



Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time

† Sunday 25th August 2019

In England and Wales:

Prayer for a deeper understanding between Christians, Jews and Moslems

Keynote: Jesus teaches us how to respond to God's call

Prophet Isaiah 66: 18-21

The Israelites saw themselves alone, as being God's Chosen People, yet the prophet announces: *'The Lord says this: "I am coming to gather the nations of every language. They shall come to witness my glory... they will proclaim my glory to the nations."'* Such a radical statement, that all nations, people of every language and culture might be invited to become God's People must have come as a surprise to those listening! The prophet Isaiah speaks of a triumphal procession coming from all directions and merging on Jerusalem, *'they will proclaim my glory to the nations. As an offering to the Lord they will bring all your brothers, on horses, in chariots, in litters, on mules, dromedaries, from all the nations to my holy mountain in Jerusalem.'* God's message about the inclusive nature of God's call to discipleship is underlined when the prophet tells them, *"And some of them" says the Lord, "I will make priests and Levites."* This is extraordinary language for the time. Outsiders are to be invited to join the select cast and circle of temple priests and the Levites! So God invites all to be welcome to worship the true God and to belong in the kingdom.

Responsorial Psalm 116 (117) – a call for all to praise the Lord

Letter to the Hebrews 12: 5-7, 11-13

The writer reminds us that as disciples of the Lord we are addressed as 'sons' [daughters] because this is our relationship with God. Then reminding us, *'But do not get discouraged when God reprimands you... suffering is part of your training; God is treating you as his sons.'* The disciple need not look for pain and suffering *'any punishment is most painful at the time, and far from pleasant; but later, in those on whom it has been used, it bears fruit in peace and goodness.'* But as Christ's disciples we are not exempt from pain and distress. When confronting the 'problem of evil' in sickness or distress, in self or others, this may be a good passage of scripture to pray and reflect upon. Indeed the writer may be referring to the 'orans' – the attitude of prayer – standing with uplifted arms, when he says, *'so hold up your limp arms, and steady your trembling knees... then the injured limb... will grow strong again.'*

Gospel according to Luke 13: 22-30

In the context of Jesus' journey to meet his destiny in Jerusalem, Luke continues to tell us what it means to be a true disciple. *'Through towns and villages, Jesus went teaching, making his way to Jerusalem.'* To be a true disciple allegiance must be total. Jesus said to them, *'Try your best to enter by the narrow door, because I tell you, many will try to enter and will not succeed.'* Again referring to the one who comes knocking at the locked door, saying *'Lord, open to us.'* Jesus teaches them, *'I do not know where you came from.'* We may find ourselves protesting and saying but, *'We once ate and drank in your company, you taught in our streets.'* So we need to be wholehearted and consistent in following the teaching of Jesus, then he will recognise us as belonging to him and one of his people? At the end, *'Men from east and west, from north and south, will come to take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God.'* The kingdom of God is open to all; and we need to be there!