

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON (or a hymn) To you I call; for you will surely heed me, O God; turn your ear to me; hear my words. Guard me as the apple of your eye; in the shadow of your wings protect me.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Ps 32)

ANTIPHON: Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.

RESPONSE: Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.

LECTOR: The word of the Lord is faithful and all his works to be trusted. The Lord loves justice and right and fills the earth with his love. **R.**

LECTOR: The Lord looks on those who revere him, on those who hope in his love, to rescue their souls from death, to keep them alive in famine. **R.**

LECTOR: Our soul is waiting for the Lord. The Lord is our help and our shield. May your love be upon us, O Lord, as we place all our hope in you. **R.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION Alleluia, alleluia! The Son of Man came to serve and to give his life as a ransom for all. Alleluia!

COMMUNION ANTIPHON (or a hymn) Behold, the eyes of the Lord are on those who fear him, who hope in his merciful love, to rescue their souls from death, to keep them alive in famine.

Or

The Son of Man has come to give his life as a ransom for many.

TODAY'S READINGS Isaiah 53:10-11; Hebrews 4:14-16; Mark 10:35-45

NEXT WEEK (30th Sunday of Year B) Jeremiah 31:7-9; Psalm 125; Hebrews 5:1-6; Mark 10:46-52

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Christmas cards

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To be a servant for others



20 October 2024 29th Sunday Year B

To be human is to experience desire and ambition. To know a person's deep desires is to see into that person's soul. Desire for good, such as world peace or the end of global warming, is a positive urge of the human spirit.

Other desires that focus on personal happiness and success can also be positive. However, they may also become caught up with the 'dark side' of the human spirit leading to jealousy, blind ambition and ruthless disregard for others.

Throughout the drama of human life, desire and suffering are closely linked. This is evident, for example, in the works of Shakespeare: one thinks of the innocent, youthful desires of Romeo and Juliet, the dark and treacherous desires of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, or the obsessive desires of King Richard III. In different ways, these desires all lead to tragic suffering.

The connection between suffering and desire is also a key insight of the Buddha who taught that all suffering is caused by human desire and that happiness or enlightenment consists in the elimination of all desires. How does this compare with the approach of our own Christian Scriptures?

The long history of Israel is one of suffering at the hands of external enemies and through internal divisions. Jesus' life-story is also one in which his efforts to bring about God's kingdom of justice and peace are thwarted by negative forces. Even Jesus' own disciples seem blind to his real mission and message.

Why are Jesus' disciples so dim-witted? In

a word, they are so caught up with their petty desires and ambition for power and glory, they are unable to see Jesus for who he really is or to hear what he truly asks. They want to overcome suffering (as we all do); but they think the way to do this is in the worldly way of grabbing power, status and authority.

Jesus' response is to challenge their preconceptions: "Anyone who is to be great among you must be your servant; anyone who wants to be first among you must be your slave." Suffering is integral to our human lives. In this sense, compared to the Buddha, Jesus is more radical by insisting his followers embrace suffering as he does: "Can you drink the cup that I must drink?"

Jesus is not glorifying suffering for its own sake but shows us how to place suffering in its proper context. The message is foreshadowed by Isaiah who links positive acceptance of suffering with liberation from sin and practising justice. Acting for God's kingdom means putting one's life on the line—and even, as in Jesus' case, giving one's "life as a ransom for many".

There is another form of suffering Jesus shares with us because, like us, he experiences human weakness – though, the writer is careful to add, "he is without sin" (Hebrews). Sin is the ultimate cause of human suffering often expressed in our wayward human desires. Jesus shows us the way to purify such desires through a life of servanthood.

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