

Our Faith Stories

Elijah left and found Elisha ploughing with a team of oxen. There were eleven teams ahead of him, and he was ploughing with the last one. Elijah took off his cloak and put it on Elisha (1 Kings 19:19)

Imagine yourself in a field. The field is being ploughed and you have your own furrow to plough. The field is the field of the world, where you are ploughing the furrow of your life. Your hands are on the plough, and your feet are heavy with the earth. Perhaps you feel that you are carrying out this gigantic task all alone. But look ahead of you. See the eleven teams of oxen that Elisha saw. You are not alone. You are part of a long line of life and of meaning. But this is not just any line of oxen teams. This is your own personal line, ploughing your particular furrow.

Who, or what, is in your line of oxen teams? Think of significant people who have made an important difference to your life. Some of them may be among the first disciples and saints. Some may be in your recent past. Some may be walking alongside you today. These are people who have helped to form the line of your life, your furrow. They have helped to provide the pulling power for your plough. And they have helped to guide its progress.

Not just people, but important moments, events, decisions, or experiences will have formed your furrow. Remember them. See how they have moved you on, or possibly corrected your direction.

Notice the landscape of your part of the field. The places that have been important to you.

If you ask a farmer how he ensures that he is ploughing a straight furrow, he will give you this advice: Fix your eyes straight ahead, on some fixed point on the horizon – a tree perhaps - and keep moving steadily towards it. Don't watch the furrow. Just keep your hands on the plough and your eyes on that fixed point.

Jesus is our fixed point. He is at the head of each one of our personal lines of oxen teams. It is his risen life and energy that provides the power for our every movement. But he gives us too, our own personal constellation of people (past and present), and landmarks and signposts for our unique journey.

Gently return to your place in the here and now, strong in the knowledge that you do not plough the field alone, and that the story of your life will lead you back through your special landmarks to the Lord himself, the Lord of your harvest.

Landmarks: An Ignatian Journey Margaret Silf

