



Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

† Sunday 15th September 2019

In England and Wales: For the spread of the Gospel and Racial Justice

Keynote: Jesus invites the disciples to show mercy and be forgiven

Book of Exodus 32: 7-11, 13-14

While Moses is away in the mountains at prayer preparing the stone tablets of the Law, the People of Israel grow impatient, and as God tells Moses, *'Your people whom you brought out of Egypt have apostatised. They have been quick to leave the way I marked for them; they have made themselves a calf of molten metal and have worshipped it and offered it sacrifice.'* God is angry and will punish them for their treacherous betrayal, *'My wrath shall blaze out against them,'* says God, but to Moses, *'of you, however, I will make a great nation.'* Moses pleads with God that the people be given another chance. Recalling the promises made by God to Abraham Isaac and Jacob, Moses says, *'Remember... by your own self you swore and made this promise... So the Lord relented, and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened.'* Sometimes we are headstrong, disloyal or unfaithful, if we turn to God, God may relent and give us a fresh chance to mend our ways. In the same way those who offend or hurt us, may be deserving of another chance.

Responsorial Psalm 50 (51) – a song of contrition and repentance

First Letter of Paul to Timothy 1: 12-17

The apostle admits he persecuted the disciples of Jesus. Paul tells us, *'I used to be a blasphemer and did all I could to injure and discredit the faith.'* Despite his past record Paul now says, *'Mercy, however, was shown me, because until I became a believer I had been acting in ignorance; and the grace of our Lord filled me with faith and with the love that is in Christ Jesus.'* Paul recognizes his own opportunity for the 'fresh start'; the 'new beginning' is because Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. *'I myself am the greatest of them'* he says, *'if mercy has been shown to me it is because Jesus Christ meant to make me the greatest evidence of his inexhaustible patience for all other people.'* Therein, lies our hope. For we too can turn from discrediting the faith, turn from ignorance, and so experience the mercy of Christ.

Gospel according to Luke 15: 1-32

Three parables to show how false our ideas about God really are! God's mercy is as foolish as a shepherd who abandons ninety-nine sheep to search for the one lost; as foolish as the woman who turns her house upside down in the search for a small coin; foolish as the father who welcomes home his wayward son who lost everything and brought discredit on the family. The parables have much in common involving the 'searching', the moment of reality, the realisation that things are amiss – the reality check: *'Then the son came to his senses... I will leave this place and go to my father and say: "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you."* Each parable has 'neighbours' – the community who become involved. Finally, there is 'rejoicing' – *'I have found my sheep that was lost'; 'Rejoice with me, I have found the drachma I lost'; 'We are going to have a feast, a celebration, because this son of mine was dead and has come back to life, he was lost and is found.'* The lessons: if we are sinful – get real and come home! Forgive others and give them a big welcome. Thank God for mercy!