

We celebrate the life and passing of Roger Sawtell today and, appropriately so, in this week of prayer for Christian Unity for, as the beginning of his funeral booklet says, though an Anglican married to a Quaker, Roger and Susan have worshipped with many Christian communities over the years, and I'm also reminded of Br. Herbert's thrice-baptised entry into the Christian faith and his complete openness to others, not in terms of necessarily agreeing with what they believed, but in terms of agreeing with them as also fellow children of God, made in God's image and worthy of respect. So when I hear the words of today's psalm

And now our feet are standing within your gates, Jerusalem

– a psalm I often find myself reading for midday prayer when out in the wilderness – I don't think firstly of Jerusalem in terms of a fortified city with a temple at its centre but of a household of both people and creatures which could be anywhere. This, for me, is 'ecumenism from below' where the question which faces us is not, firstly, to which Christian, or indeed, other faith dimension we belong, but what can I say or do in this situation, in this meeting, which will be appropriate – necessary – to the well-being of the other person or, indeed, creature or place? And mostly this is an unconscious question worked out simply in living in this world, in being at home in this universe, in this skin, in this place, now. Jesus has to make this 'small gesture' of being comfortable in the reception of and being at home with others, in a grand manner, in order to make a point that will be remembered, so obtuse are his disciples as we so often are also in this matter. But the grand gesture and special ecumenical services or, indeed, many writings will not be necessary when these small gestures of service, of love, become our norm. For if the house of God is where we feel at home and perhaps, only then, will the house of God be everywhere. Well, that's my prayer anyway.

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