

2012

### Week 7 - Space for Grace

There is a huge flat field within a mile of the presbytery where I (used) to live. It stretches for miles in all directions. I spoke to the farmer. He said it was designated on the flight-path map of pilots as a good place for an emergency landing. For the doomed descending, the field of space becomes a field of grace. I mention this huge, open field only because I love to stand in the middle of it – a place without limitations . . .

Thomas More, author of *Care of the Soul*, has written about the concept of *temenos*. He describes it as the holding of a certain area as a special or sacred precinct. It is where room, not necessarily geographical, is kept for the holy, the enchanted. For the Greeks of the past, 'temenos' was the spiritual area for what lies beyond the functional and the immediate. This sacred space was not to be filled, used or polluted in any way. Its sole reason was to protect a meeting of spirits, to be a threshold into another world of a more profound reality. The work of liturgy in particular, he writes, needs its unique *temenos* so as to be effective and transformative.

The Being called Love can never be confined in small images, in small liturgies, in small churches. We are always tempted to lock God away in windowless places with low ceilings and high security; to pinpoint the divine presence with fallible compasses and dogmatic navigation systems. The Spirit of God will always blow and dance where she will.

There are two such inner spaces for grace that I am learning to treasure. One has to do with the tiny eternal space we make room for when we hold off, even for a split second, the negative – even violent - reaction to a sudden hurt, allowing into our souls a sliver of saving light. In that tiny oasis we recover our almost-lost balance and centre, our precious peace. It lasts the space of a breath but hides a heaven. The other subtle space is equally soul-saving. It is the space we move to, to stop the deadly habit of judging everyone and everything – a common and destructive habit. This place of grace, rarely visited because it remains uncharted in the doctrinal maps of our salvation, is where we, too, hold before us Christ's compassionate understanding of the complexity of our lives. 'Out beyond right and wrong there's a field', wrote Rumi. 'I'll meet you there.'

*(Already Within: pp130, 131,132)*