



The FURROW

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Hugh O'Donnell

A Blessing for Charlotte Rose

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Word of your coming reached us. Expectation built up; a new baby on the way.

Nothing causes more excitement in a family than the prospect of new life, new beginnings; a child with whom to make friends or family.

Charlotte's life was short by our usual standards. She qualified for the Olympics in Rio, so to speak, but never got to the starting blocks. She was ready, steady...

For Charlotte Rose I am sure that every day of her life was important – 22 weeks, 154 days and no doubt she enjoyed what fun could be had swimming around in Aisling's womb, nice and snug, no worries, no bullies – getting bigger every day and familiar with the disco beat of her mother's heart.

Who knows what she knew? Whatever else she must have been delighted with her life and its possibilities and been happy, in a pre-knowing way, to have been a little someone with a name.

She has gone ahead of us and there is an extended family to greet her. We don't really have the words to describe it except to say we know she is safely home.

It would have been beautiful, awesome even, had she stayed longer but it was still awesome having her, even more so, despite the news that her life would be short.

Aisling, Kevin, baby James, grandparents, aunties and uncles, you are still her family – her roots are in you. She knows who she is. One day at the great celebration for which we use the word heaven, there will be a family reunion.

Although that sounds like future, it is a *present* future. From the first word of her being here, Charlotte was in your hearts and not just in Aisling's body. She will still be in your hearts as you will be in hers.

Charlotte Rose, we bless you for coming to our family as the unique creature that you are. As you return to the God of love and life, you will take something of our hopes and hurts with you. We

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A BLESSING FOR CHARLOTTE ROSE

let you go and yet know that you are never far from us, just a thought, a mention of your name away.

My little one, down what centuries
of light did you travel
to reach us here,
your stay so short-lived.

In the twinkling of an eye
you were moving on,
bearing our name and a splinter
of the human cross we suffer.

Flashed upon us like a beacon,
we wait in darkness for that light
to come round, knowing at heart
you shine forever for us.

The Passover. The ordinariness of Eucharist goes even deeper, as only ordinariness can. It is rooted in two primal and prehistoric actions: the telling of stories and the sharing of food. Just as the sharing of food transforms an act of survival into the mealtime of community, so the telling of stories transforms our solitariness into social identity. When Jews celebrate the Passover, just as Jesus the Jew did throughout his short life, the house liturgy of the Seder isn't simply an affectionate reminiscence of the time when the Lord delivered the House of Jacob from the land of Egypt. It is a deep communion with the timeless and eternal foundation of their faith as a chosen and covenanted people. It is more even than a participation; it is a partaking. Likewise the Lord's Supper, with its Aramaic imperatives – this my flesh, this my blood – when Jesus offers himself as a model not of reprisal or retaliatory violence for his own murder but as an experiment in reconciliation that excludes nobody, his own betrayer included.

– AIDAN MATHEWS, *Fasting and Feasting* (Dublin: Veritas) p.27.