

Reflection - 21st December 2020 - ☉ Oriens.

My rowing coach tells me that the strongest muscles in our body are in our legs. The force they exert is what really propels a rowing boat through the water. Try and use only the strength in your arms and you'll actually slow the boat down. The legs are indeed amazing creations of God, and if you want to leap either like a gazelle, a primo ballerino in Giselle, or an Olympic high or long jumper, you need strong leg muscles. To leap is a gesture of power, and expression of strength. To leap is joyous, exhilarating. Linguistically, we use leaping metaphorically in phrases such as, "My heart leapt!"

Psalm Eighteen begins, "I will love thee, O Lord my strength;" and later the Psalmist says that "with the help of God I shall leap over the wall." With a leap we can jump over obstacles, span chasms, and cover distance at increased speed. The one who leaps, therefore, is able to bound towards his objective as fast as he can. Leaping is as near as our gravity-bound bodies come to flight.

In the Song of Songs, God is the Beloved; the bridegroom leaping towards his beloved bride. He leaps over the mountains, over all barriers, seeking communion with us. He leaps over our sins and all the obstacles we put in his way, and he finds us coily hiding behind the lattice, and he calls us to arise and come away with him from the winter of sin, and shame, and death, into the Springtime of his Kingdom of abundance and fecundity. Let me hear your voice, for it is lovely. Yes, he wants to hear our joy and delight in the praise of our Creator, in the thanksgiving we owe to him, in the loyalty that is his due. He does not want us to have a relationship of servitude with him, but one of communion, hence the explicit language of love and romantic pursuit. God is the tremendous lover.

The second leaping, we hear of today in Saint Luke's Gospel, is the leaping of John the Baptist in the womb of Elizabeth. He hails the Emmanuel, the God who is with us, the fruit of Mary's womb, the result of Mary's yes as the Bride to the Bridegroom's Marriage proposal. The pre-born John leaps, for he recognises that, beyond metaphor or allegory, he is in the actual presence of God his Beloved, the Day-Spring, the Oriens, the Sun of Righteousness who has risen upon us; as his father Zechariah, his mute tongue unstopped, will later extol in his Benedictus upon John's birth. "And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her from the Lord." This is clearly an inspired acclamation. Elizabeth has not even spoken with Mary yet. John is not even born. God is leaping over all the obstacles to get as quickly as he can to the message: 'Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away... let me see your face, let me hear your voice, for your voice is sweet, and your face comely.'

God is leaping towards us today, his abundant love overcoming all boundaries - our sin and shame, death and decay, corruption and evil, our fickleness, our faithlessness - and he invites us, as his bride, to be with him for ever in endless glory. Let us use what little strength there is in our metaphorical legs to rise up, to say "Yes! Let it be done to me according to thy word." to leap after him exclaiming, "My soul doth magnify the Lord." "Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!"