



GOSPEL GOSSIP

Jesus laments over Jerusalem

St Luke 13. 31-35

Sunday 16 March

Perhaps amongst the things that cause hurt are the wasting of potential and unrequited love. In this passage from St Luke's gospel set for this second Sunday in Lent, Jesus shows his hurt for both these things as he weeps over Jerusalem, the place of his nemesis. Jerusalem, that unique place in the Jewish faith, where the Ark of the Covenant was housed in the magnificent Temple complex; whose walls contain the now-blocked Lion Gate through which the Messiah would enter.

Jerusalem had so much to offer as a spiritual powerhouse and the capital of Israel. It was there that the good and the great alike would go on pilgrimage at the times prescribed by the Law, seeking the reassurance of the presence of God, who had made his dwelling place there, offering sacrifices to ensure his continuing favour to them. It was the civil and spiritual heart of the nation. But it, representative of Israel, would reject the One who was to come.

- Is God's presence in your lives a right or a privilege?
- Do you recognise God's goodness to you, in the favour he has shown you?
- Are you thankful to God, or overlook his presence?
- Have you experienced love which is not returned?
- Can you believe that God can weep for you – and why should he?

Through the Old Covenant, the Law, God had declared that he would be with his people and make them more numerous than could be imagined. He showed his love for them by making this covenant, symbolised by the tablets of stone contained in the Ark in the Temple's innermost sanctum. Repeatedly, God had recalled his people to the promise he had made them, but still they only paid lip-service at best, especially when life was good.

Yet God is not a vengeful lover. Despite the fact that he is continually rejected, his love never fails. In his love, he makes a New Covenant in the person and works of Jesus, a covenant that would seem initially to be rejected. It is for the sheer folly and ignorance of the people, Jerusalem, that Jesus weeps. Jerusalem had taken on a life and an existence of its own, one that was increasingly devoid of God.

- In what ways do you reject God's covenant?
- How central is your faith in your lives?
- Do you fully appreciate that it was out of love that Jesus was born, lived and died?
- Would you continue to love someone who rejected you?
- If push came to shove, if you were faced with Jesus' challenges (and knowledge) would you turn to, or away from, Jerusalem?

This passage is unusual in that Jesus' emotions are laid bare. His one-ness with humanity is intensified by the suffering it is undergoing, a suffering which he was to enter fully. Yet the tears are not crocodile tears, they are not tears of self-pity: they are tears for us, for you and me, whoever we are, and wherever we may be.