

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

Sirach 3:17–18, 20, 28–29
Hebrews 12:18–19, 22–24A
Luke 14:1, 7–14

MONDAY

Luke 4:1--30
"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me . . ."

TUESDAY

Luke 4:31–37
"Be silent, and come out of him!"

WEDNESDAY

Luke 4:38–44
" . . . for I was sent for this purpose."

THURSDAY

Luke 5:1–11
" . . . from now on you will be catching people."

FRIDAY

Luke 5:33–39
"And no one puts new wine into old wineskins."

SATURDAY

Luke 6:1–5
"The Son of Man is lord of the sabbath."

All Are Welcome

In the song *All Are Welcome* (GIA), the composer Marty Haugen presents an idyllic community where people are safe and secure and supported in their search for God. The chorus of the song announces "All are welcome in this place."

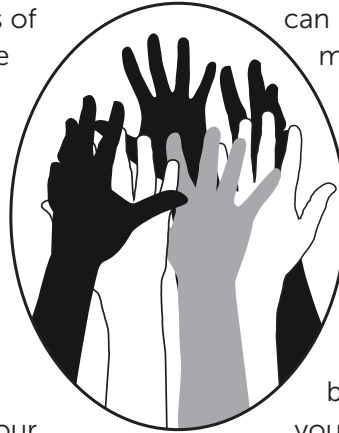
That is a wonderful sentiment and a goal to strive for, but it is also a reality that our parish communities sometimes struggle to live up to. It is important to reflect on how we might make some people feel unwelcome in our churches because of barriers—physical and symbolic—that actually may keep them out.

Perhaps people feel unwelcome because they do not have nice clothes to wear and feel out of place among the richly dressed. Perhaps they are deaf or speak a foreign language and

cannot understand a word that is said or written. Perhaps stairs prevent entry into the building for those who cannot walk. Whether intended or not, such barriers can unquestionably send the message to certain people that they are not welcome.

Jesus addresses just this issue in Luke 14:13–14 when he said: ". . . when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

This reading provides a good opportunity for us to examine our consciences by asking, In what ways might I exclude some people from my life? How might my attitudes and actions send the message to some that they are not welcomed?



The Faith of the Church

We are called by the Fifth Commandment to foster in ourselves and in others a spirit of wholeness: physical, spiritual, emotional, and social. The commandment calls for us to create a culture where all life is respected. We are to give witness to God's loving presence to all of creation and to proclaim the dignity of every person from conception to natural death (Cf. *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*, pp 389–390).



Questions of the Week

In today's Gospel Jesus tells us that those who exalt themselves will be humbled and those who humble themselves will be exalted. Take time this week to examine your conscience for the sin of pride.

Adults

In what ways do I practice the virtue of humility? How might I be more humble in the coming week?

Children

What can I do to make others feel valued and welcome during the coming week?

Visit us at 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 . . .

In the Gospel passage found in Luke 14, Jesus teaches a message of inclusion. The people to be included, according to Jesus, are those who are normally excluded: the poor, the infirm, and the downtrodden. This mirrors the message found in Matthew 25:40: ". . . just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me."

There is a story about Saint Francis of Assisi and a leper. Francis was willing to give away all of his possessions, but struggled with giving freely of himself. Francis had to physically embrace the leper

before he was free to give himself fully to God.

Who are the people in our lives who we have trouble accepting? Who do we not want to be seen with or spend time with? Who is the "leper" that we need to embrace in order to fully embrace God?

These are the people that Jesus calls us to invite to our table. These are the people Jesus calls us to recognize as our equals. These are the people of whom Jesus says, "What you do to them, you do to me."

Let us think about and pray for the people who might be excluded from our table.

SUGGESTIONS

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

In the home. Determine what your family can do to care for people in need. Be generous with your time, treasure, and talent on their behalf.

In the workplace or in school. Be friendly with those people with whom you normally don't sit, speak, or play. See the person of Jesus in them.

In the community. Be generous with those who are poor. Be patient with those who normally test your patience. Be kind to everyone you meet.



Meditation Moment

Two senior citizens were talking about the wisdom and the humility that come with age. One volunteered, "When I was young, I was very proud. My pride caused me more worry! I was constantly worrying about what other people thought about me. When I got older and wiser, I said to myself, 'I don't care what they think about me.' And now that I'm even older and wiser, I realize they weren't thinking about me at all."

For reflection . . .

WHAT KEEPS ME FROM LETTING OTHERS SEE ME AS I TRULY AM? WHO IS ONE PERSON WHO SEES ME AS I TRULY AM?

WE GAIN MORE BY LETTING OUR REAL SELVES TO BE SEEN, THAN BY PRETENDING TO BE WHAT WE ARE NOT.

FRANCOIS DE LA ROCHEFOUCAULD

ADAPTED FROM ACTION BY MARK LINK, SJ

I Shall Not Be Afraid

Lord, God.

With you by my side,

I shall not be afraid. When

I reach out to care for the poor and hungry, I shall not be afraid.

When I give comfort to the afflicted and visit those in jail, I shall not be afraid.

When I work to take care of people with special needs, I shall not be afraid.

When I am asked to give all that

I am and have for others,

give me the strength

so that I shall not

be afraid. Amen.

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

People who follow Christ make a conscious decision to do so, no matter the cost. A disciple will respect all human life, protecting it from harm and doing everything possible to enhance this gift so that life may flourish (Cf. *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*, p. 451).

Profile in Faith

The National Catholic Partnership on Disabilities (NCPD) was founded in 1982.

It works collaboratively to ensure meaningful participation and full inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of the life of the Church and society.

You can learn more about NCPD and its effective ministry at www.ncpd.org.

NIHIL OBSTAT

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IMPRIMATUR

† Most Reverend Kevin J. Farrell, DD, Bishop of Dallas
April 15, 2010

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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