



***“Show yourself at all times glad and joyful,
for almighty God loves a cheerful giver”***

Mary Ward

Part 4 - Conclusion

This is the fourth part of an exploration of the way of Felicity as Mary Ward would have understood it and lived it. This week I would like to take you right to the heart of it all for Mary Ward. *“Go close to Him”*, she said. For Mary Ward, her relationship with God was the source and summit of everything she was and did. *“I saw there was no other help and no other comfort for me than to go close to HIM. That I did and HE was there to help me”*, she wrote.

To enter a little more deeply into what that relationship may be, what it asks of us and how it may transform us, I am going to draw on another beautiful, profound and yet simple story, *The Little Prince*, by Antoine De Saint-Exupery. The little prince, who came from Asteroid B – 612, appeared in the Sahara desert, much to the amazement of the author, Saint-Exupery, who was attempting to repair his aircraft which had crashed there. Engrossed in his repairs, far from anyone and anything, he was startled by a little voice, with a curious request: *“Please, draw me a sheep”*. And so it was that the author met this enchanting little person of great wisdom and heard all about the little prince’s travels, his encounters with many strange and interesting people and facts on this planet called Earth, his search for friends and of course little snippets about his life on his own tiny planet. The part I want to draw on is the little prince’s encounter with the fox. It is a story told with such naivete and simplicity, yet full of wisdom, and as you read it I invite you to become aware of the transforming power of relationship, because it is relationship that is at the heart of Mary Ward’s way of Felicity.

[Click here to read the story](#)

There are some beautiful images in this story: the fox preparing his heart as the meeting time draws near, the anticipation and then the time together, making one day different from all the others, finding beauty and interest in the wheat fields because they remind him of the colour of the little prince’s hair, and above all, that lovely image of just watching each other, taming each other. What we see here is the transformation that relationship brings. In this little story we see joy, excitement, trust, open-heartedness - and all those things come from a lived relationship which colours the world.

For Christians, the relationship that transforms, brings happiness and colours everything is the relationship we have with God through Christ. It is a relationship that grows and



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deepens in trust, in faith. It needs to be nurtured. And when that relationship with God is the heart of all we are, the heart of our identity, it will transform the way we see ourselves, it will determine our choices, our attitudes, our actions.

This story of the fox and the little prince always reminds me of a young woman, in France, at the end of the nineteenth century, living the life of a Carmelite nun in the little town of Lisieux. One evening as she was helping an elderly and rather grumpy sister through the cloisters, in her youthful fancy, she imagined that she heard the sound of distant party music and saw elegant young women, dressed in all their finery, escorted to a grand ball with all the lavishness and excitement of such an evening. But then she realized that there was no music where she was, just the silence and the cold stones of the cloisters and the helping hand she stretched out to the old sister as she took her to her room, and she said: "But I would not change this for anything"! This is the story of Therese of Lisieux. And her story, although filled with struggle at times, is a story of joy. It is the story of a relationship with Christ that filled her, drew her, gladdened her. It was a relationship that transformed her vision and to which she gave herself completely, and it was the source and substance of her joy.

And likewise for Mary Ward.

There are some wonderful things she has written which tell us of her deep relationship with God and show us so clearly that for Mary that's where it all begins and that's what everything leads to.

"O my God what would I be if you had not done everything for me"!

"Abiding with him.
Listening to him,
or else presenting my concerns.
Leaving myself, and all, in him and his will."

What beautiful images of surrender, of peace, of joy. Mary's relationship with God was a relationship that enabled her to see herself as part of a greater reality. And being so profoundly immersed in that greater reality transformed the little details of her day to day life, just as it did for the fox. Just as it did for the woman of Samaria, sitting on the ledge of the well, who was transformed through her relationship with Jesus and was then able to hold her head up high, relate to the people she had previously avoided, and laugh with joy. Just as it was for the Comte de Renaud who was forced out of his iron-clad grip on who was 'in' and who was 'out' of God's favour. There is a beautiful stillness in Mary's words too: "Abiding with him, listening to him". Relationship does take time. It must unfold, grow, deepen. We are invited into places of stillness, waiting. We are invited to open our hearts. Be attentive.



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So Mary was formed in that relationship. It was that closeness to God and that deep listening that shaped her, moulded her inner being and sent her out into the world. It was that relationship which set her free from attachment to all else. It gave her courage in the dark days she faced, and there were many of them. It made her cheerful, positive, optimistic, generous, courageous and open-hearted. She was an amazing woman whose story points the way for us to the God she so profoundly and utterly loved and served.

And so it may be for us!

Here we are now, in the season of Lent, those marvellous forty days which invite us, day by day, to deepen our intimacy with God. May we too set aside the time, prepare our hearts in eager anticipation of the encounter, sit in that loving gaze, and indeed come to know the joy of being known and loved ourselves.

Deep in Christ I pray you know the power he can give,
May your hidden self grow strong and may you live,
Strong in faith and built on love, until you know,
How high and long, how wide and deep, the fullness of God.

Know the way you learnt from Christ to live life anew,
Let your heart be drawn to Him, let Christ renew
The hope in you to grow into Goodness and Truth,
And living so you'll come to know the fullness of God.

May the God of Jesus Christ, the Father we serve
Fill your mind that you may know, deep in your heart,
The hope his call now holds for you, his promise true,
To fill your heart with power to live the fullness of God.

Hymn, *The Fullness of God*, based on St Paul's letter to the Ephesians

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