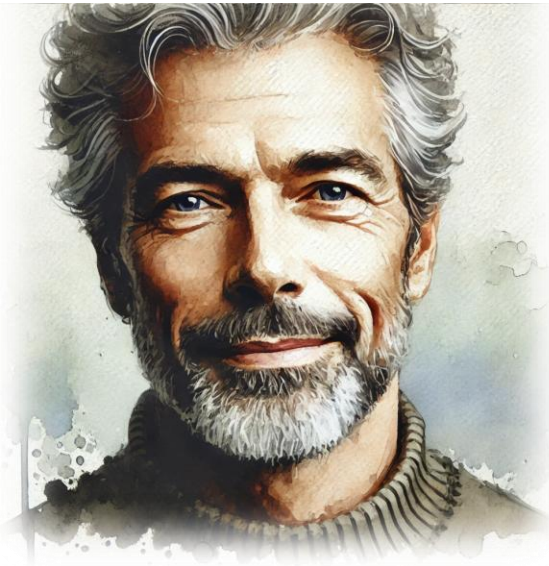


## A Theology of the World?

Two wayfaring contemplatives appear to delight in strange situations, doing bizarre things. And yet, the madness is somehow familiar. Some of their listeners are probably confused, while others may see them enacting mini-parables, or maybe they sense theology being done in odd ways. Or is it worship within an incarnated world?



These vignettes operate at a level beyond ordinary storytelling. Exploring their link to Christianity - especially in unusual or imaginative ways - can open deep spiritual resonances.

In the middle of somebody else's arguing, they take off their sandals. The room falls silent. Is this an echo of Jesus' call to peacemaking? (4:13)<sup>1</sup>

When they lose track of time, and the sea waits for them (4:1), is all this a side-glance at Christ's

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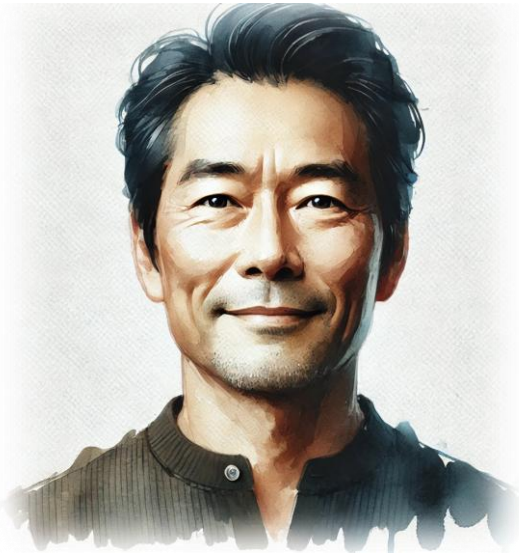
<sup>1</sup> - 4:13 this number identifies the 14<sup>th</sup> numbered snippet or anecdote in the 4<sup>th</sup> Episode 4 of the Contemplative Mischief series, called "Wandering Beatitudes"

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dominion over time and nature, as when calming the storm on the Sea of Galilee?

Knowing God through what cannot be explained is known as the *via negativa*. But does it have to be deadly serious, almost thereby negating its own spirit? Maybe it would be quite at home here. Our two friends forget what they were looking for. And leave with pockets full of light.

(4:12). They get lost, gratefully, for in the world they trust in the immanent divine (4:4). Are they apophatic riddle-makers, inviting us to strip away knowledge, control, or destination from our cluttered minds until only mystery remains?



Christianity understands God becoming flesh, entering the mess and matter of the world. These contemplatives enter the mess and matter of the world, absurdly and humbly. They bless the scanner. They bow to the walls. (4:3, 4:15) Do we sense a theology of the incarnation here? The world becomes sacred by being stumbled into, blessed, bowed to. Or rather, it was always sacred, but how many of us notice that “heavens and earth are full of your glory”? Whimsy may have a role in the theology of incarnation.

Our two nomadic friends don't seem to be attached to expected paths. They help a stranger find the right platform, and then lose their own. (4:5) In a desert road with no signs, they navigate by the stars, and they just keep walking until they feel welcome. (4:14) Jesus avoids the expected path - meeting the Samaritan woman, dining with tax

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collectors, praying alone at night. Detour is discipleship if it flowers in welcome or wonder.

On the road between towns, a stranger joins our two travellers, smiling. (4:16) On another occasion, when they walked in through the door, they find it's the wrong house. They apologise, but they are asked to stay. At midnight, one begins to weep. (4:11) What veiled epiphanies are taking place here? Are these travellers touched by the numinous? Are they living echoes of the Emmaus encounter with a hidden Christ?

If traditional Christian understanding is read from above: Incarnation, Crucifixion, Resurrection, can it be practised from the ground up: dust, sandals, strangers, silence, the ineffable? A child draws circles in the dust. They sit beside her until the light changes. (4:8) What if daily life becomes the sacred text, and Gospel truths emerge from watching, touching, and living? Or has our culture in world and Church forgotten to regard the world, with the apostle Paul, as self-revelation of God? What an impoverishment that would be! "For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities - his eternal power and divine nature - have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made..."  
— *Rom 1:20*

Our two travelling monks appear to be taking the opening lines of Psalm 19 as something more practical than pious poetry:

*The heavens declare the glory of God;  
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.  
Day after day they pour forth speech;  
night after night they reveal knowledge.  
They have no speech, they use no words;  
no sound is heard from them.  
Yet their voice goes out into all the earth,  
their words to the ends of the world.*

This seems to be why our contemplative friends plant a garden, bow to the walls, unfold a map of the stars. These are sacramental acts of

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worship and wonder, humility and gentle humour. If you or I do the same things - or almost anything, really - slowly and with attention and respect, with presence and participation, we too will realise their sacramental prayer nature. We see the monks anointing ruins, stones, and stars - not with oil, but with their attention.

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*Collectors' Tip: The PDF files of Episodes of this Blog Series have been designed for printing on size A5 sheets, or as a A5 size booklet*

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## 4. Wandering Beatitudes

*grace walks on unmarked roads, blessing even the dust that  
clings to our feet.*

*every step not planned becomes a path revealed.*

*the soul learns to follow by blessing where it has already  
wandered.*



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4:1

Two Franciscans walk into a ferry terminal at sunrise...  
They lose track of time.  
So the sea waits.

4:2

Two Franciscans walk into a mountain village...  
They are mistaken for poets.  
They do not correct anyone.

4:3

Two Franciscans walk into an airport security line...  
They remove their sandals.  
And bless the scanner.

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4:4

Two Franciscans walk into a village without roads...  
They get lost. With gratitude.

4:5

Two Franciscans walk into a railway station...  
They help a stranger find the right platform.  
And lose their own.

4:6

Two Franciscans walk into a neighbourhood in ruins...  
They plant a garden.

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4:7

Two Franciscans walk into a mountain monastery in  
Greece...  
One watches a bird disappear behind the ridge.  
The other follows a scent that never settles.

4:8

Two Franciscans walk into an empty square at dawn...  
A child draws circles in the dust.  
They sit beside her until the light changes.

4:9

Two Franciscans walk into the wrong country...  
They carry the wrong currency.  
Still, they are invited to stay.

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4:8 circles in the dust...



4:7 into a mountain

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4:10

Two Franciscans walk into an old monastery in Cyprus...  
One gently closes his eyes,  
the other looks for candles that don't flicker.

4:11

Two Franciscans walk into the wrong house...  
They apologise, but are asked to stay.  
At midnight, one begins to weep without knowing why.

4:12

Two Franciscans walk into a market they don't  
understand...  
They forget what they were looking for.  
And leave with pockets full of light.

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4:13

Two Franciscans walk into an argument already in  
progress...  
They take off their sandals.  
The room falls silent.

4:14

Two Franciscans walk into a desert road with no signs...  
They unfold a map of the stars.  
And walk until they feel welcome.

4:15

Two Franciscans walk into a narrow alley in Piemonte...  
They hear no footsteps but their own.  
So they bow to the walls.

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4:16

Two Franciscans walk onto a bridge between towns...  
They stop halfway.  
A stranger joins them, smiling.

4:17

Two Franciscans walk into the sea...  
One finds broken shells and returns to dry himself.  
The other swims to the depths and does not come back.

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