

Tame me.

Many years ago I read Antoine de Saint-Exupery's story *The Little Prince*. I was encouraged to read it by the woman who was to become the mother of my children. The story tells of a Little Prince (from a tiny asteroid) who meets the pilot of a damaged airplane in the desert. In the course of their conversations the Little Prince tells of his experiences on earth. One day he met a fox and asked the fox to play with him. The fox answered: *I can't play with you. I am not tamed.* The Little Prince asked what tamed meant. *It means to establish ties,* says the fox. *To me, you are still nothing more than a little boy who is just like a hundred thousand other little boys. And I have no need of you. And you . . . have no need of me. To you, I am nothing more than a fox like a hundred thousand other foxes. But if you tame me, then we shall need each other. To me, you will be unique in all the world. To you, I shall be unique in all the world.*

The fox went on to say, *My life is very monotonous. I hunt chickens; men hunt me. All the chickens are just alike, and all the men are just alike. And in consequence, I am a little bored. But if you tame me, it will be as if the sun came to shine on my life. I shall know the sound of a step that will be different from others. Other steps send me hurrying back underneath the ground. Yours will call me, like music, out of my burrow.* Having said all that the fox then looked at the Little Prince for a long time and finally said, *Please – tame me!* That story woke me up to the fact that I too was untamed (after years of education) – meaning I was not alert to the world I lived in, to people – I was so taken up with surviving from day to day, anxious in some subtle way, distracted, . . . bored as much as worried. I had no time to be *human*. Foxy, yes! But human? No!

Until I met what you might call my Little Prince. In other words got to know Christ in greater depth, understanding. He arrived much as he arrives surprisingly in our Gospel stories of his resurrection. When all the doors seem locked, he appears bringing peace, surprise, forgiveness. Or as in Luke's Gospel we find him coming astride of us in our sadness, asks what's bothering us, says *how slow of heart you are to believe . . .* so that our hearts begin to burn within us and we say, *Stay with us!*

Of course you say: But these are visits from beyond the grave! But grave or no grave, Jesus is a figure or force that is always present – as during the pre-resurrection episodes of his life. In John's Gospel we hear him say continually: to the Samaritan woman waiting for her Messiah: *I am he who is speaking to you this very moment.* To the disciples scared to death during a storm at sea: *It is I. Don't be afraid.* To his audiences: *I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will have the light of life.* To the once blind man who asks who is the Son of Man: *You have seen him and the one speaking with you is he.* To the disciples again on the eve of his death: *I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me but you will see me, because I live and you will live."*

Christ is ever ready to come out of the wings of our existence at critical moments by way of an experience, an insight that propels you into a tomorrow well before the arrival of any "last day". *Presence* – in the flesh or in bread and wine or in a flash of insight issuing from a word on a page – ever *present*, just beyond your shoulder (as on the road to Emmaus) to heal you in some way - disguised – even as a Little Prince – *to call you like music out of your burrow.* Or as the fox says: . . . *if you tame me, then we shall need each other. To me, you will be unique in all the world. To you, I shall be unique in all the world.*

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