

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

My eyes are always on the Lord,
for he rescues my feet from the snare.
Turn to me and have mercy on me,
for I am alone and poor.

COLLECT

O God, author of every mercy and of all goodness,
who in fasting, prayer and almsgiving
have shown us a remedy for sin,
look graciously on this confession of our
lowliness,
that we, who are bowed down by our
conscience,
may always be lifted up by your mercy.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of
the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING Exodus 20:1-17

(For shorter form, read between > <)

A reading from the book of Exodus.

>God spoke all these words. He said, "I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.
"You shall have no gods except me.<
"You shall not make yourself a carved image or any likeness of anything in heaven or on earth beneath or in the waters under the earth; you shall not bow down to them or serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God and I punish the father's fault in the sons, the grandsons, and the great-grandsons of those who hate me; but I show kindness to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.
>"You shall not utter the name of the Lord your God to misuse it, for the Lord will not leave unpunished the man who utters his name to misuse it.
"Remember the sabbath day and keep it holy. < For six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath for the Lord your God. You shall do no work that day, neither you nor your son nor your daughter nor your servants, men or women, nor your animals nor the stranger who lives with you. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth and the sea and all that these hold, but on the seventh day he rested; that is why the Lord has blessed the sabbath day and made it sacred.
>"Honour your father and your mother so that you may have a long life in the land that the Lord your God has given to you.
"You shall not kill.
"You shall not commit adultery.
"You shall not steal.
"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.
"You shall not covet your neighbour's house. You shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or his servant, man or woman, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is his."

The word of the Lord.<
Thanks be to God.

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The word of the Lord.<
Thanks be to God.

PSALM Psalm 18

Response:
You, Lord, have the message of eternal life.

- The law of the Lord is perfect, it revives the soul.

The rule of the Lord is to be trusted, it gives wisdom to the simple. (R.)

- The precepts of the Lord are right, they gladden the heart. The command of the Lord is clear, it gives light to the eyes. (R.)
- The fear of the Lord is holy, abiding for ever. The decrees of the Lord are truth and all of them just. (R.)
- They are more to be desired than gold, than the purest of gold and sweeter are they than honey, than honey from the comb. (R.)

SECOND READING 1 Corinthians 1:22-25

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Corinthians.

While the Jews demand miracles and the Greeks look for wisdom, here are we preaching a crucified Christ; to the Jews an obstacle that they cannot get over, to the pagans madness, but to those who have been called, whether they are Jews or Greeks, a Christ who is the power and the wisdom of God. For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

**Praise to you, O Christ, king of eternal glory!
I am the resurrection and the life, says the Lord,
whoever believes in me will never die.
Praise to you, O Christ, king of eternal glory!**

GOSPEL John 2:13-25

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

Just before the Jewish Passover Jesus went up to Jerusalem, and in the Temple he found people selling cattle and sheep and pigeons, and the money changers sitting at their counters there. Making a whip out of some cord, he drove them all out of the Temple, cattle and sheep as well, scattered the money changers' coins, knocked their tables over and said to the pigeon-sellers, "Take all this out of here and stop turning my Father's house into a market." Then his disciples remembered the words of scripture: Zeal for your house will devour me. The Jews intervened and said, "What sign can you show us to justify what you have done?" Jesus answered, "Destroy this sanctuary, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this sanctuary: are you going to raise it up in three days?" But he was speaking of the sanctuary that was his body, and when Jesus rose from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the scripture and the words he had said.

During his stay in Jerusalem for the Passover many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he gave, but Jesus knew them all and did not trust himself to them; he never needed evidence about any man; he could tell what a man had in him.

The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in God,
the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
(all bow during the next two lines)

who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty;
from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting.
Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Be pleased, O Lord, with these sacrificial offerings,
and grant that we who beseech pardon for our own sins,
may take care to forgive our neighbour.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

The sparrow finds a home,
and the swallow a nest for her young:
by your altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God.
Blessed are they who dwell in your house,
forever singing your praise.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

As we receive the pledge of things yet hidden in heaven and are nourished while still on earth with the Bread that comes from on high, we humbly entreat you, O Lord, that what is being brought about in us in mystery may come to true completion.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

THE WORD

Jesus Cleanses the Temple

In the Gospel accounts of Mark, Matthew and Luke, the episode of the cleansing of the Temple follows the entry of Jesus and his disciples into Jerusalem and provides the reason for the final plot to bring about Jesus' death.

In the Fourth Gospel (John) version, the pretext for this conspiracy is the raising of Lazarus, so the evangelist places this well-attested event at the beginning of Jesus' ministry. The area of Judaea is that of hostility to Jesus, Jerusalem is the chief city in the region and the Temple is the religious focal point of the capital. The Passover is the principal Jewish pilgrimage feast, so the setting of today's event could not be more significant. Three terms are used to denote the place: "Temple", "my Father's house" and "sanctuary". The first refers to the physical building; the second, the house of the Lord (the traditional way of referring to the Temple) which has become a "market"; the third, the inner sanctuary, the place of God's presence to the people of Israel.

In the Fourth Gospel, we find the theme of *replacement*: Jesus in himself replaces the feasts and institutions of Judaism. The Temple was the place of privileged access to the presence of God for Israel. The discussion with the Jewish authorities plays on the ambiguity of the physical stone structure and its ultimate purpose as the place where God's presence is located in a special way. As a result of Jesus' death and resurrection, Jesus himself will be the place where God's presence is accessible to people. ■

LEARN

In the Fourth Gospel, the term "the Jews" usually refers to the religious and political leaders in Israel, not to the people as a whole.

In this Gospel version, Jesus replaces, in himself, the Temple as the focus of God's presence.

The Temple was the place of sacrifice: after its destruction by the Romans in AD 70, it was never rebuilt and the sacrificial cult ceased in Judaism.

SAY

God, give me the courage to
change the things I can.
(from the Serenity Prayer)

DO

Reflect on what makes you angry in society or your local area: decide what you can do about it – and do it.

REFLECT

The Gospel account of the driving out of the merchants from the Temple precincts is the only one in the Gospels which shows Jesus in a fury. The merchants were providing the animals required for the rituals of sacrifice: the money changers were converting Roman coinage bearing the emperor's image into acceptable currency for use within the sacred enclosure; there is no suggestion of racketeering. Although there was nothing technically wrong with what they were doing, Jesus sees it as an abuse, distracting from the purpose for which the Temple was built, and takes drastic action to rectify the situation.

Anger is an emotion which is often misunderstood. It is essentially the appropriate reaction to unjust situations or the exploitation of the weaker members of society. It is usually the driving force behind much-needed reforms, for instance in regard to slavery, child labour and discrimination of any kind. It is, indeed, listed among the seven deadly sins, but if we look at these titles, we will find that they contain a positive value and that the "sin" is, in fact, an extreme and inappropriate expression of this. Anger enables a constructive response to injustice: uncontrollable rage is destructive, both to the person concerned and to others involved. Without anger, there would be a resigned acceptance of unfair treatment: this is not the message of the Bible, of the prophets or of Jesus. It may be that we do not get angry enough when we should. ■

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Rejoice, Jerusalem, and all who love her.
Be joyful, all who were in mourning;
exult and be satisfied at her consoling breast.

COLLECT

O God, who through your Word
reconcile the human race to yourself in a
wonderful way,
grant, we pray,
that with prompt devotion and eager faith
the Christian people may hasten
toward the solemn celebrations to come.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of
the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING 2 Chronicles 36:14-16, 19-23

A reading from the second book of
Chronicles.

All the heads of the priesthood, and the
people too, added infidelity to infidelity,
copying all the shameful practices of
the nations and defiling the Temple that
the Lord had consecrated for himself in
Jerusalem. The Lord, the God of their
ancestors, tirelessly sent them messenger
after messenger, since he wished to spare his
people and his house. But they ridiculed the
messengers of God, they despised his words,
they laughed at his prophets, until at last the
wrath of the Lord rose so high against his
people that there was no further remedy.

Their enemies burned down the Temple
of God, demolished the walls of Jerusalem,
set fire to all its palaces, and destroyed
everything of value in it. The survivors were
deported by Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon;
they were to serve him and his sons until
the kingdom of Persia came to power. This is
how the word of the Lord was fulfilled that he
spoke through Jeremiah, "Until this land has
enjoyed its sabbath rest, until seventy years
have gone by, it will keep sabbath throughout
the days of its desolation."

And in the first year of Cyrus king of
Persia, to fulfil the word of the Lord that
was spoken through Jeremiah, the Lord
roused the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia to
issue a proclamation and to have it publicly
displayed throughout his kingdom: "Thus
speaks Cyrus king of Persia, 'The Lord,
the God of heaven, has given me all the
kingdoms of the earth; he has ordered me to
build him a Temple in Jerusalem, in Judah.
Whoever there is among you of all his
people, may his God be with him! Let him go
up.'"

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM Psalm 136

Response:

**O let my tongue
cleave to my mouth
if I remember you not!**

1. By the rivers of Babylon
there we sat and wept,
remembering Zion:
on the poplars that grew there
we hung up our harps. (R.)
2. For it was there that they asked us,
our captors, for songs,
our oppressors, for joy.

"Sing to us," they said,
"one of Zion's songs." (R.)

3. O how could we sing
the song of the Lord
on alien soil?
If I forget you, Jerusalem,
let my right hand wither! (R.)
4. O let my tongue
cleave to my mouth
if I remember you not,
if I prize not Jerusalem
above all my joys! (R.)

SECOND READING Ephesians 2:4-10

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the
Ephesians.

God loved us with so much love that he was
generous with his mercy: when we were
dead through our sins, he brought us to life
with Christ – it is through grace that you have
been saved – and raised us up with him and
gave us a place with him in heaven, in Christ
Jesus.

This was to show for all ages to come,
through his goodness towards us in Christ
Jesus, how infinitely rich he is in grace.
Because it is by grace that you have been
saved, through faith; not by anything of your
own, but by a gift from God; not by anything
that you have done, so that nobody can claim
the credit. We are God's work of art, created
in Christ Jesus to live the good life as from
the beginning he had meant us to live it.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

**Glory and praise to you, O Christ!
God loved the world so much that he gave
his only Son;
everyone who believes in him has eternal life.
Glory and praise to you, O Christ!**

GOSPEL John 3:14-21

A reading from the holy Gospel according to
John.

Jesus said to Nicodemus:

"The Son of Man must be lifted up
as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert,
so that everyone who believes may have
eternal life in him.

Yes, God loved the world so much
that he gave his only Son,
so that everyone who believes in him may
not be lost
but may have eternal life.
For God sent his Son into the world
not to condemn the world,
but so that through him the world might be
saved.

No one who believes in him will be
condemned;
but whoever refuses to believe is
condemned already,
because he has refused to believe
in the name of God's only Son.
On these grounds is sentence pronounced:
that though the light has come into the
world
men have shown they prefer
darkness to the light
because their deeds were evil.
And indeed, everybody who does wrong
hates the light and avoids it,
for fear his actions should be exposed;

but the man who lives by the truth
comes out into the light,
so that it may be plainly seen that what he
does is done in God."

The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

**I believe in God,
the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,**

(all bow during the next two lines)

**who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of God the
Father almighty;
from there he will come to judge the living
and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting.
Amen.**

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

We place before you with joy these offerings,
which bring eternal remedy, O Lord,
praying that we may both faithfully revere
them
and present them to you, as is fitting,
for the salvation of all the world.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

**Jerusalem is built as a city bonded as one
together.
It is there that the tribes go up, the tribes of
the Lord,
to praise the name of the Lord.**

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

O God, who enlighten everyone who comes
into this world,
illuminate our hearts, we pray,
with the splendour of your grace,
that we may always ponder
what is worthy and pleasing to your majesty
and love you in all sincerity.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

THE WORD

In the Fourth Gospel (John), Jesus encounters individuals who represent a specific type of person. Nicodemus is a Jewish scholar who is literally and metaphorically in the dark about Jesus. He is an honest individual, one with well-formed beliefs, whose attitude to Jesus is positive, but limited by his own understanding of God.

He is impressed by the signs that Jesus has worked, but these do not, and cannot, bring him to a true appreciation of who Jesus really is. He seems to want to fit Jesus into his present system of belief, but Jesus challenges him to expand his vision beyond a narrowly Jewish way of thinking to one which is universal.

Jesus appeals to their common Jewish heritage by invoking the memory of Moses fashioning the bronze serpent and curing the Israelites who had been bitten by snakes as punishment for their complaining during the Exodus journey through the wilderness. By a play on the verb "to lift up", he presents his own being exalted on the cross as a similar healing for all those who will look at him and believe. Jesus speaks of this concern of God as being due to God's love for the world, that is, for all human beings. It is on the response which the person makes to the revealing of God's self in Jesus that judgement depends: it is not an act of God, but the result of the decision which each person makes for themselves which determines whether a person is condemned or not. Judgement is in the here and now, based on whether we accept or reject Jesus and his message. ■

LEARN

In the Gospel according to John, the crucifixion is "the exaltation" ("lifting up") of Jesus as king and priest.

Light and darkness/night are symbols of belief and unbelief in the Fourth Gospel.

Judgement in John is the decision the person makes to accept or reject Jesus and his message: it is something which the individual does, not an external, divine action.

SAY

The Son of Man must be lifted up... so that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.
(John 3:14-15)

REFLECT

Nicodemus is an interesting character. We first encounter him as a furtive figure, coming to Jesus under the cover of darkness: later he speaks up against the religious authorities' attempt to convict Jesus without giving him the benefit of due legal process; finally, he emerges as a courageous person, risking his reputation, and perhaps more, to bury the body of the crucified Jesus. We can see in him an example of developing faith and commitment.

It is in this dialogue between Jesus and the Jewish scholar that we find perhaps the most concise summary of the Christian faith. Sometimes, we can see displayed at sporting events posters proclaiming "John 3:16": this is the four-line verse which says: "God loved the world so much/ that he gave his only Son,/ so that whoever believes in him may not be lost/ but may have eternal life." Some people have said that if we were to lose the whole of the Christian scriptures except for this one verse, then we would still have the essence of the Gospel.

Nicodemus sincerely believed in the teachings he had received: Jesus did not tell him that he was wrong, but encouraged him to think more deeply about how God viewed the world, not just Nicodemus' part of it. Perhaps we might put ourselves in Nicodemus' shoes and broaden our understanding of Jesus and his message as well. ■

DO

Memorise the text of John 3:16, given in the "Reflect" section.

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Give me justice, O God,
and plead my cause against a nation that is
faithless.
From the deceitful and cunning rescue me,
for you, O God, are my strength.

COLLECT

By your help, we beseech you, Lord our God,
may we walk eagerly in that same charity
with which, out of love for the world,
your Son handed himself over to death.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of
the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING Jeremiah 31:31-34

A reading from the prophet Jeremiah.

See, the days are coming – it is the Lord who
speaks – when I will make a new covenant
with the House of Israel and the House of
Judah, but not a covenant like the one I made
with their ancestors on the day I took them
by the hand to bring them out of the land of
Egypt. They broke that covenant of mine, so
I had to show them who was master. It is the
Lord who speaks. No, this is the covenant I
will make with the House of Israel when those
days arrive – it is the Lord who speaks. Deep
within them I will plant my Law, writing it on
their hearts. Then I will be their God and they
shall be my people. There will be no further
need for neighbour to try to teach neighbour,
or brother to say to brother, “Learn to know
the Lord!” No, they will all know me, the least
no less than the greatest – it is the Lord who
speaks – since I will forgive their iniquity and
never call their sin to mind.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM Psalm 50

Response:

A pure heart create for me, O God.

1. Have mercy on me, God, in your kindness.
In your compassion blot out my offence.
O wash me more and more from my guilt
and cleanse me from my sin. (R.)
2. A pure heart create for me, O God,
put a steadfast spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from your presence,
nor deprive me of your holy spirit. (R.)
3. Give me again the joy of your help;
with a spirit of fervour sustain me,
that I may teach transgressors your ways
and sinners may return to you. (R.)

SECOND READING Hebrews 5:7-9

A reading from the letter to the Hebrews.

During his life on earth, Christ offered up
prayer and entreaty, aloud and in silent tears,
to the one who had the power to save him
out of death, and he submitted so humbly
that his prayer was heard. Although he was
Son, he learnt to obey through suffering; but
having been made perfect, he became for all
who obey him the source of eternal salvation.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Glory to you, O Christ, you are the Word of
God!
If a man serves me, says the Lord, he must
follow me
wherever I am, my servant will be there too.
Glory to you, O Christ, you are the Word of
God!

GOSPEL John 12:20-33

A reading from the holy Gospel according to
John.

Among those who went up to worship
at the festival were some Greeks. These
approached Philip, who came from Bethsaida
in Galilee, and put this request to him, “Sir,
we should like to see Jesus.” Philip went to
tell Andrew, and Andrew and Philip together
went to tell Jesus. Jesus replied to them:

“Now the hour has come
for the Son of Man to be glorified.
I tell you, most solemnly,
unless a wheat grain falls on the ground
and dies,
it remains only a single grain;
but if it dies,
it yields a rich harvest.
Anyone who loves his life loses it;
anyone who hates his life in this world
will keep it for the eternal life.
If a man serves me, he must follow me,
wherever I am, my servant will be there too.
If anyone serves me, my Father will honour
him.

Now my soul is troubled.
What shall I say:
Father, save me from this hour?
But it was for this very reason that I have
come to this hour.
Father, glorify your name!”

A voice came from heaven, “I have glorified
it, and I will glorify it again.”

People standing by, who heard this, said
it was a clap of thunder; others said, “It was
an angel speaking to him.” Jesus answered,
“It was not for my sake that this voice came,
but for yours.

“Now sentence is being passed on this
world;
now the prince of this world is to be
overthrown.
And when I am lifted up from the earth,
I shall draw all men to myself.”

By these words he indicated the kind of death
he would die.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

**I believe in God,
the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
(all bow during the next two lines)
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of God the
Father almighty;
from there he will come to judge the living
and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting.
Amen.**

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Hear us, almighty God,
and, having instilled in your servants
the teachings of the Christian faith,
graciously purify them
by the working of this sacrifice.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

**Amen, Amen I say to you: Unless a grain of
wheat
falls to the ground and dies, it remains a
single grain.
But if it dies, it bears much fruit.**

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

We pray, almighty God,
that we may always be counted among the
members of Christ,
in whose Body and Blood we have
communion.
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.
Amen.

Many people seem to think that true religion
is defined by “giving up things”. In a sense it
is far easier to deny one’s body than quietly
and soberly to surrender your whole self for
God’s possessing. In Lent, how much easier
to give up wine or chocolate than seriously to
tackle our impatience. A friend of mine who
was prepared to fast most rigorously in Lent
was horrified when I suggested daily Mass
and half an hour’s prayer instead.

Sister Wendy Beckett



“Agony in the Garden”, a wall-painting from about the year 1500, in the Church of St Mary, Elsinore, Denmark

When he is told that “some Greeks”, who have come to Jerusalem for the festival of Passover, want to see him, Jesus tells his disciples that “the hour” for him to be glorified has arrived. The period of his revealing his glory, which began with the first sign at Cana and ended with the final one of the raising of Lazarus, is over, and his passion is about to begin.

One of the features of the Fourth Gospel (John) is that some of the most dramatic scenes which we encounter in the three Synoptic Gospels are missing: these include the testing of Jesus in the wilderness (the temptations) and the agony in the garden (better expressed as the struggle in Gethsemane). However, we find the components of these episodes scattered in the Johannine account. The scenes mentioned present Jesus struggling with what it means to be the Son of God and to be faithful to his mission. They show Jesus in a very human light: in our Gospel reading today, Jesus realises that his hour, the complex events of his passion and exaltation on the cross, has arrived and the possibility of praying to be spared it comes to his mind. However, he overcomes this understandable reaction and accepts the Father’s will, since this is the purpose of his coming. The voice from heaven then vindicates Jesus’ choice. There is a tendency sometimes to play down the human aspect of Jesus, to eliminate any hesitation or struggle on his part: although the Fourth Gospel views the crucifixion as the lifting up of Jesus in glory, this passage reminds us of the enduring dark nature of the cross. ■

REFLECT

It is difficult to keep in balance the two natures of Jesus, the divine and human aspects of his being. The Gospel traditions about his being tested and his final test before the passion, described by the Synoptics in the Gethsemane scene and hinted at in our Gospel reading today from John, suggest that we should not forget or play down Jesus’ human nature. The Gospel of John shows Jesus as being well aware of his divine nature and relationship with the Father, but the temptation to take shortcuts to fulfil his destiny as the Messiah or to avoid the supreme test of the passion altogether is still there, albeit in a much more subtle, but no less real, form.

If it is true, as the letter to the Hebrews tells us, that Jesus “has been put to the test in exactly the same way as ourselves, apart from sin”, then we should not be afraid to imagine Jesus as being moved in much the same way as we would be in his shoes: for example, the Fourth Gospel tells us that Jesus is “troubled” when confronted with death. If Jesus is to be our model, then we need to know that he understands our human condition from his own experience and can sympathise with us in our difficulties and fears. ■

DO

Take the crucifix in your hands: reflect on the figure on the cross and on the human nature of Jesus.

**LEARN**

The Gospel of John does not contain some dramatic scenes which we find in the Synoptic Gospels:

These include the temptations of Jesus, the agony in the garden, and the trial before the Sanhedrin.

The agony in the garden is more accurately understood as the struggle in Gethsemane of Jesus to remain faithful to the ultimate act of obedience to his mission from the Father.

SAY

**Christ offered up prayer
and entreaty, aloud and
in silent tears.
(Hebrews 5:7)**

1. THE SOLEMN ENTRANCE**ANTIPHON**

Hosanna to the Son of David;
blessed is he who comes in the name of the
Lord, the King of Israel.
Hosanna in the highest.

As the Lord entered the holy city, the
children of the Hebrews proclaimed the
resurrection of life.
Waving their branches of palm, they cried:
Hosanna in the Highest.
When the people heard that Jesus was
coming to Jerusalem, they went out to meet
him.
Waving their branches of palm, they cried:
Hosanna in the Highest.

2. THE SIMPLE ENTRANCE**ENTRANCE ANTIPHON**

Six days before the Passover,
when the Lord came into the city of
Jerusalem,
the children ran to meet him;
in their hands they carried palm branches
and with a loud voice cried out:
*Hosanna in the highest!
Blessed are you, who have come in your
abundant mercy!

O gates, lift high your heads;
grow higher, ancient doors.
Let him enter, the king of glory!
Who is this king of glory?
He, the Lord of hosts, he is the king of glory.
*Hosanna in the highest!
Blessed are you, who have come in your
abundant mercy!

COLLECT

Almighty ever-living God,
who as an example of humility for the human
race to follow
caused our Saviour to take flesh and submit
to the Cross,
graciously grant that we may heed his lesson
of patient suffering
and so merit a share in his Resurrection.
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of
the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING Isaiah 50:4-7

A reading from the prophet Isaiah.
The Lord has given me
a disciple's tongue.
So that I may know how to reply to the
wearied,
he provides me with speech.
Each morning he wakes me to hear,
to listen like a disciple.
The Lord has opened my ear.
For my part, I made no resistance,
neither did I turn away.
I offered my back to those who struck me,
my cheeks to those who tore at my beard;
I did not cover my face
against insult and spittle.
The Lord comes to my help,
so that I am untouched by the insults.
So, too, I set my face like flint;
I know I shall not be shamed.
The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 21

Response:

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

- All who see me deride me.
They curl their lips, they toss their heads.
"He trusted in the Lord, let him save him;
let him release him if this is his friend."
(R.)
- Many dogs have surrounded me,
a band of the wicked beset me.
They tear holes in my hands and my feet.
I can count every one of my bones. (R.)
- They divide my clothing among them.
They cast lots for my robe.
O Lord, do not leave me alone,
my strength, make haste to help me! (R.)
- I will tell of your name to my brethren
and praise you where they are assembled.
"You who fear the Lord give him praise;
all sons of Jacob, give him glory.
Revere him, Israel's sons." (R.)

SECOND READING Philippians 2:6-11

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the
Philippians.

His state was divine,
yet Christ Jesus did not cling
to his equality with God
but emptied himself
to assume the condition of a slave,
and became as men are,
and being as all men are,
he was humbler yet,
even to accepting death,
death on a cross.
But God raised him high
and gave him the name
which is above all other names
so that all beings
in the heavens, on earth and in the
underworld,
should bend the knee at the name of Jesus
and that every tongue should acclaim
Jesus Christ as Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.
The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Praise to you, O Christ, King of eternal glory!
Christ was humbler yet,
even to accepting death, death on a cross.
But God raised him high
and gave him the name which is above all
names.
Praise to you, O Christ, King of eternal glory!

GOSPEL Mark 14:1-15:47

The passion of our Lord Jesus Christ
according to Mark.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in God,
the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
(all bow during the next two lines)

who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of God the
Father almighty;
from there he will come to judge the living
and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting.
Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Through the Passion of your Only Begotten
Son, O Lord,
may our reconciliation with you be near at
hand,
so that, though we do not merit it by our own
deeds,
yet by this sacrifice made once for all,
we may feel already the effects of your mercy.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Father, if this chalice cannot pass without my
drinking it,
your will be done.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Nourished with these sacred gifts,
we humbly beseech you, O Lord,
that, just as through the death of your Son
you have brought us to hope for what we
believe,
so by his Resurrection
you may lead us to where you call.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Lent is like a long "retreat" during which
we can turn back into ourselves and listen
to the voice of God, in order to defeat the
temptations of the Evil One. It is a period
of spiritual "combat" which we must
experience alongside Jesus, not with pride
and presumption, but using the arms of
faith: prayer, listening to the word of God
and penance. In this way we will be able to
celebrate Easter in truth, ready to renew the
promises of our Baptism.

Pope Benedict XVI

THE WORD**A DARK
TIME**

(MARK 14:1-15:47)

The Gospel of Mark has been described as "a Passion Narrative with a long introduction". The cross casts its shadow over this account of Jesus' life and ministry.

At the beginning of the story, we hear of the violent treatment and unjust execution of John the Baptist and the growing hostility towards Jesus, which reaches its climax in the plot of the religious and political leaders to do away with him. Jesus predicts his death three times, but the disciples do not understand. Discipleship is presented as taking up the cross and following Jesus, later illustrated by Simon of Cyrene.

It is a feature of Mark's Gospel that no one understands who Jesus really is. Jesus does not accept Peter's confession that he is the Christ, as this is, presumably, founded on Jesus performing miracles. This is corrected at once by the first prediction of the passion. One of Jesus' inner circle arranges to hand him over to the hostile religious authorities. Jesus accepts his fate as the fulfilment of the scriptures after his struggle in Gethsemane, during which he receives no answer from God.

A distinctive feature of Mark's account is the mention of the young man who "follows at a distance" and runs off naked when Jesus is arrested and all his disciples abandon him. This would-be disciple does not give up everything to follow Jesus, but rather leaves everything behind in order to escape.

Mark's depiction of the crucifixion is unremittably bleak: there is no hint of sympathy from any quarter. Even those crucified with him taunt him along with the passers-by. Jesus is abandoned by everyone – including, it seems, by God. His cry from the cross is one of despair. But at the moment of his death comes God's answer, the tearing of the Temple veil which separated the divine presence from the people. Now Jesus will be the focus of God's presence for Jew and Gentile. It is at this point, when there can be no further misunderstanding, that the Gentile centurion accurately proclaims Jesus as "the Son of God". It is the cross, not the miracles, which reveals Jesus' true identity. ■

SAY**My God, my God, why have you deserted me?**

(Mark 15:34/Psalm 21:1)

LEARN

Mark's presentation of the passion of Jesus is very bleak, suggesting that Jesus is totally abandoned and has to suffer alone.

The cross dominates the Gospel according to Mark.

Each evangelist has his own understanding of who Jesus is: we should read each account according to the appropriate point of view.

REFLECT

We must read each Gospel version according to the viewpoint of the individual evangelist. We may find the idea of Jesus apparently despairing on the cross uncomfortable, but that is precisely the reason why we should think about it more deeply. If we believe that Jesus was truly human, we should read Mark's account without importing elements from the other evangelists which soften the picture. Mark tells us that Jesus experienced being totally abandoned, which may well help some of us who feel that way; that, in Jesus, God has experienced this feeling and so can understand our situation.

We notice that Mark mentions the women from Galilee who witness the crucifixion and includes by name Mary Magdalene as they observe where Jesus is buried. This prepares the way for the events of Easter morning. The cross and Calvary are not the end of Jesus' story. ■

DO

Take your palm in your hand. Reflect on the change in the attitude of the crowd from Jesus' entry into Jerusalem and their calling for his death a few days later. Do you see a similar manipulation of people today?

