

ARTWORK: Connected (2019), Bianca Gardiner-Dodd

The narrative of our lives

From the European cave paintings to Egyptian hieroglyphs, Greek mythology, Aboriginal song lines to Maori laments, story-telling cemented communal, tribal and personal identity and preserved cultural, historical and spiritual traditions. Jesus taught through stories and, the Christian tradition, through rituals, sacraments and everyday expressions, continues to invite followers to listen and respond to stories of God's presence in our world.

Janet K Ruffing rsm notes:

We need to hear stories about encountering mystery... we especially need stories that take place in everyday life... When we hear ourselves tell our own sacred tales, we discover more clearly what God's desires are for us and ours for God (To Tell the Sacred Tale, preface and p147).

From the sharing of tradition, gathering and communication, the God-human encounter takes place in and through human history:

The entire biblical tradition expresses shared experience and vision of the God-human relationship: God offers us a relationship with God's self that unfolds in time and respects human freedom and growth. Narrative is the linguistic form that best allows narrators to share this kind of experience with one another (ibid, p50).

Ruffing also examines the stories of four mystics: Julian of Norwich, Catherine of Sienna, Catherine of Genoa and Hadewijch of Antwerp describing how their personal narratives and shared encounters brought people to God and continue to do so today:

All four women wrote or dictated major spiritual writings that derived from their mature mystical development and their encounters with other. They developed their own mystical theology from their experience, in concert with the tradition they had received... Hadewijch and the Catherines gave spiritual direction to the communities gathered around them and eloquently and profoundly communicated their spiritual teaching through their writings (p9-10).

Thomas Corson-Knowles maintains that:

Every person and every culture has stories to tell. These stories form the basis for how we think about the world and live our lives. Stories preserve culture and pass on cultural knowledge from one generation to another. Stories provide a timeless

link to ancient traditions, legends, myths, and archetypes. But they also connect us to universal truths about ourselves and our world (accessed at www.tckpublishing.com/stories-matter/ 2020).

This year we have been focusing our Mercy Moments on stories of ancient wisdom, stories that underpin our local indigenous cultures and the stories of our Catholic tradition including the mystics, religious founders and their narratives. All of these stories have highlighted commonalities and connections to how we know God-past, present and emerging.

Our Stories

**It is our stories our sacred, chaotic, blessed stories
Our awe-drenched, doubting, joyous stories:
It is our stories of God's language of the rocky,
jagged, radiant path of life.
It is the holy listener who helps arrange these
stones into cairns which point the way to
God's desire in our lives and
God's desire for our every moment.
The cairns, if patiently balanced, uneven
though they may be, if patiently balanced,
can point the way to heaven.
Heaven, after all, is making God-serving
meaning of our stories on this rocky,
jagged, radiant path of life.**

Jennifer Hoffman

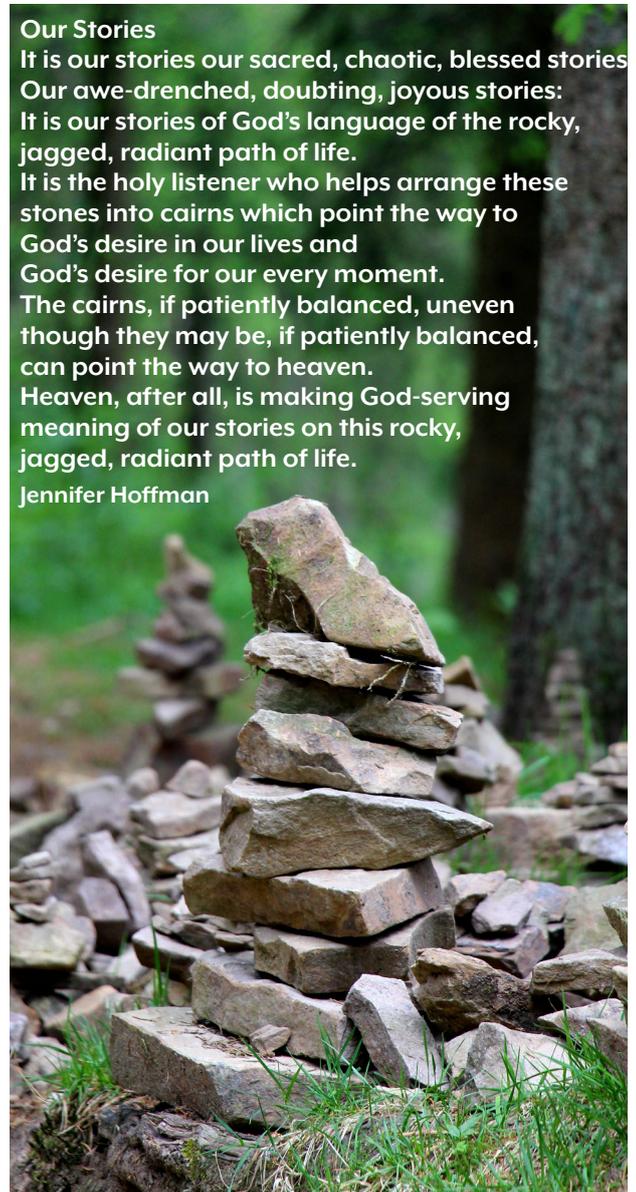


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We acknowledge and pay respect to the traditional owners of the lands on which our ministries exist and the Elders both past and present on whose land we walk, work and live. We support the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

REFLECTION

How does your story tell of God's presence in the world?

REFERENCE: Ruffings rsm, J.K. *To Tell the Sacred Tale*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2011.