



Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

† Sunday 3rd February 2019

In England and Wales

Cycle of Prayer – For the Victims of Human Trafficking

Keynote: Jesus revealed as the Teacher

Prophet Jeremiah 1: 4-5, 17-19

'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you came to birth I consecrated you; I have appointed you as prophet to the nations.' Today we overhear an intimate conversation between God and the prophet. Formed from the beginning, just as a potter shapes the clay when making a jug, God has appointed Jeremiah as spokesman. The Lord God chose Jeremiah, *'I knew you before you came to birth...'* says the Lord *'I have appointed you as prophet to the nations.'* But there is a darker consequence, a testing time to come for the servant who preaches the word of God: *'brace yourself for action. Stand up and tell them all I command'* says the Lord *'...they will fight against you but shall not overcome you, for I am with you to deliver you – it is the Lord who speaks.'* Like Jeremiah, God has called us to serve as prophets, to speak by word and example.

Responsorial Psalm 70 (71) – A song of hope and trust in God

First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians 12: 31– 13:13

Last week Paul listed the many gifts of the Spirit, and reminded the Christian community at Corinth of the great variety of these gifts – all to be used in the service of the one Lord. Now Paul, in what might be described as a great 'hymn to love', lists the practical ways in which true love may be shown. It is a strong passage, typical of the apostle, and one that merits careful reading. While Paul values the many gifts of the Spirit – such gifts, as prophecy, knowledge, the gift of language – they will eventually pass away but *'Love does not come to an end.'* Indeed, Paul says, *'If I have the eloquence of men or angels, but speak without love, I am simply a gong booming, or a cymbal clashing... If I am without love, then I am nothing at all.'* For this higher gift then we should be ambitious *'In short'* he says, *'there are three things that last: faith, hope and love; and the greatest of these is love.'*

Gospel according to Luke 4: 21-30

Jesus' words: *'This text is being fulfilled today even as you listen'* have a resonance throughout the gospel. Not just in the synagogue that day, but even now, the Word of God speaks to us. The people in the synagogue were puzzled; for they knew the young man Jesus and his family *'this is Joseph's son, surely?'* Yet Jesus *'won the approval of all, and they were astonished by the gracious words that came from his lips.'* And yet Jesus admonishes them; for history had shown that the People of Israel had been unfaithful to their Covenant with God. They lacked faith in the promises made by God; they had stopped their ears to God's word, forcing the prophets to go to other peoples. In the synagogue that day pious Jews reacted: *'When they heard this everyone was enraged. They sprang to their feet and... took him to the brow of the hill... intending to throw him down the cliff.'* The evangelist Luke – shows us the true teacher sent by God. He is also warning us not to persecute the messenger or ignore God's call to service, by rejecting the word of Jesus the teacher.