**Friday (Dietrich Bonhoeffer)**

The church is marked off from the world not by a special privilege, but by the gracious election and calling of God. “Say” and “do” do not mean the ordinary contrast between word and deed, but two different relations between man and God. The person who says ‘Lord, Lord’ is the one who puts forward a claim that he has said ‘it’; the doer is the person of humble obedience who builds their life on the grace of God. The person who says ‘Lord, Lord’ has either called themselves to Jesus without the Holy Spirit or has made out the call of Jesus as a personal privilege. But our doer of the will of God is called and endued with grace, they obey and follow. They understand there call not as a right, but as an act of God’s judgment and grace, as the will of God which alone they must obey.

**Scripture (Philippians 2:13-16)**

***It is God who, for his own generous purpose, gives you the intention and the powers to act. Let your behaviour be free of murmuring and complaining so that you remain faultless and pure, unspoilt children of God surrounded by a deceitful and underhand brood, shining out among them like bright stars in the world, proffering to it the Word of life.***

A group of us meet to discuss the readings. During Lent, we are reading them in the light of Laudato Si and CAFOD / Justice and Peace.

This week:

* **Sunday readings.** A demanding, passionate God (**Prayer)**
* **Pope Francis:** if we neglect our relationship with each other, we neglect our relationship with God **(Aware)**
* **Justice and peace:** taking a stand against injustice **(Share)**

A copy of the notes is available at [www.sthelenscrosby.org.uk](http://www.sthelenscrosby.org.uk), under ‘prayer’ and ‘Thinking outside the pew

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*3rd Week of Lent*

 ***The love of God is the root of all good***

***My experience of discussing the Commandments with people is that they are reasonable rules, but are basically there to limit bad behaviour, (‘Thou shall not.’). This is, I think, largely because people always name one of the last six if asked about the Ten Commandments. but the first four, dealing with our relationship with God, make the Ten far more than a moral code: we are being invited into a Covenant with God, and it isn’t with a remote or neutral God – he is ‘jealous’ and if people reject his ways, he will ‘punish the father’s fault’ in the next generations.***

***Uncomfortable language for anyone who, is of the ‘I don’t like the Old Testament God, I like Jesus because he’s kinder’ approach to faith, (as I often am). Apart from being unfair to Jesus, this approach looks for a nice tame God who will serve my needs.***

***A better understanding of ‘jealous’ is ‘passionate’, and the reference to punishment is, I think, in the sense of the doctor telling the heavy smoker ‘you’re in trouble’ – he is confirming the consequences, not inflicting them. God is saying that his ways lead us to his horizons limitless love, whilst to turn away limits us to our own understanding and divisive ways.***

***To live in this Covenant which offers so much, God demands complete allegiance and obedience. It is worth remembering that at this point in their history, the Israelites did not understand that there was only one God and worshipping other gods entailed various destructive practices, so when God says ‘worship only me’, he is putting the relationship with him, who is holy, at the heart of life.***

***It is the disregard for the holiness of God which provokes Jesus’ anger in the Temple, which had become a market, (John 2:13-25). In John’s Gospel, this is at the start - immediately after the Wedding at Cana, which was the first of the ‘signs’ that revealed God’s reign in our world – the new Covenant. Jesus’ had not lost his temper: he was acting passionately, showing the anger (righteous anger against corruption or any obstacle to the relationship) which is as much a sign of love as is caring for the sick.***

***Not unreasonably, the authorities wanted to know why he thought he had the authority to do this. Jesus’ answer about rebuilding the Temple in three days could not have made sense to them, and only became clear after the resurrection, when the new covenant was established. As with the old covenant, worship will be the basis, but this will no longer be focused on the Temple; the focus for Christians will be Jesus.***

***Paul shows that this won’t be easy living amongst beliefs and cultures. (1Cor 1:22-25), How could the crucified Jesus possibly be seen as God’s way by the Jews, who relied on miracles and signs for evidence of God’s presence, or by the Greeks, who relied on philosophical proofs and logic to make sense of the world. Both of these relied on human understanding, which, as Paul says, doesn’t even match God’s foolishness. Paul is frustrated with the Corinthians who have become fragmented, having become attached to someone who preached the Gospel, rather than being attached the crucified Jesus, in whom the new Covenant with our passionate God is established.***

***As Jesus is everywhere, it should be easy to worship him in all aspects of our lives, (be aware of him, converse with him walk in his ways). Perhaps Lent is a time to ‘turn over tables’ which become the focal point of our lives. It is a time to renew our part of the covenant by making love of God the basis of life.*** Martin Bennett

**Monday (Thomas a Kempis)**

Christ speaks: I must be your supreme and final end, if you desire true happiness. Refer all things to me, for it is I who have given all to you. From myself, as from a living mountain, both small and great, rich and poor alike draw the water of life; and they who willingly and freely serve me shall receive grace upon grace. But whoever desires to glory in anything outside me, or to delight in any personal good thing, will not be established in true joy, nor be uplifted in heart. Therefore, ascribe all to God, without whom man was nothing.

**Scripture (2 Corinthians 6:14-17;7:1)**

***Do not harness yourselves in an uneven team with unbelievers; what can light and darkness have in common? The temple of God cannot compromise with false Gods, and that is what we are—the temple of the living God. We have God’s word for it: ‘I shall fix my home among them and live among them; I will be their God and they will be my people.’ Since these promises have been made to us, dear friends, we should wash ourselves clean of everything that pollutes either body or spirit, bringing our sanctification to completion in the fear of God.***

**Tuesday (Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh)**

Worship to me means a relationship. I used not to be a believer, then one day I discovered God and immediately he appeared to me to be the supreme value and the total meaning of life, but at the same time a person. You cannot teach worship to someone who has not got a sense of the living God; you can teach them to act as if they believed, but it will not be the attitude which is real worship. One of the reasons why communal worship or private prayer seems to be so dead is that the act of worship, which takes place in the heart communing with God, is too often missing.

**Scripture (Exodus 20:1-5,7-9)**

***Then God spoke all these words. He said, ‘I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt. You shall have no gods except me. You shall not make yourself a carved image or any likeness of anything in heaven or on earth; you shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I am a jealous God and I punish the father’s fault in the children, but I show kindness to the thousands who love me and keep my commandments.. You shall not utter the name of the Lord your God top misuse it, for the Lord will not leave unpunished the one who utters his name to misuse it. Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. For six days you shall but the seventh day is a Sabbath for the Lord your God.***

**Wednesday (Thomas Merton)**

It is a law of man’s nature, written into his very essence, and just as much a part of him as the desire to build houses and cultivate the land and marry and have children and read books and sing songs, that he should want to stand together with others in order to acknowledge their common

dependence on God, their Father and Creator

**Scripture (Psalm 62:5-12)**

***Rest in God alone, my soul! He is the source of my hope. He alone is my rock, my safety, my stronghold, so that I stand unwavering. In God is my safety and my glory, the rock of my strength. In God is my refuge; trust in him, you people, at all times. Pour out your hearts to him, God is a refuge for us. Ordinary people are a breath, important people an illusion; set both on the scales and they are lighter than a puff of wind. For God has said only one thing, only two do I know: that to God alone belongs power and to you, Lord, love.***

**Thursday (John Henry Newman)**

I need you to teach me day by day, according to each day’s opportunities and needs.

Give me, O my Lord, that purity of conscience which alone can receive, which alone can improve your inspirations.

My ears are dull, so that I cannot hear your voice.

My eyes are dim, so that I cannot see your signs.

You alone can quicken my hearing and urge my sight and cleanse and renew my heart.

Teach me to sit at your feet and hear your word.

**Scripture (Psalm 19:7-10)**

***The law of the Lord is perfect, it revives the soul. The rule of the Lord is to be trusted, it gives wisdom to the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, they gladden the heart. The command of the Lord is clear, it gives light to the eyes. The fear of the Lord is holy, abiding for ever. The decrees of the Lord are truth and all of them just. They are more to be desired than gold, than the purest of gold and sweeter are they than honey.***