

Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time † Sunday, 12 September 2021



In England & Wales Cycle of Prayer: Day of Prayer for Education – Students and Teachers
Keynote: Courage in discipleship in time of trial or persecution

Prophet Isaiah 50: 5-9

This text forms part of the series of texts known as the Song of the Suffering Servant. *'I made no resistance, neither did I turn away. I offered my back to those who struck me... I did not cover my face against insult and spittle. The Lord comes to my help.'* It introduces us to the events described for us in the gospel today. The true disciples – the servant – having accepted the teaching of God then experiences rejection, humiliation; and may even be unjustly arraigned before the courts and falsely accused. Yet despite this persecution the true disciple is confident, *'The Lord God comes to my help... I am untouched by the insults... The Lord God is coming to my help.'*

Responsorial Psalm 114 (116): 1-6, 8-9

A song of praise – the Hallel – in thanksgiving for deliverance

Letter of James 2: 14-18

'Take the case... of someone who has never done a single good act but claims to have faith. Will that faith save him?' In a very direct manner, the Apostle James sets out the nature of faith. *'You say you have faith and I have good deeds; I will prove to you that I have faith by showing you my good deeds – now you prove to me that you have faith without any good deeds to show.'*

In giving a cup of water, by sharing our bread, or by visiting the sick or those in prison – in hundreds of practical ways, grand or small, a smile of welcome greeting may be enough – we can show Christ's love to the world today, we can let the light of faith shine in an otherwise darkened place.

Gospel according to Mark 8: 27-35

'Who do people say I am?' asks Jesus. This timeless question faces each of us to this very day. The disciples answered each in their own various ways: *'John the Baptist... Elijah... one of the prophets.'* The passage is pivotal to the whole gospel for this is the question that Mark is posing to his readership and at the same time provides the answer in the words of Peter: *'You are the Christ!'*

What the first disciples had yet to understand fully was, as Jesus told them: *'the Son of Man was destined to suffer grievously, to be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and to be put to death, and after three days to rise again.'*

The image of the Suffering Servant finds true meaning in the life of Jesus. Like the Master, we too as disciples are called: *'if anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me.'* Discipleship may not always be a comfortable path, but it follows upon our answer to the timeless question put by Jesus to his disciples, and to us: *'Who do you say I am?'*