



**East Hendred Catholic Parish**

# **Food for the Journey**

**Weekday Bulletin 10<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> August 2020**



# Food for the Journey\*

10<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> August 2020 Week 18[ii]

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## Collect for the Week

**ALMIGHTY** ever-living God, whom, taught by the Holy Spirit, we dare to call our Father, bring, we pray, to perfection in our hearts the spirit of adoption as your sons and daughters, that we may merit to enter into the inheritance which you have promised. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

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**IN THE** first reading this week we meet the Prophet Ezekiel. He stays with us for a fortnight of weekdays. Ezekiel is not a particularly accessible or easy book but fortunately the passages set for us are 'purple passages'.

For the Gospel, we stay with St Matthew and, echoing the first foretelling of the Passion on Friday last (Mt 16:24-28), on Monday we have the second (17:22-27). As the week progresses, we encounter more teaching: on Tuesday the importance of little children and caring for the hundredth sheep, the sheep which is lost (18:1-5, 10, 12-14); on Wednesday some basic instruction on church discipline (18:15-20); on Thursday a parable on how forgiveness should work (18:21 - 19:1); and, on Friday, the Lord's teaching on the indissolubility of marriage (19:3-12). I hope you will look up these Gospel passages in the Bible, Weekday Missal, or *Magnificat*.

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[Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition \(RSVCE\)](#)

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# Monday 10<sup>th</sup> August

## Reading

*Ezekiel 1:2-5, 24-28*

### *The Glory of the Lord*

In the fifth day of the month (it was the fifth year of the exile of King Jehoi'achin), <sup>3</sup> the word of the LORD came to Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chalde'ans by the river Chebar; and the hand of the LORD was upon him there.

<sup>4</sup> As I looked, behold, a stormy wind came out of the north, and a great cloud, with brightness round about it, and fire flashing forth continually, and in the midst of the fire, as it were gleaming bronze. <sup>5</sup> And from the midst of it came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance: they had the form of men.....

<sup>24</sup> And when they went, I heard the sound of their wings like the sound of many waters, like the thunder of the Almighty, a sound of tumult like the sound of a host; when they stood still, they let down their wings. <sup>25</sup> And there came a voice from above the firmament over their heads; when they stood still, they let down their wings.

<sup>26</sup> And above the firmament over their heads there was the likeness of a throne, in appearance like sapphire; and seated above the likeness of a throne was a likeness as it were of a human form. <sup>27</sup> And upward from what had the appearance of his loins I saw as it were gleaming bronze, like the appearance of fire enclosed round about; and downward from what had the appearance of his loins I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and there was brightness round about him. <sup>28</sup> Like the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud on the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about.

Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard the voice of one speaking.

## Reflection

**EZEKIEL** was a Jerusalem priest, part of the elite who in 597BC were taken off to Babylon. He gives us a timeline, which we can just about interpret, and he seems to be prophesying in Babylon about 593BC. He purports to be describing in the present events which had happened before the Exile

and, in common with the other prophets of the time, he ascribes the fate of Judah to the sinfulness of the people. God shows his divine power by abandoning the holy city. The book begins, as today's passage shows, with God still present in glory enthroned above the praises of his people. Ezekiel is very much a priestly book and the vision is described accordingly. We have a 'stormy wind', as we find in the story of Elijah (2 Kgs 2:11), Job (38:1), and Jonah (1:4). The 'living creatures', as we shall find on Wednesday, are subsequently identified as 'the cherubim' (Ezek 10:4). They are part of heavenly worship, as we hear from Rev. 4:6-8, and they are familiar figures from the ancient world. The Assyrian *karibu* were statues of animals with human heads, guarding the palace at Nineveh and appear here as integral to the worship of the Lord, the God of Israel. Ezekiel starts at the bottom: he listens and gradually looks up to the firmament of heaven, hears the sounds, and then sees the vision 'like the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud on the day of rain'. In other words, God is way above us, well above the temple in Jerusalem, way above the earth. So what the vision tells us is that God will not utterly forsake his people. He is not confined to Jerusalem and, as he chooses, can be available to his people in exile.

## Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> August

### Reading

*Ezekiel 2:8 – 3:4*

*Ezekiel is invited to eat a scroll*

I, Ezekiel, heard a voice speaking. It said: <sup>8</sup> 'But you, son of man, hear what I say to you; be not rebellious like that rebellious house; open your mouth, and eat what I give you.' <sup>9</sup> And when I looked, behold, a hand was stretched out to me, and behold, a written scroll was in it; <sup>10</sup> and he spread it before me; and it had writing on the front and on the back, and there were written on it words of lamentation and mourning and woe. <sup>3</sup><sup>1</sup> And he said to me, 'Son of man, eat what is offered to you; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel.' <sup>2</sup> So I opened my mouth, and he gave me the scroll to eat. <sup>3</sup> And he said to me, 'Son of man, eat this scroll that I give you and fill your stomach with it.' Then I ate it; and it was in my mouth as

sweet as honey. <sup>4</sup> And he said to me, 'Son of man, go, get you to the house of Israel, and speak with my words to them.

## Reflection

**THE EATING** of the scroll is at once strange and familiar. Why would one eat a scroll, let alone describe it 'as sweet as honey'? What is certainly more familiar – and we have come across it in other prophets – is pressing into service an everyday object – in Jeremiah it was the loin cloth and the potter's clay. So the vivid image of eating a scroll helps us to understand the message. We find something similar in the psalms. Psalm 19:10b describes the ordinances of the Lord as 'sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb' and Psalm 119:103 says 'How sweet are your words to my taste: sweeter than honey to my mouth'. The consuming of a scroll makes a reappearance at Rev. 10:9-10. There we learn that the scroll tastes 'as sweet as honey' but makes the stomach bitter. Written on Ezekiel's scroll are 'words of lamentation and mourning and woe', possibly identifying for us three types of Israelite lament poetry found later in the Book of Ezekiel. Or perhaps just three words for the same thing. By chewing and swallowing God's words, Ezekiel is internalising God's message. Thus, having thoroughly absorbed it, he is equipped to deliver the message to God's people.

## Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> August

### Reading

*Ezekiel 9:1-7; 10:18-22*

### *The Slaughter of the Idolaters*

**AS I**, Ezekiel, listened, God cried in my ears with a loud voice, saying, 'Draw near, you executioners of the city, each with his destroying weapon in his hand.'<sup>2</sup> And behold, six men came from the direction of the upper gate, which faces north, every man with his weapon for slaughter in his hand, and with them was a man clothed in linen, with a writing case at his side. And they went in and stood beside the bronze altar.

<sup>3</sup> Now the glory of the God of Israel had gone up from the cherubim on which it rested to the threshold of the house; and he called to the man clothed in linen, who had the writing case at his side. <sup>4</sup> And the LORD said

to him, 'Go through the city, through Jerusalem, and put a mark upon the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all the abominations that are committed in it.' <sup>5</sup> And to the others he said in my hearing, 'Pass through the city after him, and smite; your eye shall not spare, and you shall show no pity; <sup>6</sup> slay old men outright, young men and maidens, little children and women, but touch no one upon whom is the mark. And begin at my sanctuary.' So they began with the elders who were before the house. <sup>7</sup> Then he said to them, 'Defile the house, and fill the courts with the slain. Go forth.' So they went forth, and smote in the city.....

<sup>18</sup> Then the glory of the LORD went forth from the threshold of the house, and stood over the cherubim. <sup>19</sup> And the cherubim lifted up their wings and mounted up from the earth in my sight as they went forth, with the wheels beside them; and they stood at the door of the east gate of the house of the LORD; and the glory of the God of Israel was over them.

<sup>20</sup> These were the living creatures that I saw underneath the God of Israel by the river Chebar; and I knew that they were cherubim. <sup>21</sup> Each had four faces, and each four wings, and underneath their wings the semblance of human hands. <sup>22</sup> And as for the likeness of their faces, they were the very faces whose appearance I had seen by the river Chebar. They went every one straight forward.

## Reflection

**WE CAN'T** easily accept the Israelite understanding of God's anger, which is explored in this passage. The 'six men' whom the Lord chooses to do his work are not so much men as avenging angels. God himself does no harm but he is clearly seen as himself passing judgment. Those who are to be spared are marked with a sign, though the Hebrew might mean that only Ezekiel is signed and spared. There is a link here with the marking of foreheads on Ash Wednesday. Presiding over the judgment, God moves to the east gate of the temple, very definitely, as it were, stepping to one side. The terrible glory of his anger is shown in the attendance of the cherubim (as we now know the 'living creatures' to be). God's agents wreak havoc and the temple courts are filled – and therefore defiled – by dead bodies. We are probably not hearing here about what happened in 597BC, the beginning of the Exile, but a few years later, when the temple and city were laid waste. With hindsight Ezekiel conflates the events. It is a severe picture and nowadays we do our theology rather differently. We no longer start with the view that everything that happens – including death, disease, and disaster – is visited upon us by God. We see God as one who cares for

us, loves us, and supports us through the most tragic of circumstances. How those tragic circumstances arise we cannot say. We talk about the 'mystery of evil' and, as we explore that, come across a no less bewildering 'mystery of goodness'. But centuries before the coming of Christ, the history of Israel is always seen through the lens of judgment. The Babylonian Exile, the destruction of the temple, and the slaughter of old and young all happen because of the apostasy of God's people. It's a dark picture.

## Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> August

### Reading

*Ezekiel 12:1-12*

#### *Judah's Captivity Portrayed*

**12** The word of the LORD came to me: <sup>2</sup> 'Son of man, you dwell in the midst of a rebellious house, who have eyes to see, but see not, who have ears to hear, but hear not; <sup>3</sup> for they are a rebellious house. Therefore, son of man, prepare for yourself an exile's baggage, and go into exile by day in their sight; you shall go like an exile from your place to another place in their sight. Perhaps they will understand, though they are a rebellious house. <sup>4</sup> You shall bring out your baggage by day in their sight, as baggage for exile; and you shall go forth yourself at evening in their sight, as men do who must go into exile. <sup>5</sup> Dig through the wall in their sight, and go out through it. <sup>6</sup> In their sight you shall lift the baggage upon your shoulder, and carry it out in the dark; you shall cover your face, that you may not see the land; for I have made you a sign for the house of Israel.'

<sup>7</sup> And I did as I was commanded. I brought out my baggage by day, as baggage for exile, and in the evening I dug through the wall with my own hands; I went forth in the dark, carrying my outfit upon my shoulder in their sight.

<sup>8</sup> In the morning the word of the LORD came to me: <sup>9</sup> 'Son of man, has not the house of Israel, the rebellious house, said to you, 'What are you doing?' <sup>10</sup> Say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: This oracle concerns the prince in Jerusalem and all the house of Israel who are in it.' <sup>11</sup> Say, 'I am a sign for you: as I have done, so shall it be done to them; they shall go into exile, into captivity.' <sup>12</sup> And the prince who is among them shall lift his baggage upon his shoulder in the dark, and shall go forth; he shall dig through the wall and go out through it; he shall cover his face, that he may not see the land with his eyes.

## Reflection

**MORE** picture language: in today's first reading the prophet Ezekiel, priest of Jerusalem, gives us a 'sign-act'. The act is the journey of a refugee, referred to by Ezekiel as the 'prince', who digs through the wall at night to escape, face covered to conceal his identity from the Babylonian army who are giving siege to the city. The refugee, we can identify, as Zedekiah, and we find the story of this escape in 2 Kgs 25:4-7, the last chapter in the history of the Jews before the exile. It's worth just reading those verses:

Then a breach was made in the city; the king with all the men of war fled by night by the way of the gate between the two walls, by the king's garden, though the Chalde'ans were around the city. And they went in the direction of the Arabah. <sup>5</sup> But the army of the Chalde'ans pursued the king, and overtook him in the plains of Jericho; and all his army was scattered from him. <sup>6</sup> Then they captured the king, and brought him up to the king of Babylon at Riblah, who passed sentence upon him. <sup>7</sup> They slew the sons of Zedeki'ah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedeki'ah, and bound him in fetters, and took him to Babylon.

This unsuccessful flight Ezekiel portrays as the defining sign of Judah's defeat and captivity.

## Friday 14<sup>th</sup> August

### Reading

*Ezekiel 16:1-15, 60, 63*

### *God's Faithless Bride*

Again the word of the LORD came to me: <sup>2</sup>'Son of man, make known to Jerusalem her abominations, <sup>3</sup>and say, Thus says the Lord GOD to Jerusalem: Your origin and your birth are of the land of the Canaanites; your father was an Amorite, and your mother a Hittite. <sup>4</sup>And as for your birth, on the day you were born your navel string was not cut, nor were you washed with water to cleanse you, nor rubbed with salt, nor swathed with bands. <sup>5</sup>No eye pitied you, to do any of these things to you out of compassion for you; but you were cast out on the open field, for you were abhorred, on the day that you were born.

<sup>6</sup>'And when I passed by you, and saw you weltering in your blood, I said to you in your blood, 'Live, <sup>7</sup>and grow up like a plant of the field.' And you grew up and became tall and arrived at full maidenhood; your breasts were formed, and your hair had grown; yet you were naked and bare.

<sup>8</sup> 'When I passed by you again and looked upon you, behold, you were at the age for love; and I spread my skirt over you, and covered your nakedness: yes, I plighted my troth to you and entered into a covenant with you, says the Lord GOD, and you became mine. <sup>9</sup> Then I bathed you with water and washed off your blood from you, and anointed you with oil. <sup>10</sup> I clothed you also with embroidered cloth and shod you with leather, I swathed you in fine linen and covered you with silk. <sup>11</sup> And I decked you with ornaments, and put bracelets on your arms, and a chain on your neck. <sup>12</sup> And I put a ring on your nose, and earrings in your ears, and a beautiful crown upon your head. <sup>13</sup> Thus you were decked with gold and silver; and your raiment was of fine linen, and silk, and embroidered cloth; you ate fine flour and honey and oil. You grew exceedingly beautiful, and came to regal estate. <sup>14</sup> And your renown went forth among the nations because of your beauty, for it was perfect through the splendour which I had bestowed upon you, says the Lord GOD. <sup>15</sup> But you trusted in your beauty, and played the harlot because of your renown, and lavished your harlotries on any passer-by.....

<sup>60</sup> 'Yet I will remember my covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish with you an everlasting covenant...<sup>63</sup> that you may remember and be confounded, and never open your mouth again because of your shame, when I forgive you all that you have done, says the Lord GOD.'

## Reflection

**CHAPTER 16** is the longest chapter in the Book of Ezekiel and today we look at the first fifteen verses and a couple of the final verses. The image is of Israel as an adulterous wife, taken by the Lord from humble beginnings, Pygmalion-style, woo-ed, washed, and clothed by God, and given fine jewellery. But, says the Lord, Israel trusted in her beauty and became a whore (v15). This image of God as the Bridegroom and Israel the Bride is fundamental in Scripture. It is perhaps the main reason why we refer to God as masculine, and to his people – whether Israel or the Church – as 'she'. God, of course, is not a sexual being. He is beyond gender and both Israel and the Church have as many male members as female. Nevertheless story and narrative are the way we encounter God and it is through story and narrative that we understand him and his ways. Having upbraided the adulterous wife, God, in verse 60, nevertheless remembers his covenant and, in verse 63, bids us recall his forgiveness of us, and, in our shame for our sins, cease our complaining.