



## God speaks to us in mysterious ways

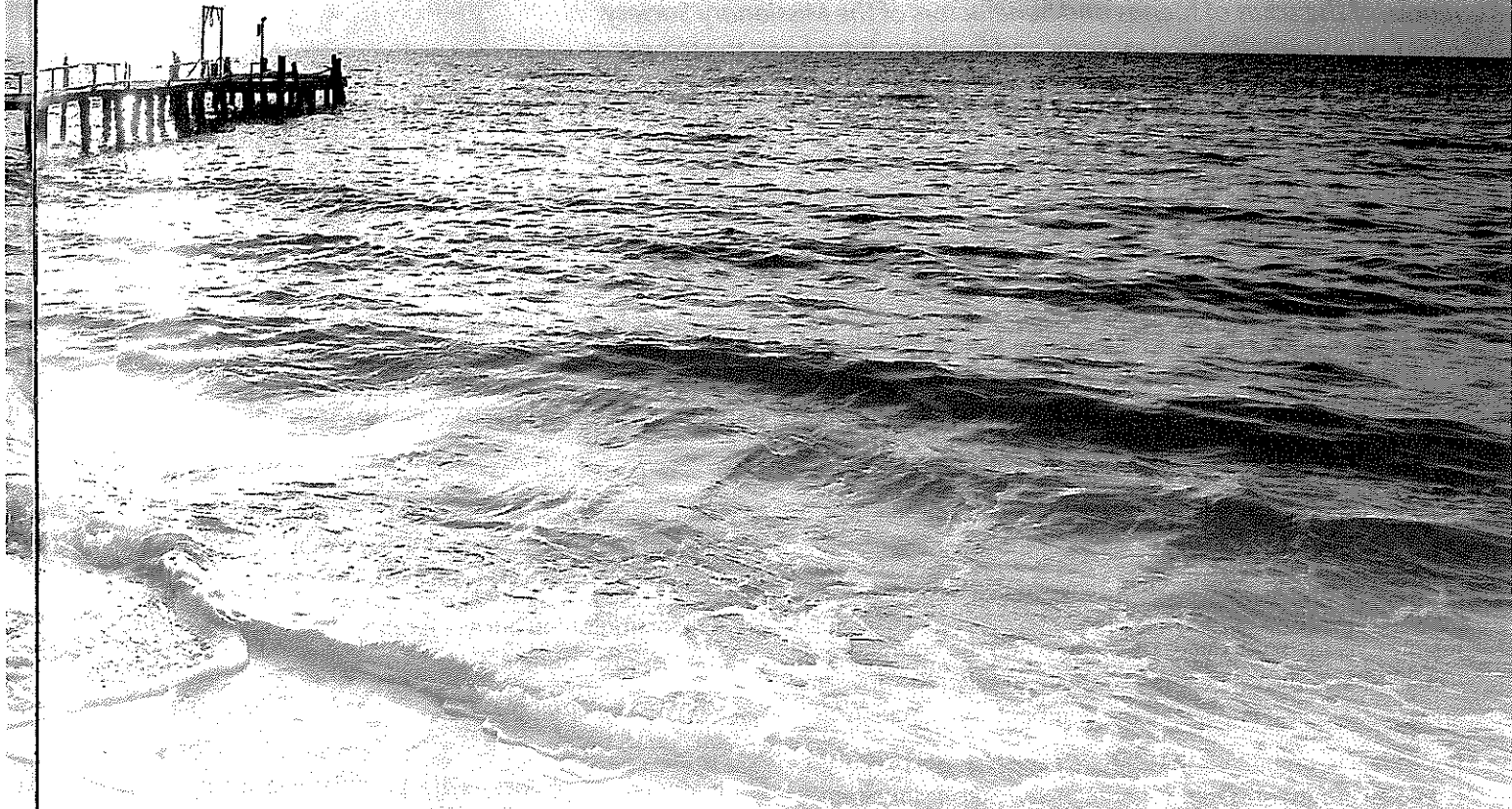
God speaks to us through the Scriptures but also through events in our lives. For example, Jeremiah, the Old Testament prophet, was locked in his room depressed about the progress of his life and mission. Then he decided he needed a change of atmosphere. He went to watch a potter at his wheel. At times the potter built up his work on the wheel in soft clay, then sometimes squashed it down to start anew.

God spoke to Jeremiah through this scene: *"Jeremiah! You are on my potter's wheel. I can rebuild you anew"* (cf Jeremiah 18:1-12). Jeremiah was encouraged and invigorated. God speaks to us too in mysterious ways.

As pastor, I team-teach in some of the parish classes for those preparing for Baptism. We ask the participants to meet themselves and to accept themselves because God loves them 100% as they are. When the group feels at ease with themselves, with God, and with each other, we ask them to answer and share this question: "What was your first contact with the Church?" The aim is not mere information, but rather to demonstrate how God speaks to us in mysterious ways – and different ways for different people. Here are some answers.

Isobe-san's job was mail delivery. Each Thursday in his mailbag he noticed that a few households received *'The Catholic Weekly'*. It came with an address wrapper that still showed the leading article. Mr Isobe read the headlines each week. He was fascinated by what he read. When he retired, he decided to visit this Catholic Church and liked what he saw and those he met. He enrolled in the catechumenate and one year later received Baptism. An avid reader, Isobe-san is now in charge of the parish library. It all started with a mail delivery of a Catholic newspaper. God speaks in mysterious ways.

Wada-san's story is this. Her family were Buddhist and she attended a Buddhist sponsored high school. In the school corridor there were various famous paintings including Millet's *"The Angelus"*. It fascinated her. What was this *"Angelus"*? Who would stop to pray in the middle of work? Twenty years after graduating, she still remembered this painting. In sickness, her life had become empty and she decided to go to the Church after a friend invited her. Mrs Wada was baptised taking the name Angela. It began with Millet's *"Angelus"*. Indeed, God speaks to us in mysterious ways.



Anda-san as a young woman was fascinated with the tartan pattern plaids of Scotland. As background, she even delved into the clans, each with its distinctive pattern. Anda-san went even further, studying the general history of Scotland. It was here that she met Queen Margaret of Scotland, a saint of the Catholic Church. Anda-san married but after the birth of her second child her husband left her for another spouse. Anda-san was devastated and it was in her desolation that she recalled Queen Margaret and her faith. So, Anda-san went to the Church just to sit and be quiet. A kind woman saw her tears and gently asked could she help. This led to the catechumenate and later, Baptism. Her Baptismal name? Margaret of Scotland of course! It began with tartans ..... Indeed God speaks in mysterious ways!

Here is the story of Sakurai-san – now Sister Misao of the Visitation Sisters. In the 1950's Misao-san worked as what was then called "an office girl" in the Sumitomo Bank on the Ginza. At that time Maryknoll Mission staffed a chapel on the seventh floor of the *Ginza Mitsukoshi Department Store*. Misao had (and still has!) an inbuilt sense of curiosity. She also liked to browse in the nearby *Mitsukoshi Department Store* and maybe buy something small.

One day curiosity led her to the seventh floor chapel, and later to the catechumenate. Still later, faith led her to Baptism and further on to the religious life. Sister Misao became a parish assistant and led one of the catechumenates in Katase Church where I was pastor. In a sharing session, Tanaka-san, an elderly gentleman in her class, spoke up and said: "*Sister! You puzzle me! Have we ever met before?*" "Yes" replied Sister in a quiet voice, "*I was an office girl in the Ginza Bank and you the manager!*" The saga began with curiosity .... Indeed God speaks to us in mysterious ways. What led Tanaka-san the bank manager to the Church? Well he didn't have much chance! Two of his daughters were Carmelite nuns praying for him.

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