

## Weekend Readings & Reflections

### September 11-12, 2021 – Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

**Reflection:** In today's Gospel, we reach a pivotal moment in our walk with the Lord. After weeks of listening to His words and witnessing His deeds, along with the disciples we're asked to decide who Jesus truly is. Peter answers for them, and for us, too, when he declares: "You are the Messiah." Many expected the Messiah to be a miracle worker who would vanquish Israel's enemies and restore the kingdom of David (see [John 6:15](#)). Jesus today reveals a different portrait. He calls Himself the Son of Man, evoking the royal figure Daniel saw in his heavenly visions (see [Daniel 7:13-14](#)). But Jesus' kingship is not to be of this world (see [John 18:36](#)). And the path to His throne, as He reveals, is by way of suffering and death. Jesus identifies the Messiah with the suffering servant that Isaiah foretells in today's First Reading. The words of Isaiah's servant are Jesus' words—as He gives Himself to be shamed and beaten, trusting that God will be His help. We hear our Lord's voice again in today's Psalm, as He gives thanks that God has freed Him from the cords of death. As Jesus tells us today, to believe that He is the Messiah is to follow His way of self-denial—losing our lives to save them in order to rise with Him to new life. Our faith, we hear again in today's Epistle, must express itself in works of love (see [Galatians 5:6](#)). Notice that Jesus questions the Apostles today "along the way." They are on the way to Jerusalem, where the Lord will lay down His life. We, too, are on a journey with the Lord. We must take up our cross, giving to others and enduring all our trials for His sake and the sake of the Gospel. Our lives must be an offering of thanksgiving for the new life He has given us until that day when we reach our destination and walk before the Lord in the land of the living



### OPENING PRAYER

**Leader:** Welcome to our study for the Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time. Let us open in prayer:

**All:** Behold me, my beloved Jesus, weighed down under the burden of my trials and sufferings, I cast myself at Your feet, that You may renew my strength and my courage, while I rest here in Your Presence. Permit me to lay down my cross in Your Sacred Heart, for only Your infinite goodness can sustain me; only Your love can help me bear my cross; only Your powerful hand can lighten its weight. O Divine King, Jesus, whose heart is so compassionate to the afflicted, I wish to live in You; suffer and die in You. During my life be to me my model and my support; At the hour of my death, be my hope and my refuge. Amen.

**Leader:** Nobody likes to suffer. Nevertheless, we encounter suffering all throughout our day. It is tempting to complain - the shower was lukewarm, the baby slept terribly, work is boring, life is expensive, and so on. We can constantly find ourselves trapped by our suffering. Sometimes, it seems too difficult to go on for another day. We have to remember, however, that Christ became man so that he might experience human suffering. Indeed, he experienced the worst of human suffering by his death on the Cross and by taking on the sins of all humanity. We must follow him on his path of suffering in order to be redeemed and to rise with him on the last day. **Are you willing to suffer with him?** (One way that we can give suffering its meaning is to offer up our pain for someone else we know to be suffering greatly. We can ask Jesus to take the graces and merit from our suffering and use it to encourage or help someone else whom we love. This action not only unites us closer to Christ, but it also allows us to be united in the Body of Christ.)

(Play the video on [FORMED.org](https://www.formed.org) - [Opening the Word – 24th Sunday in Ordinary Time \(Year B\)](#))

## FIRST READING ~ Isaiah 50:5-9a ~

The Lord GOD opens my ear that I may hear; and I have not rebelled, have not turned back. I gave my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who plucked my beard; my face I did not shield from buffets and spitting. The Lord GOD is my help, therefore I am not disgraced; I have set my face like flint, knowing that I shall not be put to shame. He is near who upholds my right; if anyone wishes to oppose me, let us appear together. Who disputes my right? Let that man confront me. See, the Lord GOD is my help; who will prove me wrong?

The 3rd Song of the Suffering Servant reading from Isaiah has been chosen today to ‘match’ with the Gospel reading and Jesus’ predication of suffering in Jerusalem. Isaiah gets battered and bruised as he shares a message of hope amongst his people in Exile in Babylon. So disheartened are God’s people they feel their ‘God’ has been overpowered by Babylon’s God by allowing them to be exiled. Each day Isaiah listens to God and seeks to comfort his people.

- Have you ‘heard’ anything from God recently.... and ‘not turned your back’ on it?

Isaiah chooses above all to trust in God and ultimately he believes he will not be disgraced. Even though the experience of rejection is hard.

- Have you ever realized deeply your purpose and passion and calling? What would it involve to ‘set your face like flint’ in living and achieving this call from God? Do you know someone who is an example to you? Have you ever asked their advice?



## SECOND READING ~ James 2:14-18 ~

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and has no food for the day, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well," but you do not give them the necessities of the body, what good is it? So also faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead. Indeed someone might say, "You have faith and I have works." Demonstrate your faith to me without works, and I will demonstrate my faith to you from my works.

A beautiful part of Jewish tradition and piety was an emphasis on helping the poor. It was more than an obligation. In fact, lifting up the poor (through almsgiving) earned one the title ‘righteous’ before God.

- If faith is words only, it is ‘dead’. Can your faith be seen in any ‘works’ for lifting up the poor?
- How do you put your faith into practice?

Jesus and his disciples set out for the villages of Caesarea Philippi. Along the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" They said in reply, "John the Baptist, others Elijah, still others one of the prophets." And he asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter said to him in reply, "You are the Christ." Then he warned them not to tell anyone about him. He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer greatly and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and rise after three days. He spoke this openly. Then Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. At this he turned around and, looking at his disciples, rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan. You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do." He summoned the crowd with his disciples and said to them, "Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and that of the gospel will save it."

**Today we arrive half-way in the Gospel of Mark. It is a turning point. Jesus' secret identity only known and shouted by 'evil spirits' is now public and spoken by Peter. The healing ministry of Galilee turns toward the suffering and saving mystery of Jerusalem - the Cross. Peter correctly states Jesus' identity but misunderstands what this really means.**

- **Do you secretly wish God will ride triumphantly into the world and with power and might (violence!) 'save the world'?**

**Peter's - and Jewish- expectation was for a Messiah / Saviour to be a Royal leader, political figure, show military might and 'boot out' the occupation Army of Rome. Bring a military victory. Restore Israel's national honor. Jesus gets 'told off' by Peter when he suggests there is another way God will 'save'. Jesus 'rebukes' Peter and told him to get behind him (the rightful place for a disciple to walk is behind the master). A major argument reveals a major disagreement.**

- **What do you think is going on here? Satan is the Hebrew word for 'obstacle'. What is the obstacle that needs to be removed?**

**As Jesus turns the disciples toward Jerusalem he gathered them together to teach them. To 'take up your cross' was a shocking idea for disciples of the time. We have sanitized it with the thought of privately enduring little hardships and spiritual difficulties. Essentially, the cross was the most shameful object to die upon. It was the means by which Rome tortured and crucified anyone who resisted them and the power 'status quo'. It symbolized the powerful, crushing the poor. The fear of death (violence used by the powerful elite) reduced the poor to inaction and non-revolution. Jesus points the pathway to over-turning this violence with nonviolent resistance and the willingness to even take up your cross, deny yourself, be willing to die. You will ransom (lead someone from slavery to freedom) society's structures and interrupt the cycle of violence in the world.**

- **The disciples didn't get it. Do you?**
- **How do you understand Jesus, and how would you describe this understanding to others?**

## MEDITATION

Many in Israel recognized Jesus as a mighty man of God, even comparing him with the greatest of the prophets. Peter, always quick to respond whenever Jesus spoke, professed that Jesus was truly the "Christ of God" - "the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16). No mortal being could have revealed this to Peter, but only God. Through the "eyes of faith" Peter discovered who Jesus truly was. Peter recognized that Jesus was much more than a great teacher, prophet, and miracle worker. Peter was the first apostle to publicly declare that Jesus was the *Anointed One*, consecrated by the Father and sent into the world to redeem a fallen human race enslaved to sin and cut off from eternal life with God (Luke 9:20, Acts 2:14-36). The word for "Christ" in Greek is a translation of the Hebrew word for "Messiah" - both words literally mean the *Anointed One*. Why did Jesus command his disciples to be silent about his identity as the anointed Son of God? They were, after all, appointed to proclaim the good news to everyone. Jesus knew that they did not yet fully understand his mission and how he would accomplish it. Jesus told his disciples that it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer and die in order that God's work of redemption might be accomplished. How startled the disciples were when they heard this word. How different are God's thoughts and ways from our thoughts and ways (Isaiah 55:8). It was through humiliation, suffering, and death on the cross that Jesus broke the powers of sin and death and won for us eternal life and freedom from the slavery of sin and from the oppression of our enemy, Satan, the father of lies and the deceiver of humankind. If we want to share in the victory of the Lord Jesus, then we must also take up our cross and follow where he leads us. When my will crosses (does not align) with God's will, then his will must be done. To know Jesus Christ is to know the power of his victory on the cross where he defeated sin and conquered death through his resurrection. The Holy Spirit gives each of us the gifts and strength we need to live as sons and daughters of God. The Holy Spirit gives us *faith* to know the Lord Jesus personally as our Redeemer, and the *power* to live the Gospel faithfully, and the *courage* to witness to others the joy, truth, and freedom of the Gospel.

- Who is Jesus for you - and what difference does he make in your life? Who do you say that Jesus is?
- What is the "cross" that you and I must take up each day?

## CLOSING PRAYER

**Leader:** In closing, let us pray ...

**ALL:** Lord Jesus, I believe and I profess that you are the Christ, the Son of the living God. Take my life, my will, and all that I have, that I may be wholly yours now and forever. Amen.

**Leader:** (if time, let us offer up our intercessions ... St. Michael... Our Father... Hail Mary... Glory Be...)

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[Opening reflection was shared from St. Paul Center at <https://stpaulcenter.com/studies-tools/sunday-bible-reflections>]

[video can be found at FORMED.ORG "Opening the Word". Additional reflections can be found at FORMED in "Opening the Word"]

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