

Readings and Reflections for the Week

SUNDAY 27 SEPTEMBER - TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Reading 1, Ezekiel 18:25-28, Psalm 24(25)

Reading 2, Philippians 2:1-11

Gospel, Matthew 21:28-32

Tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God before you

Monday 28 September – Feria

Reading 1, Job 1:6-22

Psalm 16(17), Gospel, Luke 9:46-50

The least among you is the greatest

Tuesday 29 September – Saints Michael, Gabriel and Raphael, Archangels

Reading 1, Daniel 7:9-10,13-14

Psalm 137(138), Gospel, John 1:47-51

You will see heaven laid open, and the Son of Man

Wednesday 30 September – St Jerome

Reading 1, Job 9:1-16

Psalm 87(88), Gospel, Luke 9:57-62

'I will follow you wherever you go

Thursday 1 October – St Therese of the child Jesus

Reading 1, Job 19:21-27

Psalm 26(27), Gospel, Luke 10:1-12

'Your peace will rest on that man'

Friday 2 October – The Holy Guardian Angels

Reading 1, Job 38:1,12-21,40:3-5

Psalm 138(139), Gospel, Matthew 18:1-5,10

Anyone who welcomes a little child in my name welcomes me

Saturday 3 October – Memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Reading 1, Job 42:1-3,5-6,12-17

Psalm 118(119), Gospel, Luke 10:17-24

Rejoice your names are written in heaven

SUNDAY 4 OCTOBER- TWENTY-SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Reading 1, Isaiah 5:1-7, Psalm 79(80)

Reading 2, Philippians 4:6-9

Gospel, Matthew 21:33-43

This is the landlord's heir; come let us kill him

United with Churches together in St Albans we pray for all members of the Lutheran Congregation at St Albans Cathedral

SAINT OF THE WEEK

Thérèse Françoise Marie Martin Alençon was born on 2 January 1873 into a deeply devout family, in fact her parents Louis and Marie Zélie Guérin Martin were canonised on 18 October 2015. She was the last of eight children, three of whom died in childhood. Her mother died when Thérèse was 4. She relived the drama of abandonment as each of her four sisters entered Carmelite life, though she received the particular affection of her father, who called her "Little Queen of France and Navarre". She entered the Carmel of Lisieux at the age of 15, by special permission of Pope Leo XIII, whom Thérèse herself had begged in Rome. "If God wills, you will enter," was the Pope's response. The girl's desire was to "save souls," and above all "to pray in aid of priests." Sister Theresa of the Child Jesus and of the Holy Face is the name she took at her profession. At the suggestion of her superiors, she immediately began to keep a diary, in which she noted the stages of her inner life. She wrote in 1895, "On 9 June, the feast of the Most Holy Trinity, I have the grace to understand more than ever that Jesus wants to be loved." In France at the end of the 19th century, Positivist thinking was spreading, encouraged by the many great inventions and supported by anti-clerical and atheistic tendencies. For this reason, Thérèse elaborated a highly original and powerful spirituality, called the "theology of the little way" or "spiritual childhood", which bases the practice of love for God not on great actions, but in everyday - seemingly insignificant - acts. In her autobiography (Story of a Soul), Thérèse writes, "There is only one thing to do: throw the flowers of the small sacrifices to Jesus." And elsewhere, "I want to teach the little methods that have worked for me." Not understood by the sisters of the Carmel, Thérèse struggled with life in the convent, but decided to make an effort to be charitable to all, especially those she didn't like. She performed little acts of charity always, and little sacrifices not caring how unimportant they seemed. These acts helped her come to a deeper understanding of her vocation. She says she received "more thorns than roses" but accepts with patience the injustices and persecutions, as well as the pain and fatigue of illness, offering everything "for the needs of the Church," in order, "to cast roses on all, the just and sinners. For John Paul II and Benedict XVI the specificity of her spirituality is its total openness to the invasion of God's love, the capacity it engenders to respond to that love, even in the "night" of the spirit - for which Thérèse was a sister in this to sinners, the fallen away, atheists, the desperate - and for this, she was declared patron of missionaries. After nine years of religious life, Thérèse died of tuberculosis at the age of only 24, on 30 September 1897. In 1923 she was beatified by Pope Pius XI, and then canonized in 1925. St Thérèse is the patron saint of missionaries.

Prayer: O Little Thérèse of the Child Jesus, please pick for me a rose from the heavenly gardens and send it to me as a message of love. O Little Flower of Jesus, ask God to grant the favours I now place with confidence in your hands. (mention petitions here). St. Thérèse, help me to always believe as you did in God's great love for me, so that I might imitate your "Little Way" each day. Amen

REFLECTIONS

Reading 1, Ezekiel 18:25-28, Psalm 24(25)

The prophet Ezekiel was speaking in Babylon during the exile of the Jews there after the destruction of Jerusalem. Not surprisingly, the second generation of exiles was questioning why they should suffer for the failures of their forefathers. This was, however, a new phase in the development of morality among the people of Israel, for beforehand the sense of solidarity with family or clan had been so strong that it was assumed that punishment for the sins and failures of an individual would affect the whole clan or family. Now the individual is to be held responsible for his or her own sins only. Furthermore, the individual cannot simply rely on good deeds of the past, nor feel irremediably condemned for failures in the past. Conversion in both directions is possible: just as the good person can become evil, so the evil person can change direction. At the end the Lord promises a new heart and a new spirit, so that even the sinner can repent and live.

In what ways do you take responsibility for your own sins?

Reading 2, Philippians 2:1-11

St Paul quotes an ancient Christian hymn celebrating the triumph of Christ (the hymn begins "His state was divine ..."): it describes his self-emptying and his exaltation and vindication by the Father. In the first half of the hymn Paul shows the warmth of his joy as a pastor in the fellowship of his young community at Philippi. He also gently chides them for their vanity, and the reason why he includes the hymn is to show that the path of humility is the way to exaltation.

How may we have the same mind as Christ Jesus?

Gospel, Matthew 21:28-32

Matthew loves to tell parables of Jesus which contrast 'goodies' and 'baddies' like these two contrasting sons. Matthew's parables put everything in black-and-white terms with no shades of grey (wise and foolish wedding-attendants, sheep and goats, etc.). Luke uses a different kind of parable, in which the characters - just like ourselves - often do the right thing for the wrong reason. The sayings of Jesus were handed down by word of mouth for some years before being written down. Did the straightforward contrast in Matthew (it is odd that both change their minds without a reason) develop into Luke's parable of the Prodigal Son? Both times the 'goodie' son ends up bad, and the 'baddie' son ends up good, but in Luke's version both changes of mind are motivated, and there is great emphasis on the son's repentance and the father's overwhelming joy at getting him back. The lesson in Matthew's story is given also by Jesus' word in the Sermon on the Mount, 'It is not anyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord" who will enter the kingdom of Heaven, but the person who does the will of my Father in Heaven'. It is no use simply saying that Christ is our 'Lord'; we have to express it in our behaviour.

What meaning do you find in this parable for yourself and the relationship you have with the Father?