

## 23<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time



Today's readings offer a clear picture of how believers should respond to the hurting. They endorse a program of compassion. They encourage concern for the downtrodden and involvement where the faithful find strength in helping.

In the first reading, the prophet speaks a message of hope and intervention to the discouraged and bewildered, those who are spiritually disabled. They will go home, as in the first Exodus. Yahweh's identifying with the plight of the despondent exiles shows that compassion is a mark of the strong and the faithful.

In the second reading, the author recognizes the human tendency to prefer the wealthy and neglect the poor. Favoritism and prejudice are a rejection of the belief in the crucified and resurrected Jesus. It takes the Christian faith to focus our attention on the needs of the poor. They are God's chosen, heirs of the kingdom.

Throughout the Gospel of Mark, Jesus is impelled to reach out to the marginalized. Two features stand out: Jesus' groaning, and the crowd's reaction. This speaks to Jesus' compassion and crowd's unbounded amazement. This shows the Church's universal mission of compassion, even to the Gentiles. The scene is Gentile territory. The pagans who once were deaf and mute toward God are able to hear and proclaim God's message.