

TWENTY-NINTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

An exhortatory reading. The good news here is the result of the servant's suffering, not the suffering itself, so convey the emotions very carefully.

Isaiah = Ī-ZAY-uh

God does not take pleasure in the suffering, but in the willingness of the servant to bear it for us; don't smile at this line.

Your voice, eyes, and face can hint at the good news God's servant brings to us.

Pick up your pace; the good news is now even more clear.

End on a note of quiet satisfaction.

For meditation and context:

TO KEEP IN MIND

You can't proclaim what you don't understand. Read the Scripture passage and its commentary in *Workbook*. Then read it from your Bible, including what comes before and after it so that you understand the context.

READING I After the exile, Israel saw itself in the persona of the suffering servant depicted in this reading, which describes how the servant's humiliation and suffering will lead to triumph. Rejected and broken, the servant would be revived. His death is a sacrifice in atonement for the sins of all people. The Hebrew term *'āsām* ("reparation offering" or "offering for sin"), frequent in Leviticus, refers to a sacrifice intended as compensation for what is due because of guilt. The writer envisions the suffering servant as comparable to a blameless animal vic-

LECTIONARY #146

READING I Isaiah 53:10-11

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah

The LORD was pleased
to **crush** him in infirmity.

If he gives his **life** as an offering for sin,
he shall see his descendants in a **long** life,
and the will of the LORD shall be accomplished
through him.

Because of his **affliction**
he shall see the **light** in fullness of days;
through his **suffering**, my servant shall justify **many**,
and their **guilt** he shall **bear**.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 33:4-5, 18-19, 20, 22 (22)

R. Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.

Upright is the word of the LORD,
and all his works are trustworthy.
He loves justice and right;
of the kindness of the LORD the earth
is full.

See, the eyes of the LORD are upon those
who fear him,
upon those who hope for his kindness;
to deliver them from death
and preserve them in spite of famine.

Our soul waits for the LORD,
who is our help and our shield.
May your kindness, O LORD, be upon us
who have put our hope in you.

tim, like the "lamb led to the slaughter" in an earlier verse (7).

One of the striking points is the statement "Through his suffering, my servant shall justify many, and their guilt he shall bear." Here the individual servant and Israel are combined: God's plan of putting things right is to be realized by the community. The term "justify" means to be acquitted or declared innocent. Since the servant bears their iniquity, the act of salvation will be efficacious and not merely legal.

READING II Only here the author calls Jesus our "great high priest." He is acquainted with the tradition of Jesus' temptation and struggle with evil throughout his public life, to which Jesus did not succumb. Jesus is "our great high priest," perfectly in communion with God and humans. He "passed through the heavens," an ambiguous phrase that means that even heaven is too small to hold him; his identity with human nature is total. The author stresses that Jesus was a human being like us. He experienced all that we experience, including temptation in every

An exhortatory reading. A powerful reading, reminding us of the deep connection we have with Jesus.

With energy and eagerness. This is good news!

How does it make you feel to have someone like Jesus who knows our struggles intimately? Bring that emotion to your proclamation.

Slowly and with great assurance; maintain eye contact with the assembly to the end.

A narrative reading. Jesus' definition of leadership is very different from the world's. Make sure this contrast is evident.

Zebedee = ZEB-uh-dee

James and John are acting like children.

Enthusiastically.

With great confidence.

READING II Hebrews 4:14–16

A reading from the Letter to the Hebrews

Brothers and sisters:

Since we have a **great** high priest who has passed through the **heavens**,

Jesus, the Son of God,

let us hold **fast** to our confession.

For we do not have a high priest

who is unable to **sympathize** with our weaknesses,

but one who has **similarly** been tested in every way, yet without **sin**.

So let us **confidently** approach the throne of grace

to receive **mercy** and to find **grace** for **timely** help.

GOSPEL Mark 10:35–45

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark

James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to **Jesus** and said to him,

"**Teacher**, we want you to do for us **whatever** we ask of you."

He replied, "**What** do you wish me to do for you?"

They answered him, "**Grant** that in your glory

we may sit one at your **right** and the other at your **left**."

Jesus said to them, "You do not **know** what you are asking.

Can you drink the cup that **I** drink

or be **baptized** with the baptism with which **I** am baptized?"

They said to him, "**We can**."

way, "yet without sin." Because he never wavered in temptation, we also can be triumphant in our temptations.

Through Jesus, God became so identified with humans as to empathize with us and our suffering; because of the depths of his suffering with us, mercy flows from God's throne. In Jesus, God has visited us in our home, and, now travelling the road before us, he shows us how to forgive. Because he has identified with us in our life struggle, he shows us compassion, mercy, and our better self. His visit to us

brought God to humans, and he brings humans to God.

GOSPEL

On three occasions Jesus' Passion prediction is followed by the failure of the disciples to comprehend the implications of Jesus' teaching about his suffering (8:32; 9:33, 10:35–40). In this reading James and John request positions of honor in the coming Kingdom. In reply Jesus asks if they can share his cup and baptism. The images refer to the suffering and death that await him. The "cup" is used in the Old Testament to refer to

divine punishment (Psalm 75:8), and the image may simply refer to the tremendous suffering that falls to Jesus by lot (Mark 14:36). The verb "baptize" can refer to being overwhelmed with catastrophes (Psalm 42:7; Isaiah 43:2 for a similar idea). Here the metaphor of drinking the cup refers to acceptance of the destiny assigned by God, which involves divine judgment of sin that Jesus, the innocent one, is to expiate on behalf of the guilty. His "baptism" will be Crucifixion and Death for the salvation of the human race. James' and John's request for a share in the glory involves a share in