

THE TWELVETH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR – B

The gospel reading this Sunday reveals Jesus authority over the elements, 'Even the wind and the sea obey him.' The first reading is from the discourses of Yahweh in the book of Job, Job must bow to the Creator's wisdom. In the second reading we continue with the second letter to the Corinthians where Paul is teaching about the apostolate in action. Creation, deformed by sin, is restored, re-created in Christ, 'For anyone who is in Christ, there is a new creation.'

The **First Reading** is from the book of Job the first of the wisdom books found in the Bible. The book is described as a literary masterpiece. It introduces Job as a faithful servant of God, a rich and happy man and then God allows Satan to test Job. He loses his possessions and children and then his body is racked with sickness, but Job remains faithful to God even though his wife tells him to curse God. Then three friends come to offer Job sympathy. After this introduction, ch.1-2, a long dialogue poem follows, ch.3-27, in which Job's three friends discuss the situation in a four-cornered conversation. Their solutions: the happiness of the wicked is short-lived, the sufferings of the good test their fortitude or possibly punish faults committed unwittingly or out of weakness. They think their friend innocent but Job's cries of anguish in pain and his impatience with God persuade them that his guilt goes deep. A fourth character, Elihu, develops these thoughts, the sufferings of the upright are an expiation for sins of omission or of thoughtlessness or possibly a safeguard against more serious faults and a cure for pride. In his anguish Job reaches out for God; God eludes him but Job still trusts in his goodness. When God does appear it is to tell Job how inscrutable is his person and his designs, and Job falls to silence. This is the book's lesson: faith must remain even when understanding fails.

The reading, 38.1,8-11, comes from the first of the discourses of Yahweh at the end of the book. God speaks from the heart of the tempest. This is a usual scenario for a theophany, a revelation from God, for it reveals the overwhelming power of God. The main part of the reading reveals God's controlling power with regard to the waters of the sea. Job must learn God's complete control over the powers of nature. This shows how this first reading is related to the gospel reading. To get a fuller understanding of God's word to Job we need to read both of God's discourses (ch.38-42.6).

The **Responsorial Psalm**, Psalm 106.23-26,28-31, is a hymn of thanksgiving for the mercies of Providence. The psalm links in with the first and the gospel reading and once again shows God's power over the waters of the deep.

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, 5.14-17, tells us that Christ died for all that is in the name of all, as head representing the whole of humanity. The value of this death comes from the loving obedience which it shows, the sacrifice of the total gift of life. Those who believe in Christ participate in his death through baptism and must confirm their belief in this offering of Christ by the manner in which they live their own lives as the reading says, we should not live any more for ourselves 'but for him who died and was raised to life.' Christ having been raised to newness of life we no longer judge by the standards of this world, 'for anyone who is in Christ there is a new creation' and that is the standard by which we now judge.