

Connecting faith and daily life

Something to complain about?

Heather Cooke *reflects on*
Exodus 16:2-4. 9-15 and John 6:24-35

Moan, moan, moan! It's hard to miss the complaining in today's reading from Exodus. The "whole congregation" complained against Moses and Aaron. Fortunately, God was also listening, as always. Seeming to forget they'd been delivered from cruel slavery, the Israelites bemoan the lack of food now that they're in the wilderness.

Understandable, you might think. The newly coined word "hangry" reflects how hunger can indeed make people short-tempered. God, whose shoulders are broad, doesn't resent the ingratitude expressed towards those chosen to lead the exodus. Instead, miraculous food is provided.

In today's Gospel, Jesus had just fed the five thousand with only five loaves and two fish, every bit as miraculous as quails and manna. Those in the crowd were no longer physically hungry. But Jesus spots that spiritually they might be "hangry". Indeed, the rest of this month's Gospel readings will show him facing complaints about his claim to be the bread of life. It would take his resurrection to prove the point, rescuing us from slavery to sin and death.

Do some of us, perhaps even our "whole congregation", sometimes complain against our church leaders? Or against God? When we feel we're in the wilderness, angry that our spiritual appetites aren't being satisfied, can we take heart from the promise God makes to all of us, to provide spiritual food – sometimes in the most unexpected ways? Just keep looking! 🙏

Journalling

Living the word with the written word

by Julia McGuinness

As worshippers of Jesus, God's living Word, Christians uphold the written word. The Bible records God's story and ours. Translators have laboured to make it accessible down generations and across nations – monasteries have housed learning and libraries; Robert Raikes, who pioneered Sunday Schools in the 1780s, widened literacy to children of every background.

Widespread literacy has opened up a proliferation of personal writing. Journalling has become a popular tool for personal

development. But it may also be valuable for the Christian faith journey.

Perhaps we already write Bible study or sermon notes. A journal can expand this to include anything we sense God is saying to us day by day. We can write down where we experience God at work to help us keep hold of our blessings. We can write down our worries, to help us let go. We can write our prayers, and note how they have been answered. We can grapple with complex issues, express our feelings and explore hopes and dreams.

How could writing things down strengthen your walk of faith? 🙏



Lord God, who leads us into eternal life, give us grace to see you in our daily lives. May we be thankful for the miracles of friendship and family, of love and laughter, and patient in times of trouble. Amen.

John Mason Neale (1818-1866)

by Caroline Hodgson

In his short life, John Mason Neale, who is commemorated in the *Common Worship Lectionary* on Wednesday, worked tirelessly to educate and inform.

Despite his strongly evangelical heritage, Neale became deeply drawn towards Anglo-Catholicism, and passionate about antiquarianism and architecture. In 1839 he co-founded the Ecclesiological Society, to define correct principles of church architecture, decoration, ritual and music. At a time when the low/high Church controversy was raging, Neale

was often frozen out for his views. He was dogged by ill health and died at just forty-eight.

More than anyone else, he made English-speaking congregations aware of the tradition of Latin, Greek and Russian hymns. *The English Hymnal* (1906) contains sixty-three hymns he translated and six original compositions. His translations include: "All glory, laud, and honour", "O come, o come, Emmanuel", and "Of the Father's heart begotten". As a hymn-writer, his enduring legacy is his contribution to the Christmas repertoire, notably "Good Christian men, rejoice" and "Good King Wenceslas". 🙏

“It is not the body's posture, but the heart's attitude that counts when we pray.”

Billy Graham (1918-2018), evangelist