



## Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time † Sunday 23rd September 2018

In England & Wales – Cycle of Prayer:

For the Harvest, the Fruits of Human Work and the Reverent Use of Creation

**Keynote: Testing discipleship. Then be like children!**

### **Book of Wisdom 2: 12, 17-20**

Like our own times this passage is set in the context of the modern bustling city of Alexandria of 100 BC. There is a hint that the virtuous, who remain true to the Covenant, and to the practices of their religion, are being tested, entrapped or condemned, by the unfaithful ones, who find the ways of this trading city more attractive and exciting, and have thus forsaken the true ways of their faith. *'Let us lie in wait for the virtuous man, since he annoys us and opposes our way of life... let us test him with cruelty and with torture, and thus explore this gentleness of his and put his endurance to the proof.'* In our own testing times, this text prepares us to hear the gospel for this day, where Jesus, the Just One, warns his disciples that he is to be delivered into the hands of the authorities and put to death, by those jealous of his influence. Such is the test of true discipleship.

**Responsorial Psalm 53 (54): 3-6, 8** – A song of praise calling on God by name for help

### **Letter of James 3: 16- 4:3**

The 'teacher' is the 'wise person.' Here the apostle James sets out the nature of Christian wisdom, and the nature of the disciple and teacher. *'Wherever you find jealousy and ambition, you find disharmony, and wicked things of every kind being done.'* In contrast, *'the wisdom that comes down from above is essentially something pure; it makes for peace, and is kindly and considerate; it is full of compassion and shows itself by doing good.'* James reminds his readers that jealousies and ambition in people's hearts only bring discord, even death, as people fight to get their own way and fulfil their own desires. The wise disciples on the other hand, are the *'Peacemakers, when they work for peace, sow the seeds which will bear fruit in holiness.'*

### **Gospel according to Mark 9: 30-37**

Jesus instructs his disciples in the true nature of discipleship: *'the Son of Man will be delivered into the hands of men; they will put him to death; and three days after he has been put to death he will rise again... but they did not understand what he said and were afraid to ask him.'* Not only are the disciples, like their Master, to expect rejection, false accusation, and even death, but they are also given details of another aspect of discipleship. Rather than argue about who is to be greatest, Jesus tells them, *'If anyone wants to be first... he must first make himself last of all and the servant of all.'* Jesus would have his disciples behave like the child that he sets down in front of them. The evangelist Mark today presents us with the challenge to be simple, trusting, faithful and enthusiastic in discipleship, just like the small children.

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