

Missionary Commentary

Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time
September 15, 2024

Sunday Readings

Isaiah 50:4c-9a
Psalm 116:1-6, 8-9
James 2:14-18
Mark 8:27-35

[USCCB Link to the Readings](#)

Cross at the Border

When large numbers of migrating people were released by immigration authorities into the city of El Paso, I joined the local community's vast effort to find shelter, food and transportation for them.

I learned to take down the basic information of each arriving family or individual at the shelters, and direct them to the used-clothing area, the sleeping areas filled with cots loaned by the fire departments of the city, the dining area where donated, steaming hot pans of food awaited them.

At one point, I was startled by a mother with a child, who answered my routine question about whether any other member of her family was being detained by immigration authorities in the processing "camps" located outside the city, and near the airport. Spouses or adult siblings were sometimes detained, in order to keep a required number of beds filled in the camps, and thus fulfilling the contract made between the U.S. government and the private companies running the prisons.

Yes, she told me. My other daughter, seven years old, is being held. I stared at her, unable to believe what I was hearing, but recovered quickly, and tried not to contribute further to her pain by my shocked reaction. I finished the intake form before gently telling her where she and the younger little girl could go next.

Losing our lives, by offering them in service of others, and in this way, following Jesus Christ's example and teaching, allows us to gain our life, we hear in today's Biblical readings, by entering into the Paschal mystery of the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus. May we always find the clarity and strength to be able to give our lives in love for those who are mistreated and vulnerable, especially [families traumatized by our brutal and broken immigration system.](#)



Photo courtesy Fr. Bob Mosher

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Notes on the Sunday Readings

First Reading

Isaiah 50:4c-91 – Using the language of the courtroom, the prophet writes the third of four “servant songs” of the Book of Isaiah, written during the return of the Jewish people in stages to Jerusalem, from exile in Babylon (around 550 B.C.E.).

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 116:1-6, 8-9 – This psalm echoes the first reading, describing both the distress of the inspired author of the psalm, and God’s deliverance of the author.

Second Reading

James 2:14-18 – Saint James of Jerusalem contrasts a living faith with a dead faith, the latter being a faith that fails to move the believer to the concrete actions of aid to the vulnerable (“works”).

Gospel

Mark 8:27-35 – The key to understanding Jesus properly is the mystery of the cross: to follow Jesus means to be willing to share in his Passion and death, as well as his resurrection, something that Peter fails to grasp at this point. As Jesus contrasts God’s thoughts and human thoughts, he then bridges the gap, for Peter, his disciples and for us today, by teaching the value of losing and gaining one’s life.

*Notes and commentary by Fr. Bob Mosher,
a member of the [Missionary Society of Saint Columban](#).*

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