Sunday 1 October –Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Scripture: Ezekiel 18: 25-28; Psalm 24; Philippians 2: 1-11; Matthew 21: 28-32

*Jesus said to the chief priests and elders of the people, ‘What is your opinion?’*

This simple question offers a reminder that his style of teaching was not just giving information and telling people what to think and what to do. He knew the elders and priests had considerable learning after years of study and experience – and seems not to have been out to trick them but to get them to think. This is not indoctrination but asking people to think about their own knowledge and life-experience and then apply that to what they are learning about God. So, as you listen to the gospel at Mass, hear Jesus speak to you, asking “Well, what is *your* opinion?”

* How does Jesus’ way of teaching people about God and faith compare with what we might have experienced in our own faith journey?
* How might Jesus’ approach help you to share aspects of your faith with others?

Spend some time today reflecting on your own faith and how often you actually *think* about it. Ponder what you do when there is something you do not understand – or where your opinion differs from that of the Church authorities. Invite Jesus to show you how to use your God-given ability to think and question to deepen and expand your faith.

*KT*

Monday 2 October – (The Holy Guardian Angels)

Scripture: Zechariah 8: 1-8; Psalm 101; Matthew 18: 1-5, 10

*Jesus said, ‘Take care that you do not despise one of these little ones; for, I tell you, in heaven their angels continually see the face of my Father in heaven.’*

Jesus is speaking particularly about children but his words could apply to anyone in society who does not have a high status or who are heavily dependent on others. It is very tempting to see youth – good looks – good job and prospects – and the other things we might associate with being in the prime of life – as where we should aspire to be. But there are many people who do not have these advantages. Children do have rights – but are still immature and apparently having little to contribute to society. People with disabilities can also contribute much but often find themselves patronised or marginalised. People who are ageing can feel side-lined. People who are homeless can find themselves ignored and, even, despised. As Jesus reminds us – their angels in heaven also see the face of the Father in heaven.

* Who do you tend to look down on – or even patronise?
* How might you try to be more aware of such people’s angelic companions?

Spend time today being honest with yourself about who you tend to look down on or feel a bit superior to. Choose one person or group and pray with your own guardian angel for the grace to be more aware of theirs – and the dignity that having such an angel gives you both.

*KT*

Tuesday 3 October

Scripture: Zechariah 8: 20-23; Psalm 86; John 1: 47-51; Luke 9: 51-56

*The disciples entered a village of the Samaritans to make ready for him; but they did not receive him, because his face was set towards Jerusalem.’*

Prejudices work both ways. The Jews of Jesus’ time were extremely prejudiced against the Samaritans whom they viewed as pretty much “unclean” – unworthy to offer sacrifices to God. Many would have been shocked when Jesus set the Good Samaritan up as an example of common humanity and compassion. It is clear that by sending the disciples into a Samaritan village, Jesus was trying to overcome their prejudices – but they found that the people there were as prejudiced against them as they had been. Mutual distrust and prejudice are nothing new it seems.

* When have you encountered prejudice?
* What prejudices are you aware of in yourself?

Reflect on your own prejudices today – being honest and non-judgemental. Try to identify where they originate – perhaps in your upbringing – an event in your past – or through the media treatment of other people. Pray today for an openness to others such as Jesus had.

*KT*

Wednesday 4 October (St Francis of Assisi)

Scripture: Nehemiah 2: 1-8; Psalm 136; Luke 9: 57-62

*As they were going along the road, someone said to him, ‘I will follow you wherever you go.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.’*

Jesus has set his face towards Jerusalem and his little band of disciples is clearly attracting attention and potential followers. The person today is clearly inspired and feels ready for anything – so Jesus gives a short lesson on what that might entail. As the rest of Luke’s gospel will show, Jesus is rarely left without a bed and a meal – but he has left his home and will not return there in this life. Very few people are called to such a radical life-choice – though, coincidentally, today we celebrate the life of someone who did take that risk – St Francis of Assisi.

* Have you ever been tempted to leave everything behind and follow a dream?
* Why do you think Jesus sounded so harsh and forbidding?

If you have ever dreamed the dream of pursuing a particular person or activity, reflect on how it felt and what stopped you. Do you have any regrets? And might it be possible to find a way of living some of it out without a life-long commitment? Bring any thoughts into a conversation with Jesus.

*KT*

Thursday 5 October

Scriptures: Nehemiah 8: 1-12; Psalm 18; Luke 10: 1-12

*Jesus said to the disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest.’*

It is interesting that Jesus is speaking to his disciples rather than the crowd in general. It is almost as if he is preparing the disciples to keep an eye out for the labourers who the Lord will provide but who may not really think themselves either worthy or capable. Alongside their work of preaching and healing, it seems that Jesus wants them to be alert to those who also have the gifts and potential to be labourers in the Lord’s harvest.

* What do you think makes a good labourer in God’s harvest?
* How might you be such a labourer – using your own gifts and skills?

Read this passage and then ask the Lord to show you how you might be a labourer in the harvest of the Kingdom. Do not presume others are better at it or that we are just talking about leaders! What task might you be able to undertake to bring God’s harvest to fruition.

*KT*

Friday 6 October (St Bruno)

Scripture: Baruch 1: 15-22; Psalm 78; Luke 10 13-16

*Jesus said, ‘Whoever listens to you listens to me, and whoever rejects you rejects me, and whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me.’*

Jesus is continuing to prepare his disciples for the mission ahead. He knows that some people will welcome the disciples but he also knows that many others will reject them. He seems to want to help them not to take such a rejection personally. That is how it will feel but Jesus wants them to see that it goes beyond them not doing it quite right – or because people don’t like them as people. Although he will not be with them in person it is Jesus’ message they are proclaiming and it is this that people are rejecting – not just the person delivering it.

* When have you felt rejected for speaking about Jesus or your faith in general?
* How might thinking of yourself as Jesus spokesperson help – or hinder?

Pray today for a sense of being someone who delivers Jesus’ good news – who has his trust and confidence that you will do a good enough job – even if not everyone accepts it first time round.

*KT*

Saturday 7 October (Our Lady of the Rosary)

Scriptures: Baruch 4: 5-12, 27-29; Psalm 68: 33-37; Luke 10: 17-24

*Jesus said privately to the disciples, ‘Blessed are the eyes that see what you see! For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, but did not see it, and to hear what you hear, but did not hear it.’*

When we look into the history of the Jewish people before Jesus, we come across people such as David and Solomon who were great kings. We find people like Moses – and Elijah – and Ezekiel – and countless others who shine through the Hebrew scriptures. They did and said amazing things – trusting that they were working for God. But they did not know God as the disciples did – nor as we do. In Jesus, we see and hear the fulfilment of God’s plan in a way that none of these mighty figures from the Old Testament ever did.

* How do you feel about knowing more of God than people like King Solomon – or the great prophets like Isaiah?
* How does this privilege influence how you live your life?

Spend some time today thinking about some of the great men and women in the Hebrew scriptures who longed for the coming of the Messiah but did not live to see it – who lived in trust and faith that God would fulfil his plan even though they would not witness it. Give thanks that you have the privilege of knowing Jesus – and ask that this relationship might inspire and encourage you to make a difference to the world.

*KT*