

Commentary for November

Wisdom 11:22 – 12:2

There are several very beautiful passages in the Bible, and this reading is right up there with the best. The basic message is that although God is so great that the whole world seems insignificant, He loves everything that He has created, no matter how small, even when they offend Him. He has not created anything in order to destroy it, but so that it may have life.

The Book of Wisdom was the last of the Old Testament books to be written, and it was probably only completed a few decades before Our Lord was born. It contains a long homily about the central event of Old Testament faith – the Exodus, when God brought His people out of slavery in Egypt with great signs and wonders. He saved the people who were faithful to Him and punished those who were against Him. But there is an obvious question once you have said this: if God is all-powerful, and the Egyptians were baddies, oppressing His people, why did He not simply wipe them off the face of the earth?

That is the context of this month's reading for our meditation. Why does God allow the wicked to survive? The answer that it gives tells us something important about God. God did not destroy the Egyptians because He wanted them to repent. He certainly punished them severely because of His people, but nevertheless He wants them to turn to Him eventually.

This is quite a development in Old Testament thought, and there is no clearer expression of God's love for all His creation anywhere in the Old Testament. It is not just the righteous members of the House of Israel who can hope for God's love, but everyone, even those outside the Chosen People and those who oppose God, will be gradually led back to Him when they hear His admonitions. This shows a growing realisation in the Old Testament of God's universal love and presence. It prepares the way for the complete revelation of God's goodness in Jesus Christ whom we acclaim at the end of this month as Universal King.