



of the pandemic, as transport options became more limited, many of us found ourselves walking more frequently around our local areas, our cities and towns. The splendour of buildings and monuments, the grime and tatter of urban life, the wonder of safe movement across a crowded space: all can speak to us of our human condition, of our relationship with our Creator God, of our participation in the community of Christ's body. And pondering these things prayerfully can move us to deeper understanding, or even to action.

There is a wooded area close to my hermitage. It is often littered – a source of some irritation until I began to look more closely. Much of the litter was dropped by youngsters walking between an overcrowded, impoverished housing estate and the local school. The estate itself is often littered because the regular refuse services are not sufficient to service such large families in so many small houses. So these youngsters have grown up in a culture where litter is so normal that it is effectively invisible to them. With that understanding, it was possible to be more empathetic, and even to do something (litter picking) to make this little zone of their day litter-free.

WONDER AND FASCINATION

Jesus tells us in today's Gospel to welcome the children; to welcome the ones who look with wonder and fascination at the world they encounter and ponder each day. It is a gift they can share with us, and no less sacred than the words of scripture which we ponder so deeply.

For more information on the Season of Creation: <https://seasonofcreation.org>

Mass text

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

I am the salvation of the people, says the Lord. Should they cry to me in any distress, I will hear them, and I will be their Lord for ever.

FIRST READING Wisdom 2:12. 17-20

PSALM Psalm 53

RESPONSE The Lord upholds my life.

1. **O God, save me by your name; by your power, uphold my cause. O God, hear my prayer; listen to the words of my mouth. R.**
2. **For proud men have risen against me, ruthless men seek my life. They have no regard for God. R.**
3. **But I have God for my help. The Lord upholds my life. I will sacrifice to you with willing heart and praise your name for it is good. R.**

SECOND READING James 3:16 – 4:3

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia! Through the Good News God called us to share the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Alleluia!

GOSPEL Mark 9:30-37

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

I am the Good Shepherd, says the Lord; I know my sheep, and mine know me.

Next Sunday's Readings:

Numbers 11:25-29
James 5:1-6
Mark 9:38-43. 45. 47-48

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AMBULATIO



Lectio Divina – divine reading – is the name given to the practice of sitting prayerfully with scriptural phrases and letting them wash over us, permeate our thinking, speak to us in a deeply personal way.

There is much written about *Lectio*, but God speaks to us in many ways, not just through words. During the Covid-19 lockdown when I found myself too restless to sit quietly, I was fortunate to be able to walk in my garden instead. *Ambulatio Divina*, divine walking if you like, is practised in the same repetitive way as *Lectio*: repeated steps,

a repeated short path, back and forth, engaging all the senses as the smells, sights, sounds, touch of this microcosm of God's creation are attended upon. Occasionally (as in the phrases of *Lectio*), my focus might be reeled in by a glisten, a rustle, a leaf of extraordinary, polished, sculptural form; a wind-blown rose losing its petals; a pigeon flying off from the birdbath, and the wonder when she finally has the courage to wait there and let me pass. God speaks to us through the gifts of creation.

St Bede tells this story of St Cuthbert: "One day some ravens were seen tearing the straw from the roof. Cuthbert told them to leave the monk's property alone: 'In the name of Jesus Christ, depart forthwith!' he shouted. They flew off shamefacedly almost before he had finished speaking. Three days later one of them returned, and stood before him with feathers outspread and head bowed low to its feet, humbly asking pardon. When Cuthbert realised what it meant, he gave permission for them all to return. Back they came with a fitting gift – a lump of pig's lard. The birds stayed on the island many years to set men a good example of reform."

St Bede adds wryly: "Let no one think it ridiculous to learn a lesson in virtue from birds!"

God's revelations to us through creation are not limited to the delights and drama of the natural world. During the early days

Season of Creation



During September we celebrate the Season of Creation, "a time to renew our relationship with our Creator and all creation through celebration, conversion, and commitment together". Rachel Denton is a canonical hermit and has written these pieces from her urban hermitage, which is dedicated to St Cuthbert.

19 SEPTEMBER 2021

25TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

YEAR B

DIVINE OFFICE WEEK I