

'Seeking to be the People of Christ at the Heart of the Community'.



Parkwood Herald

News Flash

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St. Mark's Parish Centre
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Happy New Year

This article caught my attention over Christmas.

Rowan Williams is considered to have one of the finest minds in the church today, yet he has a gift for making things simple, just like describing this photograph.

John

The photo that shaped me: Rowan Williams on Madeleine Delbr el



Here she is, squatting down, head cocked, birdlike, to listen to a small girl.

By Rowan Williams

Madeleine Delbr el died in 1964, having spent most of her adult life as a social worker in Ivry, in the suburbs of Paris, an overcrowded, impoverished urban district.

A passionate Catholic, she won the awed respect of the mostly communist local administration for her mixture of professionalism and radical advocacy, and ended up running the social services for her area.

She lived in a makeshift community with a couple of other women workers, prayed a lot, made countless friends, annoyed bureaucrats and clergy, and wrote copiously on current issues, church reform, and the call of God.

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I don't think I know of any other writer who does what she does in her reflections on the spiritual demands and dangers of trying to exercise responsibility in community – “leadership” was not a word she would have cared for, I suspect.

Through my time as Archbishop, I had a book of her short meditations always on my desk. I'd turn from the computer screen, pick up the book and read half a page; and feel myself firmly brought back from anxiety, drama or exasperation by someone who clearly knew exactly what she was talking about. Merciless, bracing and frequently painfully funny.

So here she is, squatting down, head cocked, birdlike, to listen to a small girl in the street who has been playing with a humming top. The attention is complete and unselfconscious. Perched on her heels, she is balanced like the child's top, stillness and energy fused.

It's an image I go back to constantly as I revisit her writings. An icon, if you like – not in any conventional style, but certainly in the sense that it shows spiritual energy in motion.

She has dropped down to the child's level. She is listening; not talking, not condescending. She is being taken into the child's world; she's not trying to conscript this little girl into hers. And she squats there, poised like a humming top, absorbed, alive with both her life and the child's.

Sometimes, for me, it's an image of what the word “holiness” might mean, stripped of its solemnity and its faint suspicion of inhuman superiority.

Sometimes it's an image of what and where the church ought to be.

Always it's an image of one very distinctive person. So that it's also an image of God.

It reminds me a bit of one of Stanley Spencer's paintings of Jesus in the wilderness – a bulky figure with dishevelled hair, down on all fours examining a clump of flowers with complete absorption.

It's a photograph that says, “This is how it is. This is where you're meant to be travelling.”

This article is from “Photo that shaped me” series in the New Statesman. We are grateful to the New Statesman and their Permissions Editor, Dominic Rae, for their generosity in allowing us to reprint this article.

A few photos of Yesteryear when things appeared to be a little more certain. Or were they! Here's to a New Year 2021. This could well be a start of a new Era.



A Christmas Poem

by Helen Steiner Rice

**I have a list of folks I know,
all written in a book
And every year when Christmas comes,
I go and take a look,**

**And that is when I realize
that these names are a part
Not of the book they are written in,
but really from my heart**

**For each name stands for someone
who has crossed my path sometime,
And in the meeting they've become
the rhythm in each rhyme**

**And while it sounds fantastic
for me to make this claim,
I really feel that I'm composed
of each remembered name**

**And while you may not be aware
of any special link
Just meeting you has changed my life
a lot more than you think**

**For once I've met somebody,
the years cannot erase
The memory of a pleasant word
or of a friendly face**

**So never think my Christmas cards
are just a mere routine
Of names upon a Christmas list,
forgotten in between,**

**For when I send a Christmas card
that is addressed to you,
It is because you're on the list
that I'm indebted to**

**For I am but a total
of the many folks I've met,
And you happen to be one of those
I prefer not to forget**

**And whether I have known you
for many years or few,
In some ways you have a part
in shaping things I do**

**And every year when Christmas comes,
I realize anew,
The best gifts life can offer
is meeting folks like you.**

**And may the spirit of Christmas
that forever endures
Leave its richest blessings
in the hearts of you and yours.**

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**I have been looking through photos
and other items from Parkwood of
Yesteryear, sorting ready for
archiving. Found a lot of photos that
were taken at events, given and not
supplied with details who, what,
where ect. So whilst some people
are still here who may remember
the people or even the event: I need
your help for future generations
who may be researching or chasing
ancestors:-
In the words of Jeremy Paxman:-
here's your starter for 10!**



Ed!