REMEMBERING YOUR DIVINITY

ments of dried flowers picked from the location shown. While our devotion to God(s) should remain fixed, it is important to note that belief and faith are essences which are not static. The depictions on the cover transport us to a place of antiquity; it is vital to remember, so much has happened since the Bible (and other ancient scriptures) were written, and so much more will happen. Our faith helps us to entrust in the Lord.

While this anthology sought dialogue from various faiths, including Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Islam and Christianity), and non-Abrahamic religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, Indigenous spirituality and Taoism), regrettably, despite my best intentions to include interfaith contributions, some of my efforts bore no fruit or otherwise were not ready to be published. As I grew up a Christian (Iglesia Ni Cristo), it is not surprising that this anthology is mainly contributed to by people in these communities (i.e., those of the Christian faith). However, this anthology serves as a foundation to share experience-informed poetry, stories, essays and perspectives that hopefully will build into other areas of interfaith consciousness, characterised by more light and less heat. This is with a common goal in a context where there is equality and conduciveness to enhance positive attitudes and contribute to social cohesion in interfaith and multi-faith societies. Rather than introducing, rehearsing or summarising the contributions in this anthology, I invite you to read on and go beyond the writings here and elsewhere, providing us with a much-needed interfaith consciousness.

Contents

You're lucky, you're going to Canaan, the land of milk and honey, our grandparents had said about the United States.

And we believed them the way we believed that Nellie Oleson and her doting mother are the evil twins of Walnut Grove, Minnesota in The Little House on the Prairie. Back then, the islands already had a daily diet of American tv-shows. Thus, in Los Angeles, we bitched like pioneers as well, and gave a Nellie Oleson attitude to anyone who made fun of our accent in school. And we never told our parents that, only things we can swallow properly at dinnertime, like a B+ on a test, or anything we can freeze into a smile, because, as The Village People might say, there's no need to feel sad and down in a new town, because there's always a place you can go. Now for us, that place was not the YMCA; it was the wooden table beside the kitchen, where everyone in my family still knew how to close their eyes and feel a steeple in their hands, before dipping our tongues in the silence of hot veggie-soup, into something pure and basic we can never let go.

2

Roland Clark

The Blessed Sacrament: Father Jeremiah O'Flynn, the Eucharist, and Early Australian Catholicism

When Father William Bernard Ullathorne, the first vicar-general to set foot in the Australian colonies, arrived in Sydney in 1832 he was almost immediately told about another priest who had briefly visited the colony in 1817 and left behind a consecrated host in a pyx box before being deported. The story is strange for a number of reasons, not least because canon law insists that a consecrated host must be kept in a church and under the care of a priest.[1] At the time New South Wales had neither Catholic churches nor priests. Ullathorne published the story of Father Jeremiah O'Flynn several years later in a pamphlet arguing that the Australian Church needed the urgent help of its European brethren:

The first missioner who reached these countries was the Very Rev. Mr. Flinn, appointed by the Holy See as Archpriest, with powers to confirm. Mr. Flinn presented himself in Sydney and the surrounding country about the year 1818. He was a man of meek demeanour, who speedily won the deep love of his people, and by his ardent zeal did much in a short time. But the local government, jealous of his happy labours, under colour of his having come out unsanctioned by the

British civil authorities - an act which no law stood to prohibit - cast this apostolic man into prison a few months after his arrival, deprived him of all communications with the faithful, and sent him reluctantly away by the first ship sailing for England. The Blessed Sacrament had been left by the Archpriest in the dwelling of a Catholic, of Sydney, where, for two years after his departure, the faithful, as many as could, were wont to assemble, there to offer up their prayers and receive consolation in their miseries. It is mournfully beautiful to contemplate these men of sorrow gathered round the bread of life - bowed down before the crucified - no voice but the silent one of faith - not a priest within six thousand miles to extend to them that pledge of pardon to repentance - whose near presence they see and feel.[2]

In 1841, the future Archbishop John Bede Polding reported to Rome that when the next priests arrived two years later, 'the sacred particles were found quite free from any corruption.'[3] Cardinal Moran's *History of the Catholic Church in Australasia* from 1896 claimed that O'Flynn had left the consecrated host in the house of William Davis in the Rocks, where Saint Patrick's Church now stands. It soon became a minor pilgrimage site for believers, who treated the pyx as a relic and reused the wood from the cupboard that it had been stored in to make ritual objects. Davis, for his part, was blessed with long life and significant wealth.[4] In 1886 Father Dean Kenny, who had served as a priest in Sydney for almost 50 years, repeated Polding's story that 'the Blessed Sacrament was consumed, and the species found uncorrupt, when the two priests, F. Connelly and Father Therry arrived, in the year 1820,' but in *The Dawn of Catholicism in Australia* (1928), Eris O'Brien gave a different version, saying that the consecrated host had in fact been consumed in 1819 by F. L. de Quéllen de la Villeglée, a priest on Louis de Freycinet's ship on its way home from exploring the Pacific islands.[5]

The story about O'Flynn leaving behind the Blessed Sacrament to comfort the small population of Catholics would indeed be quite

beautiful, if it were true. As Joseph Morley proved through his careful examination of the sources, it seems unlikely that anything of the sort happened.[6] Apart from the confusion over who actually ate the host and the fact that most historians believe 'the faithful' were not particularly faithful at all, the biggest problem with the story is that no-one mentioned it in the extensive correspondence that immediately followed O'Flynn's departure in 1818. If no consecrated host existed, why was it invented? Why might the continued presence of the Blessed Sacrament have been important to Australian Catholics, and what can the story tell us about the role of the Eucharist in community-building and identity formation?

O'Flynn's Church

Providing priests for the new colony at Botany Bay was not a high priority for the British authorities at the end of the eighteenth century. An Anglican chaplain by the name of Richard Johnson arrived in Sydney Cove with the First Fleet in 1788, and the official instructions to the colony's first governor were to 'by all proper methods enforce a due observance of Religion and good order among all the inhabitants,' including taking 'steps for the celebration of publick Worship.'[7] But this was to be the religion of the Church of England, not the Catholic religion. Catholics were probably a distinct minority among those who sailed with the First Fleet.[8] A certain Father Thomas Walshe wrote asking permission to join the voyage to minister to the convicts, but it is not clear whether he sent his letter before or after the fleet sailed. Either way, he did not go.[9]

Irishness was synonymous with Catholicism in England at the time, when only 1.4 percent of the population of England and Wales identified as Roman Catholics.[10] The first shipload of convicts from Ireland to arrive in Botany Bay laid anchor in 1791, and by 1797 there were 857 Irish convicts in the colony, 205 of whom were women. The government's problem was that no prisoner records were sent with them, so no-one in Sydney Town knew how long their prison terms

were or when they should be released.[11] More Irish prisoners arrived following the Rebellion of 1798.[12] Far from all Irish Catholics were rebels, but several of the most prominent Catholics in Sydney at the time of O'Flynn's arrival had been sentenced in connection with the Rebellion.[13] Three priests were transported for their alleged involvement in the uprising. Of these, Father Peter O'Neill was described by Governor King as 'a catholic priest of most notorious, seditious and rebellious principles' despite soon being pardoned by the authorities in Ireland. The second, Father James Harold, was interrogated in 1800 about a rumoured Irish plot against the government. Harold admitted that such a plot existed but refused to give any details, winning him friends neither with the government nor with his fellow convicts. The third, Father James Dixon, was more successful. In 1803 King gave him a conditional pardon, a salary as a priest, and issued a proclamation regulating the practice of Catholicism in the colony. Dixon was solicited to help suppress the Irish convicts involved in the Castle Hill uprising of 1804, but afterwards he was stripped of his salary and permission to conduct religious services in New South Wales.[14] By 1810 all three had left the colony.[15]

These three priests and the political prisoners of the 1798 Rebellion loom large in the history books, but the majority of the free Irish population in Sydney at the time of O'Flynn's arrival were ordinary criminals who had served out their sentences and begun to rebuild their lives in this distant land. From 1817 onwards the government actively assisted the families of emancipated convicts to come out from Britain to join them, and there were remarkably few free settlers without family ties to former convicts. Excluding government employees, 87 percent of the population still had convict backgrounds in 1828.[16] The Irish came predominantly from rural areas, many spoke Gaelic rather than English when they first got off the boat, and they kept the regional rivalries between 'Cork boys,' 'Dublin boys,' and 'North boys' that had divided them in Ireland.[17] They were also not particularly Catholic. The Penal Laws of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth

centuries had made publicly professing Catholicism something that would hurt you economically and socially, and a rapidly growing population meant that there just weren't enough priests in many parts of Ireland. Historians believe that attendance figures at mass were relatively low in rural areas before a 'devotional revolution' changed the face of Irish Catholicism in the 1850s.[18]

James Waldersee's research suggests that the Irish Catholic population in New South Wales was remarkably diverse, ranging from impoverished petty criminals to prosperous landowners. The most prominent were a small group of wealthy individuals – several of them veterans of the 1798 Rebellion – who wanted to use their success to promote the church.[19] Others were less upstanding. The governor Thomas Brisbane reported in 1824 that 'every murder or diabolical crime, which has been committed in the colony since my arrival, has been perpetrated by Roman Catholics,' and in 1830 John O'Sullivan wrote to the Archbishop of Dublin that 'some of our unfortunate and wretched countrymen are foremost in perpetrating the shocking crimes that mark this colony.'[20] Many apparently believed in things like fairies, changelings, sacred spaces, spells and portents. In 1834 David Croly described a widespread perception in rural Ireland that priests 'can at their will and pleasure make sick or make well, give prosperity or adversity, damnation or salvation.'[21] When he arrived in Sydney in 1820, Father John Therry discovered that many people thought he had magical powers, which is something that he had apparently not encountered in the more cultured circles he moved in at home.[22]

Among Sydney's pious Catholics, William Davis and James Dempsey both opened their houses for prayer meetings, and Michael Hayes wrote repeatedly about religion to his brother, Richard Hayes, who was a Franciscan priest involved in promoting the independence of the Irish Church from interference by the British state.[23] Michael had been given a conditional pardon in 1803 before being convicted of 'sly-grogging' – illegal home brewing – and sent to Norfolk Island

in 1805. He returned to Sydney with a pardon in 1808 and became increasingly wealthy, opening a hotel on George Street and marrying an Australian-born Protestant girl half his age with whom he had seven children.[24] He told his brother of the colony's need for a priest, pointing out that 'there is annexed to every free person so applying a grant of land forever from 100 to 1,000 acres or more given them, also two servants and cattle for a limited time, and victualled from government stores, and a passage out at government expence. This I have given for the guidance of a clergyman, if any prefer coming on a mission.'[25]

In Rome on church business, Richard met the Trappist priest Jeremiah O'Flynn, who was there trying to clear his name after quarrelling with his clerical superiors and ministering in the Caribbean for several years without a license.[26] Hayes convinced O'Flynn to go to New South Wales, and together they began working to secure the proper permissions. The politician Sir Henry Parnell had promised that if a Catholic priest wished to go to Australia, 'no difficulty would be placed in the way of any person going out in that character, provided he complied with the regulations which were required from everyone who wishes to go to that settlement.'[27] O'Flynn suspected that his past problems in the Caribbean would stop his mission being authorised though, and he sailed before his ministry had been approved by either church or state.[28] O'Flynn then told Governor Macquarie when he docked that he thought that his paperwork would already have arrived in Sydney and that it was almost certainly coming on the next ship.

Macquarie reported that,

> Several Ships having arrived in Succession without bringing the promised authority, I was led to the conclusion that Mr. O'Flynn's Story was false, and consequently that he was an Imposter. I also discovered that, So far from Keeping his promise of not celebrating Mass before regular authority should arrive, that he was not only busily Employed throughout the Country among the Irish Roman Catholics (with whom it abounds) in preaching and Instructing in Popery, but also in disseminating Principles of resistance to the General Orders of the Colony, and particularly to those which have for their Object the decent Religious observance of the Sabbath. ... he was actually making converts among English Protestants, by means of assuring them that he would Cure all their Bodily diseases, which his prayers could only effect by their abjuring their Heresies and becoming Papists. I found likewise that he was tampering with the Soldiers of the 48th Regt.[29]

'Disseminating Principles of resistance' most likely refers to Irish convicts and soldiers wishing to worship with O'Flynn rather than attend the compulsory Anglican services, and the charge of 'tampering with the Soldiers' probably springs from a petition by 76 soldiers requesting permission for O'Flynn to minister.[30] Macquarie insisted that O'Flynn leave at once. O'Flynn told his superiors in Britain that 'from that day, the 10th of November, I celebrated Mass in a private room,'[31] and that 'my intention is to endeavour to remain in concealment until I hear from Europe.'[32] Hayes reported in his letters that 'Mr Flynn married eight couples and baptised fifteen children ... just after his landing,'[33] and a later historian wrote of O'Flynn 'baptising hundreds of young Catholics.'[34] In addition to the soldiers' petition, another petition was presented to Macquarie containing 438 signatures, many of them Protestant,[35] and O'Flynn wrote that 'there is scarcely a Protestant gentleman but is highly displeased at the Governor's refusal [to accept O'Flynn].'[36] A strong opposition movement existed in Sydney, which Macquarie described as 'factious, discontented, and turbulent.'[37] This group appears to have supported O'Flynn just as they had supported the Protestant Rev. Vale who had been court marshalled by Macquarie in 1816.[38]

O'Flynn was eventually deported despite having hidden on the outskirts of the colony for several weeks. When he arrived in London O'Flynn was told in no uncertain terms that he would not be re-

turning to Australia, so he promptly set out to Haiti, from where he continued to Philadelphia, Dominica, and New Haven, before eventually settling in Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania, where he died in 1832.[39] After O'Flynn was deported, Hayes wrote home that he 'laves his books, vestments, etc. here with an intention of returning,' but never mentioned the Blessed Sacrament that was apparently already sitting in Davis' home.[40] That neither Hayes nor anyone else at the time seemed aware that O'Flynn had left the Blessed Sacrament behind is the strongest evidence that the story was in fact a later invention. Most of those who repeated the story in writing later in the century were keen on using it to prove that their church was being persecuted in Australia and that more priests needed to be sent to the colony.[41] The legend of O'Flynn's Blessed Sacrament was perfect for their purposes because parish priests are crucial for the celebration of the Eucharist.[42] But what of the lay Catholics who first invented the story during the 1820s? What might the Blessed Sacrament have meant for them?

Understanding the Blessed Sacrament

When priests and theologians talked about the Eucharist in the early nineteenth century, they usually discussed the transformation that takes place in the elements on the table. What does it mean to say with the Council of Trent (1551), 'that after the consecration of bread and wine, our Lord Jesus Christ, true God and true man, is truly, really and substantially contained in the august sacrament of the Holy Eucharist under the appearance of those sensible things?'[43] Does Jesus leave heaven to come to earth? Does he have 'ten thousand bodies' that appear on altars around the world every Sunday? How many wafers do you have to eat before you consume Jesus' entire body? Writing to English Methodists in 1836, Father George Spencer explained that,

> Catholics do not believe, that when the bread and wine by consecration, become the body and blood of Christ, a new Christ is created.

> Christ has but one body, and the body present on our altars is not another, but the same that was born of the blessed Virgin, and is now in heaven. We do not understand how the substance of this body can be in heaven and in many places upon earth at one time; but we dare not say that therefore it is impossible with God to make it so.[44]

Confronting Protestants and sceptics and caught up in internal debates about the competing authorities of the Papacy and secular states, nineteenth century Catholics rehashed the same discussions about the presence of Christ and the content of the elements that had concerned the Church for centuries.[45] In O'Flynn's day it was unusual to receive Communion on a regular basis. Most people took part in the sacrament only once a year, making it less central to the day-to-day practice of the faith.[46] Were they asked why they prayed before the Blessed Sacrament in the pyx, Davis and the other faithful believers in Sydney would probably have explained that they worshipped because God himself was there in front of them in the Eucharist. The sacrifice of Christ on the cross was replayed before their eyes, and venerating the Blessed Sacrament gave them material access to the very ritual act that saved them from sin and offered eternal life.[47] It was, in Spencer's words, 'the principal means, by divine appointment, through which the infinite merits of the death of Christ are applied to the souls of the faithful.'[48]

Things changed dramatically during twentieth century. After the Second World War a revolution took place in how people understood the Eucharist, explaining the mystery in ways that help us appreciate why it was so important for early Australian Catholics to have the Blessed Sacrament sitting in a pyx in a house in the Rocks. Although Davis and his friends would not have explained what they were doing in these words, twentieth century theologies of the Eucharist give us a language that makes visible – or at least, explicable – what invisibly takes place in the sacrament and therefore why it was such a powerful gift to isolated communities of Catholics such as the one in Sydney Town. As Jean-Luc Marion has pointed out, God's revelation of him-

self in the Eucharist is already 'too much' for us to understand, and he appears 'contrary to our expectations, projections, and purposes.'[49] Just because Christians do not understand what is happening in the Eucharist does not mean that it does not happen.

The most radical shift in the understanding of the Eucharist came with the work of the French Jesuit Henri de Lubac in the late 1940s. De Lubac argued – correctly – that the early church believed that Christians become one body in Christ when they participate in the Eucharist. A prayer found in an early Christian text known as *The Didache*, written by Syrian Christians in around 100 CE, prays 'even as this broken bread was scattered over the hills, and was gathered together and became one, so let your church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into Your kingdom.'[50] Towards the end of the fourth century St John Chrysostom explained that 'that is what the food that he gives us effects: he joins us himself to us that we may become one whole, like a body joined to its head.'[51] According to de Lubac, when the Church Fathers spoke about the Eucharist they called it the mystical body of Christ, *corpus mysticum*, and referred to the institutional church as the *corpus verum* – the visible community. The emphasis placed on these two terms changed from the twelfth century onwards. As theologians bickered about whether Christ's real Presence was in the bread and wine they increasingly came to think of the Blessed Sacrament as a *corpus verum*, a true body, while debates over the competing roles of the pope and the emperor ended with an emphasis on the church as a *corpus mysticum* that could be contrasted with the visible power of the state.[52] *Mysticum* and *verum* thus came 'to be transposed without any essential change in the doctrine.'[53]

De Lubac insisted on returning to seeing the Eucharist as a *corpus mysticum*, as the bringing of Christians together as one body in Christ. For de Lubac, the Eucharist *is* 'the Body of Christ which is the Church.'[54] De Lubac's formulation helps explain why the Blessed Sacrament was so important for early Australian Catholics. Without no priests and no church buildings, so long as they had the consecrated host they could be joined together with Catholics around the world. The practice of equating the body of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament with the church as the body of Christ became more common as the twentieth century progressed. Building on de Lubac's insights, the Second Vatican Council described the Eucharist as 'a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a paschal banquet in which Christ is eaten, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us.'[55] In an encyclical letter two years later, Pope Paul VI further emphasised that 'Christ is present in His Church in a still more sublime manner as she offers the Sacrifice of the Mass in His name; He is present in her as she administers the sacraments.'[56] More recently, theologians have argued that the Eucharist is especially important because of its ability to incorporate refugees and immigrants into the church, uniting 'the no-bodies of the world with the Body of Christ, transforming all that is alien to him and making it part of his divine life.'[57]

In 1971 Geoffrey Wainwright's *Eucharist and Eschatology* further intensified this new way of thinking. Wainwright pointed out that by bringing together people from all walks of life in a common meal, from convicts to free settlers and soldiers, the Eucharist offers a taste of the kingdom of God in the here and now. What will only be fully realised at the end of times is made accessible to Christians today. The Eucharist is thus a sign of the coming kingdom, and a 'prefiguration' of what eternal life looks like. Offered freely by God, it still needs to be received by humans, and it is given to each individually but always as part of a Christian community. As a sacrifice that requires the participants to have attended confession first, it incorporates elements of judgement, forgiveness and reconciliation. 'In the Eucharist,' Wainwright says, 'the Lord comes to judge and to recreate; to cast out what remains of unrighteousness in His people, and to continue the work of renewal begun in baptism; to threaten the world with an end to its old existence, and to give it the promise, through the new use to which bread and wine is put, of attaining its true destiny.'[58] Such a hope,

for people who had been exiled to the far ends of the earth and who saw themselves as marginalised by respectable English society, is truly magnificent.

The theology of the Eucharist received further elaboration in the work of William Cavanaugh in the late 1990s. Confronted by the human rights atrocities taking place around him when he lived in Pinochet's Chile during the 1980s, Cavanaugh came to realise the extent to which torture embodies the state's power over its subjects. 'Under the Pinochet regime,' he pointed out, 'torture was used as a mode of governance. The state seized bodies and made them emit signs, play roles in a drama, speak the regime's words in order to make ritually present the omnipotence of the state.'[59] Much the same could be said of the system of government under Governor Macquarie, when flogging, incarceration, chain-gangs and hanging were commonplace. 'The feelings of the convict are petrified by the hardness of every thing about him,' Ullathorne wrote in 1837. 'He never feels the touch of kindness. Wonder not that his vital warmth dies, and he becomes a haggard, insensible thing.'[60] As a theologian, Cavanaugh was not only concerned about how torture impacted individuals, but about what it did to the church. Under Pinochet, he said, 'the strategy of torture was an attack on rival social bodies, an attempt to atomise and disappear them. The discipline of fear drove the state's invisible mark deep into the individual, to make each depend only on the state, and not on one another.'[61] In colonial New South Wales, the Church of England ministered to the souls and acted as the spiritual arm of the state. The Catholic Church, for its part, was driven out of the public sphere almost entirely.

Cavanaugh argues that it is precisely when the church is excluded by the state that it becomes the most powerful. The church becomes visible in the bodies of the martyrs, as well as in the eucharistic meal. Moreover, because it is Christ who appears in the Blessed Sacrament, in the Eucharist God 'actively disciplines the church.' Judging the church for acquiescing to the state, for failing to stand against injustice, and its members for failing to love one another, the Eucharist shows it how it *should* live, as a sacrifice, such that 'the church does not simply perform the Eucharist; the Eucharist performs the church.'[62] At the same time, the Eucharist is a sacrifice offered on behalf of the church, atoning for its sins and reconciling it to God. In the sacrament the church becomes a *corpus mysticum*, the embodied mystery of God dealing directly with humanity. The state and its agents are excluded from this mystery, either because to take part in it policemen and soldiers must come before God as individuals, without their uniforms, weapons and power, or because the church actively excludes them from participating in the Eucharist until they repent and stop oppressing the poor and the downtrodden.

Conclusion

Twentieth century theologies of the Eucharist help explain why it can be such a powerful material symbol for communities such as the small number pious Catholics who gathered in William Davis' house in the 1820s. These were people separated from their homeland by thousands of miles, from other Sydneysiders of their class by virtue of the Irishness and their Catholicism, and from the other Irish in Australia by their devotion to the Church. Some of them may have remembered the short-lived ministries of Harold and Dixon at the turn of the century, but most would have experienced O'Flynn's arrival as a sudden breath of hope after having been without a priest for so long.

The idea that O'Flynn had left the Blessed Sacrament in a pyx gave them access to the body of Christ as a *corpus mysticum* at a time when their visible church was so measly to look at. It represented Christ Himself but also the Catholic Church which gathered around the world and celebrated the Eucharist in His name. More than just a reminder of the death of a Palestinian Jew centuries earlier, it was a promise that God's kingdom would soon be established on earth and offered a taste of what spiritual communion with God will be like at the end of the Age. The Blessed Sacrament stood in stark contrast

to the power of the British Empire, which had subjected Ireland to a brutal colonial regime and had then sent them, in chains, to Australia. Although the state had the power to torture their bodies, the Blessed Sacrament, left by O'Flynn despite the state's best efforts to prevent it, represented the renewed life of the Church purified from sin and untouched by the filth of corruption and politics. The Blessed Sacrament, whether it was really sitting in Davis' cupboard or not, was proof that the world of pain and death around them would soon pass away and that a new, better world was coming.

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3

Wayne Fabian

Dyarubbin, The River as a Sacred Thread: A Journey of Faith, Heritage, and Flow

At the confluence of the Nepean, Hawkesbury, and Grose Rivers in Yarramundi, my aunty stood, beaming with joy. She had just been baptised by my cousins, the pastors of our family church, marking one of the most profound moments of her life. Having moved from the Philippines to Australia, she had long awaited this rite of passage, a spiritual rebirth symbolised by the flowing waters that embraced her. In that moment, her faith, heritage and the river itself intertwined in sacred harmony, embodying the essence of transformation, renewal and continuity.

That night, after her baptism, she had a dream. In it, she found herself floating in a vast, dark expanse of water, endless and deep. Yet, she did not feel fear. Though the darkness surrounded her, she sensed a presence beside her, unseen but unmistakable. In her heart, she knew it was Jesus. His presence was not overwhelming or forceful but gentle and steady, as if simply being there was enough to comfort her. She awoke feeling at peace, the dream affirming what she had already felt in the river that day, that she was never alone.