

Monday 15th February 2021, Week 6 of Ordinary Time

Genesis 4:1-15, 25, Mark 8:11-13.

Over the last week we have been listening to the opening chapters of the Bible and have been introduced to creation in all its perfect beauty. However, we have seen that despite being given everything, men and women want it their way. Today's reading from Genesis shows that once sin has entered the world it increases and moves from disobedience and desire, to outright jealousy and murder. Books have been written on why Abel's sacrifice was accepted and Cain's rejected and many suggest that Abel offered the best of his flock whilst Cain's offering was just an average portion. However as the text does not tell us, we don't need to know for our salvation.

In the Gospel, the Pharisees ask Jesus for a sign, which He refuses to give. You would have thought that all the cures and miracles that He had been doing was a sign enough! Christ does not "perform" miracles on demand for those who refuse to believe. His miracles are His loving response to the needs to those He meets. When we turn to the Father in our brokenness, He responds, not always in the way we want or expect, but as any loving parent does, He gives us what we need through His Son, by the grace of the Holy Spirit.

Both these texts can help us prepare for Lent which begins on Wednesday. The reading from Genesis shows us how easily we can be led by our passions and can allow sin to crouch at our door. Lent is a time of "taking stock" and of reassessing what causes us to sin. Is it jealousy? Is it frustration? Is it greed? Is it desiring to be in control? The Pharisees wanted to control Jesus. Do we want to "control" our heavenly Father? Do we "demand" that He changes things for our benefit here and now? During Lent we are invited to pray more – maybe in our prayers we can listen rather than *ask*. We can do this by reading a Scripture passage slowly and reflect on what God is saying to us here and now. We can fast from things that are not necessary in our lives, (not just food). And we can be more concerned about other people, not just giving to charity (which is very good) but we can be on the look-out for how we can help people physically.

Heavenly Father, we come to you in our brokenness and offer ourselves to you. Give us the grace, we pray, by your Holy Spirit, to walk in the steps of your Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, as He spends forty days in the desert meditating on His vocation to save us from our sins. Help us to spend this time drawing closer to you so that we will be ready to celebrate Holy Week and Easter with true joy. Amen.

