

Lectionary readings: 1 Kings 19: 1-4, 8-15a; Psalm 42-43; Galatians 3: 23-29; Luke 8: 26-39

For reflection and prayer

- **1 Kings 19:** I wonder how many of us have prayed Elijah's prayer: *'I have had enough, Lord. Take my life.'* It's good to be honest with God about how we're feeling. Elijah was lonely, depressed, dejected, feeling rejected, and sorry for himself. And God ministered to him. And then God revealed Himself to Elijah in a 'still, small voice', quietly, gently. We surround ourselves with so much noise that often, I'm sure, we miss the still, small voice of God. Why not make for more stillness and silence in your life this week? God said to Elijah, *'What are you doing here, Elijah?'* Hear God say that to you this week: *'What are you doing here?'* Share with God where 'here' is for you (eg how you are feeling, what's going on in your life at present). And then as you wait silently before God, hear what God wants to say to you.
- **Psalm 42-43:** Like the Psalmist, we can all experience discouragement. Hear God say to you, *'Why are you discouraged?'* Tell God how you feel and what is causing your discouragement. Then listen for what God wants to say to you. Share with God what you have learned about yourself and about Him. Reflect on whether you can say with the Psalmist: *'As the deer longs for flowing streams, so I long for You, O Beloved. I thirst for You, my Beloved, living water, the only One who can quench my thirst.'*
- **Galatians 3:** Through faith in Christ we have a close, intimate relationship of love with God. This

relationship is at the heart of Christianity. We are now clothed in Christ, filled with His life through the Spirit of God within us. So we might like to reflect on what it means for us to be 'clothed in Christ'. Does it require us to be 'naked' before God, honest about who and what we are, before we can be clothed in Christ? We really don't know how to live - really live - apart from God. Rituals can't teach us that; living a disciplined, morally upright life can't bring us into fullness of life - only a relationship of love with the living God. How can we enter more deeply into such a relationship? Do we want to?

- **Luke 8:** Here is a man, the madman of Gerasa, who is desperately lonely, living a pathetic life in the cemetery, the place of death, naked, living in a world of illusions, uncontrollable, screaming, crazed. And into this place of chaos and confusion comes Jesus. The amazing thing is that it is the 'madman' who recognises Jesus for who He is. *'What is your name?'* asks Jesus, treating the man like a human being, the first time perhaps anyone has done that for years. The man has forgotten his true identity, and Jesus sets about restoring to the man his dignity as a human being, made in the image and likeness of God, letting him know he is precious. This was a 'holy moment' as the man came face to face with Love and responded and was changed, the human image restored. Why were the local people so full of fear? Was it because they liked having the 'madman' around, for it made them feel they were all right as they were? Was it because they were comfortable with their life and didn't want it challenged and they saw that, if Jesus stayed around, they too would have to change? What does this story say to us where we are?