

**DEANERY OF ST EDMUND CAMPION
ENGLISH MARTYRS—
VALE OF THE WHITE HORSE PASTORAL AREA**

www.portsmouthdiocese.org.uk

www.hendredcatholicparish.org.uk

East Hendred Catholic Parish

Week 19C *Per Annum*

7th – 14th August 2022



The Great Banquet

WEEK 19 YEAR 2

7th – 14th August 2022

All masses live-streamed www.churchservices.tv/easthendred
St Mary's is usually open each day from 9am until late afternoon.

SUNDAY 19C Per Annum [GREEN]

7th August **9.30am** **Parish Mass**
 11.15am **Holy Mass** (St Patrick's)
 6pm **Holy Mass**

Monday 8th August St Dominic, Founder [White]
 No Mass

Tuesday 9th August **St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross** [Red]
 [Edith Stein] **Religious, Martyr, Patron of Europe**
 No Mass

Wednesday 10th August **St Laurence, Deacon, Martyr** [Red]
 No Mass

Thursday 11th August St Clare, Foundress [White]
 No Mass

Friday 12th August *St Jane Frances de Chantal, Foundress* [White]
 8.30am Holy Mass (Hendred House) Holy Souls

Saturday 13th August *Our Lady St Mary on Saturday* [White]
 No Mass

ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY [GOLD]

Feast of Title and Dedication (1865)

14th August **11am** **Solemn Mass**
 No Mass at St Patrick's
 6pm **Holy Mass**

CONTACT DETAILS

Fr Andrew: 01235 835038 or 07976 437979

aburnham@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk

office@hendredcatholicparish.org.uk is monitored by the Parish Secretary.

FOR YOUR PRAYERS



THE HOLY FATHER'S PRAYER INTENTION FOR AUGUST

We pray for small and medium sized businesses; in the midst of economic and social crisis. May they find ways to continue operating, and serving their communities.

DIOCESAN PRAYER INTENTIONS

Sunday 7 th	Lay Dominicans and Dominican Secular Institute
Monday 8 th	Dominican Sisters [of Malta, of St Joseph, of the Presentation] in the Diocese
Tuesday 9 th	Dialogue with other faiths and especially the work of the Council of Christians & Jews
Wednesday 10 th	Parishes, Communities, & Schools in the North West Hampshire Pastoral Area
Thursday 11 th	Caritas Christi, secular institute for single laywomen
Friday 12 th	Mill Hill Missionaries in the Diocese
Saturday 13 th	Community of Holy Cross, Eastleigh

THE SICK AND THOSE IN NEED

Baby Martha, Sid Wallace, Diana France, John Castle, Daniel Cuevas, John Stringer, Louise Woodhouse, Mary Wallace, Brenda Paddon, Karen Greig, Mary McNichol, Elizabeth Gunn, Des McNichol

THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED

Recently departed: Don Woolf-Brears, Petal Connell, Lilian Mary Yates
Week 7th - 13th August: Francis Marshall, Charles Lafferty, Angela Stilwell, George Hunt, Elizabeth Boyle, Janet Russell, Harold Hackwood, Herbert Reeley

East Hendred Catholic Parish

NOTICEBOARD

APOLOGIES

Apologies for gaps in the Mass Schedule. Fr Andrew is suffering from sciatica at present and is more or less incapacitated. We hope to get back to normal soon.

Coffee

After the 9.30am Mass in St Mary's Parish Rooms.

CHURCH SERVICES

On Sunday 31st July 2022, 206 people viewed, 63 machines looking only at St Mary's. 33 of these were in the UK, 19 in the USA, 10 elsewhere in the world. 119 probably stayed on-line long enough to take part in Mass.

ASSUMPTION OF OUR LADY

Next Sunday, 14th August, we shall celebrate the Assumption of Our Lady, the Feast of Dedication and Title of St Mary's. Masses at 11am and 6pm. No Mass at St Patrick's. There is a Parish Barbecue in the Garden at The Wheatsheaf, East Hendred. The Barbecue is £15 per adult, £20 for families. Free for accompanied children. Unfortunately it is now fully booked. But there will be a second Parish Barbeque, this time at St Patrick's, round about Michaelmas Day (end of September).

CARMELITES ON BOARS HILL

I wonder if we take for granted the precious resource on our doorstep! The Carmelite Friars on Boars Hill <https://www.carmelite.uk.net/> run courses and retreats both on site and on line. Worth keeping an eye on!

E-NEWS LINK

The Bishop unveils a ten-year Mission Plan: *You Shall Be My Witnesses:*
<https://www.portsmouthdiocese.org.uk/communications/news/enews/>

CLOSER TO CHRIST CAMPAIGN

Following a series of meetings with a cross-section of the Parish, we shall be launching the funding campaign *Closer to Christ* on **Sunday 21st August**. It will be a month long and is tackling the gap in finances in diocese and parish (including in ours) caused by the COVID pandemic, on the one hand, and the problems of success on the other. Success includes having 10 seminarians (future priests) to train and retired clergy living longer and thus the need for more housing and funding for them.



The ***Closer to Christ*** Campaign Weekly Newsletter last week (end of July) reported:

“It's been a fantastic week for the Campaign with an overwhelming amount of pledges made! This week also marks the end of the Campaign in the parish of St Joseph and St Edmund, Southampton. Thanks to the efforts of Mgr. Vincent Harvey, his team and many generous parishioners, the parish has surpassed their goal!”

You can find out more [here](#).

This week (as of 5 August).they reported that, in the diocese, they had now reached 700 pledges and that about £4 million of the £13.5 million target had been reached.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADULTS

CHILDREN'S CHURCH

Though Children's Church is now closed for the summer holidays we are planning and thinking about the autumn. Have a word with Veronica or Libby if you would like to help.

PARENTS AND TODDLERS' GROUP

It would be great to enable and welcome a Parents' and Toddlers' Group and we now have a first-rate, air-conditioned environment for such a group. The advantage of such groups is that they more or less run themselves. If anyone is interested in such a venture, have a word with Fr Andrew.

YOUNG CATHOLIC ADULT NETWORK

9th –11th September 2022, Durham University. A conference to think about the Catholic calling to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Benedictines, Dominicans, SVP, CAFOD, Aid to the Church in Need, and Catholic Voices. For further information <https://youngcatholicadultnetwork.uk/>

FLAME

Flame, the largest youth gathering of Catholics, is taking place at the OVO Arena, Wembley on Saturday 4th March 2023, with the theme 'Rise Up!' All young people, whether from the parish, at school (Year 9 or older), or at university are welcome. Loud music, bright lights, moments of stillness..... Any questions? Contact youth@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk or phone 07780 221686.

WORLD YOUTH DAY 2023

Those aged 16 or above by July 2023 are invited to join with like-minded young people from across the diocese to journey on pilgrimage to Lisbon for World Youth Day. This is a life-changing experience for all those who accept the invitation and this pilgrimage, led by Bishop Philip, is set to be the best one yet! But hurry, spaces are limited! Plans are in the early stages, but we will provide more information and details as soon as possible. For further information, see the posters in church, or please email wyd@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk

mary's
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Donate



The Proclaimers, who famously sing about walking 500 miles, are asking you to [Move For Meals](#) this summer to help feed hungry children.

Musical brothers Charlie and Craig Reid are encouraging people to turn their moves into meals by setting themselves an active challenge to raise funds for Mary's Meals. Charlie says: "We're not asking you to walk 500 miles, or 500 more... With Mary's Meals, just a small number of steps can help to feed hungry children across the world."

Craig adds: "It costs just £15.90 to feed a hungry child with Mary's Meals for an entire school year – so a little sponsorship can make a big difference." Whether you choose to walk, run or skip this summer, every move will make an enormous difference to the children who eat Mary's meals.

Start your Move For Meals fundraising project!



[Twitter](#)



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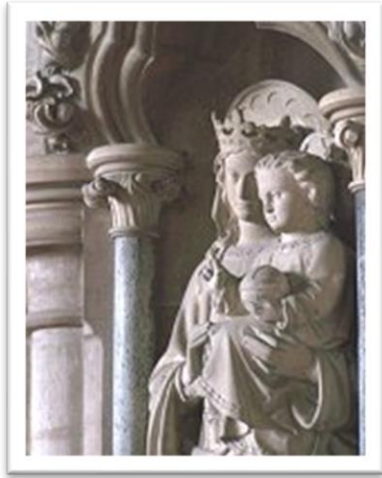
For every £1 you give, 93p is spent directly on our charitable activities. Thank you!

mary's
meals

a simple solution
to world hunger

You can [view this email in your browser](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#) too.

East Hendred Catholic Parish



Nineteenth Sunday in

Ordinary Time (C)

7th August 2022

Antiphons,

Prayers and Readings

Entrance Antiphon

Respice Domine

Look to your covenant, O Lord, and forget not the life of your poor ones for ever. Arise, O God, and defend your cause, and forget not the cries of those who seek you.

Cf Ps 74:20, 19, 22, 23

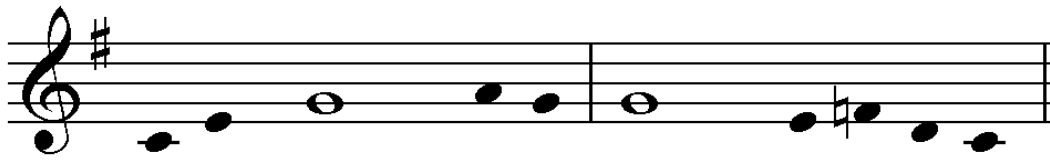
Collect

Almighty ever-living God, whom, taught by the Holy Spirit, we dare to call our Father, bring, we pray, to perfection in our hearts the spirit of adoption as your sons and daughters, that we may merit to enter into the inheritance which you have promised. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.

First Reading

Wis 18:6-9 (RSV)

That night was made known beforehand to our fathers, so that they might rejoice in sure knowledge of the oaths in which they trusted. The deliverance of the righteous and the destruction of their enemies were expected by your people. For by the same means by which you punished our enemies you called us to yourself and glorify us. For in secret the holy children of good men offered sacrifices, and with one accord agreed to the divine law, that the saints would share alike the same things, both blessings and dangers; and already they were singing the praises of the fathers.



R/ Bless-ed the peo-ple |
the Lord has chosen as his he-ri-tage.

Ring out your joy to the Lord, O you *just* ();
 for praise is fitting *for* the up-right.
 Bless-ed the nation whose God is the *Lord* (),
 the people he has chosen as *his* he-ri-tage. *R/*

The Lord's eyes are on those who *fear* him,
 who hope in his *mer-ci-ful* love,
 to rescue their souls from *death* (),
 to keep them *a-live* in fa-mine. *R/*

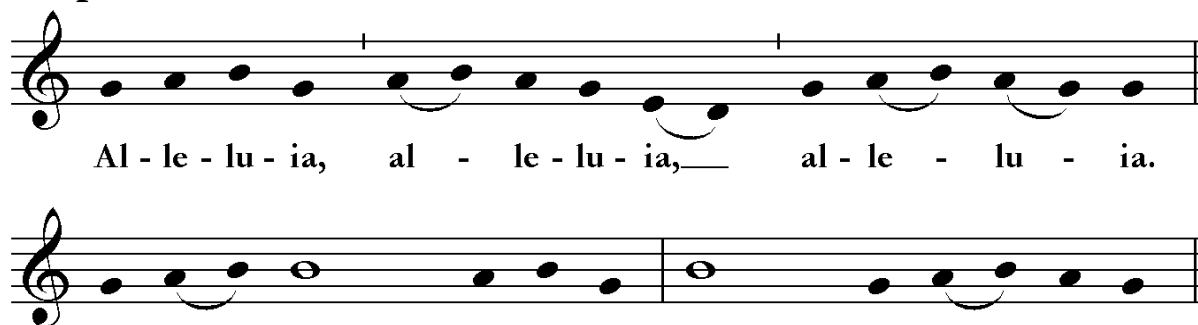
Our soul is waiting for the *Lord* ().
 He is our *help* and our shield.
 May your merciful love be *u-pon* us,
 as we hope *in* you, O Lord. *R/*

Second Reading

Heb 11:1-2, 8-19 (RSV)

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the men of old received divine approval. ...By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place which he was to receive as an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was to go. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked forward to the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised. Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore. These all died in faith, not having received what was promised, but having seen it and greeted it from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city. By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was ready to offer up his only son, of whom it was said, "Through Isaac shall your descendants be named." He considered that God was able to raise men even from the dead; hence, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.

Gospel Acclamation



Stay a - wake and *stand* rea-dy:

because you do not know the hour when the Son of *Man* is co-ming.

Gospel

Lk 12:32-48 (RSV)

Jesus said to his disciples: 'Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions, and give alms; provide yourselves with purses that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. Let your loins be girded and your lamps burning, and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the marriage feast, so that they may open to him at once when he comes and knocks. Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes; truly, I say to you, he will gird himself and have them sit at table, and he will come and serve them. If he comes in the second watch, or in the third, and finds them so, blessed are those servants! But know this, that if the householder had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have left his house to be broken into. You also must be ready; for the Son of man is coming at an unexpected hour.' Peter said, 'Lord, are you telling this parable for us or for all?' And the Lord said, 'Who then is the faithful and wise steward, whom his master will set over his household, to give them their portion of food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master when he comes will find so doing. Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. But if that servant says to himself, "My master is delayed in coming," and begins to beat the menservants and the maidservants, and to eat and drink and get drunk, the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will punish him, and put him with the unfaithful. And that servant who knew his master's will, but did not make ready or act according to his will, shall receive a severe beating. But he who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, shall receive a light beating. Every one to whom much is given, of him will much be required; and of him to whom men commit much they will demand the more.

Prayer over the Offerings

Be pleased, O Lord, to accept the offerings of your Church, for in your mercy you have given them to be offered and by your power you transform them. Through Christ our Lord.

Preface III

De salvatio hominis per hominem

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God. For we know it belongs to your boundless glory, that you came to the aid of mortal beings with your divinity and even fashioned for us a remedy out of mortality itself, that the cause of our downfall might become the means of our salvation, through Christ our Lord. Through him the host of Angels adores your majesty and rejoices in your presence for ever. May our voices, we pray, join with theirs in one chorus of exultant praise, as we acclaim: Holy, holy, holy &c.

Communion Antiphon

Lauda, Ierusalem

O Jerusalem, glorify the Lord, who gives you your fill of finest wheat. *Ps 148:12, 14*

Prayer after Communion

May the communion in your Sacrament that we have consumed, save us, O Lord, and confirm us in the light of your truth. Through Christ our Lord.

Salve Regina

Liturgical Hymns 597

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of mercy! Hail, our life, our sweetness and our hope! To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve; to thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this vale of tears. Turn then, most gracious advocate, thine eyes of mercy towards us; and after this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus. O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary!

Scripture Reading (Week 19 [II] *Per Annum*)

Monday	Ezekiel 1:2-5,24-28	Matthew 17:22-27
Tuesday	Ezekiel 2:8-3:4	Matthew 18:1-5, 10, 12-14
Wednesday	Ezekiel 9:1-7; 10:18-22	Matthew 18:15-20
Thursday	Ezekiel 12:1-12	Matthew 18:21-19:1
Friday	Ezekiel 16:1-15, 60, 63	Matthew 19:3-12
Saturday	Ezekiel 18:1-10, 13, 30-32	Matthew 19:13-15

ASSUMPTION **Revelation 11:19; 12:1-6, 10**

1 Corinthians 15:20-26

Luke 1:39-56

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FOOD FOR THE JOURNEY

7th – 12th August 2022

Collect for Week 19

ALMIGHTY ever-living God, whom, taught by the Holy Spirit, we dare to call our Father, bring, we pray, to perfection in our hearts the spirit of adoption as your sons and daughters, that we may merit to enter into the inheritance which you have promised. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.

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IN CHURCH, the readings this week are proper to St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross on Tuesday and St Laurence the Deacon on Wednesday. For our purposes in this daily commentary we shall meet and stay with the Prophet Ezekiel for a fortnight of weekdays. This is not a particularly accessible book but fortunately the passages set are 'purple passages'.

For the Gospel, we mostly stay with St Matthew and, echoing the first foretelling of the Passion on Friday last (Mt 16:24-28), on Monday we have the second (17:22-27). As the week progresses, we encounter on Thursday a parable on how forgiveness should work (18:21 – 19:1); and, on Friday, the Lord's teaching on the indissolubility of marriage (19:3-12). I hope you will look up these Gospel passages in the Bible, Weekday Missal, or *Magnificat*.

Monday in Week 19 [Year 2]

8th August

Reading

Ezekiel 1:2-5, 24-28 (RSV)

The Glory of the Lord

In the fifth day of the month (it was the fifth year of the exile of King Jehoi'achin), ³ the word of the LORD came to Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chalde'ans by the river Chebar; and the hand of the LORD was upon him there.

⁴ As I looked, behold, a stormy wind came out of the north, and a great cloud, with brightness round about it, and fire flashing forth continually, and in the midst of the fire, as it were gleaming bronze. ⁵ And from the midst of it came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance: they had the form of men.....

²⁴ And when they went, I heard the sound of their wings like the sound of many waters, like the thunder of the Almighty, a sound of tumult like the sound of a host; when they stood still, they let down their wings. ²⁵ And there came a voice from above the firmament over their heads; when they stood still, they let down their wings.

²⁶ And above the firmament over their heads there was the likeness of a throne, in appearance like sapphire; and seated above the likeness of a throne was a likeness as it were of a human form. ²⁷ And upward from what had the appearance of his loins I saw as it were gleaming bronze, like the appearance of fire enclosed round about; and downward from what had the appearance of his loins I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and there was brightness round about him. ²⁸ Like the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud on the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about.

Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard the voice of one speaking.

Reflection

EZEKIEL was a Jerusalem priest, part of the elite who in 597BC were taken off to Babylon. He gives us a timeline, which we can just about interpret, and he seems to be prophesying in Babylon about 593BC. He purports to be describing in the present events which had happened before the Exile and, in common with the other prophets of the time, he ascribes the fate of Judah to the sinfulness of the people. God shows his divine power by abandoning the holy city. The book begins, as today's passage shows, with God still present in glory enthroned above the praises of his people. Ezekiel is very much a priestly book and the vision is described accordingly. We have a 'stormy wind', as we find in the story of Elijah (2 Kgs 2:11) , Job (38:1), and Jonah (1:4). The 'living creatures', as we shall find on Wednesday, are subsequently identified as 'the cherubim' (Ezek 10:4). They are part of heavenly worship, as we hear from Rev. 4:6-8, and they are familiar figures from the ancient world. The Assyrian *karibu* were statues of animals with human heads, guarding the palace at Nineveh and appear here as integral to the worship of the Lord, the God of Israel. Ezekiel starts at the bottom: he listens and gradually looks up to the firmament of heaven, hears the sounds, and then sees the vision 'like the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud on the day of rain'. In other words, God is way above us, well above the temple in Jerusalem, way above the earth. So what the vision tells us is that God will not utterly forsake his people. He is not confined to Jerusalem and, as he chooses, can be available to his people in exile.

Tuesday in Week 19 [Year 2]

9th August

Reading

Ezekiel 2:8 – 3:4 (RSV)

Ezekiel is invited to eat a scroll

I, Ezekiel, heard a voice speaking. It said: ⁸ 'But you, son of man, hear what I say to you; be not rebellious like that rebellious house; open your

mouth, and eat what I give you.' ⁹ And when I looked, behold, a hand was stretched out to me, and behold, a written scroll was in it; ¹⁰ and he spread it before me; and it had writing on the front and on the back, and there were written on it words of lamentation and mourning and woe. ³¹ And he said to me, 'Son of man, eat what is offered to you; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel.' ² So I opened my mouth, and he gave me the scroll to eat. ³ And he said to me, 'Son of man, eat this scroll that I give you and fill your stomach with it.' Then I ate it; and it was in my mouth as sweet as honey. ⁴ And he said to me, 'Son of man, go, get you to the house of Israel, and speak with my words to them.

Reflection

THE EATING of the scroll is at once strange and familiar. Why would one eat a scroll, let alone describe it 'as sweet as honey'? What is certainly more familiar – and we have come across it in other prophets – is pressing into service an everyday object – in Jeremiah it was the loin cloth and the potter's clay. So the vivid image of eating a scroll helps us to understand the message. We find something similar in the psalms. Psalm 19:10b describes the ordinances of the Lord as 'sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb' and Psalm 119:103 says 'How sweet are your words to my taste: sweeter than honey to my mouth'. The consuming of a scroll makes a reappearance at Rev. 10:9-10. There we learn that the scroll tastes 'as sweet as honey' but makes the stomach bitter. Written on Ezekiel's scroll are 'words of lamentation and mourning and woe', possibly identifying for us three types of Israelite lament poetry found later in the Book of Ezekiel. Or perhaps just three words for the same thing. By chewing and swallowing God's words, Ezekiel is internalising God's message. Thus, having thoroughly absorbed it, he is equipped to deliver the message to God's people.

Wednesday in Week 19 *[Year 2]*

10th August

Reading

Ezekiel 9:1-7; 10:18-22 (RSV)

The Slaughter of the Idolaters

AS I, Ezekiel, listened, God cried in my ears with a loud voice, saying, 'Draw near, you executioners of the city, each with his destroying weapon in his hand.' ² And behold, six men came from the direction of the upper gate, which faces north, every man with his weapon for slaughter in his hand, and with them was a man clothed in linen, with a writing case at his side. And they went in and stood beside the bronze altar.

³ Now the glory of the God of Israel had gone up from the cherubim on which it rested to the threshold of the house; and he called to the man clothed in linen, who had the writing case at his side. ⁴ And the LORD said to him, 'Go through the city, through Jerusalem, and put a mark upon the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all the abominations that are committed in it.' ⁵ And to the others he said in my hearing, 'Pass through the city after him, and smite; your eye shall not spare, and you shall show no pity; ⁶ slay old men outright, young men and maidens, little children and women, but touch no one upon whom is the mark. And begin at my sanctuary.' So they began with the elders who were before the house. ⁷ Then he said to them, 'Defile the house, and fill the courts with the slain. Go forth.' So they went forth, and smote in the city.....

¹⁸ Then the glory of the LORD went forth from the threshold of the house, and stood over the cherubim. ¹⁹ And the cherubim lifted up their wings and mounted up from the earth in my sight as they went forth, with the wheels beside them; and they stood at the door of the east gate of the house of the LORD; and the glory of the God of Israel was over them.

²⁰ These were the living creatures that I saw underneath the God of Israel by the river Chebar; and I knew that they were cherubim. ²¹ Each had four faces, and each four wings, and underneath their wings the semblance of human hands. ²² And as for the likeness of their faces, they were the very faces whose appearance I had seen by the river Chebar. They went every one straight forward.

Reflection

WE CAN'T easily accept the Israelite understanding of God's anger, which is explored in this passage. The 'six men' whom the Lord chooses to do his work are not so much men as avenging angels. God himself does no harm but he is clearly seen as himself passing judgment. Those who are

to be spared are marked with a sign, though the Hebrew might mean that only Ezekiel is signed and spared. There is a link here with the marking of foreheads on Ash Wednesday. Presiding over the judgment, God moves to the east gate of the temple, very definitely, as it were, stepping to one side. The terrible glory of his anger is shown in the attendance of the cherubim (as we now know the 'living creatures' to be). God's agents wreak havoc and the temple courts are filled – and therefore defiled – by dead bodies. We are probably not hearing here about what happened in 597BC, the beginning of the Exile, but a few years later, when the temple and city were laid waste. With hindsight Ezekiel conflates the events. It is a severe picture and nowadays we do our theology rather differently. We no longer start with the view that everything that happens – including death, disease, and disaster – is visited upon us by God. We see God as one who cares for us, loves us, and supports us through the most tragic of circumstances. How those tragic circumstances arise we cannot say. We talk about the 'mystery of evil' and, as we explore that, come across a no less bewildering 'mystery of goodness'. But centuries before the coming of Christ, the history of Israel is always seen through the lens of judgment. The Babylonian Exile, the destruction of the temple, and the slaughter of old and young all happen because of the apostasy of God's people. It's a dark picture.

Thursday in Week 19 [Year 2]

11th August

Reading

Ezekiel 12:1-12 (RSV)

Judah's Captivity Portrayed

12 The word of the LORD came to me: ²'Son of man, you dwell in the midst of a rebellious house, who have eyes to see, but see not, who have ears to hear, but hear not; ³for they are a rebellious house. Therefore, son of man, prepare for yourself an exile's baggage, and go into exile by day in their sight; you shall go like an exile from your place to another place in their sight. Perhaps they will understand, though they are a rebellious house. ⁴You shall bring out your baggage by day in their sight, as baggage for exile; and you shall go forth yourself at evening in their sight, as men do who must go into exile. ⁵Dig through the wall in their sight, and go out through it. ⁶In their sight you shall lift the baggage

upon your shoulder, and carry it out in the dark; you shall cover your face, that you may not see the land; for I have made you a sign for the house of Israel.'

⁷ And I did as I was commanded. I brought out my baggage by day, as baggage for exile, and in the evening I dug through the wall with my own hands; I went forth in the dark, carrying my outfit upon my shoulder in their sight.

⁸ In the morning the word of the LORD came to me: ⁹ 'Son of man, has not the house of Israel, the rebellious house, said to you, 'What are you doing?' ¹⁰ Say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: This oracle concerns the prince in Jerusalem and all the house of Israel who are in it.' ¹¹ Say, 'I am a sign for you: as I have done, so shall it be done to them; they shall go into exile, into captivity.' ¹² And the prince who is among them shall lift his baggage upon his shoulder in the dark, and shall go forth; he shall dig through the wall and go out through it; he shall cover his face, that he may not see the land with his eyes.

Reflection

MORE picture language: in today's first reading the prophet Ezekiel, priest of Jerusalem, gives us a 'sign-act'. The act is the journey of a refugee, referred to by Ezekiel as the 'prince', who digs through the wall at night to escape, face covered to conceal his identity from the Babylonian army who are giving siege to the city. The refugee, we can identify, as Zedekiah, and we find the story of this escape in 2 Kgs 25:4-7, the last chapter in the history of the Jews before the exile. It's worth just reading those verses:

Then a breach was made in the city; the king with all the men of war fled by night by the way of the gate between the two walls, by the king's garden, though the Chalde'ans were around the city. And they went in the direction of the Arabah. ⁵ But the army of the Chalde'ans pursued the king, and overtook him in the plains of Jericho; and all his army was scattered from him. ⁶ Then they captured the king, and brought him up to the king of Babylon at Riblah, who passed sentence upon him. ⁷ They slew the sons of Zedeki'ah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedeki'ah, and bound him in fetters, and took him to Babylon.

This unsuccessful flight Ezekiel portrays as the defining sign of Judah's defeat and captivity.

Friday in Week 19 [Year 2]

12th August

Reading

Ezekiel 16:1-15, 60, 63 (RSV)

God's Faithless Bride

Again the word of the LORD came to me: ²'Son of man, make known to Jerusalem her abominations, ³and say, Thus says the Lord GOD to Jerusalem: Your origin and your birth are of the land of the Canaanites; your father was an Amorite, and your mother a Hittite. ⁴And as for your birth, on the day you were born your navel string was not cut, nor were you washed with water to cleanse you, nor rubbed with salt, nor swathed with bands. ⁵No eye pitied you, to do any of these things to you out of compassion for you; but you were cast out on the open field, for you were abhorred, on the day that you were born.

⁶'And when I passed by you, and saw you weltering in your blood, I said to you in your blood, 'Live, ⁷and grow up like a plant of the field.' And you grew up and became tall and arrived at full maidenhood; your breasts were formed, and your hair had grown; yet you were naked and bare.

⁸'When I passed by you again and looked upon you, behold, you were at the age for love; and I spread my skirt over you, and covered your nakedness: yes, I plighted my troth to you and entered into a covenant with you, says the Lord GOD, and you became mine. ⁹Then I bathed you with water and washed off your blood from you, and anointed you with oil. ¹⁰I clothed you also with embroidered cloth and shod you with leather, I swathed you in fine linen and covered you with silk. ¹¹And I decked you with ornaments, and put bracelets on your arms, and a chain on your neck. ¹²And I put a ring on your nose, and earrings in your ears, and a beautiful crown upon your head. ¹³Thus you were decked with gold and silver; and your raiment was of fine linen, and silk, and embroidered cloth; you ate fine flour and honey and oil. You grew exceedingly beautiful, and came to regal estate. ¹⁴And your renown went forth among the nations because of your beauty, for it was perfect through the

splendour which I had bestowed upon you, says the Lord GOD. ¹⁵ But you trusted in your beauty, and played the harlot because of your renown, and lavished your harlotries on any passer-by.....

⁶⁰ 'Yet I will remember my covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish with you an everlasting covenant...⁶³ that you may remember and be confounded, and never open your mouth again because of your shame, when I forgive you all that you have done, says the Lord GOD.'

Reflection

CHAPTER 16 is the longest chapter in the Book of Ezekiel and today we look at the first fifteen verses and a couple of the final verses. The image is of Israel as an adulterous wife, taken by the Lord from humble beginnings, Pygmalion-style, woo-ed, washed, and clothed by God, and given fine jewellery. But, says the Lord, Israel trusted in her beauty and became a whore (v15). This image of God as the Bridegroom and Israel the Bride is fundamental in Scripture. It is perhaps the main reason why we refer to God as masculine, and to his people – whether Israel or the Church – as 'she'. God, of course, is not a sexual being. He is beyond gender and both Israel and the Church have as many male members as female. Nevertheless story and narrative are the way we encounter God and it is through story and narrative that we understand him and his ways. Having upbraided the adulterous wife, God, in verse 60, nevertheless remembers his covenant and, in verse 63, bids us recall his forgiveness of us, and, in our shame for our sins, cease our complaining.