

Here's a text if you've only a minute ...

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

Think of God's mercy and worship him. *Second Reading*

If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let them renounce themselves and take up their cross and follow me. *Gospel*

Lord God of power and might,
nothing is good which is against your will,
and all is of value which comes from your hand.

Place in our hearts a desire to please you
and fill our minds with insight into love,
so that every thought may grow in wisdom
and all our efforts may be filled with your peace.

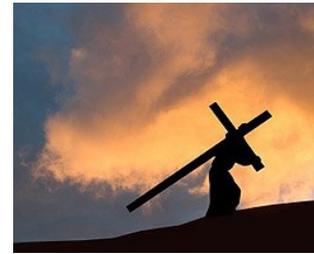
Old Opening Prayer

This week's texts if you want to reflect further:
Jeremiah 20: 7-9; Psalm 62 (63); Romans 12: 1-2; Matthew 16: 21-27

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ME...



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22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time
Year A
30th August 2020

Who do you say I am?

After Peter's resounding proclamation of Jesus as the Christ last week, the readings this Sunday strike a more sombre note as we consider the suffering and sacrifice Jesus will face. This will also be the path his followers will choose.

Jeremiah cannot resist God's call: he is overwhelmed by it, but his faithfulness brings insult and derision. (**First Reading**)

The **Psalm** echoes Jeremiah in speaking of our passionate desire and thirst for God. It is in clinging to God that we can face the crosses that will come our way.

In this passage from his letter to the Romans, St Paul encourages the people to offer themselves as a living sacrifice, 'truly pleasing to God.' (**Second Reading**)

In the **Gospel** we have the first foreshadowing of Jesus's passion and death. Peter cannot countenance this, but Jesus points out that, for his disciples, the way of the cross is inevitable.

As we go on our way this week, let us try to be of one mind with Christ and to accept each day as it comes, remembering the psalmist's words 'For your love is better than life, my lips will speak your praise.'

Opening Prayer

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.

First Reading Jeremiah 20: 7–9

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.

I settle myself to pray, slowly becoming aware of being in God's loving presence and asking his Spirit to help me pray.

After taking the time to read the text carefully, I consider the prophet Jeremiah's frame of mind.

In what ways can I relate to his burning desire for God, and at the same time his resentment of the suffering this brings him?

Perhaps I can speak honestly to God about the weight of my own life-situation or my ministry, or about the hurt, isolation or confusion I may suffer for being his disciple?

I sit quietly in his presence, or maybe ask his Spirit to rekindle love, and the desire to serve, in my heart.

Despite my likely reluctance at times to welcome God's call, I may be able to give thanks that the Lord still calls me.

Perhaps I can remember the ways he has sustained me and so many other brave followers in the past.

In time, I recall the example of all those who suffer in mind or body, and those who are imprisoned and tortured. I ask God to give them comfort.

I draw my prayer to a close with a slow 'Our Father'.

Gospel Matthew 16: 21–27

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 them renounce themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For anyone who wants to save their life will lose it; but anyone who loses their life for my sake will find it. What, then, will someone gain if they win the whole world and ruin their life? Or what has someone to offer in exchange for their 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 their behaviour.'

As always I come gently to my prayer, taking the time to relax my body and mind so that I can be fully present to my God.

What grace do I wish for today?

When I am ready, I take up the Gospel text, reading it slowly a couple of times.

Perhaps I can be present to Jesus, who having faced opposition, is now contemplating his journey to Jerusalem. As he shares this with his disciples, do I consider how he feels ... ? Or am I a disciple in denial?

Perhaps, like Peter, I rush to remonstrate rather than reflect upon Jesus's words? In what way do I want to please rather than ponder more demanding truths?

In my own life, what things have I lost by holding onto them too tightly?

I turn to the Lord, asking him to enable me – with him alongside – to look clearly and peacefully at my life.

I end with gratitude for the human example Jesus has set in accepting his cross.