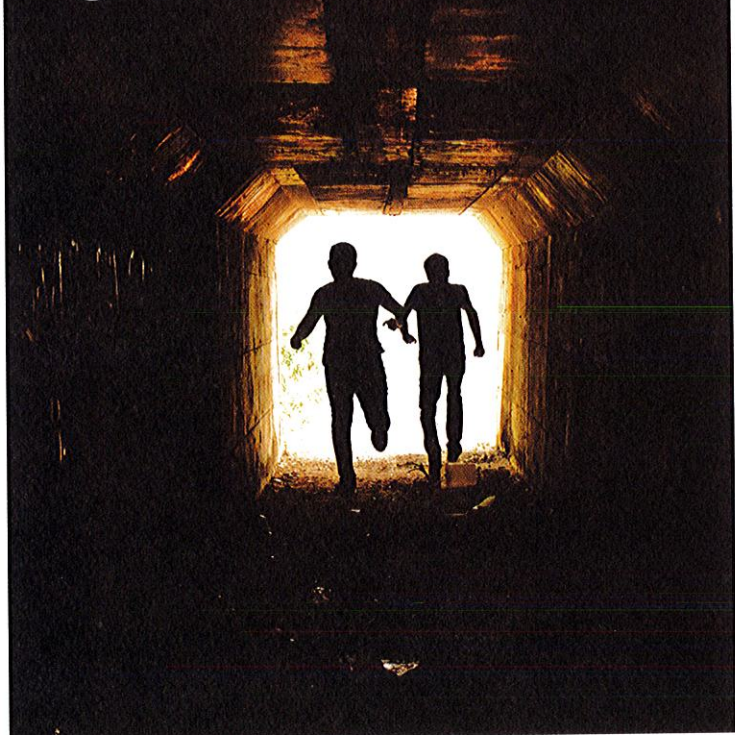


Breaking out



Water

Part 3 – the waters of baptism

by Caroline Hodgson

In Matthew's Gospel (3:16) we read us about the extraordinary, transformational moment when Jesus stepped into the River Jordan: "Just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him". In baptism, ordinary water becomes the sign of God's grace – cleansing, renewal and belonging.

It is fitting that God chose water for this purpose. We encounter it every day – for washing, drinking

and cooking, when we go for a swim or walk through rain. Water is both familiar and essential, reminding us of God's constant closeness and healing touch.

They say you can't teach a fish about water. Having been cleansed in and by the waters of baptism, we live and have our being in the waters of God's grace. But that's not to say we will be forever pure, living unpolluted lives. Although baptism is a single event it leads to a lifelong rhythm of washing and being made clean. Just as water refreshes the body, so God's mercy refreshes the heart. 🌊

Heather Smith *reflects on* Genesis 45:1-15

Could you forgive someone who sold you into slavery? Joseph's brothers had a lot to answer for, but he didn't hold it against them. Even though things had turned out well for him, it had taken a long time to reach that point, and his story included false accusations and a lengthy period in prison. Although the false accusations were not his brothers' fault, it would have been easy to hold them responsible, because they were the reason he was in Egypt in the first place.

We might think of Joseph's story as something that happened a long time ago – at another time, in another culture – but all over the world today people are being trafficked. Many end up "hidden in plain sight" in the West – in nail bars or car washes. For most, the story does not have a happy ending like Joseph's. There are no reunions or fabulous job opportunities. But it doesn't mean God doesn't care.

Pharaoh's cupbearer, who met Joseph in prison, facilitated his release. Do we pay enough attention to the plight of those around us, and can we do anything to enable them to escape from whatever situation they're ensnared in, whether that be physical, emotional or spiritual entrapment? Can we do anything to help restore them to mental and spiritual health? And do we ourselves need reconciliation and forgiveness to enable us to become whole again? 🙏

God of those who are disadvantaged and persecuted, make us alert to the suffering of others and brave enough to provide practical help. Give us compassion to work with those who are wounded, to bring them to wholeness. Amen.

Finding God in the smallholding

by Jeni Parsons

It seems to me that many Christians are too tidy. Where's the mess, the weeds that let new ideas grow? Each morning in spring and summer I need to do some weeding in the big polytunnel where I grow our vegetables, and it has become my morning prayer. I don't ask for things but I get down among the detail and observe intently. I look and find weeds,

of course, but I also find tiny self-seeded plants – leeks, tomatoes, sometimes even potatoes, and I marvel at their ability to be quietly growing. If I were too tidy I'd miss all that secret growing, that generous giving, that future possibility, because I'd have straight lines, no weeds and everything predictable and, to me, a bit sterile.

So in your prayers to God be a bit untidy and a bit more curious. Let it just happen and be ready for God's generosity. 🌱

“At Baptism, I received grace — that quality that makes me share in the very nature of God.”

Mother Angelica (1923-2016), religious sister and TV host