

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

Before Lent

14th – 21st February 2021



St Valentine

Reflection – *St Valentine*

Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends. 1 Cor 13:4-8

ST VALENTINE is a figure from third century Rome when Christianity was a proscribed religion. He met a martyr's death and there is a Roman catacomb and an ancient church dedicated to him. In 496 AD Pope Gelasius marked 14th February as St Valentine's Day. There are conflicting legends and stories and in the 1969 reforms the day disappeared from the Church Calendar. Nonetheless secular customs can be stronger than religious ones and 'Valentine's Day', celebrating romantic love, remains firmly in the Calendar of florists and suppliers of chocolate and greetings cards. The connection of Valentine with romantic love seems to derive from an edict of the time that young men could not marry. Roman society was promiscuous and polygamous but the romantic marriage bond of young people was thought to impact on the bravery of soldiers. One of Valentine's subversive acts – at a time when simply being a Christian was seen as subversive – was to encourage couples to marry secretly within the Church. This commended Christianity to serious-minded young people and encouraged marital and sexual fidelity. Valentine was eventually caught, imprisoned, and tortured for disobeying the edict of the Emperor.

In the old Calendar, the Sunday before Lent, was known as *Quinquagesima*, and the Epistle at Mass was 1 Corinthians 13, St Paul's hymn to love. With a moveable Easter and days and dates falling differently each year, it is very unusual for St Valentine's Day to fall on Sunday 14th February. It last happened in 2010 and is not down to happen again in the foreseeable future – my tables run out in 2039. So let us enjoy the co-incidence of the Sunday which traditionally proclaimed the sacredness of love and the saint's day of the one whom our culture, in the widest sense, recognises as the patron saint of marriage and romantic love.

Fr Andrew

14th – 21st February 2021

All masses live-streamed www.churchservices.tv/easthendred

Sunday 14 th February SUNDAY 6B	SIXTH SUNDAY <i>Per Annum</i> (Year B) [GREEN] 9.30am Mass <i>Pro populo</i> Leviticus 13:1-2, 44-46 1 Corinthians 10:31–11:1 Mark 1:40-45
Monday 15 th February	<i>Of Week 6</i> [Green] 9.15am Mass <i>RIP Mrs Irene Baker</i> Genesis 4:1-15, 25 Mark 8:11-13
Tuesday 16 th February	<i>Of Week 6</i> [Green] 9.15am Mass <i>RIP Mr Chris Kenway-Jackson</i> <i>& Mrs Pauline Kenway-Jackson</i> Genesis 6:5-8; 7:1-5, 10 Mark 8:14-21
Wednesday 17 th February	ASH WEDNESDAY [Purple] 9.15am Mass <i>Pro populo</i> Joel 2:12-18 2 Corinthians 5:20 – 6:2 Matt 6:1-6, 16-18
Thursday 18 th February	<i>After Ash Wednesday</i> [Purple] 10am Mass <i>Kristina (ill with COVID)</i> Deuteronomy 30:15-20 Luke 9:2-25
Friday 12 th February	<i>After Ash Wednesday</i> [Purple] 9.15am Mass <i>Holy Souls</i> Isaiah 58:1-9 Matthew 9:14-15
Saturday 13 th February	<i>After Ash Wednesday</i> [Purple] <i>No Mass</i> Isaiah 58:9-14 Luke 5:27-32
Sunday 14 th February	FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT (Year B) [Purple] 9.30am Mass <i>Pro populo</i> Genesis 9:8-15 1 Peter 3:18-22 Mark 1:12-15

East Hendred Catholic Parish

NOTICEBOARD

PARISH ADMINISTRATORS ON FURLOUGH

During February Maria Brown and Ma Lluisa Jarne are on furlough once more, so that the parish can benefit from government help. The parish e-mail hendred@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk is being monitored by Fr Andrew so no one in the parish should be affected by the furlough.

ST MARY'S ON LIVE-STREAM

Last Sunday (7th February) 263 people looked in from 112 addresses, with 121 staying around long enough to take part in the Mass. Homes with more than one person viewing and those browsing explain the largest figure.

VERSO L'ALTO - REACH THE HEIGHTS!

An Hour of Prayer and Praise

Bishop Philip invites you to join him and the Cathedral clergy online every Thursday 7.30 to 8.30 pm during lockdown to pray for safety, for the sick and for key workers, for the Diocese and for a speedy end to the pandemic. <https://www.portsmouthcatholiccathedral.org.uk/live-mass.php>

STANDING COMMITTEE

The Standing Committee met on Wednesday 10th February and decided to postpone a decision on re-opening until a meeting on 24th February, by which time we shall have heard further from the Government about emerging from Lockdown. The first stage will be opening St Mary's for private prayer during the week and we hope to be able to do that in March. Meanwhile there are plans to repair the floor in St Mary's and re-hang the the *baldacchino* securely in St Patrick's.

LENTEN RETREAT: 'FINDING HOPE IN SCRIPTURE'

Sr Hyacinthe Defos du Rau, OP, Formation for Mission Team Leader
Department for Evangelisation, Tel: 0150681874, writes:

Every Monday evening during Lent, for six weeks, at 7.30pm we will discover aspects of the virtue of hope from six different Bible passages, so that we may grow in hope in these difficult times, and find ways to share our hope with others. Our reflection will be followed by a time of live-streamed adoration and Compline with the Dominican Sisters of St Joseph. Register here to participate:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZEtc-2grjkiGtU8vPFJea2ktvR5U0MZ1mrL>

FOR YOUR PRAYERS

HOLY FATHER'S FEBRUARY PRAYER INTENTION

We pray for women who are victims of violence, that they may be protected by society and have their suffering considered and heeded.

THE SICK AND THOSE IN NEED

Kristina, Baby Martha, John Castle, Petal Connell, Daniel Cuevas, John Stringer, Louise Woodhouse, Sr Catherine, Mary Wallace, Brenda Paddon, Angus Clark, Karen Greig, Kitty Teasdale, Mary McNichol, Andrew Gunn, Elizabeth Gunn, Des McNichol, Christine Robinson, Rose

THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED

Week 14th -20th February: Robert Tammer, Emily Mulford, Dinah Booker, Yvonne Goyder, Esme Stafford Northcote, James Noonan, Patrick Barnes, Olive Gertrude Eyston, Charles John Eyston, Margaret Mary Bishop, Harry James Ballard.

CHARITY

To help with supplying the Didcot Foodbank, contact Veronica Paget: veronicapaget@hotmail.com or leave suitable food outside her front door. Jackymattam@btinternet.com helps with the poor locally and items for her may be left outside the door of Cozens Farm inside plastic bags.

VOTIVE CANDLES

If you would like a candle lighting, e-mail aburnham@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk
A donation to the parish may be made on www.hendredcatholicparish.org.uk

GIVING: THE PARISH BY REGULAR STANDING ORDER OR GIFT

BANK DETAILS: PRCDTR East Hendred, St Mary

Sort Code: 309304 Account Number: 00877183

To arrange Gift Aid, contact : hendred@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk

CHILDREN'S LITURGY

Please open the file below for resources for this week.



CLG Term 3 Sunday
14th February 2021.doc

CONTACT DETAILS

Fr Andrew: 01235 835038 or 07976 437979
aburnham@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk

East Hendred Catholic Parish



St Valentine

**Sixth Sunday in
Ordinary Time (B)
14th February 2021
Antiphons,
Prayers and Readings**

Entrance Antiphon

Esto mihi in Deum protectorem

Be my protector, O God, a mighty stronghold to save me. For you are my rock, my stronghold! Lead me, guide me, for the sake of your name.

Cf Ps 31:3-4

Collect

O God, who teach us that you abide in hearts that are just and true: grant that we may be so fashioned by your grace as to become a dwelling pleasing to you. 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

Leviticus 13:1-2, 44-46 (RSV)

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, ² 'When a man has on the skin of his body a swelling or an eruption or a spot, and it turns into a leprous disease on the skin of his body, then he shall be brought to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons the priests...⁴⁴ he is a leprous man, he is unclean; the priest must pronounce him unclean; his disease is on his head. ⁴⁵ 'The leper who has the disease shall wear torn clothes and let the hair of his head hang loose, and he shall cover his upper lip and cry, 'Unclean, unclean.' ⁴⁶ He shall remain unclean as long as he has the disease; he is unclean; he shall dwell alone in a habitation outside the camp.

Psalm 32:1-2, 5, 11 R/ cf 7

**You are a hiding place for me;
you fill me with the joy of salvation.**

Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven,
whose sin is remitted.
Blessed the man to whom the Lord imputes no guilt,
in whose spirit is no guile.

To you I have acknowledged my sins;
my guilt I did not hide.
I said: 'I will confess my transgression to the Lord.'
And you have forgiven the guilt of my sin.

Rejoice in the Lord; exult, you just!
Ring out your joy, all you upright of heart!

Second Reading

1 Corinthians 10:31 – 11:1 (RSV)

Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.
³² Give no offence to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, ³³ just as I try to please all men in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved. ¹ Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.

Gospel

Mark 1:40-45 (RSV)

A leper came to Jesus beseeching him, and kneeling said to him, 'If you will, you can make me clean.'⁴¹ Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, 'I will; be clean.'⁴² And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean.⁴³ And he sternly charged him, and sent him away at once,⁴⁴ and said to him, 'See that you say nothing to any one; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, for a proof to the people.'⁴⁵ But he went out and began to talk freely about it, and to spread the news, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter a town, but was out in the country; and people came to him from every quarter.

Prayer over the Offerings

May this oblation, O Lord, we pray, cleanse and renew us and may it become for those who do your will the source of eternal reward. Through Christ our Lord.

Preface VI

(De pignore æterni Paschali)

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 in you we live and move and have our being, and while in this body we not only experience the daily effects of your care, but even now possess the pledge of life eternal. From having received the first fruits of the Spirit, through whom you raised up Jesus from the dead, we hope for an everlasting share in the Paschal Mystery. And so, with all the Angels, we praise you, as in joyful celebration we acclaim: Holy, holy, holy &c.

SPIRITUAL COMMUNION

Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

after St Alphonsus Liguori (18th cent.)

My Jesus, I believe that you are present in the most Blessed Sacrament. I love you above all things and I desire to receive you into my soul. Even though I cannot now receive you sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace you as if you were already there, and unite myself wholly to you. Never permit me to be separated from you. Amen.

+ + + + +

O come to my heart, Lord Jesus. There is room in my heart for you.

Communion Antiphon

Manducaverunt et saturati

They ate and had their fill, and what they craved the Lord gave them; they were not disappointed in what they craved. *Cf Ps 78:29-30*

Prayer after Communion

Having fed upon these heavenly delights, we pray, O Lord, that we may always long for that food by which we truly live. Through Christ our Lord.

Ave Regina Cælorum

HAIL, Queen of Heaven, beyond compare,
to whom the angels homage pay;
hail, Root of Jesse, Gate of Light,
that opened for the world's new Day.

Rejoice, O Virgin unsurpassed,
in whom our ransom was begun,
for all thy loving children pray
to Christ, our Saviour, and thy Son.

Scripture Reading (Week 6 Year 1)

Monday Genesis 4:1-15, 25 Mark 8:11-13

Tuesday Genesis 6:5-8; 7:1-5, 10 Mark 8:14-21

ASH WEDNESDAY

Joel 2:12-18

2 Corinthians 5:20 – 6:2 **Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18**

Thursday Deuteronomy 30:15-20 Luke 9:2-25

Friday Isaiah 58:1-9 Matthew 9:14-15

Saturday Isaiah 58:9-14 Luke 5:27-32

LENT 1B **Genesis 9:8-15**

1 Peter 3:18-22 **Mark 1:12-15**

Ask your MP to support an amendment to help stop forced abortion in Xinjiang, China

There is extensive evidence that many women in the Uyghur Muslim community in Xinjiang, China are being subjected to forced abortions.

Lord Alton is currently championing an amendment to the Trade Bill which would give British courts a role in determining whether a country is committing genocide. This would help with putting international pressure on the Chinese Communist Party to stop the practice of forcing abortions on the Uyghur Muslim community along with the wider human rights abuses that evidence shows is being perpetuated against this community.

If you would like to email your MP asking them to support the amendment, you can do this easily using a tool which has been set up on the Genocide Response campaign website which can be accessed by visiting the link:

<https://genocideresponse.org/>

FOOD FOR THE JOURNEY

15th – 20th February 2021

Week 6 (Year 1)

Collect

O GOD, who teach us that you abide in hearts that are just and true: grant that we may be so fashioned by your grace as to become a dwelling pleasing to you. 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

Monday 15th February

Reading

Genesis 4:1-15, 25

Cain murders Abel

Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, 'I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD.'² And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a tiller of the ground.³ In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground,⁴ and Abel brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering,⁵ but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.⁶ The LORD said to Cain, 'Why are you angry, and why has your countenance fallen?⁷ If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it.'

⁸ Cain said to Abel his brother, 'Let us go out to the field.' And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel, and killed him.⁹ Then the LORD said to Cain, 'Where is Abel your brother?' He said, 'I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?'¹⁰ And the LORD said, 'What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground.¹¹ And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its

mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. ¹² When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength; you shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth.' ¹³ Cain said to the LORD, 'My punishment is greater than I can bear. ¹⁴ Behold, you have driven me this day away from the ground; and from your face I shall be hidden; and I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will slay me.' ¹⁵ Then the LORD said to him, 'Not so! If any one slays Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold.' And the LORD put a mark on Cain, lest any who came upon him should kill him. ²⁵ And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and called his name Seth, for she said, 'God has appointed for me another child instead of Abel, for Cain slew him.'

Reflection

IT IS hard to understand why it is, when the sons of Adam and Eve each brought an offering to the Lord, that the sacrifice of Abel, the younger brother, is accepted, but the sacrifice of Cain, the older brother, is not accepted. This early story introduces the crime of murder and the deadly consequences of sibling rivalry. It also introduces the notion, perhaps, that, from the economic perspective of a millennium before the coming of Christ, sheep farming is more highly regarded than the sowing and harvesting of crops. God punishes Cain for the heinous killing of his brother but, just as he punished Cain's parents, Adam and Eve, without abandoning them, so he offers protection to Cain. The mark of Cain is a sign of protection. The famous saying from this passage is Cain's response to God: 'am I my brother's keeper?' The Lord's questioning of Cain – like his questioning of Adam and Eve – reveals the distance created by sin. Sin places us at a distance from the love of God and from the community in which we live.

Tuesday 16th February

Reading

Genesis 6:5-8; 7:1-5, 10

The Story of Noah

⁵ The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. ⁶ And the LORD was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. ⁷ So the LORD said, 'I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the ground, man and beast and creeping

things and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.' ⁸ But Noah found favour in the eyes of the LORD.....

7 Then the LORD said to Noah, 'Go into the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you are righteous before me in this generation. ² Take with you seven pairs of all clean animals, the male and his mate; and a pair of the animals that are not clean, the male and his mate; ³ and seven pairs of the birds of the air also, male and female, to keep their kind alive upon the face of all the earth. ⁴ For in seven days I will send rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and every living thing that I have made I will blot out from the face of the ground.' ⁵ And Noah did all that the LORD had commanded him.

...¹⁰ And after seven days the waters of the flood came upon the earth.

Reflection

THE FLOOD is a story that every school child knows and both the ark as a haven of safety and the rainbow as a symbol that all will ultimately be well have become part of a shared language of hope. There is no evidence from pre-history of a global flooding but there are Mesopotamian - Middle Eastern - myths, of which the story Genesis is not the first, that describe what must have been a very widespread and perilous flood in pre-historic times. In the Genesis account, God is disillusioned with his creation and, as it were, goes back to the drawing board. He returns Earth to its pre-creation chaos. We have two accounts here: in one, the Flood lasted forty days (Gen 7:17) and in the other 150 days (7:24). In one there are a pair of each animal species (Gen 6:19) and in the other one pair of the unclean animals and seven pairs of clean animals (7:2). Did Noah release a raven or a dove or both? These discrepancies reflect different sources, sources which we met last week and identified as J and P, the Jahwistic and the Priestly sources. The story culminates in a covenant that humans could eat animals but not drink their life-blood and that God would not ever again destroy all life by a flood.

The Flood story is important in Christianity because of the mention made of it in the New Testament (Mt 24:37-39, Lk 17:26-27, 1 Pet 3:18-22; 2 Pet 2:5, 3:6, Heb 11:7). The Flood is a foreshadowing of salvation in Christ, the Flood serving as a type of Baptism. The 'nave' ('ship') of a church reminds us that the Church is the ark of salvation.

ASH WEDNESDAY

Wednesday 17th February

Collect

GRANT, O Lord, that we may begin with holy fasting this campaign of Christian service, so that, as we take up battle against spiritual evils. We may be armed with weapons of self-restraint. 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.

Reading

Matthew 6:1-18

Concerning Almsgiving

¹Beware of practising your piety before men in order to be seen by them; for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

²Thus, when you give alms, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by men. Truly, I say to you, they have their reward. ³But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴so that your alms may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Concerning Prayer

⁵And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have their reward. ⁶But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

⁷And in praying do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard for their many words. ⁸Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. ⁹Pray then like this:

Our Father who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name.
¹⁰Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.
¹¹Give us this day our daily bread;
¹²And forgive us our debts,
As we also have forgiven our debtors;
¹³And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.

¹⁴For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you; ¹⁵but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Concerning Fasting

¹⁶'And when you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have their reward. ¹⁷But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, ¹⁸that your fasting may not be seen by men but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Reflection

The Gospel, as read in Church on Ash Wednesday, omits verses 7-15 of the passage as we have given it here. The passage omitted broadly comprises the Lord's Prayer, which receives separate attention on the Tuesday of the First Week of Lent. The three sections 'Almsgiving', 'Prayer', and 'Fasting', as I remark every Lent, deal with our relationship with others ('Almsgiving'), with God ('Prayer'), and with oneself ('Fasting') In that sense, it would have been better, perhaps, if the Evangelist or his editor had begun with 'Prayer', though, of course, it is possible that what is being recalled is the Lord's own setting out of these religious tasks. They are the Christian equivalent of the five pillars of Islam – Islam also includes reciting the Muslim profession of faith and pilgrimage to Mecca – and we surely have something to learn - and recover from our history - if we took Lent as seriously as Muslims take *Ramadan* and punctuated the day with prayer in the disciplined way many Muslims approach *Salat*. Lent is about the quality of our spiritual lives, however, and not the number of duties performed so, most of all, it is a time to reflect on – and grow in – our work of almsgiving, prayer, and fasting.

Thursday 18th February

Reading

Deuteronomy 30:15-20

See, I have set before you this day life and good, death and evil.

¹⁵ 'See, I have set before you this day life and good, death and evil. ¹⁶ If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you this day, by loving the LORD your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his ordinances, then you shall live and multiply, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land which you are entering to take possession of it. ¹⁷ But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them, ¹⁸ I declare to you this day, that you shall perish; you shall not live long in the land which you are going over the Jordan to enter and possess. ¹⁹ I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse; therefore choose life, that you and your descendants may live, ²⁰ loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice, and cleaving to him; for that means life to you and length of days, that you may dwell in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.'

Reflection

THE READINGS in Lent are no longer organised as *lectio continua*, where each day's readings continue from where the readings from the day before have left off. During Lent, different passages from different parts of the Bible, are selected as an anthology. So, today, as our Lenten discipline begins, we are presented with words from the third of four addresses by Moses to the people of Israel. The title 'Deuteronomy' combines 'second' and 'Law', so we are looking at a fresh presentation of the *Torah*, whenever that was done. There are several scholarly opinions about when the book was written, giving us very different dates in Israelite history, but it is essentially a call to a renewed and pure Judaism. Today, then, we are challenged to choose between life and good, on the one hand, and death and evil, on the other. Lent is a time for choice and the challenge is to choose life.

Friday 19th February

Reading

Isaiah 58:1-9

False and True Worship

'Cry aloud, spare not,
lift up your voice like a trumpet;
declare to my people their transgression,
to the house of Jacob their sins.
² Yet they seek me daily,
and delight to know my ways,
as if they were a nation that did righteousness
and did not forsake the ordinance of their God;
they ask of me righteous judgments,
they delight to draw near to God.
³ 'Why have we fasted, and you see it not?
Why have we humbled ourselves, and you take no
knowledge of it?'
Behold, in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure,^[a]
and oppress all your workers.
⁴ Behold, you fast only to quarrel and to fight
and to hit with wicked fist.
Fasting like yours this day
will not make your voice to be heard on high.
⁵ Is such the fast that I choose,
a day for a man to humble himself?
Is it to bow down his head like a rush,
and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him?
Will you call this a fast,
and a day acceptable to the LORD?
⁶ 'Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of wickedness,
to undo the thongs of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?
⁷ Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,
and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover him,
and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?
⁸ Then shall your light break forth like the dawn,
and your healing shall spring up speedily;

your righteousness shall go before you,
the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.

Reflection

IN EARLY Jewish practice, fasting was connected with seeking God's mercy. Difficult conditions, such as the threat of military defeat, prompted the need for corporate fasting. Fasting in this sense is very different from fasting in the Christian tradition where it becomes an ascetical practice, a means of self-regulation and improvement. In this passage from the last part of the Book of Isaiah, Judah is struggling with the restoration of Jerusalem after the Exile (see Zech 8:18-23). Will the city – Mount Zion – once again become glorious, will it become a focus for the nations? The message of the prophet here is that fasting in itself is insufficient. What is needed is justice, care for those in need, feeding and housing the poor. These actions would speak eloquently of God's glory and the holiness of God's people and bring about the restoration of Jerusalem.

Saturday 20th February

Reading

Isaiah 58:9-14

Your light shall rise in the darkness

- ⁹ Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer;
you shall cry, and he will say, Here I am.
'If you take away from the midst of you the yoke,
the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness,
¹⁰ if you pour yourself out for the hungry
and satisfy the desire of the afflicted,
then shall your light rise in the darkness
and your gloom be as the noonday.
¹¹ And the LORD will guide you continually,
and satisfy your desire with good things,
and make your bones strong;
and you shall be like a watered garden,
like a spring of water,
whose waters fail not.
¹² And your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt;
you shall raise up the foundations of many generations;

you shall be called the repairer of the breach,
the restorer of streets to dwell in.
13 'If you turn back your foot from the sabbath,
from doing your pleasure^[a] on my holy day,
and call the sabbath a delight
and the holy day of the LORD honourable;
if you honour it, not going your own ways,
or seeking your own pleasure, or talking idly;
14 then you shall take delight in the LORD,
and I will make you ride upon the heights of the earth;
I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father,
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.'

Reflection

THE MESSAGE of Isaiah 58, which we encountered in yesterday's reading, continues today. Yesterday we had the critique – fasting is of no avail without embracing social justice. Today we have the promise of the Lord's response to the prayers of a righteous people. Their light will shine forth amidst the darkness, and the ruined city of Jerusalem will be rebuilt. The return from the Babylonian exile was in 539 BC, following the edict of Cyrus the Persian Emperor. Judah became a satrap of Persia and work on the rebuilding of the temple commenced. And yet it took another twenty years to complete. Meanwhile there was a new emphasis on the sabbath, hitherto simply a day of rest, but now increasingly seen as a holy day and a focus for religious practice.

THE GOD WHO SPEAKS

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST MARK,

Chapter by Chapter

Mark 4 *Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition*

The Parable of the Sower

4 Again he began to teach beside the sea. And a very large crowd gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat in it on the sea; and the whole crowd was beside the sea on the land. ²And he taught them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them: ³'Listen! A sower went out to sow. ⁴And as he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it. ⁵Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it had not much soil, and immediately it sprang up, since it had no depth of soil; ⁶and when the sun rose it was scorched, and since it had no root it withered away. ⁷Other seed fell among thorns and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. ⁸And other seeds fell into good soil and brought forth grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.' ⁹And he said, 'He who has ears to hear, let him hear.'

The Purpose of the Parables

¹⁰And when he was alone, those who were about him with the twelve asked him concerning the parables. ¹¹And he said to them, 'To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables; ¹²so that^[a] they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand; lest they should turn again, and be forgiven.' ¹³And he said to them, 'Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables? ¹⁴The sower sows the word. ¹⁵And these are the ones along the path, where the word is sown; when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word which is sown in them. ¹⁶And these in like manner are the ones sown upon rocky ground, who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy; ¹⁷and they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while; then, when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away.^[b] ¹⁸And others are the ones sown among thorns; they are those who

hear the word, ¹⁹but the cares of the world, and the delight in riches, and the desire for other things, enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. ²⁰But those that were sown upon the good soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.'

A Lamp under a Bushel Basket

²¹And he said to them, 'Is a lamp brought in to be put under a bushel, or under a bed, and not on a stand? ²²For there is nothing hid, except to be made manifest; nor is anything secret, except to come to light. ²³If any man has ears to hear, let him hear.' ²⁴And he said to them, 'Take heed what you hear; the measure you give will be the measure you get, and still more will be given you. ²⁵For to him who has will more be given; and from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away.'

The Parable of the Growing Seed

²⁶And he said, 'The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed upon the ground, ²⁷and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he knows not how. ²⁸The earth produces of itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. ²⁹But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.'

The Parable of the Mustard Seed

³⁰And he said, 'With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it? ³¹It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; ³²yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.'

The Use of Parables

³³With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it; ³⁴he did not speak to them without a parable, but privately to his own disciples he explained everything.

Jesus stills a Storm

³⁵On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, 'Let us go across to the other side.' ³⁶And leaving the crowd, they took him with them, just

as he was, in the boat. And other boats were with him. ³⁷And a great storm of wind arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. ³⁸But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him and said to him, 'Teacher, do you not care if we perish?' ³⁹And he awoke and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, 'Peace! Be still!' And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. ⁴⁰He said to them, 'Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?' ⁴¹And they were filled with awe, and said to one another, 'Who then is this, that even wind and sea obey him?'

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