Zinnbauer

He was there to meet us at the station
in a crumpled suit and worn through shoes
the Lutheran pastor from Vienna
with a Catholic mother and Jewish father
greeting every migrant arrival.
Pastor Zinnbauer would always be there
offering hope and help
bringing clothes and blankets to the hostel
ferrying children to Sunday School
in his Volkswagen bus
or turning up on his motorcycle
wherever there was a need.
Surely he was the heart of Adelaide
providing shelter for the homeless
and spiritual sustenance
giving up his own shoes to a man with none.
It is said that there were rooms in his home
full of donated clothes, shoes and blankets
for distribution to the needy
and it was open house. There was a safe place
to sleep, even under the dining table.
He was a man always lost in thought
dreaming up ways to expand his mission
forgetting to pick up children along the route
until reminded by the chorus of ‘Stop, Pastor, Stop!’
from the back of the bus, then reversing with a shudder
to let passengers on, and after Sunday School
there were visits to the Port and sometimes an ice-cream
from his meagre wage.
Now I regret not giving generously
to the pastor who tracked me down years later,
after Zinnbauer’s death, to establish a mission fund.
But he wasn’t Zinnbauer
and it’s only now, on reflection, that I can appreciate
how much that man gave of himself.

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