

5 SEPTEMBER 2021 Sunday Message 23RD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Year B • Psalter Week 3

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

You are just, O Lord, and your judgement is right;
treat your servant in accord with your merciful love.

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

O God, by whom we are redeemed and receive adoption,
look graciously upon your beloved sons and daughters,
that those who believe in Christ may receive true freedom
and an everlasting inheritance.
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

Isaiah 35:4-7

A reading from the prophet Isaiah.

Say to all faint hearts,
"Courage! Do not be afraid.

"Look, your God is coming,
vengeance is coming,
the retribution of God;
he is coming to save you."

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
the ears of the deaf unsealed,
then the lame shall leap like a deer
and the tongues of the dumb sing for joy;
for water gushes in the desert,
streams in the wasteland,
the scorched earth becomes a lake,
the parched land springs of water.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 145

Response:

My soul, give praise to the Lord.

or
Alleluia!

- It is the Lord who keeps faith for ever,
who is just to those who are oppressed.
It is he who gives bread to the hungry,
the Lord, who sets prisoners free. (R.)

- It is the Lord who gives sight to the blind,
who raises up those who are bowed down,
the Lord who loves the just,
the Lord, who protects the stranger. (R.)
- The Lord upholds the widow and orphan,
but thwarts the path of the wicked.
The Lord will reign for ever,
Zion's God, from age to age. (R.)

SECOND READING

James 2:1-5

A reading from the letter of St James.

My brothers, do not try to combine faith in Jesus Christ, our glorified Lord, with the making of distinctions between classes of people. Now suppose a man comes into your synagogue, beautifully dressed and with a gold ring on, and at the same time a poor man comes in, in shabby clothes, and you take notice of the well-dressed man, and say, "Come this way to the best seats;" then you tell the poor man, "Stand over there" or "You can sit on the floor by my foot-rest." Can't you see that you have used two different standards in your mind, and turned yourselves into judges, and corrupt judges at that?

Listen, my dear brothers: it was those who are poor according to the world that God chose, to be rich in faith and to be the heirs to the kingdom which he promised to those who love him.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!

**Speak, Lord, your servant is listening:
you have the message of eternal life.
Alleluia!**

GOSPEL

Mark 7:31-37

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark.

Returning from the district of Tyre, Jesus went by way of Sidon towards the Sea of Galilee, right through the Decapolis region. And they brought him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they asked him to lay his hand on him. He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, put his fingers into the man's ears and touched his tongue with spittle. Then looking up to heaven he sighed; and he said to him, "Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened." And his ears were opened, and the ligament of his tongue was loosened and he spoke clearly. And Jesus ordered them to tell no one about it, but the more he insisted, the more widely they published it. Their admiration was unbounded. "He has done all things well," they said "he makes the deaf hear and the dumb speak."

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

O God, who give us the gift of true prayer and of peace,
graciously grant that, through this offering,
we may do fitting homage to your divine majesty
and, by partaking of the sacred mystery,
we may be faithfully united in mind and heart.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

**Like the deer that yearns for running
streams,
so my soul is yearning for you, my God;
my soul is thirsting for God, the living God.**

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Grant that your faithful, O Lord,
whom you nourish and endow with life
through the food of your Word and heavenly Sacrament,
may so benefit from your beloved Son's great gifts
that we may merit an eternal share in his life.
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.
Amen.

It is the saying of holy men that, if we wish to be perfect, we have nothing more to do than to perform the ordinary duties of the day well. A short road to perfection – short, not because easy, but because pertinent and intelligible. There are no short ways to perfection, but there are sure ones.

St John Henry Newman

THE WORD**JESUS A
MAGICIAN?**

(MARK 7:31-37)

Jesus continues his journey through Gentile territory. Mark gives us a particularly detailed account of Jesus healing a man who has no hearing and limited power of speech.

This recalls the promise in Isaiah of the signs which will accompany the saving coming of God to Israel. The reaction of the crowd that Jesus "has done all things well" reminds us of God surveying the completed Creation. Mark's vivid presentation has a couple of interesting features which would not be surprising in a setting familiar with stories of healing by magic: the groaning by Jesus, the placing of his finger in the ears, and the anointing of the person's tongue with spittle. However, Jesus cures the person by speaking, by word. Jesus is therefore superior to any pagan healers, just as Moses and Aaron are vindicated in their competition with the Egyptian magicians.

We find another Markan motif in this episode: Jesus enjoins silence about what has happened on those who have witnessed it, only for this to have the opposite effect. This is part of the "Messianic Secret": most likely, it expresses Mark's concern that people (then and now) should not understand Jesus as being the Son of God simply because he can work miracles. Jesus' true identity as God's Son will be revealed at the cross, when there is no further possibility of misunderstanding.

The Gentile audience reacts with enthusiasm to Jesus: this contrasts with Mark's usual presenting of the disciples as failing to understand who Jesus is and the meaning of his actions. ■

REFLECT

Miracles in the Gospel tradition and text are described as *works of power*: they are signs of the kingdom of God breaking through into human life and confronting sickness and death. The person in the Gospel extract today is now able to communicate fully with those around him; the restrictions on his everyday relationships have been lifted.

It is a great temptation for preachers and teachers to emphasise Jesus' ability to perform such actions as revealing Jesus as the Son of God. But there is a very fine line between presenting these as

signs of the kingdom and (inadvertently) giving the idea that Jesus could work magic, which might be the reason why neither Matthew nor Luke includes this graphically detailed story in their own Gospel accounts. Mark's theme about Jesus' paradoxical insisting on not publicising accounts of healings or other experiences (the "Messianic Secret") only makes sense in such a setting.

When we read or listen to the Gospels, the evangelists want us to ask ourselves, "What does this mean?" not "Did it actually happen?" That Jesus worked what we call "miracles" is very much part

of the Gospel tradition. But miracles are symbolic of what Jesus' ministry is all about: they are recorded as catechetical aids which show God's kingdom breaking into situations where human beings are in need. Mark shows Jesus going beyond the confines of his own people and land and confronting suffering in those places as well as preaching the word of God. Perhaps it might remind us that our Church is called to be like the Master, who goes out to others and is not concerned simply with "spiritual" matters, but with confronting human suffering and injustice as well. ■

SAY

"Speak, Lord, your servant can hear and is listening."
(see 1 Samuel 3:10)

DO

Look up Tyre, Sidon and the Decapolis on a map of biblical lands: this will give you an idea of where Jesus carried out his ministry.

LEARN

Tyre and Sidon are non-Jewish coastal cities to the north-west of Galilee.

Decapolis means "Ten Cities", although there is no fixed list of these towns: it refers to an area on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee and the River Jordan.

The important point about all these places is that they are largely Gentile.



ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Give peace, O Lord, to those who wait for you,
that your prophets be found true.
Hear the prayers of your servant,
and of your people Israel.

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

Look upon us, O God,
Creator and ruler of all things,
and, that we may feel the working of your
mercy,
grant that we may serve you with all our heart.
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

Isaiah 50:5-9

A reading from the prophet Isaiah.

The Lord has opened my ear.

For my part, I made no resistance,
neither did I turn away.

I offered my back to those who struck me,
my cheeks to those who tore at my beard;
I did not cover my face
against insult and spittle.

The Lord comes to my help,
so that I am untouched by the insults.
So, too, I set my face like flint;
I know I shall not be shamed.

My vindicator is here at hand. Does anyone
start proceedings against me?

Then let us go to court together.
Who thinks he has a case against me?
Let him approach me.

The Lord is coming to my help,
who dare condemn me?

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 114

Response:

I will walk in the presence of the Lord,
in the land of the living
or
Alleluia!

- I love the Lord for he has heard the cry of my appeal; for he turned his ear to me in the day when I called him. (R.)
- They surrounded me, the snares of death, with the anguish of the tomb; they caught me, sorrow and distress. I called on the Lord's name. O Lord my God, deliver me! (R.)
- How gracious is the Lord, and just; our God has compassion. The Lord protects the simple hearts; I was helpless so he saved me. (R.)
- He has kept my soul from death, my eyes from tears and my feet from stumbling. I will walk in the presence of the Lord in the land of the living. (R.)

SECOND READING

James 2:14-18

A reading from the letter of St James.

Take the case, my brothers, of someone who has never done a single good act but claims that he has faith. Will that faith save him? If one of the brothers or one of the sisters is in need of clothes and has not enough food to live on, and one of you says to them, "I wish you well; keep yourself warm and eat plenty," without giving them these bare necessities of life, then what good is that? Faith is like that: if good works do not go with it, it is quite dead.

This is the way to talk to people of that kind: "You say you have faith and I have good deeds; I will prove to you that I have faith by showing you my good deeds – now you prove to me that you have faith without any good deeds to show."

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!

I am the Way, the Truth and the Life, says the Lord;
no one can come to the Father except through me.

Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Mark 8:27-35

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark.

Jesus and his disciples left for the villages round Caesarea Philippi. On the way he put this question to his disciples, "Who do people say I am?" And they told him. "John the Baptist," they said, "others Elijah; others again, one of the prophets." "But you," he asked "who do you say I am?" Peter spoke up and said to him, "You are the Christ." And he gave them strict orders not to tell anyone about him.

And he began to teach them that the Son of Man was destined to suffer grievously, to be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and to be put to death, and after three days to rise again; and he said all this quite openly. Then, taking him aside, Peter started to remonstrate with him. But, turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said to him, "Get behind me, Satan! Because the way you think is not God's way but man's."

He called the people and his disciples to him and said, "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, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it."

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

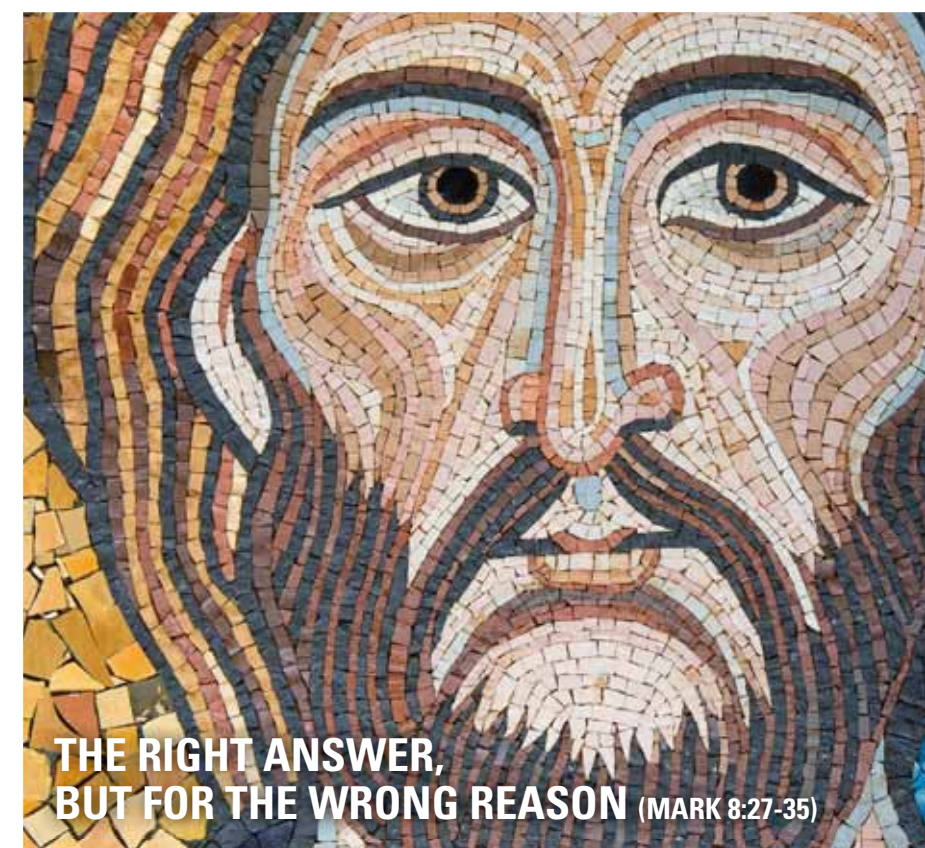
Look with favour on our supplications, O Lord,
and in your kindness accept these, your
servants' offerings,
that what each has offered to the honour of
your name
may serve the salvation of all.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

How precious is your mercy, O God!
The children of men seek shelter in the
shadow of your wings.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

May the working of this heavenly gift, O Lord,
we pray,
take possession of our minds and bodies,
so that its effects, and not our own desires,
may always prevail in us.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

THE WORD

The incident at Caesarea Philippi is the turning point in Mark's narrative. The city is at the most northerly point of Israel, and from there Jesus and his disciples will make the journey to Jerusalem.

It is also the point at which Jesus will begin to speak clearly about the suffering and death which await him there. So, he asks his followers the question which runs through the Gospel of Mark, "Who do people say I am?" Peter, the spokesperson for the group, gives the correct answer, "You are the Christ" (or "the Messiah"). This is the first time a human being has used the title about Jesus, and Jesus imposes the strict order to keep silence once more.

But Jesus does not openly accept Peter's declaration: on a human level (and Mark gives no indication of divine revelation, unlike Matthew), Peter may have concluded that Jesus is the Christ/Messiah on the evidence of Jesus' works of power ("miracles"), so he has come to the correct answer for the wrong reason. To attract a following on the basis of being identified as the Messiah would also possibly bring danger from the political and military authorities. So on different levels, Jesus' command to silence makes sense, and then he goes on to explain what being God's Messiah will mean: being rejected, suffering, put to death and raised, a suffering Messiah, which was not what the Jewish people were expecting. Jesus rebukes Peter severely for trying to deflect him from this path. ■

LEARN

Caesarea Philippi is a city at the northernmost tip of the land of Israel.

Christ and Messiah mean the same thing: "anointed".

Christ is the Greek term; Messiah is the Hebrew form.

REFLECT

All through Mark's narrative up to this point, a question about Jesus has kept recurring in various forms: "Who is this...?" This is not simply part of the historical story: it is addressed to each one of us. We may well have a great deal of sympathy with Peter's reaction on hearing what was in store for his master and friend, and Jesus' teaching is directed to ourselves as well. It can be difficult to see how Jesus' passion and crucifixion could be part of God's plan without turning God into a tyrant who can only be appeased by a human sacrifice – and of God's own Son, at that. Perhaps it might help us to remember that the Gospels are written in the light of the resurrection and after reflecting on passages in the Prophets and Psalms which make sense of Jesus' experience. Thus, the passion and Calvary are not predetermined: the elders, chief priests and scribes – and Pilate – have free will. What brings about the tragedy is human malice, not the divine will. The cross is the sign of Jesus' dedication to his mission and of the extent to which God is prepared to go in reaching out to human beings. It may seem like avoiding the question to say that all this is a mystery: a mystery is simply something that we will never fully comprehend, but must keep on trying to understand; that is what being a disciple (student) is all about. ■

SAY

Who do I think the Son of Man is?

DO

Put some olive or vegetable oil on your hand, or observe it when you use it in the kitchen: think about how Jesus is the Christ, Messiah, the Anointed One of God. Reflect on what this means to you.



ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

I am the salvation of the people, says the Lord.
Should they cry to me in any distress,
I will hear them, and I will be their Lord for ever.

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

O God, who founded all the commands of your sacred Law upon love of you and of our neighbour, grant that, by keeping your precepts, we may merit to attain eternal life. 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 Wisdom 2:12, 17-20

A reading from the book of Wisdom.
The godless say to themselves,
"Let us lie in wait for the virtuous man, since he annoys us and opposes our way of life, reproaches us for our breaches of the law and accuses us of playing false to our upbringing.
Let us see if what he says is true, let us observe what kind of end he himself will have.
If the virtuous man is God's son, God will take his part and rescue him from the clutches of his enemies.
Let us test him with cruelty and with torture, and thus explore this gentleness of his and put his endurance to the proof.
Let us condemn him to a shameful death since he will be looked after – we have his word for it."
The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 53

Response:

The Lord upholds my life.

- O God, save me by your name; by your power, uphold my cause. O God, hear my prayer; listen to the words of my mouth. (R.)
- For proud men have risen against me, ruthless men seek my life. They have no regard for God. (R.)
- But I have God for my help. The Lord upholds my life. I will sacrifice to you with willing heart and praise your name for it is good. (R.)

SECOND READING James 3:16–4:3

A reading from the letter of St James.

Wherever you find jealousy and ambition, you find disharmony, and wicked things of every kind being done; whereas the wisdom that comes down from above is essentially something pure; it also makes for peace, and is kindly and considerate; it is full of compassion and shows itself by doing good; nor is there any trace of partiality or hypocrisy in it. Peacemakers, when they work for peace, sow the seeds which will bear fruit in holiness.

Where do these wars and battles between yourselves first start? Isn't it precisely in the desires fighting inside your own selves? You want something and you haven't got it; so you are prepared to kill. You have an ambition that you cannot satisfy; so you fight to get your way by force. Why you don't have what you want is because you don't pray for it; when you do pray and don't get it, it is because you have not prayed properly, you have prayed for something to indulge your own desires.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!
I am the light of the world, says the Lord,
anyone who follows me
will have the light of life.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL Mark 9:30-37

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark.

After leaving the mountain Jesus and his disciples made their way through Galilee; and he did not want anyone to know, because he was instructing his disciples; he was telling them, "The Son of Man will be delivered into the hands of men; they will put him to death; and three days after he has been put to death he will rise again." But they did not understand what he said and were afraid to ask him.

They came to Capernaum, and when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you arguing about on the road?" They said nothing because they had been arguing which of them was the greatest. So he sat down, called the Twelve to him and said, "If anyone wants to be first, he must make himself last of all and servant of all." He then took a little child, set him in front of them,

put his arms round him, and said to them, "Anyone who welcomes one of these little children in my name, welcomes me; and anyone who welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me."

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

Receive with favour, O Lord, we pray, the offerings of your people, that what they profess with devotion and faith may be theirs through these heavenly mysteries.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

You have laid down your precepts to be carefully kept;
may my ways be firm in keeping your statutes.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Graciously raise up, O Lord, those you renew with this Sacrament, that we may come to possess your redemption both in mystery and in the manner of our life.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

THE WORD

Year B • Psalter Week 1



Christ and the disciples, façade of Monestir Monastery of Montserrat, Barcelona

After the experience of the transfiguration, Jesus and his companions continue their journey through Galilee.

Jesus' public ministry there is over: he will now instruct his disciples privately, beginning with his second teaching about his coming suffering and resurrection, and, as usual, they fail to understand the mystery of the cross as the unfolding of God's plan. They even seem to be moving into a state of wilful ignorance, being reluctant to ask questions.

The disciples' lack of understanding is heightened when we learn that they have been arguing among themselves about who is the most important. This provides the opening for Jesus' subversive teaching which we find throughout the Gospel versions about rank and status. Illustrating the lesson by introducing a child is not for sentimental effect: in the society of Jesus' time, a child did not represent innocence or the like, but rather someone who had no rights, no social standing, was totally dependent on others. There is nothing to be gained by being kind to someone who is, in effect, a "non-person". Jesus has called the Twelve apart from the wider group of disciples and directed this teaching at them in particular. Jesus puts his arms around the child, thus showing that this "non-person" deserves care and respect. Mark introduces the theme of treating Jesus well (or badly) in socially insignificant persons with the phrase "in my name", and welcoming Jesus means welcoming the one who sent him. ■

REFLECT

It is interesting that Jesus' teaching on humble and disinterested leadership is directed specifically at the Twelve, members of his inner circle. Given the social attitude to children of his day, his example of a child as being especially worthy of respect is nothing short of revolutionary. The Gospel presents us with values and principles which we are supposed to apply to our own times and circumstances. If a child represents a non-person in the society of Jesus' time, who fits that category in ours and what is our attitude towards such people? Who are our leaders most concerned about?

We might take comfort in Mark's description of the disciples and their difficulties in understanding Jesus and his message. In today's Gospel reading, their mistaken arguing about rank offers an opportunity for them to learn an important lesson from Jesus. The important thing about mistakes is that we should learn from them, not that we should not make them in the first place. The biblical picture of the people of Israel was that none of their repeated failures was the last word: God was always prepared to give them another chance. Even the disciples' ultimate abandoning of Jesus in Gethsemane was not to be the final scene in the story, as Mark's very writing of his Gospel shows. Our knowledge and understanding of Jesus is deepened by our questioning what we believe: the opposite of faith is less likely to be doubt than certainty, where there is no room for mystery. ■

DO

Make the Sign of the Cross and ask for the courage to keep asking questions about your faith.

**LEARN**

In the Synoptic tradition, Jesus makes three prophecies about his passion, death and resurrection.

The figure of Simon of Cyrene will illustrate Jesus' teaching on taking up the cross and following him.

A child, in the time of Jesus, was effectively a non-person, of no social standing.

SAY

We adore you, O Christ,
and we praise you,
because by your holy
cross you have redeemed
the world.

(from the Stations of the Cross)

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

All that you have done to us, O Lord,
you have done with true judgement,
for we have sinned against you
and not obeyed your commandments.
But give glory to your name
and deal with us according to the bounty of
your mercy.

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

O God, who manifest your almighty power
above all by pardoning and showing mercy,
bestow, we pray, your grace abundantly upon
us
and make those hastening to attain your
promises
heirs to the treasures of heaven.
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 Numbers 11:25-29

A reading from the book of Numbers.

The Lord came down in the Cloud. He spoke
with Moses, but took some of the spirit
that was on him and put it on the seventy
elders. When the spirit came on them they
prophesied, but not again.

Two men had stayed back in the camp;
one was called Eldad and the other Medad.
The spirit came down on them; though they
had not gone to the Tent, their names were
enrolled among the rest. These began to
prophesy in the camp. The young man ran
to tell this to Moses, "Look," he said, "Eldad
and Medad are prophesying in the camp."
Then said Joshua the son of Nun, who had
served Moses from his youth, "My Lord
Moses, stop them!" Moses answered him,
"Are you jealous on my account? If only the
whole people of the Lord were prophets,
and the Lord gave his Spirit to them all!"

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalms 18

Response:

The precepts of the Lord gladden the heart.

- The law of the Lord is perfect,
it revives the soul.
The rule of the Lord is to be trusted,
it gives wisdom to the simple. (R.)
- The fear of the Lord is holy,
abiding for ever.
The decrees of the Lord are truth
and all of them just. (R.)
- So in them your servant finds instruction;
great reward is in their keeping.
But who can detect all his errors?
From hidden faults acquit me. (R.)
- From presumption restrain your servant
and let it not rule me.
Then shall I be blameless,
clean from grave sin. (R.)

SECOND READING

James 5:1-6

A reading from the letter of St James.

An answer for the rich. Start crying, weep
for the miseries that are coming to you. Your
wealth is all rotting, your clothes are all eaten
up by moths. All your gold and your silver
are corroding away, and the same corrosion
will be your own sentence, and eat into your
body. It was a burning fire that you stored up
as your treasure for the last days. Labourers
mowed your fields and you cheated them –
listen to the wages that you kept back, calling
out; realise that the cries of the reapers have
reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. On
earth you have had a life of comfort and
luxury; in the time of slaughter you went on
eating to your heart's content. It was you who
condemned the innocent and killed them;
they offered you no resistance.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!
Your word is truth, O Lord,
consecrate us in the truth.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Mark 9:38-43. 45. 47-48

A reading from the holy Gospel according to
Mark.

John said to Jesus, "Master, we saw a man
who is not one of us casting out devils in
your name; and because he was not one
of us we tried to stop him." But Jesus said,
"You must not stop him: no one who works
a miracle in my name is likely to speak evil of
me. Anyone who is not against us is for us."
"If anyone gives you a cup of water to drink
just because you belong to Christ, then I tell
you solemnly, he will most certainly not lose
his reward.

"But anyone who is an obstacle to bring
down one of these little ones who have faith,
would be better thrown into the sea with a
great millstone round his neck. And if your
hand should cause you to sin, cut it off; it is
better for you to enter into life crippled, than
to have two hands and go to hell, into the
fire that cannot be put out. And if your foot
should cause you to sin, cut it off; it is better
for you to enter into life lame, than to have

two feet and be thrown into hell. And if your
eye should cause you to sin, tear it out; it is
better for you to enter into the kingdom of
God with one eye, than to have two eyes and
be thrown into hell where their worm does
not die nor their fire go out."

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

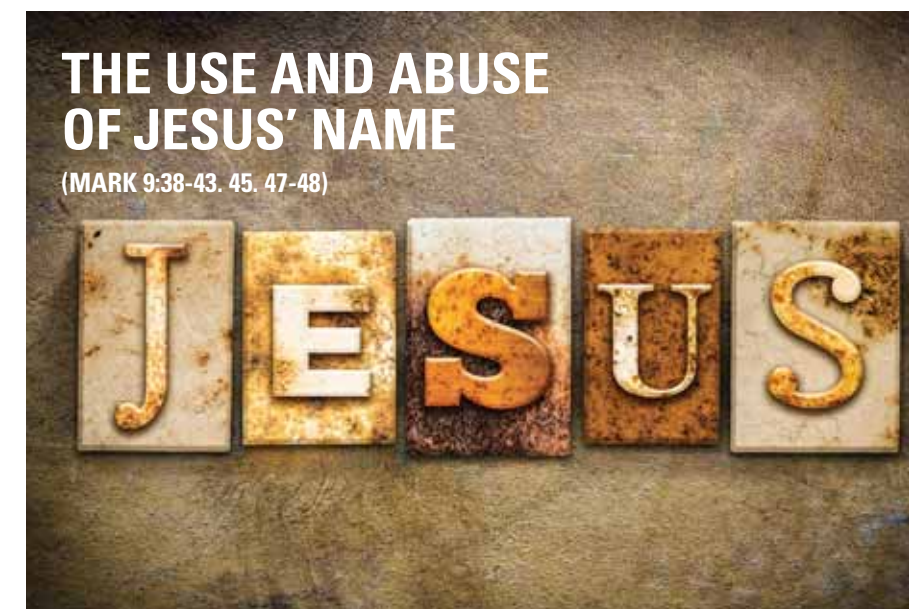
Grant us, O merciful God,
that this our offering may find acceptance
with you
and that through it the wellspring of all
blessing
may be laid open before us.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Remember your word to your servant,
O Lord,
by which you have given me hope.
This is my comfort when I am brought low.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

May this heavenly mystery, O Lord,
restore us in mind and body,
that we may be coheirs in glory with Christ,
to whose suffering we are united
whenever we proclaim his Death.
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.
Amen.

THE WORD

There is a certain irony in John's complaining to Jesus about the
unauthorised exorcist who has been using Jesus' name – and therefore
Jesus' power – to help people by casting out evil spirits.

Mark has related not long before this episode the incident where the father of an epileptic
boy asks Jesus to cast out the spirit of dumbness from his son after Jesus' disciples proved
unable to do so. Jesus reacts with frustration, saying, "You faithless generation... how long
must I put up with you?" In his reply to John, Jesus makes it clear that his power is not
limited to the circle of his disciples. There is even a hint that John is not quite clear about
where this authority lies, as he actually says that the person in question does not follow us,
rather than does not follow you.

This wider vision extends to people who show kindness to disciples who bear the name
of Jesus.

The final paragraph is an example of the exaggerated speech which is characteristic of some
Middle Eastern societies. The idea of self-mutilation as a remedy for sin is not to be taken in
any way literally, but the language serves to underline the seriousness of attending to our
moral Christian discipleship, not just for our own sake, but because it can undermine other
people's following of Jesus. ■

SAY

"...nor can she be captured, silenced or restrained."
(John L. Bell and Graham Maule – on the Holy Spirit)

LEARN

The expression "little ones" is Mark's way of referring to people of simple faith.

People in the Middle Eastern society of Jesus' day often used exaggeration or hyperbole to
emphasise the serious nature of what they were talking about.

The "donkey's millstone", which is what the text actually says, is the upper stone which the
donkey would turn by walking around: it would be heavy enough to ensure death
by drowning.

REFLECT

Reading the signs of the times is a
useful theme for today's Gospel
reflection. In these ecumenical
days, we are more appreciative of the
sincerity and values of other Christian
bodies and of other religions: much
of this progress comes from simply
interacting with such people, getting to
know them as individuals and seeing
what we have in common, rather than
what might divide us. Jesus' words
about the exorcist acting without
official permission are a warning to
those who would restrict Jesus'
influence to any privileged group.

The section on giving scandal is one
which is of particular relevance, given
the appalling revelations which have
rocked the Church in recent years. It
is clear that many people who have
survived abuse have, understandably,
lost their faith in God, Jesus and the
Church, which is supposed to be "the
sacrament of Christ's presence in the
world". Those affected are not only
those directly involved, but also those
who are so bewildered or disgusted
at this abuse of trust that they have
abandoned the practice of the faith, if
not their faith altogether.

We might remember that the Church is
the whole people of God, not just the
leaders. When the institution becomes
more important than its reason for
existing, then something has gone
seriously wrong. Perhaps John's
complaint about the unauthorised
exorcist might be a warning today
about thinking that the Spirit can
be limited (or contained) within the
structures of the Church: Jesus'
teaching on dealing with the causes
of scandal would go a long way to
preventing future disasters. ■

**DO**

Make sure that you are familiar with
your parish's safeguarding policy and
requirements.