

'AND WE WILL MAKE OUR HOME WITH THEM'

For the Cathedral Eucharist, Sixth Sunday of Easter, 9 May 2010
and the Baptism of Jessica Ann
The Gospel: John 14 23-29

*'Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we
will come to them and make our home with them.'* (John 14.23)

'And we will make our home with them.'
What wild talk is this?
If this is human language,
then such reckless presumption
is held in its small compass!
How can we possibly dream
such an impossible dream,
of the God of the high universe
choosing to make his home
within the small confinements of our own selves,
within the narrowness of our myopic minds,
the fitful beatings of our hearts,
in the dark cupboards of our souls?

Let's face it God,
you can't come that far down in the world,
The world is after all,
may I remind you,
of your own making.
Are you so desperate for shelter?
You do not need to come in from the heat of the sun,
or from the cold of the night.
And what do we have to give you?
We can't invite you to a cup of tea,
or a slice of sponge.
Even the finest of chocolate éclairs . . .
It's quite ridiculous.
You could play with Jessica, I suppose.
Yet still, how could our hospitality
be up to the mark?

I have seen you, God,
riding the waves of the great ocean,
or soaring through the heavens.
I have found you in moments of searing beauty,
in the midst of pain and joy,
in the prodigality of generous love.
Only last week I found you
in this place
in this Cathedral church

as I bent in whispered prayer,
holy icons at my back,
over kneeling figures come to find your healing touch,
strength for themselves, or else for those they loved,
traced my thumb over their foreheads
making a sign of a cross,
marking them with holy oil.
You are familiar with the sign of the cross, dear God;
It brings back memories for you,
and the shooting pains of present reality.
So perhaps it's not surprising
that you were there in that case,
though it was a surprise, of course,
for always you come as a surprise,
when a baby is born and puckers its face for its first cry,
when you come as quietly
and as gently as you possibly can,
as you did that evening
in the hushed service of healing in the Lady Chapel here.
You didn't need the grand spaces of this Nave,
only some longing and a few tears,
hands laid on heads,
thumb smudged in consecrated oil.

Alright, God,
so your needs are not as extravagant
as we might have imagined.
But come on God!
Me?
Look, good people are here,
and there is Jessica Ann waiting patiently for Baptism,
but *us?*
How can any one of us provide you with a home?
We can't get our act together
or do it between us, either.
Let's face it,
we have a hard enough job
creating homes for ourselves and our families,
and we keep on messing things up
for those we love and who love us.
And in our larger families,
in our communities,
even such a community as you see before you now, God,
sitting quietly and reasonably attentively
in this Cathedral church,
(they're terribly good, aren't they, God;
tactful, at least, trained not to interrupt)
even we have our stresses and our strains,
our huddling for the latest gossip,
our insecurities and hurts,

our little pride,
our abiding loneliness.
Oh, I know there's much more love and holiness here than meets the eye,
generosities, heroisms of mind, body and soul
known only to you and the angels.
Yet still, God, it's quite beyond us
to provide you with a fitting home.

Let's put it plainly.
We need plain speaking these days.
You need it, also, God.
I'm not big enough.
we're not big enough.
Nor good enough.
Any of us.
And that's the honest truth.

That being so,
then when you bend your head
to find your lodging here,
when you choose us, as you do,
for your cradling and your comforting,
it can only be for love of us.

And when we find you settled
in the parlour of our souls,
and the air we live and breathe
sings softly with your love,
why then, we might begin to love ourselves.
Most surely will we know to love
and keep your word,
as you keep yours.

Then, too, we will recall
you seek no fitting home;
you only seek our company,
to share with us in bread and wine.

Trevor Dennis