

AUSTRALIA DAY – FIRST READING – ALL YEARS

A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah.

Pause – and look up at the assembly

Once more a spirit from on high is poured out on us,
and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field,
and the fruitful field is deemed a forest.
Then justice will dwell in the wilderness,
and righteousness abide in the fruitful field.
The effect of righteousness will be peace,
and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever.
My people will abide in a peaceful habitation,
in secure dwellings,
and in quiet resting places.

PAUSE for **THREE** seconds
then look up at the people
and say SLOWLY:



The WORD of the LORD.

Thanks be to God.

AUSTRALIA DAY – SECOND READING – ALL YEARS

A reading from the first letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians.

Pause – and look up at the assembly

Brothers and sisters:

There are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit;
and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord;
and there are varieties of activities,
but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone.
To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.
To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom,
and to another the utterance of knowledge
according to the same Spirit,
to another faith by the same Spirit,
to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit,
to another the working of miracles,
to another prophecy,
to another the discernment of spirits,
to another various kinds of tongues,
to another the interpretation of tongues.
All these are activated by one and the same Spirit,
who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.

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PAUSE for **THREE** seconds
then look up at the people
and say SLOWLY:

The WORD of the LORD.

Thanks be to God.

AUSTRALIA DAY – GOSPEL READING – ALL YEARS

The Lord be with you.

And with your spirit.

A reading from the holy gospel according to Luke.

Glory to you, O Lord

Jesus said to his disciples,
“Therefore I tell you,
do not worry about your life,
what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear.
For life is more than food,
and the body more than clothing.
Consider the ravens:
they neither sow nor reap,
they have neither storehouse nor barn,
and yet God feeds them.
Of how much more value are you than the birds!
And can any of you by worrying
add a single hour to your span of life?
If then you are not able to do so small a thing as that,
why do you worry about the rest?
Consider the lilies, how they grow:
they neither toil nor spin;
yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory
was not clothed like one of these.
But if God so clothes the grass of the field,
which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven,
how much more will he clothe you – you of little faith!
And do not keep striving for what you are to eat
and what you are to drink,
and do not keep worrying.
For it is the nations of the world
that strive after all these things,
and your Father knows that you need them.
Instead, strive for his kingdom,
and these things will be given to you as well.
Do not be afraid, little flock,
for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”



The GOSPEL of the LORD.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

COMMENTARY ON THE SCRIPTURES

Isaiah 32:15-18

Through God's intervention, the siege of Jerusalem was lifted. Though Judah had been devastated, and Jerusalem had been through a terrible experience, God did not abandon his people. Later editors saw this as a promise that could always be relied on. God was always ready to 'pour out on us the spirit from on high'.

1 Corinthians 12:4-11

In the Corinth community there was a temptation to syncretism [the amalgamation or attempted amalgamation of different religions, cultures, or schools of thought]. The surrounding pagan world claimed to acquire a "knowledge" of God by means of trances and ecstasies. Paul tells his correspondents of another type of knowledge based on faith. Sometimes this was accompanied by signs and charisms which were not distinguished very well from pagan phenomena. Throughout chapters 12 to 15 the apostle is providing criteria by which the charisms of the Spirit can be distinguished.

In 1 Corinthians 12:1-3 a first criterion had been stated; charisms must inevitably be based on a Christian profession of faith. In today's passage Paul passes to other criteria.

He points out, to begin with (vv. 4-6), that if ancient polytheism [the belief in or worship of more than one god] had *charisms* of all kinds, those came from various murky sources. In the Church on the other hand, whether we are dealing with community functions or extraordinary phenomena, all is unified by trinitarian life. Charisms are accorded from the common good. By this criterion all pagan intoxication and individual trance is excluded. Since one and the same Spirit is the source of all gifts, these cannot be opposed on to the other. Nor indeed can those who benefit by them. If charismatics be in opposition, the reason is that they are not inspired by the Spirit. Their gifts do not come from Christ (v.7).

Paul gives a rather exhaustive list of the principal gifts of the Spirit. He classifies them according to well-established principles and exhorts the Corinthians to see the higher charisms, unknown to paganism.

In the first place, we have two charisms of the intelligence: wisdom, the knowledge of God's designs (1 Corinthians 2:7), and science, the capacity to present the truths of faith in an articulate system. Then come faith, which does not here designate the theological virtue, but rather the possibility of bringing about miracles (1 Corinthians 13:2; cf. Mark 11:19-26); the gift of healing and of miracles. These three, all considered, seem fairly identical. Lastly we have those charisms that were common to paganism too: prophecy; discernment; and the gift of tongues. The function of the first is to proclaim God's word, of the second to understand and interpret the third, which consists in some sort of mysterious communication, not comprehensible without the key.

Today we no longer live in an atmosphere of Corinthian syncretism. Yet the subject of today's reading is by no means an anachronism. The Spirit continues to direct the Church by means of the hierarchy, but for purposes of mission or reform, the Spirit will inspire individual initiatives. In this domain our criteria must continue to be those of Saint Paul. Any valid charismatic initiative must first and foremost spring from a fundamental faith in the Lord. It must be directed towards the common good, and indicate willingness to subordinate private advantage to the unity of the whole. It must not cause scandal or sow discord. Everything comes originally from the spirit of love and unity.

This reading overlaps with the second reading on Pentecost Sunday. The selection for that day comprised three sections: (1) confession of Jesus as Lord; (2) the varieties of gifts [abbreviated]; (3) diversity and unity within the body.

Today the first section is dropped; the second is given in full, specifying the varieties of gifts; and the third will form the beginning of next Sunday's second reading [Year C, Week 3].

Note first the artless triadic structure of verses 4-6:

charismata – the Spirit

service [*diakonia*] – the Lord [= Christ]

workings [*energēmata* = functions] – God

Paul's intention here is in part polemical, directed against the Corinthian Gnostics, who overemphasized the importance of some of the gifts, especially speaking in tongues.

The apostle prefers the term *charismata* to the term *pneumatika* ("spiritual things"), for it emphasizes that the gifts are gifts of grace (*charis*), not natural endowments to be proud of. The word "service" (*diakonia*) strikes a polemical note to be taken up later in the development of the image of the body.

The Corinthians thought that the gifts existed for their own glory rather than for the service of the community. Since it is the same triune God who is at work in all of them, no gift can be exalted above any other.

Verse 7 then sums up verses 4-6 and serves as a heading for verses 8-10: every spiritual phenomenon is given for the common good. Verses 8-10 spell out the *charismata*, listing nine in all: (1) wisdom; (2) knowledge (*gnosis*); (3) faith; (4) healing; (5) miracle-working; (6) prophecy; (7) discernment of spirits; (8) tongues; (9) interpretation of tongues.

The gifts fall into three groups: (I) wisdom and knowledge; (II) faith, healing, and miracle-working; (III) prophecy, discernment of spirits, tongues, and interpretation of tongues.

I. Elsewhere in 1 Corinthians there is hardly any perceptible difference between wisdom and knowledge. Both refer to gifts that the Corinthian Gnostics claimed to possess, and criticized Paul for not having.

- II. Faith here does not mean the faith by which all Christians respond to the gospel and so are justified, but a special gift confined to some. It is connected with miracle-working.
- III. Prophecy does not require interpretation, for it is not unintelligible speech; but it requires the discerning of spirits – to see whether it is genuine or false prophecy. In verse 1 Paul has already set up the criterion: whether the prophecy confesses Jesus as Lord or says *anathema lesous*.

Verse 11 rounds off the list by repeating the substance of verse 7 and prepares for the ensuing section on the churches as the body of Christ: one Spirit – one body.

Luke 12:22-32 [= Matthew 6:24-34]

This section of the Sermon on the Mount deals with the disciples' attitude toward material possessions. It is absent from Luke's Sermon on the Plain (Luke 6) but is found later in Lk 12:22-31, and therefore comes from Q [another document that is the source for Matthew and Mark's gospels]. Matthew is thought to have preserved the wording of Q better, though Luke probably has it in its original sequence in Q.

Verse 24 serves as the title to the whole section. God demands our ultimate allegiance; there can be no other ultimate allegiance, for then God would not be the ultimate.

Anxiety arises from making something other than God our ultimate concern. The ensuing passage instances concern for food, drink, and clothes—the most elementary of human needs. The argument is from the lesser to the greater: “If the birds, the grass, the flowers ... will he not much more ... you?”

Behind the argument rests faith in God as Creator. This faith is not just a matter of subscribing to the doctrine that the universe was originally created by God some thousands or billions of years ago; rather, it is a matter of present, immediate experience. We receive the world from God at this moment and at every moment of our lives as his gift.

Anxiety is the result of listening to the serpent's temptation of Adam and Eve: “you will be like God.” It is attempting to be our own gods, to usurp God's function as Creator.

Our real treasure comes from God

In the previous passage, Luke made the point that material possessions cannot satisfy the human heart. Here he directs our longing towards God. Let us look at what Jesus is not saying. Firstly, he is not encouraging us to be irresponsible. Secondly, he is not inviting us to escape into a make-believe world. After all, ravens do starve, and lilies sometimes die before they bloom. So do people, including those who have placed their trust in God and have looked to him in their need only to find themselves victims of famine, war and persecution.

Jesus himself cried out to God in his agony (22:42), but he still died an excruciating death. Luke and his community were not strangers to persecution and suffering (6:22; 10:3; 12:4). This passage is bringing out the implications of the previous one. We are not to strive for things like food and clothing, forgetting that it is God who provides them and who cares for us. This is the kind of life lived by ‘nations of the world’, by those who do not know of the God of Israel, the Father of Jesus.

While living responsibly, we are not to ‘worry’ – the word recurs four times in this passage. We first met the word when Jesus spoke about those who are: ‘choked by the worries and riches and pleasures of life’(8:14). This was the problem with Martha who was: ‘worried and distracted by many things’(10:41). Peter writes: “Cast all your worries on God, because he cares for you.” – 1 Peter 5:7

We find the same message in the Letter to the Hebrews: “Keep your lives free from the love of money, and be content with what you have; for he has said, ‘I will never leave you or forsake you’.” – Hebrews 13:5

Jesus is inviting his disciples not to be closed to the wonder of God’s action in this world. Their concern indicates that they have ‘little faith’. Faith does not protect us from the injustices and sufferings of life or from the horrible consequences of sin – our own sin or the sin of others. It does, however, give us a way of coping with them so that they do not destroy our heart or prevent us from loving. Faith opens us to the grace and love of God who never leaves or forsakes us.

God, our Father, knows what we really need and it will always be provided. We see a powerful example of this towards the end of Jesus’ life. What Jesus wanted in his agony is one thing; what he really needed is another. What he really needed on the cross was the love of God to sustain him and enable him to endure his suffering in love and to commit his spirit to God. His eyes were not distracted from looking to God and his heart remained fixed on God, and so his whole body was ‘full of light’(11:36). He is inviting us to the same trust.

Jesus is calling us to be ‘poor’. While living responsibly, we are to be like children, peacefully leaving tomorrow in God’s hands, and living today in trust. Our whole desire should be to belong to Jesus, and so to share in the kingdom of God which is already present in him, while we work to do the will of God and to bring about the final goal of God’s beautiful and loving design for the world.

God’s ‘good pleasure’(12:32, *eudokeō*) is that the little flock of Jesus’ disciples should experience the blessedness of enjoying the reign of God’s love and of being part of the kingdom where God’s saving and redeeming will is effective.

This was announced by the angels who at the birth of Jesus praised God for the peace that was to be enjoyed by those who were the objects of God’s good pleasure (2:14, *eudokia*), a good pleasure lavished especially upon Jesus, his Son, in whom he was ‘well pleased’ (3:22, *eudokeō*).

Jesus is concerned about the heart. What is treasured in the heart motivates our thoughts, desires and actions. He warns his disciples against the constricting effect material possessions can have upon us when we allow them to possess us.

They are of value. We need them. If we have more than we need, like the man in the preceding parable, it is better that we rid ourselves of the surplus and give it to those who need it. This is an act of mercy, an act of justice, and when we are ‘compassionate as the Father is compassionate’ (6:36), we bind ourselves to the heart of God. Having chosen God as our treasure, we will learn that our hearts find rest in him.