

THE SONG

In everything he did and in everything he said,
Jesus Christ sang a song.

Sometimes, when he cured a sick person, he sang softly and gently,
a song full of love.

Sometimes, when he told one of his beautiful stories,
he sang a haunting melody,
the kind of melody that, once heard, is never forgotten,
the sort of melody you hum throughout the day
without even knowing that you are doing it.

Sometimes, when he defended the rights of the poor,
his voice grew strong and powerful,
until finally, from the cross,
he sang so powerfully that his voice filled the universe.

The disciples who heard him thought
that this was the most beautiful song they had ever heard,
and, after he had returned to his Father,
they began to sing it to others.

They didn't sing as well as Jesus had
– they forgot some of the words, their voices lacked force
and went flat –
but they sang to the best of their ability,
and, despite their weaknesses,
the people who heard them thought in their turn
that this was the most beautiful song they had ever heard.

The song gradually spread out from Jerusalem to other lands.
Parents sang it to their children
and it began to be passed down
through the generations and through the centuries.

Sometimes, in the lives of the great saints,
the song was sung with exquisite beauty.
But at other times and by other people it was sung badly,
for the song was so beautiful
that there was power in possessing it,
and people used the power of the song
to march to war
and to oppress and dominate others.

So the song was argued about, fought over,
treated as a possession, distorted,
and covered by many layers of human additions.

And yet, despite everything human beings did to it,
it was still capable of captivating people
whenever its sheer simplicity and aching beauty
were allowed to pierce through.

One of the last places the song reached
was a land that would later be called Australia.
At first the song was sung there very badly indeed,
for the beauty of the song was drowned
by the sound of the lash on the backs of the convicts,
and the cries of fear of the Aboriginal people.

But the song was always greater than the singers
and, in small wooden homes and Churches,
it began to spread throughout a vast and dry land.

At last the song came down to me,
sung softly, gently and lovingly by my parents.
Like so many millions of people before me,
I, too, was captivated by the song,
and I wanted to sing and dance it with my whole being.

The song must not stop with our generation,
and we in our turn must hand on its beauty to those
who come after us.

And, as we do so,
we should always remember that this song
has two special characteristics.

The first is that, while we too sing it badly,
nevertheless, as long as we sing to the best of our ability,
others will hear not just our weak voice,
but behind and through us
they will hear a stronger and a surer voice,
the voice of Jesus himself.

The second is that we will always sing it better
whenever we can learn to sing it together
–not one voice here, another there,
singing different words to different melodies–
but all singing together as one.
For then at last the whole world will truly know
that this is still the most beautiful song
the world has ever known.

Bishop Geoff Robinson 2015.