

AND A CHILD WILL LEAD



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Introduction



I CANNOT remember my own birth, but I would like to think of it as my first “yes” to God. I would like to think that I *will-ingly* cooperated with God and truly participated in my own birth by that “yes.” If this is so, our participation in God’s will, our “yes” from birth into eternity, is always creative—filled with life, no matter the experience.

I believe that creation is the expression of the maternity of God. We are part of creation, yet in a way unique among all others. The image and likeness of God have graced us. We were born of God, formed into divine life; but we were also born into God, into the inexhaustible Mystery of Love. Our God of love believed in us then, now and into eternity. We continue to carry our divinity even when we have lost the awareness of this gift of greatness that we are.

As the expression and reflection of our Creator, we have the responsibility to become co-creators with God, co-creators of our very selves—this is our daily “yes.” It is not a burden but a gift—the gift of freedom that leads us over and over again to new life, to fullness of life. *And a Child Will Lead* is an opportunity to continue our own creation with and in God. It is an opportunity to look within to find those places in need of healing—those places that were filled with integrity and wholeness at our conception, but became wounded or scarred by persons and experiences through the years.

How do we do this? We must let go—let ourselves go into the heart of God—tumble down into the Mystery of God within us. It is there that we find compassion and healing. We let God be God for us and surrender ourselves to mercy, compassion and healing love. Commitment is the work of surrender. It is Jesus

Christ, the Son of God and our Brother, who shows us the way. Jesus is surrender itself; he is commitment; he is endless hope and glorious fulfillment. Jesus assures us, “Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?” (Jn 11:40). We are the glory of God—thanks to God! In the light of Christ, we will see our brokenness and our faults but also our gifts. In Christ we will come to believe that we truly are the glory of God. In a sense our healing is a return to our beginnings, yet it is a transformation into glory—God’s glory—the whole and holy persons of God’s original intention.

To be faithful to the process, we must depend upon God’s grace. We must lean into this grace because grace is for the long haul. It will never fail us; grace keeps us faithful in the face of our limitations. We also need a vision that penetrates through those places in need of healing as with the eyes of God—a graced vision. When we see our life experiences through the eyes of grace, we know that what we touch and what touches us are opportunities for the blessing of God. God invites us to use all things, all experiences—past, present and future—for our healing. Nothing, no circumstance or event, is void of God’s presence no matter how difficult or painful it seems. We carry God with us into every experience of the day. Healing follows this act of faith; we stand on the threshold of resurrection and new life each time we enter into those moments. What is difficult for us is also our grace, the place of our healing—the doorway to the transformations for which we long.

And a Child Will Lead is an invitation to accept the struggle we may meet along the way and to engage it. Despite our fears, we will not be destroyed. Our fears, failures and limitations are human vessels waiting to be filled with new life. Jesus saves us from the depth of our fears and the death of our fears. When we

can do nothing, God can do everything. It is precisely our powerlessness, the powerlessness of our *child within*, that opens the way to Jesus who is healing and new life. The thing we fear most can become the *wholing* of our strength—there, discouragement becomes hope and power is commitment.

We must remember Jesus. We must remember that not one drop of the blood he shed is without meaning. No tear falls from our eyes without leaving us cleansed. No failure, no betrayal is so great that Jesus will not reach down and lift us into his healing arms. Resurrection, new life and healing happen each time we hand ourselves over to him—each time we surrender that piece of ourselves we feared to hold out to the Light of Christ. Healing happens even in the quiet and hesitant expression of our desire for healing. Jesus asks only that we come to him, nothing else: “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest” (Mt 11:28). There in his presence, we experience the peace of Christ—inner peace and security—that frees us to accept life as it is and to treat others with forgiveness, gentleness and compassion. We must greet this *child within* us with open hands and hearts, and offer him or her a new beginning. The hope of healing is the hospitality we offer our inner selves, because our faith has faced Christ who longs to heal us.

Jesus performed miracles that inspired some to have faith in him and others to fear him. These pages speak of the miracles in which children received healing and life through faith in Jesus Christ. It can be a parent who intercedes on the child’s behalf, or the adult child, himself or herself, or the experience of a child’s generosity as an instrument of grace. But in all, it is faith that touches, pleads, cries out to the heart of Jesus—the heart of God. It is faith that keeps the pray-er faithful. It is faith that

makes all the difference. Faith in miracles is really faith in the power of love.

Part One of this book lays the foundation of this process toward healing: Why *Go Within*? What will we find? Will we have the strength to engage it?—Why *Jesus*? Is this Son of God truly our brother? How can I identify with him?—Why *Childhood*? Isn't this regression or weakness? Am I wasting my time with the past?

Part Two of *And a Child Will Lead* offers reflections on the gospel, prayer and guided meditations to remind us that Jesus heals. This strengthens our hope in him today and keeps us faithful to the process. Each reflection is followed by a Faith-Word: words we struggle to say, acts of faith amid our fears and uncertainties; a Heart-Word: spoken boldly from the truth within our hearts; and God's Word: reflections of God's loving care for us. These statements of belief can be prayed individually over several days, allowing the hope and courage of each "word" to prepare the holy ground within us for the guided meditation that follows. This process is not meant to be rushed and may be helpful to repeat after the meditation, as well.

The Prayer Services and Rituals found at the end of this book are further invitations to acknowledge and explore the rich gift of self that God intended for each of us. These may be prayed with a group or reflected upon in personal prayer.

This journey to healing and wholeness is a lifetime journey, a Christian journey. It began with Abraham, our father in faith, who left everything he knew for a place known only by the promise of God. We continue, in his spirit, to set out for a land we fear may never be reached—our healing—but still a destination we, too, know in the promise of God. We cross the desert of

our doubts with Moses, led by our own cloud of unknowing, fired with God's promise in Jesus Christ.

Perhaps you have visited this promised land before but continued on. Perhaps you would like to return to that mystery of God within and remain there. Perhaps you are just setting out, seeking the fullness of life and the healing for which you have longed. Come to the quiet place of your true self where all is well, where wellness and peace await you. Come in the spirit of a retreat—at home or away. It is my hope that these pages will support and nourish you on your journey.

Anita M. Constance, S.C.

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Going Within



*I praise you, O God,
for calling me to the center
of all things—
to the center of you—
to the center of me
that is you.*

THERE is a story . . .

When God finished making the world, God wanted to leave behind for human beings a piece of divinity—God’s own divinity—a spark of that essence, a promise to us of what we could become, with effort. God looked for a place to hide this divinity because, God explained, what we could find too easily would never be valued by us.

“Then you must hide the Godhead on the highest mountain peak,” said one councilor.

“Not there,” said God, “for humans are adventurous creatures and they will soon enough learn to climb the highest mountain peaks.”

“Hide it then, O Great One, in the depths of the earth!”

“I think not,” said God, “for my people will one day discover that they can dig into the deepest parts of the earth.”

“In the middle of the ocean then, O King?”

With shaking head God replied, “I have given each person a brain, you see, and one day they will learn to build ships and cross the mightiest of oceans.”

“Where then, my God?” cried the councilor.

God smiled. “I’ll hide it in the one place that they will hardly think to look. I’ll hide it deep inside their hearts. It will be my surprise—my gift!”

Was God playing a trick on us? Setting up a game of sorts? A challenge impossible to meet? No, God wants us to seek *and* to find. *Going within* is opening the door to God. It is the response we make to God’s invitation to pay attention to our hearts. Why is this so important? How do we know that our *going within* will bring us to God? How do we know that we will meet Jesus in the midst of our hopes, fears, disappointments and dreams? William Wordsworth, in his *Ode on Intimations of Immortality*, writes: “Trailing clouds of glory, we come from God who is our home.”

At Baptism, we were baptized into Jesus Christ, into the very Son of God. In chapter 12 of his first letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul tells us that we are the *body* of Christ. Couldn’t we say then that it is within our own bodies that we meet the person of Jesus? He resides there as both our life force and our healing God. St. Paul also tells us that we are temples of the Holy Spirit—the Spirit who fulfilled the promise of Jesus to be with us all days. Why would we not, then, enter this temple of God—our bodies—to pray, to seek and to find? To ask for our heart’s desires and to satisfy our heart’s longings? St. John of the Cross