

22ND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – 30 AUGUST 2026



COLLECT

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.
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.

READINGS AND REFLECTIONS

The cross has become the universal symbol of Christianity. It appears on churches, schools and religious houses. People wear a little gold one on a chain around their neck. We bless ourselves and one another with the sign of the cross. It would be an interesting exercise to walk around the parish church and count the number of times the cross appears on the walls and on books and vestments. The symbol has been tamed.

In the early centuries of the Church's history, it was considered too shameful and horrific to portray Christ on the cross. The cross was the means for executing criminals. It seemed to contradict faith in Christ as risen Lord and Son of God. It was not until the fourth century when Emperor Constantine ended persecution and found the true cross in Jerusalem that Christian practice began to change. At first it was the glorified cross which was used, symbol of life and victory. Christ on the cross was alive. Only in the Middle Ages did a 'mysticism of the passion' emerge, stirring up a deep empathy for the suffering Saviour.

Against this background, we begin to see the challenge Jesus puts to his disciples, and the struggle they have in coming to terms with it. Take up your cross, he says.

A reading from the book of 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.

First Reading

Jeremiah's lament is shocking and confronting. He describes his God-given mission in terms of violent sexual assault; God has seduced and overpowered him. For he is the proverbial 'prophet of doom' – he has been called to challenge the people. The people's response is rejection and ridicule. For him, being God's spokesman has brought nothing but insult and derision all day long.

He tries to set his mission aside. But when he tells himself this, he realises that he cannot resist God's call – there is a fire burning in his heart. He can do no other. Jeremiah gives us a stark and vivid picture of the cost and courage of discipleship.

This is an anguished text. Its proclamation should not be melodramatic, but neither should it seek to sweeten the fiercely confronting words.

Responsorial Psalm**Ps 62:2-6, 8-9**

R. My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God.
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.**

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.**

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.**

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.**

Responsorial Psalm

The verses selected from Psalm 62/63 for today are a far cry from the agitation of Jeremiah. It is just as well. More negativity and violence might have been hard to take, whereas this psalm becomes a blessing.

The yearning for God expressed in these lines are closest perhaps to end of the first reading: the fire burning in Jeremiah's heart which he cannot resist. The psalm is filled with imagery which will help the cantor/reader to proclaim it effectively – thirsting in the desert, gazing upon glory in the sanctuary, a banquet, the shade of God's wings.

It expresses beautifully our deep desire for God's help and our grateful joy when it is received.

**A reading from the letter of
St Paul to the Romans****12:1-2**

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.

Second Reading

Paul embarks on a new section of his letter teaching about a good Christian life. He begins with God's mercy and our response of worship. In doing so, he sets out the intimate connection between liturgy and life. He pairs 'thinking beings' with 'living bodies'. We do not acknowledge God's grace simply in our minds, but in our behaviour – by the way we live. The ethical response to God's mercy is to understand what is good, and then do it.

Paul's comment about not modelling our behaviour on the world around us remains highly pertinent in today's era of social media. Rather, our new mind – our understanding of God's mercy – shapes our actions.

As usual, 'brothers' is read as 'brothers and sisters'.

**A reading from the holy
Gospel according to 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 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.'

Gospel

Today's gospel passage follows on directly from what we heard last week. Peter, the hero in last week's story, is rebuked in this week's gospel. The foundation rock has become a stumbling block. It is good for us to know that none of us gets it right every time.

Jesus' sharp response to Peter makes it clear that he is not looking forward to his looming destiny. There are no easy heroics. It is as though he responds with gritted teeth. He is to suffer grievously. Yet his confidence in the Father's love enables him to see glory beyond the cross. Then he throws out the terrifying challenge. Jesus' followers must also lose their life if they are to gain life. They too must take up the dreaded cross.

There is no short-cut to glory. But as disciples shoulder the cross and carry the burden of suffering, they experience a profound union with Christ who has been there before them.

The reader should try to use inclusive language, saying: "not God's way but a human way". In the following paragraph, 'a man' can be read as 'someone'.

CONCLUDING PRAYER

Solemn Blessing (Ordinary Time I)

May the Lord bless you and keep you.

Amen.

May he let his face shine upon you
and show you his mercy.

Amen.

May he turn his countenance towards you
and give you his peace.

Amen.

And may the blessing of almighty God,
the Father, and the Son,⁺ and the Holy Spirit,
come down on you and remain with you for ever.

Amen.

(Adapted from the Solemn Blessing for Ordinary Time I, Roman Missal p. 714)

An alternative translation of the scripture readings is given here from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). This may be particularly useful for those in parishes which use the NRSV Lectionary.

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

FIRST READING (NRSV)

A reading from the book of the prophet Jeremiah 20:7-9

Jeremiah cried out to the Lord:
"O Lord, you have enticed me,
and I was enticed;
you have overpowered me,
and you have prevailed.
I have become a laughingstock all day long;
everyone mocks me.
For whenever I speak, I must cry out,
I must shout, 'Violence and destruction!'
For the word of the Lord has become for me
a reproach and derision all day long.
'If I say, 'I will not mention him,
or speak any more in his name,'
then within me there is something like a burning fire
shut up in my bones;
I am weary with holding it in,
and I cannot."

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (NRSV)

Psalms 63.1, 2-3, 4-5, 7-8 (R.1a)

R. My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God.

O God, you are my God, I seek you,
my soul thirsts for you;
my flesh faints for you,
as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. **R.**

So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary,
beholding your power and glory.
Because your steadfast love is better than life,
my lips will praise you. **R.**

So I will bless you as long as I live;
I will lift up my hands and call on your name.
My soul is satisfied as with a rich feast,
and my mouth praises you with joyful lips. **R.**

For you have been my help,
and in the shadow of your wings I sing for joy.
My soul clings to you;
your right hand upholds me. **R.**

SECOND READING (NRSV)

A reading from the letter of Paul to the Romans 12:1-2

I appeal to you, brothers and sisters,
by the mercies of God,
to present your bodies as a living sacrifice,
holy and acceptable to God,
which is your spiritual worship.
Do not be conformed to this world,
but be transformed by the renewing of your minds,
so that you may discern what is the will of God-
what is good and acceptable and perfect.

GOSPEL (NRSV)

A reading from the holy gospel according to Matthew 16:21-27

Jesus sternly warned his disciples
not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.
From that time on,
Jesus began to show his disciples
that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering
at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes,
and be killed,
and on the third day be raised.
And Peter took Jesus aside and began to rebuke him, saying,
"God forbid it, Lord!
This must never happen to you."
But he turned and said to Peter,
"Get behind me, Satan!
You are a stumbling block to me;
for you are setting your mind not on divine things
but on human things."
Then Jesus told his disciples,
"If any want to become my followers,
let them deny themselves
and take up their cross and follow me.
For those who want to save their life will lose it,
and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.
For what will it profit them
if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life?
Or what will they give in return for their life?
"For the Son of Man is to come with his angels
in the glory of his Father,
and then he will repay everyone for what has been done."