

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself.

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.

Breaking Open the Word



THE SAVING WORD

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME / A

3 SEPTEMBER 2023

CHALLENGES OF DISCIPLESHIP

As we listen to Jeremiah pouring his heart out to the Lord, it is not unusual for us to be somewhat embarrassed by his candour. It is as though we are eavesdropping on a very personal and private conversation between the suffering prophet and the God who has commissioned him. There is an enormous battle in the heart of Jeremiah as he wrestles with the message he must proclaim and the impact his preaching has on his own life.

Last week Peter was praised because he had come to understand that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God. Now he must learn what the consequences mean for Jesus and then for those who follow in his footsteps as disciples. His well-meaning attempt to protect Jesus is misguided and like Jeremiah, he must struggle to accept the paradoxical and costly ways of God.

The Christians of Rome are encouraged by Paul to continue with the struggle to live a life of faith in a world that did not share their values and vision. In a world where there were many temples, gods and sacrificial banquets, Paul goes to the heart of the matter when he calls for an offering of one's life as a living sacrifice to God.

All the readings for today converge in laying the challenge before us of not losing heart, even though at times the difficulties might seem beyond our strength. Making our own the mind of Christ is not easy, but then again, it never was.

Christopher Monaghan CP

FIRST READING

Jer 20:7-9

A reading from the prophet Jeremiah

The word of the Lord God has meant derision for me.

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 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.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Ps 62:2-6, 8-9. R. v. 2

R. My soul is thirsting for you, 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

Rom 12:1-2

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Romans

May you present your bodies as a living sacrifice.

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.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

cf. Eph 1:17, 18

Alleluia, alleluia! / May the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ / enlighten the eyes of our heart, / that we might see how great is the hope / to which we are called. / Alleluia!

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