

1 AUGUST 2021 Sunday Message 18TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

O God, come to my assistance;
O Lord, make haste to help me!
You are my rescuer, my help;
O Lord, do not delay.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;

you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

COLLECT

Draw near to your servants, O Lord,
and answer their prayers with unceasing
kindness,
that, for those who glory in you as their
Creator and guide,
you may restore what you have created
and keep safe what you have restored...
Amen.

FIRST READING Exodus 16:2-4, 12-15

A reading from the book of Exodus.

The whole community of the sons of Israel began to complain against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness and said to them, "Why did we not die at the Lord's hand in the land of Egypt, when we were able to sit down to pans of meat and could eat bread to our heart's content! As it is, you have brought us to this wilderness to starve this whole company to death!"

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Now I will rain down bread for you from the heavens. Each day the people are to go out and gather the day's portion; I propose to test them in this way to see whether they will follow my law or not."

"I have heard the complaints of the sons of Israel. Say this to them, 'Between the two evenings you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall have bread to your heart's content. Then you will learn that I, the Lord, am your God.'" And so it came about: quails flew up in the evening, and they covered the camp; in the morning there was a coating of dew all round the camp. When the coating of dew lifted, there on the surface of the desert was a thing delicate, powdery, as fine as hoarfrost on the ground. When they saw this, the sons of Israel said to one another, "What is that?" not knowing what it was. "That" said Moses to them "is the bread the Lord gives you to eat."

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 77

Response:

The Lord gave them bread from heaven.

1. The things we have heard and understood,
the things our fathers have told us,
we will tell to the next generation:
the glories of the Lord and his might. (R.)

2. He commanded the clouds above
and opened the gates of heaven.
He rained down manna for their food,
and gave them bread from heaven. (R.)

3. Mere men ate the bread of angels.
He sent them abundance of food.
He brought them to his holy land,
to the mountain which his right hand had won. (R.)

SECOND READING Ephesians 4:17, 20-24

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

I want to urge you in the name of the Lord, not to go on living the aimless kind of life that pagans live. Now that is hardly the way you have learnt from Christ, unless you failed to hear him properly when you were taught what the truth is in Jesus. You must give up your old way of life; you must put aside your old self, which gets corrupted by following illusory desires. Your mind must be renewed by a spiritual revolution so that you can put on the new self that has been created in God's way, in the goodness and holiness of the truth.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!

I am the Way, the Truth and the Life, says the Lord;
no one can come to the Father except through me.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL

John 6:24-35

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

When the people saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into boats and crossed to Capernaum to look for Jesus. When they found him on the other side, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?" Jesus answered:

"I tell you most solemnly you are not looking for me because you have seen the signs but because you had all the bread you wanted to eat.

Do not work for food that cannot last, but work for food that endures to eternal life, the kind of food the Son of Man is offering you, for on him the Father, God himself, has set his seal."

Then they said to him, "What must we do if we are to do the works that God wants?" Jesus gave them this answer, "This is working for God: you must believe in the one he has sent." So they said, "What sign will you give to show us that we should believe in you? What work will you do? Our fathers had manna to eat in the desert; as scripture says: He gave them bread from heaven to eat."

Jesus answered:

"I tell you most solemnly, it was not Moses who gave you bread from heaven,

it is my Father who gives you the bread from heaven,
the true bread;
for the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

"Sir," they said "give us that bread always." Jesus answered:

"I am the bread of life;
He who comes to me will never be hungry;
he who believes in me will never thirst."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,

(all bow during the next three lines)

and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary,
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored
and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Graciously sanctify these gifts, O Lord, we pray,
and, accepting the oblation of this spiritual sacrifice,
make of us an eternal offering to you.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

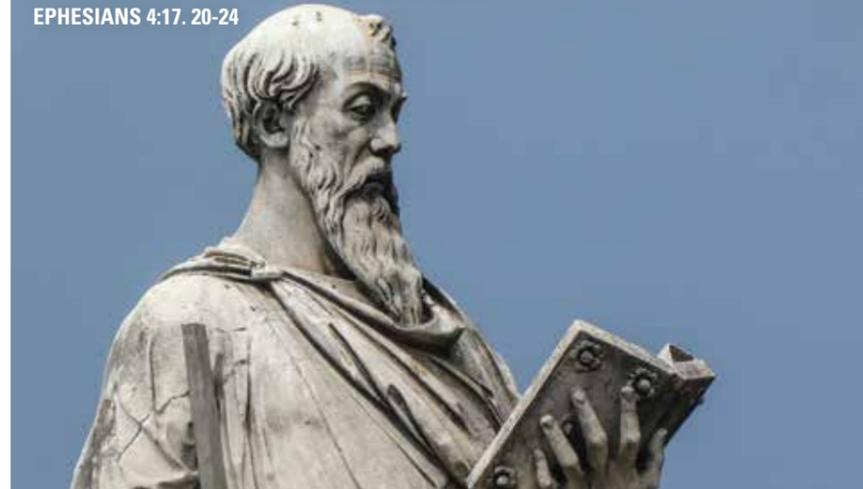
You have given us, O Lord, bread from heaven,
endowed with all delights and sweetness in every taste.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Accompany with constant protection, O Lord, those you renew with these heavenly gifts and, in your never-failing care for them, make them worthy of eternal redemption.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

A TOTAL MAKEOVER

EPHESIANS 4:17, 20-24



Statue of St Paul on Ponte Sant'Angelo, Rome, Italy, by early Renaissance sculptor Paolo Romano

In today's second reading, St Paul urges the Christian community at Ephesus to get a makeover. They must throw away the old self, he says, and put on the new self.

Paul wasn't offering them sartorial advice or suggesting that they upgrade their physical appearance in order to look ten years younger. He wasn't talking about makeup or fashion at all, but about a transformation of mind and spirit. The followers of Jesus in Ephesus must not go on living the aimless kind of lives that pagans live, but become whole new people in Christ, renewed by a spiritual revolution. They must be changed, reformed, transformed, into a Godly people.

Paul knew what he was talking about. His own dramatic experience on the road to Damascus changed his life completely. He threw away the old self and put on the new self. He even began using a new name. Through his encounter with the risen Lord, Paul's life had been upended utterly. Our encounter with the risen Lord, the bread of life, must upend and transform our lives, too. ■

REFLECT

A couple of years ago, young American writer Jia Tolentino wrote a book called *Trick Mirror*. It's a collection of essays on the challenges facing young women today. One essay is entitled "Always be Optimizing". It's about the pressure women have always felt to look good, be attractive. The need to always be optimising; in other words, trying always to look better, be thinner, more glamorous, sexier, to never be satisfied with your appearance or success.

It's not only women who feel this pressure nowadays. Young men feel it increasingly too – the need to work out, to be ripped, athletic, desirable.

Our competitive world pressurises us

to be acknowledged as successful, with a rewarding career and a big income, a perfect family and a nice house. To always be optimising. Social media, with its obsession with looks and money and celebrity, makes being your authentic self even harder. It's a reason why sales of makeup, even to young men, are booming. Image is everything.

It explains why Reality TV shows like *Ten Years Younger* and *100% Hotter* are so popular. On these shows, participants receive a makeover that alters or enhances how they look, bringing out or highlighting their best features. Seeing their before and after pics is like looking at a completely different person. We see the difference a new look can make, its transformative effect.

SAY

"Lord, never let me settle for anything less than to hunger for you who are the bread of life. Mould me in your image. Amen."

LEARN

Today is the feast of St Alphonsus de Ligouri, founder of the Redemptorists. A native of Naples in Italy, Alphonsus was a successful lawyer before becoming a priest. In 1732, while visiting the Amalfi coast, he was struck by the plight of the poor farmers and goatherds of the area who had been largely abandoned by Church and State. He founded the Redemptorists to minister especially to those who were poor and marginalised. St Alphonsus was also a moral theologian and author of more than 100 books. In 1871, he was declared a doctor of the Church. Today, more than 5,000 Redemptorists minister throughout the world.

DO

Think about what is most important to you, what you long for most. How strong is your hunger for God? Where do you turn for nourishment, for help, for life? Does God sustain you?

Who or what gives direction to your life? Is God at its centre?

PRAY

Pray for those who struggle with belief. Pray for yourself and for Christians everywhere for a deeper faith in Jesus, the bread of life.

Liturgy is also about transformation. We are invited to give up our old way of life, and put on the new self, one created in God.

The new self we are invited to put on is not as simple as getting a new wardrobe or hairstyle like the participants on a TV show, or giving up home and family and livelihood. Rather, it is about making sure that God is the director of our lives, that God shapes everything we do every day.

Putting on the new self means putting on God. It means following the example of Jesus, and allowing ourselves to be moulded in his image. It means knowing that Jesus is our bread of life, who nourishes and sustains us, and gives us everything that we need. ■

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Look to your covenant, O Lord,
and forget not the life of your poor ones for
ever.
Arise, O God, and defend your cause,
and forget not the cries of those who seek
you.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.
We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

COLLECT

Almighty ever-living God,
whom, taught by the Holy Spirit,
we dare to call our Father,
bring, we pray, to perfection in our hearts
the spirit of adoption as your sons and
daughters,
that we may merit to enter into the
inheritance
which you have promised.
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 1 Kings 19:4-8

A reading from the first book of Kings.
Elijah went into the wilderness, a day's
journey, and sitting under a furze bush
wished he were dead. "Lord," he said "I have
had enough. Take my life; I am no better than
my ancestors." Then he lay down and went
to sleep. But an angel touched him and said,
"Get up and eat." He looked round, and there
at his head was a scone baked on hot stones,
and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then
lay down again. But the angel of the Lord
came back a second time and touched him
and said, "Get up and eat, or the journey will
be too long for you." So he got up and ate
and drank, and strengthened by that food he
walked for forty days and forty nights until he
reached Horeb, the mountain of God.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM Psalm 33

Response:
Taste and see that the Lord is good.

1. I will bless the Lord at all times,
his praise always on my lips;
in the Lord my soul shall make its boast.
The humble shall hear and be glad. (R.)
2. Glorify the Lord with me.
Together let us praise his name.
I sought the Lord and he answered me;
from all my terrors he set me free. (R.)
3. Look towards him and be radiant;
let your faces not be abashed.
This poor man called; the Lord heard him
and rescued him from all his distress. (R.)
4. The angel of the Lord is encamped
around those who revere him, to rescue
them.
Taste and see that the Lord is good.
He is happy who seeks refuge in him. (R.)

SECOND READING Ephesians 4:30-5:2

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

Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God who
has marked you with his seal for you to
be set free when the day comes. Never
have grudges against others, or lose your
temper, or raise your voice to anybody, or
call each other names, or allow any sort of
spitefulness. Be friends with one another, and
kind, forgiving each other as readily as God
forgave you in Christ.

Try, then, to imitate God, as children of his
that he loves, and follow Christ by loving as
he loved you, giving himself up in our place
as a fragrant offering and a sacrifice to God.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!
If anyone loves me he will keep my word,
and my Father will love him,
and we shall come to him.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL John 6:41-51

A reading from the holy Gospel according to
John.

The Jews were complaining to each other
about Jesus, because he had said, "I am the
bread that came down from heaven." "Surely
this is Jesus son of Joseph" they said. "We
know his father and mother. How can he now
say, 'I have come down from heaven?'" Jesus
said in reply, "Stop complaining to each
other.

"No one can come to me
unless he is drawn by the Father who sent
me,
and I will raise him up at the last day.
It is written in the prophets:
They will all be taught by God,
and to hear the teaching of the Father,
and learn from it,
is to come to me.
Not that anybody has seen the Father,
except the one who comes from God:
he has seen the Father.
I tell you most solemnly,
everybody who believes has eternal life.
I am the bread of life.
Your fathers ate the manna in the desert
and they are dead;

but this is the bread that comes down from
heaven,
so that a man may eat it and not die.
I am the living bread which has come down
from heaven.
Anyone who eats this bread will live for
ever;
and the bread that I shall give
is my flesh, for the life of the world."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with
the Father;

through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,

(all bow during the next three lines)

and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the
Virgin Mary,
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under
Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored
and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and
apostolic Church.

I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness
of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the
dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Be pleased, O Lord, to accept the offerings of
your Church,
for in your mercy you have given them to be
offered
and by your power you transform them
into the mystery of our salvation.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

O Jerusalem, glorify the Lord,
who gives you your fill of finest wheat.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

May the communion in your Sacrament
that we have consumed, save us, O Lord,
and confirm us in the light of your truth.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

THE WORD

Stained glass window depicting St Paul in the Cathedral of Ghent, Flanders, Belgium

In today's second reading, St Paul offers clear instructions for how the followers of Jesus should live. Some divisions or tensions must have been surfacing among the members of the church in Ephesus, and Paul is anxious to address them.

So he warns them to never hold grudges against others, or lose their temper, or raise their voice to anybody, or call each other names, or allow any sort of spitefulness. Be friends with each other and kind, he tells them, forgiving each other as readily as God has forgiven them. They must follow Christ by loving each other as Christ has loved them.

Paul's message to the Christian community is about respect, tolerance, gentleness, love. His words are as relevant for us today as when he wrote them almost two thousand years ago. ■

REFLECT

We are all familiar with the old expression: "Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me." But we know that it is simply not true. Words have extraordinary power and can do enormous damage. They can scar for life; they can destroy. And the world wide web and modern means of communication mean that words have a greater capacity to hurt than ever before. Think of the internet bullies, who, often under the cloak of anonymity, use Facebook or Twitter or online forums to abuse and smear and ridicule those they don't like or with whom they disagree. And think of the victims whose lives have been damaged or even ended by such abuse.

Words have enormous power and can inflict enormous harm. As people of the word, Christians need to be conscious of the words we use, and ensure that what we say and how we say it always gives glory to God.

One way to try to do just that is by living according to what I like to call the three Cs:

The first C: be clean. The words I use should be wholesome and pure, never coarse or crude. We tend to use bad language for emphasis, for effect, but bad language is so commonplace today that we can become immune to it. We may not even be aware of the extent to which we use it casually ourselves. The English language contains more than one million words; there are plenty of ways we can express ourselves colourfully and with emphasis, without the need for vulgar talk.

The second C: be courteous. Our aim should be to talk to and about others the way we would like them to talk to and about us. Whether it's on social media or on the road or street or the sports field, we know that common courtesy is becoming less common, that we are becoming more rude and less civil. Think of the amount of online trolling that is taking place and how road-rage incidents are growing in frequency. Whenever or wherever we encounter people, no matter how trying or testing the situation, no matter how angry we may become, we

SAY

"Lord, let the words that I speak always give honour to your name. Amen."

DO

Think about your use of language. Do you always respect the Lord's name? Do you use words that are sexist or racist or homophobic? Are you rude or uncouth or demeaning in what you say or how you talk to people?

LEARN

Integrity is at core of our Christian faith. It is about having a moral centre that shapes and guides everything we say and do. Jesus was a person of integrity because he was true to himself whatever happened. His dedication to living truthfully, to standing up for what he believed in, to treating people with love and respect, meant that he did not back down before evil, but went all the way to the cross. For the Christian, to be a person of integrity means following the example of Jesus.

are called to be courteous and considerate in how we communicate with them.

The third C: be constructive. We should always use words that build up not knock down, that encourage not destroy. Sometimes it's necessary to challenge or criticise another but we should do it in a way that is positive and gentle and that honours the other by treating him or her with respect. We should never use words to humiliate or diminish another human being. Pope Francis has spoken frequently about the harmful nature of gossip, which he has described as a plague worse than COVID-19. We know what it's like to be gossiped about; we also know how easy it is to indulge in gossip. We should always talk to or about others in a helpful, generous manner.

Christians are people of the word. As St Paul reminds us, we must use the gift of language in such a way that it lifts people up rather than knocks people down. To be clean, courteous and constructive is to build God's kingdom and give God glory. ■

15 AUGUST 2021 Sunday Message

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

A great sign appeared in heaven:
a woman clothed with the sun, and the
moon beneath her feet,
and on her head a crown of twelve stars.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

COLLECT

Almighty ever-living God,
who assumed the Immaculate Virgin Mary,
the Mother of your Son,
body and soul into heavenly glory,
grant, we pray,
that, always attentive to the things that are
above,
we may merit to be sharers of her glory...
Amen.

FIRST READING Apocalypse 11:19, 12:1-6, 10

A reading from the book of the Apocalypse.
The sanctuary of God in heaven opened, and
the ark of the covenant could be seen inside it.
Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a
woman, adorned with the sun, standing on the
moon, and with the twelve stars on her head
for a crown. She was pregnant, and in labour,
crying aloud in the pangs of childbirth. Then
a second sign appeared in the sky, a huge red
dragon which had seven heads and ten horns,
and each of the seven heads crowned with
a coronet. Its tail dragged a third of the stars
from the sky and dropped them to the earth,
and the dragon stopped in front of the woman
as she was having the child, so that he could
eat it as soon as it was born from its mother.
The woman brought a male child into the
world, the son who was to rule all the nations
with an iron sceptre, and the child was taken
straight up to God and to his throne, while
the woman escaped into the desert, where
God had made a place of safety ready. Then I
heard a voice shout from heaven, "Victory and
power and empire for ever have been won by
our God, and all authority for his Christ."

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalms 44

Response:

On your right stands the queen,
in garments of gold.

- The daughters of kings are among your
loved ones.
On your right stands the queen in gold of
Ophir.
Listen, O daughter, give ear to my words:
forget your own people and your father's
house. (R.)
- So will the king desire your beauty:
he is your lord, pay homage to him.
They are escorted amid gladness and joy;
they pass within the palace of the king. (R.)

SECOND READING 1 Corinthians 15:20-26

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

Christ has been raised from the dead, the
first-fruits of all who have fallen asleep. Death
came through one man and in the same way
the resurrection of the dead has come through
one man. Just as all men die in Adam, so all
men will be brought to life in Christ; but all
of them in their proper order: Christ as the
first-fruits and then, after the coming of Christ,
those who belong to him. After that will come
the end, when he hands over the kingdom to
God the Father, having done away with every
sovereignty, authority and power. For he must
be king until he has put all his enemies under
his feet and the last of the enemies to be
destroyed is death, for everything is to be put
under his feet.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!
Mary has been taken up into heaven;
all the choirs of angels are rejoicing.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Luke 1:39-56

A reading from the Gospel according to Luke.
Mary set out and went as quickly as she
could to a town in the hill country of Judah.
She went into Zechariah's house and greeted
Elizabeth. Now as soon as Elizabeth heard
Mary's greeting, the child leapt in her womb
and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.
She gave a loud cry and said, "Of all women
you are the most blessed, and blessed is the
fruit of your womb. Why should I be honoured
with a visit from the mother of my Lord?
For the moment your greeting reached my
ears, the child in my womb leapt for joy. Yes,
blessed is she who believed that the promise
made her by the Lord would be fulfilled."
And Mary said:
"My soul proclaims the greatness of the
Lord
and my spirit exults in God my saviour;
because he has looked upon his lowly
handmaid.
Yes, from this day forward all generations
will call me blessed,
for the Almighty had done great things for
me.
Holy is his name,
and his mercy reaches from age to age for
those who fear him.
He has shown the power of his arm,
he has routed the proud of heart.
He has pulled down princes from their
thrones and exalted the lowly.
The hungry he has filled with good things,
the rich sent empty away.

He has come to the help of Israel his
servant, mindful of his mercy
– according to the promise he made to our
ancestors –
of his mercy to Abraham and to his
descendants for ever."

Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three
months and then went back home.
The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with
the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,

(all bow during the next three lines)

and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the
Virgin Mary,
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under
Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored
and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
I believe in one, holy, catholic and
apostolic Church.
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness
of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the
dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

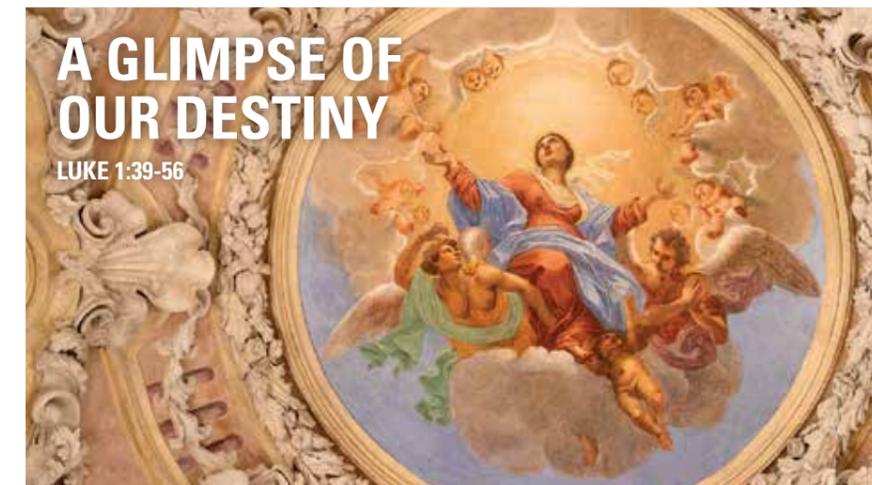
May this oblation, our tribute of homage,
rise up to you, O Lord,
and, through the intercession of the most
Blessed Virgin Mary,
whom you assumed into heaven,
may our hearts, aflame with the fire of love,
constantly long for you... Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

All generations will call me blessed,
for he who is mighty has done great things
for me.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Having received the Sacrament of salvation,
we ask you to grant, O Lord,
that, through the intercession of the Blessed
Virgin Mary,
whom you assumed into heaven,
we may be brought to the glory of the
resurrection... Amen.

THE WORD

Teofilo Polacco's ceiling fresco of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary in Chiesa di Santa Maria Assunta, Riva del Garda, Italy

A GLIMPSE OF OUR DESTINY
LUKE 1:39-56

We know the story of Mary of Nazareth. We know the indispensable role she played in God's plan for humanity, how she made it possible. Christians have honoured Mary from the Church's earliest days.

So many feasts have been established in her honour, so many church buildings named for her, so many religious congregations called after her. Mary has been given so many titles – Mother of God, Mother of the Church, Madonna, Queen of Heaven, Mother of Perpetual Help, Immaculate Conception – the list goes on.

Today we celebrate one of the great Marian feasts. The doctrine of the Assumption of Mary was promulgated by Pope Pius XII in 1950. It declares that Mary, "having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory". This teaching is an acknowledgement of Mary's singular role in the story of salvation. It is also a promise – that if we follow the example of Mary, if we seek always to say "yes" to God as she did, then we too can look forward to life in God's presence for ever. ■

REFLECT

Henri Nouwen was a Dutch priest and academic who taught at Yale and Harvard universities in the 1970s and 80s. He was well known for his books on spirituality and for his reflections on his mental health struggles. After her defeat in the 2016 US presidential election, Hillary Clinton says she turned to one of his books, *The Return of the Prodigal Son*, for comfort in her grief. Nouwen's wisdom has been a gift to many.

But even though he had gained tremendous success as a writer and academic, Nouwen began to feel that something was missing in his life. He sensed that God was calling him in a different direction. Having prayed about it, he finally found himself joining the L'Arche community, a charity that cares for those with intellectual and developmental needs. Henri Nouwen, this deep-thinking writer and professor,

this world-renowned spiritual guru, spent his final years bathing those who could not bathe themselves, feeding those who could not feed themselves, celebrating the sacraments with them, and seeing in them the beautiful face of Christ.

Like Mary the mother of Jesus, Henri Nouwen listened to God at work in his life and responded to it to the best of his ability. He heard the word of God and kept it. Nouwen felt a profound connection to Mary's simplicity and humanity. In one of his journals, he describes meeting a priest who summed up Mary's meaning to the world: "To look at Mary," the priest said, "is to see God's original plan for humanity." "In her," Nouwen wrote, "we see the way God wanted us to be... Mary shows us how to receive the marvellous gift of God's love, and how to respond to God's redemptive action in our lives."

SAY

"Lord, thank you for giving me Mary as my mother and model. Help me to follow her example so that I may share in her son's resurrection. Amen."

PRAY

Many of us grew up in homes where the Rosary was said every day. Pray the Rosary today, focusing especially on Mary's glorious assumption into heaven.

LEARN

On the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we celebrate our belief that the mother of Jesus was taken up, body and soul, into heaven, where she enjoys eternal life in the company of her son. It is a joyful feast because it points to what we believe will be our destiny. We believe that what God has done for Mary, God will do for us also – that at the end of time God will raise our mortal bodies and bring us into the fullness of God's presence for ever.

DO

Rejoice in good news.

Heaven is promised to all who fix their eyes on Jesus.

Ponder the joy and peace of the saints in heaven.

This is what we celebrate on the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. If Mary shows us "God's original plan for humanity", so does her assumption into heaven. In the assumption, preserved for ever before the face of God, freed from the corruption of the grave, Mary not only fulfils her destiny – but also offers us a glimpse of our destiny, too. Assumption is what God wants for us. Heaven is what God dreams for us. This is God's desire and design for us.

Today's feast reminds us of that promise – and that hope. We are called to model ourselves on the Mother of God – in her holiness, humility and humanity. If we want to reach heaven, if we are to claim our destiny, we must "listen to the word of God and keep it". That means, very simply, to live like Mary; to desire, like her, to bring the Word into the world; to birth Jesus every day, by all we say and do. ■

THE WORD

Year B • Psalter Week 1

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Turn your ear, O Lord, and answer me;
save the servant who trusts in you, my God.
Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I cry to you all
the day long.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

COLLECT

O God, who cause the minds of the faithful
to unite in a single purpose,
grant your people to love what you command
and to desire what you promise,
that, amid the uncertainties of this world,
our hearts may be fixed on that place
where true gladness is found.
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 Joshua 24:1-2, 15-18

A reading from the book of Joshua.
Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel
together at Shechem; then he called the elders,
leaders, judges and scribes of Israel, and
they presented themselves before God. Then
Joshua said to all the people: "If you will not
serve the Lord, choose today whom you wish
to serve, whether the gods that your ancestors
served beyond the River, or the gods of the
Amorites in whose land you are now living. As
for me and my House, we will serve the Lord."
The people answered, "We have no intention
of deserting the Lord our God and serving
other gods. Was it not the Lord our God who
brought us and our ancestors out of the land of
Egypt, the house of slavery, who worked those
great wonders before our eyes and preserved
us all along the way we travelled and among
all the peoples through whom we journeyed?
We too will serve the Lord, for he is our God."
The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 33

Response:

Taste and see that the Lord is good.

- I will bless the Lord at all times,
his praise always on my lips;
in the Lord my soul shall make its boast.
The humble shall hear and be glad. (R.)
- The Lord turns his face against the
wicked

to destroy their remembrance from the
earth.
The Lord turns his eyes to the just
and his ears to their appeal. (R.)

- They call and the Lord hears
and rescues them in all their distress.
The Lord is close to the broken hearted;
those whose spirit is crushed he will
save. (R.)
- Many are the trials of the just man
but from them all the Lord will rescue
him.
He will keep guard over all his bones,
not one of his bones shall be broken. (R.)
- Evil brings death to the wicked;
those who hate the good are doomed.
The Lord ransoms the souls of his
servants.
Those who hide in him shall not be
condemned. (R.)

SECOND READING Ephesians 5:21-32

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

Give way to one another in obedience to
Christ. Wives should regard their husbands as
they regard the Lord, since as Christ is head
of the Church and saves the whole body, so
is a husband the head of his wife; and as the
Church submits to Christ, so should wives
to their husbands, in everything. Husbands
should love their wives just as Christ loved the
Church and sacrificed himself for her to make
her holy. He made her clean by washing her in
water with a form of words, so that when he
took her to himself she would be glorious, with
no speck or wrinkle or anything like that, but
holy and faultless. In the same way, husbands
must love their wives as they love their own
bodies; for a man to love his wife is for him
to love himself. A man never hates his own
body, but he feeds it and looks after it; and that
is the way Christ treats the Church, because
it is his body – and we are its living parts. For
this reason, a man must leave his father and
mother and be joined to his wife, and the two
will become one body. This mystery has many
implications; but I am saying it applies to
Christ and the Church.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!
Your words are spirit, Lord,
and they are life:
you have the message of eternal life.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL

John 6:60-69

A reading from the holy Gospel according to
John.

After hearing his doctrine many of the
followers of Jesus said, "This is intolerable
language. How could anyone accept it?" Jesus
was aware that his followers were complaining
about it and said, "Does this upset you? What
if you should see the Son of Man ascend to
where he was before?

"It is the spirit that gives life,
the flesh has nothing to offer.
The words I have spoken to you are spirit
and they are life.

"But there are some of you who do not
believe." For Jesus knew from the outset
those who did not believe, and who it was that
would betray him. He went on, "This is why I
told you that no one could come to me unless

the Father allows him." After this, many of his
disciples left him and stopped
going with him.

Then Jesus said to the Twelve, "What about
you, do you want to go away too?" Simon
Peter answered, "Lord, who shall we go to?
You have the message of eternal life, and we
believe; we know that you are the Holy One of
God."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.
I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with
the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,

(all bow during the next three lines)

and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the
Virgin Mary,
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under
Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored
and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and
apostolic Church.
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness
of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the
dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

O Lord, who gained for yourself a people by
adoption
through the one sacrifice offered once for all,
bestow graciously on us, we pray,
the gifts of unity and peace in your Church.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

The earth is replete with the fruits of your
work, O Lord;
you bring forth bread from the earth
and wine to cheer the heart.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Complete within us, O Lord, we pray,
the healing work of your mercy
and graciously perfect and sustain us,
so that in all things we may please you.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.



In today's first reading, Joshua challenges the people of Israel. Make up your minds once and for all, he tells them. "If you will not serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve." It is decision time.

In today's Gospel, Jesus puts a similar challenge to his followers. Because of his teaching about the living bread, many of his followers turned their backs on him. They found his teaching too hard to stomach. They walked away. So Jesus asks the Twelve, "Do you wish to go away too?"

This is not simply a question from history. Jesus puts it to each of us today also: "Do you wish to go away too? Are you sick of my teaching about the living bread? Are you fed up with my talk about forgiving your enemies? Are my statements about justice and honesty too much for you? Are you turned off when I take the side of the marginalised? Are you embarrassed by the cross? Is the command to turn the other cheek a little OTT?"

It's decision time. It always is. Do you wish to go away, too? Or do you wish to stay? Either way, why? Before you answer, listen to the answers of the Israelites to Joshua and of the twelve apostles to Jesus. The Israelites say: "There is no way that we will forsake the Lord to serve other gods. Look at all God has done for us." And Peter takes it on himself to answer for the apostles: "Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and we know that you are the Holy One of God." ■

REFLECT

It seems that every year, more and more people are walking away from the Church, and for a variety of reasons. Some, due to their sexuality or domestic situation, do not feel welcome; others feel betrayed by the long litany of church scandals; still others have been hurt by a priest or religious; some feel excluded by the Church's clericalism and misogyny; some have simply lost faith. Today's Gospel offers an opportunity to think about why we choose to stay when so many others have not. There are three main reasons why I choose to remain in the Church.

First, and most important, is the person of Jesus Christ. For me, Jesus is the one who gives life meaning. For me, Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life – literally. For me, life makes sense only because God's Son took on flesh like mine and

died on a cross to save me from oblivion. In the difficult times, when scandals threaten to overwhelm me, I always try to distinguish between Jesus and his Church, which is made up of fallible human beings. Even when the Church lets me down, Jesus never lets me down. Even when the Church disappoints, Jesus never disappoints. We should never let the failures of the Church cut us off from Jesus.

Second, I stay because of the example of so many people who by their lives of love and service show me the meaning of Christianity. People like Fr Peter McVerry, who out of love God and neighbour, has devoted his life to caring for the young homeless of Dublin and elsewhere. People like 27-year-old American Jean Donovan who was martyred in El Salvador 40 years ago. She knew she was putting her life

SAY

Say with Peter: "Lord, you have the words of eternal life. I have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God."

LEARN

Each Christian is called to say a personal "yes" to Jesus.

Following Jesus means having to make hard choices.

DO

Think about the faith that you profess. What does it mean to you to say you are a Catholic? Can other people see that you are?

PRAY

Pray for those you know who no longer go to church or no longer believe in God. Pray also for those who introduced you to the faith and brought you up in it.

at risk by remaining in that war-ravaged country, but she stayed there anyway. She stayed out of love of God and God's people. She followed Jesus even to the cross.

Third, I stay because of the consoling knowledge that we are a Church of sinners. I'm not perfect. Despite my best efforts, I fail all the time. I can be moody and hard to live with. But I look around, and I see this is something we all have in common in the Church from the top down – we are all frail, fragile, broken people, who sin and fail, and sin and fail again. But I know that, even despite my failures, despite the Church's failures, God loves me – loves us – anyway, and that God will never abandon me. God is always on my side, and with God always on my side, there is no good reason why I should walk away. ■

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

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.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you, we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you, we give you thanks for your great glory, Lord God, heavenly King, O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son, Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us; you take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer; you are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

COLLECT

God of might, giver of every good gift, put into our hearts the love of your name, so that, by deepening our sense of reverence, you may nurture in us what is good and, by your watchful care, keep safe what you have nurtured. 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 Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-8

A reading from the book of Deuteronomy. Moses said to the people: "Now, Israel, take notice of the laws and customs that I teach you today, and observe them, that you may have life and may enter and take possession of the land the Lord the God of your fathers is giving you. You must add nothing to what I command you, and take nothing from it, but keep the commandments of the Lord your God just as I lay them down for you. Keep them, observe them and they will demonstrate to the peoples your wisdom and understanding. When they come to know of all these laws they will exclaim, "No other people is as wise and prudent as this great nation." And indeed, what great nation is there that has its gods so near as the Lord our God is to us whenever we call to him? And what great nation is there that has laws and customs to match this whole Law that I put before you today?"
The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 14

Response:

The just will live in the presence of the Lord.

1. Lord, who shall dwell on your holy mountain?
He who walks without fault; he who acts with justice and speaks the truth from his heart. (R.)

2. He who does no wrong to his brother, who casts no slur on his neighbour, who holds the godless in disdain, but honours those who fear the Lord. (R.)
3. He who keeps his pledge, come what may; who takes no interest on a loan and accepts no bribes against the innocent.
Such a man will stand firm for ever. (R.)

SECOND READING James 1:17-18, 21-22, 27

A reading from the letter of St James.

It is all that is good, everything that is perfect, which is given us from above; it comes down from the Father of all light; with him there is no such thing as alteration, no shadow of a change. By his own choice he made us his children by the message of the truth so that we should be a sort of first-fruits of all that he had created.

Accept and submit to the word which has been planted in you and can save your souls. But you must do what the word tells you, and not just listen to it and deceive yourselves.

Pure unspoilt religion, in the eyes of God our Father is this: coming to the help of orphans and widows when they need it, and keeping oneself uncontaminated by the world.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!
Your words are spirit, Lord, and they are life:
you have the message of eternal life.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark.

The Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered round Jesus, and they noticed that some of his disciples were eating with unclean hands, that is, without washing them. For the Pharisees, and the Jews in general, follow the tradition of the elders and never eat without washing their arms as far as the elbow; and on returning from the market place they never eat without first sprinkling themselves. There are also many other observances which have been handed down to them concerning the washing of cups and pots and bronze dishes. So these Pharisees and scribes asked him, "Why do your disciples not respect the tradition of the elders but eat their food with unclean hands?" He answered, "It was of you hypocrites that Isaiah so rightly prophesied in this passage of scripture:

This people honours me only with lip-service, while their hearts are far from me. The worship they offer me is worthless, the doctrines they teach are only human regulations.

You put aside the commandment of God to cling to human traditions."

He called the people to him again and said, "Listen to me, all of you, and understand.

Nothing that goes into a man from outside can make him unclean; it is the things that come out of a man that make him unclean. For it is from within, from men's hearts, that evil intentions emerge: fornication, theft, murder, adultery, avarice, malice, deceit, indecency, envy, slander, pride, folly. All these evil things come from within and make a man unclean."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father;

through him all things were made.

For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven,

(all bow during the next three lines)

and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate,

he suffered death and was buried,

and rose again on the third day

in accordance with the Scriptures.

He ascended into heaven

and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory

to judge the living and the dead

and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,

the giver of life,

who proceeds from the Father and the Son,

who with the Father and the Son is adored

and glorified,

who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness

of sins

and I look forward to the resurrection of the

dead

and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

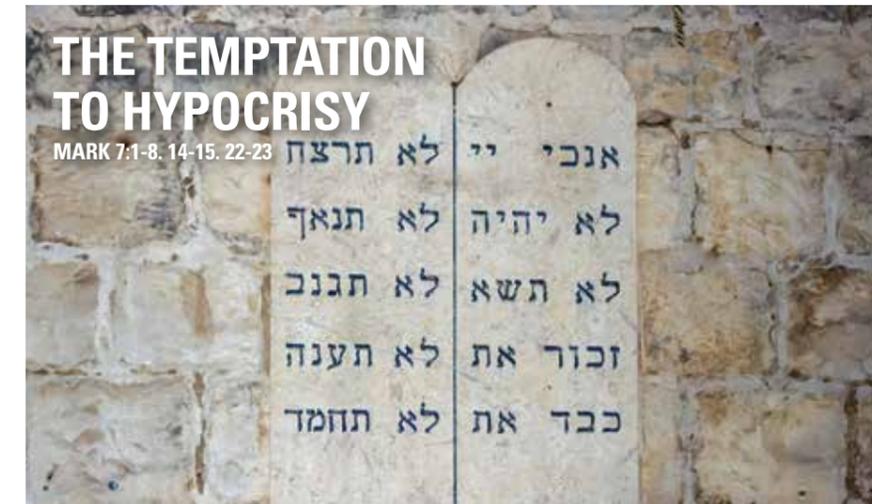
May this sacred offering, O Lord, confer on us always the blessing of salvation, that what it celebrates in mystery it may accomplish in power.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

How great is the goodness, Lord, that you keep for those who fear you.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Renewed by this bread from the heavenly table, we beseech you, Lord, that, being the food of charity, it may confirm our hearts and stir us to serve you in our neighbour.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

THE WORD

Some Pharisees and scribes have come from Jerusalem to see Jesus. They have heard about him, and want to see why he is so popular. But they are shocked by what they discover.

They notice that some of Jesus's disciples are eating without having washed their hands. This goes against the tradition of the Pharisees and some other Jews who always wash their hands before eating so as not to be unclean.

The Pharisees and scribes are appalled by this behaviour and wonder about this man Jesus. How can he be a religious leader and a prophet if his followers do not even respect the tradition of the elders?

But Jesus' response to them is devastating. He calls them hypocrites. He says that they are more interested in keeping external rules and regulations than in living God's commandments. Their brand of religion is more about outward show than worship of God. They pay lip service to God while their hearts are far from him.

It is a danger we can face too – that our religion will be more about external appearances than really living out the Gospel. We need to make sure there is no gap between what we profess in church and how we live outside of church. ■

REFLECT

During Woodrow Wilson's time as president of the United States (1913-1921), he was often described as the great moralist. It was also how he saw himself. As a devout Christian and son of a Presbyterian minister, Wilson fervently believed in the primacy of morality in politics. After the devastation of the First World War, he outlined his grand vision for a peaceful new world order, where peoples and nations would have the right to shape their own destinies, and where colonial conquest and oppression would be no more. He proposed setting up a League of Nations to ensure that war and conflict would never happen again. The League would settle international disputes and protect

the interests of smaller, weaker countries. It was a noble idea.

But there was a major problem – Wilson's own moral blind spots. He ignored the plight of the small and weak people in his own country. He did nothing to tackle systemic racism or women's demand for the right to vote. He clamped down on free speech in wartime. A native of the Deep South, he was supportive of the Ku Klux Klan and was actively racist in his attitude to African Americans. Wilson's moral idealism did not apply to them or to women's rights, and so history has judged him guilty of hypocrisy.

There was nothing unique about Woodrow Wilson. Human beings have always been prone to hypocrisy. As have

SAY

"Lord, help me to practise in my life what I proclaim in church. Amen."

DO

Because none of us is perfect, it is hard to always practise the faith we profess in the way that we should. Look up the commandments; think about the teachings of Jesus and how he has asked us to live. How well do you think you are doing? Is there any trace of the hypocrite in you?

PRAY

Pray for those who have been hurt by church people or by the scandals in the Church. Pray that nothing you do will ever give scandal.

LEARN

The Christian tries to practise what he or she believes.

The Christian knows that nobody is perfect.

Unless our worship comes from the heart, it is empty and false.

The Ten Commandments, referred to in today's first reading, are our signposts for living.

people in the Church. The clerical abuse scandals of the last thirty years have shocked Catholics to the core and left them wondering how so many priests and religious could have behaved in such a depraved and hypocritical manner.

The Church's credibility has been deeply damaged, because the gap between what those church people professed and what they did (or didn't do) was obvious for all to see. There was a clear disconnection between their words and their actions.

Whatever our rank in the Church, as Christians, our words and deeds must spring from a life lived in Jesus. There must be a clear consistency between what we say and what we do. ■