



Tender Encounters

ST. JOSEPH'S HIGHGATE

2020 August 9

Tender Encounters

Just prior to the story of the first reading for today, Elijah experiences one of the strongest victories of his prophetic career by boldly facing down more than 400 prophets of Jezebel at Mount Carmel. In doing so, Elijah demonstrated the power and primacy of God over the false god Baal. Jezebel is out for blood. In chapter 19, we find Elijah terrified and alone in a cave on Mount Horeb. There he complains to God that he is the only prophet left and he fears for his life. Elijah is as honest with God as he can be. In reality, this episode in scripture is a time of transition for Elijah.

God's response to Elijah's honesty is a self-revelation. God calls Elijah to come out of his cave and stand at the cliff. There we see an impressive display of wind, and an earthquake, and fire. But God was in none of those things. We are told that after the fire came the sound of sheer silence. It is here in the silence that Elijah encounters God.

God asks Elijah what he is doing there. His answer is the same as before. He has given all that he can to God and still all the prophets but him are gone. He is alone. And so, God tells him to go and anoint

others to be prophets in his place. There is a sense that both Elijah and God know that the prophet's time for this work is over. God assures him there are others who will do the work.

This is such a tender and intimate story. Elijah will now hand his responsibilities over to Elisha and those he leads. For all those who lead there comes a time when you have to let go of the reins and hand them to those who come behind you. Elijah was able to make this transition when he was honest with God about himself and what he had left to give to the work; and when he opened himself up to that intimate encounter with God on the mountain in the silence.

In scripture we see God revealed in all kinds of ways – God shows up in wind and clouds and burning bushes. God shows up in dreams and messengers. And here, God shows up in silence. God chooses to reveal God's self in a myriad of ways throughout scripture. The beauty in that is that God actively communicates with us, God's accessibility. God is accessible to us wherever we find ourselves. We simply must find ways to encounter God with our whole selves in honesty and vulnerability as Elijah did. And when we bring all of that to God, we allow God to care for and tend to all of it.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

O Lord, we confess that, like Elijah, we want to run from the troubles of the world and find a safe sanctuary. A virus, smaller than the eye can see, reminds us anew how fragile life is. Like Jezebel, it chases us away from people and places that we love. It has disrupted our economy and we find ourselves caught between trying to protect life and livelihood and unable to find easy solutions.

So, like Elijah, we have returned to a sacred space to worship you and find refuge in your sanctuary.

Forgive us, Lord, when we seek your presence in order to hide from the troubles of the world. Force us to ask ourselves, "What am I doing here?"

Inspire us, empower us, through our worship of you, O Lord, to leave comfort and safety in order to be bearers of your justice and peace, to be willing to struggle with the difficulties of our day, and build bridges that bring people together and tear down walls that divide us.

*In the grace of the God who finds us when we are hiding and calls us out, we pray,
AMEN.*

Know Your Parish



Territoriality matters, but can't be a limit.

Most parishes are defined by territory. With few exceptions, a parish is, properly speaking, the communion of the baptized within the limits of a certain territory, which is defined by the bishop. In the West, that concept has mostly been forgotten, Catholics tend to go to Mass at the parish where they feel most welcomed or fed, and despite encouragement from some bishops, many Sunday Massgoers don't know about parish boundaries.

The Congregation for Clergy's guidelines recognize that reality." Increased mobility and the digital culture have expanded the confines of existence," the guidelines state, "people are less associated today with a definite and immutable geographical context, and "digital culture has inevitably altered the concept of space, together with people's language and behaviour, especially in younger generations."

But the document insists that territoriality matters. That "interpersonal relationships risk being dissolved into a virtual world without any commitment or responsibility towards one's neighbour."

The parish is not a self-selected or self-defined community, but a set of people with obligations to each other, and the guidelines warn against losing that sense.

Because the parish is intended to encourage in neighbours a sense of Christian responsibility for one another, the document is clear that parishes building plans for evangelization and missionary work must take into account “those who actually live within the territory. Every plan must be situated within the lived experience of a community and implanted in it without causing harm, with a necessary phase of prior consultation, and of progressive implementation and verification.”

Still, the guidelines say, a parish's mission doesn't end at its territorial boundaries. In light of a changing world, “any pastoral action that is limited to the territory of the Parish is outdated.”

In short, the guidelines urge Catholics to think of their parishes as a community, with obligations of neighbours to one another, who share a mission to proclaim the Gospel, together, beyond the limits of their own community.

Structures are for mission, but bureaucracy kills.

The guidelines emphasize that while the parish needs policies, programs, and

structures to fulfil its mission, it must “avoid the risk of falling into an excessive and bureaucratic organisation of events and an offering of services that do not express the dynamic of evangelization.”

To overcome a tendency towards bureaucratization and formalization of the Church's sacramental and catechetical life “conversion of structures, which the Church must undertake, requires a significant change in mentality and an interior renewal, especially among those entrusted with the responsibility of pastoral leadership.”

The guidelines also urge dioceses to consider developing new structures and roles that can coordinate activity between parishes, especially those in close geographic proximity to each other.

To be continued...

By JD Flynn

Denver Newsroom, Jul 20, 2020 ([CNA](#))

BOOKING YOUR PLACE AT MASS

Booking a place is easy! Please click on the following link and choose a Mass time:

<https://parish.rcdow.org.uk/highgate/events/>



A link is also available via the parish website.

Christian Stewardship

Last week's collection amounted to £570. In addition to that we receive an average of over £900 per week in standing orders. Thank you very much for your continuing generosity in support of your Parish.



Face Coverings



Face coverings will be mandatory in Places of Worship from Saturday 8th August 2020. All those who are attending churches must wear a face covering unless they are exempt from doing so. This is for the good of all who gather in the Church for Mass as it is an enclosed public space where there are people from differing households who they do not normally meet.



100 Club Results: The delayed April Draw for the 100 Club was held in the Monastery during the week. The number of entries was 114 and the winners were: £400 G.Stern (172), £100 A.Breslin (7), £50 F.J.Blackwell (113). We will be catching up over the coming weeks with the outstanding draws which have not been held during lockdown.

PRAY

- + Agnes Marchessou
- + Michael Kennedy
- + Steven Courtney
- + Daniel Norton
- + Annie Burns



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