

An undeserving agent of God's purpose

Gillian Cooper *reflects on* Genesis 28:10-19a

Jacob does not deserve to meet God at the place he comes to call Bethel, House of God. He has cheated his brother Esau out of the status and blessing that are his right as the eldest. Now he is running away, afraid to face the consequences of his behaviour. But as he sleeps on the ground a ladder appears, with angels going up and down. And then there is the voice of God, not, as we might expect, at the top of the ladder, but right down on the ground, next to Jacob. The voice speaks a remarkable message. Despite everything, Jacob will inherit the promise made to his father and grandfather. He will carry forward the destiny of God's

people. He is the chosen one, guaranteed God's presence with him always.

God does not always use the deserving. God does not choose the more generous, more deserving Esau. Sometimes God stands beside the least likely people and calls them to be agents of God's purpose in the world. That is good news for all of us.

And by the way, Old Testament angels do not have wings. That is how they can be entertained unawares. And they need a ladder to get from heaven to earth. ☺

Generous God, you are always ready to overlook our weaknesses, and to forgive our failings. Help us to believe in your calling, that, undeserving as we are, we may be ready to fulfil in the world the purpose to which you call us. Amen.

Stained-glass window in
Voiron, France



People of the Common Worship lectionary

Margaret of Antioch

by Julian Smith

Margaret of Antioch, Marina in the Eastern Church, was one of the most venerated saints of the Middle Ages. Although her experience was a common one during the centuries of the Church's persecution, it has been much elaborated to encourage the faithful in their trials.

Margaret dedicated her life to Christ and suffered martyrdom for rejecting the advances of a

pagan Prefect at Antioch. Legend has it that the devil appeared to Margaret in the guise of a dragon who swallowed her, but then spat her out unharmed. Hence she is the patron of pregnant women and childbirth. She is one of a group of saints known as the Holy Helpers, who spoke to and inspired Joan of Arc.

Margaret is commemorated tomorrow, when you might like to take a moment to think about her story, and remember that we each have stories to tell of our journeys of faith. ☺

“We are called not to be successful but to be faithful.”

St Teresa of Calcutta (1910-1997), Roman Catholic religious and missionary

Summer reading

The Irresistible Revolution: living as an ordinary radical, by Shane Claiborne

Recommended by Caroline Hodgson

Published in 2006, in *The Irresistible Revolution* Shane Claiborne invites readers to rediscover Christianity as a way of life that's rooted in love, justice and radical compassion. Drawing from his experiences with poor and marginalised people – from the streets of Philadelphia to the slums of Calcutta – Claiborne challenges the comfort and complacency that's often found in modern Western Christianity.

At its core, the book is a call to action, challenging us to live out

Jesus' teachings in real, tangible ways, even if it means disrupting the status quo. “The more I get to know Jesus, the more trouble he seems to get me into,” Claiborne writes.

Accessible in tone, personal and deeply challenging, *The Irresistible Revolution* speaks to a generation longing for authenticity. It urges believers to move beyond belief into a life of intentional community, simplicity and active peacemaking. ☺