

THE FOURTEENTH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR - C

The gospel reading is the account of Jesus giving instructions to the seventy-two disciples on how they were to conduct themselves when he sends them out to preach in preparation for his coming. The important lesson at the end is that they shouldn't rejoice because they have cast out devils but 'rejoice rather that your names are written in heaven.' In the first reading Isaiah teaches of Jerusalem as our mother. In the second reading we have the conclusion of Paul's letter to the Galatians where he says the important marks on his body 'are those of Jesus,' not those of circumcision.

The **First Reading** comes from the third part of Isaiah. The work, Isaiah 56-66, is a composite collection, its various parts dating from before the end of the Exile, 538 B.C., to the rebuilding of the Temple in 520 B.C. Taken as a whole this last part of the book of Isaiah seems to be the work of Second Isaiah's disciples composed sometime after the return from exile. It can be considered the final product of the Isaian tradition, active from the days of the great eighth century prophet himself.

The reading, 66.10-14, is part of the final section of the book entitled 'Judgement on Jerusalem.' It is a continuation of the teaching in chapter 65 about the judgement of Jerusalem at the end of time. Chapter 65 does not make for pleasant reading but here the mood has changed with a new theme expressing the hopes of God's people. Jerusalem is told to rejoice and all who mourned for Jerusalem should rejoice for mother Jerusalem will suckle you until you are satisfied and the Lord will send peace flowing like a river in spate, an eternal peace. These words from third Isaiah are fulfilled by the coming of Christ and in today's gospel reading we have the seventy-two disciples going out to announce the peace which will come when Christ visits.

The **Responsorial Psalm**, Psalm 65.1-7,16,20, is a prayer of thanksgiving for God's wonderful deeds and mention is made of the escape from Egypt turning the sea into dry land so that the people could cross dry shod. The author then encourages the God-fearing to come and hear what God has done, the God who hears my prayer in his faithful love.

The **Second Reading** is from Paul's letter to the Galatians. This letter is closely associated with the letter to the Romans because both letters deal with the same problem, the relationship between emerging Christianity and Judaism. Paul wastes no time in getting to the point, there is no usual greeting instead he accuses the Galatians of 'going over to a different gospel', different that is from the one he preached. He then sets out his credentials proving his preaching is the truth. Paul is clearly very frustrated addressing the Galatians: 'You stupid people in Galatia!' By wishing to retain the practice of the Law they remain under guard by the Law like a slave; but now faith has come they are baptised, clothed in Christ, children of God and coheirs with Christ. The letter concludes with an exhortation to leave the Law behind and be led by the Spirit in confident hope. They were called to be free and should use their freedom, not for self-indulgence but to fulfill the law of love. Paul ends by saying: 'After this let no one trouble me.'

The reading, 6.14-18, is part of the postscript to the letter. Paul teaches the only thing to boast about is the Cross i.e. the crucified, the whole gospel message 'through whom the world (this sinful world) is crucified to me, and I to the world' in Christ Jesus. The world and its systems are judged by the gospel message and Paul is firmly standing by the gospel of Christ. Paul repeats finally that it is not a question of whether one is circumcised or not but that we have all been born anew through baptism in Christ Jesus, 'a new creation.' He offers peace and mercy to all who follow this way. He concludes by saying 'I want no more trouble from anyone after this' and ends with a benediction.