

THE TENTH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR – B

In the gospel reading we hear how Jesus' teaching is attracting such large crowds that his relatives are 'convinced he was out of his mind.' Some Scribes argue that Jesus is in league with 'Beelzebul...the prince of devils' but Jesus shows they are wrong and implies they are guilty of a sin against the work of the Holy Spirit. His mother and brothers arrive but Jesus says, 'Anyone who does the will of God, that person is my brother and sister and mother.' In the first reading God discovers that Adam and 'the woman' have given way the serpent's temptation and God places a curse on the serpent. In the second reading Paul explains how our belief in Jesus in this life with all its burdens is a preparation for a life in 'an everlasting home.'

The **First Reading** is from the book of Genesis, the first book in the Bible and the first book of the Pentateuch, the five books of the Jewish Law. The book's origins are still uncertain, it speaks of mankind's beginnings, 1-11, and then the history of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob until their arrival in Egypt. The book is a composite of three documents, the Yahwist, (J), the Elohist, (E) and the Priestly, (P), that go to make up the book of Genesis whose authorship, although attributed to Moses, is unknown. The Yahwistic tradition has a lively and vivid style and although God is described in human terms the author has a deep sense of the divine. The Elohist tradition (*elohim* means God) is more sober in style with an exacting moral code and an insistence on the distance separating human beings from God. The Priestly tradition contributes laws and is particularly concerned with the organization of the sanctuary, with sacrifices and festivals and with the person of Aaron, the priest, and his descendants. This is the tradition of the priests of the Temple of Jerusalem. The Yahwist and Elohist were possibly written down in the reign of Solomon c.950 BC, whereas the Priestly was not codified until the Exile, 587-538, and added to the Pentateuch after the return from exile.

The reading, 3.9-15, sadly misses out the previous verse which, delightfully, speaks of 'God walking in the garden in the cool of the day.' The man and his wife hear God coming and hide and the reading begins with God calling them. The man confesses 'I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid.' Up till now the man has not been aware of his nakedness before God so God asks 'Who told you that you were naked?' God of course knows and the man has to confess that he has eaten the forbidden fruit but blames his wife who blames the serpent. God now addresses the serpent and pronounces a curse on the serpent saying that the offspring of the serpent will henceforth be at enmity with the woman's descendants who will oppose the devil and his seed and there is a hint of ultimate victory, the devil will be overcome. This is the first glimmer of salvation.

The **Responsorial Psalm**, Psalm 129 is the psalm which used to be known as the *De Profundis*, Out of the Depths. It is a penitential psalm asking God to listen to our cry in the depths of our sinfulness. We rely on God's promise of forgiveness and we hope in the Lord just as the night watchman looks forward to daybreak. The psalm concludes full of confidence in the Lord's mercy and redemption.

The **Second Reading** is from Paul's second letter to the Corinthians. Paul evangelized the Church at Corinth between 50 and 52. His policy was to establish the Christian faith in a centre of population, and here he chose the great and populous port of Corinth, so that the faith could spread to the whole of the province of Achaia. The Christian community grew strong composed mainly of poor people, but Corinth was a centre of Greek life, philosophy and religions. It was also a notorious centre of immorality which was to cause problems for the newly converted. In 2 Corinthians Paul is able to say that the abuses dealt with in his earlier letter had been corrected. In the first, main part of the letter he writes magnificently about the dignity of the apostle's mission. Chapters 8-9 deal with collecting money which he illuminates with the ideal of union between the churches. The final section is in the form of an apologia when he is accused of weakness and ambition.

The reading, 4.13-5.1, begins with a quote from the psalms 'I believed therefore I spoke.' Paul too believes and therefore speaks confident that God our Father who raised Jesus from the dead 'will raise us up with Jesus in our turn, and bring us to himself.' As knowledge of this grace spreads so too will thanksgiving to God bringing God even greater glory. So we must not weaken. We may have small burdens to carry now but they are 'earning for us for ever an utterly incomparable, eternal weight of glory.' We should not be concerned with the visible things of this world for they last for only a time, 'the invisible things are eternal' for we know that when life comes to an end we will inhabit an everlasting house built by God for us in the heavens.