



Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time † Sunday 19th August 2018

In England & Wales:

Cycle of Prayer – Those who suffer persecution and denial of human rights

Keynote: *The Bread of God gives life – life eternal*

Book of Proverbs 9: 1-6

The Book of Proverbs is at one level easy to understand yet it has quite profound depths. Here 'Wisdom' and 'Folly', invite us to the banquet in the house with the seven pillars – an image for the world. We are all invited to know the Truth of God. *'Who is ignorant?' Goes out the cry – 'Let them step this way.'* The Fool, likewise is urged to: *'Come and eat my bread, drink the wine I have prepared! Leave your folly and you will live...'* The messenger goes out into the city inviting all to come and to hear the Wisdom of God. We might ask what is this wisdom of God? Where is it to be found? The invitation prepares us for the Gospel reading today where we shall hear another voice, the voice of Jesus calling, inviting us to join him: *'I am the living bread which has come down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live for ever.'*

Responsorial Psalm 33 (34): 2-3, 10-15 – In praise of God who offers refuge from oppression

Letter of Paul to the Ephesians 5: 15-20

In this part of his letter the apostle likens the person who is drunk with wine to a foolish, senseless or dissipated person, and contrasts this image with the person who is filled with the wine of the Spirit. The first is weak and foolish and the other deemed to be wise in the things of God. *'Be very careful about the sort of lives you lead,'* says Paul *'(be) like intelligent and not like senseless people. This may be a wicked age, but your lives should redeem it.'* In many places in our world today, in many a city street, we see signs of drunkenness, disorder, violence and greed, and many a wickedness, *'but let your lives redeem it,'* says Paul, *'...do not be thoughtless but recognise what is the will of the Lord... be filled with the Spirit. Sing the words and tunes of the psalms and hymns when you are together, and go on singing and chanting to the Lord in your hearts.'* The apostle sees this as the vocation of the Christian community – to praise God and to change the world – to save it from its foolish ways.

Gospel according to John 6: 51-58

This passage is another one from that long discourse in John's gospel that speaks about the food and drink that Jesus will provide. *'I am the living bread which has come down from heaven'* says Jesus, *'Anyone who eats this bread will live for ever; and the bread that I shall give is my flesh, for the life of the world.'* Some of the Jews of the day found, what Jesus said hard to accept and decided to walk with him no more. But Jesus emphasises the truth of what he says; *'He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood, lives in me, and I live in him... for my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink.'* While each Christian may approach the truth of this teaching, in the light of faith, there is little doubt that whatever the explanation, or the scientific understanding or questions we might have, at its most simple level, Jesus means what he says. The echoing invitation from the Book of Proverbs still rings in our ears: *'Come and eat my bread, drink the wine I have prepared, leave your folly and you will live.'*

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