

The Voice

Did you ever see a film called 'Little Voice', starring Michael Caine. It's a story of a shy introverted girl with a dysfunctional mother who justifies her existence alone in her bedroom by singing songs of stars like Judy Garland and Marylyn Monroe. Her mother's boyfriend overhears her singing and recognises the wonderful gift she has and begins to exploit this for his own gain, but in the process she eventually finds her real self, in the end.

This is the story of most of us in life, who is the real me? I'm surrounded by voices, calling my name. Have I had nicknames, were they good or bad? Do I have a family name passed down? Do I like my name? Have I changed it, shortened it, made it more acceptable.

My name defines who I am. A slave had no name he or she was branded, owned by the master. My name gives me rights, a place in society, a family. My name through Baptism gives me a place in the Church, a son or daughter of God, dignity, responsibility.

"Before time began I knew you, I consecrated you, I called you by your name, you are mine" Jer 1: 4. Also Isaiah 43 "What is the name that God calls me? The name defining who I am in God's mind? God has a name for each of us, His dream, calling me to work with Him in creating this World to how He wants it to be."

Who is my God? How do I relate to Him? What is life about after all? Do I know?

This last Covid time has been yet another journey for us, in life, events never end, voices never cease to call, never cease to tempt us on, even when another voice tells us that there is nowhere else to go, that everything is ended now and nothing's worth living for, no more purpose in life other than get up in the morning, do what has to be done and then go to bed at night.

I love the sight of meercats. Meercats in real life are forever on the watch, not just for themselves. There is always one straining his/her head above the mound on which it stands, gazing out on behalf of the community, alert, looking for action. Just like the Biblical Watchman. Appointed by the king, with total access to the king; patrolling the walls, standing at the gate or posted at the top of a hill. What voice is it I am hearing? Is it danger? Find safety, not only for myself but for others also. Those who give me their yes, to be their watchman also, listening for the action, listening for the voice, and daring to believe that I am entrusted with this role, daring to believe that I hear the voice in the first place.

In 'The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe' a group of children are called to save the Land. Aslan, a Lion signifying Jesus gives them the call, is betrayed by one of them and then gives his life to save the one. The children are in absolute awe of Aslan, they love him, yet they fear him as he can be fierce at times. The night he walks to his death the girls see him standing alone, not tall and majestic as before but dejected, head bowed low. They pluck out their courage and approach him. They ask can they walk with him and he agrees. Slowly they walk on either side of him to the bottom of the hill, and they do what they have always longed to do, but never dared, they bury their hands into his fur, they become part of him and accompany him to his fate.

In 'Wind and the Willows' a small badger is lost, all are out looking for it, it is in great danger in the forest. Ratty and Mole set out to search in their boat on the river. As they approach they hear God's song, inside they are longing to see Him, but they are also afraid of the presence, but they continue looking for the lost one and as a result they find it in the care and safety of the God they finally find.

When we hear the call and decide to follow, to answer, to come close, we too are afraid. Our God is transcendent and also imminent. We can never tame God, just like Aslan. God wants to be close to me, God calls me away from my imagined life, from my safe haven, from the lie of independence, to the truth of a life imagined by God for me. My life, not some other person's life that I'd like to be living safely, no my life, because the only person whose life I am asked to emulate is that of Jesus.

The first Adam believed the lie, led on of course by a woman; he was quick to blame her. The result was that they each lost the gift of life with God and the freedom to be naked and not care, to be open with god and be loved, to walk with him in the cool of the evening- to be one with as I was created to be.

We are each responsible for our own life and no matter what happens, whatever life throws at us, we are still responsible for our own life and choices, and we cannot as adults blame other people for it. When someone dies, leaves, is ill, or I am ill, whatever may happen, my life is still to be lived in whatever circumstances I find myself. Only until my life is over, does my responsibility and accountability last.

Despite fear, pondering for a lifetime, despite the full awareness of potential cost and appearance of worldly loss, both Jesus and Mary responded to their voice and began their journey of listening. They each gave their yes, they were each graced to be as Adam and Eve were, free to choose, God became man and trusted another woman to be the new Eve and to freely choose. Mary was graced as Eve was to be without stain or sin, time stood still that second the Angel waited for her answer, Heaven stood still, waited, as God waits for us to answer our call also.

Mary and Jesus gave their free yes, not knowing what was to come, but willing to ponder as they moved along the road, following the call day by day. Giovanni Odazzi painted many beautiful religious paintings; my favourite is the Annunciation where God and the Angels are hanging out of heaven in anticipation of Mary's answer, will it be yes? All of God's hopes waited on that answer. God waits for us too. Are we willing to give our lives, our freedom, our gifting and our service to the creator who made us for this purpose? True freedom is not to hang onto my life; freedom is to help me give it away.

Do I know who I am, do I know my gifting? Because that is the only route to knowing my name, I am named in God's mind as to his dream for me and the gifting he has graced me with to live that out? Am I doing it? Do I know it? Is it me? Could it be me? Will it be me?

Will I make mistakes, will I fall down and will I get up again and carry on? Does God love me enough to walk with me? Am I that special to God? Will it be a yes or no?

We need the energy of the grace of the Holy Spirit to overcome the obstacles that seem to be in our way. We need God's empowerment when the task seems hard; we need his joy and strength in the simple tasks of life. We need his assurance of who we are and who we are called to be. Only the Spirit can change my heart, change my mind, and my life, only the Holy Spirit through my Baptism allows me to grasp, believe and act on the Words God calls to me by name. This is my beloved Son/Daughter. Listen to Him/Her.

Where was I before? Where am I now? Where would I dream I could be? How am I going to get there? Who will help me? What am I willing to pay to let go, to change In order to achieve this dream, in order to find my voice, in order to answer the voice calling deep inside me, in order to find my name?

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