



**COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION**  
**SUNDAY 22 AUGUST 2021 – 12<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity**

Almighty and everlasting God,  
you are always more ready to hear than we to pray  
and to give more than either we desire or deserve:  
pour down upon us the abundance of your mercy,  
forgiving us those things of which our conscience is afraid  
and giving us those good things which we are not worthy to ask  
but through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who lives and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

*Psalm 84*

- 1 How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts! ♦  
My soul has a desire and longing to enter the courts of the Lord;  
my heart and my flesh rejoice in the living God.
- 2 The sparrow has found her a house  
and the swallow a nest where she may lay her young: ♦  
at your altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God.
- 3 Blessed are they who dwell in your house: ♦  
they will always be praising you.
- 4 Blessed are those whose strength is in you, ♦  
in whose heart are the highways to Zion,
- 5 Who going through the barren valley find there a spring, ♦  
and the early rains will clothe it with blessing.
- 6 They will go from strength to strength ♦  
and appear before God in Zion.
- 7 O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer; ♦  
listen, O God of Jacob.
- 8 Behold our defender, O God, ♦  
and look upon the face of your anointed.
- 9 For one day in your courts ♦  
is better than a thousand.
- 10 I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God ♦  
than dwell in the tents of ungodliness.
- 11 For the Lord God is both sun and shield; he will give grace and glory; ♦  
no good thing shall the Lord withhold from those who walk with integrity.
- 12 O Lord God of hosts, ♦  
blessed are those who put their trust in you.  
Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, ♦  
as it was in the beginning, is now and shall be for ever. Amen.

## *Ephesians 6.10-20*

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. Put on the whole armour of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armour of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints. Pray also for me, so that when I speak, a message may be given to me to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it boldly, as I must speak.

## *John 6.56-69*

Jesus said, 'Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. 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 for ever.' He said these things while he was teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum.

When many of his disciples heard it, they said, 'This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?' But Jesus, being aware that his disciples were complaining about it, said to them, 'Does this offend you? Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh is useless. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But among you there are some who do not believe.' For Jesus knew from the first who were the ones that did not believe, and who was the one that would betray him. And he said, 'For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted by the Father.'

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.'

### **Reflection from Peter**

I visited friends recently who have a number of suits of armour dotted around – those impressive body suits, wonderfully polished, but no helmets. A friend of theirs, knowing how much they would

like to have helmets for their armour, went and found some appropriate ones. When they were away, because he had a key, he went in and added a helmet to each suit. He didn't say anything, guessing they wouldn't notice. It took nearly a month before someone said, "Where did those helmets come from?" There's no doubt that medieval armour was as much constructed for its appearance as for its utility. We have firmly in mind the story of David taking on Goliath. First he was fitted out with armour, but found he couldn't move freely – and took it off, preferring to trust in God and take just a sling and some smooth stones. The letter to the Ephesians talks about Christians putting on the whole armour of God – but this armour doesn't weigh anything – the belt of truth and the breastplate of righteousness and the helmet of salvation. This armour is not for show, but we could be forgiven for doubting its strength: what good is a breastplate of righteousness against an angry mob?

Similarly, in our Gospel reading, the bread of life that Jesus gives is not a five course meal: it is, simply, bread. But "the one who eats this bread will live for ever," says Jesus. No wonder the disciples say, "This teaching is difficult: who can accept it?" Yet we don't need to stop and think for long: just as we have every sympathy with David who rejected the suit of armour and trusted that God would be with him, so we know deep within ourselves that truth and righteousness and salvation are not just slogans or trinkets. Rather, they are what really matters. And in the same way, we reach out our hands in the Eucharist for the bread of life – knowing that this fragment of bread, this dry wafer, is indeed, by God's own gift and grace, the food of eternal life.