

Caroline Hodgson *reflects on*
Colossians 1:15-28

At the beginning of chapter two Paul writes, "I am struggling for you... and for all who have not seen me face to face... though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit". It suggests that he was encouraging and supporting the Colossians remotely, and indeed nobody knows whether Paul ever visited Colossae in person. It's thought that Epaphras, a native of Colossae who's mentioned in the opening verses of Colossians, heard Paul preach in Ephesus and became a Christian, before going back home and founding a church.

In today's passage Paul describes Jesus at "the image of the invisible God". Christ was God on earth. After his death and resurrection, Paul became Christ's earthly representative. Since Paul, for all his zeal and energy, couldn't cover the whole earth on his missions, Epaphras brought the word to the people of Colossae. So a pattern emerges – a game of tag.

Christians have always known that, having heard the word of God, it is both a joy and a solemn responsibility to pass it on. It's not easy or straightforward. We might be shy and reserved, for example, or plain embarrassed, or compensate with off-putting over-zealousness. Each of us has our own individual contribution to make, our God-given potential – and that, in the Christian life, can be discerned through prayer, reflection and, importantly, experience – getting out there and getting on with it.

Okay, so you're "it". When are you going to set aside time to pray about it, with the real intention of acting upon God's word to you in prayer? ☺



Lord God, with the examples of Paul and Epaphras before me, I ask you to be with me in spirit as I try to fulfil my potential and discern how I can be your representative on earth. Amen.

Poetry and faith

George Herbert (1593-1633)

by Julia McGuinness

"Love bade me welcome: yet my soul drew back, / Guiltie of dust and sinne." So opens "Love (III)", George Herbert's poem, where God is personified as Love.

Herbert is widely held to be the English language's greatest devotional poet. As a dedicated parish priest at Bremerton, he harboured no artistic ambitions, describing his poems as "a picture of the many spiritual conflicts that have passed between God and my soul, before I could subject mine

to the will of Jesus, my Master, in whose service I have now found perfect freedom".

"Love (III)" is a lyrical dialogue where Love draws the reluctant sinner into divine grace. Finally, the poet accepts Love's eucharistic invitation: "You must sit down," says Love, "and taste my meat. / So I did sit and eat."

On his deathbed, Herbert sent his poems to his friend Nicholas Ferrar, asking him to decide whether to publish or destroy them. When 160 of Herbert's poems were published in 1633 under the title *The Temple*, they were immediately well received. ☺

Walking with Rosie Going home

by Gillian Cooper

It's hot today, so Rosie and I head for the shade. We walk along a tree-lined path by a river from one village to the next, and enjoy ice creams outside the café. Then we have to walk back. Now that she's walking away from the ice cream place, Rosie is much less enthusiastic. She's hot and tired, but we need to get back to the car. "Come on,"

I say, "you can do it. Tea-time is this way." We make it home in time for tea.

It can be hard to keep going. There are times when life feels like an effort, a plod along a hard and never-ending path. But there is a voice that says, "Come on, you can do it. I will help you. It's always tea-time here, and there is place set for you at my table, in your eternal home." ☺

“The Eucharist involves more than just receiving; it also involves satisfying the hunger of Christ. He says, 'Come to Me.' He is hungry for souls.”

St Teresa of Calcutta (1910-1997), Roman Catholic nun and missionary