

## The Word of God This Week

Set time aside each day this week with other members of your household, with other members of your parish or alone to listen to and reflect on the living Word of God. Use these passages from the Lectionary that are assigned for Liturgy this week. Reflect on how the Lord is inviting you to a deeper union with him.

### TODAY

**Genesis 18:20–32**  
**Colossians 2:12–14**  
**Luke 11:1–13**

### MONDAY

**Matthew 13:31–35**  
*"The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed. . . ."*

### TUESDAY

**Matthew 13:36–43**  
*"The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man"*

### WEDNESDAY

**Matthew 13:44–46**  
*"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. . . ."*

### THURSDAY\*

**John 11:19–27**  
*"Your brother will rise again."*

### FRIDAY

**Matthew 13:54–58**  
*"Prophets are not without honor except in their own country and in their own house."*

### SATURDAY

**Matthew 14:1–12**  
*" . . . these powers are at work in him."*

\*Alternate readings exist for this day.

## Persistence

In *Outliers, The Story of Success*, Malcolm Gladwell tells of men and women who do extraordinary things, and he explains what makes these people so accomplished.

Gladwell names persistence, the willingness to stick to a task until it is mastered, as a key to success. No matter what the area of expertise—art, computers, writing—the key to mastery seems to be the same: the willingness to

practice continually—as many as 12

hours a day.

According to Gladwell, it takes 10,000 hours of practice (about 10 years of effort) to become truly proficient in any subject.



This sounds like what Jesus had in mind when he taught his disciples to pray in Luke 11:1–13. Be persistent! Pray constantly until God gives you what you need. "I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, at least because of his persistence he will get up and give him whatever he needs" (Luke 11:8).

In this passage we also have the prayer Jesus taught his disciples, the one we call the Lord's Prayer. In this prayer Jesus tells us to call God "Father," to offer praise to God, and then to ask for what we need. But it is in the following passages that Jesus emphasizes his point. We are to pray without ceasing. We are to continuously ask, seek, and knock if we are ever to receive, find, or have the door opened to us.

Gladwell shows that success comes from dedication and hours of practice. Jesus tells us the same is true for prayer.



## The Faith of the Church

Prayer centers on God and involves emptying ourselves so that God might fill us. Forms of spirituality that focus on individual accomplishments and a false inner peace are not genuine Christian prayer. Genuine prayer attends to God, seeks to do God's will, and tries to serve others (Cf. *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*, p. 477).



## Questions of the Week

Today's Gospel encourages us to approach God with confidence, to address God affectionately as "Father," and to be persistent with prayer until those prayers are answered.

### Adults

*What are my deepest needs? What keeps me from bringing these needs to God and asking God for help in meeting these needs?*

### Children

*What can I do each day to improve the frequency and the quality of my prayer?*

Visit us at [www.FaithFirst.com](http://www.FaithFirst.com) (click on "Faith First for Families," click on "Gospel Reflections") and share today's Gospel reading as a family.

# Responding to God's Word . . .

The Church identifies five different forms of prayer: (1) Adoration—the act of glorifying God; (2) Petition—the act of recognizing our dependence on God for all that we need; (3) Intercession—the act of praying for the needs of others; (4) Thanksgiving—the act of showing gratitude to God; and (5) Praise—the act in exalting in God's goodness and grandeur.

There are also different expressions of prayer. Sometimes our prayers are vocal. When we pray the Lord's Prayer or say the rosary, we usually say these prayers aloud. Singing can also be a form of vocal prayer. Saint Augustine

even wrote that people who sing pray twice!

Sometimes our prayers are meditative: we quietly ponder the will of God for our lives using only our minds. We are aided in our meditations by Scripture, sacred images—such as icons and crosses—and even by the Holy Eucharist.

We may also pray through contemplation where we rest attentively with the Lord, simply enjoying being in God's presence. But we can also pray with dance or gestures or through the work we do when it is done for God. How we pray isn't important; *that* we pray is essential.

## SUGGESTIONS

*Use one of these suggestions or one of your own to respond to God's Word this week.*

**In the home.** Set aside a place in your home for prayer. Decorate this prayer space and make it special, and pray in this space each day.

**In the workplace or in school.** Begin each day by taking a moment to pray using the Scriptures of the day. You can find these at [www.usccb.org/nab/](http://www.usccb.org/nab/).

**In the community.** Give public witness to the importance of prayer by carrying a rosary or prayer card with you. Do not be embarrassed to use these in public.



## Meditation Moment

Saint Ignatius and some companions were on an extended journey. They followed a schedule that involved stopping at regular intervals to pray together. A porter, who had been engaged to help transport their baggage, observed this ritual day after day. He saw the impact it had on them and, as the days stretched on, he began to desire to pray with them. When the saint learned of this desire, he invited the porter to join them. It also dawned on Saint Ignatius that the porter's desire—day after day—to pray with them was, in itself, a splendid prayer.

### For reflection . . .

WHAT IS ONE HELPFUL THING I'VE LEARNED ABOUT PRAYER?

CERTAIN THOUGHTS ARE PRAYERS.

THERE ARE MOMENTS WHEN, WHATEVER THE ATTITUDE OF THE BODY, THE SOUL IS ON ITS KNEES.

VICTOR HUGO

ADAPTED FROM ACTION BY MARK LINK, SJ

## We Sing Your Praises

God of creation,  
maker of all that is or will be,  
we sing your praises for your  
wonderful gifts. Praise you for the gift  
of life, praise you for the gift of love,  
praise you for the gift of faith. Praise you  
for the air we breathe, the water we drink,  
and the food we eat. Praise you for our  
friends and family, and for those we  
do not know. Praise you for those  
we will meet. Praise you for the  
opportunity to participate in  
creation, to make things  
with our minds and  
hands. Amen.

*Carry this thought in your heart as a guide for your faith journey this week.*

If your children ask for an egg, which of you will give them a scorpion instead? If you know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more generous will the heavenly Father be to those who ask him?

Based on Luke 11:11-13

## Profile in Faith

### Saint Martha

The feast of Saint Martha is celebrated on July 29. She was the sister of Mary and Lazarus, and a close friend of Jesus. Martha is the one who worked while her sister Mary sat at Jesus' feet and listened. Martha was also unafraid to ask Jesus for what she wanted—for him to raise Lazarus from the dead.

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† Most Reverend Kevin J. Farrell, DD, Bishop of Dallas

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