give birth to a son'.

The one who listened deeply and interiorized what has been said to her, is able to question, clarify. 'How will this be', not referring to the engagement, but to the fact that she is a virgin, and she does not know man.

And on being assured, she made herself available to accept God's invitation to the possibility of losing her betrothed, to a situation of facing disgrace as an unwed mother. Since she knew the prophecies, I am sure she also accepted to see her son being rejected, crucified and killed.

The one who hesitated, questioned is able to respond 'I am the Lord's servant. May your word to me be fulfilled' (*Lk 1:38*). Is this coming just from her mouth, or from her heart, from the deepest resources of herself, was a fleeting question for me, which was cleared by what happened next. Mary sprang into action. Her action spoke louder than her words. Having learned from the angel that her cousin Elizabeth in her old age is pregnant 'she arose and went in haste' to assist her. (*Lk 1 39*)

Though the Scriptures say that she remained there for three months the only thing she spoke was to sing the praises of the Lord. From then on there are only a few occasions her presence is mentioned, together with the few words and these allow me to recognize her oneness in and with God. :-

1. She gives birth to her firstborn, wraps him in swaddling clothes and places him in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn.

2. She hears the words of Simeon in the temple that this child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and a sword will pierce her soul. Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.
3. She expresses distress and grief, when Jesus, at the age of twelve, was lost and found, '*Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you*'.
4. She tells Jesus at the wedding feast of Cana '*They have no wine*' trusting that Jesus would prevent the embarrassment of those newly-wed from happening.
5. She tells the servants: '*Do whatever he tells you*', even though Jesus had not given a positive answer. (When at twelve Jesus felt that he must be about his father's business Mary intervened and brought him back home. Now at 30 when Jesus says that his time has not yet come Mary urges him indirectly that the time is now and Jesus heeds her message.
6. She hears the words of Jesus '*Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?*' Outside the place where Jesus was preaching Mary stands as a model of one who believes and follows Jesus.
7. She makes bold to walk the road to Calvary amidst soldiers and persecutors to meet Jesus.
8. She hears the words of Jesus, '*Here is your son*', '*Here is your mother*', as she stands beneath the Cross at Calvary.
9. She caresses the dead body of Jesus.
10. She changes residence to be at John's house.
11. She joins the apostles in the upper room and is together with them in constant prayer.
12. She is with the twelve as Jesus ascends.

The tradition as well as all the icons and pictures show Mary as quiet and submissive. But as a Jewish peasant woman, it is unlikely that she was either of these things. Her actions and words at the finding of Jesus in the Temple as well as at the wedding in Cana give us an example of Mary's assertiveness.

In my first encounter with the Blessed virgin in the Gospel, I have been introduced to the greeting 'The Lord is with you'. 'Deeply disturbed by this, she asked herself what this greeting could mean'. This particular line in the Gospel speaks volumes to me about my search and its effects, the deep disturbances corresponding with the unexplainable peace and I treasure this encounter. And I want to share my experience of Mary and how turning to her in all events of my life, strengthened my search for meaning, search for who I am, search to live with the truth of 'The Lord is with me' 'He and I are one'.

When troubles and adversities knock at my door, I seem to stagger in my conviction that I am loved and chosen to be one with God. Though I long for that intimacy of 'You in me and I in you' I do also question 'How could this be'.

Mary is indeed a special person, a unique one. 'Blessed are you among women' was the greeting of Elizabeth. The blessedness of Mary was evident in her virtuous life and grace - filled qualities as found in the first two chapters of the Gospel according to Luke,

- ♦ Most Pure (Lk 1:27,34)
- ♦ Most Prudent (Lk 2:19, 51)
- ♦ Most Humble (Lk 1:48)
- ♦ Most Faithful (Lk 1:45)
- ♦ Most Devout (Lk 1:46-70)
- ♦ Most Obedient (Lk 1:38; 2:21-2, 27)
- ♦ Most Poor (Lk 2:7)

The logic of piety helped God's people to believe that Mary was full of grace and free of sin from the first moment of her existence.

Moreover, this great privilege of Mary is the highlight of all that God has done in Jesus. Rightly understood, the incomparable holiness of Mary shows forth the incomparable goodness of God.

The key to any kind of lasting growth is to start small. A good idea for me, is to remember that the Blessed Mother is right there with me at every step of the way, and not to hesitate to ask for her guidance and assistance and not to be afraid to grow in love for Our Lady.

“Never be afraid of loving the Blessed Virgin too much. You can never love her more than Jesus did.”

- St. Maximilian Kolbe

9. Will the pursuit ever end?

True love never has a happy ending, because there is no ending to true love. - Alexander the great

A pursuit never ends. So I cannot think of writing a conclusion to the reflections I have shared here. New developments may ensue as the phases of pursuit progress and I need be ready and open. Our foundress Mother Bernarda has beautifully instructed us in 1851, we need to *'Begin every day anew to love the Lord'*. I need to be conscious every day and hour as to where I am and where I want to start anew in my search for the Divinity that dwells deep within me. As Carlos Acutis, - the first millennial saint, - expressed

'Our goal must be the infinite and not the finite. The infinity is our homeland. We are always expected in heaven'. 'Our compass must be the Word of God that one has to measure up to constantly'.

So in my search I am convinced once again what Mother Bernarda has told her sisters years ago; *'God's grace is much more powerful compared to our human wretchedness'*.

In the book 'He and I' which contains conversations between Jesus and Gabbrielle Bossis, Jesus is supposed to have told her,

'We shall be one: You in the striving, I in the grace' (pg 223) And again *'I am more present to you than you are to yourself. You are never alone'. Can you be separated from your breathing or from the blood that flow in your veins, or from the very essence of your soul? (Pg 224)*

My long years of searching for something without knowing, that, what I was searching was deep within me, has brought me the realization that there is an unexplainable power, a tremendous power within me, when I consciously come in touch with who I really am - a person not only filled with grace, but holding the source of all graces within me. When I understand this truth, when I know how to be one

with it and direct it, I see myself as a different person.

As I celebrate my 80th Birthday, with a sense of gratitude and faithfulness, there is also a tendency to look at the coming days with a bit of uncertainty. Am I chasing behind something unreasonable? Unattainable? Am I following some fancy?

I hear within me 'Never grow weary of me', 'Don't become accustomed to any of the comfortable feelings'. 'You know how much swifter the little streams flow as they get near the sea - just as though they were in a hurry to lose themselves. Come to me in the same way'.

'Haven't I told you that I am a collector of miseries, I am like the painter who takes pleasure in touching up the colors of a faded canvas, I am like the one who mends torn and broken things'.

So I don't want to believe the excuses or reasons my mind give me, and take a look at where I am today and decide what kind of life I want to live. I want to start using the grace within me to help me achieve my dreams.

Since all people are born as originals, we need not die as carbon copies.

We do not dare consider that our work is due to any merit of ours. We know that our ability comes from God. (2 Cor 3:5)

Life is only meaningful when we are striving for a goal.

The conclusion of the matter
Was a question of perception
It was never quite decided
Who was wrong and who was right
As we filter through the wreckage
There's a pile of old excuses
As if lyrics from
An old familiar song
To replay a thousand questions
As we justify the reasons
Anyone can see the end result
Was right
For the truth remains a constant
Through a fog of indecision
Like a beacon to illuminate
The night
As we struggle with the construct
Of a book of explanations
To make sense of past mistakes
We both have made
There is nothing left to publish
But a manuscript of edits
Missing most of what
We truly want to say
So we have this little story
Like a chapter in a novel
Or a history condensed
Into a line
It's the sum of our neglecting
That gives pause to our reflecting
As we tell ourselves
We both are doing fine

Life passes, riches fly away, popularity is fickle, the senses decay, the world changes. One alone is true to us; One alone can be all things to us; One alone can supply our need. We are answerable for what we choose to believe.

Grant me, O Lord my God, a mind to know you, a heart to seek you, wisdom to find you, conduct pleasing to you, faithful perseverance in waiting for you, and a hope of finally embracing you.

- *John Henry Newman*

Nothing created has ever been able to fill the heart of man. God alone can fill it infinitely. Of all the pursuits open to men, the search for wisdom is most perfect, more sublime, more profitable, and more full of joy.

- *St. Thomas Aquinas*

A Christian is: a mind through which Christ thinks,
a heart through which Christ loves,
a voice through which Christ speaks,
and a hand through which Christ helps.

- *St. Augustine*

A dream does not become reality through magic; it takes sweat, determination, and hard work.

Because God has made us for Himself, our hearts are restless until they rest in Him.

Remember this. When people choose to withdraw far from a fire, the fire continues to give warmth, but they grow cold. When people choose to withdraw far from light, the light continues to be bright in itself but they are in darkness. This is also the case when people withdraw from God.

- *St. Augustine*

*The most important relationship we can all have is:
the one you have with yourself,
the most important journey you can take is
one of self-discovery*

To know yourself, you must spend time with yourself, you must not be afraid to be alone. *Knowing yourself is the beginning of all wisdom.*

Aristotle

Some quotes to nudge me:

Staying motivated all the time is an impossible task. Sometimes, I just don't have the energy, or I feel completely stuck. Little bursts of positive quotes sometimes provide the fuel I need to light a fire beneath.

There are ups and downs - but I know I never stop growing. I put myself in the right mindset to get up and believe that I can reach my aim, because I already know that someone else is holding the mast.

Because God has made us for Himself, our hearts are restless until they rest in Him. Augustine

The deep roots never forget that spring will come - Marty Rubin

'Do not give attention to what others do or fail to do; give attention to what you do or fail to do'

The inner invisible world of yours will be the source of your new reality.

'All progress, all fulfilment of desire depend upon the control and concentration of your attention'.

'Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world'. - Albert Einstein

God has created me to do Him some definite service; He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another. I have my mission.

If we enter into ourselves, find our true self, and then pass "beyond" the inner "I," we sail forth into the immense darkness in which we confront the "I AM" of the Almighty.

-Thomas Merton

God leads us by strange ways; we know He wills our happiness, but we neither know what our happiness is, nor the way. We are blind; left to ourselves we should take the wrong way; we must leave it to Him.

- John Henry Newman

You through me... I through you

*Whenever I had consciously given you my hands,
it was you who did your work through me*

*Whenever I had let my feet at your disposal,
I walked your way without any hindrance.*

*Whenever I looked at the same direction as you,
there was no shying away.*

Having experienced these at every moment of my life, Lord

I give you my tongue that you may speak through me

I give you my mind that you may think in me

I give you my spirit that you may pray in me

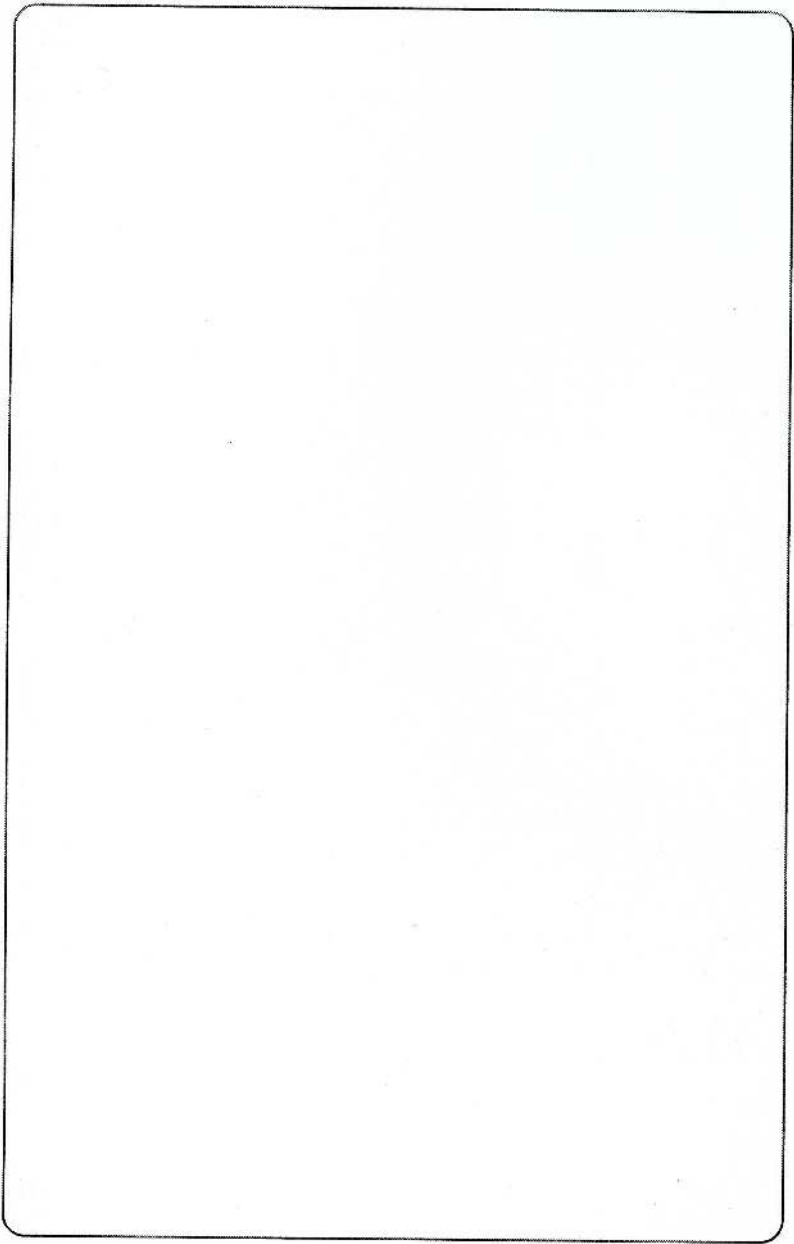
I give you my heart that you may love in me

I give you my whole self that you may grow in me

so that, it is you

Lord Jesus, who live and work and pray through me.

My grace is sufficient for you;
for my power is made perfect in weakness. (2 Cor 12:9)







About the author

Sr. Victorine James, born in Naranthanai, Kayts, had her early education at the Holy Family Convent, Naranthanai. Trained as a Nurse at the Holy Cross Hospital, Kottiyam, Kerala. She made her first commitment as a Holy Cross Sister in 1969.

Thereafter, worked as a nurse at St Michael's private hospital in Colombo and later as a Nurse Educator at the Nurses Training School, at the teaching Hospital Jaffna and at Holy Family Hospital, Karachi, Pakistan and at Holy Cross Hospital, Jaffna. She has served in different capacities, participating in the varied ministries of the congregation of Holy Cross Sisters.

She has published

- 'Sri Lankan Province 1930 -2010' in 2010
- 'One pot Spirituality' – Reminiscing to Relish in 2019
- 'Ephphatha' An invitation to all women 2021