

REFLECTIONS FOR THE FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT ~ 24 February 2022

The Mount ~ The Residence at Littledale

May the dust of the wilderness hold our footprints
lovingly
shaped as they are by your hurt
for dust remembers
May the journey into wilderness unfold
honestly
for honesty is the gift
your soul recognises as you
May your time in this wilderness
be shaped by space
rather than minutes
so there is time enough for all of you
May the stones in this wilderness
cry out your name loudly
that your spirit recognises the voice
that has been calling you always
And may you know this wilderness
has been expecting you
and you find between the stones
a promise growing



In this poem-prayer from Roddy Hamilton, we find signposts for our Lenten journey. It is a journey knowing that dust remembers, that in honesty our souls recognize who we are, that our wilderness time in Lent is meant to be shaped by space not minutes, that the stones in the wilderness cry out our names, that between the stones we find a promise growing. This is our roadmap for the coming Lenten days – rootedness in earth, trust, honesty, presence, listening to the cry, and hope.

This, too, was how Jesus began his public life, in essence, his Lenten journey. Immediately before the temptations in the wilderness, God confirms to all those gathered that Jesus is God's Son, "my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased" (Matt 3:17). The Spirit of God alights on him (Matt 3:1). Surely, that is enough affirmation and love to set Jesus on his way. But immediately, Jesus doubts. He doubts his own ability, his readiness, to follow the call of the Father even with the presence of the Spirit to guide him.

Jesus' doubting despite God's goodness echoes the doubting by our first parents in the garden, recounted in the first reading in today's Liturgy of the Word. This second creation story shows the world as God intended it to be. God intended humanity to live with God, interacting with God intimately and frequently. God intended us to be good stewards of creation, tilling in the garden, digging our hands in the clay, and following the example of our Creator-God.

All of this is challenged when, in Genesis 3, we read, “the woman took of its fruit and ate; and she



also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked” (Gen 3:6-7). God had created them, given them a place in the garden, entrusted them with the cultivation of the earth, and even walked with them in the cool of the evening. But the woman and her husband saw “that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise” (Gen 3:5).

Some theologians suggest that the reference to their knowing that they were naked is

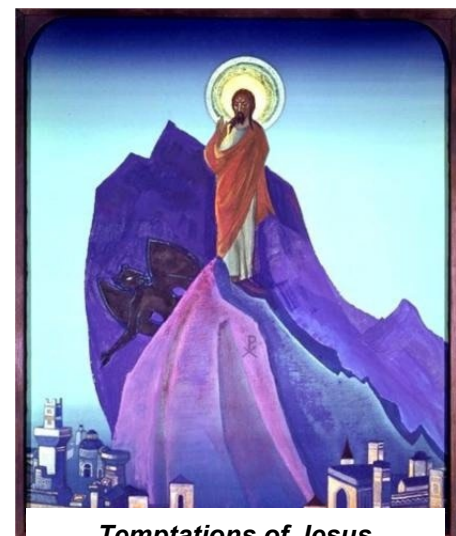
linked to their vulnerability. Before the fall, Adam and Eve were at peace with vulnerability. They accepted the vulnerability of being totally dependent upon God. They were at peace with being physically open and vulnerable. After they have fallen, Adam and Eve refuse to be vulnerable. A call to conversion includes a call to be vulnerable – to open up to each other and to recognize interdependence. The serpent had already told them, “God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (Gen 3:4). Therefore, other theologians believe that their sinfulness was in giving in to the temptation to a desire for power, to be self-sufficient, to be radically independent, to be “like God.”

Psalms 51 is a response to that turning away from God, a plea for healing and reconciliation. Its opening words, repeated three times, remind us that our creating God is a merciful God, “Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin” (Ps 51:1-2). In these two verses, three different Hebrew words are used to name God’s mercy: *hanen* (“mercy”), *hesed* (“steadfast love”), and *rahamim* (“abundant mercy”). The psalmist is relentless in making the point – God’s response to our falling away, our sinfulness, even our doubt, is always mercy-filled. The psalmist can cry out with confidence in being heard, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me” (Ps 51:10).

In the Gospel reading from Matthew, Jesus is tempted as we all are and, unlike Adam and Eve, responds to the three temptations with the same confidence that the psalmist shows:

The desire for possessions: “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” But he [Jesus] answered, “It is written, ‘One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God’” (Matt 4:3-4).

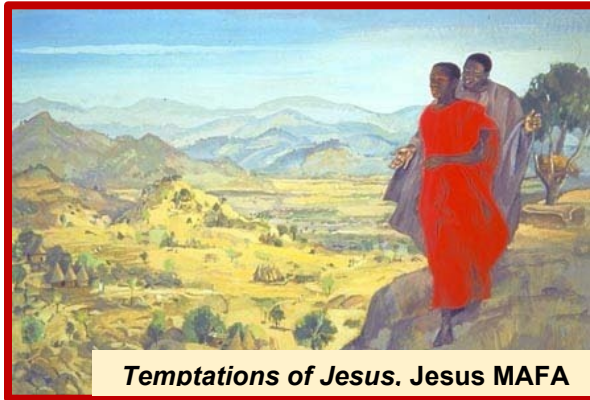
The desire for honour and power: “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, ‘He will command his angels concerning you’, and ‘On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not



Temptations of Jesus
Nicholas Roerich, Russia

dash your foot against a stone.’ Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test’” (Matt 4:6-7).

Pride and the desire for security: “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” Jesus said to him, “Away with you, Satan! for it is written, ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him’” (Matt 4:9-10).



Temptations of Jesus. Jesus MAFA

God’s response in mercy guides our response that we are loved by God. Ron Rolheiser, in commenting on this passage, concludes, “It is good to remember that we are God’s special, blessed sons and daughters, even when our lives seem empty, anonymous, and devoid of any special privileges because then we won’t forever be putting God and our restless hearts to the test, demanding more than ordinary life can give us.” The Lutheran Pastor, David Lose, echoes this conclusion, “Jesus did not die on the cross in order that we might be acceptable or to make God loving. Rather, Jesus died to show us that God already loves us and has declared that we are not just acceptable but also treasured, priceless beyond measure. . . You are ... enough.”

Karl Rahner says that, in his responses to the devil, “What does Jesus do? He once again abandons, so to speak, his awareness of his divinity and takes his place on the side of the poor, the abandoned, and the weak.” Veronia Lawson rsm adds, “Most people of faith would agree that being son or daughter ‘of God’ right now has more than a little to do with the way we relate to all of Earth’s human and other-than-human inhabitants, the value we ascribe to Earth’s precious resources, and the respect we show for life through our responsible use of those resources. Lent calls us to reject the path of domination or of greed or status or entitlement so that, like Jesus, we may truly be ‘of God.’”

Pope Francis gives us a Lenten invitation, “Let us imagine that we are in a desert. The first feeling would be that of being enveloped by a great silence: no sound besides the wind and our own breathing. The desert is a place of detachment from the din that surrounds us. It is the absence of words to make room for another Word, the Word of God, that caresses our hearts like a light breeze. The desert is a place of life not of death because speaking to the Lord in silence, gives us life again. ...The desert is *the place of the essential*.”



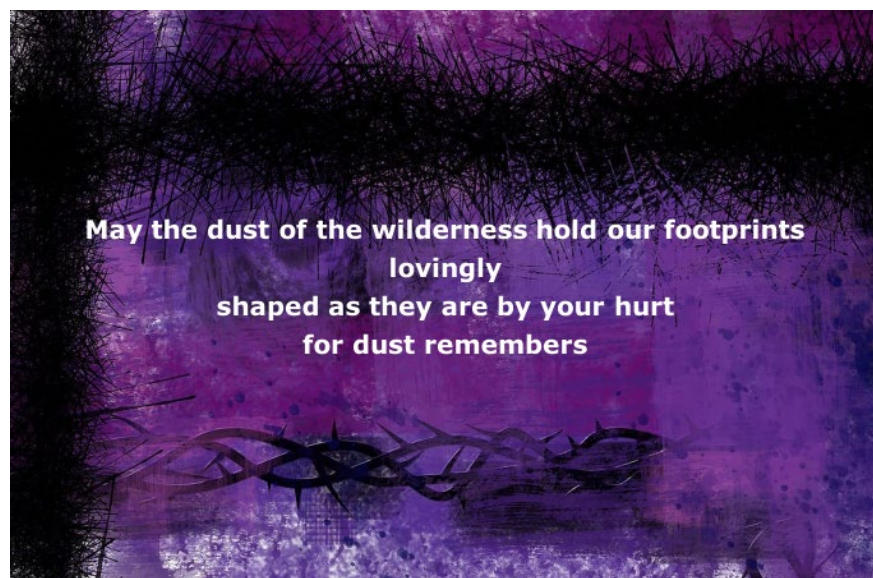
The theologian, Belden Lane, challenges us further, “Why am I drawn to desert and mountain fierceness? What impels me to its unmitigated honesty, its dreadful capacity to strip bare, its long, compelling silence? It’s the frail hope that in finding myself brought to the edge...I may hear a word whispered in its loneliness. The word is ‘love,’ spoken pointedly and undeniably to me. It may have been uttered many times in the past but I’m fully able to hear it only in that silence.”

In a reflection on the passage from Matthew entitled “Mend our Wants,” Steve Garnaas-Holmes reminds us once again that we can be confident in our failings and frailties because we are known and loved by the God who is abundantly merciful and steadfastly loving:

O Steady One, steady me.
I am unbalanced by secret weights of fears,
tugged at by invisible strings of desires,
and I stumble, crash into folks, break things.
I don't act because I'm afraid I can't succeed—
I wish I could turn stones to bread.
I don't love because I'm afraid of getting hurt—
I wish I could jump off cliffs fearlessly.
I cling to things because I'm afraid of being without—
I wish all the world could be mine.
But my wants are wayward, my fears are lies.
The power, the security, the belonging I seem to want
are all in you and you alone.

Touch my desires, Beloved,
and bend them back toward you.
Lay your hand on my hungers and steady me.
Mend my wants with your generous grace,
sweeter than bread with honey.
Heal my fears with your perfect love,
the earth from which I cannot fall.
Calm my anxieties with your steady presence,
for you are the world to which I belong.
You settle me with trust, courage and gratitude,
for I have all I need, abundantly.
You whisper to me gently, *Oh, fretting soul, relax.*
I have you.

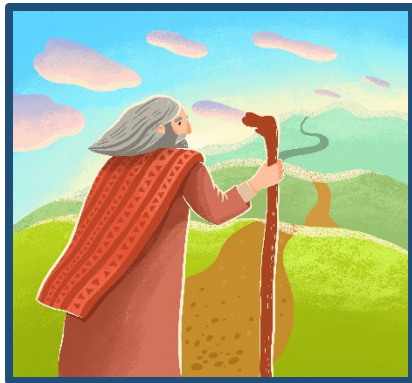
In this first week of Lent, may we know that we are “of God,” that we are enough! I am “of God,”
I am enough!



REFLECTIONS FOR THE SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT ~ 05 March 2023

The Mount ~ The Residence at Littledale

Inclusion, affirmation, and encouragement – these themes threaded through the readings in the Liturgy of the Word today seem a little strange for a Lenten Sunday. Yet we are reminded of the words of the Lutheran pastor, David Lose, “Jesus did not die on the cross in order that we might be acceptable or to make God loving. Rather, Jesus died to show us that God already loves us and has declared that we are not just acceptable but also treasured, priceless beyond measure. . . You are enough.” Our readings speak strongly to us that we, you and I, are treasured and held priceless by our God who constantly assures us that we are enough.

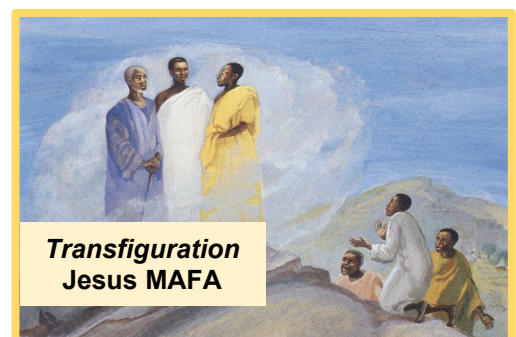


In our first reading from the book of Genesis, we are given a brief glimpse of God's offer of covenant with Abram (later to be re-named Abraham) who was then seventy-five years old. Remember that in this time the average life span was forty years. Abram was an old man. The offer of the covenant is so important that it will be repeated three times in chapters 12, 15 and 17 of Genesis. The words God uses here are daunting for a younger person let alone an old man and his elderly wife Sarai, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing” (Gen 12:1-2). Abraham and Sarah will die before this blessing is realized. The Jesuit, John Kavanaugh, says so succinctly, “Abraham and Sarah, our parents in faith, remind us that it is not so much a matter of when this life's journey ends, as it is a matter of where the great hike of hope takes us.” Today, three world religions trace their beginnings to this promise – Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Psalm 33 describes the qualities of the God who makes this covenant with Abraham and Sarah and their descendants: upright, faithful, righteous, just, steadfastly loving. The people singing the psalm are confident that this God will “deliver their soul from death and keep them alive in famine” (Ps 33:19). Their constant plea is, “Let your steadfast love, O Lord, be upon us, even as we hope in you” (Ps 33:22).

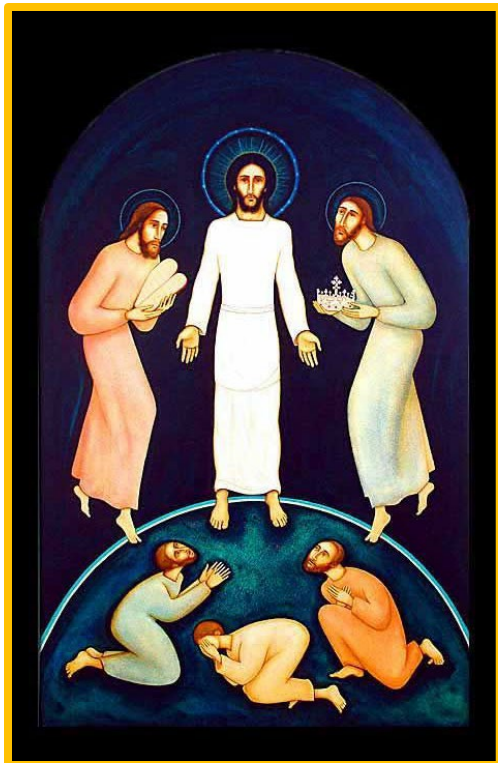
In the letter to Timothy, the writer reminds those who suffer for the Gospel that this God has “saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our own works but according to God's own purpose and grace” (2 Tim 1:9). We do not have to prove ourselves worthy of receiving this calling; it is always there. We are given the free choice to accept or reject it. As Lose said, God is always holding us “treasured and priceless beyond measure.”

The Transfiguration story is told today from Matthew's Gospel (it is also recounted in Mark and Luke) in the midst of Jesus' public ministry. It happens on a mountain, not an insignificant detail given that Matthew's community is Jewish Christian. They would immediately make a connection with the mountain as one of the preferred meeting place between God and the people. It is the place where we can best see heaven touch earth! It was during Moses' meeting with God on Mount Sinai that the



**Transfiguration
Jesus MAFA**

The Transfiguration
Michael O'Brien (Canada)



covenant was made between God and the People of Israel. Matthew will also recount the words of Jesus on the Mount of Beatitudes, early in his ministry, when he deepens our understanding of the Law, the Torah of Moses, flowing from Sinai. And at the moment of his ending his public ministry on this earth, Jesus calls the disciples to another mountain, one in Galilee, where he gives them their mission and the confidence to carry out that mission, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matt 28:19-20).

Today’s narrative describes one of three moments of “transfiguration” in Jesus’ life. The first is at his baptism, at the beginning of his public ministry, when God speaks from the heavens, saying, “This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased” (Matt 3:17). At today’s Transfiguration scene in the midst of his public ministry, God again speaks from the heavens, repeating the same words but adding to them, “This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!” (Matt

17:5). Jesus’ third transfiguration is at the Resurrection which comes after several references to Jesus’ condemnation because he claimed to be the Son of God.

While there is much to be gleaned from this story of the transfiguration, let us explore three ways in which transfiguration is part of our lives today as it was part of Jesus’ life when he walked on earth.

We, too, meet God at the mountain – while we know that God is present in our hearts, in our communities, and in Earth’s very being, we have moments when God seems especially present to us. Like Jesus’ experience, these moments of awareness are life-changing for us. For Jesus, they came at the beginning of his public ministry, in the midst of his ministry when he doubted that he was on the right path, and at the end of his time on this earth. Veronica Lawson rsm tells us, “Wilderness and mountain remind us that God’s creation is the locus of wonder and mystery. The world we inhabit has an integrity of its own. It is, in a very real sense, God’s dwelling place. It is, in addition, the place of human-divine encounter and the place of human encounter with the other-than-human material world. Attention to habitat can lead us to a clearer understanding of our own place in the scheme of things and to ever deeper understandings of our relationship with God.”

Pope Francis echoes the words, “We too are called to climb up the mountain, to contemplate the beauty of the Risen One that enkindles glimmers of light in every fragment of our life and helps us to interpret history beginning with the paschal victory.” The Anglican pastor, Wim Kuiper, adds, “We are asked to ‘climb the mountain’, go to an edge place, whatever that may mean for you. To take time for prayer, to go into silence, to come to church or literally to climb a mountain, even if you have to leave our flat country for doing so. Discovering such personal ‘edge places’ can help us to become open for the Lord to reveal Himself to us. It is when we recognise those ‘incarnation

moments' – occasions when God's abundance touches our own lives – that we can enter into a more splendid and transfigured life."

We, too, have many moments of transfiguration – the spiritual writer, Steve Garnaas-Holmes, describes so beautifully the moments of transfiguration that are ours. Note and trust his words and see in yourself these times when "you are dazzling, radiant with newborn light":

The disciples were having no strange vision,
nor the evangelist concocting a tableau
for the delight of Renaissance painters.
It was simply this: for a moment
Jesus' friends were seeing truly,
seeing him as he was,
seeing a human being as we all truly are,
shining with the whole glory of Creation,
stardust that we are.
They saw through the scruff and dirt
that this rough world leaves on us,
saw past the judgments and appearances,
the masks and costumes and shrouds
that we throw on each other:
they saw the heaven within a person,
the image of God.
If only they hadn't been so shocked
they would have noticed it in themselves.
Jesus had to tell them later:
"You are light for the world."
God shines in you,
gleams with the splendid light of heaven.
Beyond any smudge this world can put on you,
or any human word or deed can remove,
you are dazzling, radiant with newborn light.
Right now, sitting there reading this,
you breathe God's light in and out.
Your nerves spark with life.
Your eyes light up the world.
Let this light fill you, the fire of God.
Be mindful of this radiance.
Look for the light in all whom you meet.
Trust the light. Give thanks for the light.
Even in your sleep, the light closes its eye,
but breathes deeply, calmly, faithfully.



Transfiguration of Jesus

Armando Alemdar Ara

[CC 3.0](#)

We, too, cannot remain on the mountain – Pope Francis echoes Jesus' words to the disciples when he reminds us that we cannot stay on the mountain, "We cannot remain on the mountain and enjoy the bliss of this encounter on our own. Jesus himself brings us back to the valley, among our brothers and sisters and into daily life." The spiritual writer, Jan Richardson, describes the temptation to stay on the mountain and the need to return:

Believe me, I know how tempting it is
to remain inside this blessing,
to linger where everything is dazzling and clear.

We could build walls around this blessing, put a roof over it.

We could bring in a table, chairs, have the most amazing meals.

We could make a home. We could stay.

But this blessing is built for leaving.

This blessing is made for coming down the mountain.

This blessing wants to be in motion,
to travel with you as you return to level ground.

It will seem strange how quiet this blessing becomes
when it returns to earth. It is not shy. It is not afraid.

It simply knows how to bide its time, to watch and wait, to discern and pray
until the moment comes when it will reveal everything it knows,
when it will shine forth with all that it has seen,
when it will dazzle with the unforgettable light
you have carried all this way.

We must have the experience of transfiguration, of transforming awareness, to have the courage
to continue our journey. We must leave these moments of transfiguration to return to our ordinary
God-touched lives in order to be light and blessing for each other and for Earth. How wondrous
our God is to give us such joy, such hope, and such confidence! Let each one of trust that we are
enough!



Transfiguration

Charles Blakeman

REFLECTIONS FOR THE THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT ~ 12 March 2023

The Mount ~ The Residence at Littledale

"O that today you would listen to God's voice!" – in today's readings for the third Sunday of Lent, God speaks to us through water and rock, two precious elements of Earth. If you want to see images for how God cares for God's people, follow the flow of water through the scriptures. Wilderness, exodus, baptism, tempest: whether providing water, saving people from it, immersing them in it, or calming it, God uses water as a vivid sign of providence, deliverance, and grace. In an interesting way, the living water is linked with the stability and steadfastness of rock – the rock on which God stands in the wilderness or the rock of the wells and the fountains.

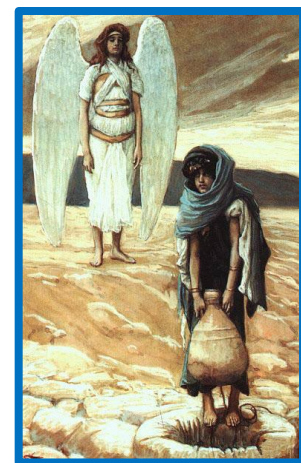


Miriam's Well, Nancy O'Neil

In the first reading from Exodus, the people wandering in the wilderness feel lost, uncertain, and afraid. They cry out against God and the unfairness of their situation, certain that they and their livestock will die from thirst. God says to Moses, "Go on ahead of the people, and take some of the elders of Israel with you; take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile and go. I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink" (Ex 17:5-6). This story is repeated in Numbers 20 after the death of Miriam when the waters again dry up. Once again God tells Moses to strike the rock, and "water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their livestock drank" (Num 20:11). There is a Jewish tradition that, after this event, the rock moves with the people through the wilderness, stopping when they stop and providing water for the people and their livestock. It becomes known as Miriam's Well. There is a lovely line in Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *The Little Prince* that reads, "What makes the desert beautiful is that somewhere it hides a well."

The pastor and poet, [Steve Garnaas-Holmes](#), gives us a poignant learning about seeking that well in the desert, the abundant water in the rock:

Sometimes
life will be demanded of you that you don't have.
Miracles will be asked of you that you can't do.
Faith will be expected of you that you can't always maintain.
Hope will be needed, hope you may not have.
This happens to leaders, happens to parents, to friends.
 Sometimes it happens with your own life.
 Sometimes you will have nothing to offer.
You won't know what to do, or how to do it.
You have no idea how to strike the rock.
Strike the rock anyway.
The power is not in your power,
not in your strength or skill.
The unseen awaits in the sanctuary,
in the holy empty space of your unknowing,
where you have left room for the Mystery,
in the shimmering vacancy of your willingness.
Strike the rock.
And have a bucket ready.

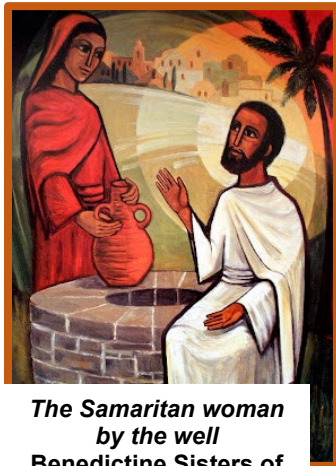


**Hagar and the Angel in the Desert
James Tissot**

Images of living water from the rock and from the well are visible before, during and after the people of Israel enter the Promised Land, and the images continue into the stories of the people of the New Testament. Before the people go into Egypt, God is sometimes visibly and sometimes silently present at the well. Hagar meets God twice at a well in the wilderness. The first time, described in Genesis 16, Hagar has run away, fleeing from the harshness of Sarai. The second time, in Genesis 21, God provides a well with life-giving water to a desperate Hagar and her son Ishmael (near death in the waterless wilderness). Genesis 24 tells of a servant who finds Rebekah, Isaac's bride-to-be, at a well. Another well serves as a signal of marriage when Jacob meets Rachel at the well where she waters her father's sheep (in Genesis 29), and again in Exodus 2. When the other shepherds try to drive them away, Moses waters the sheep of the seven daughters of Jethro at the well, and subsequently he marries one of the daughters, Zipporah. In Genesis 32, Jacob wrestles with God by a river and receives a new name.

In the prophets, we are reminded of the hope that comes with living water. In Jeremiah 2:13, God reminds the people that God is "the fountain of living water". Later in Jeremiah, we read, "O hope of Israel! O Lord! All who forsake you shall be put to shame; those who turn away from you shall be recorded in the underworld, for they have forsaken the fountain of living water, the Lord" (Jer 17:13), and again in Zechariah, "On that day living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea and half of them to the western sea; it shall continue in summer as in winter" (Zech14:8-9).

Early in the conversation in John 4 which focuses on living water, the Samaritan woman makes sure that Jesus knows that this well belonged to her ancestor Jacob. At Jacob's well, Jacob's descendant does her own wrestling with God. She is unnamed all throughout John's story, but not unchanged. In the traditions of the Eastern Orthodox Church, she is considered to be a saint named Photine (the luminous one, from the Greek φως, "light").



***The Samaritan woman
by the well***
Benedictine Sisters of
Turvev Abbey

The Samaritan woman is different. She is different in gender, religion, race, economic status, personality, and personal lifestyle from Jesus. The woman is not silent, nor is she limited to the private world of women – she has a voice. She moves out into the public arena, into male space. She enters into debate with Jesus about issues and questions that interest her. She does not wait for permission to speak, but she takes the initiative. She knows her tradition well. She participates logically and competently with Jesus in an extensive theological dialogue.

What is so sparkling about the woman that Jesus cannot stop his conversation with her? Jesus seeks her out – she does not go to him. This is the longest private conversation Jesus has with anyone in the New Testament. This man discusses theology openly with a woman. This Jewish man discusses theology with a Samaritan. This Jewish man asks for a drink from the ritually unclean bucket of a Samaritan.

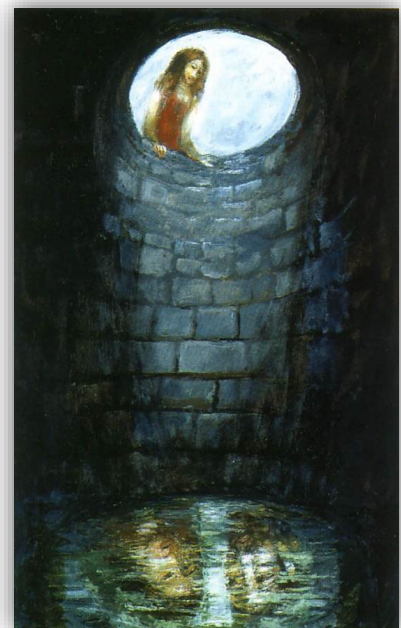
The water given by the Samaritan woman energizes Jesus to move on now in his public ministry to offer his living water and reach out as saviour of the world. Through the dialogue, Jesus grows in his own understanding of his mission. The titles which the woman and her community use show the gradual unveiling of Jesus' identity (Jew, Prophet, Messiah, Saviour of the world). Jesus declares to her that he is the source of living water, "Those who drink of the water that I will give

them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life” (Jn 4:14). This woman is the first person to whom Jesus openly reveals himself as Messiah, “I am he, the one who is speaking to you” – the first of Jesus’ many “I am” statements in John’s Gospel.

The woman searches to find the place in her own experience where self-knowledge and the knowledge of God meet. She seeks for understanding, beginning with an appeal to her traditions and cultural religious experience. Like a true disciple, she drops everything (symbolized by her water jar essential in her life) and assumes her role as disciple to invite others to Jesus. The simple request for water leads to a theological dialogue on living water. That dialogue leads to Jesus’ acknowledgement that he is the Messiah. Jesus’ declaration leads to the woman’s invitation to her community. The woman’s invitation leads to the community’s transformation. She fills her vessel with living water; she shares living water with the thirsty Jesus; she becomes a vessel of living, liberating, life-giving water. This unmarried, unnamed woman of Samaria becomes an evangelist, a disciple, the first witness to the Messiah, the first missionary to those who were not Jews.

This week, I encourage you to sit and gaze contemplatively on a well or a fountain or a brook or a river (it may be physically present to you or in a painting or photograph). Imagine all the times in your life since your early childhood when you have stood by or walked through living water. Feel the water touching you. Gaze on the nearby rocks of the well or the fountain or the brook or the river. Invite Jesus and the Samaritan Woman to be with you. Let [Jan Richardson’s “Blessing of the Well”](#) flow into your heart and into your spirit:

If you stand at the edge of this blessing
 and call down into it,
 you will hear your words return to you.
If you lean in and listen close,
 you will hear this blessing
 give the story of your life back to you.
Quiet your voice, quiet your judgment,
 quiet the way you always tell your story to yourself.
Quiet all these and you will hear
 the whole of it and the hollows of it:
 the spaces in the telling,
 the gaps where you hesitate to go.
Sit at the rim of this blessing.
Press your ear to its lip,
 Its sides, its curves that were carved out long ago
 by those whose thirst drove them deep,
 those who dug into the layers
 with only their hands and hope.
Rest yourself beside this blessing
 and you will begin to hear
 the sound of water entering the gaps.
Still yourself and you will feel it
 rising up within you,
 filling every hollow,
 springing forth anew.



Insight, Sieger Köder

May your reflections on water and rock bring you more deeply into the contemplative space that is Lent. In the words of Roddy Hamilton, “May God meet us at the wells. May God speak to us in the trysting places. May God renew all that we are and have been, fill us with a new future, inspire us with re-creation, pull us into resurrection, and give us to drink from the promise of heaven.”

GARDEN

All gardens are sacred, but this over and above,
 its grass fed from the bones of goodness,
 a green enclave for reverence and reverie,
 where the spirits murmur
 into the silence and the distant bustle of Dublin days.
 The primary sound of Ireland is not city but water,
 as it trickles, flows, pours and lashes;
 here and now it soothes
 rocks already smoothed by Ireland's great waters,
 carried here to keep this mercy water company.
 Ancient rocks from perhaps the mighty Shannon
 that wends through eleven counties, no hard borders in its way;
 stones are they from the Slaney, the Moy, the Liffey,
 the Foyle, the Barrow, the Lee,
 a stone's throw from the spirit soaked stones of
 Clonmacnoise and Cashel, Lady's Island and Kells,
 rocks that were old when Brigid and Patrick walked on them,
 rocks of sandstone, granite, and limestone
 revealing quartz-gleam in the light,
 layers of time and pressure, patterns of grace and stress,
 the upheaval of volcano, the sediment of sandstone
 compressed with tiny ancient creatures of the oceans,
 and the water-permeable, welcoming grace of the limestone:
 the play and power of water engaged
 with the endurance and amenability of stone.
 Very much at rights with its origins all this,
 but called too by the crafted orb
 to consider the wider earth, the broader waters of the world-
 the orb that holds tendrils and leaves and butterflies,
 gaps to see the sky and feel the air –
 there – put your hands tenderly through the world –
 hints of creatures supple and sinuous, but no snakes, that's certain,
 a globe that furls and unfurls the spirals of life
 and today's tune enticed with that trace of treble clef,
 as it sends the water flowing past names and memories
 from many lands laden with mercy stories,
 all enhanced by the delicate tiled colour of flowers,
 mercy made one art to another, one stone to another,
 one person to another,
 past to present and on it flows.
 And lest we forget,
 turn and see, she who began it all
 sits here at last, the bronzed woman,
 giving and taking the air, inspiring still.
 Go sit with her and listen.

~ Mary Wickham rsm



**The fountain
 in the sacred garden
 in the home
 of Catherine McAuley
 in Baggot's Street, Dublin
 with Mary Wickham's poem –
 most reflective of the themes
 of today's readings
 in the Liturgy of the Word.**

REFLECTIONS FOR THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT ~ 19 March 2023

The Mount ~ The Residence at Littledale

On this mid-point in our Lenten journey, God continues to surprise us and to reveal to us the unexpected – this day in light, seeing, clay and water – all gifts of God's creation. Indeed, light is the first gift of creation as described in Genesis 1, "God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light" (Gen 1:3).



In the first reading today taken from 1 Samuel, God sends the prophet Samuel to find the one to replace Saul as king since Saul was not walking in the way of the Lord. Samuel goes to the house of Jesse and meets each of Jesse's seven sons, all of whom are tall and handsome. None of these sons were the chosen one as Samuel said, "The Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart" (1 Sam 16:9). The youngest son David is tending the sheep, the lowliest task and, therefore, the

one that is given to the least important person. God speaks the unexpected words through Samuel, "Rise and anoint him; for this is the one" (1 Sam 16:12). David will prove to be flawed in many ways, but he does follow the way of the Lord and repents each time he fails in his commitment. God's way of looking and seeing is not our way – "The Lord looks on the heart." The Uniting Church minister, Rosemary Broadstock, helps us find the courage to accept this truth for us as David did for himself:

God is blind. . . to outward appearance, to what seems to be,
To labels, to judgement by prejudices
God looks on the heart.
There, God has eyes wide open.
Are our eyes wide shut?

When I look at God's creation every day,
The stars, the hills, a blue sky, fresh rain
Do I see?
When I look at another
Do I take the time to see? to listen? to appreciate? to marvel?

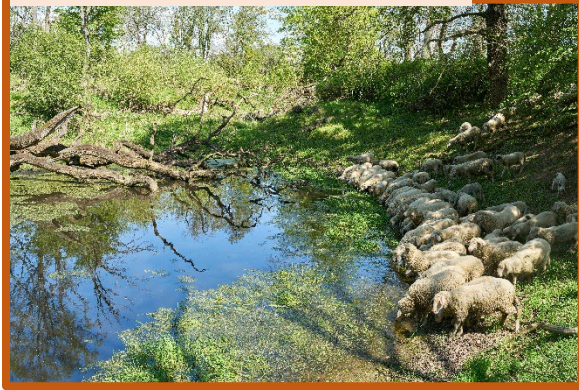
When I look at the people of other countries
When I look at an immigrant, a refugee
Do I see God's child?

When I look at the cross, do I see the courage, the power In the face of God
When I look at the cross, do I see the message "For You."

Rejoice! God sees beyond all fault, all mistakes, all past, all facades.
God sees the child God made and says,

“For you are beautiful, Son of Adam
For you are beautiful, daughter of Eve.”
May we be blind as God is blind
May we be sighted as God is sighted.
And, as we learn what really matters, may we see what God has to say to us.

Beside Still Waters, Debra J. Sepos



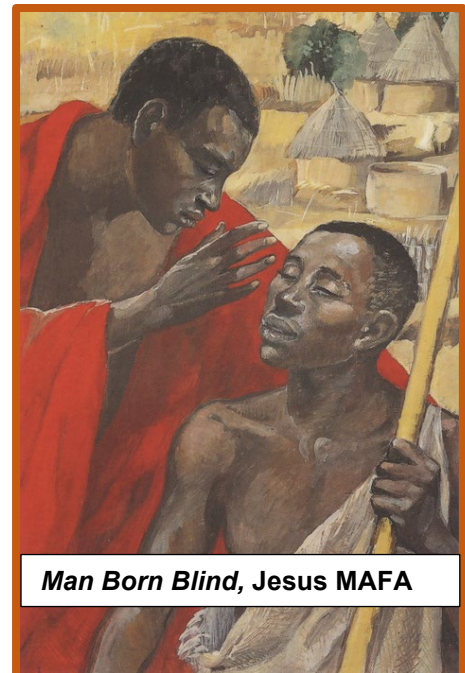
Psalm 23, the most loved of all the psalms, takes the lowliest task of shepherding and makes it the image for God's care for us – once again the unexpected happens! We never think of this when we proclaim this psalm – instead we take it for granted without further thought. The second image for God in this psalm is equally unexpected, that of the mother in the household, “You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies” (Ps 23:5). The lowly shepherd and the loving mother are two images of God in this psalm that touches the hearts and spirits of all who pray it and sing it! And it never dawns on us how scandalous

this is – two of the least important ones are the images of our beloved, compassionate, caring, trusted God! Without our being conscious of it, we have been seeing with the eyes of the heart!

The writer of the letter to the Ephesians tells us, “Now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light – for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true” (Eph 5 :8-9). Note that the scripture does not say that being good and right and true makes us children of light. Rather all that is good and right and true is the fruit of the light. God creates us as children of light. We choose whether or not to be the light for others, for Earth, and for ourselves. The spiritual writer, Judy Cannato, in her *Field of Compassion* says so beautifully, “To see ourselves as we truly are – a wisp of love itself – is perhaps our deepest fear. But it is also our greatest grace. If we are to be the new human, we must begin by embracing love, which always seeks to incarnate itself. Love is enfleshed everywhere. Everywhere the Holy One is shouting and whispering, ‘Let me love you.’ And all that is asked of us is to receive. In reality, that is our life's work. Nothing more, and certainly nothing less.”

The story in today's reading from John's Gospel involving Jesus and the man born blind is told as an intense drama. Having just declared, “I am the light of the world,” Jesus then makes a dramatic gesture, “he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes” (Jn 9:5-6). In that unexpected moment, Jesus, Earth, and water are in harmony – the holy, the habitat, and the human become one. And the blind man's sight is restored.

Veronica Lawson rsm summarizes the unexpected in this drama, “In the common estimation, the man was blind, so he or his parents must have sinned. Not so, according to Jesus. From the perspective of the authorities, Jesus heals on the Sabbath and is therefore a sinner. Not so, from Jesus' point of view. The man was born blind and so needs others to speak for him. Not so, say his parents, he can speak for



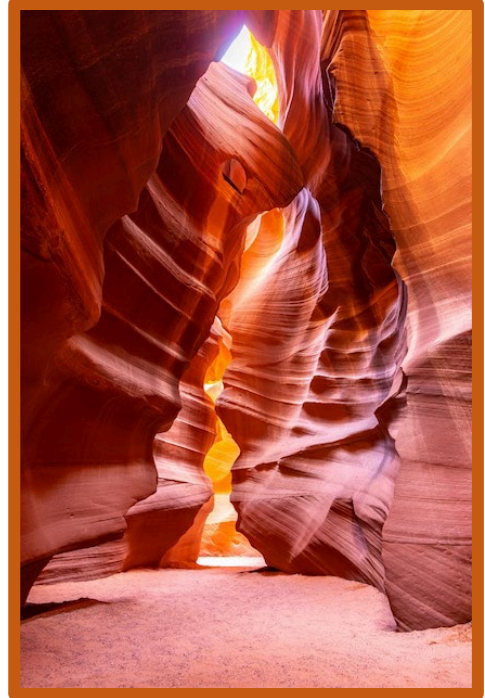
Man Born Blind, Jesus MAFA

himself. He does speak for himself and quite eloquently, to the chagrin of the religious authorities. He presents them with the truth about Jesus but they refuse to accept the word of an outcast. Their reaction is violent: they drive him out. But Jesus goes in search of him and leads him to yet deeper levels of faith and understanding.”

The Camaldolese Benedictine, Bruno Barnhart, reinforces the insight that the now-seeing man has into his own goodness and light, “A comedy begins when the man returns, seeing, to those who had known him when he was blind. They seem not to recognize him; they argue about his identity. Finally, he himself affirms, ‘I am’ (hoti ego eimi). He has received more than sight, this man who now sees. Burning and shining within him now is something of the one who gave him his sight, and who had identified himself with those syllables reserved to God. And yet he knows only that it was the man Jesus who had given him his sight; he knows neither who Jesus is, nor what is that light, now within him, in which he himself is.”

Like the man born blind, we do not always know who Jesus is or what the light is. We cannot always find the confidence to truly believe, “Burning and shining within me now is something of the one who gave me my sight.” Yet we do trust that the one who is the light has entrusted us to be the light whenever or with whomever we share our life’s journey. The Canadian-Jewish poet and singer, Leonard Cohen, gives us comfort and hope in his “Anthem”:

Ring the bells that still can ring
Forget your perfect offering
There is a crack in everything
That’s how the light gets in.



Let us take time in this Lenten week to remember that we are the light for so many. Let us rejoice and give thanks to our God who looks on our hearts not on our appearance. Let us consciously accept God’s invitation to be light for our world!



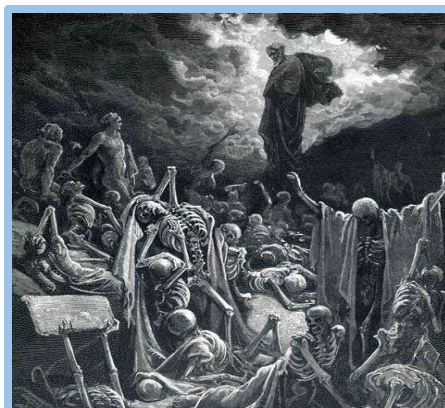
REFLECTIONS FOR THE FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT ~ 26 March 2023

The Mount ~ The Residence at Littledale

Today's readings in the Liturgy of the Word are well-known to all of us, so well known that we sometimes take them for granted. The readings from Ezekiel (the dry bones – remember the folk song, "Dem Dry Bones"), Psalm 130 (written to music by many famous musicians often with its Latin title, "De Profundis"), and the Gospel of John (raising of Lazarus from the dead) are known even in popular culture.

Let us reflect on three dimensions of the readings that may have new or enhanced meaning in the times in which we live: (i) the sense of spirit and body, (ii) the relationship between the person and the community, and (iii) the relationship between the person/community and God.

The sense of spirit and body – for many centuries now, Christians have interpreted the body and soul or body and spirit through the lens of dualism. In the times of the people of Israel and the people of Judea, that dualism was not part of their perspective or worldview. The Hebrew word *nephesh* (נֶפֶשׁ) means a "living being" without distinction of body and soul. When the person dies, the whole person dies. God speaks through the prophet Ezekiel saying, "I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil" (Ezek 37:14). The persons have died and are in their graves. Now God's spirit returns to them, and they live on Earth again, "your own soil."



The vision of the Valley of Dry Bones. Gustave Doré

Psalm 130 has the same understanding – there is no distinction between body and soul, "I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in the Lord's word I hope" (Ps 130:5). With this understanding, Paul's words in the reading from Romans make more sense, "But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you" (Rom 8:9). Each one of us is a whole person, body and soul and spirit – all one. The last words of the 4th century Nicene Creed ("I look forward to the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come") and the 5th century Apostles Creed ("I believe. . . in the resurrection of the body") echo this same understanding. The pastor, Steve Garnaas-Holmes, in his prayer-poem speaks to this integrity of being so beautifully:

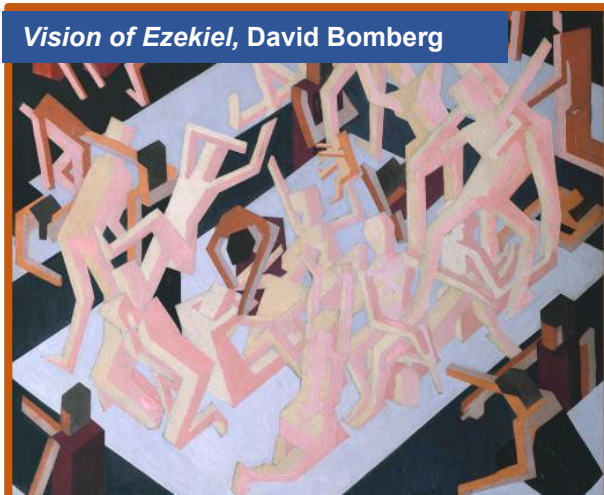
The flesh is not bad, of course:
it's how the Spirit sings.
It's only bad when we forget the singing,
when we think flesh is all we are:
a separate little sack of self
(whose selfishness is bound to get reckless).
In truth, we are all one splendid body,
visible in many bodies,
alive in one Spirit,
all of us fingers of one hand,
complete in each other.
We are both the body and its belonging.
You are the necessary syllable
of the infinite song,

the flute and the music.
Dust and wind, breath and bone.
It happens in the singing.
Alone, your single note is merely noise,
your body merely flesh.
But in the harmony of the whole great chorus
the note of love you offer with your body
is beautiful and becomes more than you.
You love your neighbor as your flesh
and are made whole, and more than flesh.

The newness of our time is the recognition that the sacred communion of all creation includes all beings, not just humans but other-than-humans. We believe that God's first incarnation is not in human form but in the form of the cosmos, the whole universe. The 12th century Muslim leader, Ibn al- Arabī, reminded us, "God has mercified the universe into being." Every Advent in our Cosmic Advent Wreath prayer, we repeat the words of Richard Rohr, "God's first 'idea' was to become manifest – to pour out divine, infinite love into finite visible forms. The "First Flaring Forth" (Big Bang) is now our scientific name for that first idea; and 'Christ' is our theological name. Both are about LOVE and BEAUTY exploding outward in all directions." God's Spirit hovered over the waters of chaos and, with God's word, creation unfolds. Body, spirit, and mind are one – one in the human person, one in the cosmos, one in the sacred communion of all creation.

The relationship between the person and the community – in earlier times, the community was the most important entity in any society. God punishes the people for turning to other gods despite the covenant that God has made with the people. In our story from Ezekiel, the dry bones of the people are given new life, "And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people" (Ezek 37:13). Ezekiel and Jeremiah are the first prophets who begin to speak about the individual's responsibility for their own actions. From that time, we have gradually moved to being more person-entered in all aspects of our society, but, when we have taken this to extremes, individualism takes priority over the common good. Indigenous communities have retained the importance of the collective, the community, in everything from raising children to making decisions about work and the environment.

Vision of Ezekiel, David Bomberg



In our time, we have begun to find the balance once again – we speak about justice but also about social justice, about ethics **and** social or communal ethics, about personal **and** communal contemplation. Our awareness includes the person **and** the community **and now** the interconnectedness of all Earth – the personal, the communal, and the global. In the 1960s, the Canadian philosopher, Marshall McLuhan, introduced us to the term, "the global village." We see this interconnectedness mirrored in the words given us by the liberation theologian, Leonardo Boff, and repeated by Pope Francis in his *Laudato Si'*, "The cry of

The icon near the entrance to the church of St. Lazarus, Larnaca, Cyprus

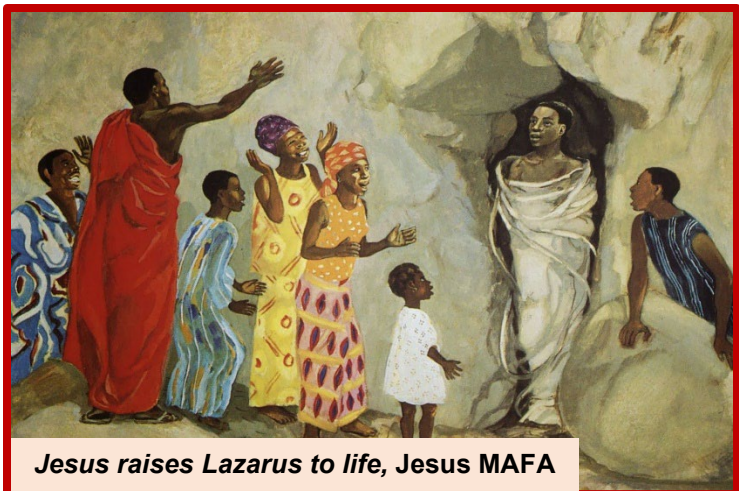


Earth and the cry of the poor are one.” In 2020, we certainly saw the intertwining of the personal, the communal, and the global in a new light with the COVID pandemic.

Our readings today hold that balance. The story from Ezekiel has God “open the graves” and bring the “people” back to life and to their own soil. Psalm 130 begins with the psalmist proclaiming a lament in the first person, “Out of the depths, I cry to you, O Lord” and ends with Israel’s thanksgiving and trust, “O Israel, hope in the Lord! For with the Lord there is steadfast love, and with the Lord is great power to redeem. It is the Lord who will redeem Israel from all its iniquities” (Ps 130:7-8). The narrative in John 11 focuses on the man Lazarus, on his family, and on his community. Jesus not only raises Lazarus from the dead but tells the whole community through Martha, “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live” (Jn 11:25).

When Pope Francis included Martha, Mary, and Lazarus as saints in the General Roman Calendar, he did so because of “the important evangelical witness they offered in welcoming the Lord Jesus into their home, in listening to him attentively, in believing that he is the resurrection and the life.” In 2021, he set July 29 as the feast day for these three siblings.

The relationship between the person/community and God – there are many diverse images of God in the Old and New Testaments and, without doubt, in our own relationships with God at different times in our lives. What is astounding about today’s readings is the image of intimacy in the relationship between God and the person and between God and the community. God speaks through Ezekiel, “I will open your graves. . . I will bring you back to the land of Israel. . . I will put my spirit within you. . . you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken and will act.” This is a personal, an intimate connection between God and the people whom God has chosen. The psalmist cries out, “Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications! If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand?” (Ps 130:3-4). This is a direct plea from the one who trusts completely that God will listen and respond. Paul can also say with confidence, “you are in the Spirit since the Spirit of God dwells in you. . . Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you” (Rom 8:9-10). Not only will God listen to our cries, but God dwells within us, the Spirit of God



dwells within us, Christ dwells within us – words repeated in this short passage from the letter to the Romans.

In the story from John, we need only to read one short verse to feel deep in our hearts the intimacy of our relationship, “Jesus began to weep” (Jn 11:35). Martha and Mary know this when they send for Jesus, “the sisters sent a message to Jesus, ‘Lord, he whom you love is ill’” (Jn 11:3). The narrator tells us in verse 5, “Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.” Martha trusts Jesus enough to rebuke him, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died” (Jn 11:21) and then to engage in a deep theological conversation with him, leading him to an increased awareness of his own vocation, “I am the resurrection and the life” (Jn 11:25).

Mary also trusts their relationship enough to give him the same rebuke that her sister had, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died” (Jn 11:32). And the narrator notes that, when Jesus saw Mary weeping, “he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved” (Jn 11:33). And Jesus’ close relationship with his Father is also intimately described by Jesus himself, “‘Father, I thank you for having heard me. I knew that you always hear me’” (Jn 11:41-42). This longest narrative in the Gospels outside the passion story is emotional, intimate, and relational – among friends, within family, among neighbours, between the people and God.

Yet again the words of Steve Garnaas-Holmes hold the beauty of these relationships embedded in our story:

For Lazarus, for Mary and Martha,
for Jerusalem, for us – Jesus weeps,
and invites us into the spiritual discipline of weeping:
to cede control, to be, after all, a body, baby-weak,
subject to the sting of love,
the pangs of our connectedness.
The rend in the fabric of Oneness
is made real in the rend in your eyes,
the crack in the wall, the opening of your flesh.
You surrender to a current,
like a river pulled into the ocean,
deep within you, flowing out, a holy out-flowing.
Tears come when you have gone beyond yourself,
embodying a divine bond, severed yet still holding.
Weep; for even if you have not suffered
you have loved a suffering world.
Break the seal. Feel the aliveness of a good cry.
For if you can weep you can hope.
If you can weep you have loved,
and will love again.
You flow with God, who weeps for us in grief,
and weeps with joy.



The Resurrection Of Lazarus
Henry Ossawa Tanner

The closing words of this poem speak to all four of our readings today, “For if you can weep you can hope. If you can weep you have loved, and will love again. You flow with God, who weeps for us in grief, and weeps with joy.” May this Lent be for us a time to weep and a time to love, a time to lament and a time to rejoice!

REFLECTIONS FOR PASSION (PALM) SUNDAY ~ 02 April 2023
The Mount ~ The Residence at Littledale

Palm and Passion, trust in what is false or trust in an ever-faithful God, the gift of words and story, eco-memory – so many threads are woven through the tapestry that is the Liturgy of the Word for our Holy Week now unfolding. This Sunday is the transition moment to the final steps to transformation which will emerge next Sunday – Easter Sunday.

We begin our liturgy today with Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, as the people shout, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!" (Matt 21:9). The people were rejoicing in the coming of the Messiah, but they were placing all their hopes in a Messiah who was a king, a mighty and powerful leader, certainly not a Messiah who was a suffering servant, who would die by the lowest form of death possible – crucifixion. They were right to trust in this Prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee. They were mistaken in understanding how this Prophet, this Son of David, this one who was coming in the name of the Lord, would lead them into new life. These same people, when their hopes seem lost, mock Jesus and choose the man Barabbas over him.

The pastor Roddy Hamilton, his prayer-poem "He has left..." speaks to the paradox of this moment:

he has left
it was just a short moment he was here
a glimpse only of the messiah
a shadow of what we had expected

he has left
and the few palm branches and discarded sandal
is all that's left of the messianic parade

he has left
and there is only disappointment to fill the space
for nothing happened, heaven didn't open
angelic armies didn't descend, the kingdom of God did not arrive

he has left and all hope with him
the crowd thought their moment had come but it hadn't
they'll turn on him for he led them on with nowhere to go

he has left
and for his own safety and that of his disciples
that is no bad thing

The paradox continues when the soldiers mock and torture Jesus, using symbols of royalty (the scarlet robe, the crown, the scepter of reeds, the hailing of the King), but the inscription on the cross reads, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews" (Matt 27:37). It is most poignant when Jesus cries out in suffering and pain, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' (Matt 27:46). Jesus is praying the words of Psalm 22 that seem to be words of despair and hopelessness. But Jesus knew his psalms and, as we heard sung in the Liturgy, Psalm 22 ends with the words of complete trust in the fidelity and steadfastness of the God who loves him and us, "I will tell of your name to my brothers and sisters; in the midst of the

congregation, I will praise you: You who fear the *Lord*, praise him! All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him; stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel!" (Ps 22:22-23). In Matthew's story of the Passion, these are the last words that we hear Jesus speak, "Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last" (Matt 27:50). It is more than likely that the last words Jesus cries were these concluding verses of Psalm 22.

In another hymn, used by Paul in his letter to the Philippians, we see the paradox once again. Jesus, "though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave" (Phil 2:6-7). The hymn ends with the same steadfast love and fidelity with which Psalm 22 ends, "God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil 2:9-11).

The first reading from Isaiah begins, "The Lord God has given me the tongue of a teacher, that I may know how to sustain the weary with a word. Morning by morning he awakens – awakens my ear to listen as those who are taught" (Is 50:4). It is an especially precious verse for Sisters of Mercy because it was the image used by the Sisters from the first community of our founder, Catherine McAuley, to describe her immediately after she died. It expresses so powerfully for all of us the importance of story and memory and passing on the story from generation to generation. The verse comes from one of the Suffering Servant songs in Isaiah, directly connecting the suffering one of Isaiah to the suffering one of the passion narrative to the suffering ones today. All suffer, but all are held in the embrace of a steadfast, loving, merciful God.

We know that the passion narratives are the first story of Jesus to be developed and passed on, the core story that led so many from Judea to Egypt to Asia Minor to Greece and Rome to become Christians. They predated the letters of Paul and the four written Gospels. While all four Gospel writers share the same elements of the story, each one adds unique and colorful details, probably those which mattered to the community in which the Gospel writer lived. No matter which passion story we read, each one is told in a way that is intriguing, impressive, and awe-inspiring. The main storyline of Jesus' passion and death is contained in all four Gospels – the betrayal by Judas, the supper shared, the visit to the garden after the supper, the denial by Peter, the trial before the Jewish leaders and before Pilate, the torture by the soldiers, the carrying of the cross, the crucifixion, the death of Jesus, and the burial.

But the details vary across the four stories: cutting off the ear of the servant in the garden, Judas' committing suicide (unique to Matthew), Pilate washing his hands of guilt for Jesus' death (unique to Matthew), Pilate's wife warning her husband (unique to Matthew), Simon of Cyrene compelled to carry the cross, the attitude of the two criminals dying with Jesus, the tearing of the temple curtain, the earthquake as Jesus dies (unique to Matthew), the women who stayed by the cross, the conversion of the Roman centurion, the women who watched the burial, the burial by Joseph of Arimathea with Nicodemus (the latter only in John), and the securing the tomb with soldiers. Each one of these stories holds a Gospel message of its own. Together all the stories create the passion narratives which are at the heart of Christianity.

One dimension of the passion narratives which we are discovering anew in our time is **eco-memory**, a new term that I learned from Byron Wratee, writing in *Earthbeat*. He says,

The Gospel stories present us with the apostles' eco-memories of Jesus' eco-stories. Jesus paid close attention to the world around him, and he connected his moral life and God's kinship with creation to the parts of creation that go unnoticed. . . We remember his

last supper where he celebrated "the bond of live things everywhere" with his disciples. . . In Jesus' hands, the fruit of the earth and the work of human hands becomes spiritual food that awakens our awareness of the interconnectedness of life and salvation. . . Our particular eco-memories and those from Jesus' life shared with us through Gospel stories ask us to think about how our homes, workplaces and neighborhoods affect how we think, act and live.

What are some of the eco-memories that are embedded in the passion narratives? Remember from today's passion story in Matthew: the donkey that brought Jesus into Jerusalem, the branches from the trees that covered the pathway (the palms), the upper room, the bread and the wine (the fruits of the Earth), the Mount of Olives, the parable of the scattered sheep, Gethsemane, the cock that crowed, the potter's field, the thorns for the crown, the reed for the scepter, the wooden cross, the road to Golgotha, the Place of the Skull, the wine, the earthquake, the linen cloth, the new tomb, and the stone at the door of the tomb. Each one has its place in the memory of the paschal mystery which grounds our entire faith tradition. This week choose just one of these other-than-human Earth beings, reflect on its place in the passion story, and thank God for this eco-memory that the first disciples, the first Christian communities, and the Gospel writers have preserved for us.

And so, we begin this Holy Week. For eight days, we will remember, we will mourn, and we will rejoice. Unlike Jesus and the disciples as they experienced these events for the first time, we have the privilege place of knowing the ending. Sadly, our knowing the ending does not always ensure our fidelity to the One who suffered, died, and rose for us. There are times when we respond as Peter and Judas did, as Pilate and Caiaphas did, as the people who cheered Jesus and then demanded that he be crucified did. But more times we are faithful as Simon was, as Pilate's wife was, as the women who stood by the cross and sat by the tomb were, and as Joseph of Arimathea was. Let us end with this challenging and consoling prayer of Rev. Christine Sobania Johnson for Holy Week:

Today we have cheered you on as our champion and hailed you as our hero.

Forgive us tomorrow when our enthusiasm wanes.

Today we have entrusted you to rescue us from our pitiful circumstances.

Forgive us on Tuesday when we decide we can take care of ourselves.

Today we have made you the centerpiece of our very existence.

Forgive us on Wednesday when we forget to remember who you are.

Today we have called out to you loudly by name.

Forgive us on Thursday when we pretend that we've never met you.

Today we have stared at you with the star struck eyes of fans and groupies.

Forgive us on Friday when we avert our eyes
because it is too painful to see you on the cross.

Today we have expressed our unsuppressed hopefulness
in the future you have in store for us.

Forgive us on Saturday when we believe all is lost.

Today we have been boldly certain of the earthly ways you will redeem us.

Restore us on Sunday when we are startled and awed by your rising.

Instead of a number of images for our reflection to accompany the words of my reflection, I share with you a set of modern Stations of the Cross, *The Footsteps of Christ*, painted by the Benedictine Sisters of Turvey Abbey in Bedfordshire, UK. They have added two new Stations: Mary and John at the Foot of the Cross (the 12th), and the Resurrection (the 16th).



**Modern Stations of the Cross, *The Footsteps of Christ*
Painted by the Benedictine Sisters of Turvey Abbey in Bedfordshire, UK**