

Thoughts on the Daily Word

20th Week of Year. Saturday 22nd August. Readings: Ezekiel 43:1-7; Psalm: 84; Gospel: Matthew 23:1-12.

In the forty years of exile, probably a symbolic number corresponding to the Exodus, Ezekiel, prepares his people for a return. Highly unlikely if not impossible at this stage. Today's story of a temple rebuilt is an image or symbol of the people as a whole. It will carry the same symbolism in the much later book of Revelation which will again be a story bringing hope in the midst of suffering and persecution. Ezekiel is a priest as well as a prophet, so he combines the imagery of God returning to a restored temple with the earlier image of God leaving the temple as Jerusalem was destroyed. He sees the temple as the centre of the restored Jewish faith and people. We see something of this in the Gospel stories of Jesus prophesying the destruction of the temple and the three days of it being rebuilt, meaning that through the Resurrection he is now the Temple. The temple image is a focus of sacrifice and self-giving common to many nations at the time. Our similarities could be the Cenotaph and Westminster Abbey as a focus for the nation's life. In the Gospel Jesus puts himself as that focus. His community would be based on brotherhood and self-sacrifice for each other.