

St Francis of Assisi

Today is Friday the 4 October, the feast of St Francis of Assisi, in the 26th week of Ordinary Time.

The nuns of Mary, Queen of Apostles, sing Veritas Mea. My truth and My mercy are with him; and in My Name his horn shall be exalted. Alleluia!

Today's reading is from the Book of Baruch.

The book of Baruch is set after the Babylonian exile but the unknown author, probably from the second or first century BC, attributes his work to Baruch, Jeremiah's secretary. The main theme of the writing is that even in foreign lands, God's people can live faithful lives and find hope in God's promises. In today's reading, we have part of the psalm in which Israel confesses her guilt. She has merited the sufferings she is undergoing. The rebelliousness of the Israelites is traced all the way back to the exodus from Egypt.

By contrast, today we celebrate the feast of St. Francis of Assisi. The one known as il poverello, the little poor one, astounded and inspired the people of the 13th century by taking the Gospel literally, not in a narrow fundamentalist sense, but by actually following all that Jesus said and did, joyfully, without limit and without a trace of self-importance. Francis was poor only that he might be Christ-like. He loved nature because it was another manifestation of God's beauty. He did great penance (apologising to 'Brother Body' later in life) that he might be totally disciplined for the will of God. His poverty had a sister, humility, by which he meant total dependence on the good God. But the heart of his spirituality was: living the Gospel life, summed up in the charity of Jesus and perfectly expressed in the Eucharist.

Listen to the reading again, in particular to the words 'We did not listen to the voice of the Lord our God?'

As I enter into prayer today, I pray that like St. Francis I may not simply listen to the voice of the Lord, but actively put it into practice. I make my own the words of the psalmist: 'Oh that today you would listen to his voice.' Give me the grace, Lord, to be your instrument today.