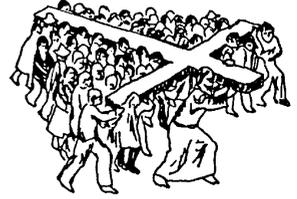


AMDG
22ND SUNDAY IN
ORDINARY TIME
YEAR A
3RD SEPTEMBER 2017



**Take up your cross and
follow me**

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.

This week's readings make it clear that discipleship isn't easy. But they also reassure us that the cost of following Jesus is always a cost worth paying. Even when taking up our cross brings real suffering, God is there, offering us something far greater – the promise of life in all its fullness.

Jeremiah feels so overpowered by God and so worn down by the demands of prophesying (First Reading) that he tries to turn away. But God's message is like a fire burning deep within him, impossible to deny. The psalmist also speaks of a profound inward longing that can only be satisfied by God, whose love for us is greater than life itself. St Paul, too, knows well how costly discipleship can be (Second Reading), but he urges us to a 'new mind', modelling ourselves not on the world, but on Jesus himself. When we offer ourselves to God we discover his desire for us, and can open ourselves to being transformed by him.

Today's Gospel moves on from previous weeks by speaking of Jerusalem and the cross. Jesus warns the disciples that he must suffer, and Peter is rebuked when he tries to dissuade him.

Following Jesus now means letting go of our own self-centred lives, but in doing so we become open to a new and much fuller life of love and freedom, lived in the Lord.

I might pray this week to be ever more open to Jesus's call to me to help him carry the cross, and I ask him to help me respond to that call with joy and generosity.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM: PSALM 62

R. / For you my soul is thirsting, 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.

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.

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.

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.

As I come before the Lord today I allow myself to slow down and relax, secure in the knowledge that he longs to welcome me exactly as I am. In time I read the psalm slowly, prayerfully. I wait in the Lord's presence. What seems to draw me? I notice anything stirring within me. Perhaps I share the psalmist's joy ... or perhaps I feel dry and weary. However I come, I can trust that the Lord understands and hears me. The psalmist's longing for God is intensely heartfelt and personal. I may like to ponder this.

Can I allow myself to get in touch with the deepest desires of my own heart, however hard they may be to express? I entrust these longings – and my whole self – to God, confident that his longing for me, his beloved child, far outweighs anything that I can imagine.

I may feel drawn to reflect on the back-page image. Are there times when I need to cling on to the Lord for safety, and feel the touch of his hand? I ask for any grace I need – for myself or for anyone else. When I am ready, I take my leave, speaking out my gratitude to God, and asking him to stay close by today.

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 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 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.'

I come to stillness in the way that suits me best, trusting that I am in the presence of my loving God.

When I am ready I turn prayerfully to the text. I may find it helpful to imagine myself present in the scene. What do I hear and see?

How do I feel as I listen to Jesus's challenge to the disciples ... and to me? I notice anything that resonates with me.

Perhaps I think of a time when I have been a stumbling block to someone else, or when I have put my own needs first. If so, I ask for the Lord's forgiveness, confident of his merciful gaze upon me.

Or perhaps I ponder the shape of the cross in my own life, or in the lives of those around me. I speak to the Lord of this, as I would to a trusted friend. If there is a grace I need, I ask for it confidently.

Jesus promises a fuller, deeper, life to all who have the courage to follow him. What is the life that I most desire ... for myself ... my family ... my church ... this world? I share my hopes and dreams with the Lord ... and allow him space to speak to me.

In time I end my prayer with a slow sign of the cross, grateful for the gift of God's unfailing love for me. Glory be ...

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

You have overpowered me Lord: you were the stronger.

First Reading

O God, you are my God, for you I long. *Responsorial Psalm*

Do not model yourself on the behaviour of the world
around you. *Second Reading*

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

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

MY SOUL CLINGS
TO YOU;
YOUR RIGHT HAND
HOLDS ME FAST.



How does this image help me meditate on these readings?



ST BEUNO'S OUTREACH
IN THE DIOCESE OF WREXHAM

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