

Lectionary
Readings for every day
You Select!



in the HCUC

No. 15

For 20 Sept 2015

Dear Friends

This is about faith and doubt.

I came across the famous prayer credited to St Francis of Assisi which begins —
“Lord, make me an instrument of your peace ...” It includes the line:

Where there is doubt, let me sow faith.

Hey! Wait a moment. I want to suggest that not all doubt is bad. A bit of doubt can be a sign of something healthy. If we have doubts about whether we are seeing the whole picture it can prompt us to dig deeper, to seek for more of the truth. Doubts can alert us to our inner disillusion with the attitudes that are not serving us positively. Doubts can push us to think again, to look deeper. However we are not meant to live doubt-ridden lives.

The negative side of doubts is that they so often lead to fears. It can be like the fear that grabs us when the normally solid ground under our feet shakes. Like when a doctor’s diagnosis destroys our inner calm about our health and opens a window onto our physical death. We can each make our list of what fears we face in addition to health concerns and the great fear of death.

Recently while browsing the internet I came on a list of the things that people fear. We know them as phobias, and there were more than 500 listed. These are the fears that restrict, cramp and put a dark cloud over people’s lives. St Francis had his finger on the pulse of his society—and our society is still stifled by doubts and fears.

So what to do? How do we find a faith that sweeps aside our disempowering doubt? Certainly not by arguing a person into faith, or trying to force them. Just as you cannot force a person into loving, trying to compel faith usually brings resistance and more doubt.

Is it possible to move from doubt to the inner certainty of one who says— “though I am walking through the valley of the shadow of death I am not afraid?” Yes!

Sincerely - Lester

	Psalm	Epistle/OT	Gospel
Monday 21 September:	119:65-72	2 Cor 4:1-6	Matt 9:9-13
Tuesday 22 September:	124	Ezra 6:7,8,12,14-20	Luke 8:19-21
Wednesday 23 September:	103:1-6	Ezra 9:5-9	Luke 9:1-6
Thursday 24 September:	149:1-5	Haggai 1:1-8	Luke 9:7-9
Friday 25 September:	43	Haggai 1:15b-2:9	Luke 9:18-22
Saturday 26 September:	125	Zech 2:1-5,10-11	Luke 9:43b-45
Sunday 27 September <u>Pentecost 18</u>			
Ps 124; Esther 7:1-6,9-10,9:20-22; James 5:13-20; Mark 9:38-50			

	Psalm	Epistle/OT	Gospel
Monday 28 September:	102:12-22	Zech 8:1-8	Luke 9:46-50
Tuesday 29 September	103:19-22	Rev 12:7-12a	John 1:47-51
Wednesday 30 September:	137:1-6	Neh 2:1-8	Luke 9:57-end
Thursday 1 October:	19:7-11	Neh 8:1-12	Luke 10:1-12
Friday 2 October:	79:1-9	Deut 31:7-13	Luke 10:13-16
Saturday 3 October:	69:33-37	Josh 22:1-6	Luke 10:17-24
Sunday 4 October <u>Pentecost 19</u>			
Ps 26; Job 1:1, 2:1-10; Heb 1:1-4, 2:5-12; Mark 10:2-16			

	Psalm	Epistle/OT	Gospel
Monday 5 October:	69:1-6	Jonah 2:2-4,7	Luke 10:25-37
Tuesday 6 October:	130	Jonah 3	Luke 10:38-end
Wednesday 7 October:	86:1-9	Jonah 4	Luke 11:1-4
Thursday 8 October:	1	Malachi 3:13-4:2a	Luke 11:5-13
Friday 9 October:	9:1-7	Joel 1:13-15; 2:1-2	Luke 11:15-26
Saturday 10 October:	97:1,8-end	Joel 3:12-21	Luke 11:27-28
Sunday 11 October <u>Pentecost 20</u>			
Ps 22:1-15; Job 23:1-9,16-17; Heb 4:12-16; Mark 10:17-31			

The great Carl Jung suggested that our world during the last century was being stripped of its sense of the sacred and “that is why it is in crisis. The modern person must rediscover a deeper source of his (or her) own spiritual life.”

Other writers put the same idea in different words.

- “To create a knowing that supplies you with faith, you need to establish a direct experience of God for yourself.”
- “It is impossible to bring faith to the presence of doubt until you give up the idea of knowing God through the words of others—be they from holy books, written creeds, religious beliefs, dogmatic expressions from people of authority. It needs to be our direct experience of God.”

However we imagine God, the point being expressed is the need to be in touch with the loving, creative SOURCE of light and what is unchanging, undying. It is the unseen energy which flows through the universe. To reach out to know this Source is a way of taking charge of our life. It is to develop the knowledge that we have access to the highest creative force. Indeed this spiritual source which can never be destroyed, was never born, never dies, is not only accessible out there, but is in us. It already exists within us. It is who we are at our deepest.

To get to that point of knowing is seldom a matter of one single step—or even a giant leap. Most often, moving from doubts and fears to faith are shifts in our attitudes, and being open to a close encounter with the awesome, unpredictable infinite dimension of life. We cannot manipulate the encounter. But we can open ourselves to its possibility and may find ourselves surprised by joy, and filled with a confidence that moves away doubts and brings to light strong faith and love that casts out fear.

What small steps can we take? Here are some very brief samples.

- * Meditating is important—as it invites us into stillness and silence. It gives us a chance to know God—rather than knowing about God.
- * Practice trusting in the things we cannot see, touch, feel, taste. Faith involves going beyond our senses to deeper dimensions and unseen realities such as love, peace, calmness and spiritual energies of confidence and trust.
- * Seek the company of warm, confident people who never parade their faith but whose presence attracts us like a magnet. Such people may awaken our own already existing faith—buried within our being.

WHERE THERE IS DOUBT — LET ME SOW FAITH

Faith is the bird that sings when
the dawn is still dark.

- R Tagore

Nature's intent is neither food,
nor drink, nor clothing,
Nor comfort,
Nor anything else in which
God is left out.
Whether you like it or not,
whether you know it or not,
secretly nature seeks, hunts,
tries to ferret out the track on
which God may be found.

- Meister Eckhart

Seeking the sacred
does not distance
us from the real,
it
defines
the real.

- S Dowrick

And the disciples shook the
sleeping Jesus, in the boat
which was tossed by a squall
and swamped by waves.
They woke him, and said:
“Lord, save us! We are
perishing!” He said to them:-
“Why are you afraid, you of
little faith?”

My fiftieth year had come and
gone,
I sat, a solitary man,
In a crowded London shop,
An open book and empty cup
On the marble table-top.

While on the shop and street
I gazed
My body of a sudden blazed;
And twenty minutes
more or less
It seemed, so great my
happiness,
That I was blessed and
could bless.

- W B Yeats

Glimpsing the world of faith,
love and trust.
A taste of the Infinite