

The Living Word

Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A

3 September 2023

First Reading Jer 20:7-9

The word of the Lord God has meant derision for me.

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.

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 62:2-6. 8-9. R. v.2

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

1. 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.)
2. 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.)
3. 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.)
4. 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.)

Second Reading Rom 12:1-2

May you present your bodies as a living sacrifice.

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.

Gospel Acclamation See Eph 1:17-18

Alleluia, alleluia!

*May the Father of our Lord Jesus
Christ
enlighten the eyes of our heart,
that we might see how great
is the hope*

to which we are called.

Alleluia!

Gospel Mt 16:21-27

Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself.

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.'



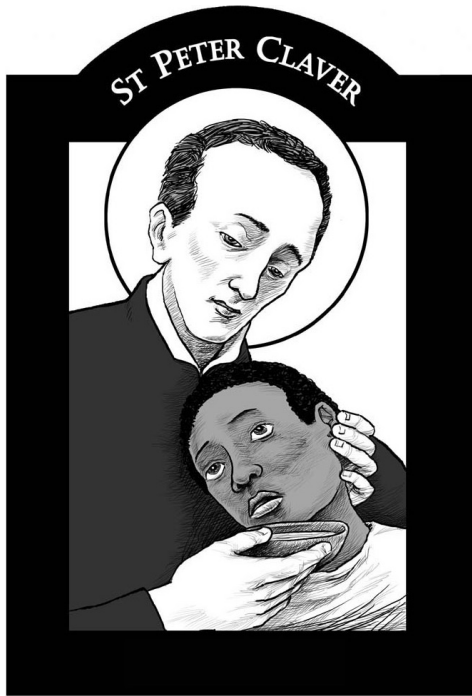
Reflection by Nick Brodie

In our own times, when the threat posed by climate change is becoming increasingly obvious, this Gospel passage asks us to look and act with openness to our sharing in God's plan. There is no mandate here for doing nothing and letting catastrophe happen. Ours is not a religion of sanctified fatalism or pious denialism. Ours is a faith which demands that we face reality, however scary it sometimes seems. We are people of hope.

After all, Jesus doesn't drift towards disaster. Rather, Jesus steps knowingly on the path towards salvation. His is a determined journey, aiming at redeeming the world. He has already told the disciples that good shall come of this. Peter's protestation comes from an understandable but misplaced attachment to the secure ways of the present. Peter, fearful of a change that is already underway, reflexively wants to deny it.

Like Peter before us, Jesus calls every one of us to follow him. We can do that by renouncing our selfishness and, like Peter eventually did, getting over our denialist habits.

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St Peter Claver was born in Spain in 1581 AD. After studying at the University of Barcelona, he became a Jesuit at the age of 20. St Peter was influenced by St Alphonsus Rodriguez to become a missionary in the Americas, where he ministered both physically and spiritually to the African slaves. He spent the next 40 years working for the humane treatment of slaves on plantations, and he reportedly converted some 300,000 African slaves to Christianity. Within the Spanish community living in America, St Peter organised charitable societies, similar to those organised by St Vincent de Paul across Europe. He said of the slaves, "We must speak to them with our hands by giving, before we try to speak to them with our lips."

COMPLETE THE TEXT MAZE

"If you want to be my followers you must take up your cross and follow me."

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CROSSWORD

Across

- 3: if something is lost you must _____ it
 5: Jesus decided he must go to this city
 6: after how many days was Jesus raised to life?
 7: the wooden structure used in a crucifixion
 11: the opposite of take

Down

- 1: unable to remember
 2: Jesus' followers
 3: take the path of a leader
 4: this man did not want to believe what was going to happen to Jesus
 8: move upward
 9: the devil
 10: we shall have eternal _____ when we enter the kingdom of God

