

**Christ the King—St. Stephen**  
**Scripture Reflection**  
**22<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time**  
**2026—A Cycle**



**What do I see?**

*In this week's gospel reading, Peter tried to keep Jesus from returning to Jerusalem because of the danger awaiting him there. "Impossible, Master! That can never be!" Jesus made it quite clear. It was no mistake. He had to submit to an ordeal of suffering at the hands of the religious leaders, be killed, and on the third day rise up alive.*

*As I study [James Tissot's](#) painting, "Get behind me, Satan" (1886-1894), what does the scene from this weekend's gospel reading say to me about Jesus' single-minded mission? What do I think of Peter's reaction? If I were one of those other onlooking apostles, what would I be thinking right now?*

**Opening Prayer**

**A Non-Traditional Blessing**

Lord of Life,  
bless me with *discomfort* at easy answers...  
half-truths... and superficial relationships...  
so I may live deep within your heart.  
Bless me with anger at injustice... oppression...  
and the exploitation of people...  
so I may work for justice... freedom... and peace.  
Bless me with tears for those who suffer pain...  
rejection... starvation... and war...

that I may reach out my hand to comfort them...  
and turn their pain to joy.  
Bless me with enough foolishness to believe...  
that I can make a difference in this world.  
Amen.

Source: [Sr. Ruth Fox, OSB](#) (Benedictine)

### Scripture Readings

Jeremiah 20: 7-10 “You pushed me into this, God, and I let you do it. You were too much for me.”

Psalms 63: 2-9 “In your generous love, I am really living at last!”

Romans 12: 1-2 “Take your everyday, ordinary life... and place it before God as an offering.”

Matthew 16: 21-27 “Jesus made it clear to his disciples that it was now necessary for him to go to Jerusalem... be killed, and then on the third day be raised up alive.”

### Introduction to the 22nd Sunday of Ordinary Time

This weekend’s Scriptures echo the raw, passionate emotions of many of us who believe in the Universal, Risen Christ. He seems to reach into my soul and embrace me in a bearhug, holding me tight against his chest. He whispers his love saying, “Listen. These words are for you.”

In the first reading, the Prophet Jeremiah has “had it” with Yahweh! After spending his whole life prophesying as God had instructed him to, what does he get? Nothing but ridicule... and abuse from his detractors.

St. Paul begs the Christians in Rome, “Don’t let yourselves be shaped by the world.” Instead, he prayed that they would embrace the Risen Christ, who desired to renew and transform their minds and hearts.

After choosing Peter to shepherd the fledgling Christian community of believers, Jesus realized that his chosen leader wanted to change him into a “respectable” man in Jewish society. His answer? “Get behind me, Satan!” [Sr. Mary McGlone, CSJ](#) (Congregation of St. Joseph), put it in these dramatic words, “Moments after proclaiming unconditional faith, Peter became Jesus’ tempter” ([National Catholic Reporter](#)).

### Reading from the Book of Jeremiah (20: 7-9)

“You pushed me into this, God, and *I let you do it*. You were too much for me. And now I’m a public joke. They all poke fun at me. Every time I open my mouth I’m shouting, ‘Murder!’ or ‘Rape!’ And all I get for my God-warnings are insults and contempt.

“But if I say, ‘Forget it! No more God-Messages from me!’ the words are fire in my belly, a burning in my bones. I’m worn out trying to hold it in. I can’t do it any longer!

“Then I hear whispering behind my back, ‘There goes old Danger-Everywhere. Shut him up! Report him!’

“Old friends watch, hoping I’ll fall flat on my face. ‘One misstep and we’ll have him. We’ll get rid of him for good!’”

### Personal Reflection

With a poetic confession, Jeremiah, Yahweh’s “Bearer of the Truth,” cried out to his God from an unexpected darkness within his soul. It seems to us as if he’d finally had it with Yahweh. The people of God had ignored his mission, rejected his prophecies. Even worse, they’d laughed at him and insulted him.

Most of us need reminding that Jeremiah lived 400 years *after* King David and around 600 years *before* the birth of Jesus. God’s chosen people had not yet come to a clear awareness of life continuing beyond the grave. They thought that what they saw was all they were going to get. Knowing this helps us understand why Jeremiah expected God to help him in real-time to fulfill his mission. But Yahweh *seemed* not to cooperate with his chosen prophet or to care about his suffering.

We might consider being spared exile (left behind) a lucky break for Israel’s remaining inhabitants. Yet, the bedraggled, abandoned remnant had to “start from scratch”—finding a way to live together in poverty, organizing a new social order, and moving on with their lives. It appears not to have worked out very well. Many, including Jeremiah, decided to leave the chaos of a plundered Israel and emigrate to Egypt, where society might, at least, offer greater stability. But later, Jeremiah decided to return to Palestine... what was left of it.

— *At what point in my own life did God seem not to care much about my needs or listen to my prayerful pleadings? What was it all about? How did it conclude?*

### **Psalm 63 (2-9)**

A psalm of David, when he was out in the Judean wilderness

*My soul thirsts for you, O Lord my God.*

So here I am in the place of worship, eyes open,  
drinking in your strength and glory.

In your generous love, I am really living at last!

My lips brim praises like fountains.

I bless you every time I take a breath;

My arms wave like banners of praise to you.

*My soul thirsts for you, O Lord my God.*

I eat my fill of prime rib and gravy;  
I smack my lips. It's time to shout praises!  
If I'm sleepless at midnight,  
I spend the hours in grateful reflection.  
Because you've always stood up for me,  
I'm free to run and play.  
*My soul thirsts for you, O Lord my God.*

I hold on to you for dear life,  
and you hold me steady as a post.  
Those who are out to get me are marked for doom,  
marked for death, bound for hell.  
*My soul thirsts for you, O Lord my God.*

### Personal Reflection

It's believed that David wrote this psalm during a time when he hid out in the dry, barren Judean desert. Saul sought David's death because David's triumph accentuated Saul's deep-seated envy and demonic torment. David had to run for his life both from King Saul and the rebellion of his own son, Absalom. These episodes exemplify the perils of unchecked jealousy.

— *When did I, like the endangered future king David, suffer at the hands of someone I expected to be a friend, relative or ally? How did it turn out?*

### **From St. Paul's Letter to the Romans (12: 1-2)**

"So, here's what I want you to do, God helping you. Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you."

### Personal Reflection

"Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture...." In this brief passage, Paul begged the Roman Christians to learn how to discern between good and evil. As they plowed their way through a pagan social, economic, and religious environment, they needed keen spiritual discernment to remain true to their baptism.

Conflicting opinions and options rain down on us every moment of every day. Some are good, others not so good—or even downright evil. To remain true to our Christian baptism, we need to be persons who pray for sound guidance and spiritual discernment.

— *To what extent are my thoughts, beliefs, and daily decisions shaped by current societal standards and values? How do I see this at work in my everyday life? Am I okay with that? If I want to live my life by a more God-centered decision-making process, where will I begin?*

### **The Gospel According to Matthew (16: 21-27)**

“Jesus made it clear to his disciples that it was now necessary for him to go to Jerusalem, submit to an ordeal of suffering at the hands of the religious leaders, be killed, and then on the third day be raised up alive. Peter took him in hand, protesting, ‘Impossible, Master! That can never be!’



“But Jesus didn’t swerve. ‘Peter, get out of my way. Get lost Satan. You have no idea how God works.’

“Then Jesus went to work on his disciples. ‘Anyone who intends to come with me has to let me lead. You’re not in the driver’s seat. *I* am. Don’t run from suffering; embrace it. Follow me and I’ll show you how. Self-help is no help at all. Self-sacrifice is the way, my way, to finding yourself, your true self. What kind of deal is it to get everything you want but lose yourself? What could you ever trade your soul for? Don’t be in such a hurry to go into business for yourself. Before you know it the Son of Man will arrive with all the splendor of his

Father, accompanied by an army of angels. You’ll get everything you have coming to you, a personal gift.”

### Personal Reflection

In last week’s gospel passage, Jesus bestowed upon Peter the keys of the kingdom, charging him with responsibility for guiding the community going forward in his physical absence. This week, we hear him call Peter “Satan,” publicly and to his face. Wow! Jesus’ quick response must have stunned Peter and the rest of the apostles. Our question might be, how can Peter be the keeper of the keys to the kingdom of heaven... and a vehicle of Satan at the same time? Where does that leave us?

— *In calling Peter “Satan,” what message did Jesus convey in that one terrible word?*

### **For Inspirational Listening and Watching**

#### Listen

“Come Thou Font of Every Blessing,” sung by [Katherine Jenkins](#)—lyrics by [Robert Robinson](#) (at the age of 22), in the 17<sup>th</sup> century—composed by [John Wyeth](#)

“Where Have All the Flowers Gone?”—[Peter, Paul and Mary](#)

*This antiwar anthem corresponds with this week’s closing poem-prayer by Fr. Daniel Barrigan, SJ.*

*My Soul is Thirsting* composed by [Michael Joncas](#), vocals by [Jennifer Kelly](#) and [Michael Kates](#) (from the CD, "Light to the Darkness: Acoustic Songs for Reflection" (1994), recorded at St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Seattle, WA. It was made by five musicians as a fundraising effort for the [l'Arche](#) community in Seattle.)

### Watch

[22nd Sunday of Ordinary Time, Cycle A](#) reflection by [John Michael Talbot](#)

### **Preview of Next Weekend's Scriptures**

Readings for the 23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Ezekiel 33: 7-9 "If you warn the wicked to change their ways and they don't do it, they'll die in their sins."

Psalm 95: 1-2, 6-9 "Come, let's shout praises to God. Raise the roof for the Rock who saved us!"

Romans 13: 8-10 "Don't run up debts, except for the huge debt of love you owe each other."

Matthew 18: 15-20 "If a fellow believer hurts you, go and tell him—work it out between the two of you. If he listens, you've made a friend."

### **Closing Prayer**

*(edited, abridged, and adapted for use here)*

### **Some**

by [Fr. Daniel Barrigan, SJ](#) (Jesuit)

Some stood up once... and sat down.  
Some walked a mile... and walked away.  
Some stood up twice... then sat down. "It's too much!" they cried.  
Some walked two miles, then walked away. "I've had it," they cried.  
Some stood... and stood... and stood.  
Some walked... and walked... and walked.  
They walked the earth... they walked the waters... they walked the air.  
"Why do you stand?" they were asked... and "Why do you walk?"  
"Because of the children," they said... and "because of the heart"...  
and "because of the bread"... and "because the cause is the heart's beat...  
and the children born... and the risen bread."

Source: [The Nuclear Resister](#)

Unless otherwise indicated, the Sunday readings are from *The Message Bible* translated by Rev. Dr. Eugene H. Peterson (Catholic Edition)

Peterson's translation of the Bible is a highly interpretive paraphrase,  
celebrated for its readability.

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