



Restoration
MINISTRIES



Autumn 2016

He Restores My Soul

Dear Friends,

A concept that has really captured my imagination and excited my spirit in the last while has been that of 'subversive friendship'. It is the term used by Brian McLaren in his book 'Why Did Jesus, Moses, the Buddha and Mohammed Cross the Road?' He defines such friendship as 'that which crosses the boundaries of otherness, daring to offer and receive hospitality.' And immediately, in all humility, I recognise that that is what we in Restoration Ministries have been seeking to practice in different ways over the last 28 years. I am full of gratitude for you the 'friends' of the ministry who have risked journeying in such a way and are continuing to do so. McLaren points to three components in any such friendship – companionship, conviviality and conspiracy. Companionship highlights the centrality of hospitality in nurturing such friendship; conviviality emphasises the importance of sharing at a deeper level, risking letting down some of our defences and becoming more open and vulnerable. But it is conspiracy that I want to stress in this newsletter. I just love this image of whispering plans and plots – plotting goodness, what McLaren describes as rehearsing and practicing for a better world through the give and take of friendship. It conjures up for me the picture of those of us who are aware of this call to friendship being God's secret agents, working for the emergence of the upside down kingdom. These agents are everywhere, more numerous than we know. We find them in unexpected places and among unexpected people. Empowered by the Spirit they are infiltrating everywhere. When the time is right, again as history has proved, they go public and, through them, we are given fresh heart to continue the journey towards unity in diversity and the reconciliation of all things.

Let me give you a few examples from recent months. As recently as 25th September Fr Eddie O'Donnell was installed as an ecumenical canon in St Anne's cathedral, Belfast. This is the first time that a Catholic priest has occupied such a position and marks a further step in the reconciliation journey. Fr Eddie is on our Board of Directors and we were absolutely delighted to be present at such a memorable service. I am already an ecumenical canon in St Anne's, so Restoration Ministries is well represented!





Paul Horan O.Carm is a longstanding friend of RM. While still a student he spent a summer with us, working both with RM and a local parish and, over the years, has kept in touch. For the last 15 years he has been in Zimbabwe. On 27th August he was ordained and installed Bishop of Mutare, Zimbabwe. On 18th September Rose and I shared with family and friends at a service of thanksgiving for Bishop Paul in Terenure College in Dublin. Please remember him in your prayers as he picks up such an important leadership role during a very challenging and difficult time. He truly is an ambassador for the Kingdom and a blessed 'conspirator'.

Most of my life in these days is crossing the boundaries of otherness. I do so with great joy, gratitude and humility. On August 17th I was in Co Mayo where I had the privilege of speaking at the Knock Novena and leading a workshop on forgiveness. Two friends of RM, if you like two 'conspirators', one Presbyterian and one Catholic made the journey out to be present for that event. It was a little glimpse of the unity that is already ours (even though largely unrecognised). On September 24th I was facilitating a workshop on 'Unity in Diversity' at the Down and Connor Diocesan Convention. Here again glimpses of not only our common humanity but our family membership of the Body of Christ were everywhere apparent. There is an open door of welcome for RM in the religious houses throughout the island where I have been invited to give retreats. I have found so many remarkable women, now very elderly who have amazing stories to tell of their work and witness over many years. Facing old age, ill health, declining numbers, no new vocations, they still have the amazing resource of the power house of prayer. They too, through their faithful prayer, are mighty 'conspirators' as they plan and plot goodness for our island and for this world.

We, too, have that same resource – and how much we need to be exercising it today, for the sake of Aleppo and all the other anguished and ravaged places on this earth. We *can* make a difference as we pick up the challenge. The fruit of such faithfulness is often prayer-motivated action. It's too easy to be overwhelmed and say there's nothing we can do.

It is encouraging, too, that the number of people seeking spiritual direction continues to grow. Awareness that the biggest peace-making journey we will ever make is the one within ourselves appears to be a steadily growing conviction.

So Restoration Ministries is alive and well, still enabled to practice companionship, conviviality and conspiracy, largely through your prayerful and practical support. Thank you – and let us keep on keeping on. Wherever you are in this world, may you, too, be encouraged by the challenge of subversive friendship!

Ruth

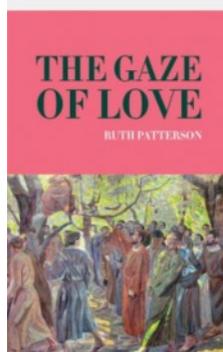
Advent Reflection Day

Saturday 26th November 2016

Time: 2 – 5pm

St Brigid's Parish Hall,
Derryvolgie Ave, Belfast

Title:
'Hope in the Midst of Chaos'



Sales are going well and we are encouraged by positive feedback from many sources.

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