

# Eleventh Week in Ordinary Time

## Monday 15<sup>th</sup> June



### First reading

1 Kings 21:1-16

#### **Ahab covets Naboth's vineyard and Jezebel has him killed**

Naboth of Jezreel had a vineyard close by the palace of Ahab king of Samaria, and Ahab said to Naboth, 'Give me your vineyard to be my vegetable garden, since it adjoins my house; I will give you a better vineyard for it or, if you prefer, I will give you its worth in money.' But Naboth answered Ahab, 'The Lord forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my ancestors!'

Ahab went home gloomy and out of temper at the words of Naboth of Jezreel, 'I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers.' He lay down on his bed and turned his face away and refused to eat. His wife Jezebel came to him. 'Why are you so dispirited' she said 'that you will not eat?' He said, 'I have been speaking to Naboth of Jezreel; I said: "Give me your vineyard either for money or, if you prefer, for another vineyard in exchange." But he said, "I will not give you my vineyard."' Then his wife Jezebel said, 'You make a fine king of Israel, and no mistake! Get up and eat; cheer up, and you will feel better; I will get you the vineyard of Naboth of Jezreel myself.'

So she wrote letters in Ahab's name and sealed them with his seal, sending them to the elders and nobles who lived where Naboth lived. In the letters she wrote, 'Proclaim a fast, and put Naboth in the forefront of the people. Confront him with a couple of scoundrels who will accuse him like this, "You have cursed God and the king." Then take him outside and stone him to death.'

The men of Naboth's town, the elders and nobles who lived in his town, did what Jezebel ordered, what was written in the letters she had sent them. They proclaimed a fast and put Naboth in the forefront of the people. Then the two scoundrels came and stood in front of him and made their accusation, 'Naboth has cursed God and the king.' They led him outside the town and stoned him to death. They then sent word to Jezebel, 'Naboth has been stoned to death.' When Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned to death, she said to Ahab, 'Get up! Take possession of the vineyard which Naboth of Jezreel would not give you for money, for Naboth is no longer alive, he is dead.' When Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, he got up to go down to the vineyard of Naboth of Jezreel and take possession of it.

**Gospel Acclamation**

**Jn14:23**

Alleluia, alleluia!

If anyone loves me he will keep my word,  
and my Father will love him,  
and we shall come to him.

Alleluia!

**Gospel**

**Matthew 5:38-42**

**Offer the wicked man no resistance**

Jesus said to his disciples: 'You have learnt how it was said: *Eye for eye and tooth for tooth*. But I say this to you: offer the wicked man no resistance. On the contrary, if anyone hits you on the right cheek, offer him the other as well; if a man takes you to law and would have your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. And if anyone orders you to go one mile, go two miles with him. Give to anyone who asks, and if anyone wants to borrow, do not turn away.'

**Fr Tim's Reflection**

There are some similarities between the actions of Ahab and David, who was king 100 years before him. Both found themselves desiring something which belonged to one of their subjects, both conspired to get it and both were found out by the prophet.

In the case of David, he spied on Bathsheba bathing in her garden as he strolled on his roof. He wanted her. When she reported to the king that she was pregnant, David called her husband, Uriah, who was fighting on the front line and invited him to spend the night with his wife. Instead he kept guard all night outside the palace and did not go to his wife. So David wrote letters to the commanding officer, asking them to place Uriah in the thick of the battle in order that he might be killed. Then he took Bathsheba to be his wife.

It was up to the prophet Nathan to confront the King with what he had done. Found out, David was contrite and did penance. Sadly the baby that was conceived through his lust died at birth, but Bathsheba's next Son with David was Solomon, who was to be king after David, and who was to go on and build the temple. We believe that David composed psalm 50, asking God for mercy, to atone for his sin.

Fast forward 100 years. The kingdom is divided. Ahab is king in the northern territory (Israel) while Jehoshaphat (a true descendant of David) was king in the southern territory (Judah). Ahab was a weak king dominated by a cruel wife, Jezebel. She found him brooding, because Naboth, a neighbour, was unwilling to sell his fine vineyard to the King. Jezebel took charge of the situation and wrote letters in the name of the king to have him falsely accused and then stoned to death. As we shall see tomorrow, it will be the turn of Elijah to confront the king for what he has done.

Just by chance, in our gospel today, Jesus is talking about punishment and revenge. The Old Testament teaching of "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" required one to exact strict vengeance for what others have done to you. If you are blinded by someone, you must blind them back, if you lose a tooth, then your opponent must lose one too. This was the conception of justice that prevailed since time immemorial.

Jesus overturns this teaching. He says that if anyone wrongs you, instead of getting your own back, you should allow them to wrong you further. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, let him strike you on the other one as well. As we see in the passion of Jesus, this instruction was not to be taken literally. When the soldier strikes Jesus, he does not present the other cheek; instead he challenges the soldier and asks why he has hit him. However, the words of Jesus are to show that God never tries to get his own back. He is a God of mercy and compassion who prefers to forgive rather than to punish. Wise words indeed.

# Eleventh Week in Ordinary Time

## Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> June



### First reading

1 Kings 21:17-29

#### The punishment of Ahab and Jezebel foretold

After the death of Naboth, the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite, 'Up! Go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, in Samaria. You will find him in Naboth's vineyard; he has gone down to take possession of it. You are to say this to him, "The Lord says this: You have committed murder; now you usurp as well. For this – and the Lord says this – in the place where the dogs licked the blood of Naboth, the dogs will lick your blood too."'

Ahab said to Elijah, 'So you have found me out, O my enemy!' Elijah answered, 'I have found you out. For your double dealing, and since you have done what is displeasing to the Lord, I will now bring disaster down on you; I will sweep away your descendants, and wipe out every male belonging to the family of Ahab, fettered or free in Israel. I will treat your House as I treated the House of Jeroboam son of Nebat and of Baasha son of Ahijah, for provoking my anger and leading Israel into sin. (Against Jezebel the Lord spoke these words: The dogs will eat Jezebel in the Field of Jezreel.) Those of Ahab's family who die in the city, the dogs will eat; and those who die in the open country, the birds of the air will eat.'

And indeed there never was anyone like Ahab for double dealing and for doing what is displeasing to the Lord, urged on by Jezebel his wife. He behaved in the most abominable way, adhering to idols, just as the Amorites used to do whom the Lord had dispossessed for the sons of Israel.

When Ahab heard these words, he tore his garments and put sackcloth next his skin and fasted; he slept in the sackcloth; he walked with slow steps. Then the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite, 'Have you seen how Ahab has humbled himself before me? Since he has humbled himself before me, I will not bring the disaster in his days; I will bring the disaster down on his House in the days of his son.'

### **Responsorial Psalm**

**Psalm 50(51):3-6,11,16**

### **Gospel Acclamation**

**2Co5:19**

Alleluia, alleluia!

God in Christ was reconciling the world to himself,  
and he has entrusted to us the news that they are reconciled.

Alleluia!

### **Gospel**

**Matthew 5:43-48**

#### **Pray for those who persecute you**

Jesus said to his disciples: 'You have learnt how it was said: *You must love your neighbour and hate your enemy*. But I say this to you: love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you; in this way you will be sons of your Father in heaven, for he causes his sun to rise on bad men as well as good, and his rain to fall on honest and dishonest men alike. For if you love those who love you, what right have you to claim any credit? Even the tax collectors do as much, do they not? And if you save your greetings for your brothers, are you doing anything exceptional? Even the pagans do as much, do they not? You must therefore be perfect just as your heavenly Father is perfect.'

### **Fr Tim's Reflection**

Ahab has done what is displeasing to the Lord. Elijah has the job of confronting the king. The king seems to be surprised that Elijah has found him out. Like David, he makes an effort to express sorry for his sin. He fasts and puts on sackcloth. God relented and did not punish Ahab immediately. However, he was to die three years later in battle, and it is reported that after his death the dogs came and licked his blood. First one son, then another succeeded him, but after that his line was extinguished. Israel was once again to have a blood descendent of David on the throne.

In the gospel, Jesus in his teaching continues to overturn commonly held beliefs. Instead of hating our enemies, we must try and love them! There was a deeply held belief that good people were rewarded by God for their kindness, while bad people were punished for their wickedness. A bit like the prophesy of Elijah to Ahab, who was to be punished for what he had done.

So, for example, when Jesus encounters the man who had been born blind, even the disciples were convinced that the man was being punished either for something he had done himself, or because of some sin of his parents. Jesus points out that good people and bad people alike share in God's blessings. They both enjoy the sunshine and they both enjoy the rain. Even Charlie Brown can see the wisdom of such a system.

So what is the point of trying to be good? We don't try and keep God's commandments because we hope of some reward, or even that we escape some form of punishment. We are all of us seeking to be the best version of ourselves that we can be. This means becoming more and more like God. And that means being merciful as our heavenly Father is merciful.

From time to time good things will come our way, but also from time to time we will experience pain and suffering. Being the best version of ourselves that we can be will help us take all of this in our stride, and see how each challenge is an invitation from God to love more. Let us aim for perfection.

# Eleventh Week in Ordinary Time

## Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> June



### First reading

**2 Kings 2:1,6-14**

#### **Elijah is taken up to heaven**

This is what happened when the Lord took Elijah up to heaven in the whirlwind: Elijah and Elisha set out from Gilgal, Elijah said, 'Elisha, please stay here, the Lord is only sending me to the Jordan.' But he replied, 'As the Lord lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you!' And they went on together.

Fifty of the brotherhood of prophets followed them, halting some distance away as the two of them stood beside the Jordan. Elijah took his cloak, rolled it up and struck the water; and the water divided to left and right, and the two of them crossed over dry-shod. When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, 'Make your request. What can I do for you before I am taken from you?' Elisha answered, 'Let me inherit a double share of your spirit.' 'Your request is a difficult one' Elijah said. 'If you see me while I am being taken from you, it shall be as you ask; if not, it will not be so.' Now as they walked on, talking as they went, a chariot of fire appeared and horses of fire, coming between the two of them; and Elijah went up to heaven in the whirlwind. Elisha saw it, and shouted, 'My father! My father! Chariot of Israel and its chargers!' Then he lost sight of him, and taking hold of his clothes he tore them in half. He picked up the cloak of Elijah which had fallen, and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan.

He took the cloak of Elijah and struck the water. 'Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah?' he cried. He struck the water, and it divided to right and left, and Elisha crossed over.

**Gospel Acclamation****cf.Col3:16a,17**

Alleluia, alleluia!

Let the message of Christ, in all its richness,  
find a home with you;

through him give thanks to God the Father.

Alleluia!

**Gospel****Matthew 6:1-6,16-18****Your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you**

Jesus said to his disciples: 'Be careful not to parade your good deeds before men to attract their notice; by doing this you will lose all reward from your Father in heaven. So when you give alms, do not have it trumpeted before you; this is what the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets to win men's admiration. I tell you solemnly, they have had their reward. But when you give alms, your left hand must not know what your right is doing; your almsgiving must be secret, and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you.

'And when you pray, do not imitate the hypocrites: they love to say their prayers standing up in the synagogues and at the street corners for people to see them; I tell you solemnly, they have had their reward. But when you pray, go to your private room and, when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in that secret place, and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you.

'When you fast do not put on a gloomy look as the hypocrites do: they pull long faces to let men know they are fasting. I tell you solemnly, they have had their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that no one will know you are fasting except your Father who sees all that is done in secret; and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you.'

**Fr Tim's Reflection**

We use the phrase "to take up someone's mantle" to mean – to continue the work that someone else has done, but in the same spirit, bringing about continuity. The first reading today is the origin of that phrase. Elisha is the disciple of Elijah and he has learnt a lot from his master. As Elijah zooms off into heaven in his fiery chariot, his cloak falls to the ground, and Elisha his servant picks it up. This mantle Elijah has just used to make a dry path through the middle of the river, recalling Moses parting the Red Sea. So inheriting that cloak is a great prize.

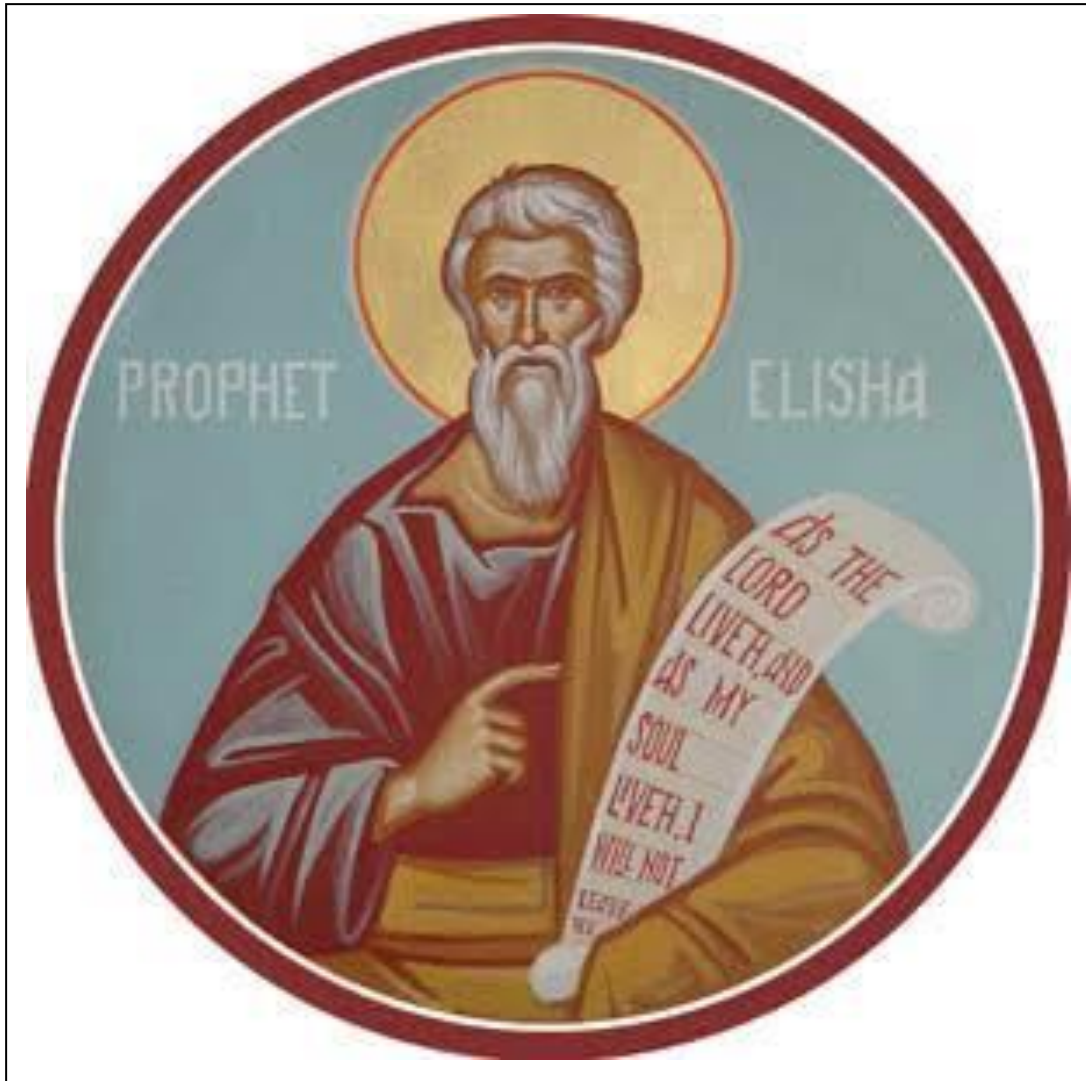
When Elijah asks Elisha what he would like, Elisha asks for a double portion of his master's spirit. Perhaps he does not realise what he is asking for. Elisha does not take his eyes off Elijah as he disappears into heaven, and this indicates that his wish will be granted.

The gospel is the one we hear on Ash Wednesday about doing good works, praying and fasting. Jesus is teaching us about the value of these activities as part of our spiritual armoury, but they are part of our personal relationship with the Father in heaven. Those who like to parade their good deeds before others have "lost their reward". In fact, we should go as far as to disguise what it is we are doing, to put others off the scent as it were.

During lockdown we have had plenty of time to deepen our relationship with the Father. From our own homes we have been able to do good for others, we have been able to pray and, if we choose to do so, we have been able to fast. Ideal settings as those outside our household have no idea that we are doing these things. However, we don't do it just so that the Father will be pleased with us. In our good works, prayer and fasting we discover who we are at a deeper level. We unmask our own identity. We can be the person God has lovingly made us to be.

# Eleventh Week in Ordinary Time

## Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> June



### First reading

Ecclesiasticus 48:1-15

#### The spirit of Elijah fills Elisha

The prophet Elijah arose like a fire,  
his word flaring like a torch.  
It was he who brought famine on the people,  
and who decimated them in his zeal.  
By the word of the Lord, he shut up the heavens,  
he also, three times, brought down fire.  
How glorious you were in your miracles, Elijah!  
Has anyone reason to boast as you have? –  
rousing a corpse from death,  
from Sheol by the word of the Most High;  
dragging kings down to destruction,  
and high dignitaries from their beds;

hearing reproof on Sinai,  
and decrees of punishment on Horeb;  
anointing kings as avengers,  
and prophets to succeed you;  
taken up in the whirlwind of fire,  
in a chariot with fiery horses;  
designated in the prophecies of doom  
to allay God's wrath before the fury breaks,  
*to turn the hearts of fathers towards their children,*  
and to restore the tribes of Jacob,  
Happy shall they be who see you,  
and those who have fallen asleep in love;  
for we too will have life.  
Elijah was shrouded in the whirlwind,  
and Elisha was filled with his spirit;  
throughout his life no ruler could shake him,  
and no one could subdue him.  
No task was too hard for him,  
and even in death his body prophesied.  
In his lifetime he performed wonders,  
and in death his works were marvellous.

### **Responsorial Psalm**

**Psalm 96(97):1-7**

### **Gospel Acclamation**

**1S3:9, Jn6:68**

Alleluia, alleluia!  
Speak, Lord, your servant is listening:  
you have the message of eternal life.  
Alleluia!

### **Gospel**

**Matthew 6:7-15**

#### **How to pray**

Jesus said to his disciples: 'In your prayers do not babble as the pagans do, for they think that by using many words they will make themselves heard. Do not be like them; your Father knows what you need before you ask him. So you should pray like this:

'Our Father in heaven,  
may your name be held holy,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts, as we have forgiven those who are in debt to us.

And do not put us to the test,  
but save us from the evil one.

'Yes, if you forgive others their failings, your heavenly Father will forgive you yours; but if you do not forgive others, your Father will not forgive your failings either.'

### **Fr Tim's Reflection**

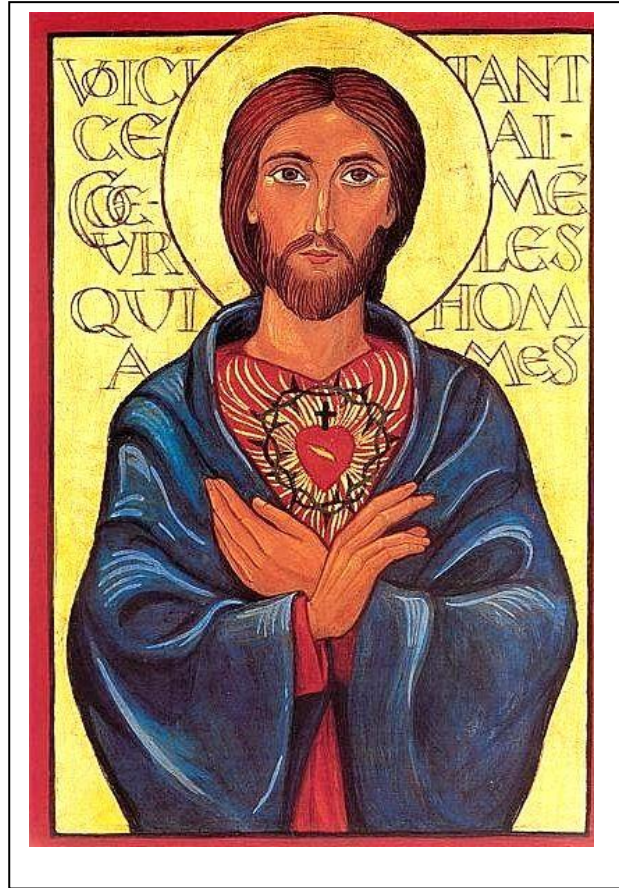
The readings today are about prayers answered. Elisha had prayed for a double portion of Elijah's spirit, which he receives. The gospel is Jesus teaching the disciples how to pray with the words of the Our Father. Each day the words that we pray come true. We do receive our daily bread; our sins are forgiven; we learn to forgive others and God's kingdom is built up. Today we can acknowledge the fact that God does indeed listen to our prayers.



# Eleventh Week in Ordinary Time

## Friday 19<sup>th</sup> June

### Feast of the Sacred Heart



#### First reading

Deuteronomy 7:6-11

#### **The Lord set his heart on you and chose you**

Moses said to the people: 'You are a people consecrated to the Lord your God; it is you that the Lord our God has chosen to be his very own people out of all the peoples on the earth.

'If the Lord set his heart on you and chose you, it was not because you outnumbered other peoples: you were the least of all peoples. It was for love of you and to keep the oath he swore to your fathers that the Lord brought you out with his mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know then that the Lord your God is God indeed, the faithful God who is true to his covenant and his graciousness for a thousand generations towards those who love him and keep his commandments, but who punishes in their own persons those that hate him. He is not slow to destroy the man who hates him; he makes him work out his punishment in person. You are therefore to keep and observe the commandments and statutes and ordinances that I lay down for you today.'

#### Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 102(103):1-4,6-8,10

#### Second reading

1 John 4:7-16

#### **Let us love one another, since love comes from God**

My dear people,  
let us love one another  
since love comes from God

and everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God.  
Anyone who fails to love can never have known God,  
because God is love.  
God's love for us was revealed  
when God sent into the world his only Son  
so that we could have life through him;  
this is the love I mean:  
not our love for God,  
but God's love for us when he sent his Son  
to be the sacrifice that takes our sins away.  
My dear people,  
since God has loved us so much,  
we too should love one another.  
No one has ever seen God;  
but as long as we love one another  
God will live in us  
and his love will be complete in us.  
We can know that we are living in him  
and he is living in us  
because he lets us share his Spirit.  
We ourselves saw and we testify  
that the Father sent his Son  
as saviour of the world.  
If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God,  
God lives in him, and he in God.  
We ourselves have known and put our faith in  
God's love towards ourselves.  
God is love  
and anyone who lives in love lives in God,  
and God lives in him.

### **Gospel Acclamation**

**Mt11:29**

Alleluia, alleluia!  
Shoulder my yoke and learn from me,  
for I am gentle and humble in heart.  
Alleluia!

### **Gospel**

**Matthew 11:25-30**

#### **You have hidden these things from the wise and revealed them to little children**

Jesus exclaimed, 'I bless you, Father, Lord of heaven and of earth, for hiding these things from the learned and the clever and revealing them to mere children. Yes, Father, for that is what it pleased you to do. Everything has been entrusted to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, just as no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

'Come to me, all you who labour and are overburdened, and I will give you rest. Shoulder my yoke and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Yes, my yoke is easy and my burden light.'

### **Celebrating the Sacred Heart feast day at home**

If you can, gather for prayer today around an image of the Sacred Heart. This feast day teaches us that when Christ loves he loves both as a man and as God. Think of the ways you have experienced his loving care. How have I tried to love him in return?