

# Speaking the Truth

14th Sunday in Ordinary Time  
Cycle B | July 7, 2024

## WISDOM FROM THE CELLS

I remember when I was growing up that I believed I was always the odd man out with both my peers and my family. I did not have a strong identity, and I had a strong desire to be accepted. So I sought out people that were outside of my family and school to see if I could find what I desired from them. And it seemed as if I finally had... at least for a time. These new friends of mine seemed to provide what I desired; a feeling of inclusion, power, purpose and identity. Only there was one catch; these people were gangsters and criminals.

I soon learned that this feeling of acceptance and identity that they provided was just as unconditional and fleeting as that given by any other group of people. But I was at a loss about where else to turn, and so I hung on to my negative associations and these false friends. I hurt a lot of people along the way because of it. I witnessed and participated in many evil acts, and I never once spoke out against it. This is exactly what characterized my entire teenage years and early twenties. I never spoke out against the wrongs in my family or in any of my later peer groups because I was afraid of being rejected, and to be rejected was to be nothing.

This fear stopped the moment I gave my life over to God. This is because I realized that I was accepted by God unconditionally and that I was something; a son of God created in His image. That is my true identity. This immediately gave me the courage I needed to change my life and to openly speak out against the wrongs being committed either amongst my family, friends, or my community. If God was for me, who could be against me? There is no more reason to fear.

- Nicholas, who is in a California State Prison.



Art by J. Salazar

## PENITENTIAL RITE

**Lord, have mercy.**

**Christ, have mercy.**

**Lord, have mercy.**

May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins and bring us to everlasting life.

**R. Amen.**

## OPENING PRAYER

Let us pray:

God of Wisdom,  
You give strength to  
those who are weak,  
empowering them to speak  
your truth to the world.  
Open our hearts to hear  
your voice and give us the  
courage to speak your truth  
in the face of adversity.

We ask this through Christ,  
our Lord. **R. Amen.**



# LITURGY OF THE WORD

## First Reading: Ezequiel 2: 2-5

As the LORD spoke to me, the spirit entered into me and set me on my feet, and I heard the one who was speaking say to me: Son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites, rebels who have rebelled against me; they and their ancestors have revolted against me to this very day. Hard of face and obstinate of heart are they to whom I am sending you. But you shall say to them: Thus says the LORD GOD! And whether they heed or resist—for they are a rebellious house—they shall know that a prophet has been among them.

The Word of the Lord.

**R. Thanks be to God.**

## Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 123: 1-2, 2, 3-4

**R. Our eyes are fixed on the Lord, pleading for his mercy.**

To you I lift up my eyes  
who are enthroned in heaven —  
As the eyes of servants  
are on the hands of their masters.

**R. Our eyes are fixed on the Lord, pleading for his mercy.**

As the eyes of a maid  
are on the hands of her mistress,  
So are our eyes on the LORD, our God,  
till he have pity on us.

**R. Our eyes are fixed on the Lord, pleading for his mercy.**

Have pity on us, O LORD, have pity on us,  
for we are more than sated with contempt;  
our souls are more than sated  
with the mockery of the arrogant,  
with the contempt of the proud.

**R. Our eyes are fixed on the Lord, pleading for his mercy.**

## Second Reading: 2 Corinthians 12: 7-10

Brothers and sisters: That I, Paul, might not become too elated, because of the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, an angel of Satan, to beat me, to keep me from being too elated. Three times I begged the Lord about this, that it might leave me, but he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.” I will rather boast most gladly of my weaknesses, in order that the power of Christ may dwell with me. Therefore, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and constraints, for the sake of Christ; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

The Word of the Lord.

**R. Thanks be to God.**

## Gospel: Mark 6: 1-6

Jesus departed from there and came to his native place, accompanied by his disciples. When the sabbath came he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astonished. They said, “Where did this man get all this? What kind of wisdom has been given him? What mighty deeds are wrought by his hands! Is he not the carpenter, the son of Mary, and the brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him. Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his native place and among his own kin and in his own house.” So he was not able to perform any mighty deed there, apart from curing a few sick people by laying his hands on them. He was amazed at their lack of faith.

The Gospel of the Lord.

**R. Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**



# MEDITATION: TRUE AUTHORITY

*(from the eyes of jesus)*  
walking towards nazareth  
home  
feelings flowed  
through me  
it seemed as if yesterday  
i had waved good-bye  
to familiar sights

now reflecting on  
what it would be like  
to return to them  
so much had happened  
nervous about  
what was going  
to happen

arriving at  
my mother's house  
seeing her radiant smile  
relaxing with my friends  
telling story after story  
of what had happened

now it was time  
to go to the synagogue  
how many times  
had i walked  
along this dusty path  
and now after  
so much controversy  
heading towards  
our village's  
place of worship

how had i changed?  
was i the same person  
that used to walk  
along this path?

i found deep peace  
in seeing the familiar  
and sitting in  
the congregation  
the rabbi came  
over to me  
and said  
jesus,  
son of joseph  
everyone talks of  
your wonders would  
you read the scriptures  
and reflect on them  
for us?

i hesitated  
afraid of how  
they might react

when they heard  
my message  
walking to the scrolls  
slowly reading  
then speaking about  
how important it is  
to live as  
brothers and sisters  
how it was wrong  
that a few had so much  
and so many have  
so little

people became  
restless  
uncomfortable  
all eyes turned on me  
i felt like i was trying to  
hold on to the edge  
at the top of a cliff

one with whom  
i had studied with  
for years  
began to shout:  
who are you?  
why do you  
consider yourself  
so important?  
you are just one of us!

it's hard to  
speak the truth  
here in this  
familiar place  
people i had known  
for years  
stood in deep anger  
not willing to see me  
as the person  
i had become  
accusing me  
of blasphemy  
they did not  
understand

suddenly i remembered  
entering these doors  
when i was seven  
the youthful faces  
long laborious hours  
of learning to read  
the gentle patience  
of the rabbi  
those were  
happy days

now these same people

are rejecting everything  
i stand for it  
cut into my heart

they yelled at me:  
jesus  
everyone who passes  
through our village  
does nothing  
but talk about  
your great wonders!  
you are nothing more  
than a craftsman!  
you never once  
did anything  
extraordinary for us!  
you can't fool us!  
you are one of us!

how demeaning  
this rejection felt  
what did i say?  
what did i do?

the anger grew rapidly  
in the room  
because of their  
limited understanding  
they could not see god  
working in me  
calling them to hear  
my message about  
who he really is  
looking at their faces  
contorted with anger  
and frustration  
they acted as if  
they actually  
possessed  
god: the danger of  
narrow-mindedness

the prophets told us  
how important it is  
to not make idols  
and my message  
was threatening the idol  
that they had  
created out of  
their misunderstanding  
of god

they seized me  
with the same hands  
they used to study  
with during those long  
lessons we shared  
they wanted to throw me

off a mountain to kill me

jesus  
what are you trying to  
do to our religion?  
what you are saying  
is causing problems!  
don't you realize  
the romans might  
annihilate us  
because of your  
subversive message?  
it is better to pay  
the heavy taxes than  
to threaten their system  
they're too powerful  
and what you have said  
about the pharisees!  
don't you realize  
you're insulting god's  
representatives?

how hard i had  
tired to explain  
as they dragged me  
toward the edge  
these were my old friends  
even some relatives  
ready to throw me over  
to be rid of their problems

but one of my  
closest friends  
near the back of the crowd  
began to say that maybe  
god was trying to  
say something through me  
a heated discussion  
began and the moment  
permitted me to slip  
through their midst

i was carried  
down the hill  
by the weight  
of the rejection  
of those with whom  
i had shared so much



**REFLECTION:** I remember a time I tried to speak the truth and was rejected. What was that truth?  
I remember... I remember...

### OUR FATHER

Let us pray with confidence to the Father  
in the words our Savior gave us:  
**Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy Kingdom come,  
thy will be done  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread,  
and forgive us our trespasses  
as we forgive those who trespass against  
us, and lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.**

**R. For the kingdom, the power and the  
glory are yours, now and for ever.  
Amen.**

### SIGN OF PEACE

Jesus, you said to your apostles: "I leave you  
peace, my peace I give you. Look not on our  
sins, but on the faith of your Church, and  
grant us the peace and unity of your kingdom  
where you live forever and ever. **Amen.**

The peace of the Lord be with you always.  
**R. And with your spirit.**

### LAMB OF GOD

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world:  
**have mercy on us.**

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world:  
**have mercy on us.**

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world:  
**grant us peace.**

This is Jesus, the Lamb of God, who takes away the  
sins of the world. Happy are we who are called to  
his supper.

**Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter  
under my roof, but only say the word and  
my soul shall be healed.**

### COMMUNION

### CLOSING PRAYER

Let us pray:

Lord God,

In a world that is so full of insults and persecution,  
you ask us to be your messengers of truth and love.  
Help us in our weakness to make us strong in faith  
and in love. May the witness of this community  
and our shared Eucharist strengthen us so that we  
may be prophets of your life to the world.

We ask this through Christ, our Lord. **R. Amen.**

