

2nd Wednesday of Advent I& II 2020
<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/120920.cfm>

Isaiah 40:25-31

*To whom can you liken me as an equal?
says the Holy One.*

*Lift up your eyes on high
and see who has created these things:
He leads out their army and numbers
them, calling them all by name.*

*By his great might and the strength of his
power not one of them is missing!*

*Why, O Jacob, do you say, and declare, O
Israel, "My way is hidden from the LORD,
and my right is disregarded by my God"?*

*Do you not know or have you not heard?
The LORD is the eternal God, creator of
the ends of the earth.*

*He does not faint nor grow weary, and his
knowledge is beyond scrutiny.*

*He gives strength to the fainting; for the
weak he makes vigor abound.*

*Though young men faint and grow weary,
and youths stagger and fall, they that
hope in the LORD will renew their
strength, they will soar as with eagles'
wings; they will run and not grow weary,
walk and not grow faint.*

Psalm 103:1-2, 3-4, 8 and 10

*Bless the LORD, O my soul;
and all my being, bless his holy name.
Bless the LORD, O my soul,
and forget not all his benefits.*

*He pardons all your iniquities,
he heals all your ills.
He redeems your life from destruction,
he crowns you with kindness and
compassion.*

*Merciful and gracious is the LORD,
slow to anger and abounding in kindness.
Not according to our sins does he deal
with us,
nor does he requite us according to our
crimes.*

Matthew 11:28-30

*Jesus said to the crowds:
"Come to me, all you who labor and are
burdened, and I will give you rest.*

*Take my yoke upon you and learn from
me, for I am meek and humble of heart;
and you will find rest for yourselves.*

For my yoke is easy, and my burden light."

X

They that hope in the LORD will renew their strength, they will soar as with eagles' wings; they will run and not grow weary, walk and not grow faint. (Isaiah)

"Come to me... and I will give you rest. (Matthew)

Is this not that for which we hope?

Life has a way of beating us down. Life challenges us beyond our abilities and resources. We hunger beyond what is available. What we obtain does not last. A meal today, cannot nourish us next week. Affection leads to separation.

This is the human condition. Ecclesiastes of the Old Testament reminds us:

Vanity of vanities, says Qoheleth,
vanity of vanities! All things are vanity!*

*What profit have we from all the toil
which we toil at under the sun?*

*One generation departs and another generation comes,
but the world forever stays.*

*The sun rises and the sun sets;
then it presses on to the place where it rises.*

*Shifting south, then north,
back and forth shifts the wind, constantly shifting its course.*

*All rivers flow to the sea,
yet never does the sea become full.
To the place where they flow, the rivers continue to flow.*

*All things are wearisome,
too wearisome for words.
The eye is not satisfied by seeing nor has the ear enough of hearing.*

*What has been, that will be;
what has been done, that will be done.
Nothing is new under the sun!*

Even the thing of which we say, "See, this is new!" has already existed in the ages that preceded us.

*There is no remembrance of past generations;
nor will future generations be remembered by those who come after them.*

* *Vanity of vanities: (hebel) a Hebrew superlative expressing the supreme degree of futility and emptiness.ⁱ*

Whether one is left with futile cynicism or undying optimism, we have all experienced at one time or another this deep sense of despair. We have been at the bottom looking up to be rescued, to be saved.

Do we even dare ask for strength, hope for vigor, to run and even dream to soar?

I did dream once about soaring. It was around 60 years ago (that would make me around 8). Forgive the haziness that comes with six decades of filters. Yet, I think it must have been a pretty powerful experience to survive in my memory and imagination through all this time.

I dreamed that I was flying—not exactly flying, but hovering, suspended, weightless. I could move from here to there in mid-air, but it was more like directed drifting than flying. It was the feeling of airiness that impressed me the most. I had never experienced anything like that before. It was exhilarating. And yet it felt natural, like being freed to be natural.

I woke up ready to repeat the experience. But I couldn't. I never did. I never experienced that sensation again.



Dreams are funny things. Some scientists argue that it is just a random firing of synaptic junctions triggering this memory center or another in a jumbled way as our brain necessarily resets every night. Some say it is our subconscious re-aligning into meaningfulness.

What I think is funny about that 8-year old's dream, is that I experienced something I had never experienced before and had never since. So what memory was triggered to give me that middle of the night sensation? I have no idea. Your guess is as good as mine.

What I can say is that I have a sense of what it means to soar. I've seen eagles soar Up North. As with everyone else, I sympathize with the freedom of their flight. Yet, because of that 8-year old's dream, I can feel their soar. It is wonderful. It is in harmony with an ecstatic spiritual experience, but oh, so much more sensual, being felt deeply in my weightless core.

This stretches one's imagination. I don't think the 8-year-old Pat would have had the understanding or vocabulary to express that experience. I still don't have the understanding or vocabulary to express that experience. But, it is my real experience. It teases me about the "more" that is beyond my daily life.

When I wonder, *What profit have we from all the toil which we toil at under the sun?*

When I despair that, *All things are wearisome, too wearisome for words...*

When I cry out to be saved, my Lord assures me:

They that hope in the LORD will renew their strength, they will soar as with eagles' wings; they will run and not grow weary, walk and not grow faint. (Isaiah)

Come to me... and I will give you rest. (Matthew)

I, as you, will face future trial and despair. I will cry out for deliverance from pain and grief. Yet, I have confidence that my Lord will be with me, to endure with me, strengthen me, make me run, and allow me to soar-- a destiny to hope for. I'll come back to you if it's anything like that 8-year old's... in your dreams that is.

X

ⁱ Introduction to Ecclesiastes, New American Bible, Revised)