

THE FIRST READING IS FROM THE BOOK OF
EXODUS

In those days: The people of Israel came into the wilderness of Sinai, and they encamped in the wilderness. There Israel encamped before the mountain, while Moses went up to God. The LORD called to him out of the mountain, saying, ‘Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel: “You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”’

The word of the Lord

THE RESPONSE TO THE PSALM IS

We are his people, the sheep of his flock.

Cry out with joy to the LORD, all the earth.

Serve the LORD with gladness.

Come before him, singing for joy.

We are his people, the sheep of his flock.

Know that he, the LORD, is God.

He made us; we belong to him.

We are his people, the sheep of his flock.

We are his people, the sheep of his flock.

Indeed, how good is the LORD,
eternal his merciful love.

He is faithful from age to age.

We are his people, the sheep of his flock.

THE SECOND READING IS FROM THE LETTER OF ST
PAUL TO THE ROMANS 5:6-11

Brothers and Sisters: While we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person — though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die — but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

THE GOSPEL ACCLAMATION.

Alleluia, alleluia.

The kingdom of God is at hand;
repent and believe in the gospel.

Alleluia.

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING
TO MATTHEW

At that time: When Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest.’

And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction. The names of the twelve Apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them, ‘Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And proclaim as you go, saying, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without paying; give without pay.’

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS

My younger brother is called Andrew, Andy to his friends, Ajay while he was at Wimbledon College, and at the Ursuline where he studied drama, the first boy to be there. Andy is a calm and respected organiser of people as are his sons; Sam took some brilliant pictures of St Mary's school. My parents admitted there was no good reason why they chose those names, if we kept to family tradition there were 3 Yorkshire Harrys and one London Harry among our ancestors. But by reading the bible there was a co-incidence, that maybe they had got it right.

Simon Peter is headstrong, noisy, self-willed, and given the role of a leader, Andrew is a calm and respected organiser of people. Andrew the Apostle was a generous hearted, open-minded man, introducing Simon Peter to Jesus. The disciples were a varied bunch, James and John fishermen too, in their father's business.

Matthew had the most to lose, giving up being a tax collector meant he lost a reliable if disreputable income. He would have been literate and numerate, able to handle and obtain money. James, the lesser one, was a relative of Jesus and calmly organised the Church at Jerusalem as the others and Paul went through modern Syria, Turkey and Greece, bringing the Good News.

The other Simon was more accurately called the zealous, he was not one of the terrorist groups called the zealots, instead it was a compliment to his enthusiasm and engagement with the Jewish law and then giving his wholehearted support to Jesus. Thomas was also outspoken, asking difficult questions which Jesus always respected and answered fully in word and action. Philip, Bartholomew, and Thaddeus were chosen for Jesus' good reasons. They probably did a good job spreading Christianity east of Jerusalem before Islam changed the middle East. Judas is the problem, was he really evil through and through? Perhaps he did share the fear of Caiaphas that Jesus, the popular, charismatic leader would bring too much trouble to

the Jewish people from the Romans ruled by the uncertain Pontius Pilate.

The apostles are a real group of people, each one of them had a part in God's plan as each one of us does. Some will be obviously influential; others a quiet and sincere witness who had a deep if unnoticed influence.