

In the week ahead...

Jesus' capacity to resist temptation came in part because of his deep awareness of God's power and generosity. This gave him complete trust in God – and we often hear him saying things like: "I thank you, Father."

Spend a few moments in personal reflection on

- How does gratitude for what God has done for me strengthen my faith?
- How do I show gratitude to God?

This week, we are suggesting that we keep a gratitude diary. It does not need to be complicated. You could use a small notebook or sketchpad – or just a couple of sheets of paper. You might do this at the end of the day – or try to jot things down as they happen or occur to you. There will not be a test on how well you have done this but please bring your list back next week to share one or two things with the rest of the group... just to help us to be aware of how great our God is – and how abundant is his generosity.

Closing Prayer – from Psalm 92

It is good to give thanks to the Lord,
to sing praises to your name, O Most High;
to declare your steadfast love in the morning,
and your faithfulness by night,
to the music of the lute and the harp,
to the melody of the lyre.

For you, O Lord,
have made me glad by your work;
at the works of your hands I sing for joy.

How great are your works, O Lord!
Your thoughts are very deep!
The dullard cannot know,
the stupid cannot understand this:
though the wicked sprout like grass
and all evildoers flourish,
they are doomed to destruction for ever,
but you, O Lord, are on high for ever.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit
As it was in the beginning is now
and ever shall be,
world without end..

Amen.

Lent 2019 Year C FIRST WEEK OF LENT

God's Gifts of Love and Mercy: Gratitude



Bedouin Hospitality in the Sinai desert

God's Gifts of Love and Mercy

Opening Responses

Reader We gather in the name of the Father,
All Who looks on the whole of Creation with love— and on his human children with mercy.

Reader We gather in the name of the Son,
All The Word who made flesh the love and mercy of God.

Reader We gather in the name of the Holy Spirit,
All Who opens our minds and hearts to see all that God has done for us and to respond to his love with thanksgiving.

Reader We gather...
All (making the Sign of the Cross) in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Setting the Scene

For the Jewish people, the Exodus was a pivotal moment in their history. The 'wandering Aramean' in our Reading may refer back to Abraham – to his son Isaac – or, even more likely, to Jacob, the father of Joseph (later made even more famous by the musical, "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat")!

They wandered because they were taking their flocks and herds through the countryside, often following traditional routes to water and fresh grazing. Their lifestyle was very different from that of the Egyptian people who used the Nile floods to water and fertilise their land so that they could grow crops. When famine hit the Middle East, the nomadic people travelled to Egypt where food had been stored – and many of them settled there.

Over time, they encountered harsh treatment and called on the Lord for liberation from what had become a form of slavery. We do not have time to tell the whole story of the plagues that hit Egypt and the 40 year trek that took the Hebrews through the desert but our Reading reminds of the gratitude they felt when they reached the Promised Land. They realised that they owed it all to God and, as a sign, offered the first fruits of their harvest back to God as an acknowledgement of the great things God had done for them.

To Ponder...

- Why should something written about people who lived thousands of years ago in very different places to my own still be included in our Scriptures and read out at Mass in my church?

Reading— Deuteronomy 26: 4-10

Moses said to the people,
“When the priest takes the basket from your hand and sets it down before the altar of the Lord your God, you shall make this response before the Lord your God: ‘A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he went down into Egypt and lived there as an alien, few in number, and there he became a great nation, mighty and populous.

When the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, by imposing hard labour on us, we cried to the Lord, the God of our ancestors; the Lord heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. The Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with a terrifying display of power, and with signs and wonders; and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. So now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground that you, O Lord, have given me.’ You shall set it down before the Lord your God and bow down before the Lord your God.”

Sharing Reflections

- How can we put ourselves in the shoes (or sandals) of the people we hear about in the Old Testament?
- What is the Reading telling us about how the Jewish people see God at work in their history?
- Does God do similar things today?