



Fifth Sunday of Lent
† Sunday 7th April 2019

In England and Wales

Cycle of Prayer – Candidates for the Sacraments, Penitents and Wanderers

Keynote: Called to change our lives, finding new life in Christ

Prophet Isaiah 43: 16-21

This passage written by the prophet while the Israelites are living in captivity exiled in Babylon is truly a message of hope. The prophet reminds the people that God once saved them from the pursuing army of the Pharaoh and the Egyptians. It was the Lord God *'who made a way through the sea, a path in the great waters; who put chariots and horses in the field, a powerful army, which lay there, never to rise again.'* Now, the prophet tells them there is to be a new exodus, for the Lord God promises *'Yes, I am making a road in the wilderness, paths through the wilds... because I am putting water in the wilderness to give my Chosen People drink.'* So like those exiles – whom God will lead back home to Jerusalem – we, as the People of God, join with them now in singing God's praises: *'The people I have formed for myself will sing my praises.'*

Responsorial Psalm 125 (126) – The happy song of the returning exiles

Letter of Paul to the Philippians 3: 8-14

The apostle Paul reflects upon his life. At one time he persecuted the followers of Jesus now he can say *'I believe nothing can happen that will outweigh the advantage of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.'* Not that Paul is yet perfect, nor has he yet completed the race of life *'but,'* he says *'all I want is to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and to share his sufferings by reproducing the pattern of his death.'* An invitation to us all then, to reflect on life's priorities: to change from a self-centred life, to lead a new life where Christ alone is the centre of being. *'I am far from thinking that I have already won... I strain ahead for what is to come; I am racing for the finish, for the prize to which God calls us.'*

Gospel according to John 8: 1-11

'The scribes and Pharisees brought a woman along who had been caught committing adultery; and making her stand there in full view of everybody, they said to Jesus: "Master, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery, and Moses has ordered us in the Law to condemn women like this to death by stoning. What have you to say?"'

Possibly attempting to catch Jesus out by making him take sides with the distraught woman; the 'accusers' quickly find the tables are turned on them. *'If there is one of you who has not sinned,'* Jesus says *'let him be the first to throw a stone at her.'*

The accusers then leave one by one until only Jesus and the woman remain. There being no one left to accuse the woman and to throw the first stone Jesus says *'neither do I condemn you... go away, and don't sin any more.'* With this gentle telling off, Jesus invites us to repent, to change our ways, and begin the new life.

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Note:

Sunday of the Passion of the Lord [Palm Sunday] † Sunday 14 April 2019

The entrance of the Lord into Jerusalem is celebrated at all masses, usually with a procession, with singing and carrying of branches. This marks the beginning of Holy Week, which re-presents the Last Supper, the arrest trial, crucifixion and death of Jesus, culminating with the Great Vigil of Easter and the celebration of the Lord's resurrection. The faithful are encouraged to take part in each of these holy celebrations.