



*God will guide us . . . with joy*

THE PROPHET BARUCH

#### WHO WAS THE PROPHET BARUCH?

It is thought that Baruch was the prophet Jeremiah's scribe, his name means 'blessed'. The book of Baruch only appears in the deuterocanonical section of Catholic bibles. In this Sunday's reading from Baruch, we hear echoes of other prophets who were also envisioning the return of the exiled people to the land of Israel.

Baruch's message to a people who had lost everything was an encouraging invitation to let go of sorrow and distress and to 'put on the beauty and glory of God for ever.' He offers a profound message of hope that God will guide them with mercy and joy on a challenging journey.

Baruch gives us wonderful images of God's tender care for the people by creating a safe path for them through deserts and harsh mountainous country. Pope Francis often writes and speaks about God's tenderness that is available to all of us:

*It seems that our God wants to sing us a*

*lullaby. Our God is gifted at this. His tenderness is this: He is a father and a mother. Many times God said: 'But if a mother forgets her child, I will not forget you.' He carries us deep within. He is the God who with this dialogue makes himself small to make us understand, to make us trust in him...*

#### THE MESSAGE OF THE PROPHETS

Fr Brian Boyle writes that the prophets were intensely involved in their present time. Prophecy was not about foretelling the future. They were more interested in bringing God's word to the people.

The socio-economic changes in Israelite society and the emergence of a new wealthy commercial class, there was no sense of solidarity with the marginalised. Changes in society had created a large number of hidden poor who were powerless in this society. The kings of Israel and Judah relied on political alliances to stay in power. The prophets challenged the kings to have faith in God and to establish justice, especially for the poor. They were also critical of the official religion as

being an obstacle to faith in God. Their critiques concerned corruption for the gain of power and wealth.

#### LIVING IN HOPE

Sr Antonia from Jamberoo Abbey, recently facilitated a retreat that focussed on living with hope. She states:

In **Hebrew**, the word hope means **expectation** and it also means **cord or rope**, which comes from a root word that means to **wait for** or **wait upon**. Perhaps we could say that God hopes that we will go on hoping.

God waits and hopes.

To live in hope then, anxiety needs to diminish and to be replaced by a patient waiting, an expectation that knows that God is present in this situation, that God is searching, God is longing and God will reveal what God needs to reveal to us, in God's time.

Hope is not wishful thinking; it is not imagining the outcome nor is it begging God for a particular answer. As Abbot Gregory Polan says "it is a letting go, a surrender, a leap of faith." It is a hugely courageous step and one that is made in humility, and often when we are in mortal anguish. It is this surrender, strange as it may seem, that actually ignites our hope.

#### BARUCH'S INVITATION FOR TODAY

Walter Brueggemann wrote *Prophetic Imagination* in 2006. He described prophetic ministry as: *to nurture, nourish and evoke a consciousness and perception alternative to the consciousness and perception of the dominant culture around us.*

It doesn't take a lot of imagination for us to call to mind the people and places today who are clothed in 'sorrow and distress'. The numbers of forcibly displaced people and those seeking asylum are, according to the UNHCR in 2021 are over 84 million people.

In *Fratelli tutti*, Pope Francis writes:

Every war leaves our world worse than it was before. War is a failure of politics and of humanity, a shameful capitulation, a stinging defeat before the forces of evil. .... Let us think of the refugees and the displaced, those who suffered the effects of atomic radiation or chemical attacks, the mothers who lost their

children, and the boys and girls maimed or deprived of their childhood ... let us listen with an open heart to the stories they tell. n 261



Some of the hundreds of refugees detained in Belarus

During Advent we can join with Pope Francis in the call for global friendship and solidarity and pray one of the prayers from *Fratelli tutti* :

Lord, Father of our human family, you created all human beings equal in dignity: pour forth into our hearts a fraternal spirit and inspire in us a dream of renewed encounter, dialogue, justice and peace.

Move us to create healthier societies and a more dignified world, a world without hunger, poverty, violence and war. May our hearts be open to all the peoples and nations of the earth.

May we recognise the goodness and beauty that you have sown in each of us, and thus forge bonds of unity, common projects, and shared dreams. Amen.

#### CHRISTMAS GIFTS THAT WILL ASSIST REFUGEES HERE AND OVERSEAS

**Jesuit Refugee Services (JRS)** will have many demands made on its scarce resources to assist refugees in the coming weeks. Donations can be made online at: <https://aus.jrs.net/en/news/spring-appeal-2021/>

**Caritas Australia** offers a **Global Gift** alternative to purchasing a Christmas gift. The website provides details of what can be purchased in lieu of a gift. A card will be sent to the recipient on your behalf.

<https://www.globalgifts.org.au/>