

Lectionary readings: Isaiah 25: 1-9; Psalm 20; Revelation 22: 1-5; Matthew 5: 38-48 (Remembrance)

For reflection and prayer

- **Isaiah 25:** Isaiah speaks of *'the cloud of doom'* that hangs over the earth. This could well describe our current situation. Isaiah says that the Lord will remove that 'cloud of doom'. Can we look forward to a time when all the nations of the world will live at peace and share the riches of God's presence together? With God all things are possible. But He chooses to work in and through us. And the question is: will we open our hearts to God and allow ourselves to be changed and to see others as God sees them, reaching out with love, living at peace where we are and allowing the ripples of peace to spread out? v9: *'This is our God. We trusted in Him, and He saved us. This is the Lord in whom we trusted. Let us rejoice in the salvation He brings.'* Do we really trust God and bring Him into the centre of all we are and do?
- **Psalm 20:** v5 (Psalms for Praying): *'Let us shout for joy as Love triumphs over fear. Let our thankful hearts sing in loud acclamation to the Beloved who answers our heartfelt prayers.'* So why hasn't God answered our prayers for peace? Perhaps one reason is that we have not opened our hearts to God and sought His help in enabling us to live at peace with our neighbours, friends and family and enemies? It must start on an individual level with each one of us living at peace where we are, willing to see the best in people, instead of being quick to criticise and find fault, willing to see people as our

brothers and sisters. The miracle of grace must begin in our own hearts before it can spread out to the world.

- **Revelation 22:** This is a lovely picture of the time when we will all live in harmony. We think of this as a future time when there will be a new heaven and a new earth, God in the midst and everyone worshipping Him, all darkness gone, everything flooded with the light of God's presence. But eternal life begins here and now as God lives in our hearts, so we can experience this new earth here and now. The *'water of life'* - God's life - fullness of life - which God makes available to each one of us, is flowing down our streets as we go about our daily business, provided we open our whole lives to Him. *'The Kingdom of God is within you,'* said Jesus. God wants to shine in our hearts here and now and light up the darkness of our world. There is no barrier on God's side. Are we willing to destroy the barriers we put up to God's grace and life?
- **Matthew 5:** *'Love your enemies.'* The trouble is that we too often operate out of the old Mosaic law 'an eye for an eye'. We give as good as we get. That is not Jesus' teaching and that is not what it means to live as a disciple of Jesus. We see this happening between Jews and Arabs in the Middle East. The same thing happened in Northern Ireland, and in other parts of the world. Nothing will be solved by violence and retaliation. Jesus has the answer: *'Love your enemies.'* Let them bring out the best in us. Let's live with a generous, open spirit, as we open ourselves to the Spirit of Jesus, living generously and graciously towards others, reaching out with God's love, overcoming evil with good. Then we will experience the new heaven and the new earth here and now. But it involves transformation. Perhaps that's what we are afraid of?