

Thoughts on the Daily Word

14th Week of the Year. *Thursday 11th July. Readings: Hosea 11:1-4,8-9; Psalm 79; Matthew 10:7-15.*

God works in strange ways. I remember as a child seeing pictures of the Infant of Prague. This strange image of an overdressed royal child of centuries ago. I couldn't quite see the point of it all. Then in the 60's and 70's these things died a death, I thought. It took my time as a Parish Priest to discover how some of these old devotions had a powerful impact on people's lives and how it could produce people of deep faith, hope, and love. These devotions tended to be looked down on by a generation of priests, or so I thought. It took a crisis in my own life, a cancer, that helped me see how deep, almost like an underground river, these devotions were in our Catholic life. When I announced to my parish that I had a tumour that needed dealing with quickly, so many people, quietly, took me aside to offer me devotions and prayers that had carried them through difficult times. One of those was a very old novena to the Infant of Prague that had obviously meant a lot to the lovely person concerned. I was very moved and promised to use the prayer faithfully. Shortly afterward somebody gave to our church a large statue of the Infant, and lo and behold when I come here to Prudhoe, there is the same statue! I have been faithful to the prayer and God has been good to me in my treatment. There is something simple and childlike about such faith, I have realised. Today's reading is one of the most beautiful descriptions of the relationship of God with his people. Israel is like an infant held close to its father or mother's cheek. Here is the root of the faith of Jesus in his father's love, his Abba. We are invited to discover that relationship for ourselves. It is not something we make happen, it is there already, waiting to be discovered and experienced. That is the trust expressed in the Gospel today. Complete abandonment to the Father's love.