

## **In my Father's House**

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As a student in about 1980 I spent a month one summer caring for patients, in a lock up ward of Prestwich Mental Hospital.

One of the jobs the staff gave me was to take certain inmates to the hospital shop to buy tobacco, and sweets and bits and pieces from their meagre allowance.

In those long since days the medication that was taken was often strong and indiscriminate.

So Basil my client for the trip had been victim to these brain rotting chemicals for years. His history had been violent. Which was the reason he was in the lock up. But to all intents and purposes seemed quite harmless. So as a young man I patronised him.

Basil purchased his roll up tobacco and papers and sweets, and we made our way back to the locked gates that lead into the security section of the unit.

At the gates was a lady patient who always carried postcards of pussy cats. She stopped Basil showed him the pictures and asked for some of his tobacco.

He opened the packet and gave her a precious portion of what he had.

I stopped Basil and told him he should keep this necessity for himself.

Then this man who had suffered for years, who dragged his feet, and found it difficult to concentrate turned to the 20 year old me and said.

“Leave it. That is the only pleasure that she has”

The gates were unlocked and we shuffled in

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Basil will most certainly have died many years ago

Heaven is a place where kindness is celebrated

So Basil will most certainly have got there before me

I hope he prays for me

I have had the honour of working in Our Lady of Perpetual Succour Higher Croft.

While there, a lady who came to daily mass began to develop the early stages of Alzheimer's

She lost all track of time

So set off one night at two in the morning to come to church.

Wondering why it was so dark. Why there were so few people around.

Returning from a boozing session at the same time  
was one of the characters of the community  
A woman who I had got to know via my contacts with the Manxman pub  
She was not the kind of lady, often found in respectable company  
But she spotted this confused victim of Alzheimer's.  
Gently asked her where she was going  
Worked out where she lived  
Guided her home  
Opened her door  
Left her in her living room  
Then went home to her own bed  
The next day she telephoned me  
And told me what had happened  
So I could care for the lost old Lady  
In my Father's house there are many rooms.  
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The Good Samaritan I remember is probably still living  
But the woman she helped will have gone  
I imagine that old daily mass goer, waiting to guide this strange disciple into eternity  
For there is certainly a place for her there  
There are many rooms  
  
Then occasionally as a priest I get a window into private lives  
Access to often hidden thoughts can be facilitated by grief  
In preparation for a funeral there is the interview of the family  
  
So the service can seem more appropriate  
On a particularly beautiful occasion  
We were speaking of the mother's home, and how it needed emptying  
The son who had not had an easy life  
Who would not have looked out of place in a police line up

Explained that he wanted the house, to remain full, for as long as possible

Because he could still

open the front door

Go over to the coat rail in the hall

And bury his face in his Mums scarfs and overcoats that always hung there

“You can still smell the perfume he said”

“For a split second she is still there”

But she was not there

She was perhaps in eternity

Waiting for that son who loved her so deeply

Love of such sincerity

That he would surly eventually join her

For

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God does not see as man sees

Take care that you look with faith

For

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