**LECTIONARY FOR THE WEEK**

**FROM SEXAGESIMA TO QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY**

**Feb. 20 THROUGH Feb. 27**

Feb. 20, Sunday (2nd before Lent, commonly called Sexagesima)

1st Lesson Gen. 3 Gen. 6: 5--end

2nd Lesson Mark 9: 33—end Luke 17: 20—end

Feb. 21, Monday

1st Lesson Gen. 17: 1–22 Gen. 18

2nd Lesson Mstt. 19: 16–20: 16 Romans 7

Feb. 22, Tuesday

1st Lesson Gen. 19: 1–29 Gen. 21

2nd Lesson Matt. 20:17—end Romans 8: 1--17

Feb. 23 Wednesday

1st Lesson Gen. 22: 1--19 Isaiah 22: 15--22

2nd Lesson Matt. 21:1--22 John 15: 1--16

Feb. 24, Thursday (St. Matthias’ Day)

1st Lesson 1 Samuel 2 27–35 1 Samuel 16: 1--13

2nd Lesson Matthew 7: 15–27 Acts 20: 17--35

Feb. 25, Friday (Day of Abstinence)

1st Lesson Gen. 25: 7–11, 19-end Gen. 26: 1–5, 17-end

2nd Lesson Matt. 22: 1–33 Romans 10

Feb. 26, Saturday

1st Lesson Gen. 27: 1--40 Gen. 27: 41-end & 28

2nd Lesson Matt. 22: 34–23: 12 Romans 11

Feb. 27 Sunday next before Lent, commonly called Quinquagesima

1st Lesson Gen. 12: 1–8 Gen. 13

2nd Lesson Matt. 5: 1–16 Luke 10:25--37

**SEXAGESIMA**

These Pre-Lenten Sundays have unusually distinctive Collects. And in case you are not familiar with the term *Collect*, this word is the name for brief prayers which sum up or “collect” the private petitions of God's people; that is why there is or should be a slight pause between “Let us pray” and the Collect itself, to allow for the people to pray silently for a moment.

On Septuagesima and Sexagesima, the proper collects strike a solemn, almost sad, tone. Today we pray to be “defended from all adversity.” Last Sunday, we acknowledged that such “adversity” sometimes comes as the “just punishment for our offences.” These two prayers (BCP pages 118 and 120) might well be read together as examples of authentic Christian prayer. Those who learn to pray this way are not instructing God, giving Him good advice, sharing information, or even telling Him how they feel or what they want. They are simply asking to be defended against all adversity and mercifully delivered by God's goodness.

These two collects are among the most ancient prayers in the Prayer Book. They seem to have been composed in the Sixth Century A. D., just after the fall of the Roman empire, at the time when heathen barbarians from northern Europe were moving aggressively into Italy, leaving disaster and destruction in their wake. Whereas the Church had enjoyed a measure of safety and security in the last days of the Roman empire, now the world seemed to be collapsing. It was a perilous time, marked by pestilence, famine and earthquake. “Adversity” was not just a word.

The parallels between that period and our own are striking. Like the Roman Christians of the Sixth Century, we also perceive that our inherited world order may well be slipping away. But here is the great difference: whereas the Christian community of the early Dark Ages understood matters in solidly Biblical terms of God's just judgment on a sinful world, modern Christians seem to have a knack for making excuses and finding others to blame. We point to the liberals (both religious and political), we denounce the secular culture, we find fault with almost everyone and everything other than ourselves.

The Scripture tells us that Divine judgment begins with the house of God. We are not here to play; the service of God is serious business. We know what God will do with the wicked, but what is in store for the shallow and superficial? Are you ready for Lent? LKW