

similarity of name makes a strong pro-Christian point. The innocent Jesus (Christ), son of the Father, paid the ransom not just for all mankind, but also for Yeshua Barabbas (son of the father). Pope Benedict XVI and other modern Christian scholars have sought to right an historic wrong on the part of Christians towards the Jewish people. The story of Barabbas' release and the consequent crucifixion of Jesus have in the past led to anti-semitism, by making the Jewish people as a whole culpable for Jesus' death. The crowd's cry, St Matthew 27:25, - "*His blood be upon us and on our children*" - has been latched on to in support. In the Vatican II document "*Notra Aetate*", the Roman Catholic Church denounced the imputation of collective guilt. The crowd consisted of Jewish Temple authorities and Barabbas' supporters, not of the entire Jewish people. Indeed, the crowd can be seen as representing all humanity when we sin. Jesus' death reconciled humanity and God. It did not seek retribution against any section of humanity.

**Next Week:** *Simon of Cyrene.....*

**Stephen S**

**Entrance antiphon:** **Rejoice, Jerusalem, and all who love her. Be joyful, all who were in mourning; exult and be satisfied at her consoling breast.**

**First Reading:** Joshua 5 9-12

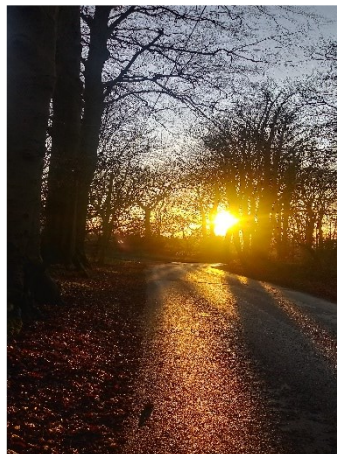
**Psalms 33:** **Response:** **Tate and see that the Lord is good.**

**Second Reading:** 2 Corinthians 5:17-21

**Gospel Acclamation:** **Praise and honour to you, Lord Jesus! I will leave this place and go to my father and say: 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you.' Praise and honour to you, Lord Jesus!**

**Gospel:** Luke 15: 1-3, 11-32

**Memorial Acclamation:** **Save us, Saviour of the world, for by your Cross and Resurrection you have set us free.**



'The Return of the Prodigal Son' by Rembrandt

## **Fourth Sunday of Lent Sunday Cycle C, 2022 Weekly Reflection: Minor Players in the Passion (4): Barabbas**

All four Gospels state that Pontius Pilate gave the crowd the choice of

releasing Jesus or Barabbas and that they cried for the release of Barabbas. St Matthew (27:15) refers to Barabbas as a '*notorious prisoner*', whereas St John (18:40) describes him as '*a robber*'. That he was just a robber is very unlikely. Someone who was only a robber would probably not have been offered as an alternative to Jesus who was facing crucifixion. Also, St Mark (15:7) says that Barabbas: "*.. had committed murder in the insurrection...*" and St Luke (23:19) writes that Barabbas: "*...had been thrown in prison for an insurrection started in the city, and for murder...*". It seems clear, therefore, that Barabbas was not a relatively low-grade villain. He was guilty of treason and murder, the punishment for which was crucifixion. Jesus Christ was in fact crucified for treason. The High Priests Annas and Caiphas were Sadducees who controlled the Temple. The Sadducees were seen as collaborators of the Romans. Barabbas was probably part of a group that had taken up arms against the Romans. He may have been a Zealot or a *sicarius* (dagger-man), a militant Jew who aimed to expel the Romans by force.

The name Barabbas probably signifies either '*son of the father*' (bar abba) or '*son of the teacher*' (bar rabban). More controversially, some early manuscript of St Matthew's account record his full name as "*Yeshua bar Abba*", Yeshua being '*Jesus*' - not an unusual name at the time. The second century Christian scholar, Origen, saw manuscripts naming Barabbas in this way. He said that it was not possible that the criminal could have such a holy name and that '*Yeshua*' must have been added by a heretic. Some scholars do not accept this, suggesting that a person creating a Christian manuscript is unlikely to have invented the name for Barabbas. It may be thought that the