

## Potential

*This arose out of looking at the story of Anna at the presentation of Jesus in the temple giving thanks for the potential the baby being presented offered. We started thinking that as we grow and develop certain avenues begin to close as our life takes shape. Rather than lamenting the loss of potential we need to celebrate our growing and maturing. But Anna's story has a sad note – Jesus' life is tragically cut short, a denial of potential. But this is not the end of the story. From blood spilled comes new life, new potential.*

*Just a note of caution – this touches on several potential pastoral concerns, especially for anyone who has longed to have a child and couldn't or for whom parenthood has involved loss or has not quite turned out as they had hoped. This is not to say avoid these issues, far from it. Just tread carefully and honour people's spoken and unspoken stories.*

How depressing  
The birth of a baby  
How sad  
The miracle of life.  
Nine months of waiting  
Ends in blood and pain  
But it is not the pain which is sad  
It is not the beginning of life  
Which brings tears.  
Rather it is the end of hoping,  
The end of wondering  
The end of questioning.  
Will it be a girl or a boy?  
Will it be healthy?  
Will it be dark or fair?  
Now we know.  
Now we have certainty.

This baby,  
beautiful and innocent  
Brings an end  
to our hoping.  
This baby,  
takes away potential.

And with every passing day  
There is more and more that the baby  
Cannot be.

She cannot be a boy.  
She cannot be black.  
She cannot be a redhead.

And with every passing day  
There is more and more that the baby  
Cannot be.

Suddenly, you find  
it is too late for her to be an Olympic gymnast.  
Then his fingers won't stretch across the piano keyboard

And one day, it is too late to have children.

And one day, life is complete.

Finished.

Fulfilled.

There is nothing more that you can become.

In an upper room,  
on a dark and violent night,  
The baby, whom Anna praised,  
knowing that there was not much more he could become,  
showed his friends all that he was:

I am the bread of life.

This is my body, broken for you.

*[Share bread]*

Then, after supper, the body which Mary would anoint  
knowing that there was still infinite potential for life  
showed his friends all the he would become:

I am the resurrection and the life

This is my blood, poured out for you.

*[Share wine]*

There, in his dying, is our living.  
There, in his ending, is our beginning.  
There, in his fulfilment, is our potential.

So, you who have much to become  
and you who are nearly all that you can be,  
Go now,  
in the power of the spirit who nourishes potential,  
and live eternal life.

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