

**Editorial:** Ann McNelley

Christmas is a time of mixed emotions for many people, the memory of past unhealed hurts, sadness at the loss of loved ones, or regrets for what might have been. But it is also a time for celebrating new life. A time for a reason to hope, show love and practice forgiveness.

This Christmas, whether you are caught up in the frenzy that the season can become or not bothered, take time to hold your treasured ones close. You don't know how long you will have them in your lives.

This Christmas: Be safe Be happy Stay calm Spread joy And know you are loved.  
May your Christmas be filled with love, joy and peace.

**A Birth:** Deirdre Gardiner



One conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
One that keeps on being birthed,  
One that comes from within me,  
from within how I respond  
to this conceiving of the Holy Spirit.  
Or to give it another name,  
it is the continuing birth  
of the Universal Christ,  
the resurrected Christ  
dwelling in all that is.

My cooperation is needed  
for particular instances  
of this continual birthing.

Do I see it? Do I acknowledge it?  
My responsibility is to cooperate,  
be like Joseph,  
foster the birthing life-giving process.

I am in you. You are in me.  
Nothing separates us.

## **The Pilgrimage of Life: Clare Smith**

On a lovely Saturday in October a group from Toowoomba and other local towns gathered at Sychar for an offering by Sr Pat Quinn on *The Pilgrimage of Life*.

It was an interesting day of reflection starting with a poem called *The Train of Life*. This provided a great opening for each of us to reflect on our individual lives and triggered memories of times when we had been on pilgrimages but maybe not recognised them as such. Guided questions and quiet time led to rich reflections and sharing.

The day culminated when we used our writings to compose a verse using one of two formulas Pat suggested for us - one being the Japanese poetic style of haiku and the other the French pantoum. Each has a set formula for the writing but once we settled our thoughts, we managed one or both of the styles which captured our personal reflections. (Please look up each style so you can try verse writing too.)

I reflected on the day itself in the form of a pantoum:

Pilgrimage of Life the topic  
Participants from near and far  
Memories from years ago  
Reflection in the Sychar garden

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Richness in the sharings  
Reflection in the Sychar garden  
Symbols of life's journey

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Pilgrimage of Life the topic.

Thanks to Pat and Elaine at Sychar for an interesting and appreciated offering.





## **A Model of Spirituality:** Fr John O' Malley S.J.

from beginnings to invitations,  
from laws to ideals,  
from threats to persuasion,  
from coercion to conscience,  
from monologue to conversation,  
from ruling to serving,  
from withdrawn to integrated,  
from vertical and top-down to horizontal,  
from exclusion to inclusion,  
from hostility to friendship,  
from static to changing,  
from passive acceptance to active  
engagement,  
from prescriptive to principled,  
from defined to open-ended,  
from behaviour- modification to conversion of the heart,  
from the dictates of law to the dictates of conscience,  
from external conformity to the joyful pursuit of holiness.



## Turning towards the Inner Light of Love (Moyalía Tokmak)

*“The human spirit is a lamp of the Lord that sheds light on one’s inmost being”. Proverbs 20:27*

In early November, Elaine and I embarked on a trip together to visit the parish of Miles to add a spiritual dimension to their candle-making workshop. We stopped along the way to renew the Sychar rural library in the parish of Chinchilla. This was my first trip to meet other parishioners within our diocese and they have endeared themselves to my heart. I give thanks for the opportunity to connect with a wider part of our diocese. The drive, the vast landscape and the conversations with the beautiful people in the communities, struck me as intensely spiritual moments and experiences.

The “In praise of Light” contemplative reflection on the Light of Christ that shines, dances and illuminates all of Creation was an engagement with Scripture, art, music and meditation and enriched our day with Light, wisdom, unity and beauty. These practices helped to awaken us to inner stillness and to the Divine presence. It is through the gift of Christ’s Light that the rich array of God’s beauty is perceivable all around us and within our hearts. We gave thanks that God’s light is sprinkled into every living thing.

As I reflected further on the theme of light, the words of Thomas Keating resounded in my heart: “As the Divine light grows brighter, it reveals what it contains, that is, divine life; and divine life reveals that the Ultimate Reality is Love “

May we become true human beings, standing together in the Light of God’s Love.









**Wise Women Also Came:** Jan L. Richardson

(from *Night Visions: Searching for Shadows of Advent and Christmas*, 1998: United Church Press)

**Wise women** also came.

The fire burned in their wombs long before they  
saw the flaming star in the sky. They walked in shadows,  
trusting the path would open under the light of the moon.

**Wise women** also came,  
seeking no directions, no permission from any king.  
They came by their own authority, their own desire, their own longing.

They came in quiet, spreading no rumours,  
sparking no fears to lead to innocents' slaughter,  
to their sister Rachel's inconsolable lamentations.

**Wise women** also came,  
and they brought useful gifts: water for labour's washing,  
fire for warm illumination, a blanket for swaddling.

**Wise women** also came,  
at least three of them, holding Mary in the labour,  
crying out with her in the birth pangs, breathing ancient blessings into her ear.

**Wise women** also came,  
and they went, as wise women always do,  
home a different way.

*In this and every season may we see them,  
the wise ones who come bearing your gifts to us.  
They cloak themselves in garb that rarely draws attention,  
but they are there at the edge of the shadows,  
in the margin of our days, on the threshold of our awareness,  
offering what we most need.*

*Give us eyes to see them now, before they have left  
to go home some other way,  
before we glimpse their departing shadows  
edged in gold and smell their spiced perfume  
lingering behind them in the air.*



*At this time of Christmas,  
May we welcome the Light of the world.*

*Rekindle the flame within us, O God  
so it will not flicker nor dim;  
Ignite us with the light of your love  
so you will shine brightly within,  
and our hearts will be burning  
for zeal of your mission.*

*A very happy and blessed Christmas, and may your  
heart be burning all through the New Year.*