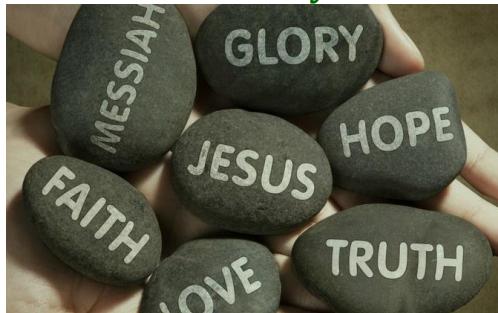


ctkAlive! Scripture Study
24th Sunday in Ordinary Time
2021—B Cycle



“Who do you say I am?”

Source: Crosswalk.com

Opening Prayer

(edited and abridged for use here)

A Prayer for Faith

Lord, let my faith
be full and unreserved,
let it penetrate my thoughts,
my way of judging Divine things
and human things.

Lord, let my faith
be joyful and give peace and gladness to my spirit,
so that I may find joy in its possession,
and shine forth in both sacred and secular conversation.

Lord, let my faith
be humble, not based on my thoughts
and my own feelings,
but let it surrender to the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Source: Catholic.org

Scripture Readings

Isaiah 50: 5-9 “The Lord God opens my ear to hear.”

Psalm 116: 1-6, 8-9 “I shall walk before the Lord in the land of the living.”

James 2: 14-18 “What good is it . . . if someone says he has faith but does not have works?”

Mark 8: 27-35 “Who do people say that I am?”

A Reading from the Book of Isaiah (50: 5-9)

Third song of the servant

Yahweh has opened my ear.
The Lord Yahweh has taught me
so I speak as his disciple
and I know how to sustain the weary.
Morning after morning, he wakes me up to hear,
to listen like a disciple.
The Lord Yahweh has opened my ear.
I have not rebelled, nor have I withdrawn.
I offered my back to those who strike me,
my cheeks to those who pulled my beard;
neither did I shield my face
from blows, spittle, and disgrace.
I have not despaired,
for the Lord Yahweh comes to my help.
So, like a flint I set my face,
knowing that I will not be disgraced.
He who avenges me is near.
Who then will accuse me?
Let us confront each other.
Who is now my accuser?
Let him approach.
If the Lord Yahweh is my help,
who will condemn me?
All of them will wear out like cloth;
the moth will devour them.

Personal Reflection

An Ethiopian official asked Deacon Philip to interpret this statement in the Book of Isaiah, "Who is the prophet talking about, himself or another?" (Acts 8: 34).

Actually, the servant in this passage could be the prophet himself. At the same time, it might also include the faithful minority of believers. Isaiah leaves the question vague. The biblical author had a reason for this. In Moses, who endured a rebellious people, we see a profile of the perfect servant of Yahweh—Jesus. Because the Servant himself listens every morning and keeps his ears open to prophetic writings, he can encourage his listeners to do the same . . . believe. Note the beginning of the poem. The Servant transmits the word on behalf of God. A true prophet is a person of prayer, always open to the spirit of God.

Read the Servant's song again, this time placing yourself in the prophet's place.

— *Which lines jump out at me as pertaining to my present life experience? Why these . . . why today?*

“The Servant himself listens *every morning* and keeps his ears open to prophetic writings.”

— *What is my usual practice of daily prayer? What prayer aids do I use, if any?*

— *If I don't spend some time in prayer every day, why don't I? How might I break that pattern?*

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

Prayer of a person saved from death.

*I will walk before the Lord
In the land of the living.*

Alleluia! I am pleased that Yahweh
has heard my voice in supplication,
that he has not been deaf to me,
the day I called on him.

*I will walk before the Lord
In the land of the living.*

When the cords of death entangled me,
the snares of the grave laid hold of me,
when affliction got the better of me,
I called upon the name of Yahweh:

“O Yahweh, save my life!”

*I will walk before the Lord
In the land of the living.*

Gracious and righteous is Yahweh;
full of compassion is our God.
Yahweh protects the simple:
he saved me when I was humbled.

*I will walk before the Lord
In the land of the living.*

He has freed my soul from death,
my eyes from weeping,
my feet from stumbling;
I will walk before Yahweh
in the land of the living.

*I will walk before the Lord
In the land of the living.*

Personal Reflection

This psalm offers a prayer of thanksgiving to God, after an escape from death by sickness, accident, or malice. It is part of the Hallel or ‘Hymns of Praise’ (Psalms

113-118) sung by Jewish families at the Passover supper. After the Last Supper, Jesus, went to death with these words on his lips. In Matthew 26: 30 we read, “After singing *psalms of praise*, they went out to the Mount of Olives.”

When Jesus sang the Hallel, the words took on new meaning. Unlike the psalmist, he does not ask to escape the snare of bodily death. Rather, he defies death and defeats it. We too can pray with Psalm 116, when we have overcome some severe danger or solved personal a conflict.

The introduction to Psalm 116 is, “Prayer of a person saved from *death*.”

— *When have I come close to death due to illness, accident, or some other cause? What were the circumstances? What role did Jesus/Yahweh/God play in that dark hour? How have I continued to show my gratitude by paying back that blessing?*

“I am pleased that Yahweh has heard my voice in supplication, that (Yahweh) has not been deaf to me, the day I called on him.”

— *How strongly do I believe that God hears and responds to my every prayer, though I may not always see the results? How often do I thank the Lord for hearing my prayers?*

A Reading from the Letter of Saint James (2: 14-18)

“What good is it, my brothers and sisters, to profess faith, without showing works?



Such faith has no power to save you. If a brother or sister is in need of clothes or food, and one of you says, ‘May things go well for you; be warm and satisfied,’ without attending to their material needs, what good is that? So, it is, for faith without deeds: it is totally dead. Say to whoever challenges you, ‘You have faith and I have good deeds; show me your faith apart from actions and I, for my part, will show you my faith in the way I act.’”

*Photo courtesy of [Matt Collamer](#)
via [Unsplash.com](#)*

Personal Reflection

Following Christ cannot be theoretical. Every Christian must demonstrate faith in action, in good works of some kind. Christ himself says the same thing in Matthew 7: 21: “Not everyone who says, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven.”

James, in speaking of active practices, is thinking about deeds inspired by love. St. Paul said the same when he wrote in Galatian 5: 6: “Faith works through love.” Love is by definition *other*-centered, even when, at times, we struggle to love ourselves. In that case, the “other” is that part of our self we see as less than perfect, less than lovable.

This faith vs. works issue somehow became a bloody battleground during the Protestant Reformation. Perhaps, I’ve had the experience of arguing with someone, before realizing we are both saying the same thing but in different ways. Fortunately, both sides no longer see that question as in any way relevant to living a faithful Christian life.

— *How good am I at backing up my faith with outreach to others in some way? Specifically, how am I letting my faith move me to action for others according to my means, health, and ability?*

Proclamation from the Gospel according to Mark (8: 27-35)

“Jesus set out with his disciples for the villages around Caesarea Philippi; and on the way he asked them, ‘Who do people say I am?’

“And they told him, ‘Some say, you are John the Baptist; others say, you are Elijah or one of the prophets.’

“Then Jesus asked them, ‘But you, who do you say I am?’

“Peter answered, ‘You are the Messiah.’

“He ordered them not to tell anyone about him. Jesus then began to teach them that the Son of Man had to suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the teachers of the law. He would be killed, and after three days rise again. Jesus said all this quite openly, so that Peter took him aside and began to protest strongly.

“But Jesus, turning around, and looking at his disciples, rebuked Peter, saying, ‘Get behind me, Satan! You are thinking not as God does, but as people do.’

“Then Jesus called the people and his disciples, and said, ‘If you want to follow me, deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow me. For if you choose to save your life, you will lose it. And if you lose your life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, you will save it.’”



*“Jesus Rebukes Peter”
Flemish School
16th-17th Century*

Personal Reflection

To be a true follower of Christ, I must “lose my life”:

- like [Abraham](#), who in his old age followed Yahweh’s call to strange lands;
- like [Moses](#), who agreed to lead a grumbling band of ungrateful people;
- like [Mary](#), who followed a path no one could possibly understand;
- like [Ignatius of Antioch](#) who said with his last breaths in the Roman Coliseum: “I am the wheat of God; may I be ground by the teeth of wild animals to be converted into the pure bread of Christ. My passions are crucified in me. There is no carnal fire that can burn me. A fountain has sprouted in me that murmurs and speaks from within: ‘Come to the Father.’”

Jesus tells us that to follow him is to follow the same path that took him to the cross. To reach maturity as a Christian, we must risk ourselves for something noble instead of being concerned about our own status and future. We must choose a lifestyle that will help us excel in the ways of love. And we must accept that our life may be seen as a failure according to others’ way of thinking—even our own family’s.

Taking up our cross by accepting freely the sacrifices the Father sends each day, we receive something more marvelous than what we sacrificed: *inner freedom* and a

more *profound happiness*.

“Jesus asked them, ‘But you, who do you say I am?’”

— *How would I answer that question today, not from a textbook but from my own faith?*

Peter took Jesus aside and tried to walk him back to a more sensible position: “Peter took (Jesus) aside and began to protest strongly.”

— *If I had been with Jesus when he started talking about the future in those frightful images, what might I have said or done? “Count me in, Lord, I’m with you all the way, no matter what”? Try to walk him back with “C’mom, Lord, there’s gotta be another way”? Or simply, “I’m outta here,” and leave before getting in any deeper?*

— *Why have I chosen what I answered to the above question? Am I satisfied with my answer? How might I amend my stance today?*

For Inspirational Viewing/Listening

Video:

“[The Cost of Discipleship](#),” a really good homily based on Mark 8: 27-35 by Lutheran pastor, [Rev. Jeff VanOsdol](#) (13 min.)

Music:

[John Denver](#) wrote the song, [“Follow Me.”](#) to his wife, Annie. He had nothing else in mind. But this week’s gospel sounds an almost identical theme. I invite you to listen to the song as if Jesus were speaking directly to you.

The Week Ahead

Journaling Prompts

— *Based on this weekend’s Scripture readings, what does the Risen Christ ask me to do TODAY regarding . . .*

*(1) the quality of the love I bring to my personal relationships . . . and
(2) my life as an emissary of Christ, committed to bringing God’s love to the people with whom I interact in person and on social media?*

Who this week needs to hear from me some expression of love?

Who needs to receive from me a moment of laughter and personal concern?

Why do I hesitate?

In the light of this weekend’s Scriptures, take some time to write about events occurring in your life this week and what you see happening in the world.

Preview of Next Week's Scriptures

15th Sunday of Ordinary Time

Wisdom 2: 12, 17-20 "The wicked say . . . 'Let us see if his words be true.'"

Psalm 54: 3-8 "O God, by your name save me."

James 3: 16 to 4:3 "Where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every foul practice."

Mark 9: 30-37 "If anyone wishes to be first, he shall be last of all and the servant of all."

Closing Prayer

(edited and abridged for use here)

Prayer for Deep Listening

God of silence and God of all sound,
help me to listen.

Help me to do that deep kind of listening
to the sounds of my soul,
waiting to hear your soft voice
calling me deeper into your presence.

Give me attentive ears
that begin to separate the noise around me
from the sounds that are you—
you who have spoken to me . . .
and through me . . . my whole life.

Too often I receive your voice
as if it were background noise.
Today, open my inner hearing
to hear you anew within my spirit.

Source: [Jesuit Resource](#)

Questions?

Send any questions or comments you might have to algarrotto@comcast.net

Gender usage in writing: We are conscious of gender references to God in the Scripture texts. Often, attempts to rewrite these passages result in awkward sentence structures. We have left the biblical translations as they are but do our best to be inclusive in all other parts of the reflection.

The Sunday readings are from [Christian Community Bible: Catholic Pastoral Edition](#)

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Follow this link to my spiritual novel, [Bishop Myriel: In His Own Words](#).

Coming soon!! *Inspector Javert: at the gates of Hell*
(a novel exploring “what happens next?” after we die)