

# Stations of the Locks



*The Caen Hill Lock Ladder is a marvellous feat of engineering and building. The theme of our pilgrimage is "Building our cathedral, building our faith". There are 16 locks in the ladder, and I offer 16 scriptural texts on the theme of building, together with a short reflection for each one. Feel free to use these individually or in small groups as you ascend the ladder. You might like to use this prayer at the end of each 'station':*

**Lord God, build us up as your Church.  
Make us living stones,  
Forming a spiritual house  
For the building of your kingdom  
In our lives, our communities, and our world.  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
Amen.**

*Fr Tony Milner*

## **The First Lock (29): Creation**

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day. And God said, "Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day. And God said, "Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. (Genesis 1: 1-10)

*The opening passage of Genesis gives an image of Creation. In it God brings order to chaos, creating an ordered and comprehensible world. The world has its own 'rules', but they come from God. Lets us reflect on the wonder of our ordered and beautiful world.*

## **The Second Lock (30): Stewardship**

So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." (Gen 1:27-28)

The LORD God took Adam and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. (Gen 2:15)

*Both the creation stories speak of human beings co-operating with God in creation as stewards. There is a story of two monks. One is the gardener and is working in the monastery garden. A brother monk came to admire the garden and remarked, "Brother gardener, isn't God wonderful in creating such a wonderful garden!", to which the gardener replied, "You should have seen it when God had it to himself". How do we use our stewardship of God's creation?*

### **The Third Lock (31): Arrogance**

The people migrated from the east, they came upon a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. And they said to one another, “Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly.” And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. Then they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves; otherwise we shall be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.” (Genesis 11:2-4)

*Human beings have immense power in the world, which is a consequence of our intelligence and freedom. That can be used for great good. But sometimes we get ‘ideas above our station, and forget that we are creatures like the rest of the world, and we are not just lords over creation, but dependent on it. If we forget our place in creation, what are the consequences?*

### **The Fourth Lock (32): Gift**

When the LORD your God has brought you into the land that he swore to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give you—a land with fine, large cities that you did not build, houses filled with all sorts of goods that you did not fill, hewn cisterns that you did not hew, vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant—and when you have eaten your fill, take care that you do not forget the LORD, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. (Deuteronomy 6:10-12)

*There are some people of whom it could be said “he is a self-made man and he worships his maker”. It is good to remember that, however much we have done, we always build on what others have already created. We are dependent on God and on one another. We are meant to work together, and appreciate the work of others, in our stewardship of creation, which is, itself, a gift.*

### **The Fifth Lock (33): Listening**

Now when the king was settled in his house, and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies around him, the king said to the prophet Nathan, “See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent.” Nathan said to the king, “Go, do all that you have in mind; for the LORD is with you.” But that same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan: Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the LORD: Are you the one to build me a house to live

in? I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle.... Moreover the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. (2 Samuel 7:1-6.11-12).

*At times we think we know what God wants us to do, what God wants us to build. Yet it is important to listen for God's voice, lest our plans, however well meant, may not be according to God's will.*

### **The Sixth Lock (34): The Presence of God**

In the four hundred eightieth year after the Israelites came out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, which is the second month, he began to build the house of the LORD. (1 Kings 6:1)

Then Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the assembly of Israel, and spread out his hands to heaven. He said, "O LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven above or on earth beneath, keeping covenant and steadfast love for your servants who walk before you with all their heart... Regard your servant's prayer and his plea, O LORD my God, heeding the cry and the prayer that your servant prays to you today; that your eyes may be open night and day toward this house, the place of which you said, 'My name shall be there,' that you may heed the prayer that your servant prays toward this place. Hear the plea of your servant and of your people Israel when they pray toward this place; O hear in heaven your dwelling place; heed and forgive. (1 Kings 8:22-23.28-30

*Whatever we build – whether it be 'secular' or 'sacred', we should ask that God be present in all we do. God is, of course, always present, but we need to recognise that presence, and allow it to inform all our actions, all our building.*

### **The Seventh Lock (35): Destruction**

In the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month—which was the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon—Nebuzaradan, the captain of the bodyguard, a servant of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem. He burned the house of the LORD, the king's house, and all the houses of

Jerusalem; every great house he burned down. All the army of the Chaldeans who were with the captain of the guard broke down the walls around Jerusalem. (2 Kings 25:8-10)

*The destruction of Jerusalem and the deportation of the people to Babylon is seen as a punishment for sin. But it also reminds us that our earthly buildings are always temporary. We often visit church ruins on our pilgrimages. Sometimes their destruction was deliberate, sometimes they just fell into neglect. We often find they have an austere beauty. More importantly, they witness to a history of faith and prayer which endures long after buildings have disappeared.*

### **The Eighth Lock (36): Restoration**

On that day I will raise up the booth of David that is fallen, and repair its breaches, and raise up its ruins, and rebuild it as in the days of old; in order that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations who are called by my name, says the LORD who does this. The time is surely coming, says the LORD, when the one who ploughs shall overtake the one who reaps, and the trader of grapes the one who sows the seed; the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it. I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel, and they shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine, and they shall make gardens and eat their fruit. I will plant them upon their land, and they shall never again be plucked up out of the land that I have given them, says the LORD your God. (Amos 9:11-15)

*Many of the prophets talk of a restoration after Exile. The temple and the city were indeed rebuilt, but Israel still did not find the peace and tranquillity it looked for, and remained under the rule of external empires. Further, they continued to be torn by internal divisions. Have you had hopes of a new beginning that were dashed? What might a restored world look like for you?*

### **The Ninth Lock (37): A Stable**

This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favours!” When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made

known to us.” So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. (Luke 2:12-16)

*When the Lord does come to his people, he does not come to a temple or a palace. He comes to a humble stable. In his life, of course, Jesus did pray and preach in synagogues and in the temple, but it is important to remind ourselves that he is also to be found in the humblest and most unexpected of places.*

### **The Tenth Lock (38): The Carpenter**

Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him. (Mark 6:3)

*The word translated as ‘carpenter’ is ‘tekton’- which can in fact refer to any skilled builder, whether in stone or wood. So we might translate it ‘builder’. The people take offence: how can a mere builder speak of God? Do we undervalue those who do physical work in our world, or do we take them for granted?*

### **The Eleventh Lock (39): Building on Sound Foundations**

Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its fall!. (Mt 7:24-27)

*However impressive, imaginative and ambitious our project are, even our church projects, if they are not founded on Christ they will ultimately fail. Do we bring all our activities, in our lives and our churches, to the Lord in prayer?*

### **The Twelfth Lock (40): Destroy this Temple**

Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. He told those who were selling the doves, “Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father’s house a marketplace!” ... The Jews then said

to him, “What sign can you show us for doing this?” Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” The Jews then said, “This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?” But he was speaking of the temple of his body. (John 2:13-21)

*Jesus speaks of the abuse of the temple, and also prophesies his own passion, in which he will be taken and cruelly treated. Yet this corruption and destruction will not have the last word.*

### **The Thirteenth Lock (41): A New Tomb**

When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who was also a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus; then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. So Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock. He then rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb and went away. ...After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. (Matthew 27:57-60, 28:1-2)

*Joseph and the women are devout people. Yet at this stage they have no idea what is about to happen. They come to honour one they think is dead. Soon they will be astonished by Jesus' risen life. Life itself cannot remain buried in a tomb*

### **The Fourteenth Lock (42): Living Stones**

Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ... You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. (1 Peter 2:4-5.9)

*The Church is, of course, first and foremost the people of God. St Peter uses a variety of images. These indicated that the Church is called to be a real social*

*force in the world, both interceding with God for the world, and transforming the world through its holiness, building the Kingdom of God.*

### **The Fifteenth Lock (43): A Home Not Made by Human Hands**

For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. (2 Cor 5:1)

*The description of our earthly body as a tent reminds us that we are travellers on a journey – a pilgrimage. We are journeying in this world, accepting its benefits, but knowing it is not our permanent home. That awaits us at the end of our life's pilgrimage. We also recall that God himself journeyed in a tent – both with the Israelites, and by sharing our earthly bodies in the incarnation.*

### **The Sixteenth Lock (44): New Heavens and New Earth**

In the spirit he carried me away to a great, high mountain and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God. ...I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. Its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. People will bring into it the glory and the honour of the nations. (Rev 21:10.22-26)

*The symbolic imagery of the Book of Revelation presents us with a powerful image of a life in which all people of all nations living in harmony and light, bringing their own 'glory' with them. The gates are open! If we believe that is our true destiny in heaven, how can we countenance anything in our own world that undermines the dignity of others, especially those most in need?*

Scripture Translations from The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition. Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ, 1993.