

PAINTING
Wilfried Joye

MEDITATION
Bernie Mullen

‘As the deer that longs...’



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Introduction:

Wilfried Joye was born in Dadizele, Belgium in 1939. He was ordained a priest in 1964 in the order of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. He has been working as a missionary in Potchefstroom in South Africa since 1966. He has often been exhibited in S A and in Belgium and his paintings often portray rural life and the human situation. His works are vibrant and appealing and he uses the fish as his symbol in most of his works. This is because the fish represents insight (it never closes its eyes) these remain open for the reception of life and truth. The mouth of the fish is always readily open and this symbolises capacity for the ‘food of life’ in its purity and fullness. The paintings of Joye are often religious and he presents to the world a journey of deep faith, the sacredness of life and the joy of hope. Fr Joye was a close friend of Fr Frans Claerhout and he often exhibited with him in South Africa and internationally.

Opening Prayer:

In the desert
Water comes to surface in the mind,
In small eye-oceans
That strain,
That long to feel the rain,
And yearn to glimpse a lake of life created.

In the desert, water-gifts are sudden
In small heart swellings that dam,
That battle breath,
That long to free
The burgeoning floods toward the sea...

In the desert heart-yearnings bear burden.
Fire flames the soul
In myriad memory searing;
That smoulder and that spark
Dared thoughts of liberation
In tears that finally fall
In desert death’s feared aftermath.

In the desert
Rivers of being come to surface
In all who brave the earth and sky,
Who crawl and walk and fly
The dry dunes of desire
In the long, tried gifts
Of Life’s waters so completely
Given...

Pause for reflection:

Centring Music:

Lacus Somniorum (Lake of Dreams)
Karl Jenkins
CD: Imagined Oceans
Sony Classical: SK60668

Scripture Reading:

John 4: 7-15

'A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." His disciples had gone into the town to buy food. The Samaritan woman said to him, "How can you, a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink?" (For Jews use nothing in common with Samaritans.) Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God and who is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him and he would have given you living water." (The woman) said to him, "sir, you do not even have a bucket and the cistern is deep; where then can you get this living water?" Jesus answered and said to her, "Every one who drinks this water will be thirsty again; but whoever drinks the water I shall give will never thirst; the water I shall give will become in her a spring of water welling up to eternal life." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may not be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water..."

Pause for reflection:

Meditation:

The wide eyes of anxiety and of desire draw us deeply into the depicted predicament in this painting. Both emotions are conveyed in several ways. Not only do the eyes of the woman stare far into the beyond but so do the bird and fish eyes. All point in the same direction; beyond the here and now to what may be experienced post present life. It seems that all creation longs for the quenching of search and desire; for ultimate assurance of complete security, fulfilment and peace. Captured in creation and in human attitude is the thirst for the ultimate death of assurance and the realisation of Joy, Truth and full knowledge of Love. Our sojourn in the desert of faith is simply a means to this end. All our longing is towards this end. Our life of blind endurance will die and our life after the experience of this will be born. We have only to wait out and to travel the journey.

Pause for reflection

Prayer: Psalm 42

As the deer longs for streams of water,
So my soul longs for you, my God.
My being thirsts for God, the living God.
My tears have become my food day and night.
As they ask daily, 'Where is your God?'
Those times I recall
As I pour out my soul,
When I went in procession with the crowd...

As the deer that longs for streams of water,
So my soul longs for you my God...

Pause for reflection:

Wilfried Joye takes us graphically on this journey. He does this through design, through the use of colour and through all else that is present in the work. Our first area of contemplation is easily the woman's face. Apart from her large, gazing eyes that first compel our attention are other features that compliment them. Her pursed and tremulous mouth speaks of the same anxiety and yearning. It remains mute and its woeful silence deeply affects us. Her straight nose and finely arched eyebrows emphasise emotional turmoil. Her stretched neck, bared to the desert sun and her facial skin tones speak of long exposure to dry existence. Both have a weathered look about them. The colour of the woman's head dress speaks to us of mourning. The colours of the bird's chest twin this idea. The foreground hues of the earth introduce to us subtly stated connotations of sand dunes. These match the facial tones so that we feel the woman belongs in the desert and that it is where she lives. We empathise. We encounter our own desert demands.

Pause for reflection:

Prayer: Psalm 42

I went with them to the house of God,
Amid loud cries of thanksgiving,
With the multitude keeping festival.
Why are you downcast my soul;
Why do you groan within me?
Wait for God, whom I shall praise again,
My saviour and my God.
As the deer that years for streaming of water
So my soul longs for you, O God...

Pause for reflection:

We move from empathy, not only for the woman but for ourselves, to real disturbance and fear when we notice the widely open and thirsting mouth of what may be the deer or some other animal that does not belong in and that does not survive the desert. It lies directly behind the woman's head as though it is part of her thought and an extension of her own being. It tells of her insecurity, her fragility, her exposure and of her need for spiritual sustenance. It also fuels the dread that if we do not live in real faith all life will be lost. Spiritual death looms. We note too the large tree bark that share the colour of the woman's eyes. This saves us from despair. The leaves that arise from what looks half dead are full and perfectly shaped, almost moulded into the uniformity of growth. They are greened by life. They pierce straight from the bark in their spring. They lend us some comfort.

Pause for reflection:

Prayer: Psalm 42

My soul is downcast within me;
Therefore I remember you
From the land of the Jordan and Hermon,

From the land of Mount Mizar.
Here deep calls to deep in the roar of your torrents.
All your waves and breakers sweep over me.
At dawn may the Lord bestow faithful love
That I may sing praise through the night,
Praise to the God of my life.

As the deer that longs for streams of water
So my soul longs for you, O God...

Pause for reflection:

Comfort continues the journey. We are not left alone and in need. Our thirst is quenched and our faith complemented by hope and trust. Joye paints the sky in faded blues. A cloud appears, the sun is toned down into soft yellows. The woman's dress reflects the bright yellow of hope, intelligence, enlightenment, optimism and wisdom. Joye makes the paint texture thick and bold, perhaps to emphasise this. There is more to lift the human spirit. The verge of land behind the woman speaks of rich, green fertility and the mountains to climb are distant, not daunting. The very bright blues of sprung water flows in torrents through the desert to form an oasis for the soul. We are graphically reminded of the words spoken by Jesus at the well of hope: "Every one who drinks this water will be thirsty again; but whoever drinks the water I shall give will never thirst; the water I shall give will become in her a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

Prayer:

I say to God, "My rock,
Why do you forget me?
Why must I go about mourning
With the enemy oppressing me?"
It shatters my bones, when my adversaries reproach me.
They say to me daily; "Where is your God?"
Why are you downcast me soul,
Why do you groan within me?
Wait for God, whom I will praise again,
My saviour and my God.

As the deer that longs for streams of water
So my soul longs for you, O God...

Pause for reflection:

What finalises our renewed hope and faith in the human journey are the bird and the fish. Joye chooses blue to associate its flight with the heavens, where it belongs and where we finally belong. It looks ill at ease on its human perch and readies itself for its sky voyage. The colour shades of the fish are equally reassuring. The desert toned one also coupled with the shades of mourning is preceded by the much larger and more prominent, bright pink one that negotiates the flowing water. Pink, in many psychological theories and in many cultures represents spring, gratitude, appreciation, admiration, sympathy, health and joy.

As we leave this painting we feel we are able, with the psalmist, to 'wait for God, whom I will praise again, my saviour and my God.' We are moved to sing praise through our night and to praise in all we are and do, the God of our Life.

Closing music:

The Deer's Cry (from The Pilgrim)
Sung by Lisa (of Celtic Women)
CD: Celtic Women presents: Lisa
Manhattan Records: 0946 3 **42964** 2 7

I arise today
Through the strength of heaven:
Light of sun,
Radiance of moon,
Splendour of fire,
Speed of lightning,
Swiftness of wind,
Depth of sea,
Stability of earth,
Firmness of rock.

I arise today

Through God's strength to pilot me:

God's eyes to look before me,

God's wisdom to guide me,

God's way to lie before me,

God's shield to protect me,

From all who shall wish me ill,

Afar and anear,

Alone and in a multitude.

Against every cruel merciless power that may oppose my body and soul

Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me,

Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me,

Christ on my right, Christ on my left,

Christ when I lie down,

Christ when I sit down,

Christ when I arise,

Christ to shield me,

Christ in the heart of every one who thinks of me,

Christ in the mouth of every one who speaks of me.

I arise today.