

Thoughts on the Daily Word

Saturday after Ash Wednesday. Saturday 8th March. Readings: Isaiah 58:9-14; Psalm: 85; Luke 5:27-32.

In this part of Isaiah there is hope for the future as a small party of Israelites leave exile and return to rebuild Jerusalem. This is quite an amazing event. The standing policy of most empires was to divide and conquer. Moving subject peoples and placing them in slavery. There was a remarkable similarity with the policy of Stalin in the Soviet Union. This Israelite story seems to flow from the overthrow of the Babylonian Empire by Cyrus the Persian. For some strange reason he allows a number of Israelites to return home to their ruined city. Certainly, a miracle, especially as only a few make the journey. Most Jews had made their homes in foreign lands and were not risking the prophetic words in what looked like a futile enterprise. The inhabitants of Judah did not want these people returning to reclaim their land. Some historians think that those who had remained were the poor, it was the elite who were dragged into exile, they were not wanted back. The Gospel possibly goes back to that ancient tradition by choosing the poor and outcast rather than the rich elite. It will be the elite of Jerusalem who will crucify Jesus. As Jesus seeks to rebuild the kingdom it is to the poor or outcast to whom he turns.