

Trinity Sunday Year C

GOSPEL

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Jesus said to his disciples:

'I still have many things to say to you
but they would be too much for you now.
But when the Spirit of truth comes
he will lead you to the complete truth,
since he will not be speaking as from himself
but will say only what he has learnt;
and he will tell you of the things to come.
He will glorify me,
since all he tells you
will be taken from what is mine.
Everything the Father has is mine;
that is why I said:
*All he tells you
will be taken from what is mine.*'

(John 16:12-15)

DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

- The early Christians struggled to understand the belief that God is both one and three. Many great councils of the church were held to clarify what this meant and to find the language with which to describe the trinitarian relationship between Father, Son and Spirit. It was not until the Council of Constantinople in AD 381 that the doctrine of the Trinity was defined.
- Many of the prayers of the church express our belief in a triune God (three persons in one). One of the greatest and most simple of these prayers is the sign of the cross, in which we dedicate ourselves 'in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit'.
- St Augustine described the Trinity in terms of the Lover, the Beloved and the Love that exists between them.
- St Patrick reportedly used the shamrock to explain the three persons in one God to the pagans of Ireland.

EXPLORING THE WORD

The people of Israel were unique among the nations of the ancient world in that they held to a belief in one God. But Jesus speaks of this God as 'Abba', Father. There is an implied relationship with this God. Jesus also speaks of the Spirit, and again, there is a relationship implied between Jesus and the Spirit, for this Spirit will continue to speak the words of God and of Jesus and will glorify them. Thus begins the

early church's deep reflection on the mystery of Jesus and the relationship between Father, Son and Spirit. This relationship was ultimately formulated in what we now call the Trinity.

In this text, Jesus is not simply addressing those present with him but all those who will search for the truth down the centuries to come. All of us are led to complete truth and understanding through the actions of the Spirit, who directs us to the Father and the Son: '*At the heart of the mystery of the Trinity is a Father whose love is incarnated in the Son who gives life to the world, and in the mutual love which exists between the Father and the Son and touches our lives as the Holy Spirit*' (F. Maloney, *This is the Gospel of the Lord, Year C*, Sydney: St Paul Publications, 1991, p. 115).

- Explore the ways in which Jesus embodies the love of God.
- How does the Spirit continue to lead us to the truth?
- You could look at some depictions of the Trinity in art (an internet search will yield many results). Compare the classical representations with some more contemporary images of the Trinity. Discuss what these suggest to you of the relationship between Father, Son and Spirit.

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- What are the things that have led you to search for the complete truth?
- What have you learnt so far?
- Where do you feel the Spirit leading you now?
- There are many different images that people have of God. God can be a distant, cosmic figure, something of a Santa Claus from whom we ask favours, or someone to turn to only in times of trouble. Explore together some of the ways you have thought about God during your life. Has your understanding changed over time? What have been the significant moments that have led you to a new understanding of God?
- Start and end each day with a sign of the cross this week. Contemplate the meaning of this action and live each day 'in God's name'.
- One beautiful prayer to the Trinity is:

*Glory be to the Father,
and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit.
As it was in the beginning,
is now, and ever shall be,
world without end.
Amen.*

Memorise this prayer and pray it often this week.

*Corpus Christi Year C***GOSPEL**

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Jesus made the crowds welcome and talked to them about the kingdom of God; and he cured those who were in need of healing.

It was late afternoon when the Twelve came to him and said, 'Send the people away, and they can go to the villages and farms round about to find lodging and food; for we are in a lonely place here.' He replied, 'Give them something to eat yourselves.' But they said, 'We have no more than five loaves and two fish, unless we are to go ourselves and buy food for all these people.' For there were about five thousand men. But he said to his disciples, 'Get them to sit down in parties of about fifty.' They did so and made them all sit down. Then he took the five loaves and the two fish, raised his eyes to heaven, and said the blessing over them; then he broke them and handed them to his disciples to distribute among the crowd. They all ate as much as they wanted, and when the scraps remaining were collected they filled twelve baskets.

(Luke 9:11-17)

DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

- The actions of our eucharistic celebration are based on the actions of Jesus in this gospel text and later at the Last Supper: the priest takes the bread, blesses it, breaks it and distributes to all who come to the table.
- The twelve baskets full of remaining food signify that the Eucharist can meet all our needs. The abundance of the Eucharist is enough, indeed more than enough, to fill and sustain us.
- The abundant feast is an image associated with the coming of the Messiah, the advent of God's kingdom. In this gospel text, Jesus is bringing an experience of God's reign in the present time to those whom he fed in such abundance.

EXPLORING THE WORD

The attitude of Jesus towards the crowd is starkly contrasted with the attitude of the Twelve. Jesus welcomes all who come to him, patiently explains his message of the kingdom and offers healing to all those in need of it. By contrast, the Twelve, anxious about their paucity of resources, suggest that the crowd must be sent away to search out their own nourishment. Jesus presents for them a model of how they should respond: with generosity and trust in God. Significantly, Jesus hands back

the food to the apostles to distribute among the crowd. They are given the ministry of feeding the multitude. For Luke, the Twelve are the foundation of the church. This church, founded on the Twelve, must never cease to nourish those who come seeking healing and the kingdom. The church is made up of its members, so each one of us has the responsibility to use what resources we have to meet the needs of others.

- What are some of the implications of this understanding of this text?
- Are they confined to our immediate community or are they global in scope? How does this idea challenge us further?
- In what ways are the church and its members helping to meet your needs at present?
- In what ways are the church and its members helping to meet the needs of the world?

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- Have you ever been in a 'lonely place'?
- How do you make people welcome?
- What needs healing in you?
- How is your 'hunger' being fed by Jesus?
- Jesus tells the disciples that they should feed the crowd themselves. What resources do you have to offer that may help feed the needs of those people you know? Share a story of a time when you were able to help someone in their time of need. Share a story of a time when someone was able to help you.
- Spend a little time each day reflecting on your needs and how your journey towards Christ is helping to feed those needs. Try to help someone find a way out of their 'lonely place'.
- This week's gospel acclamation makes a beautiful reflection. Pray it often:

*I am the living bread from heaven, says the Lord;
Whoever eats this bread will live forever.*

13th Sunday of Ordinary Time Year C

GOSPEL

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As the time drew near for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely took the road for Jerusalem and sent messengers ahead of him. These set out, and they went into a Samaritan village to make preparations for him, but the people would not receive him because he was making for Jerusalem. Seeing this, the disciples James and John said, 'Lord, do you want us to call down fire from heaven to burn them up?' But he turned and rebuked them, and they went off to another village.

As they travelled along they met a man on the road who said to him, 'I will follow you wherever you go.' Jesus answered, 'Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.'

Another to whom he said, 'Follow me', replied, 'Let me go and bury my father first.' But he answered, 'Leave the dead to bury their dead; your duty is to go and spread the news of the kingdom of God.'

Another said, 'I will follow you, sir, but first let me go and say goodbye to my people at home.' Jesus said to him, 'Once the hand is laid on the plough, no one who looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.'

(Luke 9:51-62)

DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

- A very central theme in Luke's writings is that of journey. In Luke's Gospel, Jesus' journey to Jerusalem is the vehicle for his preaching and for the formation of the disciples in what it means to be a follower of Christ.
- Luke's second volume is The Acts of the Apostles. In this book, the journey continues with the message of Jesus being taken by the church outward from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth.
- There existed an ancient rivalry between the Samaritans and the Jews, which caused each group to be suspicious of the other. The area of Samaria lay between Galilee in the north and Judea in the south.

EXPLORING THE WORD

This gospel text marks a turning point in Luke's story of Jesus. He has made a momentous decision. When he is rejected by the very first village he approaches, the disciples want to punish them. But Jesus refuses violence and coercion as a means of conversion. He wants willing disciples! The following three brief exchanges outline what is needed for discipleship: it won't necessarily be comfortable; there is a sense of urgency, and it requires single-mindedness and sometimes difficult choices. Comfort or family relationships cannot take priority over the kingdom of God, and once one becomes a follower of Christ, there can be no turning back. This gospel is not only about Jesus; it is about all those who seek to follow the road God has laid out for them.

- One of the characters in this text says, '*I will follow you wherever you go.*' What made you embark on this journey? Has the road been difficult?
- What are the things you have had to turn your back on to continue on this journey? Are there still hurdles to overcome?

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- You too have resolutely set out on a journey. How are you feeling about where this road is leading you?
- What difficulties have you experienced on the road to Christ?
- What have you had to leave behind?
- Reflect on times when you have had to make difficult decisions and choices—perhaps to turn your back on something you value in order to pursue an even greater goal. How did you feel? What motivated your actions? Share your reflections.
- '*Your duty is to spread the news of the kingdom of God.*' Reflect on the ways available for you to spread the news of the kingdom of God. Make an extra effort to do just that this week.
- Use this adaptation of this week's collect as your prayer:

O God, you chose us to be children of light. Grant that we may not be wrapped in the error of darkness but always stand in the light of truth.

14th Sunday in Ordinary Time Year C

GOSPEL

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The Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them out ahead of him, in pairs, to all the towns and places he himself was to visit. He said to them, 'The harvest is rich but the labourers are few, so ask the Lord of the harvest to send labourers to his harvest. Start off now, but remember, I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. Carry no purse, no haversack, no sandals. Salute no one on the road.

'Whatever house you go into, let your first words be, "Peace to this house!" And if a man of peace lives there, your peace will go and rest on him; if not, it will come back to you. Stay in the same house, taking what food and drink they have to offer, for the labourer deserves his wages; do not move from house to house.

'Whenever you go into a town where they make you welcome, eat what is set before you. Cure those in it who are sick, and say, "The kingdom of God is very near to you." But whenever you enter a town and they do not make you welcome, go out into its streets and say, "We wipe off the very dust of your town that clings to our feet, and leave it with you. Yet be sure of this: the kingdom of God is very near." I tell you, on that day it will not go as hard with Sodom as with that town.'

The seventy-two came back rejoicing. 'Lord,' they said 'even the devils submit to us when we use your name.' He said to them, 'I watched Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Yes, I have given you power to tread underfoot serpents and scorpions and the whole strength of the enemy; nothing shall ever hurt you. Yet do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you; rejoice rather that your names are written in heaven.'

(Luke 10:1-12, 17-20)

DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

- The image of the vineyard is often used in the Old Testament as an image of God's people. They must be tended to and cultivated well so that the harvest is a rich one.
- The church has always understood its main function to be one of announcing the Gospel to others. This is the mission of the church, and the work is carried out by missionaries.
- All baptised people are called to be a part of this missionary activity of the church.

EXPLORING THE WORD

At the very end of Luke's Gospel, Jesus' final instruction to the disciples is to proclaim the Good News to all the nations (Luke 24:47). In today's text, it is almost as if Jesus is throwing them into the deep end! They are sent out on their first missionary assignment as raw recruits, with little to help them, but the lessons they learn here will be greatly needed later. Whatever they seek to achieve in Jesus' name, they are given the assistance they need. Jesus, however, reminds them that the crucial factor is not that they are powerful or that they are successful. What really matters is that they are doing the will of God, in Jesus' name, and this is the reason for their ultimate salvation.

- Explore ways in which the catechumens are like the disciples in this story: not yet fully formed but willing to undertake the mission. What lessons are they learning?
- Do they feel as if they are lambs among wolves? Explore this idea. In what ways in today's society is it 'dangerous' to be a Christian?

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- How have you been received into the family of God's people?
- In what ways are you called to spread the Good News to others?
- At this early stage of the gospel, the disciples are hardly formed yet for the task they are given. Have you ever been given a job to do that set you on a 'steep learning curve'? How did you feel? What was your response? How well did you achieve your task? Share your stories with others.
- Offer the gift of hospitality to someone this week. Make them welcome and give something of 'the peace of Christ' to them. Reflect on how you yourself are enriched by this, as well as the recipient of your hospitality.
- Use the gospel acclamation as the basis of your prayer this week:

*May the peace of Christ reign in my heart
and may the fullness of his message live in me.*

15th Sunday in Ordinary Time Year C

GOSPEL

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There was a lawyer who, to disconcert Jesus, stood up and said to him, 'Master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?' He said to him, 'What is written in the Law? What do you read there?' He replied, 'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbour as yourself.' 'You have answered right,' said Jesus 'do this and life is yours.'

But the man was anxious to justify himself and said to Jesus, 'And who is my neighbour?' Jesus replied, 'A man was once on his way down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell into the hands of brigands; they took all he had, beat him and then made off, leaving him half dead. Now a priest happened to be travelling down the same road, but when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. In the same way a Levite who came to the place saw him, and passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan traveller who came upon him was moved with compassion when he saw him. He went up and bandaged his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them. He then lifted him on to his own mount, carried him to the inn and looked after him. Next day, he took out two denarii and handed them to the innkeeper. "Look after him," he said "and on my way back I will make good any extra expense you have." Which of these three, do you think, proved himself a neighbour to the man who fell into the brigands' hands?' 'The one who took pity on him' he replied. Jesus said to him, 'Go, and do the same yourself.'

(Luke 10:25-37)

DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

- The priest and the Levite in this parable were religious professionals. They were on their way to perform duties in the temple. If they had touched the wounded man, they may have come into contact with blood and therefore become ritually unclean and unable to perform their duties. Their obsession with religious regulations blinded them to an even more fundamental commandment to love their neighbour.
- The denarius was a Roman silver coin equivalent to a day's pay. The action of the Samaritan is extravagantly generous!
- The road from Jericho to Jerusalem was the normal route taken by anyone travelling to the holy city and the temple. Jericho was the usual crossing point of the River Jordan.

EXPLORING THE WORD

The parables that Jesus tells were always designed to shock those listening. To our modern ears, the shock lies in the fact that the priest and Levite simply walked past the wounded man, but this would not have been a shock to those of Jesus' time. These men had sacred duties to perform in the temple. If the man was dead or even bleeding and they came into contact with him, they would not have been able to perform their obligations to God! The real shock to those listening in Jesus' day lies in the response of the Samaritan. Between Jews and Samaritans, there was enmity and suspicion that went back centuries. Samaritans do not behave like that! To be so moved by compassion for the wounded man that he bathes and dresses the wounds and pays for his further care would seem outrageous to the Jews. This practical application of 'love of neighbour' is taken a step further when Jesus commands that the lawyer act in the same way as the Samaritan. This too would have been a shock!

- What are some of the 'stereotyped' images we have of certain groups or peoples today?
- Explore some of the barriers that exist in our own society.
- How are we called to break down those barriers and build bridges instead?

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- Ask yourself that fundamental question: what must I do to inherit eternal life?
- Who is your neighbor? Identify those who suffer today.
- Go and do the same yourself: what does this mean in our world?
- Share an experience you may have had of being helped or attended to by someone you least expected. Perhaps you were assisted by a perfect stranger. Share your stories. Alternatively, share an experience of when you were moved by compassion and responded positively.
- Respond with generosity to someone in need this week. Give a donation to an agency that works with the poor or needy. Better still, become involved in that work.
- A verse from today's psalm is a suitable prayer this week:

*This is my prayer to you, my prayer for your favour.
In your great love answer me, O God,
with your help that never fails:
Lord, answer, for your love is kind;
in your compassion, turn towards me.*

16th Sunday in Ordinary Time Year C

GOSPEL

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Jesus came to a village, and a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. She had a sister called Mary, who sat down at the Lord's feet and listened to him speaking. Now Martha who was distracted with all the serving said, 'Lord, do you not care that my sister is leaving me to do the serving all by myself? Please tell her to help me.' But the Lord answered: 'Martha, Martha,' he said 'you worry and fret about so many things, and yet few are needed, indeed only one. It is Mary who has chosen the better part; it is not to be taken from her.'

(Luke 10:38-42)

DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

- The attitude taken by Mary in this text is one of discipleship. To sit at the feet of the Master is to be a follower or disciple. In Jesus' time, such an attitude was often only the preserve of men.
- Mary and Martha, the sisters of this text, are also mentioned in the Gospel of John. While Luke does not tell us the name of the village where they live, John does. They live in Bethany, just outside Jerusalem, with their brother, Lazarus.

EXPLORING THE WORD

On our first reading of this text, many of us would feel sympathy with Martha, who is left to do all the work. But a more careful reading of the text uncovers the real problem. Martha is ready 'to welcome Jesus into her house'. And yet she becomes so preoccupied with the fuss of getting food ready that she is failing to do exactly what she set out to do: offer welcome to the person of Jesus. Mary, on the other hand, is attentive to the words and teachings of Jesus. Who has offered the true welcome? The responses of these two women are not in opposition, but rather indicate two ways of acting that should become integrated in how we relate to others: attentive friendship and generous and practical service. The gospel of the Good Samaritan from last week shows us a model of selfless service. Here we are presented with the other side of the story: the need to also be attentive and to listen to the word of God so that we don't get caught up in activities and preoccupations that are ultimately not important.

- With which of the women in this story do you more readily identify?
- How might you cultivate the other side of yourself?
- Identify circumstances where both contemplation and action are required.

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- What causes you to 'worry and fret'? Is this a distraction from God?
- What happens when you do take the time to be still and attentive to the voice of God?
- It is often difficult in the busyness of life to pay real attention to others. Spend time in pairs reviewing the week and recalling those times when you gave undivided attention to the important people in your life. Is there something to be learnt from this exercise? If you need to, resolve to do better this week!
- Make time this week to 'sit at the feet of the Master'. This could mean reading the Scriptures or other religious literature or listening to someone who can teach you something of the life of faith.
- Use today's prayer after Communion as your prayer this week:

*Graciously be present to your people, we pray, O Lord, and lead those you have imbued with heavenly mysteries to pass from former ways to newness of life.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen*
- Alternatively, you could spend some time each day praying without words. Make yourself still and close your eyes. Fix your heart on God, who dwells within you. If you find yourself being distracted, don't worry but turn your mind back to God.

*17th Sunday in Ordinary Time Year C***GOSPEL**

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Once Jesus was in a certain place praying, and when he had finished one of his disciples said, 'Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.'

He said to them, 'Say this when you pray:

"Father, may your name be held holy,
your kingdom come;
give us each day our daily bread,
and forgive us our sins,
for we ourselves forgive each one who is in debt to us.
And do not put us to the test."

He also said to them:

'Suppose one of you has a friend and goes to him in the middle of the night to say, "My friend, lend me three loaves, because a friend of mine on his travels has just arrived at my house and I have nothing to offer him"; and the man answers from inside the house, "Do not bother me. The door is bolted now, and my children and I are in bed; I cannot get up to give it you." I tell you, if the man does not get up and give it him for friendship's sake, persistence will be enough to make him get up and give his friend all he wants.

'So I say to you: Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you. For the one who asks always receives; the one who searches always finds; the one who knocks will always have the door opened to him. What father among you would hand his son a stone when he asked for bread? Or hand him a snake instead of a fish? Or hand him a scorpion if he asked for an egg? If you then, who are evil, know how to give your children what is good, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!'

(Luke 11:1-13)

DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

- In Jesus' time, there were many teachers offering a spiritual path to their followers—a particular 'way'. Here the disciples ask Jesus to teach them his 'way' to the Father.
- The reluctance of the man in the parable to get up to help his friend may be explained if we understand the houses of the period. Animals often occupied the ground floor at night while the family spread out their sleeping mats on an overhead platform. The door was often difficult to bolt. To get up to assist, this man would have disturbed the entire family and flock.

EXPLORING THE WORD

The God of this gospel text is not a vague and distant God but one who is in an intimate relationship of love—that of a father. If ordinary parents know what is good for their children and want to give them all that is good, how much more will our Father in heaven give us what we need. Asking our Father for the things that we need (rather than the things we want) is an expression of our dependence on God. To ask is to place ourselves in a state of cooperation with God. We also have to commit ourselves to working towards that which we pray for or else prayer becomes a way of evading responsibility and we make God into some kind of Santa Claus.

- So often we abuse this privilege of asking God for the things we need. In what ways can this happen? In what ways can we turn prayer and petition into something inappropriate?
- Persistence is praised in this text. Have there been times when you have felt like giving up on your journey? What has kept you persevering?

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- Seek and you will find; ask and it will be given to you. What is it that you are searching for? Have the answers been found yet?
- What would you ask God for at this point in your journey?
- Have you ever had to refuse a request for help that was made of you? Why? What were the circumstances? How did you feel? Did it alter your relationship with the petitioner? Do you regret that decision? Share your stories.
- Live out the Our Father: honour God, give thanks for your daily bread and forgive others who wrong you.
- Learn the Lord's Prayer by heart if you do not already know it. Pray it often and carefully this week. Be attentive to each petition as you pray.

18th Sunday in Ordinary Time Year C

GOSPEL

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A man in the crowd said to Jesus, 'Master, tell my brother to give me a share of our inheritance.' 'My friend,' he replied, 'who appointed me your judge, or the arbitrator of your claims?' Then he said to them, 'Watch, and be on your guard against avarice of any kind, for a man's life is not made secure by what he owns, even when he has more than he needs.'

Then he told them a parable: 'There was once a rich man who, having had a good harvest from his land, thought to himself, "What am I to do? I have not enough room to store my crops." Then he said, "This is what I will do: I will pull down my barns and build bigger ones, and store all my grain and my goods in them, and I will say to my soul: My soul, you have plenty of good things laid by for many years to come; take things easy, eat, drink, have a good time." But God said to him, "Fool! This very night the demand will be made for your soul; and this hoard of yours, whose will it be then?" So it is when a man stores up treasure for himself in place of making himself rich in the sight of God.'

(Luke 12:13-21)

DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

- According to the law of Israel, if a person had more than they needed, there was a requirement to share the excess with those who did not have enough. The goods of the earth belong to all.
- The Acts of the Apostles indicates that the early church members shared their wealth so that each would have what they needed (Acts 2:44-45).
- St John Chrysostom wrote, '*Not to enable the poor to share in our goods is to steal from them and deprive them of life. The goods we possess are not ours but theirs.*'
- One of the major themes of Luke's Gospel is the right use of wealth and money.

EXPLORING THE WORD

Jesus finds himself in a situation where he is asked to render judgment on a claim made by one brother against another. In a sense, this is a recognition of Jesus' authority because a rabbi was expected to be able to make judgments on all facets of law. According to the law, the firstborn son inherited a double portion of his father's inheritance—that is, twice as much as that received by each of his brothers (Deuteronomy 21:17).

Perhaps this man's brother was not keeping the law. But Jesus refuses to be drawn into such a debate because this is not what his mission is about. He has come to establish a new situation, where women and men are drawn into God's reign. The parable of the unwise man makes the point. A person's life is not made secure by what they own. Better instead to be storing up riches in heaven than in the here and now.

- Discuss these words of Dom Helder Camara:
I used to think when I was a child that Christ might have been exaggerating when he warned about the danger of wealth. Today I know better. I know how very hard it is to be rich and still keep the milk of human kindness. Money has a dangerous way of putting scales on one's eyes, a dangerous way of freezing people's hands, eyes, lips and hearts.
- There are also many examples of wealthy people who have undertaken extensive works of philanthropy. Explore some of those. Why do you think some people act in this way?

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- How important is the acquisition of material wealth to you? Does it distract you from what is really important?
- What do you need to do better to make yourself 'rich in the eyes of God'?
- We so often hear of wealthy people who do not seem able to find happiness despite their wealth. Who are some of those and what has befallen them? Have you ever experienced a time when material comfort was no buffer against suffering? Have you ever experienced great happiness in spite of not having a lot of material wealth? Share your reflections.
- Approach this teaching two ways this week: reflect on the attitudes and values you need to cultivate to be rich in the sight of God; share some of your excess wealth with those in need.
- Use today's gospel acclamation this week. Reflect each day on this saying of Jesus. What does it mean to be 'poor in spirit'?

*Happy the poor in spirit;
the kingdom of heaven is theirs!*

*19th Sunday in Ordinary Time Year C***GOSPEL**

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Jesus said to his disciples: 'There is no need to be afraid, little flock, for it has pleased your Father to give you the kingdom.

'Sell your possessions and give alms. Get yourselves purses that do not wear out, treasure that will not fail you, in heaven where no thief can reach it and no moth destroy it. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

'See that you are dressed for action and have your lamps lit. Be like men waiting for their master to return from the wedding feast, ready to open the door as soon as he comes and knocks. Happy those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes. I tell you solemnly, he will put on an apron, sit them down at table and wait on them. It may be in the second watch he comes, or in the third, but happy those servants if he finds them ready. You may be quite sure of this, that if the householder had known at what hour the burglar would come, he would not have let anyone break through the wall of his house. You too must stand ready, because the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.'

Peter said, 'Lord, do you mean this parable for us, or for everyone?' The Lord replied, 'What sort of steward, then, is faithful and wise enough for the master to place him over his household to give them their allowance of food at the proper time? Happy that servant if his master's arrival finds him at this employment. I tell you truly, he will place him over everything he owns. But as for the servant who says to himself, "My master is taking his time coming," and sets about beating the menservants and the maids, and eating and drinking and getting drunk, his master will come on a day he does not expect and at an hour he does not know. The master will cut him off and send him to the same fate as the unfaithful.

The servant who knows what his master wants, but has not even started to carry out those wishes, will receive very many strokes of the lash. The one who did not know, but deserves to be beaten for what he has done, will receive fewer strokes. When a man has had a great deal given him, a great deal will be demanded of him; when a man has had a great deal given him on trust, even more will be expected of him.'

(Luke 12:32-48)

DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

- According to Roman custom, a day was reckoned from midnight to midnight, and the night divided into four watches. Jewish custom was to reckon a day from sunset to sunset, and the night was divided into three watches.

- A Jewish wedding consisted of the groom going in procession to the home of the bride, where the wedding took place and a feast was held. After this celebration, the groom returned to his own home with his bride to begin their life together.

EXPLORING THE WORD

The longer version of today's gospel opens with a sublime promise: '*There is no need to be afraid, little flock, for it has pleased your Father to give you the kingdom.*' There is such intimacy in these words, not only in the relationship of Jesus to his 'little flock' but in the promise of the kingdom given by the Father. This intimate relationship and promise do not take away our responsibility, however. On the contrary! Our response to this promise—whether we put our faith in it or whether we doubt it—will determine our response to the demands that Jesus makes of us: detachment from possessions, readiness for the Lord when he comes, and integrity of life. To us has been given a great deal, and a great deal will be demanded in return. We must be attentive to the requirements of the Master.

- What are some of the good things that you have been given in your life?
- In what concrete ways can you make yourself ready for the Lord?

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- Do you know what the Master wants but have difficulty carrying it out?
- Recall an occasion when you were found to be completely unprepared. What were the circumstances? What did you do? What was the outcome? Share your stories.
- At the end of each day, take some time to reflect on how well you lived the Gospel call. Resolve to be more attentive to preparing for what is to come, if that is necessary.
- Use an adaptation of a verse from today's psalm as your prayer this week:

*My soul is waiting for the Lord.
The Lord is my help and my shield.
May your love be upon me, O Lord,
as I place all my hope in you.*

20th Sunday in Ordinary Time Year C

GOSPEL

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Jesus said to his disciples: 'I have come to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were blazing already! There is a baptism I must still receive, and how great is my distress till it is over!

'Do you suppose that I am here to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. For from now on a household of five will be divided: three against two and two against three; the father divided against the son, son against father, mother against daughter, daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law, daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.'

(Luke 12:49-53)

DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

- This text paints a different picture from the gentle, compassionate Jesus of popular belief. It is just one example of Jesus displaying human emotion and passion for his cause.
- One of the symbols of the Holy Spirit is fire. At Pentecost, the Spirit came in the form of tongues of flame to the disciples in the upper room.
- The baptism that Jesus is still to experience is his death, his 'baptism of fire' or the persecution he undergoes because of his commitment to doing the will of the Father.

EXPLORING THE WORD

This is a difficult text because it challenges our notions of what Jesus was like. The imagery that Jesus uses has a long history in the Old Testament, where we frequently read of people passing through the fire of testing and judgment. John had prophesied about the one who would come bringing a baptism of fire and judgment, but it had never occurred to him that the one who was to come may be the first to undergo that baptism! This rare glimpse into the mind of Jesus reveals an agonising mixture of impatience and reluctance. Convinced that God's redemptive plan requires him to bring upon earth the fiery baptism of judgment—not by inflicting it upon others but by undergoing it himself—he feels handicapped and thwarted until this mission can be accomplished.

The reference to households being divided may well be directed at Luke's community itself. Faith in Jesus could well be the cause of division in families. While predominantly Gentile, Luke's community did have Jewish Christians. Some Jews failed to recognise Jesus as the Messiah, and in the late first century, Jews expelled Christians from their synagogues. To persist in Christian belief would have caused great division.

- What causes you to have 'a fire in your belly'? What do you get passionate about?
- How do you deal with people who do not understand or accept your faith in Jesus?

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- Has your coming to faith in Christ caused division or awkwardness in your family or with friends?
- Who are the people you know who have 'a fire in their belly' or great passion about their beliefs?
- Have you experienced a rift within your family? What was the cause of the division and hurt? How was this overcome? Or does it still need to be overcome? How can you help heal the pain and division? Share your stories.
- Reflect this week on the things that divide your family or friends. Try to overcome those divisions and work to re-establish harmony.
- Use today's collect as your prayer this week:

O God, who have prepared for those who love you good things which no eye can see, fill our hearts, we pray, with the warmth of your love, so that, loving you in all things and above all things, we may attain your promises, which surpass every human desire.

21st Sunday in Ordinary Time Year C

GOSPEL

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Through towns and villages Jesus went teaching, making his way to Jerusalem. Someone said to him, ‘Sir, will there be only a few saved?’ He said to them, ‘Try your best to enter by the narrow door, because, I tell you, many will try to enter and will not succeed.

‘Once the master of the house has got up and locked the door, you may find yourself knocking on the door, saying, “Lord, open to us” but he will answer, “I do not know where you come from.” Then you will find yourself saying, “We once ate and drank in your company; you taught in our streets” but he will reply, “I do not know where you come from. Away from me, all you wicked men!”

‘Then there will be weeping and grinding of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves turned outside. And men from east and west, from north and south, will come to take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God.

‘Yes, there are those now last who will be first, and those now first who will be last.’

(Luke 13:22–30)

DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

- The community for whom Luke wrote his Gospel was made up largely of Gentiles (non-Jews). They are the ones from the ‘east and west, north and south’ who have come to a place at the feast because they came to faith in the risen Christ.
- This is a text about the universality of God’s love and the redemption God offers. It is not limited to a particular group or nationality. It is open to all who respond positively.
- Some Christian denominations have a very exclusive view of salvation and believe that only ‘a few’ will be saved. This is not the case with the Catholic Church, which sees the salvation offered by Christ as very inclusive—open to all who come to faith.
- In John’s Gospel, Jesus refers to himself as the ‘gate’ through which people must come to be saved.

EXPLORING THE WORD

As the chosen people, the Jews believed they were in a privileged relationship with God. In this text, Jesus shatters some illusions. There is no privileged or exclusive entry to the kingdom of God by those who see themselves as ‘religious insiders’. This is equally directed to the disciples. It is not enough that they have shared a meal with Jesus or have heard his word. They must respond to that word and act on it. They must enter by the narrow door, and this requires great effort, or else those who thought themselves ‘inside’ could find themselves ‘outside’, while others, ‘the outsiders’, will find their way ahead of them. This radical reversal of values and expectations would have shocked those who thought they were on the ‘inside’.

- Getting through a narrow door is difficult, and we may feel tempted to go around instead. Is there a narrow door in your life that you must go through rather than go around?
- What does it mean that those who are first will later be last?

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- What does it mean to ‘enter by the narrow door’?
- Do you make the most of the opportunities you have to be close to Jesus through prayer, service and living simply?
- Speak to each other of experiences you may have had of being an ‘insider’ or an ‘outsider’.
- Who are the people in our society who are treated as ‘outsiders’?
- Have you ever defended an ‘outsider’? What was the result?
- Make choices for the ‘narrow door’ this week. Don’t take the easy option, which requires so little of us. The more difficult option is often the one that brings greater reward. Go out of your way to be of service to others. Make extra time for prayer and reflection. Put yourself last and others first.
- This week’s gospel acclamation from the Gospel of John makes a wonderful prayer:

*I am the way, the truth and the life, says the Lord;
no one comes to the Father, except through me.*

22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time Year C

GOSPEL

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On a sabbath day Jesus had gone for a meal to the house of one of the leading Pharisees; and they watched him closely. He then told the guests a parable, because he had noticed how they picked the places of honour. He said this, ‘When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take your seat in the place of honour. A more distinguished person than you may have been invited, and the person who invited you both may come and say, “Give up your place to this man.” And then, to your embarrassment, you would have to go and take the lowest place. No; when you are a guest, make your way to the lowest place and sit there, so that, when your host comes, he may say, “My friend, move up higher.” In that way, everyone with you at the table will see you honoured. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the man who humbles himself will be exalted.’

Then he said to his host, ‘When you give a lunch or a dinner, do not ask your friends, brothers, relations or rich neighbours, for fear they repay your courtesy by inviting you in return. No; when you have a party, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind; that they cannot pay you back means that you are fortunate, because repayment will be made to you when the virtuous rise again.’

(Luke 14:1,7-14)

DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

- In Scripture, as we have noted before, the wedding feast—a time of joyous celebration and abundance—is one of the traditional images of the kingdom of God.
- At the time of Jesus, society was organised along strictly hierarchical lines. People were very sensitive to their status in society and how they were treated.
- Pharisees are one among a number of groups within Jewish society. They were especially observant of the law and were influential in society.

EXPLORING THE WORD

In Luke’s Gospel, Jesus is often depicted as sharing meals with people who were not considered at that time and in that culture to be appropriate table companions: publicans, tax collectors, sinners and women of dubious reputation. In this meal, Jesus reveals more of the radical reversal that is characteristic of God’s way. He challenges the way the Pharisees see their own standing in society as people of status, urging them instead to take the more humble positions at table and to allow the host, or God, to choose those who should be exalted. He also shatters the Pharisees’ idea of table fellowship by urging them to share their festive table with those who are the least important or the outcasts of society. The way to God cannot be organised according to human priority! It is in the ultimate humiliation of crucifixion that Jesus is exalted in resurrection and ascension.

- What challenges does this text offer to society today or to the church, which sometimes excludes people of ‘inappropriate status’ from the Eucharistic table?
- Who are treated as the ‘least important’ in our modern world? Who are treated as the ‘most important’ in our modern world? Do we need to offer a critique of this?

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- Do you appreciate all things while expecting nothing?
- What does honour mean to you?
- How do you repay kindnesses done to you?
- Share a story (and enjoy the humour of hindsight) about an embarrassing moment you have experienced!
- Offer table fellowship and share a meal with someone who would appreciate your company this week.
- Use today’s collect as your prayer this week:

*God of might, giver of every good gift,
put into our hearts the love of your name,
so that, by deepening our sense of reverence,
you may nurture in us what is good
and, by your watchful care, keep safe what you have nurtured.*

