

We shall go up with joy.....

Thanks to everyone who came along for the Cantors' evening at our Lady of Good Counsel on Monday past. The ministry of the cantor enables us to have the Psalm sung during our Sunday Liturgies, as it should be, not recited. I hope the evening was encouraging to all the cantors.

Psalm 121 has been set to music many times, and no wonder! It is a true *pilgrimage song*. As travellers approach the Holy City of Jerusalem, the Psalmist extols its beauty, which does not consist only in the *fine stonework and votive offerings* of the temple (c.f. last Sunday's Gospel) but is principally worthy of such praise because the temple in Jerusalem signified the divine dwelling place where God had *pitched his tent* in the midst of humanity. Coming in sight of the temple mount, the pilgrims would break into song: *Now our feet are standing within your gates, O Jerusalem!*

We make this Psalm our own this Sunday, the Solemnity of Jesus Christ, King of the Universe. It calls us to worship and to recognition: worship of the divine one, Christ our King; recognition that he has made his home in our midst. The city of Jerusalem and the temple in particular was the earthly symbol of the coming of God's kingdom. All this year, as we have read the Gospel of Saint Luke, we have learned about the "newness" of the Kingdom made known through Jesus, from his first sermon in the synagogue at Nazareth, to his final "sermon" given from the cross, to the "good thief" who is promised "paradise". The notion of paradise takes us back to the Genesis story. From Adam's sin onward, it seemed paradise was "lost": overtones of temptation, sin, death, the reign of Satan, locked gates. But we have experienced this year through the Gospel that Jesus has inaugurated a new order, featuring obedience to God, *good news* for poor, the end of Satan's reign, and the re-opening of the gates of paradise.



We approach this reality most powerfully when we gather to share our Sunday Eucharist together. Jesus' paschal mystery is present in our midst as we rejoice that we are in God's house, as we listen to his word and have our eyes opened at the breaking of bread. The scene at the cross in this Sunday's Gospel shows one criminal joining the leaders and soldiers in their mockery of Jesus and the other making a confession of faith—a confession which also [co-incidentally] has been famously set to music: *Jesus, remember me.....* Jesus responds to him with a promise of a place in paradise.

Luke, who at the beginning of his text told us he would give an *ordered account* of events, has been true to his word. He has shown Jesus to be the fulfilment of all the prophecies. Interestingly, Luke also portrays Jesus as being in complete control of his situation to the very end, despite the fact that, with the exception of the good thief, everything said to Jesus by the leaders and soldiers and the other criminal was filled with mockery and abuse, the titles of *Messiah* and *Chosen One* being thrown at him in a taunting manner. Luke omits the cry of anguish from the cross and the accompanying confusion over whether he was calling on Elijah. Jesus forgives his executioners as well as promising paradise to the repentant criminal. Having done these things, he entrusts his spirit to the Father in prayer and dies.

His death is shown by Luke to be utterly consistent with his life; his life is an enactment of his teaching. In Luke's Gospel Jesus taught his most profound parables; in the passion narrative he is shown to be the Lord of all he has said and done, crowning his life with his redemptive death. It is given to the centurion to sum up the reality of the moment: *this was a great and good man*. The crowd go home beating their breasts. Joseph of Arimathea seeks permission to bury the body. The women, faithful to Jesus to the end, prepare the ointments for burial. Another refrain is now anticipated: *Now the green blade riseth, from the buried grain....*