

Psalm 16 – by Sharron Dinnie – 9 September 2011

What a challenge – to express in 500 words something of what the Bible, Holy Scripture means to me! It has been part of my life for all of my life. I can still hear my Mother’s voice reading her favourite passages to me as a very young child. I can still quote texts from the Bible that I was required to learn in Sunday School. Scripture has helped develop and deepen my understanding of God and my faith, has taught me, challenged me, prompted me to question much, comforted and encouraged me.

Over the years I find I have been drawn more and more to the Psalms – those “religious poems” which have the distinction that, to a degree not present in any other part of the Bible, they contain the words of a person addressing God. The psalmists on occasions speak to God directly, in praise, thanksgiving or supplication. In the psalms of trust God is spoken to indirectly – but always the psalmist’s thoughts and emotions are turned God-wards, and in their words we have the supreme example in the Old Testament of the human being’s search for and experience of the living God.

At a critical time in my journey of faith, as I was wrestling with what I had discerned as a call to ordained ministry in the midst of harsh criticism of women clergy, Psalm 16 helped me keep my focus on God – the psalmist’s prayer became my prayer (and still is) – that I may always live in the shelter of God’s presence, for in God alone my soul finds its happiness. Keeping, like the psalmist, God always before me, I am instructed and given direction in the wisdom that leads to life and joy. I often find myself selecting Psalm 16 as a scripture passage to read to someone who is sick and/or dying or suggest it to one who is searching or floundering. There is a song based on Psalm 16, the words written by John B. Foley and the arrangement by George Mims and Betty Pulkingham, which is often in my head and my heart:

For you Are My God

Refrain *For you are my God – you alone are my joy,
Defend me, O Lord.*

*You give marvellous comrades to me,
the faithful who dwell in your land.
Those who choose alien gods,
have chosen an alien band.*

Refrain

You are my portion and cup.

It is you that I claim for my prize.

Your heritage is my delight,

the lot you have given to me.

Refrain

Glad are my heart and my soul,

securely my body shall rest.

For you will not leave me for dead,

nor lead your beloved astray.

Refrain

You show me the path for my life,

in your presence the fullness of joy.

To be at your right hand forever,

for me would be happiness always.