

Reading for the Feast of St James the Great

25th July 2026

First reading

2 Corinthians 4:7-15

‘He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence.’

Brothers and Sisters: We have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For we who live are always being given over to death for the sake of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you.

Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, ‘I believed, and so I spoke’, we also believe, and so we also speak, knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence. For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 126(125):1-2b. 2c-3. 4-5. 6. R5

Those who are sowing in tears will sing when they reap.

When the Lord brought back the exiles of Sion,
we thought we were dreaming.

Then was our mouth filled with laughter;
on our tongues, songs of joy.

Then they said among the nations,
‘What great deeds the Lord worked for them!’

What great deeds the Lord worked for us!

Indeed, we were glad.

Bring back our exiles, O Lord,
as streams in the Negeb.

Those who are sowing in tears
will sing when they reap.

They go out, they go out, full of tears,
bearing seed for the sowing;
they come back, they come back with a song,
bearing their sheaves.

Gospel Acclamation

Cf. John 15:16

Alleluia, alleluia.

I chose you out of the world, says the Lord,
that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide.
Alleluia.

Gospel

Matthew 20:20-28

‘You will drink my cup.’

At that time: The mother of the sons of Zebedee came up to Jesus with her sons, and kneeling before him she asked him for something. And he said to her, ‘What do you want?’ She said to him, ‘Say that these two sons of mine are to sit one at your right hand and one at your left in your kingdom.’ Jesus answered, ‘You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink?’ They said to him, ‘We are able.’ He said to them, ‘You will drink my cup, but to sit at my right hand and at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father.’ And when the Ten heard it, they were indignant at the two brothers. But Jesus called them to him and said, ‘You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.’

Short reflection on the reading for today

Today’s Gospel comes just after Jesus had told his disciples of what would happen to him and they were shocked. And then we have the request from the Mother of James and John.

So Jesus takes them all aside and gives them a lesson in what constitutes true greatness in his world. It is not a question of status or power. Greatness in Jesus’ world, in his Kingdom, comes to those who dedicate themselves most to the well-being of their brothers and sisters. And Jesus himself was a living example of this. He, the Son of God, came to serve and not to be served. His whole life, up to his last breath, was a mission of love and service given unconditionally to every single person. He died in shame and disgrace, a nobody. He totally emptied himself—for us. That is greatness. Of course, in time, James would learn this lesson and would follow his Master in giving his life for the sake of the gospel.