

What a shock, then, when Jesus starts preaching that these people of the soil among whom he chooses to live as a wandering teacher, homeless and dependent, these people are precisely those who have direct access to God. He will make this absolutely clear, saying in effect: "Blessed are the destitute for theirs is the kingdom of God." If the learned want access to the living presence of God then they must, like Jesus, be alongside those who are destitute and the people of the land.



## PEACE AND REST

It is above all these people who recognise the divine voice in Jesus and flock to listen to him. And it is among them that he is able to offer the full reconciling and healing grace of God. He tells parables of wedding feasts where the invited, wealthy and privileged can't be bothered to be in the palace of the king and so he sends his servants out to bring the tramps and foreigners from the backstreets in to celebrate. They will find a true peace and rest in the kingdom of God denied them by the religious authorities and the secular state.

In this little gem of a prayer we are taken into the heart of Jesus' life and ministry and we can see the basis of all that will be developed in our own time in the Church's Social Teaching and in the radical call of Pope Francis to be a poor Church for those who are poor. In doing so we encounter the mercy of God anew, and the call to be a holy people in the midst of our real world. In Jesus' ministry it is clear that it is such lived holiness that is truly contagious.

## Mass text

### ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

**Your merciful love, O God,  
we have received in the midst of your temple.  
Your praise, O God, like your name,  
reaches the ends of the earth;  
your right hand is filled with saving justice.**

### FIRST READING Zechariah 9:9-10

### PSALM Psalm 144

**RESPONSE I will bless your name for ever,  
O God my King.**

Or **Alleluia!**

- I will give you glory, O God my King,  
I will bless your name for ever.  
I will bless you day after day  
and praise your name for ever. **R.**
- The Lord is kind and full of compassion,  
slow to anger, abounding in love.  
How good is the Lord to all,  
compassionate to all his creatures. **R.**
- All your creatures shall thank you, O Lord,  
and your friends shall repeat their blessing.  
They shall speak of the glory of your reign  
and declare your might, O God. **R.**

- The Lord is faithful in all his words  
and loving in all his deeds.  
The Lord supports all who fall  
and raises all who are bowed down. **R.**

### SECOND READING Romans 8:9. 11-13

### GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

**Alleluia, alleluia!  
Blessed are you, Father, Lord of heaven and  
earth,  
for revealing the mysteries of the kingdom to  
mere children.  
Alleluia!**

### GOSPEL Matthew 11:25-30

### COMMUNION ANTIPHON

**Come to me, all who labour and are burdened,  
and I will refresh you, says the Lord.**

### Next Sunday's Readings:

Isaiah 55:10-11  
Romans 8:18-23  
Matthew 13:1-23

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# SUNDAY BULLETIN

## PEOPLE OF THE SOIL

We don't have many examples of Jesus' own personal prayers but if we compare those we have to the other Jewish prayer traditions of his time a distinctive and personal voice emerges.

Prayerfully pondering the first five books of the Hebrew scriptures was the basis of prayer for the elite aristocratic Sadducees. Meanwhile the new renewal movement, the Pharisees, faced with the oppression of the pagan Romans, turned to spirituality. These were lay men and women who deliberately set out to turn their homes into the space of holiness that the Temple was meant to be. They applied all the rules and regulations of the Temple priesthood to the daily lives of their families. The ordinary people admired them even though they couldn't follow the 300-plus laws and regulations which governed every hour of every day of their holy and ritually pure lives. Their holiness separated them from their less holy neighbours among whom they might be contaminated.

Another group, the Essenes, were so scandalised by the corruption of the Temple that they moved out into the desert with their leader, a former high priest, to form radical reform communities preparing for the day when God's Messiah would come and they would be ready to join his forces and re-establish a renewed and truly holy Temple. The prayer demands of their members were even more excessive than the Pharisees. Only the purest of Israel could belong to their movement.

So where did his leave the ordinary mass of people who struggled day by day to make a living from the land or the sea? Taxation under the Romans was heavy, and the Temple also levied a tax on every Jewish working man regardless of whether you lived in Jerusalem in southern Judaea or up in the Galilean hills or in Samaria. These people were often referred to by the holy ones as "the people of the soil". It is easy then for the "people of the soil" to be seen as the "dirty", or soiled, people and an easy slip to "sinners". And if you lived among sinners it was almost inevitable that their contagion would spread. So the "people of the soil" were not regarded as people of prayer.

## Catching the kingdom



David McLoughlin is a teaching theologian who has spent nearly forty years helping to train Christian teachers, ministers and activists. In this series of reflections, he considers the Sunday readings.



5 JULY 2020

14TH SUNDAY  
IN ORDINARY TIME  
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DIVINE OFFICE WEEK II