

## **26th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

### **Sign of the Cross+**

### **Read by Leader of the Family**

Christ's death on the cross and his resurrection  
set the pattern which we are called to live out in our daily lives.

**Penitential Act** – reflect on sins and ask for God's mercy and forgiveness.

### **Recite the Gloria**

### **Today's Readings**

**First Reading** Ezekiel 18:25-28

When sinners renounce their sin, then they will live.

**Second Reading** Philippians 2:1-11

The incarnate Son empties himself of his majesty to become human.

**Gospel** Matthew 21:28-32

The tax collectors and sinners respond, but not the chief priests and elders.

## **HOMILY FOR THE 26<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME**

*“In your minds you must be the same as Christ Jesus.”*

Tom Holland is a popular English historian. In his adolescence, he was a lukewarm Christian who preferred the stories about Romans and Greeks to those of Israel and the early Christians. He wrote bestselling books about Julius Caesar and Alexander. In a 2019 book called *Dominion* he recalls that after twenty years of study of the ancient world he found their values alien. He found them callous and cruel; they showed a complete lack of any sense that those who were poor and weak might have the slightest intrinsic value. He came to realise that his deepest values and those of Western society had been inherited from Christianity; and that at the heart of those values was the cross. The Greeks could accept that a mighty emperor might become divine, but they were outraged by the claim that a criminal tortured to death on a cross might reveal the glory of the creator of the universe. And that this Jewish outcast might be raised to life in the resurrection only added to their horror and challenged their basic values. It made God seem closer to those who were weak than those who were mighty. It was a scandal.

St Paul was also scandalised by this audacious claim of a crucified saviour and was determined to persecute this blaspheming sect, the follower of Jesus Christ. And yet years later St Paul was to write, “to shame what is strong... [God] chose what is weak”. How did he change his views?

On his way to Damascus, Paul, the zealous Pharisee, encountered the risen and crucified Christ. He had to choose either the Jewish law or the risen Lord. Paul was overwhelmed by God’s grace and turned to Christ. He had to rethink all his views. He understood now that the God who had freed Moses from slavery in Egypt and brought the Jews out of their prison of exile had gone even further and been willing in Jesus, God’s Son, to suffer the degrading death of the cross. It blew Paul’s mind that God could reveal such amazing love.

And instead of being ashamed of the cross, he puts it in the centre of his Gospel. When he writes to his congregation at Philippi in today’s second reading, he wants to touch their hearts to make them more loving to each other. How can he change them? He recites a beautiful hymn, which tells the story of Jesus’ divine love: how Jesus did not cling to his status as divine Son but in the incarnation humbly took on our human condition and was willing to face death. And not just any death but the terrible punishment meted out to slaves – crucifixion. Jesus plumbed the depths of human suffering, and his Father answered his prayer by raising him up to eternal life so that the whole of creation recognised him as Lord. Paul tells his congregation to steep themselves in this story so that their hearts are touched by this divine love, and they imitate Jesus and think like him.

Tom Holland came to realise that our Western society was based on Christian values, although most people do not recognise it. Such prized beliefs as the equal intrinsic worth of all human beings and the inherent dignity of the individual person depend on a crucified and risen Christ, and St Paul drew out the implications of such divine love for his congregations. Many people today do not realise what an outrageous claim was being made in a Roman Empire where power and status were supreme. Now God showed compassion for outcasts; poor people were closer to God than those who were rich: “the last will be first, and the first, last”. It is not surprising, then, in today’s Gospel, that the tax

collectors and the prostitutes are drawn by Christ's strange love before the religious leaders.

Historians can help us to see the past in fresh ways. If Christianity and its values are to survive in the West, then it will need communities like those of St Paul to respond to the demanding but amazing love revealed in Jesus' crucifixion. We are called to overcome our profound divisions and hatreds by letting our hearts and minds be filled with the power of his divine humility; and to ask that God may give us the mind of Christ.

1. Tom Holland realised that our Western values derived from Christianity and the scandal of the cross.
2. St Paul was also scandalised by the cross, but the risen Christ changed his mind. He placed the cross at the centre of his Gospel, for it revealed God's amazing love.
3. We must rediscover the scandal and power of the cross and try to have the mind of Christ.

## **Recite the Creed**

### **PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL FOR THE 26<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME**

#### **Leader of the Family:**

Let us turn to our heavenly Father and put before him our needs.

#### **Read by a member of the Family:**

1. We pray for the Church:  
that our leaders may bear witness  
to Christ's divine humility in their lives.  
We pray to the Lord...
2. We pray for all our Christian communities:  
that they may understand the folly of the cross  
and rejoice in the power of its message.  
We pray to the Lord...
3. We pray for world leaders:  
that they may not put their faith in power and arms

but follow Christ's concern for those who are weak and poor.  
We pray to the Lord...

4. We pray for all those who are suffering from ill-health:  
that they may see in Christ's suffering  
a source of comfort and healing.  
We pray to the Lord...
5. We pray for those who have died,  
especially Sr. Bernie Gaetz, a Sister of the Charities of St. Louis,  
and those whose anniversaries we keep at this time:  
that they may enjoy the fruits of Christ's resurrection.  
We pray to the Lord...

**Read by the Leader of the Family:**

Heavenly Father, hear all these our prayers  
and what we ask in faith  
may you grant through your Son,  
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen!!!

**Recite the Our Father**

**Thank God for his generosity.**

**Make the Sign of the Cross +**