

## Exodus Part I: Joseph's Blessings

Images from the Hebrews' exodus from Egypt with Moses come to mind as I ponder the uncertainties of these days. What follows below is the first in a series of personal reflections on how the Exodus events can speak to us as followers of Jesus at this time.

The Exodus story has roots in Genesis 37 with the emergence of Joseph. Joseph is seventeen years old, the beloved son of Jacob's old age. His brothers are envious of their father's special affection toward him. When Joseph recounts two dreams of his family bowing down to him, the brothers decide to get rid of him. Instead of putting him to death as planned, they end up selling him into slavery. They tear up Joseph's special robe given him by Jacob, sprinkle it with goat's blood, and tell their father a wild animal has torn his beloved son to pieces.

Joseph is taken to Egypt, purchased by a wealthy Egyptian named Potiphar, and begins to demonstrate keen management skills. Potiphar puts him in charge of his household, and his affairs prosper. The book of Genesis tells us that Potiphar saw this as a sign of God's favour on Joseph:

The LORD was with Joseph, and he became a successful man; ...His master saw that the LORD was with him, and that the LORD caused all that he did to prosper in his hands. ...he made him overseer of his house and put him in charge of all that he had. ... the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; the blessing of the LORD was on all that he had, in house and field. (Gen 39, 2-5)

As a slave, Joseph no longer had the freedoms he once enjoyed. Without doubt, he had many losses to grieve, but in the end, he seized the opportunities before him. In so doing, he experienced the blessing hand of God, promised to Abraham and his descendants, in his affairs:

I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." (Gen 12, 2-3)

What kinds of freedoms have been removed from you this year?

Where have your gifts and blessings shone through despite these lost or curtailed freedoms?

- have you accomplished things you never thought you would?
- are you discovering talents and skills you didn't think you possessed?
- are those you serve (students & parents/caregivers, family members) showing new signs of appreciation for you, for your work?

The promises and blessings of Abraham that thrived in Joseph, and much more, have been poured out on us in Christ. Consider the words of St. Paul to the first Christians at Ephesus:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. (Eph 1,3)

The Risen Jesus, seated at the right hand of the Father, shares all His gifts and blessings with the members of His body, “each according to the measure of [His] gift.” (Eph 4,7) Sometimes, it takes a crisis to move us forward to the next level – to discover and put into action these blessings. Consider the new insights, shifts in approaches to learning, lateral thinking and problem-solving skills, new forms of reaching out, of being in relationship, the innovation and adaptive skills we have all developed in these times of restriction. These are blessings, perhaps underdeveloped or un-tapped... until now.

These times have forced us to make *choices*: to consider our circumstances a *prison* where we passively languish without hope; OR to become like Joseph, *trust God’s promises*, take hold of new opportunities, and allow hope to become the dominant active virtue in our lives. God is always preparing us for something better, more glorious – more blessed. This was the case with Joseph. Trusting in the promise, drawing on his gifts and the promise of God’s blessing in adversity, he built a legacy that reached far beyond anything he could have imagined. Trust the promise, trust the blessings. They’re ours in Christ.

To be continued...