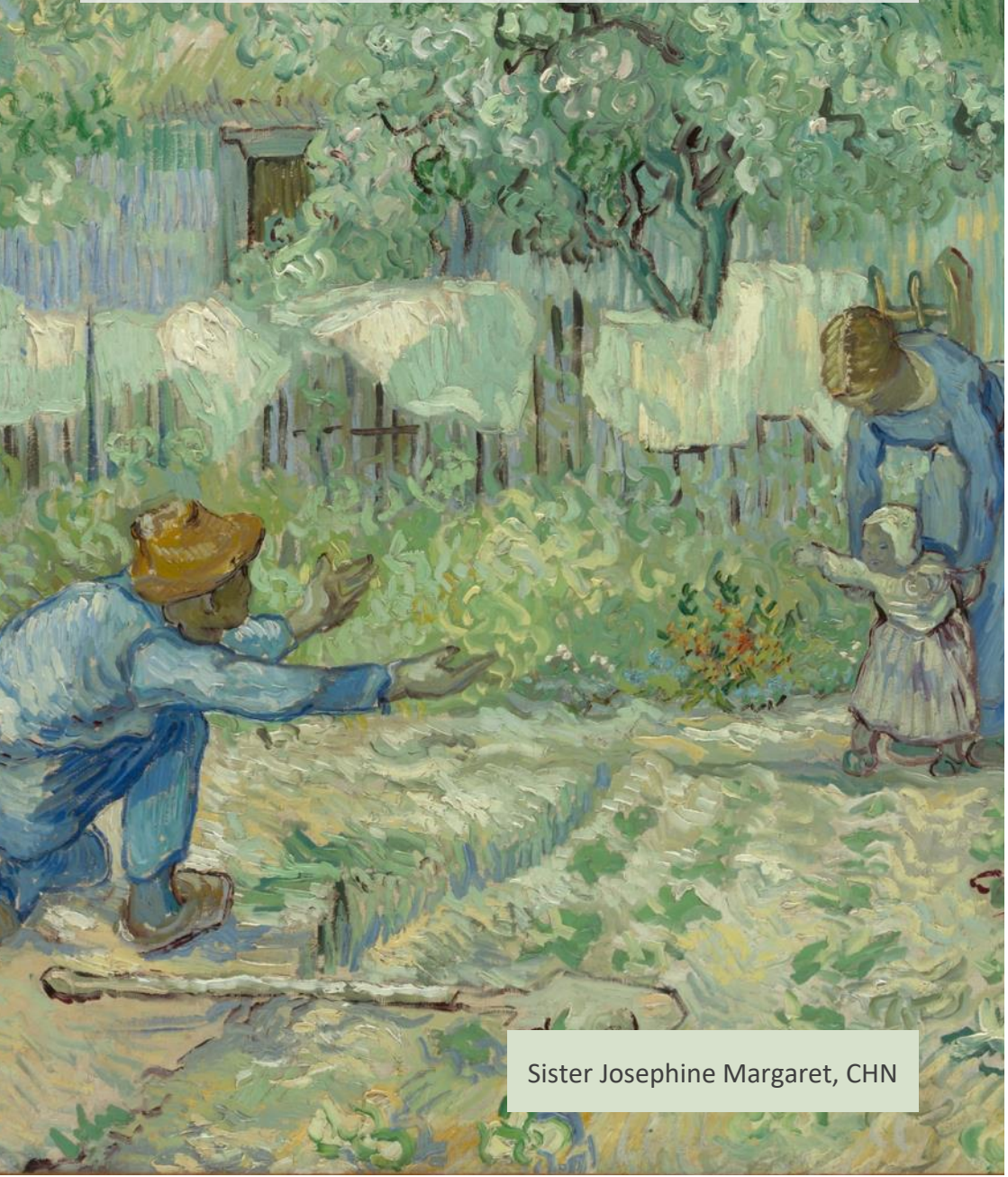




MARCH 2020: AS I CONTINUE MY JOURNEY
CHN Series: Aid to Prayer and Reflection



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First Steps by Van Gogh, based on Millet

What is actually happening when we pray?

We see in Van Gogh's painting the small child moving from the security of its mother's arms, and responding to that innate spirit within us which urges us to walk and become independent.

The Spirit of God is at work within us, and God stoops down as in the Incarnation, reaching out in his love for all He has created, drawing us to Himself.

This is the setting of our life's journey. What is God's plan and purpose? How do we respond to his loving care and guidance?

In many ways we can identify with the very mixed group of people who followed Moses out from the slavery of Egypt who over the forty years of their travelling in the desert became one people, who gradually learned about the nature of this one God who had chosen them to be his people (not for their own benefit and glory but so that they could be God's witness to all people.)

As we set off on our journey, let us look back, from an "Exodus perspective", to reflect on where we have been, what we have learned, and received personally, and give thanks to God for all his blessings.

What do we bring on our journey, with God as our Guide and Companion?

The Old Testament bears witness to the unique historical experiences of a particular people, the Israelites.



'Abraham' by Minnah8812 on flickr, fair use

Ancient Covenant records in the Bible describe the relationship between God, and Abraham and his descendants. – an agreement with mutual promises and responsibilities.

About 2000 B.C. God called Abram to leave Haran -his own land, his family etc in Mesopotamia, and led him to Canaan. God established a Covenant with Abraham. God promised to give the land of Canaan to him, and make of him a great nation, and that all peoples would be blessed through him. “I will be God to you and to your offspring”. Abraham’s people were to keep within this covenant relationship, acknowledging no other god, and obeying God’s commands as they were revealed. Male circumcision was the outward sign that sealed the relationship.

There was famine in the land – a recurring event, and eventually the people, called the Hebrews, went down to Egypt, where after many years they were enslaved, subjected to forced labour and oppressed in every way. About 1300 BC

Moses became their leader and led their escape into the desert where they were forged into a community with a single religious allegiance.

The Book of Exodus narrates all this. It is dominated by the life and actions of Moses, arranged around 2 great events – The Exodus from Egypt and the establishment of the Covenant at Sinai.

During the forty years of the Exodus experience, God revealed his Name to the people. To know God's Name signified knowing God and his nature.

God revealed Himself as Lord of history, at work to further his purposes, drawing people to Himself, faithful to his promises, remembering and caring for his people, always present amongst them, gracious and righteous, just, merciful and holy.

At Sinai, the motley crowd, despite their continuing rebellion, their stubborn and self-centred lives, were recognizably a people, who had chosen God as their God. On Mt Sinai God gave the 10 Commandments to Moses. The "Book of the Covenant", described in the Biblical books of Numbers, Leviticus and especially Deuteronomy, showed them how to apply the commandment principles in their own lives.

The Book of Exodus is an unusual record. It bears witness to the unique historical experience of a particular people, the Israelites, with whom we today can easily identify. And we can see the story as a narration of God's action, his self-disclosure – what God has done, is doing and will do, as He fulfils his plan to reconcile all people, all creation, to Himself.

Do not forget the things your eyes have seen, do not let them slip from your mind all the days of your life. (Deuteronomy 4:9)

Loving God, give me peace of heart and mind as I reflect, and make me more aware of how You have cared for me and challenged me on my journey, and continue to reach out to me and draw me to yourself. Encourage me to see more clearly the many aspects of my life that call me to gratitude and wonder. You have shown me that I don't need to fear the wilderness, or feeling lost, because You are always there, my loving Guide and Companion.

Can I remember from my recent experiences on the journey...



Abolition of Slavery, Martinique, from Pixabay

“ Egyptian situations of slavery”,
which I have been able to leave behind?



AdobeStock_69061679

Burning Bush times ,

when my faith was affirmed, and I could set out in a new direction?

Times of difficulty and challenge when the **Waters parted** and I saw the way through?



AdobeStock_263557664

My companions on the way who were with me in times of doubt, and confusion?



Image by MabelAmber from Pixabay



The manna and quail which sustained me and nourished me in my need?

Image by Anna Tis from Pexels



The fire and cloud of steady support and encouragement from others, assuring me that God was near and guiding us?

From image by Johannes Westermann from Pixabay



From image on Free-photos from Pixabay

Moses' example -

mentors and guides who continue to hope and trust in God, that He is working his purpose out, and will bring me/ us to our Promised Land?

Write, or make, a prayer of Thanksgiving for these blessings.

What other memories have come to mind?

Perhaps make a list of significant challenges, opportunities, joys, insights, you have recognized and want to spend more time thinking about.

Are you nervous about anything as you continue the Journey?

What do you most fear?

What is your greatest need at this time?

What is your greatest hope?

What good things/blessings are you bringing with you to this time of new beginnings?

What good things/blessings have you to share with your fellow travellers?

How well do we know the Exodus story in our Bible? It is well-worth careful reading and study. It can be seen as an account of God's loving action, and his self-revealing: what God has done, is doing and can do as He seeks to draw us to Himself, and complete his plan/purpose for each one of us.

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