

**Lectionary readings: Jeremiah 1: 4-10; Psalm 71: 1-6;
Hebrews 12: 18-29; Luke 13: 10-17**

For reflection and prayer

- **Jeremiah 1:** God says to Jeremiah that He knew him and had a plan for him before he was born. That is true of all of us, for we are all special in God's eyes. God knows each one of us intimately; each one of us is set apart for a special purpose. Have we discerned what that purpose is? Or are we, like Jeremiah, making excuses, saying, 'I can't possibly do that!' I'm too young; I'm inadequate; it would cause me too much anxiety!' God's reply to us, as to Jeremiah, is, 'Don't be afraid ... I'll be right there, looking after you.' God is saying to each one of us, 'Trust Me. No matter how hard and how tough the assignment is, I will be present with you, giving you strength, wisdom, love - whatever it is you need.' Jeremiah's message was a tough one, for it challenged people to look at their lives to see whether they were in line with God's desires. Are our lives in line with how God wants us to live? What about our attitudes and prejudices? Are we prepared to look at these and are we willing to change?
- **Psalm 71:** Here is a paraphrase of these verses: *I take refuge in You, my Beloved. If I feel separated from You, let me know that I can never be apart from You. In Your love and compassion, come and refresh me. You are a rock, a tower of strength to me. I abandon myself to You. Be a very real presence to me as fear takes hold of me and grips me. You are my hope. I have trusted You from childhood and You have never let me down. You have cared for me since I was in my mother's*

womb. I continually sing praises to You. Much here to reflect on this week.

- **Hebrews 12:** Many people haven't got beyond the fear of God. But the old catechism says: '*Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever.*' These verses and the catechism speak of rejoicing in God's presence. God is approachable, loving, welcoming. Let's rejoice to come before Him, for His arms are outstretched to us in love, inviting all to come and be refreshed. Let's allow God to cleanse us, to purify us, to destroy all that clogs up our lives, all the 'junk' we have accumulated over the years. We have a wonderful God, who is full of love and forgiveness. So let's be thankful, our hearts overflowing with worship, our hearts on fire with love.
- **Luke 13:** Here we have the healing, setting free of a woman - utterly insignificant in the eyes of the men who ran the synagogue, keeping the rules more important than setting a human being free from her affliction. In healing this woman, Jesus was saying that this woman - indeed every person - is important to God. A great weight would have been lifted from her simply because Jesus noticed her, treated her as someone of worth and value, poured out His love and compassion on her. That alone would have set her free from her shame of believing herself to be a great sinner, and the rejection she had experienced for eighteen years. The synagogue exploded into praise and worship such as had never happened before. Why? Because they knew themselves to be in the presence of God. Are we allowing Jesus to set us free? Are we allowing Jesus to lift the burden of fears, anxiety, guilt, bitterness etc? How often do we go away from worship lighter than we came, set free, rejoicing?