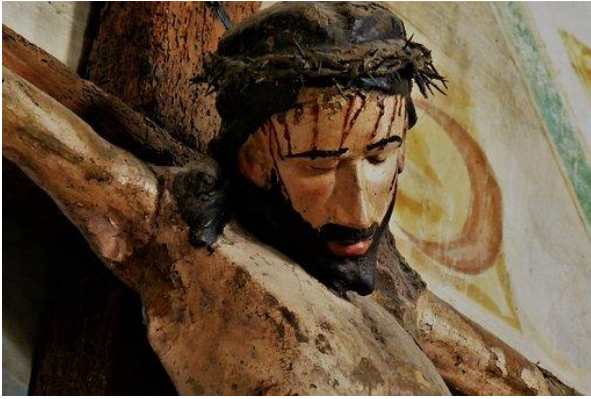


SEASON OF LENT—WEEK 2
28 February, 2021



It is in being humble that our love becomes real, devoted and ardent. If you are humble nothing will touch you, neither praise nor disgrace, because you know what you are.

—Mother Teresa

Opening Sentences

with verses from Psalm 22

Praise the One who is not repulsed by weakness
who does not despise our suffering.

In a world where vulnerability is discouraged,
we affirm humility and interconnectedness.

Where need is shameful and limitations hidden,
we lean together on God's merciful love.

In God, the poor shall eat and be satisfied;
in God, our hearts will live forever.

Opening Prayer

Author of Life,
by your Spirit I am able
to face these Lenten days
with courage and hope.
You fill me with compassion
bringing joy to my costly loving.
You bring vision to my eyes of faith
helping me discover meaning
in the simple routine of my service.

Send your Spirit
to teach me the way of self-giving love.
Strengthen my faith and trust
that I might walk the path with Christ.
Amen.

ENCOUNTERING THE LIVING WORD

Gospel Presentation—Mark 9:30–35; 10:13–31

The last few weeks many have been upset and outraged by the culture of violence, fear and dominance instead the “Canberra bubble.” Money, power and influence are *the* triad of temptation as we will hear from the Gospel today. The teachings, disposition and actions of Jesus raise questions directly related to the malaise of our culture such as:

- On whom and what shall we trust?
- What is true greatness?
- How are we as followers of Jesus called to be, especially in our wish to be a healing, reconciling, harmonious community in the world?

Jesus and the disciples went on from there and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know it; for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, “The Son of Man is betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again.” What Jesus was saying made no sense to them, but they were afraid to question him.

Then they came to Capernaum; and when Jesus was in the house he asked the disciples, “What were you arguing about on the way?” But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another who was the greatest. He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, “Whoever desires to be first must be last of all and servant of all.”

As Jesus was teaching his disciples, people were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, “Let the little children come to me; do not hinder them; for the kingdom of God is like ones such as these. Truly I tell you, whoever does not welcome the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

As Jesus was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: ‘You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; Honour your father and mother.’” He said to him, “Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth.” Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, “You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.” When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions.

Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!” And the disciples were perplexed at these words. But Jesus said to them again, “Children, how hard it is for those who trust their wealth to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” They were greatly astounded and said to one another, “Then who can be saved?” Jesus looked at them and said, “For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible.”

Going Deeper

*If a word, phrase or gesture stands out for or moved you,
you might like to reflect on this movement of heart and what the Spirit is trying to say to you.
Alternatively, you might consider one of the questions below:*

The gospel writer places Jesus' conversation with the disciples *in the house*. By this, Mark "domesticates" the Gospel, he brings Jesus' teachings close to home, so to speak. We receive, learn about and live out our love for God and others through every day, ordinary relationships. This is a shift from the sacrificial system promoted by the temple in Jesus' day or the institutionalised religion in our day which can keep faith and love at a (safe) distance.

- What have you learned about God's love in the realities close to home for you?
- Do you hear an invitation in today's Gospel to love through some word or action?

The entirety of today's reading presents a clear distinction between those who vie for power and status (disciples) or who attempt to earn a place in the heart of God (rich man), and the children who are simply recipients of love as their parents bring them to Jesus who lifts and blesses them.

- When have you experienced grace and love coming to you freely in recent days?
- In the silence, you might relax into the presence of God that surrounds and seeks to bless you. Picture love filling you with every breath.

Jesus teaches the rich man in the Gospel, "Go, sell what you own, give money to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven." Relinquishing our possessions and giving generously—enacting an intentional redistribution of power and resources—is a continual process. It is the way of Jesus that enables us to make real the kingdom of God in our midst.

- Hear Jesus' teaching as though he is saying it directly to you. What, if any, response is being invited from you?
- What message might there be for us as a community? How might this teaching give shape to how we embody our mission?

RESPONDING WITH OUR LIVES

Prayers of the People

Moulder of life: Help us to let go of habitual ways of living. Challenge us to lighten our footprint on your creation.

In your mercy, hear our prayer.

Help us to let go of our sectarianism. As the world still wavers from polarised viewpoints, enable us to connect in new ways.

In your mercy, hear our prayer.

Help us to let go of our weariness in the pandemic. As the vaccine arrives and is distributed, fill us with renewed energy to establish an improved normal.

In your mercy, hear our prayer.

Help us to let go of our patriarchal system, to hear and respond to the cries, anger and despair of the victims or victimised. Make this a moment where your light penetrates in this darkness.

In your mercy, hear our prayer.

Help us to let go of our outmoded ways. Provoke us to envision a renewal for life in community, to embody your love in this world.

In your mercy, hear our prayer.

And now, as we consider our personal prayers, help us view your world with childlike eyes and heart... Amen.

Disciples' Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen.

You might want to listen to this song on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VBJDWSufLPg>

1
 God, be the love to search and keep me;
 God, be the prayer to move my voice;
 God, be the strength to now uphold me.
 O Christ, surround me, O Christ surround me.

2
 Bind to myself the Name of Holy,
 great cloud of witnesses enfold;
 prophets, apostles, angels witness.
 O Christ, surround me, O Christ surround me.

3
 Brightness of sun and glow of moonlight,
 flashing of lightning, strength of wind,
 depth of the sea to soil of planet:
 O Christ, surround me, O Christ surround me.

4
 Walking behind to hem my journey,
 going ahead to light my way,
 and from beneath, above and all ways,
 O Christ, surround me, O Christ surround me.

5
 Christ in the eyes of all who see me,
 Christ in the ears that hear my voice,
 Christ in the hearts of all who know me:
 O Christ, surround me, O Christ surround me.

Blessing

Refreshed by this time of worship,
 let us return to our service in the world
 knowing this quiet centre is within us
 and we can return to it whenever we feel
 weary, overwhelmed,
 or in need of comfort or courage.
 Deep within we encounter
 God our maker,
 Christ our lover,
 and the Spirit our keeper—
 the Triune God with and for us always.
 Let us go in peace.