



AMDG  
24TH SUNDAY IN  
ORDINARY TIME  
16TH SEPTEMBER 2018



**Who do you say I am?**

OPENING PRAYER

Look upon us, O God,  
Creator and ruler of all things,  
and, that we may feel the working of your mercy,  
grant that we may serve you with all our heart.

The servant of today's *First Reading* from the Prophet Isaiah, who suffers for the people, is promised God's help. He may well have sung today's *Psalms*, praising God for his salvation.

The *Gospel* presents Jesus as the suffering servant foretold by Isaiah, and Jesus speaks about his Passion and death for the first time here. St Mark places this scene at the centre of his Gospel. It is the turning point. He shows Jesus being met with confusion, misunderstanding and non-acceptance. The Christ (the 'anointed one') will not be the Messiah of popular expectation, but one who also embraces rejection.

Likewise, the true disciple is one who demonstrates his or her faith through good works (*Second Reading*). And of course, faith also calls for commitment, as we, too, try to follow the way of the cross.

Let us pray for the strength, this week, to embrace the ultimate 'good work' by doing out best to imitate Christ's loving sacrifice in our own lives, even in small ways. We ask, too, for the assurance of God's help, as we try to take up our own crosses day by day.

## PSALM 114 (116)

*R./ I will walk in the presence of the Lord in the land of the living.*

**I** love the Lord for he has heard  
the cry of my appeal;  
for he turned his ear to me  
in the day when I called him.

They surrounded me, the snares of death,  
with the anguish of the tomb;  
they caught me, sorrow and distress.  
I called on the Lord's name.  
O Lord my God, deliver me!

How gracious is the Lord, and just;  
our God has compassion.  
The Lord protects the simple hearts;  
I was helpless so he saved me.

He has kept my soul from death,  
my eyes from tears  
and my feet from stumbling.  
I will walk in the presence of the Lord  
in the land of the living.

I come into the presence of the Lord conscious of how I am feeling at this time.  
What cares and concerns do I bring with me? Like the psalmist,  
I may be caught up in some deep sorrow and distress.

As always, I begin by trying to become still, and by trusting in the protection of the Lord.

I look to the psalmist who 'loves the Lord', turning his focus to the Lord when anguish and sorrow take over.

Now I look to myself: where is my own focus?

On the distresses of life, or on the Lord, the giver of life?

Do I sense some change in myself as I ponder where I give my attention?

My God is one who responds to my pleas, who has compassion, who protects, who saves me. How does this make me feel? How would I like to respond?

I may be drawn to pray for those I know, or know of, who are suffering;  
or ask to help them see they are not alone.

I end my prayer by spending whatever time I have in the company of the Lord.

I thank him for walking with me. *Glory be ...*

## GOSPEL MARK 8: 27–35

Jesus and his disciples left for the villages round Caesarea Philippi. On the way he put this question to his disciples, ‘Who do people say I am?’ And they told him. ‘John the Baptist’, they said, ‘others Elijah; others again, one of the prophets.’ ‘But you,’ he asked, ‘who do you say I am?’ Peter spoke up and said to him, ‘You are the Christ.’ And he gave them strict orders not to tell anyone about him.

Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man was destined to suffer grievously, to be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and to be put to death, and after three days to rise again; and he said all this quite openly. Then, taking him aside, Peter started to remonstrate with him. But, turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said to him, ‘Get behind me, Satan! You are thinking not as God thinks, but as human beings do.’

He called the people and his disciples to him and said, ‘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, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it.’

After I become settled, I read this passage a few times, very slowly.  
I ask for the help of the Holy Spirit.

I may like to imagine the scene in my mind’s eye. Perhaps I can see the group gathered around a fire with Jesus looking from disciple to disciple. They are watching him, maybe sensing something is different.

Jesus asks, ‘Who do people say I am?’ What do I notice about the tone of his voice? How do the disciples respond?

Now he looks directly at me: ‘But *you*, who do *you* say I am?’  
What is my response? How do I feel?

Jesus now talks about his suffering to come. How do I feel now?  
I watch as Peter takes him aside, trying to protect his friend.

Maybe I can identify with this. It can be hard to feel powerless to help those we care for. I bring to mind any situation where I feel I have no control, and speak to the Lord about it.

I give what time I can, staying with the disciples gathered around the Lord whom we love.

And I quietly ponder, Who is Jesus for me? Who am I for Jesus?

When I am ready, I end with a slow and deliberate sign of the cross.

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

The Lord is coming to my help.

*First Reading*

He turned his ear to me in the day when I called him.

*Psalm*

If good works do not go with faith, it is quite dead. *Second Reading*

Anyone who loses his life for my sake will save it.

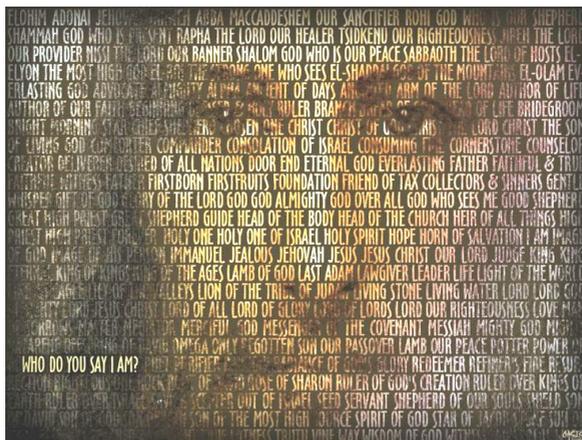
*Gospel*

But you, who do you say I am?

*Gospel*

*This week's texts if you want to reflect further:*

*Isaiah 50: 5–9; Psalm 114 (116); James 2:14–18; Mark 8: 27–35*



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