

St Mary Magdalene's Anglican Church
Moore Street, Adelaide

Reflection for the 10th Sunday after Pentecost

Where is God to be Found?

It is strange but if many of us are honest we have allowed our sceptical society to influence our notions about 'finding God'. Our society looks for the dramatic, powerful and decisive God – perhaps the God they learnt about in Sunday School or of whom they dreamt themselves in their childhood. It is easy to associate God with tremendous power because we know that God has this power. But to expect that power will be the most convincing and helpful way God acts stands to be corrected or modified by the readings for today.

Like Elijah we can ask ourselves where God is in the turbulence of our times. If we confine our thoughts and prayer to such wondering we can miss the daily miracles in life which continue to happen. The trouble is that we wish God to speak up loud and clear and to act dramatically so that everyone can see and believe. We long for our children to believe and to rediscover the religious faith they laid aside perhaps years ago. God seldom satisfies our longings of this kind.

It is helpful to think of our own or our family's troubles as if they were "little boats" in the rough waters of everyday life. God longs for us to keep our gaze and thoughts on him rather than on the turmoil which surrounds us. Life may be rough but the little miracles continue to happen each day in some way or other. Somewhere a voice is saying to us gently, "Courage! It is I! Do not be afraid!"

I have found myself over the years that God is strongly at work in ways which are not universally evident. It is significant that when Jesus, after his baptism by John the Baptist, was wrestling with himself over the way he should carry out his work among the people, he was clearly tempted to work in spectacular, compelling ways which would ensure people in general would be drawn to him. Tellingly, Jesus rejected this approach. We must try to reject such expectations ourselves.

The hand of God is at work in small but decisive ways. God draws one to certain people for good reason. God can use a drawn out, very unjust process to bring about justice and acquittal in the end, through the personnel involved. Much good fortune is, in fact, really God's providence. A book can be selected for reading which, in fact, answers many questions. One can be led in an extraordinary, seemingly bizarre direction only to discover quite unexpectedly something marvellous during the journey.

These are not necessarily earth-shattering events which force sceptics to believe. The process of conversion and persuasion is often gentler and more compelling in the end.

Fr Graeme Kaines