



# *The* FURROW

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*Patricia Higgins*

## A Woman of God

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Where do I go to be seen as a Woman of God?  
To find a role that allows expression of that  
And prompts others to look to me at times when they want  
A person of God around?

I envy my husband and his fellow former religious  
Their status of 'former (practicing) priests'  
It gives them a shorthand for 'being into that God' stuff  
And they got – albeit not from all quarters – sympathy and  
understanding for the huge loss involved  
In leaving their priestly role behind.

'The stone the builders rejected has become a cornerstone'  
I heard that line recently and wondered does that apply here?  
To me – and others like me?  
Then realised 'Well, no ...  
To be rejected, you'd first have to be **considered**'.

So, where do I go to be seen, recognised as a Woman of God?

I asked this question once  
While within the walled garden of a retreat house  
I marched around, fuming at the latest instance of  
non-consideration

During a small eucharist  
The celebrant had handed me the Lectionary  
At the point at which the Gospel was to be read.  
I knew him – and knew him to be quite conservative-

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So, for the briefest of moments I was shocked, taken aback  
Unprepared to step out of my long-held sense of grievance.

I only had the book in my hand when the celebrant nodded at me  
Indicating that I should pass it on to the very elderly priest seated  
beside me.

Oh foolish, foolish me.

The Gospel was that of the Prodigal Son  
I listened, enraged  
Ranting internally that we didn't hear too much about the mother  
or daughters in that story  
The only women to rate a mention were prostitutes.

Expecting there to be a shared homily  
I waited to spit some of this out  
But my seething must have been noted  
As, Lectionary safely returned, the celebrant moved swiftly on  
And I stomped outside afterwards for some air  
And a chance to rant and rail at You, God  
Asking how am I to live within these walls that so constrain?

Distracted by an old door along one wall,  
I went over and – through a crack in it-  
Saw the hillside beyond  
With patches of gloriously yellow gorse

Returning to my pacing and my indignant fuming  
I was again distracted, this time by a tree,  
Its branches all reaching for the sky  
Many of them clearing the top of the wall  
Giving them a full view of the hillside and all that glorious gorse

And with that, came an answer of sorts

'Move towards the light,  
and you will see over the walls.'