

# Sunday Gospel Readings with *Lectio Divina*

Year C: Year of Luke

“The Roman Catholic Bishops of Scotland once more recommend this resource for the prayerful reading of the word of God. The 2008 Synod of Bishops in Rome had as its theme the word of God and *Lectio Divina* was recognised, described and recommended as an important expression of the Church’s love of Sacred Scripture (see the Message to the People of God, 9). The Bishops are grateful to the Scottish Bible Society and all those who have worked to produce this volume based on the readings for Year C of the Lectionary.”


*Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Scotland*



These *Lectio Divina* outlines are also available in Albanian, Dutch, French, Greek, Maltese, Portuguese, Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish and other languages.

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“All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching the truth, rebuking error, correcting faults, and giving instructions for right living, so that the person who serves God may be fully qualified and equipped to do every kind of good deed.”

**2 Timothy 3:16-17**

*Good News Bible*

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*Sunday Gospel Readings with Lectio Divina Year C: Luke*

## INTRODUCTION

These weekly outlines combine the Liturgy's Sunday Gospel readings with the *lectio divina* approach to Holy Scripture.

*Lectio divina* is a dynamic, life-oriented approach to reading Holy Scriptures encouraged by both Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI. It provides a framework for a faithful and respectful reading of the Bible that is sincere and authentic.

*Lectio divina* is a blessing for the entire Church as it opens up the rich truths of Scripture for every Christian. Through it believers are invited to read, understand and deepen their appreciation of the Scriptures and to seek guidance for their lives in the teaching of the Lord Jesus.

Our real goal is to meet our Lord as we read his Word and allow him to transform our lives to be more like him through the work of the Holy Spirit.

All the information necessary for you to have a meaningful encounter with God's Word is included in this booklet. These outlines can be used individually or in groups.

The following pages introduce the four steps of *lectio divina* with some extra tips for using these outlines in groups.



## ABOUT LECTIO DIVINA

### *History*

*Lectio divina* dates back to the early Church Fathers around 300 AD. The four steps were first recorded by a monk, Guigo Cartujo, in 1173. These steps Lectio (Reading), Meditatio (Meditation), Oratio (Prayer) and Contemplatio (Contemplation) remain central today although methods differ.

### *Overview*

In essence *lectio divina* is a simple way to meet with the Lord through reflection and prayer based on Holy Scripture. It is not a study method. Background knowledge can be helpful but is not essential.

Used in groups a structure is necessary but for individuals the steps need not be followed rigidly. Our aim is meeting God, not just completing the steps themselves. So when the Lord impresses something on us we need to stop and wait. We can always come back to the steps another time. We don't want to lose what God is saying to us.

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## **L**ECTIO – READING

Reading the Scripture passage humbly and prayerfully is the foundation for everything else that follows and cannot be rushed. So begin with a prayer and ask the Holy Spirit to ‘lead you into all the truth’ (John 16:13).

Read the passage slowly and carefully. Avoid being tempted to look at the Lectio comments or any of the other steps at this stage.

Have a notebook and pencil ready. Underline, or make a note of, any words or phrases that stand out to you. Write down any questions that occur to you. Read the passage several times and read it aloud. Give yourself time to understand and appreciate what is being said.

Now read the Lectio comments and reflect on the ways they are similar or different to your first thoughts.

## **M**EDITATIO – MEDITATION

Meditation deepens our appreciation of the passage and helps us to explore its riches. We read in 2 Timothy 3:16 that ‘All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching the truth, rebuking error, correcting faults, and giving instructions for right living...’ So approach Scripture in faith expecting God to speak to you. He may reveal something of himself to you. He might highlight an attitude or behaviour of yours that needs to change. He might show you a promise to encourage and strengthen you.

*Here are some suggested approaches you may find helpful.*

Use your imagination. Picture the passage; put yourself into the scene and become part of the story. See things through the eyes of the other characters, listen to what they say, watch their reactions, imagine how they feel. Keep coming back to Jesus. Get to know him; delight yourself and become fascinated by him, his words, his actions, the way he responds – everything about him.

Ask questions. Use your own questions and the questions given to think more deeply about the passage and what God wants to say to you. Ask Jesus why he did and said what he did. Try to understand his reasons and intentions. Allow time to be quiet, to listen and hear his answer.

Let the Word be a mirror for you. As we read the Bible it shows us more of what the Christian life looks like and where ours needs to change. We see how God’s Word applies to our daily life, as an individual, and as part of our community and society. We will find promises and encouragement, challenges and demands. If we are willing God will nurture and free us to be more fully human and fully alive.

## **P**ORATIO – PRAYER

Prayer opens up a conversation between God and us. In the Psalms we see how the writers pour out their feelings to God, often mixing hopes and fears side by side. God values our honesty. We can’t hide anything from him anyway. Using the words of the responsorial psalm can help us but we can also use our own words to have a heart-to-heart conversation with a very special friend.

Through prayer we make our response to the light God’s Word has shed on how we are living our lives. Now we can bring what is happening in our own life and in our community before God. We speak and listen, listen and reflect – it is a conversation with God.

## **C**ONTEMPLATIO – CONTEMPLATION:

To help us interpret the Gospel reading the Liturgy provides two further Scripture readings. Reflecting on these can both enrich our understanding of the text and bring into focus a response we may need to make to the Lord.

Contemplation gives us the opportunity for an intimate time of communion with God. Be still before God and invite him in. Few words, if any, are necessary here. Enjoy time in his presence. Just be with him and let him love you. Let him refresh your soul.

### *Review*

After you have finished your time of reading, meditation, prayer and contemplation you may want to jot down in a notebook any experiences or thoughts that particularly impressed you. You may find it helpful to look back at these later.



## USING THESE OUTLINES IN GROUPS

When *lectio divina* is used in a group a little preparation is needed.

### **L**ECTIO:

Try one or more of the following ways of reading the passage. See what works best for your particular group.

Individual reading. To start with give everyone time to read through the passage silently.

Proclamation of the Word. One person reads (proclaims) the Word. This is the traditional manner of reading in the liturgical celebration.

Two readers. Two people read the text aloud alternately.

Each person reads a verse. This is a way of involving each participant, inviting each to read from his own Bible, so that the reading is attentive and dynamic.

Audio version. If you have access to a recorded version of the text you could also use that. You may notice different words are stressed.

With different characters. Approach the text somewhat like a drama, in which one person is the narrator/reader, another takes the part of Jesus, a third takes another character. This can be the most dynamic or engaging method and helps us to identify just what the different characters in the passage are saying.

### **M**EDITATIO:

- In the group setting, it is important that everyone is given time to participate, to share what the Lord has been saying to them. While the Lord speaks through his Word, he also speaks to us through our brothers and sisters. So as we listen to others we need to open our hearts to hear the Lord's voice speaking through them.
- It is important that everyone in the group understands that this sharing is to build one another up and enrich our experience. It is not necessary that everyone agrees about what is shared. You need to be careful to avoid this time turning into a debate or argument. The Lord knows us each as individuals so will have different things to say to us personally at this specific point in our lives.
- You can start with a simple question like "What catches your attention in this passage?" and use the printed questions. The aim is to help everyone feel comfortable to speak and share how the text has inspired them. Gently keep the group focused on the text and what God is saying.

### **O**RATIO:

We suggest you give people time for personal silent prayer before God. You can also give opportunity for people to pray out loud in their own words and use verses from the responsorial prayer. The aim should be to help each person make a personal response to the Lord during this time.

### **C**ONTEMPLATIO:

Contemplation by its very nature is an individual exercise and silence is necessary. If you have room it may be helpful to suggest people move so they have their own 'personal space'.

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*\*The Scripture references for the Psalms follow the Hebrew numbering used in many recent Bibles including the Jerusalem Bible but some Bibles use different numbering. If Psalm 23 The Good Shepherd is numbered as Psalm 22 in your Bible, please refer to your church lectionary for all the correct Psalm references for your Bible.*

## GOD COMES TO SAVE

### Luke 7:11-17

<sup>11</sup> Soon afterwards Jesus went to a town called Nain, accompanied by his disciples and a large crowd. <sup>12</sup> Just as he arrived at the gate of the town, a funeral procession was coming out. The dead man was the only son of a woman who was a widow, and a large crowd from the town was with her. <sup>13</sup> When the Lord saw her, his heart was filled with pity for her, and he said to her, "Don't cry." <sup>14</sup> Then he walked over and touched the coffin, and the men carrying it stopped. Jesus said, "Young man! Get up, I tell you!" <sup>15</sup> The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother.

<sup>16</sup> They all were filled with fear and praised God. "A great prophet has appeared among us!" they said; "God has come to save his people!"

<sup>17</sup> This news about Jesus went out through all the country and the surrounding territory.

*Other Readings: 1 Kings 17:17-24; Psalm 30:1, 3-5, 10-12; Galatians 1:11-19*

## LECTIO:

Can you imagine this scene in a small town near Nazareth? A large crowd, women wailing and a funeral procession is passing by. The chief mourner is an older woman.

This poor woman has already lost her husband. Now her only child is dead and all her future security has died with him. She is left behind with no one to provide for even her most basic needs. Her grief is pain-filled and raw.

Jesus joins the sympathetic crowd. No one asks him to intervene but compassion moves him to act. He touches the makeshift coffin, probably no more than a plank used to carry the dead body for burial.

This tiny action made Jesus ceremonially unclean and would have shocked those around him. The procession comes to a halt. Jesus tells the dead body to get up. The young man sits up and starts to talk! Jesus 'gives him back to his mother'. Luke repeats this exact phrase from 1 Kings 17:23 describing the miraculous raising of another widow's son – this time by Elijah.

The people don't know who to look at first - the man raised back to life, his ecstatic mother or Jesus, who right in front of their very eyes has repeated the miracle performed by one of their greatest prophets, Elijah.

Fear and praise grip the crowd at the same time. They echo the words of Zechariah's prophecy about the Messiah (Luke 1:67-75), 'God has come to save his people!'

This event takes on added significance when seen in context. Read the verses before and after it in Luke 7. This miracle follows straight after the healing of the Roman officer's servant, when Jesus was amazed at the officer's great faith. Jesus demonstrated his authority over sickness and the servant was healed.

In the verses after today's Gospel reading two of John the Baptist's disciples arrive. They have been sent by John to establish if Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah. Jesus simply tells them to report what is happening – people are being healed, the dead raised and the gospel is being preached. Jesus knew John would make the connection with the Messianic prophecies he was fulfilling such as Isaiah 35:5.

## 2 MEDITATIO:

- Imagine you were one of the mourners that witnessed this once in a lifetime miracle. What would you have thought about Jesus after seeing this miracle?
- The verses that precede today's reading highlight Jesus' authority over sickness. This miracle demonstrates that Jesus has authority over death. Why is this significant?

## 3 ORATIO:

The widow didn't ask Jesus to help her but he chose to intervene. Think about the times Jesus has intervened in your life to help you. Take some time to express your thanks and praise to God.

The Psalmist gives his testimony in Psalm 30. Let these words inspire your prayers too.

## 4 CONTEMPLATIO:

In Galatians 1:11-19 we read how God revealed Jesus to Paul so he could preach the Good News. Think about how God revealed Jesus to you and how you too might be able to share your faith with others.



## FORGIVEN MUCH

### Luke 7:36-8:3

<sup>36</sup> A Pharisee invited Jesus to have dinner with him, and Jesus went to his house and sat down to eat. <sup>37</sup> In that town was a woman who lived a sinful life. She heard that Jesus was eating in the Pharisee's house, so she brought an alabaster jar full of perfume <sup>38</sup> and stood behind Jesus, by his feet, crying and wetting his feet with her tears. Then she dried his feet with her hair, kissed them, and poured the perfume on them. <sup>39</sup> When the Pharisee saw this, he said to himself, "If this man really were a prophet, he would know who this woman is who is touching him; he would know what kind of sinful life she lives!"

<sup>40</sup> Jesus spoke up and said to him, "Simon, I have something to tell you."

"Yes, Teacher," he said, "tell me."

<sup>41</sup> "There were two men who owed money to a moneylender," Jesus began. "One owed him 500 silver coins, and the other owed him fifty. <sup>42</sup> Neither of them could pay him back, so he cancelled the debts of both. Which one, then, will love him more?"

<sup>43</sup> "I suppose," answered Simon, "that it would be the one who was forgiven more."

"You are right," said Jesus. <sup>44</sup> Then he turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came into your home, and you gave me no water for my feet, but she has washed my feet with her tears and dried them with her hair.

<sup>45</sup> You did not welcome me with a kiss, but she has not stopped kissing my feet since I came. <sup>46</sup> You provided no olive oil for my head, but she has covered my feet with perfume. <sup>47</sup> I tell you, then, the great love she has shown proves that her many sins have been forgiven. But whoever has been forgiven little shows only a little love."

<sup>48</sup> Then Jesus said to the woman, "Your sins are forgiven."

<sup>49</sup> The others sitting at the table began to say to themselves, "Who is this, who even forgives sins?"

<sup>50</sup> But Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

<sup>1</sup> Some time later Jesus travelled through towns and villages, preaching the Good News about the Kingdom of God. The twelve disciples went with him, <sup>2</sup> and so did some women who had been healed of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (who was called Magdalene), from whom seven demons had been driven out; <sup>3</sup> Joanna, whose husband Chuza was an officer in Herod's court; and Susanna, and many other women who used their own resources to help Jesus and his disciples.

*Other Readings: 2 Samuel 12:7-10, 13; Psalm 32:1-2, 5, 7, 11; Galatians 2:16, 19-21*

## LECTIO:

Jesus is invited for a meal by Simon the Pharisee. At that time, rich people would have eaten reclining on couches at a low table with their feet pointing away from the table.

A woman, probably a prostitute, washes Jesus' feet with her tears, dries them with her hair, kisses them and then anoints them with perfume. This would have been socially unacceptable. Simon judges them both, but judges Jesus even more than the woman because he did not stop her.

Jesus is fully aware what Simon is thinking. So he tells a parable about two people being forgiven debts they could not repay. Jesus makes the point that we are all sinners in need of forgiveness. The woman's actions show the sincerity of her repentance, her faith in Jesus, and love for him.

Luke then draws attention to the role of women in Jesus' ministry, naming three who travelled with him and the disciples while they preached the gospel. He also adds that many women supported Jesus' ministry from their own resources, probably with food and money.

## MEDITATIO:

- In what way does Simon misjudge both Jesus and the woman?
- Consider the impact this encounter might have had on Simon, the other guests and the woman. What can we learn from this parable?
- Do you feel you have been forgiven much or just a little for your sins?

## ORATIO:

Praise God, Jesus will cancel out our sins if we repent. Pray through the verses from Psalm 32. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you understand the real nature of grace.

## CONTEMPLATIO:

Contemplate Jesus' sacrifice for you and God's gift of forgiveness. Consider what it means to live for God, not for yourself.

## FORGETTING SELF

### Luke 9:18-24

<sup>18</sup> One day when Jesus was praying alone, the disciples came to him. “Who do the crowds say I am?” he asked them.

<sup>19</sup> “Some say that you are John the Baptist,” they answered. “Others say that you are Elijah, while others say that one of the prophets of long ago has come back to life.”

<sup>20</sup> “What about you?” he asked them. “Who do you say I am?”

Peter answered, “You are God’s Messiah.”

<sup>21</sup> Then Jesus gave them strict orders not to tell this to anyone. <sup>22</sup> He also said to them, “The Son of Man must suffer much and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the teachers of the Law. He will be put to death, but three days later he will be raised to life.”

<sup>23</sup> And he said to them all, “Anyone who wants to come with me must forget self, take up their cross every day, and follow me. <sup>24</sup> For whoever wants to save their own life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for my sake will save it.

*Other Readings: Zechariah 12:10-11, 13:1; Psalm 63:1-5, 7-8; Galatians 3:26-29*



### LECTIO:

In this passage Jesus allows his disciples to know that he is indeed the Messiah. But he doesn’t want this revealed publicly yet. He also starts to show them that he is a very different Messiah from the one they expected. In fact, he will be rejected by the very people who should have welcomed him most – the religious leaders. Even more shockingly he will be put to death. But three days later he will be raised back to life.

Jesus then talks about the cost of discipleship, ‘Anyone who wants to come with me must forget self, take up their cross every day, and follow me’ (verse 23). Jesus confronts the disciples with the tough reality. Being a Christian requires the daily choice of obeying God rather than following our own plans, even when this involves hardship and suffering. So whoever wants to be Jesus’ disciple must be ready to give their life for their faith.

It must have seemed a frightening prospect to the disciples. But Jesus explains his first saying with the second, ‘For whoever wants to save their own life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for my sake will save it’. So while ultimately following Jesus is the only way to save our life, sacrifice and suffering is part and parcel of the process.

These few words must have left the disciples reeling! While Jesus is indeed the Messiah, the idea of him being put to death rather than delivering the Jews victoriously from their Roman oppressors would have been shocking.

They must also have wondered what they had got involved in. Much of the Old Testament taught them that God blesses the righteous; it is those who disobey God that experience suffering. Where would following Jesus lead them?

Following Jesus involves putting his will and kingdom first whatever the cost or consequences to us personally.



### MEDITATIO:

- Today and throughout history people have had very different ideas about Jesus. Who do you think he is?
- Consider how Jesus unites the idea of a suffering Messiah with that of a suffering disciple. How do you respond to suffering in your life?
- What does it mean in practical terms for you to lose your life and take up your cross daily? In which areas of your life do you find it hardest to do what God wants rather than what you want?



### ORATIO:

Read through today’s responsorial Psalm several times. Do these verses express how you feel? Use them for an honest conversation with God. What strikes you most? Maybe God wants you to bring it to him in prayer.



### CONTEMPLATIO:

Sit and contemplate a crucifix for a while each day this week. Think about all it symbolises and its relevance for you each day. What does Jesus’ death and resurrection change?

## FOLLOW ME

### Luke 9:51-62

<sup>51</sup> As the time drew near when Jesus would be taken up to heaven, he made up his mind and set out on his way to Jerusalem. <sup>52</sup> He sent messengers ahead of him, who went into a village in Samaria to get everything ready for him. <sup>53</sup> But the people there would not receive him, because it was clear that he was on his way to Jerusalem. <sup>54</sup> When the disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?"

<sup>55</sup> Jesus turned and rebuked them. <sup>56</sup> Then Jesus and his disciples went on to another village.

<sup>57</sup> As they went on their way, a man said to Jesus, "I will follow you wherever you go."

<sup>58</sup> Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lie down and rest."

<sup>59</sup> He said to another man, "Follow me."

But that man said, "Sir, first let me go back and bury my father."

<sup>60</sup> Jesus answered, "Let the dead bury their own dead. You go and proclaim the Kingdom of God."

<sup>61</sup> Someone else said, "I will follow you, sir; but first let me go and say goodbye to my family."

<sup>62</sup> Jesus said to him, "Anyone who starts to plough and then keeps looking back is of no use to the Kingdom of God."

*Other Readings: 1 Kings 19:16, 19-21; Psalm 16:1-2, 5, 7-11; Galatians 5:1, 13-18*



## LECTIO:

Jesus needs a bed for the night in a certain Samaritan village. When the Samaritans realise Jesus is heading for Jerusalem, they turn him away.

There was centuries of friction between Jews and Samaritans. Many Jews regarded Samaritans as worse than pagans and tried to avoid any contact with them.

James and John react strongly when the Samaritans turn Jesus away and want to call down God's judgement to destroy them. But Jesus rebukes his disciples for their response and simply moves on.

Next Luke tells us about a series of encounters with people who seem to be keen to become Jesus' disciples. Jesus is on his way to die for the sake of the gospel and is looking for total commitment in those who want to be his disciples. So he is direct and tests their sincerity.

In the first exchange Jesus says '...the Son of Man has nowhere to lie down and rest.' This is a reminder that ultimately Jesus' home is not in this world. The same is true for Christians - 'We, however, are citizens of heaven,' (Philippians 3:20).

Another man wants to follow Jesus but first he asks to bury his father. At face value this seems a reasonable request. Jesus' reply seems harsh and uncaring. We know Jesus upholds honouring one's parents. Following Jesus must be our first priority. Taking care of family obligations must be out of obedience to Jesus, not an excuse for delaying obedience to him.

The same idea is expressed in verses 61-62. To plough a straight furrow you need to stay focused on the task in front of you. If you keep looking back you will veer off course.

As we learned last week there is no quick fix for disciples. Jesus must come first and following him costs everything.



## MEDITATIO:

- How do the ideas contained here challenge your own priorities? Have you ever said to Jesus, 'yes, but later...'?
- In what ways can we 'proclaim the Kingdom of God'?
- Consider Jesus' attitude to John and James after their emotional outburst against the Samaritans. What can we learn from this?



## ORATIO:

Ask God to speak to you from today's passage. Tell him honestly how you feel about it.

If you really want to be one of his disciples, ask the Holy Spirit to help you with the areas of your life you find hardest to give to God. Ask God to help you focus on serving him and not get distracted by things that take you off course.



## CONTEMPLATIO:

Consider the Kingdom of God. What influence does it have on your life? Consider what it really means to follow Jesus and be his disciple.



## MESSENGERS FOR JESUS

### *Luke 10:1-12, 17-20*

<sup>1</sup> After this the Lord chose another 72 men and sent them out two by two, to go ahead of him to every town and place where he himself was about to go. <sup>2</sup> He said to them, "There is a large harvest, but few workers to gather it in. Pray to the owner of the harvest that he will send out workers to gather in his harvest. <sup>3</sup> Go! I am sending you like lambs among wolves. <sup>4</sup> Don't take a purse or a beggar's bag or shoes; don't stop to greet anyone on the road. <sup>5</sup> Whenever you go into a house, first say, 'Peace be with this house.' <sup>6</sup> If a peace-loving person lives there, let your greeting of peace remain on him; if not, take back your greeting of peace. <sup>7</sup> Stay in that same house, eating and drinking whatever they offer you, for workers should be given their pay. Don't move round from one house to another. <sup>8</sup> Whenever you go into a town and are made welcome, eat what is set before you, <sup>9</sup> heal the sick in that town, and say to the people there, 'The Kingdom of God has come near you.' <sup>10</sup> But whenever you go into a town and are not welcomed, go out in the streets and say, <sup>11</sup> 'Even the dust from your town that sticks to our feet we wipe off against you. But remember that the Kingdom of God has come near you!' <sup>12</sup> I assure you that on Judgement Day God will show more mercy to Sodom than to that town!

<sup>17</sup> The 72 men came back in great joy. "Lord," they said, "even the demons obeyed us when we gave them a command in your name!"

<sup>18</sup> Jesus answered them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. <sup>19</sup> Listen! I have given you authority, so that you can walk on snakes and scorpions and overcome all the power of the Enemy, and nothing will hurt you. <sup>20</sup> But don't be glad because the evil spirits obey you; rather be glad because your names are written in heaven."

*Other Readings: Isaiah 66:10-14; Psalm 66:1-7, 16, 20; Galatians 6:14-18*



### LECTIO:

Only Luke tells us this important event in Jesus' ministry. He chooses 72 disciples (in addition to the 12 apostles) and sends them out in pairs to the cities and villages ahead of him on his journey to Jerusalem. According to ancient legal requirements, testimonies and messages were regarded reliable only when pronounced by at least two witnesses or heralds.

The number is significant. It links back to Moses, who assembled 70 leaders so God could impart his spirit to them to help lead the people of Israel (Numbers 11:16). Now Jesus sends out 72 disciples (some versions have 70) to spread the message of the Kingdom of God along with God's healing power.

The rule of God's kingdom comes in a very different way to worldly power. It comes with peace, humbleness and dependency on God to meet needs. But it is not without power and authority and Jesus gives his messengers power to heal and control demons.

Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem where he would be crucified. The mission was urgent and it remains so today. Those who don't accept Jesus' message will have to answer to him on Judgement Day. What matters most is receiving the gospel so our 'names are written in heaven'.



### MEDITATIO:

- When do people in your community get the opportunity to hear about the gospel and the Kingdom of God?
- Most of us are not called to be missionaries overseas but we can all play a part in sharing God's message of salvation. Of course our witness is more than just what we say; how we live our daily lives and care for others is important too. Think about how you can respond to this.
- What do you think Jesus means when he speaks about the Kingdom of God?



### ORATIO:

Give thanks that we too can have our names written in heaven.

Pray for more 'workers to gather in his harvest' and how you might be involved. If you know people working as missionaries take time to pray for them now.



### CONTEMPLATIO:

Contemplate the words of Galatians 6:14-18. Allow the ideas of being 'crucified to the world' and becoming a 'new creature' to challenge and give you hope.

## LOVE IN ACTION

### *Luke 10:25-37*

<sup>25</sup> A teacher of the Law came up and tried to trap Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to receive eternal life?”

<sup>26</sup> Jesus answered him, “What do the Scriptures say? How do you interpret them?”

<sup>27</sup> The man answered, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind’; and ‘Love your neighbour as you love yourself.’”

<sup>28</sup> “You are right,” Jesus replied; “do this and you will live.”

<sup>29</sup> But the teacher of the Law wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “Who is my neighbour?”

<sup>30</sup> Jesus answered, “There was once a man who was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho when robbers attacked him, stripped him, and beat him up, leaving him half dead. <sup>31</sup> It so happened that a priest was going down that road; but when he saw the man, he walked on by, on the other side. <sup>32</sup> In the same way a Levite also came along, went over and looked at the man, and then walked on by, on the other side. <sup>33</sup> But a Samaritan who was travelling that way came upon the man, and when he saw him, his heart was filled with pity. <sup>34</sup> He went over to him, poured oil and wine on his wounds and bandaged them; then he put the man on his own animal and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. <sup>35</sup> The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Take care of him,’ he told the innkeeper, ‘and when I come back this way, I will pay you whatever else you spend on him.’”

<sup>36</sup> And Jesus concluded, “In your opinion, which one of these three acted like a neighbour towards the man attacked by the robbers?”

<sup>37</sup> The teacher of the Law answered, “The one who was kind to him.”

Jesus replied, “You go, then, and do the same.”

*Other Readings: Deuteronomy 30:10-14; Psalm 69:13, 16, 29-30, 32-33, 35-36; Colossians 1:15-20*



### LECTIO:

A teacher wants to trap Jesus with a question. Jesus sees straight through him and asks him to answer his own question. The teacher gives the correct answer that sums up the Jewish teaching: loving God and loving our neighbour.

But the teacher hasn’t achieved his objective of making himself look cleverer than Jesus so he asks another question, “Who is my neighbour?” Jesus responds with a powerful parable – the Good Samaritan, as we know it today.

Jesus contrasts the responses of three people when they encounter a man at the side of the road who has been robbed and beaten up. The first two, a priest and a Levite were in positions of religious authority. They would have sought to obey the law in every detail but here they fail to obey one of the most important commandments.

It is the third person, a Samaritan, who acts like a good neighbour and helps this man. To appreciate the full impact of this parable we need to understand the longstanding animosity that existed here. The Jews looked down on the Samaritans and considered them ‘unclean’, no better than Gentiles. Jesus uses a non-Jew, a despised foreigner, to show this religious teacher how to live out Jewish teaching!

With this parable Jesus makes it clear that we should always be neighbours to any fellow human being who needs help. We may never have met them before, they may be from a different racial and religious background, but nonetheless we are still their neighbours.



### MEDITATIO:

- Consider the reasons the priest and the Levite might have had for not helping the man. Do you see any of these attitudes in yourself? What needs to motivate our actions towards others?
- What do we learn from this passage about why we should help others in need?
- Is it significant that Jesus says ‘do this’ (verses 28 and 37)? What light does James 2:14-17 shed on this?
- Think about what it means for you to love God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind.



### ORATIO:

Let Psalm 69 guide your prayers for those you love and for those you see in need.



### CONTEMPLATIO:

Read Colossians 1:15-20 slowly several times. Then take a couple of lines at a time and contemplate the meaning of the magnificence of Christ revealed here.

## RIGHT PRIORITIES

### *Luke 10:38-42*

<sup>38</sup> As Jesus and his disciples went on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha welcomed him in her home. <sup>39</sup> She had a sister named Mary, who sat down at the feet of the Lord and listened to his teaching. <sup>40</sup> Martha was upset over all the work she had to do, so she came and said, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her to come and help me!"

<sup>41</sup> The Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha! You are worried and troubled over so many things, <sup>42</sup> but just one is needed. Mary has chosen the right thing, and it will not be taken away from her."

*Other Readings: Genesis 18:1-10; Psalm 15:1-5; Colossians 1:24-28*



### LECTIO:

Martha invites Jesus for a meal in her home. Martha and Mary may be the sisters of Lazarus (see John 11:1-2) but we cannot be sure.

While Martha prepares the meal Jesus continues teaching. Mary doesn't help Martha but stays and listens to Jesus. The phrase 'sat down at the feet of' is significant. In other places it is used to describe the relationship between a disciple and his teacher (Luke 8:35, Acts 22:3). Jesus, radically departing from the cultural norms of the time, encourages women to learn about the Kingdom of God.

Luke doesn't tell us what Jesus was talking about on this occasion; the focus is on Martha and Mary and their response to Jesus. Martha is frustrated. She is left doing all the work to get everything ready and Mary is doing nothing to help. She protests to Jesus, urging him to agree with her and to ask Mary to give her a hand.

Martha must have been surprised by Jesus' response. His answer goes well beyond the mundane domestic details of preparing a meal. Jesus gently criticises Martha for placing material needs above spiritual ones. It's Mary that has got her priorities right by spending time listening to and learning from Jesus.

Jesus did not say that domestic work or house work is unimportant. He grew up in a family in Nazareth and knew the value of domestic routine in meeting family needs. Jesus underlines the importance of setting right priorities. The Kingdom of God must come first and this is equally true for both men and women.

It is important to set aside time for family needs, and even more important to set aside time to spend with God, time when we are not too tired or distracted by other things.

This was Martha's challenge. By giving too much importance to material needs and too little to spiritual matters she was missing an important opportunity to learn from Jesus.



### MEDITATIO:

- Who do you identify with most in this story, Mary or Martha? What can you learn from this passage?
- Consider your own priorities in your daily life. Are you placing a high enough priority on your relationship with God?
- We all have responsibilities that require our time. Consider how you can serve and honour God in the way you fulfil your daily work and responsibilities.



### ORATIO:

Read over these Gospel verses again. Talk through your situation with God in prayer. He understands the everyday pressures and tiredness that can overwhelm us. Bring anything you are worried about to the Lord.

Take some time to pray through the verses from Psalm 15. Find a few words which resonate with you, offer them to the Lord and wait to see what he will reveal to you.



### CONTEMPLATIO:

Read today's verses from Colossians. Marvel at the privilege we share in having the gospel message revealed to us. Allow the Holy Spirit to deepen this wonder in you.

## PRAY LIKE JESUS

### Luke 11:1-13

<sup>1</sup> One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.”

<sup>2</sup> Jesus said to them, “When you pray, say this:

‘Father:

May your holy name be honoured;  
may your Kingdom come.

<sup>3</sup> Give us day by day the food we need.

<sup>4</sup> Forgive us our sins,  
for we forgive everyone who does us wrong.  
And do not bring us to hard testing.’ ”

<sup>5</sup> And Jesus said to his disciples, “Suppose one of you should go to a friend’s house at midnight and say, ‘Friend, let me borrow three loaves of bread. <sup>6</sup> A friend of mine who is on a journey has just come to my house, and I haven’t got any food for him!’ <sup>7</sup> And suppose your friend should answer from inside, ‘Don’t bother me! The door is already locked, and my children and I are in bed. I can’t get up and give you anything.’ <sup>8</sup> Well, what then? I tell you that even if he will not get up and give you the bread because you are his friend, yet he will get up and give you everything you need because you are not ashamed to keep on asking.

<sup>9</sup> “And so I say to you: ask, and you will receive; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you. <sup>10</sup> For all those who ask will receive, and those who seek will find, and the door will be opened to anyone who knocks. <sup>11</sup> Would any of you who are fathers give your son a snake when he asks for fish? <sup>12</sup> Or would you give him a scorpion when he asks for an egg? <sup>13</sup> Bad as you are, you know how to give good things to your children. How much more, then, will the Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”

*Other Readings: Genesis 18:20-32; Psalm 138:1-3, 6-8; Colossians 2:12-14*



### LECTIO:

Prayer is at the heart of today’s teaching. The disciples felt their prayers were not up to the mark and asked Jesus to give them some guidance. There are two versions of the Lord’s prayer, this one from Luke and Matthew’s version (Matthew 6: 9-13). Matthew’s version is longer and better known by Christians as it is used in the liturgy.

Jesus keeps the prayer guide short and simple. Most importantly he wants the disciples to recognise it’s a relationship between Father and child.

The first step is to acknowledge God as our Father recognising his holiness and honouring him. Next we should pray for his Kingdom rule to come. Then we can make any essential requests, for example food for the day, forgiveness of our sins and protection from hard testing.

Jesus didn’t intend us to only pray these exact words. Rather they provide us with a framework and guidance on the type of things we should pray about.

The only thing that is subject to any condition is forgiveness. If we do not forgive those who sin against us, then we won’t receive forgiveness ourselves.

Jesus goes on to teach about the importance of being persistent in prayer and concludes with the illustration of a father and son. Most human fathers give good things to their children rather than things that are harmful. How much more then will our heavenly father, who knows us perfectly, give us what we need? Of course, sometimes this may mean God not giving us what we ask for because he knows it would be harmful for us.



### MEDITATIO:

- What does this passage reveal to us about God and how he wants us to approach him?
- How do you feel about God being your Father?
- How does the condition of forgiving others in order to receive your own forgiveness affect you?
- What is your own experience of prayer? What can you learn from this passage to help you?



### ORATIO:

Pray through these verses from the Lord’s prayer. After each line add your own words. Ask the Holy Spirit to help and guide you. Take your time.



### CONTEMPLATIO:

Consider today’s responsorial verse Psalm 138:3:

‘You answered me when I called to you;  
With your strength you strengthened me.’



## TRUE RICHES

### Luke 12:13-21

<sup>13</sup> A man in the crowd said to Jesus, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide with me the property our father left us.”

<sup>14</sup> Jesus answered him, “My friend, who gave me the right to judge or to divide the property between you two?” <sup>15</sup> And he went on to say to them all, “Watch out and guard yourselves from every kind of greed; because a person’s true life is not made up of the things he owns, no matter how rich he may be.”

<sup>16</sup> Then Jesus told them this parable: “There was once a rich man who had land which bore good crops. <sup>17</sup> He began to think to himself, ‘I haven’t anywhere to keep all my crops. What can I do?’ <sup>18</sup> This is what I will do,’ he told himself; ‘I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, where I will store my corn and all my other goods. <sup>19</sup> Then I will say to myself, Lucky man! You have all the good things you need for many years. Take life easy, eat, drink, and enjoy yourself!’ <sup>20</sup> But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night you will have to give up your life; then who will get all these things you have kept for yourself?’”

<sup>21</sup> And Jesus concluded, “This is how it is with those who pile up riches for themselves but are not rich in God’s sight.”

*Other Readings: Ecclesiastes 1:2, 2:21-23; Psalm 90:3-6, 12-14, 17; Colossians 3:1-5, 9-11*



### LECTIO:

In today’s reading feuding brothers get a short answer from Jesus. He refuses to get involved in their dispute and they are left to resolve the issue themselves. However, Jesus is a master at turning a question into an opportunity for teaching. And so he follows up his comments with a parable.

The rich man at the heart of the narrative is feeling good. Not only has he good crop bearing land, but he’s also an excellent farmer with a surplus of corn and other goods. He believes bigger barns to store his ‘riches’ will set him up for life.

The rich man pictures his future. He will live a life of ease; food and goods to hand mean he can sit back and eat, drink and make merry with not a cloud on the horizon. Sadly he doesn’t seem so smart about spiritual matters and fails to consider God or anyone else’s needs.

The rich man completely overlooked God, but God didn’t forget him. That night was to be the rich man’s last on earth. And it didn’t look as though he was heading for heaven!

In this parable Jesus is not criticising the man for being wealthy. But he is commenting on the man’s attitude to God and his fellow man and how he handles his wealth.

Luke follows up this theme in the book of Acts where he reports the believers sharing their goods with one another (Acts 2: 44-45). They also sold their property and possessions to give to those in need.

The church believed it was right and proper to share with others as a practical demonstration of love. Mutual love was plainly not something this rich man considered. But Jesus taught that this was the only way for his followers to behave.



### MEDITATIO:

- In all his careful business plans and decisions the rich man gave little thought to God and his fellow man. How do you plan your life? When decisions need to be made, whose guidance do you seek?
- Consider Jesus’ statement ‘a person’s true life is not made up of the things he owns’. What things and attitudes make up your life?
- What can we learn from this passage about healthy and unhealthy attitudes to money?
- Why does Jesus call the man in the parable a ‘fool’?



### ORATIO:

Use the words from Colossians 3:1-5 to inspire a time of prayer with the Lord.



### CONTEMPLATIO:

Consider how you can make Jesus’ advice practical and ‘store up riches in heaven’ (Matthew 6:19-21). What do you think makes a person rich in God’s eyes?

Spend some time quietly before God and let him reveal his riches in your life.



## HEAVENLY PRIORITIES

### *Luke 12:32-48*

<sup>32</sup>“Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father is pleased to give you the Kingdom. <sup>33</sup>Sell all your belongings and give the money to the poor. Provide for yourselves purses that don’t wear out, and save your riches in heaven, where they will never decrease, because no thief can get to them, and no moth can destroy them. <sup>34</sup>For your heart will always be where your riches are.

<sup>35</sup>“Be ready for whatever comes, dressed for action and with your lamps lit, <sup>36</sup>like servants who are waiting for their master to come back from a wedding feast. When he comes and knocks, they will open the door for him at once. <sup>37</sup>How happy are those servants whose master finds them awake and ready when he returns! I tell you, he will take off his coat, ask them to sit down, and will wait on them. <sup>38</sup>How happy they are if he finds them ready, even if he should come at midnight or even later! <sup>39</sup>And you can be sure that if the owner of a house knew the time when the thief would come, he would not let the thief break into his house. <sup>40</sup>And you, too, must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you are not expecting him.”

<sup>41</sup>Peter said, “Lord, does this parable apply to us, or do you mean it for everyone?”

<sup>42</sup>The Lord answered, “Who, then, is the faithful and wise servant? He is the one that his master will put in charge, to run the household and give the other servants their share of the food at the proper time. <sup>43</sup>How happy that servant is if his master finds him doing this when he comes home! <sup>44</sup>Indeed, I tell you, the master will put that servant in charge of all his property. <sup>45</sup>But if that servant says to himself that his master is taking a long time to come back and if he begins to beat the other servants, both the men and the women, and eats and drinks and gets drunk, <sup>46</sup>then the master will come back one day when the servant does not expect him and at a time he does not know. The master will cut him in pieces and make him share the fate of the disobedient.

<sup>47</sup>“The servant who knows what his master wants him to do, but does not get himself ready and do it, will be punished with a heavy whipping. <sup>48</sup>But the servant who does not know what his master wants, and yet does something for which he deserves a whipping, will be punished with a light whipping. Much is required from the person to whom much is given; much more is required from the person to whom much more is given.

*Other Readings: Wisdom 18:6-9; Psalm 33:1, 12, 18-20, 22; Hebrews 11:1-2, 8-19*

## **1** LECTIO:

The essence of what Jesus is saying here is summed up in two simple ideas. Make sure you are storing up your riches in the right place – heaven – and be prepared for Jesus’ return.

Luke reminds us of the totality of God’s provision for us through all time. In these uncertain days we can be confident our heavenly father will provide for us. So we can freely share our worldly goods knowing God recognises every investment of trust we make in him and will also supply our needs from his heavenly treasure house.

Many Christians in Luke’s day expected Jesus to return at any moment. Luke reminds us to be ready no matter how long the wait. God’s timetable will not be revealed to us in advance, the timing of Jesus’ return will be a surprise.

## **2** MEDITATIO:

- Consider Jesus’ words in verse 32. As Christians we can feel in the minority. Draw strength from living in God’s kingdom.
- Make a list of all the things that are most important to you at this point in your life – your ‘riches’. Consider where these ‘riches’ are invested?
- How do you maintain a state of readiness for Jesus to return?

## **3** ORATIO:

Ask God to speak to you from today’s Gospel reading. Maybe he will have something to say about your ‘riches’ or how to be more prepared for his return.

## **4** CONTEMPLATIO:

After reading Hebrews 11, consider what sustained these believers and allow God to show you how he can sustain you too.

## BLESSED OF ALL WOMEN

### Luke 1:39-56

<sup>39</sup> Soon afterwards Mary got ready and hurried off to a town in the hill country of Judea. <sup>40</sup> She went into Zechariah's house and greeted Elizabeth. <sup>41</sup> When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby moved within her. Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit <sup>42</sup> and said in a loud voice, "You are the most blessed of all women, and blessed is the child you will bear!" <sup>43</sup> Why should this great thing happen to me, that my Lord's mother comes to visit me? <sup>44</sup> For as soon as I heard your greeting, the baby within me jumped with gladness. <sup>45</sup> How happy you are to believe that the Lord's message to you will come true!"

<sup>46</sup> Mary said,

"My heart praises the Lord;

<sup>47</sup> my soul is glad because of God my Saviour,

<sup>48</sup> for he has remembered me, his lowly servant!

From now on all people will call me happy,

<sup>49</sup> because of the great things the Mighty God has done for me.

His name is holy;

<sup>50</sup> from one generation to another

he shows mercy to those who honour him.

<sup>51</sup> He has stretched out his mighty arm

and scattered the proud with all their plans.

<sup>52</sup> He has brought down mighty kings from their thrones,

and lifted up the lowly.

<sup>53</sup> He has filled the hungry with good things,

and sent the rich away with empty hands.

<sup>54</sup> He has kept the promise he made to our ancestors,

and has come to the help of his servant Israel.

<sup>55</sup> He has remembered to show mercy to Abraham

and to all his descendants for ever!"

<sup>56</sup> Mary stayed about three months with Elizabeth and then went back home.

*Other readings: Revelation 11:19, 12:1-6, 10; Psalm 45:9-11, 15;  
1 Corinthians 15:20-26*



### LECTIO:

The Church has chosen this powerful text to celebrate Mary's assumption into heaven. The events take place soon after the angel Gabriel tells Mary of God's plan for her life. She accepts the great honour of being the mother of the Son of God, though to the rest of the world she will appear to be an unmarried mother.

The reading starts with Mary visiting her cousin Elizabeth who, after many barren years, is six months pregnant even though both she and her husband are past the age they would expect to have a child.

On arriving at her cousin's house Mary called a greeting. Hearing her voice Elizabeth feels her baby move within her. She is filled with the Holy Spirit and honours Mary as the mother of the Lord, confirming the angel Gabriel's words. She commends Mary's faith for believing the Lord's message. She recognises that the movement of her baby, who will grow up to become John the Baptist, was a jump for joy at the presence of the Son of God in Mary's womb. It is a wonderful prophetic moment.

Mary responds with an overflowing song of praise that magnifies the faithfulness and mercy of God. She begins by giving thanks that God has chosen her for this great honour. She then celebrates God's deliverance for the poor and powerless and the long-awaited fulfilment of his covenant promise to Abraham. There are echoes of Hannah's prayer in 1 Samuel 2:1-10 and the heart-felt cries of Old Testament messianic prophecies.

Mary was granted this special place in God's salvation plan. Catholic tradition teaches that after Jesus' death Mary soon followed him to heaven, although this is not mentioned in the New Testament. However all true Christian believers live in the real hope and expectation that one day they too will be united with God in heaven for all eternity.



### MEDITATIO:

- What does this text reveal about Mary and Elizabeth's relationship with God?
- Consider Mary's response to God. What can we learn from this and what can we apply in our own lives?



### ORATIO:

Read this song of praise over several times each day this week. Let the Holy Spirit speak to you from it and then respond to God in prayer. Offer your own words to magnify God and thank him for all he has done in your life.



### CONTEMPLATIO:

Take one part of the song and absorb it. Try and learn it so that it will always be there in your heart, your spirit and your prayer life. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you.

Spend some time marvelling at the fulfilment of God's plan of salvation.

## THE NARROW DOOR

### *Luke 13:22-30*

<sup>22</sup>Jesus went through towns and villages, teaching the people and making his way towards Jerusalem. <sup>23</sup>Someone asked him, “Sir, will just a few people be saved?”

Jesus answered them, <sup>24</sup>“Do your best to go in through the narrow door; because many people will surely try to go in but will not be able. <sup>25</sup>The master of the house will get up and close the door; then when you stand outside and begin to knock on the door and say, ‘Open the door for us, sir!’ he will answer you, ‘I don’t know where you come from!’ <sup>26</sup>Then you will answer, ‘We ate and drank with you; you taught in our town!’ <sup>27</sup>But he will say again, ‘I don’t know where you come from. Get away from me, all you wicked people!’ <sup>28</sup>How you will cry and grind your teeth when you see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the Kingdom of God, while you are thrown out! <sup>29</sup>People will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down at the feast in the Kingdom of God. <sup>30</sup>Then those who are now last will be first, and those who are now first will be last.”

*Other Readings: Isaiah 66:18-21; Psalm 117; Hebrews 12:5-7, 11-13*

### **L**ECTIO:

Life as a Christian demands a lot of the believer. Today Jesus talks about who will and who won’t be allowed into the Kingdom of God. He warns his listeners both then and now to do more than just listen to his teaching.

Sadly, if you are not actively allowing Jesus to impact your everyday life you are not really living as a Christian at all. Christian living involves more than just attending church – it’s all to do with your personal relationship with God through Jesus.

For some people, listening to Jesus’ teaching became an intellectual exercise. They treated Jesus as just another rabbi, asking theoretical questions like the one in verse 23, and taking it for granted they’d be saved.

Jesus warns them they are in serious danger of losing their chance to enter the Kingdom of God. He compares it to a house with a very small entrance. People are struggling to get in but the owner has closed the door and is only allowing certain people to enter.

Jesus is making his meaning very clear. There has to be a personal entering in to faith in God by believing in Jesus and then a practical application of faith to every part of your life.

Jesus is reminding us there can be no sitting on a fence in matters of faith. If you belong to him, his teaching will impact your life. You may make mistakes but you will be endeavouring to live your life in obedience to him. Anyone who does not repent and choose this option is risking everything, as the day may come when the ‘house owner’ does not recognise you and allow you to enter in.

### **M**EDITATIO:

- The narrow door refers to a time when an individual repents and makes a personal commitment of faith in God through Jesus. It is not something someone else can do for you as it requires a personal choice. Can you remember the time when you made the choice to follow Jesus? For some people it can be a gradual process taking years. For others there was a special day when they took the decision. If you are not sure, why not talk about it with your priest or minister?

### **O**RATIO:

‘Keep on working with fear and trembling to complete your salvation, because God is always at work in you to make you willing and able to obey his own purpose. (Philippians 2:12-13)

In these verses the Apostle Paul exhorts the Philippian believers not to be complacent but to continue their life of faith. Ask the Holy Spirit to make you willing and able to obey God’s purposes for your life.

### **C**ONTEMPLATIO:

The reading from Philippians reminds us that God is at work in each one of us. Consider the ways God is working in your life right now. He may show you some ways that surprise you.

## WALK HUMBLY

### Luke 14:1, 7-14

<sup>1</sup>One Sabbath Jesus went to eat a meal at the home of one of the leading Pharisees; and people were watching Jesus closely.

<sup>7</sup>Jesus noticed how some of the guests were choosing the best places, so he told this parable to all of them: <sup>8</sup>“When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not sit down in the best place. It could happen that someone more important than you has been invited, <sup>9</sup>and your host, who invited both of you, would have to come and say to you, ‘Let him have this place.’ Then you would be embarrassed and have to sit in the lowest place. <sup>10</sup>Instead, when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place, so that your host will come to you and say, ‘Come on up, my friend, to a better place.’ This will bring you honour in the presence of all the other guests. <sup>11</sup>For all those who make themselves great will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be made great.”

<sup>12</sup>Then Jesus said to his host, “When you give a lunch or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or your rich neighbours – for they will invite you back, and in this way you will be paid for what you did. <sup>13</sup>When you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind; <sup>14</sup>and you will be blessed, because they are not able to pay you back. God will repay you on the day the good people rise from death.”

*Other Readings: Ecclesiasticus 3:17-20, 28-29; Psalm 68:3-6, 9-10; Hebrews 12:18-19, 22-24*



## LECTIO:

Today we join Jesus as he dines with a leading Pharisee. All the guests at the dinner are watching to see how Jesus will behave. What they don't notice is Jesus observing their proud ways.

In Jesus' day the most important seats were close to the host and each of the Pharisees' guests wanted one of these seats for themselves.

Jesus uses the opportunity to teach the dinner guests a better way to behave. His comments are a reminder of Jewish teaching summed up in verses like Proverbs 25:6-7, “When you stand before the king, don't try to impress him and pretend to be important. It is better to be asked to take a higher position than to be told to give your place to someone more important.”

Of course the irony is that had the host realised who Jesus was then he would have immediately given Jesus the place of honour.

Jesus then emphasises hospitality and generosity towards people who cannot reciprocate - the poor and physically disadvantaged. Again it is a question of our attitudes. Do we exclude others because of selfishness or pride?

Jesus' concern is always to be inclusive. He spent time with people who were not considered 'respectable'. The Kingdom of God should be, and is, open to all irrespective of man-made social status because before God we are all sinners in need of salvation.



## MEDITATIO:

- The apostle Peter took Jesus' words to heart as he also taught, 'And all of you must put on the apron of humility, to serve one another; for the scripture says, "God resists the proud but shows favour to the humble." Humble yourselves, then, under God's mighty hand, so that he will lift you up in his own good time'. (1 Peter 5:5-6)
- Jesus regularly reminded his listeners about humility. Why do you think it is so important for us to keep a humble attitude towards others? Why is pride so dangerous?
- Think about who you invite to your home. Does Jesus' teaching challenge your choice of guests?



## ORATIO:

Ask God to speak to you from today's reading about humility and hospitality.

Read Psalm 68:1-10. Notice the contrast between God's majesty and his concern for the poor, the lonely, for widows, orphans and prisoners. Pray for people in these situations. The Holy Spirit may bring specific people to mind. God may also show you something practical you can do to help.



## CONTEMPLATIO:

Read Philippians 2:3-11 and think about the example Jesus gives us of humility and service. Let God bring to mind small steps you can take in this direction during the coming weeks.