

## Reading for the 22<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

30<sup>th</sup> August 2026

### First reading

**Jeremiah 20:7-9**

**‘The word of the Lord has become for me a reproach.’**

O Lord, you have deceived me, and I was deceived;

you are stronger than I, and you have prevailed.

I have become a laughing-stock all the day; everyone mocks me.

For whenever I speak, I cry out, I shout, ‘Violence and destruction!’

For the word of the Lord has become for me a reproach and derision all day long.

If I say, ‘I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name’,

there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones,

and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot.

### Responsorial Psalm

**Ps 63(62):2. 3-4. 5-6. 8-9. R2b**

*For you my soul is thirsting, O Lord, my God.*

O God, you are my God; at dawn I seek you; for you my soul is thirsting.

For you my flesh is pining, like a dry, weary land without water.

I have come before you in the sanctuary, to behold your strength and your glory.

Your loving mercy is better than life; my lips will speak your praise.

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; with joyful lips, my mouth shall praise you.

For you have been my strength; in the shadow of your wings I rejoice.

My soul clings fast to you; your right hand upholds me.

### Second reading

**Romans 12:1-2**

**‘Present your bodies as a living sacrifice.’**

I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

### Gospel Acclamation

**Cf. Ephesians 1:17-18**

Alleluia, alleluia.

May the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

enlighten the eyes of our hearts,

so that we may know the hope to which he has called us.

Alleluia.

### Gospel

**Matthew 16:21-27**

**‘If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself.’**

At that time: Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, ‘Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you.’ But he

turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.'

Then Jesus told his disciples, 'If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done.'

### **Short reflection on the reading for today**

If invited to pick and choose within the Gospels, and form our religion only with what appeals to us, what a cosy, comfortable church we would have! We might keep the stories about Christ's birth and infancy, his temptation in the desert and his healing miracles. We would include our favourite parables, like the Prodigal son, the Pharisee and the Publican, and of course, the Good Samaritan. But would we leave out that Gospel for today, that hard teaching about renouncing self, taking up the cross, losing our lives for the sake of Jesus? And even if we have not removed those words from our Gospels, do we remain deaf to them in practise, in our lives?

In a way, isn't following Christ like accepting a friend whom we must accept in full or not at all; welcoming the demands as well as the benefits of friendship? Just as we need to take people as they are, without trying to change them to suit ourselves, so with the Gospel: we accept the whole of Christ's recorded words, because we trust him and know that his ways are truth.

So what does the Lord want from us? What does he mean by "renounce yourself," "lose your life for my sake," "carry your cross," or (in the epistle) "present your bodies as a holy sacrifice?" Surely these words don't refer to anything suicidal, to devaluing of this present life, its joys and its achievements? And yet, are these not something more than a pious way of saying: Put up with what cannot be changed? These are questions to revolve in the mind, without expecting any quick or simple solution. If we will allow, God's Word challenges us out of any complacency with a comfortable, conforming religion. It unmasks our many evasions, our double standards, our desire for "cheap grace" — wanting salvation at cut price, unwilling to involve ourselves in sacrifice.

Perhaps a clue to this demand is in the first reading, in Jeremiah's extraordinary accusation that he was *seduced* by God. Letting his prophetic vocation overpower him, Jeremiah was involved in many a thankless task. He had *fallen in love with God*, so that nothing held him back from doing God's will, no matter where this might lead. Have *we* fallen in love with Christ? Are we seduced by him, so as to give to his service all that is ours to give? Wouldn't that be *becoming a living sacrifice*?

We might overly focus on the "renunciation" in today's Gospel so as to miss its positive aspect. All growth, all lasting achievement demands effort and sacrifice. Yet the sacrifice can be a satisfying part of experience, when orientated towards a high and valued goal. (Examples: athletic training; mountain-climbing; studying a language; practising any skill.) So, the self discipline involved in Christian life, and accepting the circumstances in which God places us, contribute to our personal destiny. And we look forward in hope to the great reward of loyal service — when the Son of man, coming in glory, will reward all according to their behaviour.