

## Epiphany 4 Septuagesima 2021 (31<sup>st</sup> January)

9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton	Deuteronomy 18 vv 15-20 p197
11.00 Holy Communion Halling	Revelation 12 vv 1-5 p1241 Mark 1 vv 21-28 p1002

**O** LORD, we beseech thee favourably to hear the prayers of thy people; that we, who are justly punished for our offences, may be mercifully delivered by thy goodness, for the glory of thy Name; through Jesus Christ our Saviour, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. *Amen.*

Psalm 111<sup>10</sup>: *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have they that do thereafter; the praise of it endureth for ever.*

The LORD set the people of Israel free from slavery in Egypt. God subjected the Egyptians to ten plagues and at last they let them go. When the Egyptians changed their minds and sent an army to recapture the departing slaves, God divided the waters of the Red Sea so that His people could pass through to freedom and the Egyptians who pursued them were drowned. God then brought Israel to Mt Sinai where Moses ascended to the peak to speak with God. The LORD gave Moses the Ten Commandments inscribed on two tablets of stone. God announced these commandments in a voice which the people waiting at the foot of the mountain could hear. They were filled with awe and fear and their leaders begged Moses to act as an intermediary between them and God. It was too much for them to hear the very voice of God themselves. They promised that they would hear and obey God's commandments. Moses records (Deuteronomy 5): <sup>28</sup> *And the Lord heard the voice of your words, when ye spake unto me; and the Lord said unto me, I have heard the voice of the words of this people, which they have spoken unto thee: they have well said all that they have spoken.* <sup>29</sup> *O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!*

After this, the people remained in their tents with the flocks and herds at the foot of the mountain and Moses returned into the Presence of God on the mountain peak to receive the rest of the Law. Moses was God's spokesman. He received God's Word from God Himself and declared that Word to the people. But what would happen when Moses died? How would God speak to His people then? In today's OT lesson, Moses informs the people of the provision which God is making in order to ensure that the people will continue to have access to His Word. *I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.* And so it happened. Down through the ages, in the succeeding centuries, God sent prophets to proclaim the Word of the LORD to the people. Sometimes they heeded the Word. All too often they did not. But God remains faithful even when His people are faithless.

After many centuries, God's Word is made flesh in Jesus Christ. He is both the fulfilment of all that has gone before, the promises and the hopes, and a new beginning. He says: *Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.*

(Matthew 5<sup>17</sup>). In today's Gospel reading, the people of Capernaum are astonished, when Jesus casts out the demon. *And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying. What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth he the unclean spirits, and they do obey him.* Christ is the power and wisdom of God.

The Revelation reading is complex. A woman bears a child. A dragon seeks to destroy her son. The child is taken up to the Throne of God. Thoughts that come to mind are Mary bearing Jesus only to have Herod try to kill Him; Mary bearing Jesus and Him being crucified 33 years later at Calvary and afterwards rising from the dead and ascending into Heaven; Eve being mother to the human race which comes under sentence of death when deceived by the serpent, but is redeemed in Christ; holy Mother Church begetting sons and daughters through evangelism, only too often to see them persecuted as their Master too was persecuted, but who also have an eternal home prepared for them in Heaven, a joy which no one can take away.

Jesus is the Word, the wisdom and the power of God. He fulfils the Law. Jesus is the new Moses proclaiming God's law of love both in word and deed. He is the prophet Who was to come, the One Who speaks the Word of God. Jesus is our intermediary. He is our mediator and advocate. He stands in the heavenly Presence on our behalf. He is the messenger Who brings God's Word to us. He elevates us into the awesome Presence of God.

S Paul says (II Corinthians 4): *<sup>6</sup> For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. <sup>7</sup> But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.* Pottery is fragile. It breaks easily. Like us, pottery is made of clay. We are earthen vessels to contain the Word of God. How can we be filled to the brim with Jesus Christ? We can love Him. We can read His Word in the Bible. We can enjoy Him in Christian fellowship. We can ingest Him in the Sacrament. We can speak with Him in prayer. Filled with the Word of God, filled to overflowing, we become conduits of His grace. God's love fills us and flows through us out into the world.

*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have they that do thereafter; the praise of it endureth for ever.*