

In the week ahead

For this week, spend some time thinking about places where people are desperate for things “to be made new”.

Jot them down and pray for them.

Look back at your own life when you were eager for something new to happen – and how it came about, perhaps unexpectedly, as God did a new thing but you were a bit slow to perceive it.

Closing Prayer – from Psalm 104

Bless the Lord, O my soul.
O Lord my God, you are very great.

You set the earth on its foundations,
so that it shall never be shaken.
You cover it with the deep as with a garment;
the waters stood above the mountains.

At your rebuke they flee;
at the sound of your thunder
they take to flight.

They rose up to the mountains,
ran down to the valleys
to the place that you appointed for them.

You set a boundary that they may not pass,
so that they might not again cover the earth.

You make springs gush forth in the valleys;
they flow between the hills,
giving drink to every wild animal;
the wild asses quench their thirst.

By the streams
the birds of the air have their habitation;
they sing among the branches.
From your lofty abode
you water the mountains;
the earth is satisfied with the fruit of your work.

Bless the Lord, O my soul.
Praise the Lord!

Lent 2019 Year C

FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

God's Gifts of Love and Mercy:
Making things new



God's Gifts of Love and Mercy: Making all things new

Opening Responses

Reader We gather in the name of the Father

**All Who saves his people
and makes all things new.**

Reader We gather in the name of the Son

**All Who died and rose again
so we too might walk in newness of life.**

Reader We gather in the name of the Holy Spirit

**All Whom the Father and the Son
send forth to renew the face of the earth.**

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

Those who study the Bible now believe that the Book of Isaiah is actually three books. The first part, *Proto-Isaiah* (chapters 1–39) was probably written by Isaiah himself. The one our Reading today is taken from is called *Deutero-Isaiah* (chapters 40–55) and the third is *Trito-Isaiah* (chapters 56–66). These were written by followers of Isaiah and pick up the themes that Isaiah himself had opened up.

Deutero-Isaiah was written while the Jewish people were in exile. Many felt that they would never return to the land God had given to them.

But one great thing about prophets is that when things are going well, they have a tendency to say, “Ah, but it won’t last...” which is a bit depressing and gives us the phrase “prophets of doom”! However, when things are going badly, they also say, “Ah, but it won’t last...” – a side of prophets we hear much less about.

Today’s reading is sometimes called a second exodus. The people are in exile but the follower of Isaiah shares his mentor’s optimism that this too shall pass and that God will do something new and unexpected to bring his people home. What God does comes in the shape of a Babylonian king called Cyrus who, against all the odds and without the need for the plagues that persuaded the Egyptian Pharaoh, allowed the Jewish people to go home and even helped them to rebuild their Temple.

To Ponder...

- What struck you as you listened to or read the Reading?
- How did it touch you – as a thought – or a feeling – or something that raised a question for you?
- What does it tell you about the hopes and dreams of God’s people?

Reading— Isaiah 43: 16-21

Use these or your own words.

Please listen as the Reading is read. It can help to close your eyes—or look at the person reading—or the image on the screen – whichever suits you best.

Thus says the Lord,

who makes a way in the sea,
a path in the mighty waters,
who brings out chariot and horse,
army and warrior;
they lie down, they cannot rise,
they are extinguished, quenched like a wick:
Do not remember the former things,
or consider the things of old.
I am about to do a new thing;
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?
I will make a way in the wilderness
and rivers in the desert.
The wild animals will honour me,
the jackals and the ostriches;
for I give water in the wilderness,
rivers in the desert,
to give drink to my chosen people,
the people whom I formed for myself
so that they might declare my praise.

Sharing Reflections

- Where in the world might people really make these words their own? Places where there is war – or hunger – or violence – or...?
- How is God’s making something new different from change for change’s sake?