

Sunday, August 7, 2016

This Sunday's Scripture Readings

19th Sunday in Ordinary Time

<http://new.usccb.org/bible/readings/080716.cfm>

Wisdom 18:6-9

Hebrews 11:1-2, 8-19 or 11:1-2, 8-12

Luke 12:32-48

The situation seemed impossible! It had started out as a morning excursion to a nearby site, The Springs, in the Judean Desert. Since we had an average temperature of over 100 degrees for the last two months, The Springs drew us with visions of “cool, clear, water.” Little did we realize the road, then the trail, then the rocky inclines and declines would leave us sitting in a dried up wadi under a thorny skeleton of an acacia tree. Ahead of us was an incline. Behind us lay an even steeper decline. The one ahead had a forty-five degree curve about one third of the way up. Jim tried it. The engine roared. He tried it again and again and again and spun out every time. I prayed to [El Shaddai, the Hebrew God of mountains and wind](#). I stretched out my arms as Moses did for victory in the time of battle. I sang aloud so El Shaddai would hear me. I pleaded with Abraham who had walked in this Israeli desert. Nothing. Nothing but the wind. My mind reminded me of the gentle breeze that spoke to Elijah in one of the caves surrounding this same desert. Nothing. I asked God to send at least two angels to help us. Nothing. We started walking. It was 1:30 PM, the hottest part of the day. Avoiding the road that had not a single tree offering shade, we trekked down the wadi conserving our water and resting often in the scattered shade of dried out trees.



Somehow, my heart never faltered. God would not have brought me to Israel to die in the desert. I thought of Abraham who went forth as God called. He has been my guide for the three summers I've volunteered in Israel. He “went out, not knowing where he was to go.” This experience in the same location helped me realize the strength of Abraham's faith. Did he have enough water? Did he have enough food? He was not only responsible for himself, but for the entourage of people and animals traveling with him. Over and over, the Scripture passage says, “by faith”! What is faith? “Faith is the realization of what is hoped for and evidence of things not seen.” Abraham, the great father of multiple religions was the man of faith, *par excellence*.

Faith and hope are brother and sister. In the desert, we “walked by faith and not by sight” as our water dwindled. The hope that an angel would rescue us also dwindled as the sun moved westward casting shadows ... delicious shadows. The inner core of my strength weakened and I began to be afraid we would

be trapped by the night. Yes, the wadi was full of animal tracks, signs both consoling and frightening. Somehow, I still had tracks of hope in my heart that God would send help. I prayed with every step. I became aware of my breathing. Stop and rest. Stop and rest. I ate a few dried blossoms from a tree. They wet my mouth. There were no cell phone connections. Only God! Somehow, we trekked on.

At 6:30 we found Hwy 227 and sat on roadside rocks. A car going the opposite direction stopped. Evidence of faith? They poured water into Jim's empty container. Ah! Our first angel but still no rescue! There were no cars going in our direction at all. Dusk was falling. God, another angel, please? An old truck with a red flag standing straight up in back, stopped. A ride, please? A ride? Hope rose! Our second angel gave us more water and it was cooler. Would God send a third angel? We continued to walk. According to a road sign, we had twenty kilometers to go. Darkness. Piercing my exhaustion a tiny glimmer of hope survived. God's sheltering hand was still hovering over us. Through the darkness, I spied a truck with a red flag off the road about fifty feet. The [Bedouin](#) driver was on his knees, head touching the ground. He was praying. As we walked past, he stood up and waved. My mind called out, "Yes. Hello! And thank you for the water!"

But then, he got into his truck and drove out to us! He signaled us to get in. He spoke no English. He got out and opened the back door for me. A gentleman! A big smile. God sent our second angel back to us! All I could say was, "Thank you, thank you, thank you!" When we arrived back, I pressed shekels into his hand, but he pressed them right back into my hand. "No, no." Jim handed him American dollars, receiving the same response. God bless this Muslim Bedouin, this son of Abraham, who saved two Christians who were trusting in the same God who just has a different name.

The next day after showers and gallons of cold water, we were strengthened. But the ordeal was ongoing. Our vehicle was still resting under an acacia tree in that deep wadi. Faith and hope still stood in my heart. Who to call? Who spoke English? Where to get phone numbers? At noon, finally a connection! And God sent a third angel. This time, Jewish. We finally contacted an Israeli park ranger. His dark good looks were heightened by a smile and open attitude. He spoke beautiful English! He drove us back to our "waterloo." Would his 4x4 truck be strong enough? Again, faith and hope joined hands in my heart. I prayed as he towed us up that steep incline, slowly, slowly, slowly! Alleluia! Success! Success! Thank you, God! God of the mountains. God of the wind. God of the wadi. God who keeps his promises.

The ranger said he wasn't supposed to do this, but... All he accepted was our thanks.

We were not prepared for this experience. It came like a "thief in the night". We didn't expect to be stranded in 100 plus heat with no cell phone service and only about two liters of water between us. The situation seemed impossible. We were in desperate straits! Our flimsy faith and hope were rewarded. God watched over us as promised again and again and again. What do we need to fear? God, help me remember who you are!

Patricia DeGroot, ObISB

NOTICES

REMEMBERING MOTHER TERESA

The Holy Father announced the upcoming canonization of five new saints, including Blessed Mother Teresa of Kolkata (née Anjezë Gonxhe Bojaxhiu), set for September 4, 2016. LPi has created an exclusive collection of banners, prayer cards, and more to celebrate the canonization. Visit the [LPi Store](#) to view the entire collection.

LPI WEBINARS

Liturgical Publications hosts webinars on stewardship communications and sustainable offertory programs as well as online giving and event management. You can view a full list of scheduled webinars [here](#).

BULLETIN COVER FOR PEACE

In light of the tragic events that have taken place over the past few weeks, Liturgical Publications is making available free bulletin cover artwork to encourage parishioners to remember in prayers all those affected and to pray for peace in our world. You can download the artwork [here](#).

PRAYER

The LORD is my shepherd;
there is nothing I lack.
In green pastures he makes me lie down;
to still waters he leads me;
he restores my soul. He guides me along right
paths for the sake of his name.
Even though I walk through the valley of the
shadow of death,
I will fear no evil, for you are with me;
your rod and your staff comfort me.

II

You set a table before me in front of my
enemies;
You anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
Indeed, goodness and mercy will pursue me
all the days of my life;
I will dwell in the house of the LORD
for endless days.

—Psalm 23. Scripture text taken from the NABRE ©
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