

Hoseana
 (Wherever you go)
 [Weston Priory]

If you were listening on Monday of last week, you might remember that song which I introduced for you then: and I hope you like it (at least a little) for I intend to use it for a while to introduce and sign-off these Monday and Thursday Midday Prayers, a change from the Prayer of St Francis we've been having this past while. And if you were listening on Monday of this week, you might remember that I ended by reading an episode in the life of the OT prophet Elijah: when in anger, frustration and humiliation at his failure (as he saw it) to fulfill the task God gave him, he went to the mountain of the Lord, Horeb, and hid himself away in a cave there. And the Lord called him to His presence. But it wasn't in the mighty wind or the earthquake or the fire that God ^{made} His presence known, but in the sound of a gentle breeze. A stormy day, like today, may perhaps be suiting your mood, as Elijah's mood was echoed in the forces of nature raging outside his cave. Whatever the prophet may have expected, it was not there that he found God's presence with him. And it always seems to be so, when we think we know how God should act, when His protection and power and vindication of His own people should be at work. It's when we're not expecting Him that He's waiting for us to recognise His hand, that He's already in action for us. Elijah learnt the lesson that it wasn't what he thought God should be doing that is God's way. So many people, for far less reason, get discouraged and upset that things go wrong for them, that life (in one aspect

or another) isn't what they'd expected, or that God Himself doesn't seem to act as they'd expected. We all, to some extent, at some stage, follow the prophet's footsteps — try to get away from it all, go and demand of God what's going on, what does He think He's doing; and hide ourselves away in a cave. The pity is, people mostly know the answer they want to hear, and that's all they listen for — even if they don't expect any answer at all. So, in discouragement or frustration, some people tell themselves God doesn't care, or even that He doesn't exist. And the answering mood of the world around them does not bring God's presence to them — they haven't noticed the sound of a gentle breeze. We so quickly judge: decide that what agrees with our own point of view is fact or is right — whether it's people and their characters, events in our lives, in the world, in the church. And then something goes wrong, out of character, out of expectation, and we find it difficult to understand, to adjust. In time of prayer, in our 'cave', it's God's presence when He wants to show Himself to us that we should be waiting for, rather than looking to find Him when we think He ought to be. So, for a little music now: the Benedictine monks of Weston Priory — and you'll be wrong if it's plain-clat you expect to hear. They sing that Hoseana we began with: here's another song of theirs, 'Anything Happens'

MUSIC
PRAYERS

Wherever you go
2'

Communities, nations, countries act much like individual people do, at a slower pace, perhaps. And they seek inspiration, salvation too, in directions that usually harmonize with current moods — and so a prophet is never welcome in his own country, for he sees things that people either don't want to hear or cannot take. Unfortunately for us, it's only well after the event that a prophet is often recognized as such, and for some reason we're very slow to learn from the past: even there, people dismiss the past as irrelevant and having nothing to say, forgetting perhaps that it may well be the gentle breeze in which they could find the presence of God if only they weren't looking elsewhere. Who are the prophets of our age, the present-day Elijah's? There are surely some, in various departments of human life and activity, only it's so difficult now to spot them. But in the field of human values and life today, it's striking that there is one man who has been found too uncomfortable for his own country where he has expelled him: and now, after a welcome in the other camp of the world, he's becoming too uncomfortable there too. Who's right? Solzgenitzin and his insights into the things that are wrong with the world, or the rest of us who from left or right find him an irritant?