

## Reflection for 21<sup>st</sup> January

Seek the Lord while he may be found,  
Call upon him while he is near;

....

For my thoughts are not your thoughts,  
Neither are my ways your ways, says the Lord,  
For as the heavens are higher than the earth,  
So are my ways higher than your ways  
And my thoughts higher than your thoughts.       *(Isaiah 55, v6, v8-9)*

On Tuesday we looked around us to see just how much we had to be thankful for during lockdown. But we also have to look forward, knowing that many changes await us. At the burning bush, when Moses was commissioned to lead the exiled people of Israel out of Egypt, he asked God "if I come to the people of Israel and say to them, "The God of your fathers has sent me to you", and they ask me, 'What is his name?', what shall I say to them?" God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And he said, "say to the people of Israel, I AM has sent me to you"

*(Exodus 3, 13,14)*

But how shall we move forward? In a word, we do not know. We are so taken up with our ideas of past, present and future that we forget that Hebrew does not have those tenses: Hebrew has perfect and imperfect only: perfect is used of a completed action, imperfect of an uncompleted action. You can only tell which of our tenses is appropriate from the context.

God is eternally present with us now. He is not with us yesterday for yesterday has gone, and he is not with us tomorrow; for, as my Mother loved to say when I was child and said of something she had just asked of me "I'll do it tomorrow", "Do it now Margaret. Tomorrow never comes." And how right she was.

Think of it this way: it is Thursday today. Yesterday Thursday was tomorrow. Today Friday is tomorrow but on Friday, Friday will be today. We can't serve God yesterday for yesterday is no longer with us and we can't serve him tomorrow because tomorrow never is. We can only serve him today. So, what should we do about the way forward? Forget our own ideas and pray.

Look upward to God and seek his will for what we do today and concentrate on that.

We love asking God for things. Now we need to learn to listen. Only one question in our prayer: after offering our own doubts, fears, hopes, imaginings to God pray simply "Please show us what you want us to do?"

We need to learn to be silent before him and concentrate on him alone. A few find it easy to move into this kind of prayer, others take a long time to reach this art, and many need a tangible help. A cross, a crucifix or a lighted candle helps many to focus and concentrate. Eyes closed with something tangible in their hand, like a rosary or a cross, helps others. But this is one time not to 'say the rosary', but to let go of words: just let the beads as they slip through your fingers, bring you back to that point of silent contemplation of who God is and what he wants of us.

It took St. Mary's a long time, years, in the matter of reordering the church, to learn the importance of seeking God's plan to answer to an obvious need. We had to learn not to pray "Please bless and enable these plans", and grandiose they were in the beginning and far beyond our means or capabilities. We were like people wanting to move house and having visions of a beautiful detached home in the country when we could only afford a semi in the suburbs, or a terrace house in the inner city. When eventually we did get our prayers the right way round things

began to happen, funds came in and the work could go ahead. We are now all enjoying the far greater flexibility of our reordered church.

This time we shall have to focus on ways of mission, service times and who can do what to achieve those goals. We shall be in for many surprises but if we just listen to God and follow the plan he shows us we shall move forward into a yet wider mission and many blessings. This is the way to live as a church family, and to order our personal lives too.

*(Psalm 8, GNB)*

O Lord, our Lord, your greatness is seen in all the world!  
Your praise reaches up to the heavens;  
it is sung by children and babies,  
You are safe and secure from all your enemies;  
You stop anyone who opposes you.

When I look at the sky, which you have made,  
At the moon and stars, which you set in their places –  
What is man, that you think of him;  
Mere man, that you care for him?

Yet you made him inferior only to yourself;  
You crowned him with glory and honour.  
You appointed him ruler over everything you made;  
Sheep and cattle, and the wild animals too;  
The birds and the fish and the creatures in the seas.

O Lord, our Lord,  
Your greatness is seen in all the world.

*Psalm 8 is from the Good News Bible; all other quotations from the Revised Standard Version.*

For further reflection you may wish to read all of Exodus Chapter 3 and Isaiah chapter 55.