

## Sunday's

## READINGS

Isaiah 50:4c–9a  
James 2:14–18  
Mark 8:27–35

Scan the code to read  
today's readings. ➔



## Opening PRAYER

*Dear Jesus, suffering is something we strive to avoid at all costs. Yet, I believe that whatever suffering I endure you will use to help me grow closer to you and others. Help me to accept my cross. Amen.*



## Thoughts for REFLECTION

There is a saying that life is not worth living if there is nothing you would die for. Reflect upon the things that would move you to endure suffering and death.

Have you ever felt misunderstood and misjudged? How did you respond?

*Awaken* is written and edited by Jo Ann Paradise, D.Min.



## What You NEED to KNOW

### Scripture Background

#### Isaiah 50:4c–9a

Once again we are reading from one of the four Servant Songs in Isaiah. No one can say with certainty who Isaiah is referring to in these passages. Because as Christians we have encountered Jesus, when we read this passage, we see the foreshadowing of Jesus' Death. We recognize the description of the suffering of Jesus, but the faithfulness of the servant is emphasized here. The servant will endure whatever is necessary for the will of God to be realized. He is in such fullness of communion with God that he asks those inflicting the suffering, "See, the Lord God is my help; who will declare me guilty?" (v. 9a). When we stand strong in our faith in God, we are given the grace that we need.

#### James 2:14–18

The Letter of James continues to explore the relationship between words and action—faith and works. What good is it, he asks, if we tell others that we believe in God but our actions do not support our claim? We pray for the suffering of the world. Yet, if we do not practice charity, if we do not look for the cause of the injustice

that is the root of suffering, if we do not offer self-sacrifice, our faith is dead. Did you answer, "Thanks be to God" at the end of this reading at Mass today? That response acknowledges acceptance that this is God's Word and affirms that we are grateful for it. Thus, when we are asked to live out our faith through good works, are we grateful for this call? Do we have the courage to live it out?

#### Mark 8:27–35

This Gospel is rich in theological insights and demonstrates Mark's literary skills. The disciples are being prepared for Jesus' final days on earth. Jesus asks, "Who do people say that I am?" (v. 27). The disciples respond with the names of two prophets who were recognized for their courage to speak for God to those in power. Then Jesus asks the disciples who they think he is. You can imagine the awkward pause that happened then. Peter speaks up and says, "You are the Messiah" (v. 29). The Israelites had waited for this Messiah for thousands of years. He would lead a military battle that would secure the Kingdom of God—an eternal Kingdom of justice and peace.



## Points to Ponder

### God Redeems

At some point you may have asked yourself, “Would I have enough courage to be martyred for my faith?” This question may follow the viewing of a film or reading of a book about the life of a martyred person. While we might be accepting of death, it is the suffering before the death that makes us question our conviction. Suffering, the consequence of Original Sin, is a certainty in this world. Being a Christian is not a guarantee that a person will not endure suffering. We have only to gaze upon a crucifix to understand this. On the other side of that crucifix, though, is the empty tomb. Those two tangible realities must be welded together in our hearts. No matter what the evil, the suffering we face, God has promised to redeem it. God more than promised. In Christ, he gave us the hope of the Resurrection and a glimpse of eternal life.

- Does God cause evil in the world to show us he can redeem it?
- Why do you think God allows suffering in the world?



Volunteer aid workers martyred in El Salvador

Lord Jesus, you are truly present. Amen!



The more Eucharist we receive, the more we will become like Jesus, so that on this earth we will have a foretaste of Heaven.

—Blessed Carlo Acutis

Strengthen belief in the True Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. Visit the Pflaum Eucharist resources page.



## and CHURCH TEACHING

Connecting GOSPEL

## How Are We Called to be a Suffering Servant?

The *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults* offers a reflection on suffering connected to the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick. “Another effect of the Sacrament is union with the Passion of Christ. By uniting ourselves more closely with the sufferings of our Lord, we receive the grace of sharing in the saving work of Christ. In this way, our suffering, joined to the Cross of Christ, contributes to the building up of the ‘people of

God” (p. 254). While joining to Christ’s Passion does not eliminate our suffering, it gives it purpose. Christ suffered as a sacrifice of love. When we give our heart to be in union with him, our suffering also becomes a sacrifice of love. Love is what makes God’s Kingdom visible. Our love then becomes joined to Christ’s work of salvation.

➔ To learn more, refer to CCC, 1499–1505 or go to Booklet 12, Session 3 in *Growing Faith*.



## Closing PRAYER

*Dear Jesus, while I will never fully understand your suffering or the suffering we experience in this world, help me rely on the power of your love to stand in this mystery. Amen.*

## FAMILY CORNER

Scan here for parent resources. ➔



### Question of the Week

What does Jesus mean when he says that we must take up our cross and follow him?



### Family Prayer

Jesus, help us to believe in you and trust in you completely, especially when it is difficult. Amen.