

REFLECTION FOR THURSDAY, 4th WEEK OF LENT

Exod 32:7-14 John 5:31-47

The greatest sign God gave the Israelites of his love for them was when he delivered them from slavery in Egypt. Sadly, as the First Reading shows, they quickly fell back into idolatry.

The emphasis here is on the thanklessness of God's people and on God's readiness to forgive and give them another chance.

We are constantly in the same situation. Let us be aware at this time of the countless gifts God has given us and continues to shower on us. At the same time, we know that when we fail, his mercy and compassion are there for us always. But let that compassion draw us closer to him and to Jesus, and so help us to leave behind every lack of love in our lives.

We might think that idolatry belongs to primitive peoples and to a bygone age. This is not so. Modern people have their idols too, and how they worship those idols. They may not get down on their knees before them or offer sacrifices to them, but they worship them in other ways.

Whenever anything takes the place God should occupy, then idolatry enters our life. Money is probably the most common idol today. But there are others – possessions, pleasure, success, fame, power... A life based on the worship of things is a life of idolatry.

What is enthroned in our heart becomes the substance of our desires and the object of our strivings. In short, it becomes our god. We worship what we love.

Idolatry leads at best to a superficial life, and at worst to a debased life. But the greatest harm idolatry does is that it causes us to forget the true God.

Jesus shows us who God is, and how we can keep him at the centre of our lives. God is not some remote and uncaring figure. God is our heavenly Father, who is close to us, and to whom we are important and precious.

We must strive to keep God at the centre of our hearts. And we must try to serve God with an undivided heart. Because only God can fill our empty hearts.

Fr Patrick