Will you walk with me....?

Ann Morrison rsj



This question was put to me at a time when I was residing in a rather dark place. Things in my life had become confused, complex and complicated. If the truth were known, I did not want contact with anyone at all, let alone being asked the question, "Will you walk with me to... (even a very small distance away!)" and then came the next question "Would you have time for a coffee?" A decision had to be made quickly. I had already decided how I was going to stay in my dark place and not have contact with anyone and probably continue to feel miserable. However, there was something in those eyes that caused me to stop short and reconsider. Now it was those very eyes asking the question, not really the inviting words. Somehow this was another story. Acceptance was acknowledged and the power of the **LIVING** God began to share its own story through the hearts that gathered round the coffee mugs. It was simple; it was profound; it was powerful; it was jaw-dropping; it was life-changing!

The story that began to reveal itself was the very ordinary, down-to-earth MESS of daily living. Nothing was clean and sanitized here. It was rugged; it was hard; it called for a strength and courage not previously acknowledged. It was calling forth a newness. It was being pulled painstakingly forth from hearts that had somehow unknowingly recognised that something was beginning to be revealed – and needed space given it – space in the daily breath of life – the very breathing in and out of breath. There was a PRESENCE here that allowed the barriers to be dropped and the truth to be expressed in words that tumbled out uncensored onto, into, around and through the bodies and coffee mugs alike. This scene was something extremely powerful and deeply vulnerable at the same time. No holes barred here as the story itself poured forth its own nakedness, messiness, struggle, heartache and pain, showing us the depths within itself, and glimmers of beauty and riches as well. Fragments of true divine revelation unfolded, held lightly and lovingly – becoming moments of pure happiness and trusting peace.

It is many months now since that first invitation – 'Will you walk with me?' However, that question continues to dance its beautiful rhythm and presence in multifaceted ways through my days and weeks of travelling life's main highways, small pathways, scrubby landscapes, hidden valleys and secret gardens, as it continues to reveal its many faces, varied expressions, diverse desires and deep invitations.

In 2002 Scottish singer and songwriter Isla Grant, published a song entitled *"Will you walk with me?"* I believe it resulted from her own thoughtful writing and a desire to notice God walking with her. Having a copy of her CD in my collection, I dragged it out and listened to the lyrics which began to pull at my own heartstrings, and I found myself making this my own prayer as well.

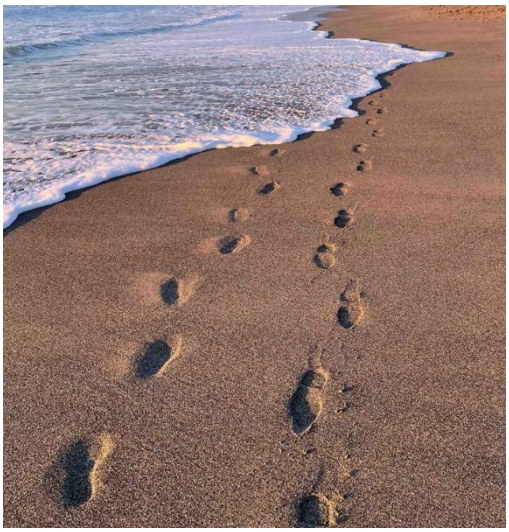
Will you walk with me
Through the darkest night
When my world goes wrong
Will you make it right,
will you guide my lips in all I say,
will you walk with me every day.[1]



[1] Isla Grant ℗ 2002 CMR Records Released on: 2002-01-01

The lyrics spoke a deep longing for God to walk with humanity though all the 'stuff' of our mortality and daily living, of our 'daily bread'. How that plea cries from our soul for God to walk with us; fix our lives; turn our wrongs into rights; and let us know that God is indeed right there beside us.

Since that day of being asked *"Will you walk with me*...?" I've become aware that I now notice how the eyes of the other tell the story or ask the question. Acutely aware of our need to listen to the unspoken invitation to walk with each other in the ordinariness of our daily bread and butter – in the simple things as well as the big things. How this makes a huge difference, and indeed, changes our attitude to life and its pain, heartache and struggle.



I have also become deeply aware of the times when the focus of this question needs to be flipped over...who is asking the question? Is it me asking another to walk with me through something, or is it the other who is asking me to be present? Indeed, is it ***The Beloved*** asking the question in some tiny, silent, unnoticed, obscure way? How often I miss the opportunity of that powerful interaction that is possible when the focus is moved from me to the other.

Recently, while spending time waiting at the airport before a flight, it became clear that lurking within the folds of humanity there is an endless capacity for simple goodness, compassion and creativity to reveal itself in limitless relational ways. This time the question is *"Will you sit with me?" "Will you wait with me?"* I even heard a grandfather's cry for relationship, *"Can I have one last hug before you leave?"*

From this pondering comes the important question: *What is the quality of my waiting* - of my presence with the other? This was brought home to me recently when contemplating what it was that was missing in my own daily living, indeed it was gnawing deep within me. I was able to recognise God with me in my day, but something was missing and I couldn't find it, name it, know it. *What is the quality of my presence?* I turned and gazed out the window, and there, standing in her own naked ruggedness, was the magnolia tree. Somehow, she began to draw me to her own story and seemingly wanted to share something of herself with me. Over the next few days, my gaze rested on the bare jaggedness of barren branches twisting every which way. I spent some time in the presence of the magnolia and was drawn into her *very act of waiting* for the moment her new attire would be revealed. She wasn't asking the questions I was asking; she was simply actively waiting, patiently, for her time to come, unbidden and when ripe. This act of actively waiting spoke deep into my very soul and I was able to accept the invitation of God to simply sit and wait, cradling what was precious and new.

After a week away I gazed out at the magnolia, and there she was in her resplendent beauty, with her leaves opening out to give praise and thanksgiving for the silence and faithfulness of her actively waiting. Her open-mouthed, vibrantly colourful blossoms crying forth in gracious gratitude for the life blood that flowed through her veins. My own heart sang with her and gave praise to God, calling forth the words at the end of this piece of writing.



I wonder, can we – you and I - leave the imprint of our God as we sit with each other - walk with each other – listen to the silence of each other - in our CEN times of being together, mindful that our God holds our world in great love and invites us to do likewise. May we be prepared to actively wait with

our God particularly at those times ‘we would rather not’ take that specific journey? Will you wait with me?

The Magnolia

The magnolia is now dressed in her verdant beauty
The product of those long days of ancient silence
Of deep, active, authentic and faithful waiting
No longer standing in her raw unashamed nakedness
But displaying the exquisiteness of her new dress
Her leaves of attractive green reaching heavenward
Open-handedly offering gratitude, thanks and praise
For her long and ancient lineage upon this Earth

Her purple open-mouthed flowers cry out with sheer delight
Despite their short-lived blazing miracle of being alive
Their exhilaration expressed in pure and simple tenderness
A gentle reminder never to squander one moment of living
For in a few short days of resplendent prettiness, they are gone
Grateful for showing forth the magnificence of their maker
Now to actively await the next stage the Creator plans for her
That of providing rich organic nutrients to sink into the soil

The spiritual gifts of endurance, purity and inner strength
Flow silently from the wonder, beauty and magnolia magnificence
Flowing from her deep and holy connection with the divine
As she continues her faithful journey, content in her own being
A reminder for those who have eyes to see, heart to ponder
And time to actively wait within her simple tender goodness
A kindly reminder never to squander a single moment
For every second of life is precious – so very precious!

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