

## Adventuring

*4 Advent Reflections for groups or individuals in the second half of life*

### Week Two: Moses

Moses spends his life working for something that will ultimately lie beyond him – a land of plenty and peace for a people who have known hardship and slavery. He has made his mistakes, yet kept faith in God who has kept faith in him. He uses his experience generously, to help those who are younger have an easier passage than he himself has known. He lays hands on his successor, Joshua, knowing he has done what belongs to him and the rest must be left to another.



### Older age is a time for letting go

Each of us has important work to do; and yet it is also part of a larger whole that lies beyond us. As children we depended on adults to nurture and guide us. We came to stand – more or less – on our own feet, and in our turn we helped others to begin their journey. In our work and our relationships we laid foundations that others now build on. What we do, the roles we have, the new initiatives we set up, are never our possession. The time comes to let go and allow another to carry on what we have begun.

But if letting go sounds negative remember Jesus' words: *'unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies it remains a single grain, but if it dies it yields a rich harvest'* [John 12.]

Sometimes we have to let go to let God. By this trust our life in God grows deeper. And, like Moses, we are given new work to do. For him, it was helping his people understand the significance of the road they had travelled, and preparing Joshua as his successor. What will it be for you?

Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak;  
let the earth hear the words of my mouth.  
May my teaching drop like the rain,  
my speech condense like the dew;  
like gentle rain on grass,  
like showers on new growth.  
For I will proclaim the name of the Lord;  
ascribe greatness to our God!  
Remember the days of old,  
consider the years long past;  
ask your father, and he will inform you;  
your elders, and they will tell you.  
When the Most High apportioned the nations,  
when he divided humankind,  
he fixed the boundaries of the peoples  
according to the number of the gods;  
the Lord's own portion was his people,  
Jacob his allotted share.  
He sustained him in a desert land,  
in a howling wilderness waste;  
he shielded him, cared for him,  
guarded him as the apple of his eye.  
As an eagle stirs up its nest,  
and hovers over its young;  
as it spreads its wings, takes them up,  
and bears them aloft on its pinions,  
the Lord alone guided him;  
no foreign god was with him....

Moses came and recited all the words of this song in the hearing of the people, he and Joshua son of Nun. When Moses had finished reciting all these words to all Israel, he said to them: 'Take to heart all the words that I am giving in witness against you today...This is no trifling matter for you, but rather your very life; through it you may live long in the land that you are crossing over the Jordan to possess.'

**Deuteronomy 32: 1-3,7-12, 44-47]**

### Questions for reflection and sharing;

1. For all his adventures, Moses never entered the Promised Land. He had to trust it would be there for the next generation. How do you think Moses might have felt about this?
2. Looking back at your life thus far, think of a time when like Moses you knew it was time to let go. How did this work out for you, and what did you experience?
3. Looking back, think of a time when, like Joshua, you were entrusted with a responsibility that others had worked for. What did you feel in taking this over?

### What is it time for you to do?

As winter draws on, the last leaves fall from the tree, making way for new buds for another season.

- In Advent we are invited to let go of anything that prevents us making room for God. What will you let fall in this season so that God's new life may form in you through prayer?
- Is there anything in your life that you are grasping tightly where you sense God inviting you to let go?

### Some Advent challenges:



1. Spend some time gazing at the landscape: trees stripped bare of their leaves, fields ploughed and ready for sowing, the openness of land and sky. Ask the Lord for the gift of an open and ready heart.
2. Clear out a cupboard that has long been cluttered. Be daring in throwing or giving away what you no longer need. Ask the Lord to simplify your life in the same way.

## A reflection by Oscar Romero

*Oscar Romero, the Archbishop of San Salvador, was assassinated in 1980 after speaking up for the rights of the poor and dispossessed in his country. Before his death he spoke about the importance of being generous in working for the Kingdom, trusting that our small acts of kindness and courage do make a difference, though we may never know in what ways.*

It helps now and then to step back and take the long view. The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts; it is even beyond our vision. We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work. Nothing we do is complete, which is another way of saying that the Kingdom is always beyond us.

No statement says all that could be said.

No prayer fully expresses our faith.

No confession brings perfection,

No pastoral visit brings wholeness.

No program accomplishes the church's mission. No set of goals and objectives achieves everything.

This is what we are about: We plant the seeds that one day will grow.

We water seeds already planted, knowing they hold future promise.

We lay foundations that will need further development.

We provide yeast that produces effects far beyond our capabilities.

We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realising that.

This enables us to do something, and do it very well. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way,

an opportunity for God's grace to enter and do the rest.

We may never see the end results,

but that's the difference between the master builder and the worker.

We are workers, not master builders – ministers not messiahs.

We are prophets of a future not our own.

### **Prayer:**

Lord, you choose to empty yourself to come close to us.

You come among us not as God almighty,

but as God, all-humble, taking the servant's place.

Open our hands to let fall what we grasp too tightly,

and to receive all those good gifts you so long to share.

Give us, with Moses, a thirst for the Promised Land of your Kingdom,

and the generosity to allow it to come through many hands,

and not just our own.