

## Reading for the Memorial of St Dyfrig

14<sup>th</sup> November 2024

### First reading

Philemon 7-20

#### He is a slave no longer, but a dear brother in the Lord

I am so delighted, and comforted, to know of your love; they tell me, brother, how you have put new heart into the saints.

Now, although in Christ I can have no diffidence about telling you to do whatever is your duty, I am appealing to your love instead, reminding you that this is Paul writing, an old man now and, what is more, still a prisoner of Christ Jesus. I am appealing to you for a child of mine, whose father I became while wearing these chains: I mean Onesimus. He was of no use to you before, but he will be useful to you now, as he has been to me. I am sending him back to you, and with him – I could say – a part of my own self. I should have liked to keep him with me; he could have been a substitute for you, to help me while I am in the chains that the Good News has brought me. However, I did not want to do anything without your consent; it would have been forcing your act of kindness, which should be spontaneous. I know you have been deprived of Onesimus for a time, but it was only so that you could have him back for ever, not as a slave any more, but something much better than a slave, a dear brother; especially dear to me, but how much more to you, as a blood-brother as well as a brother in the Lord. So if all that we have in common means anything to you, welcome him as you would me; but if he has wronged you in any way or owes you anything, then let me pay for it. I am writing this in my own handwriting: I, Paul, shall pay it back – I will not add any mention of your own debt to me, which is yourself. Well then, brother, I am counting on you, in the Lord; put new heart into me, in Christ.

### Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 145(146):7-10

*He is happy who is helped by Jacob's God.*

It is the Lord who keeps faith for ever,  
who is just to those who are oppressed.  
It is he who gives bread to the hungry,  
the Lord, who sets prisoners free.  
It is the Lord who gives sight to the blind,  
who raises up those who are bowed down.  
It is the Lord who loves the just,  
the Lord, who protects the stranger.  
The Lord upholds the widow and orphan  
but thwarts the path of the wicked.  
The Lord will reign for ever,  
Zion's God, from age to age.

### Gospel Acclamation

1P1:25

Alleluia, alleluia!  
The word of the Lord remains for ever:  
What is this word?  
It is the Good News that has been brought to you.  
Alleluia!

## **Gospel**

## **Luke 17:20-25**

### **The kingdom of God is among you**

Asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was to come, Jesus gave them this answer, “The coming of the kingdom of God does not admit of observation and there will be no one to say, “Look here! Look there!” For, you must know, the kingdom of God is among you.’

He said to the disciples, ‘A time will come when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man and will not see it. They will say to you, “Look there!” or, “Look here!” Make no move; do not set off in pursuit; for as the lightning flashing from one part of heaven lights up the other, so will be the Son of Man when his day comes. But first he must suffer grievously and be rejected by this generation.’

### **Short reflection on the reading for today**

The ties of love and friendship go beyond the letter of the law. In his letter, Paul calls Philemon a beloved friend and fellow worker, and he seems grateful for the kindness of his rich friend, because “through you the hearts of God’s people have been refreshed.”

We too can show others a love that refreshes and unites. With the grace of God we can come to regard each man or woman as our own kith and kin. If at first they seem as unlike us as the runaway slave was unlike his master Philemon, we can come to love and respect them as members of the human family.

While Paul does not directly take issue with slavery, he sees that both master and slave have equal Christian dignity. His principle was “There is no longer ... slave nor free ... for all are one in Christ Jesus (Gal 3:28). Through the courage of the 18th century Quakers, this insight would eventually banish the scandal of slavery from the Christian world.

We can be impatient like the questioners of Jesus and press him for an answer, “When will the reign of God come?” He dismisses the question, *when*. The kingdom of God is not to be identified with a point of time; this is an important warning to those who try to predict the end of the world on such and such a day. Jesus also refuses to locate the reign of God “here” or “there.” There is no particular, all-holy place where the kingdom must appear, in one country rather than another. Jesus’ answer is baffling but also consoling: The reign of God is already in your midst. Intimately, personally rooted within us, is the kingdom of God, already begun in Jesus who dwells within us. In him we may already taste the sweetness of eternal life. Here we get the strength to be strong and loyal, for God’s wisdom already lives in our hearts.