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PRAYER

GROWING UP

We grow in stages
According to God's
Holy will.
Some are young
Some are old –
God's love for us
Overcomes
The will of the world
And makes us grow up,
Taking control of our lives –
Learning to take control
Of the consequences.
God gives free will,
But He loved us first.
Father God,
Help us to mature
As Christians
And be a blessing
To You.
In Jesus' precious name.

Amen

Pam Earp

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EDITORIAL

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A COUNSEL OF IMPROVEMENT

Any fuss on my part about correcting small blemishes is likely to be greeted by family mutterings of ‘OCD. . .OCD.’ Well, I’m not going to admit to anything so serious as ‘Obsessive Compulsive Disorder’, but I must confess to the pang of a wry smile when this old English teacher failed to notice the very kind of error he told his many eager pupils to avoid. Let me illustrate from the last *Poetry Church*: on page 28, in the last line of the poem, you will probably find an extra ‘i’ in ‘triumphantly’. (I have already corrected the copies sent out after we discovered the mistakes; that is how obsessive I am). A sharp point will lightly remove the guilty letter, and the cross of the ‘t’ and the ‘r’ can be widened slightly with a fine waterproof black pen so that the improvement will be hardly noticed. (My ambition as a callow youth was to become a famous forger. Truly.) Also, on page 3, 5 lines from the bottom, is the mistake, for which I am completely responsible, that made me smile wryly. Turn the first ‘s’ in ‘devises’ into a ‘c’ by lightly scraping the centre from the letter. With your fine black biro, join the left of the line at the head to the left of the line of the bottom, to make the ‘c’. This is actually an example of the false friend the spellcheck can be, because it cannot distinguish between the verb ‘devise’ and the noun ‘device’. There, you have your small improvements. Sic transit gloria Tony!

Back in the real world, in spite of the current trend to condemn the behaviour of our times, my own experience suggests that we are often developing, and finding better ways to make and do things. I know this is belied by improvements in military weapons and the actions of unscrupulous governments, but, overall, the collective conscience is becoming more discerning and the strength of democracy is making itself felt. We will improve, unless we destroy ourselves first. For myself – I remain a slave to my search for perfection.

BLADES AND EDGES

First sharpened shears when six;
Now it is edges on skates and skis,
Chisels, mowers,
Scythes for farming,
Stanley and carving and kitchen knives,
Perfectly pointed pencils
And artists' sables.

Blades can be cruel or kind;
Sword and scalpel,
Razors and lasers,
Killing or healing;
Roller-blades and
Lawn edging are my greatest relaxations
(Family would say obsessions)
And small points for changing letters.
These things fascinate me – every one.
I say keep your blades keen, and hearts kind,
And above all, keep a sharpened mind.

Tony Reavill

A MOMENT OF HOMAGE TO JOSIE

I learnt of Josie Davies's death when the copy of her last *Poetry Church* was returned unopened with 'No longer living at this address R.I.P.' on the envelope. I quickly added a colour illustration, so characteristic of her work, to her trenchant final poem and wrote 'R.I.P.' after her name. I first met Josie when she asked me, as a recording engineer, to make a CD from two tape cassettes she had made earlier of her poems. I had to listen carefully to them to edit the final version with all the blemishes removed, so I came to know her magnificent acting and reading voice very well. Members of the *Poetry Church* will also be familiar with her consummate skill in visual artistry, particularly imaginative line work, coloured with ink washes. I have never seen better. It saddens me that there will be no more of them.

A HOLY PARADOX

While Holy Friday's liturgies unfold,
behind the scenes the Paschal lilies wait
to bear brave part in Easter's white and gold,
that highest festival we celebrate.

The Stations of the Cross; the Servant Songs;
Bairstow's and Jeremiah's *Lamentations*;
Bach's Passions; each dear ritual belongs
to grief recalled in all our contemplations.

Christ vanquished death and now dwells on his throne
at God the Father's side, Who hears each prayer
Our Saviour offers for us. Once alone
He died, to live forever. Let's declare

that we should keep in faithful recollection
Stations of Joy and of the Resurrection.

Barbara Wilcock Bland

THE PAGEANT OF HOLYROOD

Untutored in fine arts and graces
old ghosts slip out of secret places.
Watched by a host of Scottish kings
they walk the stately rooms and wings.

A lantern in the abbey's lit,
all with a common purpose sit.

The solemnities are duly said
hymns sung in honour of the dead.
In quiet concordance, hand in hand
a gathering of the low and grand...
In the dignity of repose men find
a rare communion of the mind.

Robert Carson

IN MEMORY

In memory of the guards
who died
fighting for freedom
in a far off land,
freeing the villages
from the Taliban,
making their fight
a tour of duty
far away from home,
from loved ones – a tour of duty
ending a life
when it had just begun.

Fay Davies