

Sunday Message

22ND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

THE WORD

Year A • 3 September 2023 • Psalter Week 2



DO

In today's Gospel, Jesus makes it very clear what being his follower entails. Think about your life and your priorities. Do you follow the way of the world or the way of Christ?

PRAY

It is so difficult to follow Jesus. Even Peter, the first pope, found it hard. In last Sunday's Gospel he is praised for correctly identifying who Jesus is; now Jesus rebukes him for opposing the cross. Pray for all members of the Church, and for all Christians, that we may constantly strive to follow Jesus to the best of our ability.

SAY

"Lord, help me to follow you faithfully. Give me the courage to take up my cross if I have to. Amen."

LEARN

To be a follower of Christ often means going against the values of the world we live in.

The Christian is one who puts God first – at whatever the cost.

In today's Gospel Jesus prepares his disciples for the ordeal he is about to face in Jerusalem. He tells them that he will suffer greatly and be put to death, and that he will be raised up on the third day.

The prediction is too much for his disciples. They are appalled by his words. Just a little earlier Peter had declared Jesus to be the Messiah. The Jews associated the Messiah with glory and power and victory, not suffering and failure and death. If Jesus is the Messiah, then he could not end up on a cross.

Peter points this out to Jesus. "Heaven preserve you, Lord," he says. "This must not happen to you." But Jesus turns on Peter and rebukes him in very harsh language: "Get behind me, Satan. You are an obstacle in my path."

Peter must have been shocked to the core by the violence of Jesus' response. Only a short while previously Jesus had told Peter that he would be the rock upon which he would build his Church; now Jesus tells him that he is a tool of Satan.

Peter failed to understand what Jesus' mission was about. For Jesus, the most important thing in the world was proclaiming the Good News of the kingdom. He knew that to do so would mean making enemies; that it would even cost him his life. But he knew too that he could not betray the will of his heavenly Father no matter what the price.

Jesus goes on to explain what being a follower of his really means. It is not about seeking earthly glory or material reward. It is about being willing to take up one's cross. It is about being willing to die to self, to risk everything, even to lose one's life, for the sake of the Gospel.

But he assures us that it is a price worth paying – for it will guarantee us the reward of eternal life. ■

REFLECT

We shouldn't be too hard on Peter. He couldn't understand why the Messiah had to suffer, why suffering would have to be part of the deal. Why would he?

None of us likes to have to face up to the reality of suffering. Our culture today is one that is big into pleasure and youthfulness and instant gratification. We want to enjoy the good life, to celebrate the body beautiful, to keep the ageing process at bay, to deny for as long

as we can the discomfiting fact that we are mortal.

Our society finds it very hard to have to deal with suffering and pain. We don't want anything that will inconvenience us, or upset us, or put us out. We don't want to have to confront pain or live with it. We find it particularly hard to see how anything good could come out of suffering.

Jesus does not see suffering as something good. In the garden of Gethsemane, he prayed to avoid it. But he knows that it is part of life, part of the human condition, and that to follow his way means having to take up one's cross. To give oneself for others always costs. But Jesus knows, too, that God is present with those who suffer, and that this knowledge gives us strength. The pain of Calvary is the prelude to the glory of Easter. ■

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I cry to you all the day long.
O Lord, you are good and forgiving,
full of mercy to all who call to you.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

COLLECT

God of might, giver of every good gift,
put into our hearts the love of your name,
so that, by deepening our sense of reverence,
you may nurture in us what is good
and, by your watchful care,
keep safe what you have nurtured.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of
the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING

Jeremiah 20:7-9

A reading from the prophet Jeremiah.
You have seduced me, Lord, and I have let
myself be seduced.
you have overpowered me: you were the
stronger.
I am a daily laughing-stock,
everybody's butt.
Each time I speak the word, I have to howl
and proclaim: 'Violence and ruin!'
The word of the Lord has meant for me
insult, derision, all day long.
I used to say, 'I will not think about him,
I will not speak in his name anymore.'
Then there seemed to be a fire burning in my
heart,
imprisoned in my bones.
The effort to restrain it wearied me,
I could not bear it.
The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 62

Response:

For you my soul is thirsting, O Lord my God.

1. O God, you are my God, for you I long.
for you my soul is thirsting.
My body pines for you
like a dry, weary land without water. (R.)

2. So, I gaze on you in the sanctuary
to see your strength and your glory.
For your love is better than life,
my lips will speak your praise. (R.)

3. So, I will bless you all my life,
in your name I will lift up my hands.
My soul shall be filled as with a banquet,
my mouth shall praise you with joy. (R.)

4. For you have been my help.
in the shadow of your wings, I rejoice.
My soul clings to you.
your right hand holds me fast. (R.)

SECOND READING

Romans 12:1-2

A reading from the letter of St. Paul to the Romans.

Think of God's mercy, my brothers, and worship him, I beg you, in a way that is worthy of thinking beings, by offering your living bodies as a holy sacrifice, truly pleasing to God. Do not model yourselves on the behaviour of the world around you, but let your behaviour change, modelled by your new mind. This is the only way to discover the will of God and know what is good, what it is that God wants, what is the perfect thing to do.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia! May the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ enlighten the eyes of our mind, so that we can see what hope his call holds for us. Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Matthew 16:21-27

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

Jesus began to make it clear to his disciples that he was destined to go to Jerusalem and suffer grievously at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, to be put to death and to be raised up on the third day. Then, taking him aside, Peter started to remonstrate with him. 'Heaven preserve you, Lord;' he said 'this must not happen to you.' But he turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle in my path, because the way you think is not God's way but man's.'

Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me. For anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for my sake will find it. What, then, will a man gain if he wins the whole world and ruins his life? Or what has a man to offer in exchange for his life?

'For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of his Father with his angels, and, when he does, he will reward each one according to his behaviour.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with
the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,

(all bow during the next three lines)

and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the
Virgin Mary,
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under
Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored
and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and
apostolic Church.
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness
of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the
dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

May this sacred offering, O Lord,
confer on us always the blessing of salvation,
that what it celebrates in mystery
it may accomplish in power.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

**How great is the goodness, Lord,
that you keep for those who fear you.**

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Renewed by this bread from the heavenly
table,
we beseech you, Lord,
that, being the food of charity,
it may confirm our hearts
and stir us to serve you in our neighbour.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.