

STATIO NOVEMBER 2011

Where are you? Genesis 3:9

God asks us questions; Jesus asks many questions to his disciples, the crowd. All are recorded in our Bible. We, I am asked these questions and God is waiting for my response. The first question in the bible asked by God to man is: Adam – that means any human being - *Where are you?*

A story of a Jewish Rabbi goes as follows:

Rabbi Schneur Salman in Petersburg (Russia) was in prison; his enemies had given wrong testimony against him. He was waiting for his trial, to be brought before the court, when the Chief of the Police entered his cell in prison. When the Chief saw the face of his prisoner, full of peace and power, absorbed in meditation so that the Rabbi did not notice him, he stood there in awe and got a hunch what a special prisoner he had. The Chief started a conversation with his prisoner and asked questions in connection with the bible. So he asked: "How can we understand that God, who knows all, asks Adam: Where are you?" The Rabbi replied: "Do you believe that the Scripture is alive and speaks to every age, each generation and each human being?" – "That is what I believe," was the reply. "Well, God calls out to each human being in each generation: where are you in your world? So and so many years and days measured out to you have passed already, up to where did you go in your world during this time? For instance God says: you lived forty-six years, where are you now?" When the Chief heard the number of his age, he patted the shoulder of the Rabbi, saying: "Well said!", but his heart trembled.

So far the story. The first question of God will never be silenced again. Again and again I hide myself, I get lost, I run away, I look for distraction – there are so many ways to hide myself, even when living in the convent. Again and again God asks me: *where are you?*

God wants to call me back before his holy face. He wants that I return to Him, be with him in truth with my own life, that I answer Him, be present to Him.

I put my own name at the place of Adam in this question. And listen to the question said in loud voice: "Where are you, Sister Raphaela?"

When I come before God with my real life, then I pray: and when I pray I come before God. The one who prays stops to run away and to hide before God.

Do I stand before God with my real life? Can my life pass His examination? I have not to be perfect, but by coming before the Lord I am made whole, accepted. I sing my "suscipe me, Domine" – "Unipokee, Bwana". The Lord accepts me, upholds me and heals my life and makes it whole.

But now we ask God a question: **“Where are you, God?”** Does God hide himself from us? The Prophet Isaiah says: “[You are a God who is hidden, Is 45:15. The Jerusalem Bible translates: Truly, you are a God who conceals himself.

God wants that we search for him, that we ask this question: *God, where are you?*

Again a Jewish story: One day Rabbi Baruch’s grandchild Jechiel played with other boys hide-and-seek. He found a good hiding place and waited that the boys would search and find him. After waiting for a long time he came out from hiding, but no boy was to be seen. Now Jechiel understood that nobody had searched for him since the beginning. He run crying to his grandfather and complained about the bad boys not playing. Now Rabbi Baruch started crying and said: “God says this: I hide myself but nobody wants to search for me...”

This hide-and-seek by God is different for each human being. So we have again and again to ask the question: “God, where are you in my life?”. God finds hiding places in our life where we do not expect to find him: in sickness, being abandoned, painful experiences of our limitations, the every-day life which seems to be so boring, the burden of a certain person, a decision to be made, a meeting, longing for something....

God goes into hiding and we are invited to search for him. When I start to search for him he will give me a sign, perhaps a very little one, and then even go deeper into hiding, as children do in this play.

What kind of signs may I perceive given to me by God? A certain peace in my heart perhaps, new strength to continue. What an adventure to continue asking God for his hiding place and searching for it! But that is exactly what our Father Benedict wants each monk to do life-long. The first and most important quality of any candidate is seriously searching for God, see RB 58. Benedictine nuns like ourselves would become experts in this search for God lifelong.

St Augustine prayed: “Lord, my God, I want to run after your voice and get hold of you. Do not hide your face from me.”

Questions:

How and where do I hide myself from God? Find times and examples in your life.

What does search for God mean in my life? Give 5 examples how you have been searching for Him.

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Cf. Johannes Bours: Nehmt Gottes Melodie in euch auf. Pp 150-153