

Let us dream

“But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will plant my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”
(*Jeremiah 31:33*)

Where do we find God in our lives, where can we sense his presence with us now? The first place to look, I believe, is what we love the most. That is where he is, first of all – in the people we love, the convictions we hold most deeply, the dreams we cherish, the joys we carry with us, in the things we really value and treasure.

The Rule of St Benedict famously begins with the call to “Listen”. It then goes on to tell us two things. The first is what to listen with: “listen with the ear of your heart,” listen from that mysterious centre of who you are, from your depths, from that place which is sacred and mysterious, which is the source of life, love, enthusiasm, joy. The second thing St Benedict tells us is what we have to listen *to*. He gives the image of Jesus in the marketplace calling out, “Is there anyone who longs for life, and desires to see good days?” It is to listen to the voice of the Lord calling you to the fullness of life, a call we hear from deep within. So the second thing is to listen to your deepest desires, your dreams and to discover there the way in which the Lord is inspiring you.

Our call is rooted also in an *encounter* - however it may have happened to us – something sensed within, something that happened that struck an answering chord in us, that awoke something in us or confirmed something, an encounter with something that matters to us however apparently faintly it may be felt. The deepest convictions are often the ones we find it very hard to put our finger on – it’s easy to look around us and see, it’s harder to see the ground we are standing on, the place we look out *from*. But it is precisely on that level I would like to focus on today. On the joy, the love, the hope, the conviction there is deep within us, so much part of us we hardly notice it or think of questioning it. For me perhaps the most touching profession of faith comes from Peter, after Jesus has spoken about the eucharist, and we are told many found it intolerable language and stopped following him. Jesus turns and asks the twelve: “And you, what about you, will you also leave?” It was Peter who answered: “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the message of eternal life. We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God” (*John 6:68-69*). We know this too, somehow, in our bones. We also know what it is we long for, what it is we have to offer and to create, what we love, what we really believe in deep down.

Perhaps today could be a day to get in touch with that again.

What do you love? What touches you, moves you, inspires you most deeply. What makes you get up in the morning, who do you love, what do you feel it is worth giving yourself to. Today and in the coming days I invite you to get in touch with that again. Perhaps this is how God is calling us, our most fundamental vocation – his way of showing us our authentic path through life and what we have to offer life.

The invitation is to trust those dreams, those convictions, because that is where God has spoken to us and continues to speak to us and call us. Pope Francis, to my mind, did something brilliant and I believe inspired by God. As we were in the midst of lockdown and perhaps seeing a light at the end of the tunnel, and people were wondering how we would cope, how we would recover, return to normal – he issued an invitation, in a book called simply: “Let us dream.” This time of difficulty and recovery is for us an **opportunity** to make a fresh start, to make a better start: let’s be people of vision, who can dream, who can seize this opportunity to learn and to build a better future. It’s been a hard journey we might say! Enough is enough. Covid, all the hardship it has brought along with the increasing challenges of life in a changing world, violence, exclusion, indifference... It’s hard and its undermining and exhausting... We might feel like Elijah when he falls down exhausted and says to the Lord, “You might as well end my life, it is finished.”, or like Cardinal Newman. “The night is dark and I am far from home.” That’s how it can feel like...

Reminds me of Jacob in Genesis 18, fleeing for his life, things looking very bleak – he fell asleep and had a dream – and in that dream he saw a ladder reaching from where he lay to heaven, with angels going up and coming down. And in that dream God said: “Be sure that I am with you; I will keep you safe, for I will not desert you before I have done all that I have promised you.” Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, “Truly, where I am now, in this place, Yahweh is here and I never knew it!” He was struck with wonder and said, “How awe-inspiring this place is! This is nothing less than a house of God; this is the gate of heaven!” (Genesis 28:10-17)

This is where we are! Though we may not know it, *God is here*. In this moment, this time, this situation we are in. This is the house of God, the gate of heaven. So let us dream: “I will not desert *you* before I have done all that I have promised you.” It is a deeply personal promise, as well as a promise to the church. He is here, look around at the seeds that are there waiting to be watered, the life waiting to burst forth in the midst of the desert. In the Prophet Isaiah

that promise is expressed beautifully: “In this place of which you say, ‘It is a waste’ ... there shall be heard again the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voices of those who sing.” (*Isaiah 33:10-11*)

“Truly God is in this place and I did not know it.”

Where are we meeting God today and not noticing? Where is he inviting us to life and we do not notice or discount it as too ordinary or obvious or small or human. Where are the gifts, opportunities... today, every day, in my life.

Perhaps we need to look again to see where life is there waiting to be seen, nourished, watered, reawakened, re-enchanted. To come home to the ways in which God is already present within us and around us, blessing us and calling us.

In the bible dreams are very special, seen as carriers of revelation, revealing what God wants to come about, showing where he is present trying to break through (*Joseph do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife...*) What is your deepest dream? For you, for your life, for your work, your family, your community. Listen not so much to plans and strategies, but to your deepest dreams ... and then begin!

God says to us as he said to Jacob: “Be sure that I am with you; I will keep you safe, for I will not desert you before I have done all that I have promised you.”

The invitation Jesus gave to Peter and the first disciples, after they had worked hard all night long catching nothing, was to “Put out into the deep...” And we are told that when they did, they made a huge catch of fish.

Someone once explained to me that Peter and his friends were shallow fishermen, they fished close to the surface of the water. Jesus was asking them to fish in a different way, to change their method, to go deeper. Perhaps this is our invitation. To go deeper, to listen with the ear of the heart to the voice of the Lord calling us, to hear the call to be true to our deepest aspirations, hopes and dreams – those planted there by the Lord himself.

In Matthew’s gospel we are told that when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples a question: “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” Then he asked them a much more important question: He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”” (*Matthew 16:13-15*)

Who do you say I am? Perhaps part of the way to find the answer to that question for yourself is to really trust what you believe most deeply, what you really love – and live from that. “What good is to a person if he gains the whole world and loses his soul.” It’s about having the courage to live out of what matters most to us – to be true to yourself and to how God is inspiring you; not anyone else, but you. “And you, who do you say I am?”

‘What does it take?’

What does it take
to mark the canvas
to write the line
to play the chord
to plough the field
to cross the river
to change the world?

Perhaps
the courage
to let become
what is waiting to become
Ian Adams

As Pope Francis would say: “Let us dream!”

Today

- Perhaps today take time to allow yourself hear that question: “Who do you say I am?”
- “Truly God is in this place, and I did not know it.” Where is God in your life now?
- Take some time to remember what your dreams and ideals are, what you really value and believe life is about.