

HEARERS OF THE WORD

1Kings 19:4-8; Psalm 34 (33); Ephesians 4:30-5:2; John 6:41-51

Jesus said: I am the living bread that came down from heaven

John 6:31 *Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'* 32 *Then Jesus said to them, 'Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. 33 For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.'* 34 *They said to him, 'Sir, give us this bread always.'*

PART I

35 *Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. 36 But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. 37 Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and anyone who comes to me I will never drive away; 38 for I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. 39 And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. 40 This is indeed the will of my Father, that all who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life; and I will raise them up on the last day.'*

41 Then the Jews began to complain about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." 42 They were saying, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, 'I have come down from heaven'?" 43 Jesus answered them, "Do not complain among yourselves. 44 No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me; and I will raise that person up on the last day. 45 It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. 46 Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father. 47 Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes has eternal life.

PART II

48 I am the bread of life. 49 Your an-

cestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. 50 This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. 51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."

52 *The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?'* 53 *So Jesus said to them, 'Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. 54 Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; 55 for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. 56 Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. 57 Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. 58 This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live forever.'* 59 *He said these things while he was teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum.*

INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

The Sunday divisions are a bit awkward here, thus making the commentary a bit difficult—see below. Sunday 18B gives us 6:24-35 and Sunday 19B offers 6:41-51. A more intelligent division of the material would be 6:31-48 followed by 6:49-59. It is really a homily, in two parts as indicated above. The lectionary cuts across the natural divisions. The text above gives the context in italics. The actual appointed reading is boxed.

KIND OF WRITING

The speech in chapter 6 is a homily and gives us a good glimpse of what preaching was like towards the end of the first century. Research has shown that rabbinic homilies of the period showed these characteristics:

(i) Homilies are in a *midrashic* style (rumi-

Thought for the day

For us eternal life usually means the next life and it can sound remote and unreal. The Fourth Gospel, where the expression occurs seventeen times, can be of help. The last occurrence (17:2) teaches that eternal life is a *quality of relationship* which *begins now* in the present moment and which is *indestructible* (Heb 7:16).

Prayer

Lord, we struggle to believe at all and we struggle to hold on to eternal life. Help us to hear your call in the present moment. Help to know you and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. Help us to respond with full and trusting hearts, now and into the future.

nating, paraphrasing, updating). In verses 31-59, we have an early Christian homily, in a recognisably *midrashic* form, combining text, paraphrase and story material: John 6:33, 50, 41, 51, 58, 38, 42.

(ii) Rabbinic homilies use a main quotation in two parts; these are dealt with in sequence, with the first part of the quotation under consideration in the first part of the homily and the second part of the quotation in the second part of the homily. The main quotation is taken from Exodus 16:4, with echoes of Ex 16:15 and 16:2 (below)

(iii) As is often the case, the beginnings and the endings of homilies resemble each other. The beginning and the end do, in fact, echo each other: 6:31-33 and 58.

(iv) In this style of homily, a further perspective is given by the use of subsidiary quotation from elsewhere in the Bible. The subsidiary citation, in 6:45, is from Is 54:13.

Finally, the suspicion that here we have a homily is surely confirmed by v. 59: *He said these things while he was teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum.* (John 6:59) The awkwardness in the lectionary is that it splits up the homily incorrectly. For instance, the second part of the homily

Sequence	John	Mark
Multiplication (5000)	6:1-15	6:30-34
Walking on the water	6:16-24	6:45-54
<i>Skip to what follows in Mark after the second multiplication (4000)</i>		
Request for sign	6:25-34	8:11-13
Remarks on the bread	6:35-59	8:14-21
Faith of Peter	6:60-69	8:27-30
Passion theme/ betrayal	6:70-71	8:31-33

begins in v. 48 and continues until v. 59. In these notes the whole homily is given for the sake of clarity. Notice that PART I deals with Jesus as the bread of life and PART II deals with eating the bread of life, that is, with having faith in Jesus.

OLD TESTAMENT BACKGROUND

Some key Old Testament texts stand behind the long speech here.

Then the LORD said to Moses, “I am going to rain bread from heaven for you, and each day the people shall go out and gather enough for that day. In that way I will test them, whether they will follow my instruction or not. (Exod 16:4)

When the Israelites saw it, they said to one another, “What is it?” For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, “It is the bread that the Lord has given you to eat. (Exod 16:15)

The whole congregation of the Israelites complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. (Exod 16:2)

All your children shall be taught by the LORD, and great shall be the prosperity of your children. (Isa 54:13)

NEW TESTAMENT FOREGROUND

The real issue is who is Jesus and how do we have faith in him. This comes out very clearly at the end of the chapter, where we read:

Because of this many of his disciples turned back and no longer went about with him. So Jesus asked the twelve, “Do you also wish to go away?” Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.” (John 6:66-69)

ST PAUL

We are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners, yet we know that no one is justified by the works of the law but by the faithfulness of Jesus Christ. And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by the faithfulness of

Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified. But if while seeking to be justified in Christ we ourselves have also been found to be sinners, is Christ then one who encourages sin? Absolutely not! But if I build up again those things I once destroyed, I demonstrate that I am one who breaks God’s law. For through the law I died to the law so that I may live to God. I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So the life I now live in the body, I live because of the faithfulness of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not set aside God’s grace, because if righteousness could come through the law, then Christ died for nothing! (Galatians 2:15–21 NET)

BRIEF COMMENTARY

Verse 41 “Complaining” is an echo of the complaints against Moses in the desert.

Verse 42 The “whence” of Jesus is very important in this Gospel. Those who know where he is “from” in fact know nothing. Intriguingly, Pilate (!) asks the right question: *He entered his headquarters again and asked Jesus, “Where are you from?” But Jesus gave him no answer.* (John 19:9)

Verse 43 The Jesus of this Gospel (i.e. the Risen Lord) always knows what people are thinking.

Verse 44 A mysterious, apparently tangential answer, which paradoxically goes to the heart of the matter.

Verse 45 The citation and expectation from Isaiah are applied to Jesus. Compare: *As for you, the anointing that you received from him abides in you,* and so you do not need anyone to teach you. *But as his anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, abide in him.* (1 John 2:27)

Verse 46 An echo of the Prologue. *No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father’s heart, who has made him known.* (John 1:18)

Verse 47 Eternal life is faith in Jesus and is for the present moment.

Verse 48 PART II of the homily starts here with a repetition. The text goes on to reflect on “eating” that is, being nourished by Jesus through faith in his gift of himself on the cross.

Verse 49 In contrasting the old and the new, the Gospel proposes life in abundance through Jesus (Jn 10:10)

Verse 50 Eating is a metaphor for ingesting by faith in Jesus.

Verse 51 This points to the death of Jesus, the (only) moment in which he “gives his flesh” for the life of the world.

POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. Jesus gave the disciples a share in his Faith is reasonable but we cannot reason our way into faith. We have to be ‘drawn by the Father’. We have to be ‘taught by God’. What opens your mind and heart to God’s message?

2. One thing which closes our minds to what another is saying is when we label them disparagingly, as the Jews did to Jesus. Have you ever had the experience of being surprised by the wisdom of another when you laid aside your prejudices about her/him to listen to what s/ he was saying?

3. ‘No one has ever seen the Father except the one who is from God’. As Jesus put a human face on God and God’s love, so God’s love for us today is mediated through one another. How have other people been sacraments of God’s love for you?

4. The way in which Jesus became a source of life for us was by giving himself. It is when we truly give ourselves that we can be life-giving to one another. If we do not give of ourselves, what do we have to offer? How have you discovered the importance of self-giving, in yourself or in others?

PRAYER

God our Father and provider, whose Son has given his flesh for the life of the world, sustain your pilgrim Church on its journey with the word of life and the bread of heaven. Draw us nearer to him in whose name we gather, that, following his way of sacrificial love, we may come to the banquet of eternal life. Grant this through your Son, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Live in love, as Christ loved us

Eph 4:25 *So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbours, for we are members of one another.* 26 *Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger,* 27 *and do not make room for the devil.* 28 *Thieves must give up stealing; rather let them labour and work honestly with their own hands, so as to have something to share with the needy.* 29 *Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear.* 30 *And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption.* 31 *Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice,* 32 *and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.*

Eph 5:1 *Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children,* 2 *and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.*

INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

There is a lifestyle which is the mark of the disciple and the Christian community. It is often in tension with accepted codes of behaviour and even with our own inner impulses. The Good News, a proclaimed by Jesus, subverts and sometimes inverts the “usual” way. Why should we do that? Simply because of what God has done for us in Jesus and in the Holy Spirit.

The full passage, starting at v. 25, is given above.

KIND OF WRITING

The writer continues with the Two Ways teaching, illustrating both sin and virtue, the negative and the positive. But the key lies in the motivation for such transformed behaviour. Because God has forgiven us in Christ, we too ought to forgive. This can be endlessly expanded: *because Christ loves us* and so forth.

ORIGIN OF THE READING

Ephesians, like Colossians, is overwhelmingly positive and encouraging. This does not mean that reality is being ignored, of course! Who does not stand in need of being encourage again not to lose heart and to continue the journey of conversion? If you glance at vv. 25-29

above you can see that the writer is quite realistic about what is likely to be going on.

RELATED PASSAGES

In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God’s own people, to the praise of his glory. (Ephesians 1:13–14)

But now you must get rid of all such things—anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive language from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices (Colossians 3:8–9)

As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. (Colossians 3:12–14)

Rid yourselves, therefore, of all malice, and all guile, insincerity, envy, and all slander. Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation— if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good. (1 Peter 2:1–3)

BRIEF COMMENTARY

Verse 30 Grieving the Spirit is an expression which is found in Second Isaiah: *But they rebelled and grieved his holy spirit; therefore he became their enemy; he himself fought against them.* (Isaiah 63:10; the words are different in the LXX). Sealed with the Spirit is a genuine Pauline expression from 2 Cor 1:22. Cf. *In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit.* (Ephesians 1:13). The language of redemption is more typical of the later NT books, such as Luke, Ephesians, Colossians and Hebrews: Luke 21:28; Rom 3:24; 8:23; 1 Cor 1:30; Eph 1:7, 14; 4:30; Col 1:14; Heb 9:15; 11:35.

Verse 31 The pile-up of words of similar intent comes to a climax with *malice* or *badness* in general. There is a kind

of movement from the inner to the outer, from what is felt to what is done. Thus, bitterness, wrath and anger spill over into wrangling and slander. Bitterness = to refuse reconciliation. Wrath = outbursts of passion. Anger = sustained irritation. Wrangling = Slander = speaking ill of so as to destroy. To crown (!) all this, there is malice.

Verse 32 The virtues match the vines in v.33. Kind (Gk: *chrestos*) is a play on the word Christ. It means to think of the neighbour’s well-being first. Tenderhearted (Gk: *eusplagchnoi*) means lit. to have healthy bowels(!). The transferred meaning is compassion. This time the crown is forgiveness and a reason is given which echoes the Sermon on the Mount.

Verses 1-2 V. 32 leads directly to 5:1. As always, he loved us first in Christ and that is our gift and our motivation. To live in love = lit. to walk in love. Imitation and image are key ideas throughout Ephesians.

POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. Take the vices and the virtues and reflect on your own attitudes and actions.
2. He loved us first: what keeps you walking the pilgrimage of faith?
3. We all following people who inspire us. These must include Jesus himself, *the image of the invisible God* (Col 1:15).

PRAYER

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen. (Eph 3:14–21)

Get up and eat, otherwise the journey will be too much for you

1 Kings 19:1 *Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword.* 2 *Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "So may the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life like the life of one of them by this time tomorrow."* 3 *Then he was afraid; he got up and fled for his life, and came to Beer-sheba, which belongs to Judah; he left his servant there.*

1 Kings 19:4 But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a solitary broom tree. He asked that he might die: "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am no better than my ancestors." 5 Then he lay down under the broom tree and fell asleep. Suddenly an angel touched him and said to him, "Get up and eat." 6 He looked, and there at his head was a cake baked on hot stones, and a jar of water. He ate and drank, and lay down again. 7 The angel of the Lord came a second time, touched him, and said, "Get up and eat, otherwise the journey will be too much for you." 8 He got up, and ate and drank; then he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb the mount of God. 9 *At that place he came to a cave, and spent the night there.*

INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

The story today has been chosen with a clear reference to "food for the journey". Elijah is under pressure, as we say. What will keep him going?

KIND OF WRITING

This is an episode from the life of the prophet, presenting him as supported by God. The added verses just in front of the passage tell us why Elijah was on that journey and the reasons for urgent relocation. In 1 Kings 17-19, there is a threefold pattern of activity and legitimation.

1 Kgs 17: *drought predicted; the widow of Zarephath; raising of the widow's son.*

1 Kings 18: *Ahab meets Elijah; the context with the priests of Baal on Mt Carmel; rain predicted.*

1 Kings 19: *Elijah flees; Elijah's call renewed; Elisha becomes a follower.*

ORIGIN OF THE READING

The second book of Kings is really part

of a four-part literary work, 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings. In the Hebrew Bible, 1 and 2 Kings are a single work; the Greek Old Testament (LXX) treats the four books as really one in four parts. Broadly speaking, the 2 volumes tell an extensive story in several parts:

1 Kings 1-11: the reign of Solomon

1 Kings 12-2 Kgs 17: the divided kingdom

A. *The division (1 Kings 12)*

B. *Divided kingdoms (1 Kings 13-2 Kings 17)*

2 Kings 18-25 Judah on its own.

1 Kings 19 comes from section B above, the stories of the divided kingdoms of Israel and Judah.

Elijah was a prophet in the 9th century bc and worked during the reign of Omri. He is the primordial prophet of Israel, although no book bears his name. The stories that have come down to us have a strong symbolic and even legendary character (as in ch. 19), but nevertheless he seems to have been a historical figure. Stories about him are found in 1 Kings 17-18 and 2 Kings 1-2.

RELATED PASSAGES

As a kind of archetypal "man of God," Elijah continued to be significant long after his death. Three references will illustrate this: Mal 4:5-6; Sir 48:1-10; 2 Kings 1:8.

Cf. *Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey.* (Mark 1:6)

BRIEF COMMENTARY

Verse 4 Elijah is frightened and heading south into the wilderness, towards Egypt. Elijah goes to pray, but his prayer is one of exhausted resignation. The broom tree has a symbolic role in the Hebrew Bible.

Through want and hard hunger they gnaw the dry and desolate ground, they pick mallow and the leaves of bushes, and to warm themselves the roots of broom. (Job 30:3-4) What shall be given to you? And what more shall be done to you, you deceitful tongue? A warrior's sharp arrows, with glowing coals of the broom tree! (Psalms 120:3-4) And I will make it a possession of the hedgehog, and pools of water, and I will sweep it with the broom of destruction,

says the Lord of hosts. (Psalms 120:4; Isaiah 14:23)

Elijah under the broom tree is mimicked in Jonah 4:3. Cf. Num 11:11-5 for a scene where Moses doesn't quite feel up to his role either.

Verse 5 Sleep is often the time of special discernment / intervention in the Bible, from Adam onwards. The sudden appearance of an angel indicates the intervention of God.

Verse 6 The cake reminds us of the earlier story: Elijah said to her, "Do not be afraid; go and do as you have said; but first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me, and afterwards make something for yourself and your son. (1 Kings 17:13)

Verse 7 The repeated action affirms both Elijah's need and God's gift.

Verse 8 The prophet is obedient to the messenger and so is able to make a symbolic journey of forty days to Horeb, that is to Mount Sinai. Forty has many echoes in the Bible, such as Moses' time on Sinai etc. In fact, Elijah retraces Moses's steps back to the original covenant with the Israelites.

POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. Elijah is threatened and quite realistically fearful. How have you reacted in such circumstances? Where you able to pray as honestly as Elijah?
2. Elijah experiences a moment of "epiphany", when the help from God was offered. We all have our little and great epiphanies which do keep us going. Reflect on your sense of God with you on the journey.
3. Elijah goes back to the very roots of the Israelite experience, the covenant on Sinai / Horeb. When you are in need, what are your resources and your springs of refreshment?

PRAYER

God, you walk with us always, even when we are unaware.

Open our ears to your Word; open our eyes to your Presence; open our hearts to your Love.

Thus may we have the strength to make the journey of faith, knowing that your Son is with us always to the end of time, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen.

THE LITURGY

1 Kings 19:4-8; Psalm 34 (33); Ephesians 4:30-5:2; John 6:41-51

READINGS 1 AND 3

The food for the journey motif is the real link with this Gospel. Of course, there is a Eucharistic layer to John 6, but the primary focus is on the person of Jesus and faith in him. The Moses symbolism is also important: just as Elijah was a prophet like Moses, Jesus is the prophet who has come.

THE RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Psalm 34 (33) fits very well, with its mention of the angel of the Lord and “taste and see that the Lord is good.”

SUNDAY INTRODUCTIONS

First reading

1 Kings 19:4-8

Where you ever tempted to give up and yet your kept going? This reading mirrors this experience. Queen Jezebel had set her heart on killing Elijah, so he “relocates” in the desert (reasonably!). There, under pressure, he has a special experience of God’s care for him.

Second reading

Ephesians 4:30-5:2

Once again, we hear two contrasting ways of living in response to the Gospel. The idea that we *could* grieve the Holy Spirit is startling but it is also a very human way of putting it.

Gospel

John 6:41-51

Where do you find nourishment for the journey of life and of faith? What or who is it that keeps you going? The Gospel uses the image of bread—a good image, as we all eat bread as a staple in our diet.

WEEKDAY INTRODUCTIONS

Monday 12 August

St Jane Frances de Chantal, religious; St Muredach, bishop; St Attracta, virgin; St Lelia, virgin.

Ezekiel 1:2-5, 24-28

For the next two weeks, we hear from the extraordinary book of the prophet Ezekiel. Some of the most beguiling and

upsetting passages in the Old Testament come from his pen. Our reading of Ezekiel begins today with the story of his calling as a prophet.

Matthew 17:22-27

Jesus’ own real freedom in relation to civil authorities is wittily reflected in this rather legendary story.

Tuesday 13 August

Sts Pontian, bishop of Rome, and Hippolytus, Priest, martyrs; St Fachtua, bishop

Ezekiel 2:8-3:4

In a very graphic way, the function or role of a prophet is illustrated. The prophet must ingest and digest the message and only then may he or she speak.

Matthew 18:1-5, 10, 12-14

Familiarity can blunt our appreciation of biblical imagery. In this case, a child is as symbol of powerlessness rather than innocence. In the case of the shepherd, it against common sense to abandon ninety-nine in search of just one.

Wednesday 14 August

St Maximilian Kolbe, religious, priest, martyr.

Ezekiel 9:1-7, 10:18-22

Ezekiel lived at a time of tremendous unfaithfulness. The story we read today is not meant as a description of something which actually happened but rather a warning, even a threat that people should reform their lives. Ezekiel is always aware of God as mystery, greater than our words, our minds and our heart.

Matthew 18:15-20

In this Gospel we are overhearing practices developed in the community of Matthew, most likely centred in Antioch. What to do with people who “stray”? The procedure is in several stages, following common sensitivity and biblical precedent.

Thursday 15 August

Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Apocalypse 11:19, 12:1-6, 10

This unusual reading is really about the motherhood of the church and the martyrdom of early Christians. By an ac-

commodated interpretation, it is read for the feast.

1 Corinthians 15:20-26

Our text is really a good example of Christian apocalyptic. One of the concerns of apocalyptic writings was the sequence of the end or when we will see the total victory over death. Paul believed in this, but knew it was not yet.

Luke 1:39-56

The prayer of Mary can still cause surprise because it is not about having a baby but about social reversal or revolution. We overhear in these words the prayer of the Christian *anawim YHWH* or the poor of the Lord.



Friday 16 August

St Stephen of Hungary

Ezekiel 16:1-15, 60, 63

In the Old Testament, marriage symbolism is used frequently for God’s relationship with his people. Partly, this is because the word covenant and (marriage) bond are identical in Hebrew. In today’s reading, Ezekiel—never short of a word—exploits the metaphor to reawaken the people’s original love for God.

Matthew 19:3-12

This important passage goes back to Jesus himself. He upholds the *ideal* of life-long marriage.

Saturday 17 August

Our Lady of Knock.

Ezekiel 18:1-10, 13, 30-32

If we listened carefully to this reading it is extraordinary. It move from the traditional collective and generational guilt to individual responsibility. It thus fits in with the Axial Age, observed by Karl Jaspers, when humanity underwent a change of consciousness.

Matthew 19:13-15

It might be reassuring that the disciples got in the way so early!! Jesus corrected them and received the little children. Perhaps today we still stand in need such re-orientation...