Today is Wednesday the 2 September in the 22nd week of Ordinary Time.

The University of Johannesburg choir sing Ukuthula; Peace in this world of sin the blood of Jesus brings. Redemption in this world of sin the blood of Jesus brings.

Today’s reading is from St Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 3:1-9

And so, brothers and sisters, I could not speak to you as spiritual people, but rather as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for solid food. Even now you are still not ready, for you are still of the flesh. For as long as there is jealousy and quarrelling among you, are you not of the flesh, and behaving according to human inclinations? For when one says, ‘I belong to Paul’, and another, ‘I belong to Apollos’, are you not merely human? What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. The one who plants and the one who waters have a common purpose, and each will receive wages according to the labour of each. For we are God’s servants, working together; you are God’s field, God’s building.

We find Paul wrapped up in confrontation in today’s passage. Corinthians are used to seeing themselves in the best light, why would it be different for their spiritual life? These cosmopolitan people would have been very comfortable in today’s world and would have certainly engaged in all manner of social media platforms that allowed them to shine. Image is everything, until Paul, in just a sentence, moves their status from ‘brothers and sisters’ to babies. Can you place yourself in this scene? Can you imagine the emotions that have been aroused? What feelings or thoughts does this raise for you?

Paul reminds them that mature spiritual person seeks unity not division. Their continuing preoccupation with status and shows of jealousy are proof that there is more work to do. And the work is not about feeding the ego but being fed by the God who nurtures us into our spiritual life. Despite all we may do, or not do, for ourselves, it is God who will give the growth. God calls us into relationship where we are both the field and the fieldworker.

We listen to the reading again.

How does Paul’s challenge speak to me? Can I see myself as a child, needing the care and guidance of a loving parent? Can let go of any envy or resentment I have for others? Can I give myself to God’s purpose and thank God for the blessings that are given to me?

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.