

Lectionary readings: Leviticus 19: 1-2, 15-18; Psalm 1; 1 Thessalonians 2: 1-8; Matthew 22: 34-46

For reflection and prayer

- **Leviticus 19:** No favouritism, no gossip, no hatred, no revenge, no harbouring of grudges, no self-seeking at the expense of others; judge on the basis of what is right; love your neighbour as you love yourself. *'Be holy, because I, your God, am holy.'* Be holy, whole, like God; behave as God behaves; treat others as God treats us. There is a lot here in Leviticus (which is regarded as rather a dry, outdated book) to challenge us in our daily living. Which part speaks most to you?
- **Psalm 1:** Blessed are those who walk hand in hand with God, who delight in the Spirit of Love, who live in Love's heart. They are rooted in life-giving, well-watered soil, flourishing, bearing fruit in lives that are pleasing to God and giving life to others. The unloving are *'like dandelions which the wind blows away'*. They know pain and suffering as they turn away from God. They will ultimately destroy themselves. But those who set their hearts on God and live like Him will find themselves set on the journey of life with God as their Companion. This is a paraphrase of the psalm. Why not try to write your own paraphrase of this psalm this week, or a prayer arising out of your meditation on this psalm?
- **1 Thessalonians 2:** Paul is not seeking the approval of people; it is enough for him to know that he is doing the work God has called him to do. Paul came to the Thessalonian church in love, opening his heart to the people, sharing his own self at a cost. He says that his

message was free of mixed motives and hidden agendas. We might like to look at the motives underlying what we do this week. What hidden agendas are we operating out of? It's good to reflect on why we do what we do. May all we do this week be done out of love.

- **Matthew 22:** Jesus' reply in answer to the question: *'Which is the greatest commandment?'* is *'Love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and intelligence; and love others as well as you love yourself.'* (The Message) The Pharisees had lost sight of the importance of love, for they had got hung up on rules and laws. The Christian faith is a matter of deepening our love for God, not a matter of holding rigidly to beliefs. Paul was sure his message was free of error. I don't think any of us can say that, for none of us has a monopoly on the truth. We all have a tiny glimpse into the truth, for God is Mystery. What we do know is that Jesus' life was characterised by love. Let's always err on the side of love. God looks on the heart, not on the outward things. That's why we need constantly to reflect on how we live and what motivates us to do what we do.

Prayer is about living reflectively

'When the ocean within us becomes still and clear, we can begin to see things as they really are, in ourselves and in our world.... Without this ongoing reflectiveness our prayer becomes, literally, 'disembodied'. The reflection, as we move on with our daily life, is what weaves the wisdom of God into our moment-by-moment choices and decisions, our reactions, responses and relationships. Prayer, then, is not something we do, but a way of living, in growing awareness of the greater reality in which we live and breathe.' (Margaret Silf)