

Thoughts from the Prayer Corner 2

Dry Times



The above photograph is taken from The Chelsea Flower Show 2018 depicting the South African landscapes incorporating the idea of the savanna being subject to fire and the growth that comes out of it.

Over the past few weeks, I have been thinking about difficult times, both through physical situations and spiritual dryness and the following imaginative story which was written in one of those really dry times, has been very much in my mind over the past 3 weeks and so I would like to share it with you. Maybe having read Ruth Valerio's book and the fact that it is Easter Saturday maybe this is the right time? Please ask the Lord to speak to you through it, as you read.

The River Bed's Yearning

I used to be so proud of my skin. It was soft and smooth and decorated with crescent shaped wedges that sparkled with the fine grains of sand which the water deposited, as it gently flowed over me, keeping me cool and refreshed.

Sometimes, if the water was moving very slowly and was particularly clear, I could look up and see the grasses and the flowers which grew along the banks, and the tall slender trees which were canopied with lush green leaves of assorted shades. Where the trees parted, they would open up to reveal exotic shades of blue, dotted with wispy or fluffy white clouds meandering weightlessly across the sky.

As the day journeyed on, I might see fiery bursts of red and orange cutting across the backdrop of yellow pronouncing the departure of the sun, giving way to the midnight blue, broken by the myriad stars and of course, the moon, its size and shape changing like a frame in a film.

Now, I see these sights every day, every month. Once I felt privileged to see these sights, now I often curse them." Why", you might ask. Clear day and night skies mean no rain, no moisture.

It must have begun last year, or maybe the year before that. I cannot remember, it seems so long ago. I thought it was my imagination that the water seemed much lighter in weight as it brushed over me. Now it was clouded with particles of dust and dirt which caught me and cut me as it journeyed onwards.

As each day passed the water became progressively dirtier and lessened in volume until it was non-existent. The residue that it had dumped on me felt like dead weight which burrowed itself into me until my skin became like dry coarse sandpaper.

Climbing daily into the sky, the sun would burn down relentlessly. At first the trees and leaves gave me some protection, but gradually they withered and shrivelled up as their roots were no longer able to take their sustenance from me. Simultaneously, the trees were dying as I blistered and cracked in the

heat. Would there never be an end to this continued thirst, agony and pain. It was like hell on earth.

As the cracks began to open into mini ravines, so some of the dross and objects that had been hidden within me, began to reveal themselves. Sometimes something pretty would appear, catching the sunlight and beaming out a radiance of colour which would momentarily dance over me as it disappeared over the horizon.

A small piece of irritating glass has just surfaced, cutting me with its bare, exposed edge, but that is nothing compared to the horror I am currently registering. One of the oldest trees is smouldering, soon to be engulfed in flames as a spark ignites. The flames fan as they greedily absorb the oxygen in the air taking nourishment from it for their venomous attack.

“It’s my fault, I’m to blame”. The glass that was hidden in me has reflected light and caused the frenzy around me. Tree after tree, shrub after shrub have succumbed. All that is left is a burnt-out shell. As the fire dies away the smoke and fumes are over-powering. The air is eerily silent and still filled with the stench of death.

A month passes and it seems almost as if there is a tangible spirit of excitement, whispering life back into the vegetation. Even the odd bird has stopped momentarily in its migration.

Personally, I have reached the point where it cannot get any worse. I am totally dried out, parched and guilt-ridden, almost at the point of quiet acceptance of my lot.

Looking skyward, there is a tiny cloud on the horizon, sporting a frilled grey edge. Almost like silent tears, two raindrops fall. Miraculously, they land on me. They are so precious, a gift which is almost too much to bear.

Around me, there is the odd shoot of hope just beginning to emerge out of the ashes of the old roots and my heart knows that this is the beginning of a new day.