

# SUNDAY READINGS

## READ AT HOME

Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Year B

30 June 2024



### Collect

O God, who through the grace of adoption  
chose us to be children of light,  
grant, we pray,  
that we may not be wrapped in the darkness of error  
but always be seen to stand in the bright light of truth.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
God, for ever and ever.  
**Amen.**

### Readings and Commentaries

Were Paul's letters read out when the community gathered to break bread in memory of Jesus? If so, one might invoke today's reading to justify appealing for money at Mass. In one of the earliest accounts of the eucharist, that of Justin Martyr around the year 155, we read: "The wealthy who so desire give what they wish, as each chooses; and what is collected is deposited with the president.

He helps orphans and widows, and those who through sickness or any other cause are in need, and those in prison, and strangers sojourning among us; in a word, he takes care of all those who are in need." This still has a local focus. In asking the Corinthians to give financial assistance to the community in Jerusalem, Paul's thinking is global, even cosmic. In his vision, communities far apart belong together, as do Jew and Greek, rich and poor. All are enriched by the generosity of God whose only Son emptied himself that we might be filled with his fullness. This glorious canvas may not be at the forefront of our minds as the routine Sunday collection is taken up, but it's what gives it meaning.

### **A reading from the book of Wisdom 1:13–15; 2:23–24**

Death was not God's doing,  
he takes no pleasure in the extinction of the living.  
To be - for this he created all;  
the world's created things have health in them,  
in them no fatal poison can be found,  
and Hades holds no power on earth;  
for virtue is undying.  
Yet God did make man imperishable,  
he made him in the image of his own nature;  
it was the devil's envy that brought death into the world,  
as those who are his partners will discover.

### **First Reading**

There's general agreement that the book of Wisdom emerged from the scholarly Jewish community in the Egyptian city of Alexandria, probably not long before the birth of Jesus but possibly even during his lifetime. It's a masterly blend of Jewish tradition and Greek philosophical thought. This cross-fertilisation provided Jews with an impressive resource that gave Jewish faith and practice respectability.

Today's short passage homes in on death and immortality. The stirrings of Jewish belief in life after death were late in coming. Here it is expressed briefly and in a way that raises as many questions as it offers answers. The origin of death is attributed to underworld powers, Hades and the devil, not to God. This dualistic view of the world pits God and life against death and the devil. What is meant by "the devil's envy" is unclear. It may refer to the serpent in the Garden of Eden or to Cain's jealousy of Abel. Of all the things God created to live, humankind was made in God's own image. Immortality, however, is not an intrinsic attribute of the human soul, as the Greek philosophers argued, but God's gift to the righteous (though this is not stated in the reading itself). This perspective is distinctly Jewish.

The poetic and philosophical character of this reading may make it difficult for the assembly to grasp. The language is not difficult and the argument is clearly built up on a series of assertions, but its style calls for thoughtful and unhurried proclamation.

### **Responsorial Psalm**

**Ps 29:2, 4–6, 11–13**

**R.** I will praise you, Lord,  
for you have rescued me.

I will praise you, Lord, you have rescued me  
and have not let my enemies rejoice over me.  
O Lord, you have raised my soul from the dead,  
restored me to life from those who sink into the grave. **R.**

Sing psalms to the Lord, you who love him,  
give thanks to his holy name.  
His anger lasts but a moment: his favour through life.  
At night there are tears, but joy comes with dawn. **R.**

The Lord listened and had pity.  
The Lord came to my help.  
For me you have changed my mourning into dancing,  
O Lord my God, I will thank you for ever. **R.**

### **Responsorial Psalm**

This particular responsorial psalm is allocated to a number of Sundays and to the Easter vigil. It is drawn from Psalm 29/30, a song of praise and thanksgiving for deliverance. The psalmist seems to have had an experience like that of Job, being laid low by the loss of prosperity and well-being. In the distress he faces – probably a life-threatening illness – he pleads for help and is saved. For this he gives thanks and praise. His prayer is prompted by being saved from actually dying. As such it does not imply any faith in life beyond death. The fate of those who die is to "sink into the grave."

In the context of this Sunday's readings, we can see this psalm foreshadowing the belief in immortality ventured in the first reading. We can imagine it as the prayer of the young girl raised by Jesus, with her parents joining in, as well as that of the woman healed from her bleeding. These stories give the response great poignancy. More broadly, we can hear it as the prayer of the risen Lord himself, raised out of death into immortality.

The overall tone is one of great rejoicing, and this is the spirit in which the verses should be proclaimed. At the same time there are phrases which call for quieter delivery, such as "His anger lasts a moment" and "At night there are tears." Readers will need to take care with the longer lines and make sure they maintain momentum through to the end.

**A reading from the second letter of St Paul  
to the Corinthians 8:7, 9, 13–15**

You always have the most of everything - of faith, of eloquence, of understanding, of keenness for any cause, and the biggest share of our affection - so we expect you to put the most into this work of mercy too. Remember how generous the Lord Jesus was: he was rich, but he became poor for your sake, to make you rich out of his poverty. This does not mean that to give relief to others you ought to make things difficult for yourselves: it is a question of balancing what happens to be your surplus now against their present need, and one day they may have something to spare that will supply your own need. That is how we strike a balance: as scripture says: The man who gathered much had none too much, the man who gathered little did not go short.

**A reading from the holy Gospel  
according to Mark 5:21–43**

When Jesus had crossed in the boat to the other side, a large crowd gathered round him and he stayed by the lakeside. Then one of the synagogue officials came up, Jairus by name, and seeing him, fell at his feet and pleaded with him earnestly, saying, 'My little daughter is desperately sick. Do come and lay your hands on her to make her better and save her life.' Jesus went with him and a large crowd followed him; they were pressing all round him.

[Now there was a woman who had suffered from a haemorrhage for twelve years; after long and painful treatment under various doctors, she had spent all she had without being any the better for it, in fact, she was getting worse. She had heard about Jesus, and she came up behind him through the crowd and touched his cloak. 'If I can touch his clothes,' she had told herself 'I will be well again.' And the source of the bleeding dried up instantly, and she felt in herself that she was cured of her complaint. Immediately aware that power had gone out of him, Jesus turned around in the crowd and said, 'Who touched my clothes?' His disciples said to him, 'You see how the crowd is pressing round you and yet you say, "Who touched me?"' But he continued to look all round to see who had done it. Then the woman came forward, frightened and trembling because she knew what had happened to her, and she fell at his feet and told him the whole truth. 'My daughter,' he said 'your faith has restored you to health; go in peace and be free from your complaint.'

While he was still speaking] some people arrived from the house of the synagogue official to say, 'Your daughter is dead: why put the Master to any further trouble?' But Jesus had overheard this remark of theirs and he said to the official, 'Do not be afraid; only have faith.' And he allowed no one to go with him except Peter and James and John the brother of James. So they came to the official's house and Jesus noticed all the commotion, with people weeping and wailing unrestrainedly. He went in and said to them, 'Why all this commotion and crying? The child is not dead, but asleep.' But they laughed at him. So he turned them all out and, taking with him the child's father and mother and his own companions, he went into the place where the child lay. And taking the child by the hand he said to her, 'Talitha, kum!' which means, 'Little girl, I tell you to get up.' The little girl got up at once and began to walk about, for she was twelve years old. At this they were overcome with astonishment, and he ordered them strictly not to let anyone know about it, and told them to give her something to eat.

[Short Form: omit text in brackets.]

**Second Reading**

Paul's second letter to the Corinthians is a complicated work. Its varied topics and changes of mood have prompted scholars to surmise it is a composite of several letters. While it's useful to be aware of these debates, what matters for today's reading is the context. It isn't made clear in the passage itself that Paul is appealing to the Corinthians to give generously to a collection for the impoverished community in Jerusalem.

He employs diverse strategies to win their support. He flatters them by acknowledging their wealth of gifts. He follows this with a heavyweight argument invoking the example of Christ "who became poor for your sake" (cf. Philippians 2:6-11). Then he shows how reasonable he is. He's not asking them to disadvantage themselves. It's all about balance, exemplified by God's gift of the manna in the desert which gave each one just enough for their daily need. There's more at stake than the amount of money Paul persuades the Corinthians to give. He's wanting them to recognise that the faith with which they have been blessed originated in Jerusalem. At the same time, he is seeking the Jerusalem community's endorsement of his mission to the Gentiles. Paul is promoting a vision of Church that transcends conventional boundaries. Readers face the challenge of conveying Paul's persuasive ploys without the benefit of context. Each step in the argument deserves to be distinguished by the appropriate tone of voice and by a noticeable pause between them. The NRSV renders "the man" as "the one."

**Gospel**

Today's gospel is the second of several examples of Mark's fondness for inserting a second story in the middle of another. The lectionary provides the option of omitting the story of the woman with the haemorrhage. The two parts of the larger story – the raising of Jairus' daughter – do form a seamless whole, but it would be better to respect Mark's wish to let the two stories illuminate each other.

There are similarities and differences. Jairus is a respected public official, presumably well-off. The woman is unnamed. If once she had the resources to pay for treatment, she is now impoverished. We know nothing else about her, other than that she suffered from a physically and socially debilitating condition. Jairus approaches Jesus publicly, the woman secretly. Jairus' faith appears strong, hers perhaps a little magical. Each has their faith doubly tested. Jairus loses his daughter, then has to trust that Jesus can save her. The woman dares to touch Jesus' garment, then is challenged to identify herself.

This interweaving of the stories engages us sympathetically with the two leading characters, though of course it is the figure of Jesus that looms large throughout. The willingness of Jairus and the anonymous woman to put their faith in him casts the disciples' unbelief (a Markan theme) in sharp relief. Mark tells these stories with dramatic flair and an eye for attention-catching detail. Well proclaimed, they invite us to take the risk of putting our faith in the power of Jesus to heal and save.

An alternative translation of the scripture readings is given here from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). This may be particularly useful for those in parishes which use the NRSV Lectionary.

### THIRTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

#### FIRST READING (NRSV)

**A reading from the book of Wisdom 1:13–15, 2:23–24**

God did not make death,  
and he does not delight in the death of the living.  
For he created all things so that they might exist;  
the generative forces of the world are wholesome,  
and there is no destructive poison in them,  
and the dominion of Hades is not on earth.  
For righteousness is immortal.  
For God created us for incorruption,  
and made us in the image of his own eternity,  
but through the devil's envy death entered the world,  
and those who belong to his company experience it.

#### SECOND READING (NRSV)

**A reading from the second letter of Paul to the Corinthians 8:7, 9, 13–15**

Now as you excel in everything—  
in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in utmost eagerness,  
and in our love for you—  
so we want you to excel also in this generous undertaking.  
For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor,  
so that by his poverty you might become rich.  
I do not mean that there should be relief for others  
and pressure on you,  
but it is a question of a fair balance  
between your present abundance and their need,  
so that their abundance may be for your need,  
in order that there may be a fair balance.  
As it is written,  
"The one who had much did not have too much,  
and the one who had little did not have too little."

#### GOSPEL (NRSV)

**A reading from the holy gospel according to Mark 5:21–43**

When Jesus had crossed in the boat to the other side,  
a great crowd gathered around him;  
and he was by the sea.  
Then one of the synagogue leaders named Jairus came  
and, when he saw Jesus,  
fell at his feet and begged him repeatedly,  
"My little daughter is at the point of death.  
Come and lay your hands on her,  
so that she may be made well, and live."

So Jesus went with him.  
And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him.  
[Now there was a woman  
who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years.  
She had endured much under many physicians,  
and had spent all that she had;  
and she was no better, but rather grew worse.  
She had heard about Jesus,  
and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak,  
for she said,  
"If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well."  
Immediately her hemorrhage stopped;  
and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease.  
Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him,  
Jesus turned about in the crowd and said,  
"Who touched my clothes?"  
And his disciples said to him,  
"You see the crowd pressing in on you;  
how can you say, "Who touched me?"  
He looked all around to see who had done it.  
But the woman, knowing what had happened to her,  
came in fear and trembling, fell down before him,  
and told him the whole truth.  
Jesus said to her,  
"Daughter, your faith has made you well;  
go in peace, and be healed of your disease." ]  
While Jesus was still speaking,  
some people came from the leader's house to say,  
"Your daughter is dead.  
Why trouble the teacher any further?"  
But overhearing what they said,  
Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue,  
"Do not fear, only believe."  
Jesus allowed no one to follow him.  
When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue  
he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly.  
When he had entered, he said to them,  
"Why do you make a commotion and weep?  
The child is not dead but sleeping."  
And they laughed at him.  
Then Jesus put them all outside,  
and took the child's father and mother and those who were with him,  
and went in where the child was.  
He took her by the hand and said to her,  
"Talitha cum," which means, "Little girl, get up!"  
And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about  
for she was twelve years of age.  
At this they were overcome with amazement.  
Jesus strictly ordered them that no one should know this,  
and told them to give her something to eat.

[Short Form: omit text in brackets.]

## Concluding Prayer

### Solemn Blessing (Ordinary Time VI)

May God bless us with every heavenly blessing,  
make us always holy and pure in his sight,  
pour out in abundance upon us the riches of his glory,  
and teach us with the words of truth;  
may he instruct us in the Gospel of salvation,  
and ever endow us with fraternal charity.  
Through Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

And may the blessing of almighty God,  
the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
come down on us and remain with us for ever.

**Amen.**

(Adapted from the Solemn Blessing for Ordinary Time VI, Roman Missal p. 717)