

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

You have seduced me, Lord, and I have let myself be seduced;  
you have overpowered me: you were the stronger. *First Reading*

My body pines for you like a dry, weary land without water. *Psalms*

Anyone who loses their life for my sake will find it. *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*

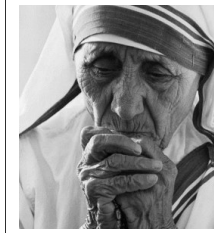
This week's texts if you want to reflect further:  
Jeremiah 20: 7-9; Psalm 62 (63); Romans 12: 1-2; Matthew 16: 21-27



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

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**ST BEUNO'S OUTREACH IN THE DIOCESE OF WREXHAM**



Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time  
Year A, 3rd September 2023

'For you my soul is thirsting,  
O Lord my God'

Today's readings remind us that the path of love leads us away from ourselves. This is always painful, but ultimately it is a path that leads us to the fullness of life.

Peter's journey of faith (**Gospel**) earns him the severe disapproval of Jesus, who has started to speak openly of the shocking nature of his Messiahship. Peter rejects the idea: his thoughts are human rather than those of God. Jesus explains that being his disciple means being prepared to shoulder his cross: a metaphor for suffering for what we believe in.

Jeremiah (**First Reading**) gives remarkable insight into how costly his own prophetic mission is. He shares his profound struggles and suffering, as well as the intensity and depth of his relationship with God.

The **Psalms** speak passionately of our life-giving desire and thirst for God – and by implication, of the personal cost that following the Lord may involve.

In the **Second Reading**, Paul encourages the Romans to see all aspects of their lives as a living sacrifice. Paul is offering a radical, new teaching on the concept of sacrifice. Sacrifice is now to do with transforming our way of life from within, and modelling ourselves on the person of Christ.

This week, we pray for the grace to deepen our relationship with God. We ask for the human freedom to offer our whole being in loving service of Christ and the world.



### 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.

## Second Reading Romans 12: 1–2

**T**hink of God's mercy, my sisters and 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 yourself on the behaviours 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.

I begin my prayer time, slowly, in my own way, bringing my whole self into  
the presence of God. To help ground my mind and my heart on God, I may  
like to use the response to today's Psalm: *'For you my soul is thirsting, O  
Lord my God'*. I surrender myself to God's presence and embrace.  
I rest in the silence of my prayer for as long as I feel drawn.

When ready, I read St Paul's words slowly and openly, several times.  
I notice what touches me as I receive the living, active word of God.

As I read the text again, I come as a *'thinking being'* to ponder God's mercy.  
Perhaps I can *'think'* with my whole being – body, heart and soul?  
I try to place my whole trust in the compassionate nature of God, offering  
all that I am ... my thoughts, words and deeds ... to the One who longs for  
me.

It may be that I notice fear and resistance welling up inside me to this  
radical offering of *'a holy sacrifice'* suggested by St Paul. With honesty and  
confidence, I share whatever arises with Jesus ... who knows me,  
understands me, and loves me with an enormous love.

With the help of the Holy Spirit, I reflect gently reflect on how I am being  
invited to deepen my relationship with God.

What might it mean to deepen my awareness of the *'will of God'* in my  
life ... to model my life on Jesus more fully?  
I ask for God's help to follow the path of love and goodness, even if that is  
sometimes a path of sacrifice.

For the final part of my prayer, I may simply choose to sit in silence, gazing  
lovingly on my Lord and my God. I pray to become even more aware of  
God's loving gaze on me.

As I draw my prayer to a close, I pray for the world and all its needs.  
Finally I thank God for all his blessings. *Glory be ...*

## Gospel Matthew 16: 21–27

**J**esus 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 Jesus 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 that of humankind.'

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 I come to prayer, I take time to find inner stillness and silence.  
I allow my mind to settle from the busyness and distractions of my daily life.  
I ask the Holy Spirit to guide me with grace and trust as I prepare.

When ready, I ask God to speak to me through the words of today's Gospel.  
I read Jesus's challenging teachings a couple of times.  
Perhaps my imagination takes me into the scene with the disciples.  
If I can, I allow myself to hear and receive these words personally.  
Maybe Peter's words resonate all too readily with me?  
I notice my responses, and reflect on them ...

As I read the passage again, perhaps I feel invited to think about what it  
would be for me to take up Jesus's demanding invitation.  
What would it mean to *'lose my life'* to enable me to *'find it'*?

I ask for the grace and courage to notice any reluctance or resistance to  
such an invitation. I allow whatever is in my heart to arise, and share all that  
emerges with Jesus, who stands alongside me.

I pray for the wisdom and freedom to continue my life journey of daily  
death and resurrection for the sake of Christ Jesus, who loves me as I am.  
*Our Father ...*