

# The God Who Speaks

## 1: A Still, Small Voice

### Opening Prayer and Welcome

God our loving Father,  
You made us your children in baptism.  
Pour out on us the gifts of your Holy Spirit.  
Help us as a parish to know the paths we must follow  
so as to build up your kingdom.  
Teach us to grow in faith,  
to encourage one another with words of hope,  
and to care for your family with love.  
Let us bear witness to the Good News,  
and be faithful followers of your Son,  
our Lord Jesus Christ  
who lives and reigns with you  
and the Holy Spirit  
for ever and ever.  
Amen.

### Introduction to the Theme

We may not notice it most of the time, but God is always speaking to us.

That word “*always*” is one we can often pass by.

We are taught, of course, that God speaks to us in Scripture, in the words of the Bible. But to ‘hear’ that word, we either have to sit down and read it, or we have to actually listen to it when it is read out for us at Mass or at other times.

But God is speaking to us *always*.

It might seem a bit much to go even further and say that God is speaking to us *always and everywhere*, but it’s true: Always and Everywhere. Not only in Scripture, but Always and Everywhere.

It **has** to be true because that *is* God: God IS Always and Everywhere.

### Scripture Reading

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#### Exodus 3:1-10 (NRSVACE)

Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. Then Moses said, ‘I must turn aside and look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up.’ When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, ‘Moses, Moses!’ And he said, ‘Here I am.’ Then he said, ‘Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.’ He said further, ‘I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

Then the Lord said, ‘I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them. So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.’

## Discussion

*You may find it helpful to sit with the text in silence for a little while. Then, in a spirit of helping one another, you could share your thoughts and discuss with one another what you notice in this text from the Bible. **Listen to one another** because God also speaks through our sisters and brothers in Christ, and through us.*

*You can use the following to help you, or explore other thoughts that come to mind:*

*What do you notice about this meeting between Moses and God? What strikes you as important?  
What do you think God wants Moses to understand?*

*What do you think God wants Moses to do?*

*Moses saw God in a burning bush. But if God is always and everywhere, where - would you say - have you perhaps seen God?*

## A quiet reflection

*Close your eyes and remain in quiet for a little while. Ask yourself if you can feel God's Presence right now. Or perhaps you can think back to something that happened today, or yesterday, that - on reflection - says to you that God is near, perhaps that God has spoken to you. Or it could be in a memory that comes to mind, where you can say, perhaps, that God was close?*

We think, perhaps, that God in the Bible is big and loud, but remember how often God's Presence and God's Call are something small, or silent, something spoken gently or something whispered. Perhaps only Moses saw something special, and heard something spoken to him, that day? Or do you remember Elijah who recognised God not in a storm, or in an earthquake, or in fire, but a gentle whisper (1 Kings 19:11-13)? Perhaps no-one else noticed a thing.

Because God is always and everywhere, it isn't hard to find God. Because God is always present, always here right now, then all we really need to do is be here too. We might, perhaps, have recognised God's Presence in a beautiful sunset, but that isn't because God is suddenly there: it's because we are suddenly HERE, right now! Our problem is not in finding God; it is being here right now ourselves so that we can recognise God again.

Wherever we look!

In the Bible.

In the person we're looking at.

In the job we have to do.

In our breath.

Everywhere. Right now.

Of course, our Faith teaches us that there are special places where we can look to see God:

- In Scripture.
- In the Eucharist.
- In our own prayer.

But we learn these things just to help us to focus, to look for God there.

And we can help ourselves by coming with a ready mind and a ready heart -

- To reading the Bible
- To coming to Mass
- To prayer

- by learning to be **present**.

## Scripture Reading

### John 1:35-51 (NRSVACE)

The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, ‘Look, here is the Lamb of God!’ The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, ‘What are you looking for?’ They said to him, ‘Rabbi’ (which translated means Teacher), ‘where are you staying?’ He said to them, ‘Come and see.’ They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o’clock in the afternoon. One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. He first found his brother Simon and said to him, ‘We have found the Messiah’ (which is translated Anointed). He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, ‘You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas’ (which is translated Peter).

The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, ‘Follow me.’ Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, ‘We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth.’ Nathanael said to him, ‘Can anything good come out of Nazareth?’ Philip said to him, ‘Come and see.’ When Jesus saw Nathanael coming towards him, he said of him, ‘Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!’ Nathanael asked him, ‘Where did you come to know me?’ Jesus answered, ‘I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you.’ Nathanael replied, ‘Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!’ Jesus answered, ‘Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these.’ And he said to him, ‘Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.’

## Discussion

What is happening here? Maybe we think something really BIG is happening here? But maybe something really small and ordinary is happening: these men see Jesus and they like what they see and they want to find out more. They’re standing near a river; Jesus is walking by. A bystander might notice nothing at all. The fact that John sees, and that these followers of his also see says something about them, not just something about how special Jesus was: it tells us that they were **present** to what was right in front of them, to what was in front of them right here right now. These are small happenings made wonderful because God is Present in Jesus and these, his new followers, are also present, to see, to hear him and to follow.

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You can use the following to help you, or explore other thoughts that come to mind:

What do you notice about Jesus? How does he behave?

What do you think you would have done if Jesus said “Come and see!” to you. What do you think you might have seen?

How could Andrew be so sure that he had “found the Messiah”?

Did you notice that we only know the name of ONE of those first two disciples of Jesus? We are given Andrew’s name, but who - do you imagine - might the other one have been?

## The Church Teaches

‘Jesus has no house, because his house is the people; it is we who are his dwelling place; his mission is to open God’s doors to all, to be the presence of God’s love’.

(Pope Francis, General Audience, 27 March 2013)

‘Let the risen Jesus enter your life—welcome him as a friend, with trust: he is life! If up till now you have kept him at a distance, step forward. He will receive you with open arms. If you have been indifferent, take a risk; you won’t be disappointed. If following him seems difficult, don’t be afraid. Trust him, be confident that he is close to you, he is with you, and he will give you the peace you are looking for and the strength to live as he would have you do’.

(Pope Francis, Homily for the Easter Vigil, 30 March 2013)

These are two small extracts from *The Church of Mercy*, which was published in 2014 gathering together some of the teachings of Pope Francis in his first year as Pope.

*Read these extracts again and sit with them for a short while in silence.*

*Then feel free to share with one another the thoughts that come to your heart.*

## Closing Prayer

We thank you, Gracious Father, for this time of reflection.

We ask you to give us a fresh understanding of your Presence in our lives.

Strengthen us, we pray, in our faith

Help us to be present to each moment

So that we may see You and hear Your Voice

Everywhere and in all things and all people.

Give us hearts and minds that seek the face of Jesus,

And help us, through the power of the Holy Spirit,

To be always grateful for your blessings,

For the gracious gift of Your Presence.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ

In the unity of your Holy Spirit.

Amen.

## Reading suggestion

Pope Francis, *The Church of Mercy*, Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd., 2014. This is a wonderful collection of extracts from Pope Francis’ speeches and sermons from his first year as Holy Father.