

The Desert – the place of God’s providence

One of our Sisters was at a conference and she found herself sitting next to an old Carmelite Prior. As she talked with this wise, old priest the conversation turned to finance. He said to her questioningly, “do you not believe in God’s providence”. Some years later she found herself completely dependent on God’s direct help. It was quite a shock and not what she had planned for the future. It is only when we are in that place that we see the mysterious working of his providence. The Israelites after their escape from Egypt were helpless. They were a vast company of men, women and children and there was neither food for them to eat or water for them to drink. Quite a problem! The heavenly Father provided them with manna, a food that before that they had not known ¹and in “that thirsty and waterless land, with its venomous snakes and scorpions, he brought water out of a hard rock.”²

This is not the health, wealth and prosperity doctrine in disguise or a quick fix by the Almighty when we are in difficulties. Often it is anything but a quick fix. There are countless testimonies to God’s last minute intervention. It seems to be the norm. It would be more comfortable for us if the answer came sooner but we would not learn to trust.

In a book written by the same Carmelite Prior he tells of a time when a very unexpected letter came from the bank manager congratulating him on the progress of an extensive building scheme in which he was involved and also commenting on the healthy appearance of the bank account. He continues, “Strangely enough, that gave me a great feeling of disappointment and anti-climax. The implications of prosperity were too much for me and I felt momentarily as if all my faith had gone. But I recovered my faith again. At the end of the next month the bills have been paid and there is ample room for God’s providence”.³

Perhaps we are not as far along the road as the good Prior and find that trusting God can still have its scary moments. Eventually it becomes a path that we know and love. The Lord’s divine providence is mysterious but it is wonderful.



A friend told us recently of her delight in seeing an eagle in a remote place in Scotland. The writer of Deuteronomy tells us that God is like “an eagle that stirs up its nest and hovers over its young, that spreads its wings to catch them (as they learn to fly) and carries them on his pinions.”⁴ In the wilderness, the hard difficult places, we too will glimpse the eagle. Just as we think we are falling and falling he will swoop down and carry us on his strong wings. Our Lord Jesus said, “Don’t be afraid”.

¹ Deut 8:3

² Deut 8:15

³ Courage to Build Anew Edwina Fielding.

⁴ Deut 32:11