



August 1, 2006

Lectio Divina : Joyful Detachment **2 Samuel 6: 12-23**

Tout le monde connaît l'histoire de David, de son onction secrète par le prophète SaEveryone knows the story of David, of his secret anointing by the prophet Samuel, of his entrance into the service of Saul and of his battle with Goliath, of his disputes with the king who, nevertheless, gave him his daughter Mikal for his wife.

Without doubt Saul wanted to associate David with his reign by giving him his daughter. In the ancient Near East marriages were, in effect, always political. But David had a lot of success and Saul realized that he could become his rival. He sought to kill him, took away his daughter...At Saul's death, David was chosen as king first by the most important southern tribe, that of Judah, and then by the northern tribes. He also took Mikal back – solely for political strategy and not as a mark of affection!

So we are at the point of the narrative where David wants to bring the Ark of the Covenant up to Jerusalem. The ark is the most important religious symbol of the time: there God is present in a unique way. Why does David want to bring the ark up to Jerusalem? The answer is undoubtedly both political and religious. Jerusalem, the city of David, is a judicious choice for a capital. But it also has one serious flaw: its Canaanite past. The presence of the ark in the city shows the attachment of David to the tradition and the worship of the Lord. At the same time, David, by this act, validates his power over all the tribes of Israel, because the ark associates him with the most sacred values of Israel's religion.

So, the ark goes up to Jerusalem and David, dressed like a priest, dances in front of it. He dances, offers holocausts, blesses his people and his house. In dancing before the ark, in offering the holocausts, in blessing, David assumes a priestly role. Dance and blessing are the two moment of a traditional ritual: the fertility cult. In the popular religion of Israel, there is a strong link between blessing and fertility. The blessing of King David is meant to assure a vital force, the ability to transmit life, for the people of Israel. And David dances to obtain the blessing for his people and his house. He celebrates the coming of God into his city. His dance celebrates the God of Israel, source of life and of joy, the God who assures a blessing in abundance to his people.

But David dances for another reason as well that goes beyond what verse 21 suggests: he dances because God has removed the crown from Saul to give it to David.

Once again, the religious motivations and the political ones are well mixed in David! And that he shows himself as he dances is the sign of his own fertility, of his posterity. Mikal scorns David and refuses to enter into the dance; thus she cuts herself off from the source of fertility. The account concludes by saying she will have no children.

- **And so, for us?**

No doubt the story leads us, through the figure of David, to the humility of recognizing the complexity of human nature and the ambiguity of our motivations, our choices, and our behaviors, including the religious ones. There is a weight in human nature: in the confrontation between our psychological life and our life of faith, in our ambitions for our personal success and our desires to see the Kingdom grow... a weight that we must accept with a lucidity and lightness (in the dance, in play) that are part of joyful detachment.

In the figure of Mikal, we learn that to close ourselves up in our own self-love, to keep our distance, to never unmask, never want to be lowly, never be seen naked or vulnerable – in sum, to refuse to dance, is to condemn ourselves to sterility.

The mystery of life, with all its complexity and its ambiguities, is an invitation to the dance. To dance is to participate in the mystery of divine fecundity, to welcome the benediction and to make of it a mediator for ourselves. That asks for a great freedom: “It is before the Lord that I dance!” David calls us to that freedom before God whatever our situation may be, whatever our function, whatever our feelings of joy or pain. In gratitude for the love of God, he invites us to say “yes” to life. And this yes of David to life, his dance, does not turn our eyes to him – except by jealous or arrogant spirits – but toward God.

You have worked throughout this Chapter; dance now, and you will bear much fruit!

Sr Sophie Ramond

The province of India

The province of India has twelve communities. Its delegates are Shobha Parippilettathouttu, the provincial, Rekha Chennattu, and Daisy Isaac.

- x **Shobha** taught in various places and then followed a course of formation in psychology and counseling at Saint Anselm in England. After being named superior, she was made responsible for the candidates, and in August 2005 she was named provincial.
- x **Rekha** began her studies in philosophy and theology in Pune, then at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome. She completed her doctorate in exegesis, with a dissertation on the gospel of John, at Catholic University of Washington, D.C. She is a provincial counselor, a member of the formation team, and at the service of the Church in India as the chair of the Department of Biblical Studies in the Jesuit university at Pune.
- x **Daisy** worked with the indigenous peoples of the Bihar region. After her formation in Paris, she was first charged with the care of the candidates and postulants, and later, in 2003, she was named as novice mistress. She

completed her studies in psychology. At present she is working as a professional counselor.

What does this province have to say about Assumption Together?

- x Different communities are in the midst of the starting up **groups of Friends** of the Assumption. The communities of Pune, Rajodi and Pala began their groups in 2002. The provincial community has also set up a group. Each meeting is a time for exchanges on the life and spirituality of Marie Eugenie: the group reflects to see how her message can be applied to the life of each member. The group is ready for a deeper commitment which would include work with the sisters.
- x The presence of lay friends (for the first time) during **the last provincial chapter** was a joyful and enriching experience. The province feels that it has grown in its openness to and collaboration with the laity. The Friends especially aided the provincial chapter by their contributions to the discussions on young people.
- x They showed themselves generous and ready to act in the face of natural disaster. **The Friends of the Assumption of Pune proposed to set up a team of sisters and friends that could respond in case of disaster.**

Young people and vocations in Italy

The community of Pietrasanta lives in the center of this historic town, in a diocesan house dedicated to the formation of young people. From the beginning of its mission, the community has set itself to listen to what's happening locally, to recognize needs and to respond especially through educational activity. Currently the formation activity at the house targets several different types of youth: some are on a faith journey, asking for space and help, for time for spirituality; others, in collaboration with the sisters, engage themselves in projects of social animation, but without explicitly declaring their faith or their church membership. The project called "Musicaldanzando" is directed toward this type of young person, with a goal of education through music and dance.

- x **The goal** is to accompany persons in an experience of personal harmony, to allow them to discover their own gifts and abilities in the educational and musical domain and to put those gifts into practice.
- x **The method** gives priority to listening, to body work, to playing musical instruments, to the dance, and to games in order to develop attitudes of confidence in self and in others. The project unfolds over three weekends. The participants stay at the house – which reinforces the bond with the sisters and indirectly with the other educational organizations with which they work.
- x The three moments of formation have been developed according to the

following themes:

- ✓ To make music with instruments, voice, and the body in order to create a closeness between young people and not so young people, to improve trust, the well being of the group, and to open up creative possibilities.
 - ✓ To familiarize the participants with popular dances for relational growth and for a knowledge of the techniques of group dynamics.
 - ✓ To play group games in order to augment self esteem, personal reflection, to make the group grow stronger. This activity supports a growth in leadership and the ability to animate other groups in the town.
- x **This dynamic** of *learning by doing/doing the same for others* opens up new horizons for educational action. This project which is not explicitly religious is, nevertheless, in accord with the charism of the Assumption and permits the sisters to reach young people who would otherwise be very difficult to touch. **The philosophy** that underlies the project is the person in all his or her wholeness: body, emotions, feelings, ability to communicate emotions and thoughts by word and by the whole body. It is a question of believing in the creative capacity of the person, to promote the search for harmony among body, heart and spirit without excluding the transcendent dimension of the person. **The passion** is to open the person to the spiritual dimension through this experience.

The Photo of the Day: Father Olegario Gonzales de Cardedal

