

Reading for Thursday after Ash Wednesday

19th February 2026

First reading

Deuteronomy 30:15-20

‘See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse.’

Moses spoke to the people: ‘See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil. If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God that I command you today, by loving the Lord your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his rules, then you shall live and multiply, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them, I declare to you today, that you shall surely perish. You shall not live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to enter and possess. I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, loving the Lord your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.’

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 1:1-2. 3. 4. 6. R Psalm 40(39):5a

Blessed the man who has placed his trust in the Lord.

Blessed indeed is the man
who follows not the counsel of the wicked,
nor stands in the path with sinners,
nor abides in the company of scorners,
but whose delight is the law of the Lord,
and who ponders his law day and night.

He is like a tree that is planted
beside the flowing waters,
that yields its fruit in due season,
and whose leaves shall never fade;
and all that he does shall prosper.
Not so are the wicked, not so!
For they, like winnowed chaff,
shall be driven away by the wind.
For the Lord knows the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked will perish.

Gospel Acclamation

Glory and praise to you, O Christ.
Repent, says the Lord,
for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.
Glory and praise to you, O Christ.

Matthew 4:17

Gospel**Luke 9:22-25**

'Whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.'

At that time: Jesus said to his disciples: 'The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.'

And he said to all, 'If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?'

Short reflection on the reading for today

Jesus says that if we want to be his followers we have to be ready to renounce ourselves. Lent is traditionally a time for self-denial. We ask ourselves what it is we need to let go, to give up, in order to follow the Lord more closely. We probably could benefit from cutting down on something; it might be an excessive attachment that is derailing us, or some habit that is not serving us well.

Self denial is harder now than in the past because our marketing culture urges us to indulge ourselves. We can easily think of self-restraint as negative. Yet, any giving up of self indulgence, any letting go of trivia, is done to enhance our life, to live it to the full. The 1st Reading puts it very positively, "Choose life," and Jesus says in the gospel that whoever loses his life for his sake will save it. We pray this Lent that the Lord would give us the grace to keep on choosing life.