SB

Not content with this strictly Jewish liturgical image, Paul then turns to a wider image. "Adam" means "man" or "humankind", and the sin of Adam is the sin of the whole human race. The disobedience of Adam and Eve is the turning of the whole of humanity from obedience to God. In a noble passage (Romans 5:12-21) Paul explains how, as Adam's sin plunged the whole of humanity into sinfulness, so the loving obedience of Christ, the second Adam, on the cross annulled this sinfulness and brought humanity back into peace and harmony with God.

NEW LIFE

How can this obedience affect Christ's followers? In Romans 6:1-14 Paul explains. By the expression of faith in baptism Christ's follower is plunged into Christ's death and emerges from the water enlivened with Christ's new life in his resurrection. It remains only for Paul to explain in chapter 8 how the Christian is to live according to the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead, the Spirit of love. Romans 8 is a song of praise and hope: since we are stamped with the seal of God's spirit and can call God our Father, Paul stresses that the Christian can use the same Aramaic term of loving intimacy which Jesus himself used, "*Abba*, Father".

Mass text

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON
The Lord said: I think thoughts of peace and not of affliction.
You will call upon me, and I will answer you, and I will lead back your captives from every place.

FIRST READING Proverbs 31:10-13. 19-20. 30-31

PSALM Psalm 127

RESPONSE **O blessed are those who fear the Lord.**

1. O blessed are those who fear the Lord
and walk in his ways!
By the labour of your hands you shall eat.
You will be happy and prosper. **R.**

2. Your wife like a fruitful vine
in the heart of your house;
your children like shoots of the olive,
around your table. **R.**

3. Indeed thus shall be blessed
the man who fears the Lord.
May the Lord bless you from Zion
in a happy Jerusalem
all the days of your life. **R.**

SECOND READING 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION
Alleluia, alleluia!
Make your home in me, as I make mine in you, says the Lord.
Whoever remains in me bears fruit in plenty.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL Matthew 25:14-30

COMMUNION ANTIPHON
To be near God is my happiness, to place my hope in God the Lord.

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Next Sunday's Readings:
Ezekiel 34:11-12. 15-17
1 Corinthians 15:20-26. 28
Matthew 25:31-46

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PAUL'S LETTER TO THE ROMANS

The God who speaks

Fr Henry Wansbrough OSB considers how God speaks to us through St Paul.

The apostle Paul has been spoken of as the founder of Christianity. This is definitely not the case. But it is the case that God speaks through Paul, for Paul is integral in working out many implications of the teaching of Jesus. He also gives us two short passages in 1 Corinthians where he quotes the historical tradition about Jesus at the Last Supper, his death and the meetings of the risen Christ with his disciples, passages learnt by heart and passed on in the earliest tradition.

We know Paul personally from the letters he wrote to the Christian communities he had founded in response to their problems. We must think of him as labouring ceaselessly and tirelessly, travelling over huge distances, sometimes on fine Roman roads, sometimes through dangerous and hostile country, in danger from rivers, in danger from brigands, in danger from his own people and in danger from the Gentiles, three times shipwrecked, liable to be thrashed with thirty-nine lashes by the Jews (presumably for proclaiming a false Messiah) and with scourges by the Roman lictors (presumably for proclaiming Christ rather than the Emperor as Lord).

After some years of this frenetic travelling he felt that he could turn his attention to the West and projected a journey to Spain. It was then that he wrote to Rome, the capital of the Empire, to ask for their help. This letter is printed first in our collections of Paul's letters not because it was the first to be written or because it is the most important, but simply because it is the longest. But it does bid to be also the most important, for it gives the fullest Pauline explanation of the process of salvation.

In the first chapters he demonstrates how sunk in sin and evil the whole world is, both Gentiles and then (to their shocked surprise) also Jews. He then sets out to explain how Christ's action has made the world right with God. He does this first by reference to the annual Jewish Day of Atonement, when a "scapegoat" was driven out into the desert, bearing the sins of the people. As a reconciliation, God put forward not a black goat but Christ. Christ is the reconciliation, the mercy-seat on top of the Ark, which was the dwelling place of God (3:25). God is primarily a God of forgiveness. The mercy-seat on the top of the Ark was sprinkled with the blood of sacrifice as a sign of this forgiveness, for blood, the symbol of life, is a cleansing agent of new life.

15 NOVEMBER 2020

33RD SUNDAY
IN ORDINARY TIME
YEAR A
DIVINE OFFICE WEEK I