

**ENTRANCE ANTIPHON** (or a hymn) Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I cry to you all the day long. O Lord, you are good and forgiving, full of mercy to all who call to you.

**RESPONSORIAL PSALM** (Ps 62)

**ANTIPHON:** My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God.

**RESPONSE: My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God.**

**LECTOR:** 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.**

**LECTOR:** 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.**

**LECTOR:** 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.**

**LECTOR:** 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.**

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION** 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!

**COMMUNION ANTIPHON** (or a hymn) How great is the goodness, Lord, that you keep for those who fear you.

**Or**

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God. Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

**TODAY'S READINGS** Jeremiah 20:7-9; Romans 12:1-2; Matthew 16:21-27

**NEXT WEEK** (23rd Sunday of Year A) Ezekiel 33:7-9; Psalm 94; Romans 13:8-10; Matthew 18:15-20

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**3 September 2023 22nd Sunday Year A**

Is self-sacrifice ever mentioned in your workplace, along with service, commitment, excellence or respect? Probably not because, as one website suggests, it's not normal and very unhealthy, while another warns us that you'll sacrifice your own well-being.

There are positive views too, suggesting we are a little ambivalent and unsure about the idea of self-sacrifice. While there's probably not much mention of it at work, we quite unselfconsciously refer to it when it comes to our families and sports teams. See how this plays out in the gospel: when Jesus mentions his suffering, death and resurrection to Peter, Peter takes him aside and argues with him. For Peter thinks he is the Messiah we had been led to expect, not this humiliating alternative Jesus puts to him.

We know the feeling: we often think we know better than Jesus what he's about. But Jesus responds to Peter, in no uncertain terms, that Peter has become an obstacle in God's way. Then, turning to the disciples Jesus says let each "take up his cross and follow me." Taking up our cross, which is Jesus's, we gradually come to befriend God and so begin, at moments, to discover the glory of the resurrection in our lives. You can see why the prophet Jeremiah is tempted to become an obstacle in the first reading. He sounds off against God, at having to howl violence and ruin at the people, who hurl insult and derision

back at him. But the more Jeremiah does God's bidding, the more he realises God is at the core of his life. The fire of God's love consumes him and, in the midst of his dire complaints, Jeremiah recognises, though he can hardly bear it, that God is there. In the second reading, Paul speaks of how the Good News of the cross shapes our life together as a community. What do we have to let go of to make room in our lives for others, to learn that we belong to each other? This is what Paul is speaking of, learning to 'offer our own lives, together with Jesus, for the life of the world.'

It's what we celebrate in the sacrifice of the Mass and what we are sent out to do in our daily lives. In this way, we begin to discover 'the will of God and know what is good.' It's 'not normal', in the sense that's it's not something we have initiated but is a gift of God.

However difficult the situation we may find ourselves in - firmly rebuked, derided, cast out - the readings encourage us to take heart, because it's there we're able to discover the cross and each other. The way into a relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and with each other, is through the cross. It is to the cross that we commit ourselves to each time we make the sign of the cross.

Losing our lives for his sake, we find them. As Jesus makes clear, it's our new normal.

**Damian Coleridge**

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