Columns
Spirituality



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by Margaret Gonsalves

Contributor

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For my birthday I received a book called *I Hear a Seed Growing* by Edwina Gateley, a theologian and founder of Genesis House in Chicago.

I started reading it during my daily meditation, and when I discovered her poem "God Ran Away," I had an attack of hysterical laughter: until now I have only heard about girls and boys running away when they fall in love, but I never thought of God running away. I was all the more interested in reading it, wondering what made God run away, when everything belongs to God.

> God ran away when we imprisoned her and put her in a box named church. God would have none of our labels and our limitations and she said,
>
> "I will escape and plant myself in a simpler, poorer soil where those who see, will see, and those who hear, will hear. I will become a God-believable, because I am free, and go where I will. ..."
>
> So, send your spirit then, to dance with Her.
>
> Dance, sing with the God whom they cannot tame nor chain. ...

It was fascinating reading, and I loved reflecting on the poem, where I realized Edwina's God is "she" and not "he." Gradually I got engrossed in reading the entire book and it became my "bible reading" before going to bed.

Throughout her memoir, Edwina's experiences of ministering and serving the women recovering from prostitution and from drug addictions were heart wrenching. I felt it was there that she found her calling to a "radical religious life" with the marginalized.

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Today God has run away:

- From pathological uniformity in institutionalized religious life, exclusionary dogmas and the church — especially where white supremacy is at its peak.

- From Vatican II, because she smells there sickening clericalism and an absence of inter-religious dialogue; she finds neither collegiality nor ecumenism and sees the loss of newness-creativity.

- From the Vatican palace which seems to have provoked Pope Francis to leave behind the musty smelling old building — with its mold and mildew — and take a breath of fresh air at the guesthouse where he is closer to the community. No wonder Francis is a breath of fresh air!

- From theology, which is from male perspectives — so boring and mind numbing.

The runaway God of radicalism and solidarity is at the margins, so Francis is asking the theologians to search for her at the margins, among women doing theology at the grassroots levels — like EWA (Ecclesia of Women in Asia) and IWTF (Indian Women Theologian's Forum).

The pope is busy making efforts to bring her back, and ready to celebrate her with a fiesta of synodality, allowing her children to experience the new Pentecost.

Following this, I hope there will be revolutionary reforms — recognizing the priesthood of all the baptized, radical decentralization; and canonical reforms — recognizing the common responsibility for the life and mission of the church, and theology of the Anawim.

As a new lease on life happens, beware of God, who has run away from the institutional and theological confinements of churches, mosques and temples; she is coming home, not with a whip but to weep with all those crying out of no fault of theirs.

When she comes home, guess what she will do? She will lead the dance and hug everyone in a healthy interplay between *kataphatic* (c*hit*- conscience) and *apophatic* (s*at*- truth) theology, bestowing an abundance of creative energy on her children, regardless of castes, creeds and colors.

There will be fulfillment of the Scripture "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). All will be sitting together at the Sophia's round table and singing: "Come and dine, the Sophia calleth, come and dine!"

At Sophia's table, there won't be dress code robes, habits, miters, and no higher and lower seats to discriminate among male-female, or LGBTQI: So no one needs to worry about their status and bribe her with money or power.

On the first Friday of this month, I reflected on the reading of the day: Matthew 13:54-58. Faith grows in the hearts that allow themselves to be surprised by creativity and newness. Jesus' wisdom surprises his townspeople whose "minds are prone to stereotype and cannot permit an element of surprise to upset their presumed familiarity" with Jesus as the carpenter's son, as Sr. Bernardita Dianzon says in *2019 Gospel Power with Gospel Reflections**. He is expected to remain in that box of rigidity and unhealthy dogmas. His display of astonishing wisdom and mighty deeds upset their stereotypes. How dare he open their stubbornly locked hearts, outlooks, predisposition and beliefs?

Every page in Edwina's book oozes the mystical power of a listening heart, the excitement of freedom, and a profound call to kindness channeling through deep faith, allowing everyone to hear the seeds of integrity, compassion and daring courage.

Deep and intense listening is an art that that can heal a human heart. A listening heart gives voice to a vision that challenges any stifling situation by opening new windows to experience God.

Edwina is a life-changer for this era of uncertainty, giving voice to the Gospel by saying God cannot be confined to our limited thinking. God is creatively busy making all things new.

God finally finds a beautiful castle to reside in the heart of all those who are ignored, discriminated against and abused.

Chant: Lord of the universe, O eternal consciousness, universal God I bow to you!

**This column has been updated with correct attribution.*

[Margaret Gonsalves belongs to the Sisters for Christian Community, Washington, D.C. She is active in church and theological fora. As founder of ANNNI Charitable Trust, she works to empower indigenous girls and women, offering residential programs in English and sustainable development skills in India.]