

Reflection on New Year' s Eve 2015 Genesis 28: 10-18

New Year's Eve is somehow very special, sisters and brothers.
On the one hand, it is just an ordinary day, but on the other hand, it's not that at all!
It is an evening full of memories, expectations and excitement.

There are good times and rough patches in all our life-stories – as there are in Jacob's about whom we've just heard in the reading.
Jacob knows both: success and fear; joy and pain; pride and shame; homelessness and safety.
Here tonight Jacob is on the run.
Jacob had been involved in a story of love and guilt that could never be undone.

It all began because Jacob was afraid to come off second best and to be left out.
In the end Jacob had to leave.
Run away from his brother Esau whom he had betrayed.
They were twins.
And right from the beginning they were so different from one another.
They competed with each other. And even the parents were divided over their sons.
The whole mess was not only Jacob's fault.
Isaac and Rebecca had their hands in it too....
When Esau discovered the betrayal over the blessing, he furiously swore revenge.
Jacob feared for his life and ran away.

And then all of a sudden he was all alone.
Walking through the wilderness.
Entering a strange land. Jacob a refugee...

He flees because he cannot undo what he'd done.
No one is only saint or only sinner.
Jacob is a refugee.
In the place where he'd lived he risks his life, so he leaves home and seeks safety in a far away land.
On his escape he finds a place to stay for the night on a mountain.
He can only find a stone for a pillow.
But the whole sky with its bright stars covers him like a blanket.
The hard journey makes him grow.

In the night Jacob is dreaming.
He sees the heaven open...
a ladder leading from him up into the sky; and angels are moving up and down on this ladder.
And of course God speaks to him:
"I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring; ...and all the families on the earth shall be blessed in you... Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land, for I will not leave you (Gen 28)."
A tremendous dream!

And with Jacob millions of people throughout the history of humankind have been dreaming it too.

According to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, in 2015 the number of refugees has reached its highest point since World War II.
There are almost 60 million refugees and displaced people around the globe right now.

60 million Jacobs with only a stone under their heads but with a heart full of hope and dreams, seeing the angels walking up and down a divine ladder promising them a future of security and peace.

60 million people hearing their God say: "... the land on which you lie I will give to you. Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go!"

Jacob realises that there is always a future ahead.

In spite of the wilderness there are new possibilities of life!

They appear at the bottom of the ladder where God is lovingly turning toward the homeless on the run.

God does not take away the stolen blessing from Jacob.

Jacob is allowed to keep it.

And his journey goes on...

Just imagine what it must have meant to Jacob to hear God say: "I am with you. I will keep you."

Take a moment and discover what this means to you...

Then try to imagine how it is also said to all those who are, at the moment, somewhere on the road and seek a safe future here with us.

And then let us hear God speaking to all human beings at all times:

"I am with you...

I will keep you wherever you go.

I will never leave you.

I am always there...

- every single moment in all the challenges lying ahead."

May the heaven be open for us,
may we be open to others,
and may angels be there to show all of us the way
– no matter who we are and where we come from.
Amen.