

## **Friday (Julian of Norwich)**

As truly as God is our father, so just as truly is he our mother. In our father, God Almighty, we have our being; in our merciful mother we are remade and restored. Our fragmented lives are knit together and made perfect. God wills that we should understand that if we know him and love him and reverently fear him, we shall be at rest and be at peace. And we shall rejoice in all that he does. He did not say 'You shall not be tempest-tossed, you shall not be work-weary, you shall not be discomforted.' But he said, 'You shall not be overcome.' God wants us to heed these words so that we shall be always strong in trust, both in sorrow and joy.

## **Scripture (Micah 4:1-4)**

***In the days to come, the mountains of the Temple of God will tower above the mountains, rise higher than the hills. Then peoples will stream to it, then many nations will come and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of Yahweh, to the Temple of the God of Jacob, so that he may teach us his ways and we may walk in his paths. 'He will judge between many peoples and arbitrate between mighty nations. They will hammer their swords into ploughshares, their spears into sickles. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, there will be no more training for war.***

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14th Week of Ordinary Time

## ***Go in peace to love and serve joyfully***

*The gentle, caring image of a baby being fed by its mother (Isaiah 66:10-14) is given to faithful people whose lives are pretty miserable, scorned and rejected by those in power who have long since turned their back on God. God isn't making a 'there, there', gentle promise of a carefree existence where he does everything for them; in the context of Isaiah 65 – 66, the image is nothing less than the promise of a new order, brought about by bringing down of the powerful, and the establishment of a 'new Jerusalem, in which people will live joyfully and securely in harmony with God's will, symbolised by the restoration of harmony in nature: 'the wolf and the lamb will live together', (65:25). When Jesus says he is sending out his followers 'like lambs among wolves', (Luke 10:1-20) he isn't just saying they will be defenceless: he is defining their mission of preparing people for the new Covenant. Rather than raining down fire as in the Old Testament, it is through Jesus that God will fulfil his plans, and the followers of Jesus are key in preparing people – they are sent to the villages that Jesus will visit. In the light of the instructions to go immediately, as they are, (no sandals, haversack or money, my first response to this Gospel is, 'Would I go?'. Part of me thinks, 'I'm not an apostle. I'm not called to leave everything and go out on the road', but Luke's version doesn't allow me this excuse to distance myself from the call, to leave the work to others. Luke has 72 followers being sent out in pairs. This symbolises the mission to gentiles as well as Jews, but the point is that the 72 must have contained people who had responded to the call to follow Jesus, but who weren't 'specialists', (apostles). As 'lambs among wolves', they were already living as members of God's Kingdom, relying on God rather than on human resources, (the lesson Jesus had learned in the desert.). The disciples had the authority of Jesus and were to proclaim the Kingdom in word and deed. 'Even devils submit to us when we use your name' symbolises that the reign of God had begun. I'm not sure I would be confident about curing people, or performing exorcisms, but as the risen Jesus is present, we have the authority to overcome evil and my role (by virtue of Baptism) is to prepare people to be open to that presence – I can't leave it to 'specialists'. Nor can I use the excuse that 'people don't want to know about religion' as the 72 would meet acceptance or rejection, but their role was to announce the Kingdom, whether people wanted to hear or not, and the same applies to us, as the commission at the end of Mass, 'proclaim the Gospel with your life', makes clear. There is a second, equally challenging, way of reading the Gospel. If I imagine the scene of two dusty, penniless travellers arriving in my town, would I welcome them and offer hospitality? I could probably compete with most people in giving very reasonable excuses, but the issue isn't just allowing people in; it's whether I would be open to the message they bring. Many good, God-fearing Jews rejected Jesus, and his messengers – the people of Chorazin and Bethsaida witnessed miracles and heard Jesus, but rejected him, so I have to worry about whether I would listen to unlikely sources coming with something radically new, or would I say, 'these can't be God's messengers – they're too...' (fill in your own prejudices and certainties about who are God's worthies!). Wherever I put myself in this Gospel, it challenges me to both listen to God's messages as they come in daily life, and to be a messenger in the same place. Lambs should be noticeable among the wolves! Martin Bennett*

## **Monday (Martin Luther King)**

Human life through the centuries has been characterised by our persistent efforts to remove evil from the earth. But the problem that has always hampered us has been our inability to conquer evil by our own power. This recalls an event immediately after Christ's transfiguration. Jesus found his disciples who had desperately tried to cure a small boy, but the more they laboured to heal him, the more they realized their own inadequacies and the pathetic limitations of their power. When they were about to give up in despair, the Lord appeared on the scene and sent the demon from the boy. Jesus told the disciples their failure was due to their unbelief. They had tried to do by themselves what could be done only after they had so surrendered their natures to God that his strength flowed freely through them.

### **Scripture (Isaiah 66:8-10, 12-13)**

*Who ever heard of such a thing, who ever saw anything like this? Can a country be born in a day? Can a nation be brought forth all at once? For Zion, scarcely in labour, has brought forth her children! Shall I, who bring to birth, close the womb, says your God. Rejoice with Jerusalem, be glad, all who love her! For the Lord says this: Look, I am going to send peace flowing over her like a river, like a stream in spate, the glory of the nations. You will be suckled, carried on her hip and fondled in her lap. As a mother comforts a child, so I shall comfort you.*

## **Tuesday (from 'Becoming the Gospel, M. J. Gorman)**

Paul's sentiments expressed [are that] God has graced you with the privilege not only of benefitting from Christ but also of participating in Christ.. Some people will dislike those who stop going to normal social functions that incorporate devotion to pagan deities, including the emperor. Some will dislike those who treat their slaves – or their masters – with a newfound respect. Some will dislike those who show a very un-Roman concern for the weakest members of a community. And so on. Although Paul did not believe that all members of the church should become travelling missionaries or public preachers, he firmly believed that they should all become the gospel.

### **Scripture (1 Thessalonians 5:5,9-10,14-18)**

*You are all children of the light and children of the day: we do not belong to the night or to darkness. God destined us, not for his retribution, but to win salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that, awake or asleep, we should still live united to him. Be at peace among yourselves. We urge you to admonish those who are undisciplined, encourage the apprehensive, support the weak and be patient with everyone. Always be joyful; pray constantly; and for all things, give thanks;*

## **Wednesday (Meister Eckhart)**

We should be able to recognise true and perfect love by whether or not someone has great hope and confidence in God, for there is nothing that testifies more clearly to perfect love than trust. We will truly find in God everything that we dare hope for in him, and a thousand times more. Just as we can never love God too much, neither can we have too much trust in him. Nothing we may do can ever be so appropriate as fully trusting in God. He has never ceased to work great things through those who have great trust in him. Love possesses not only trust but also true knowledge and unshakeable certainty.

### **Scripture (Luke 10:3, 8-9, 16-17)**

*Jesus said to the seventy-two he had appointed to go before him to all the towns and places he would visit, 'Start off now, but look, I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. Take no purse with you, no haversack, no sandals. Whenever a town makes you welcome, eat what is put before you. Cure those in it who are sick and say, "The kingdom of God is very near to you." Anyone who listens to you listens to me; anyone who rejects you rejects me.' The seventy-two came back rejoicing. 'Lord,' they said, 'even the devils submit to us when we use your name.'*

## **Thursday (Fr. Austin Smith, CP)**

At the very heart of the mission of Jesus, his casting out of evil in his world, both in cosmic and personal terms, was his own total self-giving. God became man, existed with, acted with and suffered with his world, to underline, on the one hand, the spiritual emptiness if such self-giving is not at the heart of the building up of the kingdom and to exemplify, on the other, the wonder of a vision which has this self-giving as its basic demand. Indeed, it is the root of all hopefulness. It is a statement which articulates the belief that "things can be better, that things can be different." In a despairing world this may appear totally unreal, but in a hopeful world it is the cry of authentic progress.

### **Scripture (Ezekiel 34:11-12, 15-16)**

*"For the Lord says this: Look, I myself shall take care of my flock and look after it. As a shepherd looks after his flock when he is with his scattered sheep, so shall I look after my sheep. I shall rescue them from wherever they have been scattered on the days of cloud and darkness. I myself shall pasture my sheep, I myself shall give them rest – declares the Lord. I shall look for the lost one, bring back the stray, bandage the injured and make the sick strong. I shall watch over the fat and healthy. I shall be a true shepherd to them."*