



## Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

† Sunday 21st July 2019

In England and Wales

Prayer for a deeper understanding between Christians, Jews and Moslems

Keynote: Jesus invites us to recognize him in the stranger

### Book of Genesis 18: 1-10

*'The Lord God Yahweh appears to Abraham... while he is sitting by the entrance of the tent during the hottest part of the day.'* The scene is set, the mysterious majesty of God is revealed, *'he (Abraham) saw three men standing near him. As soon as he saw them he ran from the entrance of the tent to meet them...'* Abraham makes his visitors welcome, and in traditional style the guests are invited to rest in the shade and to wash while the household hurriedly prepares refreshment and food for the unexpected arrivals. Abraham and his wife Sarah are kept busy with their practical tasks, but the guests have come on this journey with a purpose, and announce that the couple are to have a son within the year. How are we to welcome God into our lives? There will be the practical household tasks to perform, but they should not distract us from the more important task of listening for the message, to the word of God. Sometimes it will be the stranger in our lives who brings the vital lesson. Welcome then the message and the one who brings it.

**Responsorial Psalm 14 (15)** – the just walk in the presence of God

### Letter of Paul to the Colossians 1: 24-28

This section of the near continuous reading of Paul's letter supports the theme of the readings today. The apostle sets out his credentials, *'I became the servant of the Church when God made me responsible for delivering God's message to you.'* It really is an invitation to listen, and to listen well, to the message that he is about to deliver. For *'the mystery of Christ is among you, your hope of glory; this is the Christ we proclaim.'* This is the focus of Paul's words: Christ the mystery – the sacred event – is to be found among us. In the Eucharist we greet Christ in the word, in sacrament and in the community of faith – Christ in each of us. We are to welcome the bearer of the Good News and take God's word to heart. For *'the mystery of Christ is among you, your hope of glory; this is the Christ we proclaim.'*

### Gospel according to Luke 10: 38-42

Following the hospitality of Abraham and Sarah, we enter the household of Martha and Mary, who also welcome a messenger – this time it is Jesus – to their home. Luke, the evangelist, makes the point that anyone is welcome in the household of faith. Jesus is portrayed with the two sisters, possibly alone in their house, the women wait upon him, and he speaks with them directly. All this is absolutely contrary to the law and custom of the time governing relations between the genders. Jesus' behaviour is a challenge to the discrimination of his day and maybe, to the discrimination of our own day. Then, there is the contrast between the busy practical welcome that is Martha's, and the more contemplative stillness of Mary sitting at the feet of Jesus to listen to his words. We, like Martha, *'worry and fret about so many things, and yet few are needed, indeed only one.'* The lesson is about the welcome we can give to God in our lives and the welcome we can extend to others, be they friends, strangers or outcasts. *'It is Mary who has chosen the better part; it is not to be taken from her.'* Draw the modern day lessons for yourself.