

## Tuesday 20 April 2021

Today is Tuesday the 20 April, in the Third Week of Easter.

The St Thomas Music Group sing the Kyrie by Margaret Rizza: Kyrie eleison; Christe eleison: 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 Acts of the Apostles.

Acts 7:51 - 8:1

Stephen said to the crowd, 'You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you are forever opposing the Holy Spirit, just as your ancestors used to do. Which of the prophets did your ancestors not persecute? They killed those who foretold the coming of the Righteous One, and now you have become his betrayers and murderers. You are the ones that received the law as ordained by angels, and yet you have not kept it.' When they heard these things, they became enraged and ground their teeth at Stephen. But filled with the Holy Spirit, he gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. 'Look,' he said, 'I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!' But they covered their ears, and with a loud shout all rushed together against him. Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him; and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them.' When he had said this, he died. And Saul approved of their killing him. That day a severe persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout the countryside of Judea and Samaria.

It is said that 'those who do not remember the past, are condemned to repeat it.' This is what is happening in this scene. How many prophets since Jeremiah have stood in the same place as Stephen is standing? How many have tried to speak out, to explain things?

How many have suffered the same violent fate? How many times have young people like Saul seen it happening, approved of it and imitated it? Where do I see these things being repeated in the world around me today? Take a moment to pray for those Christians around the world, facing persecution at this very moment...

As you hear the reading for the second time, listen for the voice of Stephen saying, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them.'

Stephen's plea for his killers echoes the words of Jesus on the cross. Forgiveness and reconciliation is often the first step to break the cycle of violence, but it is always a difficult step, a step that costs us something. Is there something in myself, some situation in my life, that needs forgiveness or reconciliation? Can I ask the Lord to help me along this path.

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.