

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

An exhortatory reading. Maintain a steadfast calm and confidence throughout. Stand up straight and keep eye contact with the assembly.

Isaiah = Ī-ZAY-uh

The prophet names the source of his strength right away.

Careful not to sound weary or put upon.
plucked = tried to pull out

Smile as you recall your relationship with God.

Pause at the end of this line.

"I'm ready to meet anyone who questions that God loves me."

Don't challenge; rather, maintain a centered confidence.

Offer your assembly that same relationship with God.

LECTIONARY #131

READING I Isaiah 50:5-9a

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah

The LORD God **opens** my ear that I may **hear**;
and I have **not** rebelled,
have not turned **back**.
I gave my **back** to those who **beat** me,
my **cheeks** to those who **plucked** my beard;
my **face** I did not **shield**
from **buffets** and **spitting**.

The LORD God is my **help**,
therefore I am not **disgraced**;
I have **set** my **face** like **flint**,
knowing that I shall **not** be put to **shame**.
He is **near** who upholds my **right**;
if anyone wishes to **oppose** me,
let us appear **together**.
Who **disputes** my right?
Let that man **confront** me.
See, the LORD God is my **help**;
who will prove me **wrong**?

READING I

Although this prophecy could also be applied to an individual's experience, the "servant" named here is often interpreted as the community of ancient Israel. In that sense the reading is an expression of the community's understanding of its situation before God. The first part describes the sufferings endured in obedient docility—sufferings the servant has accepted without complaint. Are the people responsible for their unhappy history due to their sins, or are they victims? The preceding verses have spoken of sin and transgression, but here

the servant is innocent. The servant has not hidden his face, even though the exposure subjected him to shame and spitting.

In the midst of insult, the servant is confident in the Lord's help, even though the prophet does not specify how it will take place. The last part of the reading stresses the servant's fortitude: silent suffering is not a sign of cowardice; God strengthens him in the face of tormenters. In the end only the servant will continue, while his adversaries will be eclipsed. Christians read this prophecy as fulfilled in Jesus, silently enduring his Passion. It may

also be seen as a picture of the Church in the present age.

READING II

Paul wrote that the person is not justified primarily by the works of the Law but by faith and adherence to Jesus. Here James writes that a person is not justified by faith alone. Does this present teaching contradict that of Paul? Paul's works refer to the detailed prescriptions of the Mosaic Law. He holds that a person has to fulfill more than outward observance. James' point is clear: ideological faith, insufficient in itself, must be

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.

A didactic reading. Don't get caught up in the theology here. The teaching is very simple; keep your proclamation the same.

The tone throughout is, "Don't you see?"

Keep your pace up.

Be sincere; it's not the genuineness of the faith that James is challenging but its practical application.

Slow a bit and set this line apart.

Emphasize "from."

translated into action. Needy persons are not aided simply by the good wishes of their fellows; the faith commitment is to be translated into practice.

Paul argues against those who claim to gain salvation just on the basis of their good deeds, but he understands how true faith leads to a generous life. In this reading James condenses the key idea: faith without works is dead; it cannot save. His example is similar to 1 John 3:17: "If someone who has worldly means sees a brother in need and refuses him compassion, how can the love

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 116:1–2, 3–4, 5–6, 8–9 (9)

R. I will walk before the Lord, in the land of the living. or R. Alleluia.

I love the LORD because he has heard
my voice in supplication,
because he has inclined his ear to me
the day I called.

The cords of death encompassed me;
the snares of the netherworld seized
upon me;
I fell into distress and sorrow,
and I called upon the name of the LORD,
"O LORD, save my life!"

Gracious is the LORD and just;
yes, our God is merciful.
The LORD keeps the little ones;
I was brought low, and he saved me.

For he has freed my soul from death,
my eyes from tears, my feet from
stumbling.
I shall walk before the LORD
in the land of the living.

READING II James 2:14–18

A reading from the Letter of Saint James

What **good** is it, my brothers and sisters,
if someone says he has **faith** but does not have **works**?

Can that faith **save** him?

If a brother or sister has nothing to **wear**
and has no **food** for the day,
and one of you says to them,

"Go in **peace**, keep **warm**, and eat **well**,"

but you do not give them the **necessities** of the body,
what **good** is it?

So also faith of **itself**,
if it does not have **works**, is **dead**.

Indeed someone might say,
"You have **faith** and I have **works**."

Demonstrate your **faith** to me **without** works,
and I will demonstrate my faith to you **from** my works.

of God remain in him?" For James, deeds authenticate the Christian life and give evidence of the truth of faith and charity.

GOSPEL

Jesus has just given sight to a blind person. Now he will open the eyes of the disciples, a process that spans the following chapters on the road to Jerusalem. This episode when the disciples confess Jesus as the Messiah, is the turning point in his ministry. Popular opinion regards him as a prophet with a stature like that of Elijah, the forerunner of

the Messiah, but the disciples confess him to be the Messiah. Toward the end of Old Testament times, the Messiah was expected to appear as a victorious figure—with no hint of defeat or suffering.

Jesus now removes any false messianic impressions, explaining that the Messiah will undergo suffering and death. Peter, acting as spokesperson, rebukes Jesus for speaking about such apparent defeat. Jesus' reply is forceful: the plan of salvation requires that the Messiah suffer. Peter, in the role of tempter, represents the limited,