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The FURROW

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Martin Kelly

Musings of an
Ageing Priest

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Musings of an Ageing Priest

Martin Kelly

Retired,
76 with a gammy hip,
a bird with a broken wing,
isolated, without a flock.

With Francis in Rome my spirit flies,
Hercules cleansing the stables
sweeping out encrusted rigorism,
proclaiming Jesus the Revolutionary
not confined to tabernacles
or private spiritual cul-de-sacs
where we try to contain him
pursuing certainty and safety,
the disease of comfort zones.

Judas said, 'Take charge of him'.
The authorities seized and bound him.

Despite our efforts Christ escapes.
The stone is rolled away forever.
He's loose on the streets
with children playing,
people texting, twittering,
at kitchen tables setting places,
in marriage beds where love is shared,
hostels, hospices,
sleeping in doorways,
with prostitutes, the possessed,
refugees, migrants,
in war zones being crucified.

In the 40s, 50s
doldrums of mind-control,

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the Church had a broken wing
unable to fly to freedom.

The freeing smile of John XXIII in '59
inspired flight, open skies
soaring on eagles' wings,
hills clapping, rivers laughing
fresh winds banishing stale air,
conditioning control and fear.

The 60s of rule breaking,
edge of the cliff time,
was unnerving, exciting,
new became the present and future,
past was made redundant.

Reading Congar and Rahner,
we rediscovered the Resurrection,
new beginnings, possibilities,
Jesus the Revolutionary
on the street,
enabling the woman bent double
to stand erect with head held high,
calling, 'Follow me',
come, smell of sheep.

As always,
fear persists, quenching risk,
wagons are circled,
resort to rules and ritual
confining the Spirit
again and again,
cancelling Pentecost.

Francis perseveres
cleansing the stables,
inviting us to embrace risk,
be evangelising disciples,
open doors, open windows,
'Go out to the whole world'.

I'll have to get a new hip.