

PREGO PLUS: BACKGROUND NOTES
FIFTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, YEAR C

Second Reading Colossians 1: 12–20

Colossae was a city in present-day South West Turkey. Although there was a large Jewish population, it seems most of the new Christians were Gentiles. The local economy revolved around wool and textiles.

This letter was originally accepted as one of the letters truly written by St Paul, but since the nineteenth century, scholars have begun to doubt this for reasons of language, style and theological ideas. It is now thought by most exegetes to have been written by someone familiar with the Pauline tradition towards the end of the first century AD. At that time, writing in the name of an important and respected author was accepted as a way of rendering him homage.

The main purpose of the letter is to provide encouragement and support to the Christians of Colossae, often persecuted and suffering for their faith. The author also wants to correct errors of beliefs which have been reported to him (see Colossians 2).



The verses we are praying today constitute a Christological hymn. (See also Philippians 2: 6–11, or Ephesians 1: 3–14 for similar hymns.)

A good number of scholars think that it is the adaptation of a pre-existing text. The main theme is the role of Christ. Christ is seen as:

- ◆ the one who has dominion over all creation;
- ◆ the head – that is, according to Greek thought, the very source of life – of the Church (i.e. all of us who are the Body of the Risen Christ);
- ◆ the one who reconciles us to God.

Sin had alienated all creation from God. Through Jesus Christ who 'made peace by his death on the cross', we are given direct access to God.

Gospel Luke 10: 25–37 The Parable of the Good Samaritan

This episode follows last week's commissioning of the seventy-two disciples. It is only to be found in Luke's Gospel

There was a lawyer ...

As the name implies he is a specialist in the Law. In other stories, such people are often called Scribes.

What is written in the Law?

The answer the man gives is first of all, the traditional Jewish prayer called the 'Shema', which observant Jews to this day recite twice a day (Deuteronomy 6:5), followed by a quote from Leviticus concerning the love of one's neighbour (Leviticus 19: 18). They are two well known texts, but until now not usually quoted together.

A man was once on his way down from Jerusalem to Jericho

This is a distance of about 17 miles through very inhospitable, bandit-infested, treacherous country. There is a steep change in altitude too (from 2500 feet to 800ft below sea level). Travelling Jews would often take a longer route through Transjordan (literally, 'the other side of the river') to avoid this area.

A priest ... and a Levite were travelling on the same road.

These two men, one a religious leader, the other an assistant in the Temple, keep to the strict letter of the Law. They would have been defiled had they touched the wounded man.

A Samaritan traveller ... was moved with compassion.

John in his Gospel simply tells us 'Jews do not associate with Samaritans' (John 4: 9). This is something of an understatement. Orthodox Jews considered them heretical and unclean. They did follow the Pentateuch but had intermarried with the local population and considered the main centre of their faith to be Mt Gerizim and not Jerusalem.

In this instance the Samaritan follows the spirit rather than the letter of the Law.

He poured oil and wine on his wounds

These were commonly used as medication at the time, often blended together as an ointment.

He took out two denarii

This represents about two day's wages for a worker at that time.

Which of these three proved himself a neighbour ?

This question is Jesus's answer to the lawyer's original query 'Who is my neighbour?' A 'neighbour' is not defined by location or by belonging to a particular group of people, but by our actions.



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IN THE DIOCESE OF WREXHAM