



LESSON FOUR

RESOURCES

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HANDOUTS

Isaiah 43:16-19

In this final lesson, we will be looking at a passage from the Hebrew Scriptures. It contains the words of the Lord according to the prophet Isaiah. They are comforting words spoken to a nation broken by exile and separated from their own land; a nation which had become disobedient to the commands of the Lord, deaf to the Lord's call.

LECTIO: Read the text from Isaiah 43:16-19. Let us read it slowly, in order to prepare the soil of our hearts for new seeds and new growth. Be aware of the Holy Spirit playing on the fibres of your heart as you listen. This is the true *oratio* (prayer) of *lectio divina*.

This is what the Lord says - he who made a way through the sea, a path through the mighty waters, who drew out the chariots and horses, the army and reinforcements together, and they lay there, never to rise again, extinguished, snuffed out like a wick. "Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland."

MEDITATIO: Some further background to enrich our reading, reflection and response. The "Collegetown Bible Commentary" states that "in this passage the Jews are told

not to remember the things of the past; that the exodus is not past history! Rather it is something new, something happening in the present.” *I am making a way* is a deliberate statement of something happening now...I am making. The commentary goes on to say that “Isaiah points the way to using the Exodus story to throw light on a new situation; that exodus is a pattern in history. God’s saving action is not all past but is repeatable.” This is good news indeed. God can always make something in our own lives become an exodus story as well, making a new way for us out of whatever desert we find ourselves in.

We now spend some quiet time meditating on the passage.

ORATIO: This is the movement when we speak to God in response to what we have heard from the passage. We speak to God just as we would to someone who is close to us, whom we trust. If it is helpful you may wish to write your dialogue or your prayer in your prayer journal. You may even wish to draw your response. There are no rights or wrongs to this movement. Simply open your heart to God and reveal to God your thoughts, emotions, fears, concerns, your petitions, your thanksgiving and praise.

CONTEMPLATIO: We are now in a position to leave behind all the thoughts and interior movements of our heart and allow ourselves to sit still in his presence as Mary of Bethany was able to do. Here we allow God to take over and we simply wait in silence, in peace, not expecting anything or initiating anything. It is God’s turn now. We are not perturbed if we hear nothing or feel nothing because this is an exercise of trust. We trust that God allows whatever God

chooses and we allow ourselves to be content with what is and not what we would like it to be.

EVANGELAZATIO/ACTIO: This is the time for making decisions as to what we will DO in response to what we have heard in God's Word for us today. I share my response with you here.

I feel great relief as I read these words from Isaiah because in our own present age we desperately need to believe that God is doing something new. I sense myself being called firstly to look at this passage from the point of view of the whole world, rather than just my own little world. What is happening to us? Is climate change real? And am I blind and deaf to even seeing that in all that is happening, wars, famine, fires, floods, higher temperatures, destruction of the planet, somewhere in all of this mess God is present and God is making something new, a new highway in the desert that is our whole world just now?

When so many signs point to the hopelessness of our situation I can tend toward despondency, disillusionment and even despair. Yet it is in situations such as we find ourselves in at present that I feel called to open my eyes and see, to open my ears and hear and dare I say it to open my mind and heart to the Holy spirit's Word that will strengthen my faith to such an extent that it can move mountains, because this is literally what we may be called to do. If we can live with a strong faith and a firm trust in the Lord he will make something new out of the destruction, a new pathway. I ask myself am I ready to believe that?

RUMINATIO: We choose a word or phrase from the passage, one that really speaks to us and which we resonate with, in readiness to carry it with us through the day and for as long as it continues to nourish us and speak to us. We may like to write it on a card and display it somewhere where we will see it frequently.

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