

Thoughts on the Daily Word

25th Week of Year. Saturday 27th September. Readings: Zechariah 2:5-9,14-15; Psalm: Jeremiah 31:10-12,13; Luke 9:43-49.

This is the fascinating time of the rebuilding of Israel. Physically it is the return of the exiles from Babylon. It is good to remember that these were the important people who were taken off to exile by the Babylonians, the people left behind were mainly the poor and uneducated. These exiles would appear to have thrived and most did not want to return. It was a remnant that returned under the encouragement of the prophets like the later Isaiah. Those who had remained in the land probably had a simpler form of faith while the exiles had engaged with the wider world which had challenged their faith. What they brought back was based more on the Law and ritual practices that marked them out and protected their religious heritage. It was a defensive strategy that nevertheless was a product of engaging with a cosmopolitan world. The return did not change this challenge. The returnees were not welcome when they began to rebuild Jerusalem. It was a remarkable story that forged a new form of Judaism. The new walls that had to be built were practical defences but were also social and religious. Zechariah challenges the defensive model somewhat in his apocalyptic visions. That is what he is about, renewing the vision of a world transformed. Jesus is preparing his disciples for the same challenges that will come to him and to them.