

## **Friday (Dorothy Day)**

It was in Chicago as a child, living in tenements, that I had my first glimpse of supernatural beauty, in Mrs. Barrett, mother of Kathryn and six others who lived upstairs. It was around ten o'clock in the morning that I went to call for Kathryn. There was no one on the porch or in the kitchen. The breakfast dishes had all been washed. Thinking the children must be in the front room, I burst in and ran through the bedrooms. In the front bedroom, Mrs. Barrett was on her knees saying her prayers. She turned to me to tell me all the children had gone to the store and went on with her praying. And I felt a warm burst of love towards her that I have never forgotten, a feeling of gratitude and happiness that still warms my heart when I remember her. She had God, and there was beauty and joy in her life, in her sordid little tenement flat.

### **Scripture (Ps. 84:1-2, 4-5,10-12)**

*How lovely are your dwelling places, Yahweh. My whole being pines for Yahweh's courts, my heart and my body cry out for joy to the living God. How blessed are those who live in your house, who find their strength in you, whose hearts are set on pilgrimage. Better one day in your courts than a thousand at my own devices. Yahweh refuses nothing to those whose life is blameless. Blessed is the one who trusts in you.*

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28th Week of Ordinary Time

## **Your invitation. RSVP now.**

*Inspired by a book called 'Making Buddhism Work for You' I am considering editing the Bible to make a 'Cosy Christianity', which should sell well to people who like their religion adapted to suit their needs. The art is knowing where to edit so as to produce a passage which tells you what you want to hear. Put the passage into context you reveal a very different understanding - one which will be more fruitful but may well demand a change of ideas and habits.*

*An example of how this can be used legitimately and to good effect would be the passage which is often used at funeral services, (Isaiah 25:6-10). In promising that all mourning will be removed and tears wiped away as well as the destruction of death, it is an obvious and fitting choice, with its comforting description of the joyful rewards which we can look forward to in heaven. Death and heaven were not, however, what Isaiah had in mind. The promised banquet to which all are invited and where all will be joyful contrasts with the withering of vines and banishment of joy in the previous chapter in which God punishes and vanquishes those who thought they were so powerful that they could rule without heeding God's Law. This banquet, therefore, is a celebration of the kingship of God's reign of justice and integrity. The proud now honour him and even the most cruel stand in awe of his power.*

*This passage gave rise to the idea of the messianic banquet - looking forward to 'that day' when God will reign, with the banquet being a description of the joy of all nations living in the abundance of God's Kingdom.*

*Jesus uses the image of this banquet, (Matthew 22: 1-14), but he is not looking far into the future. The banquet is ready, the Messianic age is imminent. Those invited, however, fail to see the urgency of the invitation. Their busy, self-important lives mean that other matters of their everyday life are more important. They have not only become complacent about God, they actively fight against his messengers when the invitation becomes a command. In short, the messianic age for which they have waited so long is upon them, but there is no room for it in their lives.*

*By inviting the crowds at the crossroads, the place where you would find all sorts of people, Jesus is pointedly reminding the Chief priests that all people are invited. It is also a clue to the reason why the unwanted guest was thrown out: clearly, none of those at the crossroads would be likely to be going about their daily lives in wedding attire on the off chance they are suddenly invited, yet all respond and the rather motley crew, fill the hall, yet only one was thrown out for not wearing the right clothes. In the context of Matthew's Gospel, this is saying that he has not changed; i.e. this guest had turned up but not repented.*

*Because of the death and resurrection of Jesus, the feast is no longer in the future, or imminent; we are living in the messianic age now. If I am too busy for God, focusing on what I (or society) considers to be important, I am like those who did not respond to the invitation. If I do respond, do my actions and lifestyle suggest my response is genuine? I may say that God is the most important thing in my life, but if my sharing in the Eucharistic feast is no more than a comforting, even prayerful, oasis in a busy day, but does not result in a my priorities being any different from 'the world', I am like the wedding guest who attends without changing and who cannot enjoy the feast: cosy, but limited **Martin Bennett***

### **Monday From the Spiritual Exercise of St. Ignatius)**

There are three types of person who wish to be free enough to follow God's call wherever it may lead. The first keep saying that they would like to stop being so dependent on things which get in the way of giving their life unreservedly to God, but never actually take any steps; the second type would rather work harder, or fast, or pray more—anything rather than face the problem which is holding them back. They act as though they are negotiating with God; the third type strive to be in balance ready to move in any direction that the call of God may lead. Their whole desire and choice is for whatever seems better for the service of God.

### **Scripture (Philippians 4:11-13,18-20)**

*I have learned to manage with whatever I have. I know how to live modestly and how to live luxuriously too: in every way now that I have mastered the secret of all conditions—full stomach and empty stomach, plenty and poverty. There is nothing I cannot do in the One who strengthens me. And my God will fulfil all your needs out of the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus. And so glory be to God our Father for ever and ever, amen.*

### **Tuesday (John Main, OSB)**

We have to realise that when we talk about 'our prayer' we are really talking about our disposing ourselves for the full liberation of the life of the Spirit within us. That is why we pray to the degree that we turn away from ourselves, from the possessive self-consciousness and trivial distractedness of everything we sum up in the word *ego*. The call of Jesus to 'leave everything behind' is easily muted or compromised. Most often it is just postponed. We are 'too busy', or the work we are doing is just at this moment too important. It is also easier to drift into reverie rather than to 'stay awake and pray', or into self-conscious reflection than opt for the still, alert simplicity of being who and where we are.

### **Scripture (Romans 12: 2,10-13)**

*Let the renewing of your minds transform you, so that you may discern for yourselves what is the will of God. In brotherly love let your feelings of deep affection for one another come to expression and regard others as more important than yourself. In the service of the Lord, work not half-heartedly but with conscientiousness and an eager spirit. Be joyful in hope, persevere in hardship; keep praying regularly. Share with any of God's holy people who are in need; look for opportunities to be hospitable.*

### **Wednesday (Jean Vanier)**

To enter a new covenant and belong to a new people, a community with new values, we have to leave another people - those with whom we have lived - with other values and other norms: wealth, possessions, social prestige or whatever. This passage from one people to another can be a very painful uprooting. Many do not achieve it because they do not want to choose or to cut themselves off from their old life. They keep a foot in each camp and live a compromise. To enter into covenant you have to eliminate certain values and adopt new ones.

### **Scripture (Mt.22:2-7)**

*Jesus said " The Kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a feast for his son's wedding. He sent his servants to call those who had been invited, but they would not come. Next he sent more servants. 'Tell those who have been invited,' he said 'that I have my banquet all prepared.' But they were not interested: one went off to his farm, another to his business and the rest seized his servants, maltreated them and killed them. The king was furious.*

### **Thursday (St. Teresa of Avila)**

If God sees that after he has set the kingdom of heaven within the soul, it turns to this world, not only will he desist from revealing to it the mysteries of his kingdom, but he will only show it the former favours at rare intervals and for a short time. I believe that the reason why there are not more spiritual persons is that they do not respond worthily by their actions to this signal grace by preparing to receive it again. As they withdraw their will from the Lord and centre it on worldly things, he seeks other souls whose love for him is so fervent that he can grant them even more sublime favours.

### **Scripture (Ps. 119:1-8)**

*How blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the Law of Yahweh! Blessed are those who observe his instructions, who seek him with all their hearts, and, doing no evil, who walk in his ways. You lay down your precepts to be carefully kept. May my ways be steady in doing your will. Then I shall not be shamed if my gaze is fixed on your commandments. I thank you with a sincere heart for teaching me your upright judgements, I shall do your will.*