

Monday 19 August

Today is Monday, 19 August, in the Twentieth Week of Ordinary Time.

The University of Johannesburg choir conducted by Renette Bouwer sing the Kyrie from Missa De Meridiana Terra: Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy. These imploring words, which have been sung for centuries, are a reminder of the inexhaustible mercy of God, of God's unfailing compassion and forgiveness. As I listen, I might think for a moment about my need for that forgiveness, and the need, too, for me to show that same forgiveness to others.

Today's reading is from the Book of Judges.

This reading offers a pattern that the biblical writer has observed in human history. The pattern goes like this: first, Israel (the 'people of God') abandons the following of God and worships other 'gods' ('the Baals' 'the Astartes'); so, to wake them up, God punishes them and gives them into the hands of their enemies; finally, they learn the lesson and come back to God. And then the cycle starts all over again. In what ways might God be reacting today to our infidelity?

What do you think would be the equivalent today of 'worshipping other gods'? Why does the writer say that 'they lusted after other gods'?

Some people think that when our society is called 'secular' what is really meant is that it is idolatrous, putting money or power or pleasure where only God should be. Some people suggest that the equivalent of prophets today is the group of people who warn us of the consequences of neglecting our concern for the environment, or for the poor. As you listen to the reading, just try and hear what God may be calling you to do.

In these last few moments, try and think what 'practices or' 'stubborn ways' are you being invited to renounce today?