

'The great work of the contemplative is thanksgiving' wrote Thomas Merton: mine grows with each dawn as we rise for an hour's silent prayer before the tabernacle or out of doors. What must He be like, I whisper to myself, the creator of all this? And I hear His answer: 'Yes, today you will be with me in Paradise'.

*Sr. Mary Paul of Jesus, 1994*



*Sr. Mary Paul died in May 2003, as the cherry blossoms were falling like confetti outside. Quoting an old Irish song, she said: shortly before she died: 'It will not be long now 'til our wedding day'.*

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# *Bliss at 47*



*by Sr. Mary Paul of Jesus*

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‘I am so glad for you, that you have fallen in love with God’. So said a friend when she heard my news: at 47 I was entering an enclosed contemplative Carmelite monastery, less than 3 miles from my office. Other friends saw my radiance – it was the happiest time in my life.

Looking back 16 years, I would now say ‘it’s a second spring’. I liked my job in a research institute very much – the work, the people, the place and its permanency – wild horses wouldn’t have spirited me away from it. And yet I exchanged it and my happy leisure life of weekends in the country and holidays abroad for an ‘island’ of prayer where God’s praises are spoken and sung 7 times a day, 7 days a week, and where TV and radio and newspapers rarely impinge.



Silence is in the air – how else can God’s presence become the centre of our days? How else can the cries of the poor and the afflicted be heard and answered?



But it is not all silence. Laughter abounds when we meet twice daily for ‘recreation’, and even before it when something funny happens. Some of us are born story-tellers, even actors, (others are good at drawing them out!).

A ‘Dub’, I had taken for granted the earth, sky and sea I had grown up with, but now I marvel at it all. God knows I would have gone to the other end of the world to be a Carmelite, but He set me down in a paradise of wild flowers and grasses overlooking Dublin Bay, with birds swooping and calling to one another in a woodland where I walk, where cattle and a donkey roam about in a field in search of choice munchings.

