

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, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

FIRST READING Ezekiel 18:25-28

A reading from the prophet Ezekiel. The word of the Lord was addressed to me as follows: "You object, 'What the Lord does is unjust.' Listen, you House of Israel: is what I do unjust? Is it not what you do that is unjust? When the upright man renounces his integrity to commit sin and dies because of this, he dies because of the evil that he himself has committed. When the sinner renounces sin to become law-abiding and honest, he deserves to live. He has chosen to renounce all his previous sins; he shall certainly live; he shall not die."

The word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

PSALM Psalm 24

Response: Remember your mercy, Lord.

- Lord, make me know your ways. Lord, teach me your paths. Make me walk in your truth, and teach me: for you are God my saviour. (R.)

- Remember your mercy, Lord, and the love you have shown from of old. Do not remember the sins of my youth. In your love remember me, because of your goodness, O Lord. (R.)
- The Lord is good and upright. He shows the path to those who stray, he guides the humble in the right path, he teaches his way to the poor. (R.)

SECOND READING Philippians 2:1-11

(For shorter form, read between > <)

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

>If our life in Christ means anything to you, if love can persuade at all, or the Spirit that we have in common, or any tenderness and sympathy, then be united in your convictions and united in your love, with a common purpose and a common mind. That is the one thing which would make me completely happy. There must be no competition among you, no conceit; but everybody is to be self-effacing. Always consider the other person to be better than yourself, so that nobody thinks of his own interests first but everybody thinks of other people's interests instead. In your minds you must be the same as Christ Jesus:<

His state was divine, yet he did not cling to his equality with God but emptied himself to assume the condition of a slave, and became as men are; and being as all men are, he was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a cross. But God raised him high and gave him the name which is above all other names so that all beings in the heavens, on earth and in the underworld, should bend the knee at the name of Jesus and that every tongue should acclaim Jesus Christ as Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

>The word of the Lord.<
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!
If anyone loves me he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we shall come to him. Alleluia!

GOSPEL Matthew 21:28-32

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

Jesus said to the chief priests and the elders of the people, "What is your opinion? A man had two sons. He went and said to the first, 'My boy, you go and work in the vineyard today.' He answered, 'I will not go', but afterwards thought better of it and went. The man then went and said the same thing to the second who answered, 'Certainly, sir', but did not go. Which of the two did the father's will?" "The first" they said. Jesus said to them, "I tell you solemnly, tax collectors and prostitutes are making their way into

the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you, a pattern of true righteousness, but you did not believe him, and yet the tax collectors and prostitutes did. Even after seeing that, you refused to think better of it and believe in him."

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

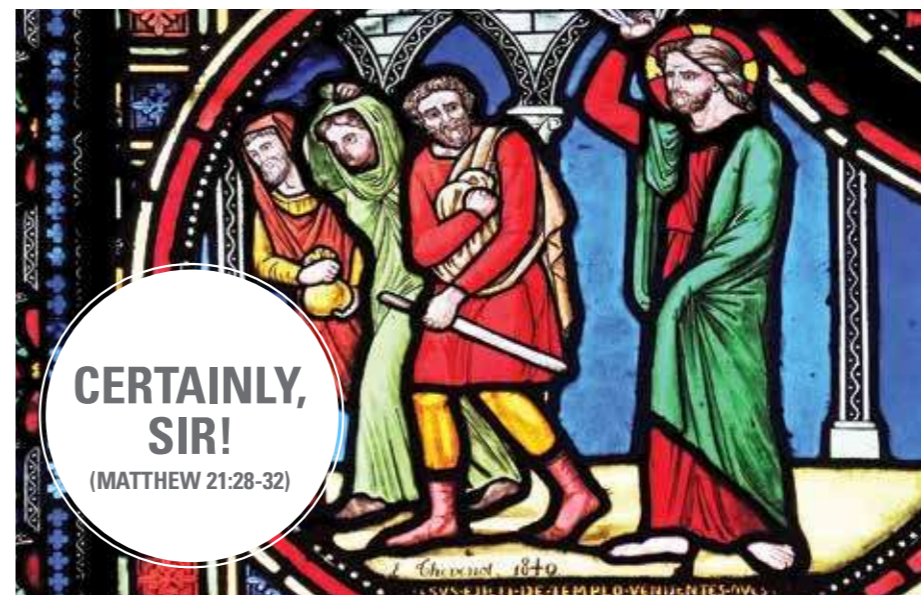
Grant us, O merciful God, that this our offering may find acceptance with you and that through it the wellspring of all blessing may be laid open before us. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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

Christ driving the merchants from the Temple: stained glass window from Saint Germain l'Auxerrois church in Paris, France.

Jesus has arrived in Jerusalem with his disciples. He has caused a scene by driving out the merchants from the precincts of the Temple, and the chief priests and elders of the people have questioned his authority to act in this way.

Jesus does not answer their demand, but challenges them about the origin of the teaching of John the Baptist, whether it was human or divine. They cannot admit that John is a prophet, as they are allied with the Romans and with Herod Antipas, who regard the Baptist as a possible focal point for a popular rebellion: if they declare that his teaching is simply human doctrine, then they risk antagonising the people, who hold John in high esteem.

Sensing themselves caught out whatever answer they might give, they play the political card and avoid committing themselves. Jesus then refuses to reply to their question, but tells them the parable about the two sons and their reaction to the instruction of their father. By implication, the religious authorities are identified with the second son, who outwardly assents to his father's desire – "Certainly, sir" – but fails to carry it out. In this way, they prove themselves less than members of the most despised groups in the land, tax collectors and prostitutes, both of whom, in different ways, collaborate with the Roman occupiers of the country. Not even the positive reception of John's message on the part of these groups caused the authorities to listen to what he had to say and to amend their ways of thinking and living. ■

REFLECT

One of the ways in which we can fail to appreciate the meaning of the Gospels is to regard them simply as historical documents, relating the story of Jesus, and, among other things, his teaching and his conflict with the religious authorities of his day. This can, in a way, be quite comforting, as we can tell ourselves that, like the Hebrew prophets, we are looking at a past situation which has little to do with us. But even with the Gospel versions which have come down to us, it is not so simple. The

arguments which we find in Matthew's account, especially the passages where Jesus condemns in unambiguous, and untypical, language the scribes and the Pharisees, reflect more the situation of Matthew's later community versus the synagogue and its contemporary leaders, than disputes which Jesus might have had with the authorities of his time, especially the chief priests and the elders.

The Gospels are part of the word of God: in this way, they have a permanent and

LEARN

John the Baptist's preaching attracted the attention of tax collectors and soldiers, both groups essential to the maintaining of Roman rule.

It was more likely for this reason that John was eventually imprisoned and executed.

The teachings of the Gospel are valid for each generation: we should read and apply them in the light of our own situation and experience.

SAY

Lord, teach me your ways, Lord show me your paths. (Psalm 25:4)

DO

Listen to politicians avoiding answering questions directly. Reflect on what it would mean if they (and we) committed ourselves to a more honest approach in speaking.



contemporary message for the disciples of Jesus in each generation. One danger that the prophets, including John the Baptist, saw was that organised religion can become a substitute for a true commitment to the covenant relationship between God and God's people. It can encourage a complacent attitude, where the responsibility of living up to the calling to be the people of God can be forgotten: where positions of authority can become instruments of power. ■