

MONDAY
21 FEBRUARY
 James 3:13-end
 Psalm 19:7-end
 Mark 9:14-29

TUESDAY
22 FEBRUARY
 James 4:1-10
 Psalm 55:7-9. 24
 Mark 9:30-37

WEDNESDAY
23 FEBRUARY
 James 4:13-end
 Psalm 49:1-2. 5-10
 Mark 9:38-40

THURSDAY
24 FEBRUARY
 James 5:1-6
 Psalm 49:12-20
 Mark 9:41-end

FRIDAY
25 FEBRUARY
 James 5:9-12
 Psalm 103:1-4. 8-13
 Mark 10:1-12

SATURDAY
26 FEBRUARY
 James 5:13-end
 Psalm 141:1-4
 Mark 10:13-16

REFLECTION

This week's readings from Mark's Gospel are full of misunderstandings. Jesus' disciples seem thoroughly confused. As they travel, they argue about which of them is the greatest, even though they have just become painfully aware of their limitations in performing miracles.

In any case, they should by now have heard enough of Jesus' teaching to know that greatness is irrelevant. They try to stop someone performing exorcisms in Jesus' name because he is outside their circle. And then they try to keep the children away. But the greatest misunderstanding of all, the one that underlies all the others, comes when Jesus tells them his destiny. "They did not understand what he was saying and were afraid to ask him," we are told in Tuesday's reading.

They really should know better. They have, after all, recently seen Jesus transfigured. They should know who he is. But they fail to see the truly radical nature of his mission. It is not about becoming a successful elite. It is about being open-hearted, about accepting weakness, about looking failure and even death in the face. We should sympathise with the disciples. The Church has needed to learn this lesson many times since.

PRAYER

Help us, O God, to know our limitations.
 Keep us from the sin of pride and the pursuit of success,
 that we may follow in the footsteps of Christ,
 who walked with poor and ate with the sinners,
 and submitted to death that we might have eternal life.



Jesus blesses His disciples. St Catherine of Siena Church, New Orleans. Dan Oberly / Shutterstock.com

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HOLY COMMUNION

PART IV – THE COMMUNION

We come to the climax of the service. The Eucharistic Prayer is made by a priest, usually the vicar or priest in charge, who serves as the congregation's leader. (He or she "presides" and is often described in the order of service as the president.) The president praises God and recalls the Last Supper. As bread and wine are taken and blessed we "re-member", bringing the past into the present, and the once-for-all events of the Last Supper are made real again in this community at this time. The great thanksgiving that is the Eucharistic prayer ("Eucharist" is simply the Greek word for thanksgiving) sees bread and wine taken and blessed to become the body and blood of Christ.

However we understand that presence, there is something significant happening. The prayer enables us to focus on Christ's presence in our midst and, although for most of the prayer the president speaks alone, she or he does so on behalf of everyone. This is OUR prayer, which we offer as the people of God, in common with the communion of saints and the whole company of heaven. In some places, as the president speaks Christ's own words of institution: "This is my body... This is my blood... Do this in remembrance of me," bread and cup will be lifted high for all to see. But this is no priestly magic. This prayer belongs to the whole congregation, and so we all share in the "Great Amen" when the consecration is complete.

Now God's family is ready to share a holy feast together, so it makes sense that we first pray the Lord's Prayer, which unites Christians everywhere, as we see the bread of life before us. That bread is broken, not just so that it can be shared, but because the Church that gathers at the table is Christ's broken body. Whatever our divisions and failures, we are still that body, entering into his suffering and death, and feeding on Christ in our hearts as we kneel at the altar.



Second week before Lent

During Lent we will be studying one of the modern classics of Christianity, C. S. Lewis' *Mere Christianity*, with Jane Williams. The articles will not assume knowledge of the book, although you may want to read it in advance.

Monday 21 February to
 Saturday 26 February
 2022