

LECTIO DIVINA

Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year A)

LECTIO

1 Kings 19:9a, 11-13a, Psalm 85:9, 10, 11-12, 13-14, Romans 9:1-5, Matthew 14:22-33

MEDITATIO

Elijah was one of the greatest prophets in the Old Testament and in the New he appeared next to Jesus and Moses at the Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-13). He had a dramatic life working for the Lord and on this occasion, he was in big trouble and on the run from Jezabel who had ordered his execution. He fled into the desert to Mount Horeb (Sinai) in despair and asked God to take his life but God had other plans for Elijah. He took refuge in a cave and waited until he heard the voice of God. Not the loud, thunderous, almighty powerful voice but voice in a gentle breeze.

There is so much to love in this passage from 1 Kings. The cave was Elijah's place of refuge and quiet away from the world. Caves are rich in symbolism for our spiritual journey. They may represent psychic / spiritual cycles of withdrawal and emergence (mymythos.org) not unlike moving from the dark night of the soul into awareness of the presence and love of God. Our greatest periods of growth may not happen when we are at our most productive and dazzling, but in the quiet, patient dark of introspection especially in the aftermath of crisis. The cave is the sacred space where God can transform the raw material of our experience into wisdom and give us direction.

Elijah needed the refuge of the cave when he was in despair. Most of us have had times when we thought God had forgotten us and it was all too much. We all need a cave at times where we can find silence, escape from the stress of life, open ourselves up honestly to the Lord and refresh our spirits. Caves can be interior places (Saint Teresa of Avila, Saint John of the Cross, Thomas Merton) or they can be actual places. Where is your sacred cave? I go to my studio or to a natural bush setting. The Abbey at Jamberoo is another place of peace and one of my favourite caves. In these places we may hear the voice of God because the language of God is silence and love. It's all about trusting God because like Elijah we don't know what plans he has for us. We get impatient and forget "to trust in the slow work of God" (de Chardin).

Sister Hildegard (RIP) had this to say about Elijah's experience at Horeb;

"The loneliness of Elijah brought him to this point. Paul Gardner notes that "until now he had been accustomed to express the presence of God through the use of magnificent 'special effects' miracles. God, however, now showed him that the divine presence does not lie in such demonstrations of power but in the apparent weakness of the softly spoken word (the gentle breeze). Henceforth, Elijah's ministry would emphasize the word rather than the acts. The gentle breeze made it safe for him to emerge. Gentleness will allow us to bring the message of Christ to others".

In 2015 I went to Israel on a pilgrimage. We had a very moving Mass in a boat on the Sea of Galilee. When I told my friends about it they all asked if I had 'walked on water'! Very funny but I had to disappoint them. This account of Jesus walking on the lake and saving Peter and

the apostles is about faith 'from which our spiritual life flows' (Casey, 2019, p.156). Casey says "Faith is our source of strength to do and to endure. Faith is a force for freedom" (Casey, 2019, p. 276) even enabling us to 'walk on the water' of our lives however rough. Sister Hildegard (RIP) in her Lectio reflection refers to St. Augustine who says this about Peter:

"... fear made him falter and lose confidence. Then he began to sink and emerged from the water only after calling on the Lord with renewed faith." ... When overtaken by fear, we lose our confidence. In that moment, we cry out: "Lord I am drowning, save me!" Until we cry out to God in this way, we haven't really lived, or suffered or been devastated in any way. St. Augustine says: Think...of this world as a sea, whipped up to tempestuous heights by violent winds. A person's own private tempest will be his or her unruly desires. If you love God, you will have power to walk upon the waters, and all the world's swell and turmoil will remain beneath your feet. But if you love the world, it will surely engulf you, for it always devours its lovers, never sustains them. If you feel your foot slipping beneath you, if you become a prey to doubt or realize that you are losing control, if, in a word, you begin to sink, say: "Lord, I am drowning, save me!"

ORATIO

Oratio is "the movement when we speak to God in response to what we have heard in the passage. We speak to God just as we would to someone who is close to us, whom we trust" (Curtis, A. 2024, p.10).

Dear God sometimes I forget you are there
Sometimes I need to remind myself to turn to you
For you are my God.
(The rest of my Oratio is classified)!

CONTEMPLATIO

Abide, be still, be silent, rest and wait ... God will work on us!

EVANGELIZATIO

I am prompted to strive toward gentleness and quietness with others and to seek more balance in my life according to Benedictine spirituality by pursuing prayer, Lectio, manual work, stewardship, companionship, service, leisure and time in my cave.

REFERENCES

Casey, M. (2019) Ballaam's Donkey. Liturgical Press, Minnesota.

Curtis, A. OSB. (2024). I Give You My Word: Notebook. Benedictine Abbey Jamberoo
(Sister Antonia is a Benedictine nun at Jamberoo Abbey).

Ryan, Hildegard. Sister OSB (deceased. 2025. Former Director of Oblates. Jamberoo Abbey)

www.mymythos.org 'The Symbolism and meaning of Cave'

Anne Edith Fry, Oblate of Jamberoo Abbey