

Sunday Message

THE WORD

Year B • Psalter Week 3



Stained glass window depicting St Paul in the Cathedral of Ghent, Flanders, Belgium

In today's second reading, St Paul offers clear instructions for how the followers of Jesus should live. Some divisions or tensions must have been surfacing among the members of the church in Ephesus, and Paul is anxious to address them.

So he warns them to never hold grudges against others, or lose their temper, or raise their voice to anybody, or call each other names, or allow any sort of spitefulness. Be friends with each other and kind, he tells them, forgiving each other as readily as God has forgiven them. They must follow Christ by loving each other as Christ has loved them.

Paul's message to the Christian community is about respect, tolerance, gentleness, love. His words are as relevant for us today as when he wrote them almost two thousand years ago. ■

REFLECT

We are all familiar with the old expression: "Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me." But we know that it is simply not true. Words have extraordinary power and can do enormous damage. They can scar for life; they can destroy. And the world wide web and modern means of communication mean that words have a greater capacity to hurt than ever before. Think of the internet bullies, who, often under the cloak of anonymity, use Facebook or Twitter or online forums to abuse and smear and ridicule those they don't like or with whom they disagree. And think of the victims whose lives have been damaged or even ended by such abuse.

Words have enormous power and can inflict enormous harm. As people of the word, Christians need to be conscious of the words we use, and ensure that what we say and how we say it always gives glory to God.

One way to try to do just that is by living according to what I like to call the three Cs:

The first C: be clean. The words I use should be wholesome and pure, never coarse or crude. We tend to use bad language for emphasis, for effect, but bad language is so commonplace today that we can become immune to it. We may not even be aware of the extent to which we use it casually ourselves. The English language contains more than one million words; there are plenty of ways we can express ourselves colourfully and with emphasis, without the need for vulgar talk.

The second C: be courteous. Our aim should be to talk to and about others the way we would like them to talk to and about us. Whether it's on social media or on the road or street or the sports field, we know that common courtesy is becoming less common, that we are becoming more rude and less civil. Think of the amount of online trolling that is taking place and how road-rage incidents are growing in frequency. Whenever or wherever we encounter people, no matter how trying or testing the situation, no matter how angry we may become, we

SAY

"Lord, let the words that I speak always give honour to your name. Amen."

DO

Think about your use of language. Do you always respect the Lord's name? Do you use words that are sexist or racist or homophobic? Are you rude or uncouth or demeaning in what you say or how you talk to people?

LEARN

Integrity is at core of our Christian faith. It is about having a moral centre that shapes and guides everything we say and do. Jesus was a person of integrity because he was true to himself whatever happened. His dedication to living truthfully, to standing up for what he believed in, to treating people with love and respect, meant that he did not back down before evil, but went all the way to the cross. For the Christian, to be a person of integrity means following the example of Jesus.

are called to be courteous and considerate in how we communicate with them.

The third C: be constructive. We should always use words that build up not knock down, that encourage not destroy. Sometimes it's necessary to challenge or criticise another but we should do it in a way that is positive and gentle and that honours the other by treating him or her with respect. We should never use words to humiliate or diminish another human being. Pope Francis has spoken frequently about the harmful nature of gossip, which he has described as a plague worse than COVID-19. We know what it's like to be gossiped about; we also know how easy it is to indulge in gossip. We should always talk to or about others in a helpful, generous manner.

Christians are people of the word. As St Paul reminds us, we must use the gift of language in such a way that it lifts people up rather than knocks people down. To be clean, courteous and constructive is to build God's kingdom and give God glory. ■

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Look to your covenant, O Lord,
and forget not the life of your poor ones for
ever.

Arise, O God, and defend your cause,
and forget not the cries of those who seek
you.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

COLLECT

Almighty ever-living God,
whom, taught by the Holy Spirit,
we dare to call our Father,
bring, we pray, to perfection in our hearts
the spirit of adoption as your sons and
daughters,
that we may merit to enter into the
inheritance
which you have promised.
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.

FIRST READING

1 Kings 19:4-8

A reading from the first book of Kings.
Elijah went into the wilderness, a day's
journey, and sitting under a furze bush
wished he were dead. "Lord," he said "I have
had enough. Take my life; I am no better than
my ancestors." Then he lay down and went
to sleep. But an angel touched him and said,
"Get up and eat." He looked round, and there
at his head was a scone baked on hot stones,
and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then
lay down again. But the angel of the Lord
came back a second time and touched him
and said, "Get up and eat, or the journey will
be too long for you." So he got up and ate
and drank, and strengthened by that food he
walked for forty days and forty nights until he
reached Horeb, the mountain of God.
The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 33

Response:
Taste and see that the Lord is good.

1. I will bless the Lord at all times,
his praise always on my lips;
in the Lord my soul shall make its boast.
The humble shall hear and be glad. (R.)
2. Glorify the Lord with me.
Together let us praise his name.
I sought the Lord and he answered me;
from all my terrors he set me free. (R.)
3. Look towards him and be radiant;
let your faces not be abashed.
This poor man called; the Lord heard him
and rescued him from all his distress. (R.)
4. The angel of the Lord is encamped
around those who revere him, to rescue
them.
Taste and see that the Lord is good.
He is happy who seeks refuge in him. (R.)

SECOND READING Ephesians 4:30-5:2

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the
Ephesians.

Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God who
has marked you with his seal for you to
be set free when the day comes. Never
have grudges against others, or lose your
temper, or raise your voice to anybody, or
call each other names, or allow any sort of
spitefulness. Be friends with one another, and
kind, forgiving each other as readily as God
forgave you in Christ.

Try, then, to imitate God, as children of his
that he loves, and follow Christ by loving as
he loved you, giving himself up in our place
as a fragrant offering and a sacrifice to God.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!
If anyone loves me he will keep my word,
and my Father will love him,
and we shall come to him.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL

John 6:41-51

A reading from the holy Gospel according to
John.

The Jews were complaining to each other
about Jesus, because he had said, "I am the
bread that came down from heaven." "Surely
this is Jesus son of Joseph" they said. "We
know his father and mother. How can he now
say, 'I have come down from heaven'?" Jesus
said in reply, "Stop complaining to each
other.

"No one can come to me
unless he is drawn by the Father who sent
me,
and I will raise him up at the last day.
It is written in the prophets:
They will all be taught by God,
and to hear the teaching of the Father,
and learn from it,
is to come to me.
Not that anybody has seen the Father,
except the one who comes from God:
he has seen the Father.
I tell you most solemnly,
everybody who believes has eternal life.
I am the bread of life.
Your fathers ate the manna in the desert
and they are dead;

but this is the bread that comes down from
heaven,
so that a man may eat it and not die.
I am the living bread which has come down
from heaven.

Anyone who eats this bread will live for
ever;
and the bread that I shall give
is my flesh, for the life of the world."

The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with
the Father;

through him all things were made.

For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,

(all bow during the next three lines)

and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the
Virgin Mary,
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under
Pontius Pilate,

he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.

He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored
and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and
apostolic Church.

I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness
of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the
dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Be pleased, O Lord, to accept the offerings of
your Church,
for in your mercy you have given them to be
offered
and by your power you transform them
into the mystery of our salvation.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

O Jerusalem, glorify the Lord,
who gives you your fill of finest wheat.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

May the communion in your Sacrament
that we have consumed, save us, O Lord,
and confirm us in the light of your truth.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.