

**ENTRANCE ANTIPHON**

The Lord became my protector.  
He brought me out to a place of freedom;  
he saved me because he delighted in me.

**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**

Grant us, O Lord, we pray,  
that the course of our world  
may be directed by your peaceful rule  
and that your Church may rejoice,  
untroubled in her devotion.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of  
the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever.  
Amen.

**FIRST READING**

Is 49:14-15

A reading from the prophet Isaiah.  
Zion was saying, "The Lord has abandoned me,  
the Lord has forgotten me."  
Does a woman forget her baby at the breast,  
or fail to cherish the son of her womb?  
Yet even if these forget,  
I will never forget you.  
The word of the Lord.  
Thanks be to God.

**RESP. PSALM**

Psalm 61

Response:  
In God alone is my soul at rest.

1. In God alone is my soul at rest;  
my help comes from him.  
He alone is my rock, my stronghold,  
my fortress: I stand firm. (R.)
2. In God alone be at rest, my soul;  
for my hope comes from him.  
He alone is my rock, my stronghold  
my fortress: I stand firm. (R.)
3. In God is my safety and glory,  
the rock of my strength.  
Take refuge in God all you people.  
Trust him at all times.  
Pour out your hearts before him. (R.)

**SECOND READING**

1 Cor 4:1-5

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the  
Corinthians.  
People must think of us as Christ's servants,  
stewards entrusted with the  
mysteries of God. What is expected of  
stewards is that each one should be  
found worthy of his trust. Not that it makes  
the slightest difference to me  
whether you, or indeed any human tribunal,  
find me worthy or not. I will not  
even pass judgement on myself. True, my  
conscience does not reproach me at  
all, but that does not prove that I am  
acquitted: the Lord alone is my  
judge. There must be no passing of  
premature judgement. Leave that until the  
Lord comes: he will light up all that is hidden  
in the dark and reveal the  
secret intentions of men's hearts. Then will  
be the time for each one to  
have whatever praise he deserves, from God.  
The word of the Lord.  
Thanks be to God.

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

Alleluia, alleluia!  
Your word is truth, O Lord,  
consecrate us in the truth.  
Alleluia!

**GOSPEL**

Mt 6:24-34

A reading from the holy Gospel according to  
Matthew.

Jesus said to his disciples: "No one can be  
the slave of two masters: he will either hate  
the first and love the second, or treat the  
first with respect and the second with scorn.  
You cannot be the slave both of God and of  
money.  
"That is why I am telling you not to worry  
about your life and what you are to eat, nor  
about your body and how you are to clothe  
it. Surely life means more than food, and the  
body more than clothing! Look at the birds  
in the sky. They do not sow or reap or gather  
into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds  
them. Are you not worth much more than  
they are? Can any of you, for all his worrying,  
add one single cubit to his span of life? And  
why worry about clothing? Think of the  
flowers growing in the fields; they never have  
to work or spin; yet I assure you that not even  
Solomon in all his regalia was robed like one  
of these. Now if that is how God clothes the  
grass in the field which is there today and  
thrown into the furnace tomorrow, will he not  
much more look after you, you men of little  
faith? So do not worry; do not say, 'What are  
we to eat? What are we to drink? How are we  
to be clothed?'  
It is the pagans who set their hearts on all  
these things. Your heavenly Father knows  
you need them all. Set your hearts on his  
kingdom first, and on his righteousness,  
and all these other things will be given you  
as well. So do not worry about tomorrow:  
tomorrow will take care of itself. Each day  
has enough trouble of its own."  
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,  
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**

O God, who provide gifts to be offered to your  
name  
and count our oblations as signs  
of our desire to serve you with devotion,  
we ask of your mercy  
that what you grant as the source of merit  
may also help us to attain merit's reward.  
Through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

**COMMUNION ANTIPHON**

I will sing to the Lord who has been bountiful  
with me,  
sing psalms to the name of the Lord Most  
High.

**PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Nourished by your saving gifts,  
we beseech your mercy, Lord,  
that by this same Sacrament  
with which you feed us in the present age,  
you may make us partakers of life eternal.  
Through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

## GOD IS A MYSTERY

GOSPEL MT 6:24-34



It is not often that the bible presents the Lord through a feminine image. Jesus at one point likens himself to a mother hen gathering her chicks under her wings.

In today's reading from Isaiah, the prophet tries to reassure the people in exile that the Lord has not forgotten them – or rather that the Lord simply cannot forget them. They are as close to the Lord as a new-born baby is to her or his mother. That profound bond which only a mother can understand is what links the Lord to the people.

This use of feminine imagery should not surprise us. On the very opening of the bible, in the first account of Creation, we read that God made human beings in the divine image and likeness. And just in case anyone misses the point, the most conservative writer in that part of the scriptures rams the message home by underlining the message: in the image of God God created them; male and female God created them. So if women are as much the image and likeness of God, it should surprise us that such presentations of God in feminine ways occur so seldom, rather than that they occur at all.

Today we are offered a vision of God as caring and nurturing. It might be useful to remember that any attempt to talk about God is done by analogy: we have to express ourselves in terms which make sense to us, but God is a mystery, far beyond our understanding. We must grapple with this mystery, but always keep in mind that God cannot be pigeon-holed: no matter how well we construct a system of belief, the Lord does not have to conform to our ideas. The book of Job is the classic warning that there is more to God than is dreamed of in our philosophies. We have tended in the past to identify the caring professions such as nursing with women: we are hopefully less likely now to restrict women to those walks of life as was customary in the past. But the bible is not simply using this sort of imagery because it is useful: it is saying that there is a feminine aspect to God which women mirror and express. One way in which we could understand this might be to consider how we talk about the Holy Spirit, whom we usually speak of as He. The correct pronoun for the Spirit in the New Testament should be It. But it is not considered good form to refer to a person (even a baby) in this neuter way. It would be just as accurate to think about the Holy Spirit as She: in that way we might appreciate better the teaching of Genesis and not see the depicting of God in feminine terms as so unusual. ■

### SAY

Don't worry about tomorrow: tomorrow will take care of itself.

### LEARN

Our first reading comes from the second major section of the Book of Isaiah (Chapters 40-55): this was composed during the Exile in Babylon (587-539 BCE).

This section is known as the Book of Consolation, as it encourages hope in a people who have been devastated by the destruction of their homeland and who have been forcibly deported.

The writer encourages them to hope and look for a new Exodus: what God did once, God can do again.

God's action in the second Exodus will be nothing short of a new act of Creation, done out of God's motherly love for Israel.

### DO

Look at the people as you walk along the street. Each of them is created in God's image and likeness. Is there anyone of whom you find that difficult to believe? Why might that be?



## REFLECT

Our ideas about God are often influenced by what we hear, especially by what we were told when we were young and impressionable. Much preaching and catechetics stressed the justice of God and left the audience in a state of fear and apprehension at the thought of judgment and hell. While

that sort of presentation may have an immediate effect, it seldom lasts. Only a relationship of love can bring us to a state of quiet trust which will help us live our lives with a sense of deep peace, no matter what storms are raging around us. The Lord may be presented as a warrior: but anyone who has experience

of a mother's determination when the good of her child is at stake will know that proper anger and a fighting spirit are not exclusively a male preserve. Perhaps if we thought of the Lord's anger in this way, even when directed at the Lord's own people, we might gain a different perspective and insight. ■