

Along the track

Soundtrack Music

During a boat ride on Loch Ness the guide vividly described the memory of his first supposed encounter with Nessie. “She rose up out of the water”, he said “and began swaying to music only she could hear.”

In a sense we all do that, move to the ‘music’ that is so often of our own making. There are many experiences that shape our lives, more recent ones and some from our distant past. We all see and experience and recall events in our own way. Some people have richly detailed recollections while others can recall facts but little detail. People who experience the same event can remember it quite differently. Some experiences we choose to remember, others we opt to put aside. These memories play a large part in shaping the fabric of our lives, they form the background music, as it were. Our habits, our beliefs, ideologies, our hopes and fears are all influenced by what we remember of our past. Memories remind us that we are all different, all quite unique. Memories are as individual as we are.

Matthew describes a challenging post resurrection scene

Meanwhile, the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain Jesus had designated. When they saw Him, they worshipped Him, but some doubted. Mtt 28 16-17

How could they doubt? They had been with Jesus, they had heard him, seen what he did. They must have recalled the special memories of their years together, the special moments, the words that hit home. Now they were with the Risen Jesus. But some still doubted! Matthew did not say some did not believe. No, some doubted. Even after all this, some still needed a bit more reassurance, a bit more ‘proof’.

We all bring ourselves to faith, we bring who we are, pragmatists, dreamers, sceptics, visionaries, those with scientific, analysing minds, the romantics, the poets... whatever gifts we have been blessed with, the gifts that make up who we are and what we might become. So some doubted while others embraced this occasion with open minds and hearts. For each of them, it was the right response. We are all different.

A searching faith speaks to who we are. It speaks to the core of our being and how we see our world, whether we are pragmatists, dreamers, sceptics,

visionaries, those with scientific, analysing minds, the romantics or poets. They are gifts from our Creator God. We each make our own journey in faith in our own way ‘moving to the music that only we can hear’. Our life experiences, our memories, our talents, the relationships we have built up over the years, our work, the skills we have acquired, the friendships we have made and how we have worked together with others all help us (or perhaps hinder us?) in our faith journey, our faith story.

That is not to say that faith is only a private journey. We will not find all that faith and wisdom, beauty and meaning in our own stories, our own memories. We need the stories of others, the memories of others and the distilled wisdom that comes from them. That’s why for aboriginal people the Dreamtime Stories are so important, for Jewish people and for Christian people, the Bible is so important as a source of wisdom, encouragement and inspiration. Faith is not just a private search. In our faith journey of discovery, we need the support and wisdom of others, the faith sharing of others. We need a faith community.

When we listen to the faith stories of others, they are many and varied. For Mother Theresa, now a saint, she suffered terrible bouts of doubt: *But as for me, the silence and the emptiness is so great, that I look and do not see, listen and do not hear*, she said. Pope Paul VI suffered extended bouts of sadness, even depression, yet he could write with great eloquence and sincerity on joy. We could look in both the Bible and in the lives of saints and see enormous contradictions in their stories. For some faith came easily, for others it was a very hard road indeed.

In the end, we have to live our lives ‘swaying’ to music only we can hear. But what binds us together in our journey towards a deeper knowledge and an active love of God is our shared search for a deeper faith, a willingness to listen to each other and to each other’s stories and a willingness to be open to God who speaks to us in many and varied ways. Faith asks us to never stop listening, to never stop searching.

Regards
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