

Lectionary
Readings for every day
You Select!



in the HCUC

No. 16

For 4 October 2015

Dear Friends

One cold but bright autumn morning a young woman shivering in a T-shirt and running shorts stepped into the vestibule of the Church of Heavenly Rest in New York to catch her breath and warm up. She hadn't been in church for a long time. She was startled by her response to what she saw, heard and felt. There was the 'soaring harmonies of the choir and congregation, the priest, a woman in bright gold and white vestments, leading prayers in a clear resonant voice. As I stood watching and listening I felt here is a family that knows how to face death.'

She was deeply touched by the encounter. As a result she became a regular member of that church community. All this happened at a crucial time for herself and her husband when their 18 month-old son had been diagnosed as having an invariably fatal lung disease. Elaine, the mother, describes how she was drawn to the situation:

"Here was a place to weep without imposing tears on a child. Here was a community that gathered to sing and celebrate, to face common needs, to deal with what we cannot understand or control. Yet the times together spoke of hope. I joined them not because I was looking for faith, but in their presence my defences fell away—I gathered new energy to face whatever awaited us."

When people said to Elaine "Your faith must be of great help to you" she wondered what they meant. It raised the question What is faith?

I invite you to a brief exploration of some aspects of faith.

Perhaps the first thing to make clear is that there is a difference between faith and belief. Beliefs tend to be fixed in statements, creeds and words. Faith is a living, pulsing and hopefully growing expression of trust in life.

"What people call different faiths are just different belief systems." says David Steindl-Rast.

More exploring — !!

Sincerely - Lester

	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			

	Psalm	Epistle/OT	Gospel
Monday 12 October:	98	Rom 1:1-7	Luke 11:29-32
Tuesday 13 October:	19:1-4	Rom 1:16-25	Luke 11:37-41
Wednesday 14 October:	62:1-8	Rom 2:1-11	Luke 11:42-46
Thursday 15 October:	130	Rom 3:21-30	Luke 11:47-end
Friday 16 October:	32	Rom 4:1-8	Luke 12:1-7
Saturday 17 October:	105:6-10, 41-44	Rom 4:13,16-18	Luke 12:8-12
Sunday 18 October <u>Pentecost 21</u>			
Ps 104:1-9,24,35c; Job 38:1-7,(34-41); Heb 5:1-10; Mark 10:35-45			

	Psalm	Epistle/OT	Gospel
Monday 19 October:	4; 131	Rom 4:20-end	Luke 12:13-21
Tuesday 20 October:	40:7-12	Rom 5:12,15,17-end	Luke 12:35-38
Wednesday 21 October:	124	Rom 6:12-18	Luke 12:39-48
Thursday 22 October:	1	Rom 6:19-end	Luke 12:49-53
Friday 23 October:	119:65-72	Gen 33:1-11	Matt 13:53-58
Saturday 24 October:	24:1-6	Rom 8:1-11	Luke 13:1-9
Sunday 25 October <u>Pentecost 22</u>			
Ps 34:1-8,(19-22); Job 42:1-6,10-17; Heb 7:23-28; Mark 10:46-52			

BEYOND BELIEF FINDING FAITH

One way of recognizing how we develop faith is to “see” the way we make meaning of life. We develop patterns of what and who we can trust, of what gives us a sense of worth and purpose, of what is really real, of what will still be there when all else has crumbled. The deepest aspect of faith raises this question:-

Do I, or my world or what I call “God” collapse when—a child dies, an accident cripples, a partner or friend betrays my trust, my money disappears in a scam, I lose a sense of purpose in old age. Someone has summed it up with the question: Do I live with the attitude that the world (or God?) is out to get me, or that the universe is friendly.

Another way of exploring this issue is to recognize that faith needs to be able to cope with the loss of the patterns of trust and meanings we depended on, when life as we have known it falls apart. A thoughtful writer has suggested that faith is often experienced as a movement under 3 headings:

(1) Shipwreck (2) Gladness (3) Amazement

1. This happens (as we have already noted) when what has held our world and our life together or when rich connections that gave significance and purpose are lost. Shipwreck is when shelter, protection and safety are smashed and we feel washed up. It is part of what can and does happen in life.
2. When we are washed up on shore amidst the wreckage there is a sense of relief, a feeling of “I’ve pulled through” “I’m still here”. We discover something different—a new question comes “What do I do now?” It is a new knowing. It is something that is beyond the loss—beyond the beliefs I took for granted. Some will see it as an experience of amazing grace and will begin building a new pattern of meaning. There can be a new vitality. Yes, the loss is still real and pain and wounds do not vanish in a night. There is however a subtle and grateful move towards newness.
3. The sense of relief can widen out to an amazement at what seems so clear now, though it was hidden and we had no awareness before the wreck. It is as when a person is surprised by the inner strength and calm that welled up from within, during the shipwreck. Or as someone is deeply touched and amazed at the gifts and treasures and new perspectives and meanings that have emerged for them.

FAITH IS A GROWING PLANT

There is a shipwreck and our neat water-tight craft smashes against the rocks.

We are thrown up on the shore, battered and bruised. How did I survive? Why me?
But I survived!
Relief—Grace.

The first time this happens, is the first time! So how can we know that even this might be survived?

How do we know and trust the sun is still there and shining when the sky is dark with cloud?

How does the bird still sing long before the dawn comes?

The amazement is
— celebrated in the Passover,
— celebrated on the freedom side of the Red Sea,
— Easter is the amazement and celebration of looking back on the shipwreck and saying -

I am alive!
This time is new!

* Mature faith is learning how to hold on and when to let go. — As with—perceptions—patterns of trust—relationships and those aspects that we have put in place as part of the ultimate value and truth.

* Faith is verb!
— it is rocking, flowing, tumbling, moving, growing, dying, renewing.

* Faith is a noun!
We journey from one resting place to another— from one certainty and trust to a place of uncertainty and disillusionment. But the journey is never finished.

*Faith is in plain sight,
but cannot be seen.
It is never silent, but
cannot be heard.
It is not lost, but cannot
be found.
It is waiting to be
discovered.*