

**Lectionary readings: Jeremiah 15: 15-21; Psalm 26: 1-8;
Romans 12: 9-21; Matthew 16: 21-28**

For reflection and prayer

- **Jeremiah 15:** Self-pity oozes from Jeremiah in this passage. He is up against it and he lashes out at God, angry with God because Jeremiah's faithful obedience has resulted in nothing but rejection and intolerable suffering. So he says, *'You're nothing, God, but a mirage, a lovely oasis in the distance - and then nothing.'* (v 18 The Message) I love Jeremiah's honesty. God wants us to be honest with Him, saying what is on our heart. God urges Jeremiah to stop allowing others to influence who or how he is. God doesn't promise Jeremiah an easy life, but He does promise him His presence and strength to see him through. May we know His presence with us too as we seek to live from the Spirit of God within us, whatever we are facing.
- **Psalm 26:** Here are these verses in 'Psalms for Praying' for us to reflect on: *'Speak on my behalf, O Beloved, for I would choose the path of wholeness, trusting in Your love without reserve. May my heart be as Your Heart; may my mind be as Your Mind - as Your steadfast love guides me, as I live in faithfulness to You. I walk with friends of integrity, and associate with those who live in truth; I love the company of faith-filled people, and count myself among those who make Your Word their own. Cleanse my heart in innocence that I might be childlike, singing songs of thanksgiving and proclaiming the Beloved's way. O Loving Presence, I*

cherish Your dwelling place, my heart; O that I might radiate Love Divine.'

- **Romans 12:** This is a chapter about Love, the love that should characterise every person who calls him/herself a follower of Jesus, and every Christian church. Love from the centre of who you are - deeply, passionately. Be humble, willing to be overlooked. Keep yourself on fire with God's love. Excel in hospitality. Pray all the more when times are hard, rather than giving up. Bless your enemies - no cursing or speaking ill of anyone. Feel with people in their sadness and joy. Live in harmony with one another. Make friends with those who are considered 'nobodies'. Discover beauty in everyone. Don't repay evil with evil. Don't take revenge. Leave all judging of others to God. Overcome evil with good. All this is very challenging and not for the faint-hearted. How we and our churches would be transformed if we all aspired, by the grace of God, to live like this.
- **Matthew 16:** Jesus had recently described Peter as a 'rock' after Peter had declared that Jesus was 'the Christ, the Messiah'. Here Jesus calls Peter 'Satan' for it is clear that Peter has no idea who Jesus really is. Peter tries to tell Jesus that the way of suffering is not for Him. v24-26 The Message: *'Anyone who intends to come with me has to let me lead. You're not in the driver's seat; I am. Don't run from suffering; embrace it. Follow me and I'll show you how. Self-help is no help at all. Self-sacrifice is the way, my way, to finding yourself, your true self. What kind of deal is it to get everything you want but lose yourself? What could you ever trade your soul for?'* My experience has been that it is through embracing suffering and finding God with me in it that I have come to know not only myself better, but God too.