

THE WORD

Year A • Psalter Week 2

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,
one 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 hold 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 any more."
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 this 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.

"The splendour of the rose and the whiteness of the lily
do not rob the little violet of its scent nor the daisy of its simple charm.
If every tiny flower wanted to be a rose,
spring would lose its loveliness."

St Thérèse of Lisieux



In today's Gospel Jesus prepares his disciples for the ordeal he is about to face in Jerusalem.

He tells them he will suffer greatly and be put to death, and that he will be raised up on the third day. The disciples are appalled. Just a little earlier Peter had declared Jesus to be the Messiah. In the Jewish mind the Messiah was associated with glory and victory, not suffering and death. If Jesus was the Messiah, he could not suffer and die.

Peter decides to point this out to Jesus. "Heaven preserve you, Lord," he says. "This must not happen to you." But Jesus turns on Peter and denounces him in harsh language: "Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle in my path." Peter must have been gobsmacked by the violence of Jesus' response. Only a short while before, Jesus had told Peter he would be the rock upon which he would build his Church; now Jesus tells him that what he has said belongs to the realm of Satan.

Without realising it, Peter was playing the role of Satan, tempting Jesus to follow the path of an earthly messiah, full of glory and prestige, rather than keep to his Father's plan. Peter failed to understand the mission of Jesus. For Jesus, the only thing that mattered was proclaiming the Good News of the kingdom. He knew that some would not like his message, and that it would ultimately cost him his life. But he knew too that if it came to a choice between saving his skin or being true to his Father, there was only one decision he could make. He could not betray God even if it meant saving his life because it would be death for him; he would no longer be united with God.

Jesus knew that fidelity to the Father would mean having to take up his cross, and that anyone who wished to follow him would have to take up his or her cross too. But he assures his disciples that it is a price worth paying – for it is the guarantee of eternal life. ■

REFLECT

The monks had a major decision to make. An Islamic insurgency was taking place in Algeria, and many lives were being lost. A community of French Trappists had lived in the monastery of Tibhirine for decades, in harmony with the local Muslim population. Now, their harmony was being disrupted, and the monks had to decide whether to get out of the country. They chose to remain. Despite the growing danger, and the death threats they faced, they decided to stand in solidarity with the townspeople. On the night of 26-27 March 1996, terrorists seized seven of the monks and took them away. Two months later, their bodies were discovered. They had given their lives out of love for God and God's people.

Like those Trappist monks, countless Christians have given their lives for the Gospel over the centuries. It's still happening. If anything, the numbers are

increasing. Remember Fr Jacques Hamel, the elderly French priest murdered in July 2016 while he celebrated Mass in a Normandy church. Or the image of a long line of young men kneeling in an arid desert, each with a sword-wielding executioner standing behind him. They were being martyred simply because they were Coptic Christians.

Martyrdom takes other forms, too. As Pope Francis states in *Gaudete et Exsultate*: "Persecutions are not a reality of the past, for today too we experience them, whether by the shedding of blood, as is the case with so many contemporary martyrs, or by more subtle means, by slander and lies. Jesus calls us blessed when people 'utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.' At other times, persecution can take the form of gibes that try to caricature our faith and make us seem ridiculous."

SAY

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

DO

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 Christians, that we may constantly strive to follow Jesus to the best of our ability.

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 cost.

In our modern society, to say you are a practising Catholic is to invite scorn. "Jesus himself warns us that the path he proposes goes against the flow, even making us challenge society by the way we live and, as a result, becoming a nuisance," writes Pope Francis. "He reminds us how many people have been, and still are, persecuted simply because they struggle for justice, because they take seriously their commitment to God and to others. Unless we wish to sink into an obscure mediocrity, let us not long for an easy life, for 'whoever would save his life will lose it.'"

"In living the Gospel, we cannot expect that everything will be easy, for the thirst for power and worldly interests often stands in our way," warns Francis. Risking all for the sake of the Gospel is a guarantee of the promise of heaven. ■