

Sunday 23 August 2026
Twelfth Sunday after Trinity

Collect:

God of constant mercy,
who sent your Son to save us:
remind us of your goodness,
increase your grace within us,
that our thankfulness may grow,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Readings for this week:

Isaiah 51:1-6; Psalm 124; Romans 12:1-8; Matthew 16:13-20

We begin with a section from Isaiah dealing with the return of exiled people from Babylon. As they travel home they ask disbelievingly, ‘Why should God give us a fresh start?’ The idea of a homeland gives them more hope than the actuality on the ground. Isaiah prompts them to remember Abraham and Sarah, an aged, childless couple, yet who, despite their frailties gave birth to the nation. The God who is able to make many from one, who creates fruitfulness out of a wilderness, can take a remnant and make them flourish. More than that, they will be God’s light drawing all nations, even those who are their enemies, into the divine presence. The closing verses build further upon this – God’s salvation is eternal, not temporal. Psalm 124 taps into the sense of deliverance coming through the help of God, reminding the Israelites where their salvation is rooted. Note how compassion comes from God – it is a virtue required for a nation to be holy.

But for this remnant to become a nation again they will need to act corporately, as one body working together, also including their fellow Israelites who had been left behind in the land when they had been taken into exile. Paul, in our passage from Romans, is also exhorting his listeners to work together as one body, using the skills and gifts of all to grow into a strong whole, focussed on their joint enterprise as heirs of the Gospel. For all involved that will require some form of sacrifice, perhaps giving up something they enjoy because others are better at it, or committing to something that they find hard because it will benefit the community.

The revelation of Jesus’ identity to Simon Peter in our Gospel reading is followed by Jesus conferring authority onto Peter as the rock upon which the Church is built. Peter, and the other disciples (with all their own frailties), are the Abrahams and Sarahs of the Church, rooted in Christ but anointed to become the trunk from which all other branches grow, through time and place, down to us. For the Church to flourish they must use this authority wisely. Paul’s exhortation to the Romans reminds us of the hard work and sacrifice involved in becoming the ever growing Body of Christ.

God of all mercy,
in the eucharist you have set aside our sins
and given us your healing:
grant that we who are made whole in Christ
may bring that healing to this broken world,
in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Readings for next week:

Jeremiah 15:15-21; Psalm 26:1-8; Romans 12:9-21; Matthew 16:21-28
Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity