

ST MARYS CF10

DEAN
ATKINS

AS THE
CROW
FLIES

RESOURCES DRAWN FROM
YOUTH MINISTRY

AS THE CROW FLIES

**RESOURCES DRAWN FROM
YOUTH MINISTRY**

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	4
As the Crow Flies	5
A New South Wales	6
Who are you, Lord?	8
Epiphany	9
You found out what we were doing	10
He walked to the water's edge.....	12
He changed the way I see.....	13
The Room	14
Come from the corners of the Earth	15
Come to the Water.....	17
Crumbs from your Table.....	19
Hill of Crosses	20
On the first day of the week.....	22
When you called us friends	24
I want the world to change, God.....	26

Introduction

This little publication
features a few reflections, prayers and meditations
created for various celebrations
of the Eucharist with young people.

They are offered as models. Ideas.
Feel free to use them as they are
or perhaps be inspired to create your own,
and to encourage young people to be creative too!

Perhaps, at times,
all we need is simply permission to be creative,
and to *believe* that we can be creative.

After all, God is creative.
When we are creative
we reflect God's life in us.

As the Crow Flies

*Here's a reflection which is useful at the beginning of a gathering,
and suited also to both Advent and Pentecost.*

Come to us, Lord,
as the crow flies.

Pay no attention to bends and diversions.
Ignore the signposts and beauty spots.
Fly across the meandering paths and obstacles,
across the trees and ravines,
the quarries and rubble of our lives.

Across the rooftops and industrial units,
the slime and mess of the river that runs through the place where we live.
Do not look for bridges we have burned
or be delayed by the trenches we have dug.

Swoop over our mountains made from mole-hills
and the babel tower blocks of steel and glass.
Ignore the congested canal of cars and two-way traffic
and the masts that search the sky for something more.

Swoop into our presence, Lord.
Come straightaway.

Come to us, Lord,
as the crow flies.

A New South Wales

*A reflection inspired by the vision of the Revelation of St John, chapter 21.
The local references of both South Wales and the particular communities
can be replaced by your own local places.*

And I saw the new South Wales
Coming down out of heaven from God,
made ready like a bride adorned for her husband.

And the old had passed away, and the new had come.

I heard a loud voice proclaiming from the throne:
'Now God has his dwelling with mankind!
They will dwell among them and they will be his people,
and God himself will be with them...'

And there was no need for Homeless Agencies or Soup Runs
because everyone had fair choice and opportunity, a place to call home.
There were no needles discarded in lanes, no alcohol induced crime.
There was no complaining about the noise of skateboards.
Young and old gathered on street corners and talked about the past
and looked forward to the future with brightness in their eyes.

There was no Industrial Action –
workers and employers were one in fairness and equality.
The boarded up shops were opened for trade,
and the streets were clean and safe,
for the old order had passed away, the new had come.

There was no gay-bashing or hatred.
No daubed paint or words of intolerance splashed on walls.
Hospital waiting lists had passed away,
and no-one popped pills for depression.

There were no suicide statistics, no crying into pillows or screaming at night.
No dawn raids by detectives, no families separated,
no children went hungry.
There was no violence on the terraces.
No CCTV to catch crime on camera,
because the old had passed away, the new had come.

The valleys were one with Cardiff, and Bridgend opened up to the Vale.
Port Talbot placed hope in Pentwyn, and St Mellons embraced by Penarth.
No poisonous smoke choked the air,
no threat of war, no incitement to hatred.

Suspicion and cynicism was the old order, the new had come.

The One who sat on the throne said, 'I am making all things new!
Then he said, 'It is done!
I am the Alpha and the Omega,
the beginning and the end.'

Who are you, Lord?

*A prayer that is particularly suitable for use after Communion
and which could be read by two different voices*

Who are you, Lord? Who are you?
Are you the great 'I am'?
The One who knows it all?
Are you the One who answers questions?
Or are you the One who questions our answers? Are you the One who gives us all we need?
Or do we need to give you all we are?
Are you the One with words of wisdom?
Or does your wisdom leave us speechless?
Are you the One who existed before time began?
Or does time begin with you?
Who are you, Lord? Who are you?

*I am the One who sits among you
and the One who welcomes you to sit.
I am the One who has shared myself with you in bread and wine
and the One whose bread and wine you must share.
I am the One who brings you all you need
and the One who needs all that you bring.
I am the One who makes you what you are
and shows you all that you can be.
I am the One who takes to the cross with arms outstretched
and the One whose arm stretches through time.
I am the One who dies to bring life.
and the One whose life will never die.
I am the One who asks you to follow
and the One who follows your every move.
I am the One who sits among you
and the One who has welcomed you to sit.*

Epiphany

A poetic reflection on the journey of the Magi

They wanted to see what all the fuss was about.
Entertainers entertained.
 Magical conjurors
 twisting perceptions
 manipulating senses
attempting to change the way we see.

And the twist came
in the sight before them.
They were used to seeing things differently
so the child could have been anything:
an apprentice;
someone to learn the trade;
a card trick of emotions.

Gifts are delivered -
an acknowledgement?
A price?
A theological masterpiece expressed
 in glitz and drama?
A gesture of importance?
Peddlers calling to see, to sell,
to smile into a families predicament?
Or a rising star?
Parents protective and bemused;
frightened by the future.

The conjurers had suitably expressed the indelible
and cut time short
with an illusion.

The child was amused by the visitors:
kind enough to display
and entertain.
And then gone.
Not in a puff of smoke
but deliberately and slowly
as if afraid
the child would do a disappearing act
when their backs were turned.
It was a clear night.

You found out what we were doing

A reflection on the invitation of Jesus to the disciples to 'Come and have breakfast' in John 21.

You found out what we were doing.
You called out to us across the water,
our play pond, the place where we worked,
the land locked sea with endless possibilities.
And you called to us and cried to us –
and we heard your distant voice breaking through the waves.

You saw us splashing around, immersed in the sounds,
watching for movement below the surface,
our eyes dropped to the depths below.
And you called to us and cried to us –
and we heard your distant voice breaking through the waves.

You saw us in the distance,
insignificant specks bobbing around on the ebb and flow.
You heard our familiar voices,
and our lives almost turning back to the old ways,
but you were doing something new.
And you called to us and cried to us –
and we heard your distant voice breaking through the waves.

You stood there in the distance.
We saw your face and we heard your voice
and someone said, 'It is the Lord.'
And our lives were turning, returning,
twisting and turning,
pushing through the water,
across the water,
back through our lives,
back through our deaths,
emerging from our dangerous existence,
departing from the things that had parted us from you.

And the spit and the splinters of the flame warmed us.
And there was little to do
but eat
and love
and be loved
We ate and drank
and the juices ran down our chins,
and the sand was warm beneath our shaking bodies.
The sun was high and rising higher,

and all we saw was your face across the flames.
And we knew it was you.
We knew it was you.

Come and Bring the Fish you have just caught

This prayer could be accompanied by an action in which the young people are invited to write a gift, talent, longing, need, prayer, person, place, etc on a paper fish which they have been given, and bring it to the altar with the intention of offering it so that Christ can accept it and use it.

He walked to the water's edge

A Reflection on the Baptism of Jesus

He walked to the water's edge.
Not tentatively – as if scared of the water
But confidently – like a master swimmer.
It was John who was the nervous one:
as if everything he'd learnt had been lost.
All that time he'd spent in the water
and now he held back – afraid to go in.

A few words were exchanged.
And soon they were in the water.
A solidarity dip.
A plunge into the deep.
Gasping breath.
And out again

A few words were exchanged
as heaven joined the conversation.
'This is my Son, I'm pleased with him.'
As he walked away a dove dropped from the sky
Brushing his head;
drying his brow.

He walked to the road-side.
Not tentatively – as if scared of the path ahead
But confidently – like an athlete anointed for action
embracing the life that lay ahead
All that time he'd spent in the water
And now he moved forward – eager to go on.

He changed the way I see

A reflection on John 9:1-41 when Jesus heals the man who is blind. This is a good activity in which young people could be involved – imagining the perspective and experience of characters in certain bible stories.

I couldn't even see the faces of those who dropped money in my cap.
I couldn't see if they had a look of disgust or disdain.
I couldn't see if they looked on me in sympathy
or if they did it to make themselves feel better
If it was to bring me some sort of comfort
or it was done to comfort them as they returned to their homes and their lives.

I couldn't see the eyes of the people who kicked dust in my face
or the people who lifted me from the ground as I stumbled on stones.
I couldn't see the face of the people who passed by:
if their faces were turned the other way as they hurried onto their next thing.
I couldn't even see the face of my healer as he rubbed my eyes and sent me off to wash.

And now I can see -
I can see far more than anyone can imagine.
I have looked into the eyes of the One who brings healing,
whose touch is loving.

And now I have a different outlook on everything.
I see things from a different perspective.
I see things in a different way.
I see things that are hidden from the eyes of many.

If only I could have seen all this before.
But now I am looking in a different direction.
No longer is my head bowed for begging
No longer do I wish life was different.

His touch has changed the way I see things.
I see so many people who are blind to things that catch my eye.
I see the life of God in the world whose touch makes us see.
I see Jesus in the lives of the broken and wounded and his presence in those who are healed.

Even if I was to see for only one more day
I will never be blind to those things
Because He has touched me
and changed the way I see.

The Room

A meditation appropriate for use after Communion exploring the events that occurred in the Upper Room from Maundy Thursday to Pentecost Sunday, and which ends with our situation.

The room was prepared, clean and ready,
the table laid and food at hand,
nothing left to chance.

And when the time was right,
he sat down with his friends
and did the unbelievable
and said things that were out of order.
He disturbed them and comforted them.
He sat close to them and gave them himself.

The room was locked, empty of colour.
A sad, confused gathering of people,
bereaved and dejected,
pained by the death of someone they had loved and lost.
And then he came and stood in front of them,
and again he ate with them,
and gave them his peace.

The room was silent and still.
The same people - with heads bowed and arms raised –
waiting, as they were told,
for the promise to come true.
And then you came,
fulfilling the promise and filling their lives,
helping them to speak truths that would have remained unspoken, giving them courage.

The room was empty.
They had spilled out onto the street,
a people transformed,
a message to share,
words to speak,
bringing life and change to a world in search of something,
giving them hope.

The room is full and the people satisfied,
but still waiting for more.
Waiting for a word or a presence
that makes us want to leave and share the life we have.
Waiting for the Spirit of God to change our lives and show us Jesus.

Come from the corners of the Earth

The traditional way of gathering for the Eucharist and beginning the liturgy is to have a Gathering Song, accompanied by the entrance of the priest and assistant ministers, perhaps – according to your tradition - with cross, candles, gospel book, incense, etc.

Here is a different expression of that ritual action. It can either be followed by song, or the priest can simply begin with 'In the name of the Father...')

The places mentioned below express some of the communities of South Wales, many of whom were gathering for a youth event for which this piece was written. Obviously, you'd need to adapt it with your own local places, which could incorporate particular areas or simply street names.

Come from the corners of the earth...

From Penrhiwceiber and Port Talbot
From Splott and Skewen
From Aberdare and Aberaman
From Ely and Eglwysilan
From Penarth and Porthcawl
From Barry and Bridgend
From Cilibebyll and Cowbridge
From Roath and Rhiwbina
From Merthyr and Mountain Ash
From Treharris and Treorchy
From Neath and Newcastle
From Llandaff and Llantrisant
From Fairwater and Ferndale...
Come from the corners of the earth.

Come before the Lord with thanksgiving.
Come before the Lord and worship.

Within the darkness of the world we seek your light

Two people approach the altar, each with a lit candle and place them on the altar

Within the selfishness of the world
we seek to offer a sacrifice of praise and worship

Someone approaches the altar with a bowl of incense and places it in front of the altar

Within the confusion of the world
we seek your love.

Someone approaches the altar with a crucifix and places it on or near the altar

Within the noise of the world we seek to hear your voice

A Deacon (or other) approaches the altar with the Book of the Gospels and places it on the altar

Within the 'lostness' of the world,
we approach your altar to seek you in the breaking of the Bread

The priest approaches the altar, venerates it and goes to their seat.

Come to the Water

An Invitation

One beautiful expression of the penitential rite at a celebration of the Holy Eucharist is the rite of sprinkling, which calls us back to our baptismal promises, and when we are refreshed and revived by the outpouring of God's forgiveness.

This reflection was written to invite people to come forward to water which had been blessed, into which they could dip their hands perhaps to make the sign of the cross, or perhaps from which they could drink. Its inspired by the invitation found in Isaiah 55. You could create your own invitations determined by your circumstances.

"Oh, come to the water all you who are thirsty;
Though you have no money, come!
Buy corn without money, and eat,
And, at no cost, wine and milk.
Why spend money on what is not bread,
Your wages on what fails to satisfy?
Listen, listen to me, and you will have good things to eat and rich food to enjoy.
Pay attention, come to me;
Listen and your soul will live."

Come to the water if you're fed up of thirsting for something that has meaning.

Come to the water if your zest for life has dried up.

Come to the water if your tongue is dry of words that mean anything.

Come to the water if your heart is barren and searching for something more.

Come to the water if your loneliness is incessant.

Come to the water if your mind is puzzled by life.

Come to the water if there's nothing left to go to.

Come to the water if you've tried everything and found nothing.

Come to the water if love is just an ideal and being loved has escaped you.

Come to the water if your limbs are bruised and your bones ache with the dullness of life.

Come to the water if your life is fantastic
and you feel as if you've experienced everything you think is worth experiencing.

Come to the water if your thirst for life has been pleased by so many things.

Come to the water if the world has quenched your thirst but you are still left wanting.

Come to the water if you've been drifting and don't know where you are.

Come to the water if the depths of life scare you and confuse you and leave you with a sinking feeling.

Come to the water if you have been splashing around and seen nothing but the reflection of something else.

Come to the water if you have been treading water for some time and going nowhere.

Come to the water if you have already discovered in Christ the answer for a thirsty world.

Come to the water if being a Christian has revived and refreshed you.

Come to the water.

Come now. Come without money.
Come and drink. It's an open day ...
where everything is yours....
and yours is everything.

Come and taste the water that brings life.

Life that lasts. Life that leaves no bitter taste in the mouth.

Life that is honest and open and spills over into the lives of others.

Life that washes over you like a tidal wave of love.

Come to the water. Come now. And drink.

Crumbs from your Table

A Penitential Rite

This can be quite a moving sequence if done sensitively, as the blowing out of a candle is quite a strong and dramatic symbol. Accompanied by the other suggested actions of the participants turning their back to the altar expresses a feeling of disgrace or unworthiness.

Perhaps play some reflective background music. During the sequence, four people approach the altar in turn, speak the words and extinguish a candle and stand with their back to the altar, heads bowed. The candles are re-lit after the priest gives the words of forgiveness. You can decrease or increase the number of petitions depending on the number of candles on your altar!, and also, of course, use your own words!

We have failed to listen to you and have been busy with other things;
we have disobeyed your word and strayed from your commands,
and we are not worthy to even gather the crumbs from your table.

Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy**

We have failed to listen to others and been more concerned with
our own worries and concerns, we have ignored what is really important,
and we are not worthy to even gather the crumbs from your table.

Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

We have failed to listen to your voice in the poor and powerless, in the hungry and homeless,
in the cries of the suffering and downtrodden,
and we are not worthy to even gather the crumbs from your table.

Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

We have failed to listen to your words and put them into action in our daily lives,
we have not lived out your love or passed on your words of compassion and healing to
others, and we are not worthy to even gather the crumbs from your table

Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

Hill of Crosses

This act is based on the Hill of Crosses in Lithuania where there are literally hundreds and thousands of crosses placed there as a symbol of faith and of defiance, too.

Throughout its history, the hill has been levelled, the crosses have been removed and even melted down as scrap by the Soviet authorities but local inhabitants and pilgrims continued to place and replace crosses there. The hill and the crosses now stands undisturbed and is visited by thousands of pilgrims, including Pope John Paul II in 1993.

People are invited to create a cross from various materials made available to them, and then place them in a particular space to create their own hill of crosses. Whilst they are making crosses, reflective music could be played.

Meditation

If you wanted a sign that Christ ruled,
where would you look?

Would you look in the rubble of buildings,
the ghost towns of people haunted by fear and violence?

Would you seek it out in the back lanes,
among the discarded needles and empty cans?

Would you find it in a mother's cry for her son,
another statistic of a suicide bomb or mortar attack?

Would you seek it in the gangland culture,
among those who hide their guns in shoeboxes under the bed?

Would you look in the rucksacks of troops with blackened faces,
as they scour the landscape and the broken buildings?

Would you see it in the child with a swollen stomach and big eyes,
who sits lifeless on the cracked soil?

Would you look for it in the broken doors and boarded up windows
of a council estate, in the damp corners and damp houses?

Would you find it beneath the poverty line,
or above the shoulders of a girl whose dreams have been lost in depression?

Would you find it on a Friday night,
in the doorway of a shop where a young man has curled himself to sleep?

Would you seek it out in the drunken figure who beats his wife
or the cry of the child upstairs afraid of the noises below?

Would you seek out a sign in the homes of the mentally ill,
and the drug controlled individuals who are a mystery to themselves?

Would you search in the people who are HIV positive
in the individuals and communities pained with the pandemic?

Would you look for it on a skull shaped hill,
on the bare branches of a tree holding a man nailed to its bough?

If you wanted a sign that Christ ruled,
Where would you look?

Prayer

Loving Father,
to many people, the cross is a symbol of death and destruction,
a figure of folly or a symbol that makes us stumble,
but to us who are called
it shows your strength and wisdom,
your love and forgiveness,
your untiring commitment to a people who have fallen short.

As we rejoice in Christ the King,
may we know the power of your forgiveness in our lives
and the freedom that comes from serving you.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

On the first day of the week

The following is a reflection on why Sunday is important to Christians, and how it is spent by a vast array of people, and can be used at the beginning of a gathering which occurs on the first day of the week! It could be used at the beginning of a Sunday celebration.

From the references you'll read below, this particular piece took place just before Christmas so try replacing it with references to your own circumstances. This piece can be written by different voices.

On the first day of the week
when it was still dark,
Mary of Magdala came to the tomb.
She saw that the stone had been moved away from the entrance.

On the first day of the week
when the disciples were together behind locked doors,
Jesus came and stood among them. 'Peace be with you!' he said.

On the first day of the week
we all went for lunch to the local pub.
Dad had a few too much to drink and the kids were really badly behaved.
We should have gone to a Harvester!

On the first day of the week,
we redecorated the lounge in time for Christmas,
'cos things were looking a bit faded
since the last time we redecorated three months ago.

On the first day of the week
we got up really early to go to IKEA,
got pushed around the one way system like a cattle market,
and came home with a candle holder.
Never go to IKEA on a Sunday!

On the first day of the week
we went up to Manchester to see United playing.
My mother bought me tickets for my birthday.
United rule!

On the first day of the week
we began our Christmas shopping
cos there are only 60 shopping days to Christmas
and we wanted to beat the rush.
Everyone else seemed to have the same idea!

On the first day of the week
we went swimming at the local sports centre.
My mate got thrown out for bombing someone.
Never go swimming with my mate!

On the first day of the week
I got up early to play football.
Don't know why I bothered we got thrashed 4 nil.
Better luck next time!

On the first day of the week
we sat in three miles of traffic going nowhere
cos there was football on at the stadium.
I knew we shouldn't have taken the dog with us.
He threw up all over the back seat!

On the first day of the week
we enter the mystery of the eucharist to make a meal of Christ's love.

This is the first day of the week.
The first day.
A new beginning.
A new life.
The Day of Resurrection,
when Christ stands among us,
and says 'Peace be with you.'

This is the first day of the week,
the first day,
and so we gather...

When you called us friends

These prayers may be used as a response to the gospel reading of John 15:12 –15 where Jesus tells his apostles, 'I have called you friends.'

They may be read by different voices and used with a response such as:

Lord Jesus, friend and brother:

Help us to know the true meaning of friendship

When you called us friends
it made us look at ourselves.
It made us think about what it really means to be a friend.
So, help us, Lord, to know the true meaning of friendship.

When you called us friends
it made us look at our own friends.
It made us think what it means to have friends.
So, help us, Lord, to value the friends that we have.

When you called us friends
it made us look at others
It made us think about those who don't know the joy of friendship.
So help us, Lord, to be a friend to others and reach out to those in need.

When you called us friends
it made us look at our families.
It made us think about the friends we didn't realise we had.
So, help us, Lord, to value those who stand by us and help us through life.

When you called us friends
it made us look at the Church.
It made us think about what it really means to follow you.
So, help us, Lord, to be a good friend to you and to each other.

When you called us friends
it made us look at the world.
It made us think about all those who have fallen out or disagreed.
So, help us, Lord to build up friendship in the world.

When you called us friends
it made us look at all the people we know.
It made us think about those we don't like or don't care for.
So, help us, Lord to see others as you do.

When you called us friends
it made us look at ourselves.
It made us think about all the friendships we have and are called to have.
So, help us, Lord to have the courage to be a good friend to others.

I want the world to change, God

A prayer from the heart

I want the world to change, God.
God, I want the world to change.

I want wars to end.
I want people to start trusting each other.
I want hate crimes to cease.
I want a world free of choking smoke and slimey seas.
I want bullying and hatred to be a thing of the past.
I want people to respect each other.
I want the injustice in Africa to be turned on its head.
I want terrorism to be a forgotten word.

I want the world to change, God.
God, I want the world to change.

I want to change the world, God.
God, I want to change the world.

What's the best way, God?
Is it through prayer or politics?
Do I take to the street with placards and chants?
Or do I demonstrate peacefully and quietly?
Do I go to church more often?
Is lighting a candle enough?
Do I have to spend my money?
Shall I do a sponsored walk?
Is it by standing out from the crowd?
Or do I join a crowd?
Do I become an activist?
Maybe I should join a Political Party?
Or set up a community group?
Should I go to the Press?

I want to change the world, God.
God, I want to change the world.

But I don't know where to start.
Do I meet the high and mighty?
Or help the homeless on the streets?
Do I do great things to impress and amaze
Or work quietly in the background?

I once heard someone say
'You ask us to do no great thing only small things done with great love.'
No great thing, God?
Only great love.
Do I love enough though, God?
I know I care.
But love is a different thing
It takes a lot to love.

I want to change the world, God.
But you don't ask me to do 'great' things.
Only 'small' things done with 'great' love.

I want my heart to change, God.
God, I want my heart to change.
So that everything I do is filled with love.
And then...
and only then...
will the world begin to change.

At the Well

Here's a slightly longer piece to end with! It wasn't particularly written with young people in mind but is an example of imagining....!

Whilst the account of the Annunciation in the Gospel according to Luke mentions the town of Nazareth, it does not in itself give details that might help to identify the actual location of this event. However, the Protoevangelium of James, a 2nd-century apocryphal text, states that, "She took the jar and went out to fetch water. Then a voice spoke to her: 'Greetings, you who have received grace. The Lord is with you, you blessed among women.'" It continues to state that having looked around and seen no one, Mary returned home, placed the jar of water aside, and began to spin, whereupon the angel appeared before her to continue to inform of her appointed role. The Greek Orthodox Church of the Annunciation in Nazareth stands over the spring reputed to be the place of this annunciation

Somewhere in the world
there is village.

And somewhere in the village
there is a well.

The well is deep and dark and friendly,
and at the bottom of the well,
there is water,
cool and fresh.

The water is so cool and so lovely
that the villagers say that to taste a drop of water from the well
is like tasting heaven.

Every day, everyone from the village that's somewhere in the world
thanks God for the well and for the water
and for giving them a taste of heaven.

*

At the well, there is a girl.
The girl's name is Mary.

Every day she, like every other girl in the village, draws water from the well.
Sometimes, the girls stop and talk to one another
and the words flow as freely as the water.

And at other times, like today, she is alone.

She lowers a bucket into the darkness below.
The bucket seems to drop for ever.
There seems to be no end to the darkness.

Then there is a splash.

The noise echoes,
jumping from the stones,
leaping to the sun.

She pulls the rope,
once, twice, three times.

The water sparkles in the daylight,
splashing over her hands and feet,
overflowing.
It is cold and lovely to touch.

Mary smiles.

*

She carries the bucket to her home in the heart of the village.

Her home is carved into the earth,
burrowed into rock.
It is cool inside.
She loves to be alone inside the earth.
She plays a game.
She imagines she is the only person alive in the world,
waiting for someone to come and save her from her loneliness.

*

Mary pours the water into a large, stone jug.
She loves the noise the water makes,
like secret words,
like whispers.
She imagines it is a lost language,
telling her tales,
ancient stories from ancient people.

She listens to the water speaking.

It says her name.

'Mary.'

She smiles.

The water trickles out her name again.

'Mary.'

Her name splashes into the jug.

*

She wonders if others can hear the water as it splashes words into the world.

She wonders if only she can hear the streaming secrets.

She peers into the jug
and waits for more whispers, more words,
flowing,
splashing.

She imagines a world of flowing water,
like a fountain,
where children play
and laugh and splash,
and old people stop to talk and drink and soak their aching bones,
and young lovers make promises that last for ever.
She imagines angels cooling their wings and breathing over the water.

*

And then she hears the water splash a word she has never heard before.

She listens again.

She waits.

There is silence.

The word is like a promise,
like the oldest word in the world.

Like the first word that ever was.
The last word that shall ever be.

She tries to speak the word
but it is like water,
running away from her,
too wet,

too flowing,
too quick,
too deep.

She wonders what it means.
and if there is a wise man or woman in the village or the world
who can tell her what it means.

*

She listens again.
The water tells her tales of long ago,
of old things and new things,
the beginning and the end,
of unbroken promises
of promises fulfilled.

She feels the breath or the breeze of an angel's wings,
as cool as water.

Mary shivers.

*

The angel has a message.
Mary closes her eyes.
She imagines the angel is beautiful,
that his face is lovely to touch and lovely to see.
She imagines there is so much light,
so much brightness,
that his eyes are like deep pools of water.
His voice is like a stream,
like a river,
like ripples of love.

The message is clear,
like water.

The angel breathes again.

His wings cover her.

He tells her she is loved.

Heaven, for a while, holds its breath.
There is no movement.
No ripples.

All is still.

She feels a weight, like water.

*

The water is still.

And silent.

There are no more words.

She is alone.

She plays a game.

She imagines she is the only person alive in the world,
waiting for someone to come and save her from her loneliness.

*

She feels life growing inside her,
like water welling up,
like a deep well,
speaking words that only she can hear.

She listens.

She can hear the word speaking inside her,
like a well,
an echo,
jumping from stones,
leaping to the sun.

*

She feels God is close.
Closer than he has ever been to anyone before.
Like water, like life,
welling up inside her.

No longer does she imagine she is the only person in the world.
There is no loneliness, no waiting.
Her Saviour has come.