

Along the track

In the Present

Words matter. How we speak, how we describe things matters. Words enable us to connect with others, they help us share our thoughts and feelings, our ideas and dreams. They help us to describe how we feel, what is important to us, what we believe. The meaning and importance we give to things can depend upon the words we choose to describe them. They help us describe how we see what is real.

So what?

Too often we speak of God in the past tense, as someone not intimately involved in our lives and in our world. We often refer to the God who created the world or the God who saved the world, God in the past tense. But God is alive and very much present today; still creating, still saving, still loving, still involved in the lives and actions of people, including us.

We tend to think of God as somewhere beyond us. Yet, God is always present. Our task is not to search for the God beyond but to become aware of God who gives us life, who loves us, sustains us. God's presence is the source of all being, of our being too. Scripture reminds us: For it is in Him we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28). That will not change. What can change is our awareness of that. The Catechism offers many insights, not the least asking us in its own way, do we think of God as one who 'moves among us', who addresses us 'as friends'?

Faith is not about the past, although that is where we may find inspiration and encouragement. As far back as the eighth century BCE, the prophet Isaiah reminded the Israelites that God says to them:

Do not be afraid,
I have redeemed you:
I have called you by your name,
You are mine
You are precious in my sight
and honoured,
And I love you Isaiah 43: 1 – 4

Why would that have changed? That wasn't just a one-off. Scripture has many such messages to the people across many ages, in different places and in different circumstances. Sometimes those circumstances were positive and rewarding and at other times they were tough and challenging. But the message was the same. I am with you. The Church offers similar wisdom too. The Catechism reminds us:

The desire for God is written in the human heart, because each person is created by God and for God: and God never ceases to draw each person to himself. Only in God will each person find the truth and happiness that they never stop searching for. Catechism of the Catholic Church #27

Do I live my faith in the past? Do I speak of God as someone I used to know? Do I speak about what God did do, not what God is doing right here and now, what God can still do? Do I think about or speak about my relationship with God in terms of when I was a child, but don't or cannot speak of walking with God in the present?

Changing the way we speak about God by using the present tense helps us understand that we are on a journey, that faith is about an ongoing relationship, it is not something static. Being in a relationship takes two. We don't have to step out of our ordinary world to discover God, to go off into the wilderness or spend hours in contemplation. That may be an option for some but not many. God is already present, but we are not always present to God, not present to God's daily invitation to live life to the full, not always present to the beauty God shows us in creation each day, to God's invitation in those we meet each day.

It is worth asking ourselves sometimes where in our lives today do we experience God's love, God's patience, what God's forgiveness may feel like? Who are the ones who showed us that, who helped us experience that? These gifts from God are present, often conveyed to us by the people we know and the familiar circumstances of our lives, in the beauty we take for granted each day.

Each day may you feel the wonder of being alive,
experience each day as a precious gift.
May you come to realise that you are never alone,
And that God is with you
in the joys and sorrows, the hopes and anxieties
the day may bring.
Take time to celebrate and give thanks for those
you meet today
and open your eyes to the quiet miracles that
happen in your life.

Regards
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