

When words begin to sound

Beloved person,

As I write this Weekly Letter to you, our little blue songbook lies on my desk. As I leaf through it with care and attention, it seems as if more than just the words themselves gradually emerge. As I leaf through it, I recognise our roots, I see who we were, and simultaneously I recognise who we are *now*. In my imagination, I hear the voices of people, from recently or the distant past, who bring the words to life with their sounding voices and touch my soul. The loose pages bring a smile to my face. Our culture of liberalism – the *reflecting once again*¹ – is even recognisable in the form of our songbooks. And as I let the words sink in, I feel how touched I am by the constant search for and rediscovery of language for our faith and our religious awareness. Perhaps our musical culture is one of the most important treasures that preserves and keeps alive the soul of our Society.

Which song opens the way to your religious awareness?

I'm particularly touched by the – for me, religious – questions posed in some of the songs. They are gentle in tone yet open a world of searching and longing. I read: *Does all derive from the same source? How can we comprehend such wonder? What lives within them, what sings and asks?* These are sentences that don't attempt to explain but invite you to amazement and contemplation. A single line from a song can suddenly provide direction, not as certainty but as space. These are moments when you suspect something greater but cannot grasp it. *God in all things and in all people*. Words make me realise that all life is interconnected and that *all that surrounds us and also within me, is part of eternal creativity*. And when I, searching and stammering, try to find words for this, I am so incredibly happy with the gentleness of a sentence like: *Though reason lacks explanation or words always fail to convey*.

What makes our music, our lyrics, so meaningful to me is the religious awareness that is evoked, as it were, to lay out the welcome mat to practical application, to everyday reality. That *I can use my abilities to contribute to the greater good*, and that *I keep faith with love(then), she will show the path I must pursue*. This resonates again and again in our songs. For love does not have one fixed form. Sometimes it demands *creative and inventive thinking*, sometimes *a new start*, sometimes the *courage to walk through the darkness*, or sometimes it demands asking yourself the vulnerable question: *who will I be?*

Which words guide you in your resolve to live a loving, humane way of life?

It is also the roots of our faith that deeply touch me when I read the songs. In a world where division and harshness often prevail, I hear the men's choir praying for *the warm heart from which the priest speaks...* Or I hear our hopeful view of humanity and the world: that *I can be the light of the world* and that, through everything, we continue to believe *that love will prevail*. And if I lose it for a moment, that I may have the confidence to *find God's strength deep inside*. I am grateful that such hopeful insights nourish my search for meaning and purpose.

However beautiful the lyrics and music may be, they *recognise within us the same essence* in us humans. I feel blessed because I meet so many others who not only sing the words but also express them in their own lives. If you look closely, you can sometimes see in the eyes of those who sing the song the effort to sing themselves forward. And at other times, a song seems to resonate specifically for me. That is precisely why I am so grateful for all those rich melodies, those words that touch us, that move us. I want to continue to cherish them because they continually bring our faith and our work to life.

With a warm-hearted greeting, gladly your brother

Marten van der Wal



We remind each other of our baptism promises

¹*All italicised words refer to one of our song texts*
All care has been taken to find the English translations of the songs mentioned in this weekly letter.
For some songs an English translation does not exist (yet) or the translation deviates from the original Dutch text.

On Saturday 29 November the 'festival of new song power' took place in Bussum, meant for everyone who is actively busy with music and who feel passion for our living and relevant Apostolic music culture.