

Twenty–Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

† Sunday, 17 October 2021



In England & Wales Cycle of Prayer: For Evangelisation and World Mission,
and for a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission
Keynote: Jesus invites his disciples to be servants of the gospel

Prophet Isaiah 53: 10-11

This text is part of what is known as the Fourth Servant Song. The ‘servant’ is at one with the people in their sorrows and suffering yet his innocence of life marks him out – set apart. The life of the ‘servant’ is characterised by total lifelong faithful service given to the Lord God. *‘If he offers his life in atonement... he shall have a long life, and through him what the Lord God wishes will be done.’* While the servant in life endures much hardship the prophet tells us *‘by his sufferings shall my servant justify many, taking their faults upon himself.’* God will see that the servant has a long life and will see his heirs. This then is the reward for the faithful servant, and *‘the soul’s anguish over, he shall see the light and be content.’* Christians have for long understood this passage as a reference to Jesus, saviour and redeemer.

Responsorial Psalm 32 (33): 4-5,18-20, 22

A joyful song of trust in the Lord God who is faithful to his promise

Letter to the Hebrews 4: 14-16

This letter’s author will probably have been very familiar with the writings of the Prophet Isaiah. Although the text occurs today quite by chance as we continue with our readings from this letter, we find throughout this writing that Jesus is compared with the priests of the Jewish Temple, but here the author emphasises the superiority of Jesus’ priesthood; for in Jesus *‘the Son of God, we have the supreme high priest.’* Yet, we are reminded, Jesus *‘though he is without sin’* was capable of feeling our weaknesses with us. That is why, if we never let go of the faith, we can be *‘confident in approaching the throne of grace... we shall have mercy from him and find grace when we are in need of help.’*

Gospel according to Mark 10: 35-45

Last week the gospel contained the shocking prediction that Jesus would be handed over to the chief priests and be put to death. Now this week there is a moment of intimacy between two of the disciples and Jesus. *‘Master’* they said to him *‘we want you to do us a favour... allow us to sit one at your right hand and the other at your left in your glory.’*

Giving Jesus’ reply, Mark spells out the consequences of being a disciple. Later, while with the rest of the disciples Jesus reminds them all, *‘You know that among the pagans their so-called rulers lord it over them, their great men make their authority felt. This is not to happen among you. No’* says Jesus *‘Anyone who wants to become great among you must be your servant.’* The keynote is contained in the word servant, ‘diakonos’ literally the one – usually a slave – who waits on the household at table. The true disciple then is *‘anyone who wants to be first among you must be slave to all.’* There is a profound message here for all who would be Jesus’ disciples.