

## Sacrificial love

A little four year old girl was dying of a very rare disease. Her one hope was in having a blood transfusion, and the only possible person who could give matching blood was her six year old brother. The pediatrician handling the case talked very sensitively to the little boy. "Your little sister is very sick" she said, "and we think that if we can take out some of your blood and put it into her it might make her better. Would you be willing to let us take it?" The little boy paused for a moment and then nodded his head in consent. A few days later when the little boy came back with his parents to visit his sister they met the pediatrician. She said to him, "It is so wonderful! Your blood saved your sister, she is going to be all right now." But the little boy's eyes filled with tears and he burst out crying. The doctor asked him what was wrong? "When" he asked her, "am I going to die?" All the time he had believed that he himself was going to die in giving his blood for his little sister but he had been willing to do it!

Once upon a time in the heart of the Western Kingdom lay a beautiful garden. There in the cool of the day the master of the garden took an evening walk. Of all the dwellers in the garden the most beautiful and beloved was a gracious and noble bamboo plant. Year after year Bamboo grew yet more beautiful and gracious. He was conscious of his master's love and admiration. Yet bamboo was modest and in all things gentle. Often when the wind came, bamboo would dance and sway, forgetting his dignity in his joy, tossing and leaping, bowing in joyous abandon. He would lead the dance in the garden and so most delighted his master's heart. One day the master came near to look at his favourite plant. With curious eyes filled with expectancy, Bamboo in a passion of love bowed his head to the ground in a joyful greeting to his master. The master spoke "Bamboo I would use you"

Bamboo flung his head to the sky in delight. This day of days had been growing hour by hour, the day in which he would find his completion, his destiny. His voice came low "Master I am ready, use me as you want".

"Bamboo" The master's voice was grave, "I would be obliged to take you and cut you down". A trembling of great horror shook Bamboo "Cut.... Me ....down" "I whom you master have made the most beautiful in all the garden. Cut me down, ah, not that surely. Use me for your joy o master. But please do not cut me down."

"Beloved Bamboo" the master's voice grew graver still "If I do not cut you down, then I cannot use you"

The garden grew still. The wind held her breath. Bamboo slowly lent his proud head forwards. There came a whisper "Master, if you cannot use me unless you cut me down, then do as you will and cut"

"Bamboo, beloved Bamboo I would cut your leaves and branches also"

"Master, master spare me. Cut me down but lay my beauty in the dust, yet you desire to take from me my leaves and branches too?"

"Bamboo, alas! If I do not cut them away I cannot use you" the master Today's Gospel tells us of this kind of love, "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son that whoever believes in him may not be lost, but may The Sun hid its face. A butterfly glided fearfully away. Bamboo shivered in terribly expectancy. In a very low whisper he said "Master cut away"

"Bamboo I would divide you in two and cut out your heart, for if I do not cut so, I cannot use you" the master said.

"Master, Master cut then and divide"

So the master of the garden took Bamboo and cut him down, he hacked away his branches, stripped his leaves and cut out his very heart. Then lifting him gently he carried him to where there was a stream of fresh sparkling water in the midst of the valley. There putting down one end of broken Bamboo into the spring and the other into an empty water channel in the field the master laid out his beloved bamboo. The spring sighed a warm welcome, the clear sparkling water raced along the open tube-like branches of bamboo across into the waiting empty water channel in the field. Bamboo became a bridge for the life-giving water. Then the master planted rice and the days went by until one day the shoots began to appear. A great harvest was gathered. On that day Bamboo once so beautiful and glorious was yet more glorious in his broken-ness and humility. For in his beauty Bamboo was life abundant, but now in his broken-ness, Bamboo became a channel of abundant life to all who lived in his master's world.

The Gospel tells us of this kind of love, "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son that whoever believes in him may not be lost, but may have eternal life."