

Reading for the Memorial of St Bonaventure

15th July 2024

First reading

Isaiah 1:10-17

Take your wrongdoing out of my sight

Hear the word of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom;
listen to the command of our God, you people of Gomorrah.
'What are your endless sacrifices to me?
says the Lord.
I am sick of holocausts of rams and the fat of calves.
The blood of bulls and of goats revolts me.
When you come to present yourselves before me,
who asked you to trample over my courts?
Bring me your worthless offerings no more, the smoke of them fills me with disgust.
New Moons, sabbaths, assemblies – I cannot endure festival and solemnity.
Your New Moons and your pilgrimages I hate with all my soul.
They lie heavy on me, I am tired of bearing them.
When you stretch out your hands I turn my eyes away.
You may multiply your prayers, I shall not listen.
Your hands are covered with blood, wash, make yourselves clean.
'Take your wrong-doing out of my sight. Cease to do evil.
Learn to do good, search for justice,
help the oppressed, be just to the orphan, plead for the widow.'

Responsorial Psalm Psalm 49(50):8-9,16-17,21,23

I will show God's salvation to the upright.
'I find no fault with your sacrifices,
your offerings are always before me.
I do not ask more bullocks from your farms,
nor goats from among your herds.
'But how can you recite my commandments
and take my covenant on your lips,
you who despise my law
and throw my words to the winds,
'You do this, and should I keep silence?
Do you think that I am like you?
A sacrifice of thanksgiving honours me
and I will show God's salvation to the upright.'

Gospel Acclamation

cf.Ac16:14

Alleluia, alleluia!
Open our heart, O Lord,
to accept the words of your Son.
Alleluia!

Gospel Matthew 10:34-11:1

It is not peace I have come to bring, but a sword

Jesus instructed the Twelve as follows: 'Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth: it is not peace I have come to bring, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. A man's enemies will be those of his own household.

'Anyone who prefers father or mother to me is not worthy of me. Anyone who prefers son or daughter to me is not worthy of me. Anyone who does not take his cross and follow in my footsteps is not worthy of me. Anyone who finds his life will lose it; anyone who loses his life for my sake will find it.

'Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me; and those who welcome me welcome the one who sent me.

'Anyone who welcomes a prophet will have a prophet's reward; and anyone who welcomes a holy man will have a holy man's reward.

'If anyone gives so much as a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is a disciple, then I tell you solemnly, he will most certainly not lose his reward.'

When Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples he moved on from there to teach and preach in their towns.

Short reflection on the reading for today

Isaiah points to internal oppression within Israel, not caused as in the past by the Egyptians, but by their fellow-Jews. The religious scene in Isaiah's time seemed so perfectly observant that one could easily have overlooked the injustices and suffering in homes and places of employment. Yet God's anger blazes out in the words of the prophet: "Your new moons and festivals I detest; they weigh me down, I tire of the load... Though you pray the more, I will not listen. Your hands are full of blood."

The "hands full of blood" refer to a judge's "Guilty" verdict in a law court. But the divine judge gives another chance; instead of sentencing the guilty party to death, Israel is granted a reprieve, provided that they make justice their aim, redress the wronged, hear the orphan's plea, defend the widow. Unless their religion turns towards social justice, God will "turn my hand against you, and refine your dross in the furnace" (Isa 1:25). In Isaiah's view, what God desires is peace with justice, compassion and human dignity. If needs be, fire will engulf the guilty party and burn away the dross.

Jesus speaks about problems that arise within the family circle. Again, the solution to seek is not peace at any price, but a peace that is compatible with our faith in Jesus. If discord threatens our family relationships, it must not be for dominance but for conscience. We are summoned to be compassionate to others but firm in our faith, and willing to suffer and bear the cross, whenever the Lord sends it to us.