

A reading from the book of Genesis.

Pause – and look up at the assembly

The Lord said,  
“How great is the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah  
and how very grave their sin!  
I must go down  
and see whether they have done altogether  
according to the outcry that has come to me;  
and if not, I will know.”  
So the men turned from there, and went toward Sodom,  
while Abraham remained standing before the Lord.  
Then Abraham came near and said,  
“Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked?  
Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city;  
will you then sweep away the place  
and not forgive it for the fifty righteous who are in it?  
Far be it from you to do such a thing,  
to slay the righteous with the wicked,  
so that the righteous fare as the wicked!  
Far be that from you!  
Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?”  
And the Lord said,  
“If I find at Sodom fifty righteous in the city,  
I will forgive the whole place for their sake.”  
Abraham answered,  
“Let me take it upon myself to speak to the Lord,  
I who am but dust and ashes.  
Suppose five of the fifty righteous are lacking?  
Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five?”  
And the Lord said,  
“I will not destroy it if I find forty-five there.”  
Again Abraham spoke to the Lord,  
“Suppose forty are found there.”  
He answered,  
“For the sake of forty I will not do it.”



Then Abraham said,  
“Oh do not let the Lord be angry if I speak.  
Suppose thirty are found there.”  
The Lord answered,  
“I will not do it, if I find thirty there.”  
Abraham said,  
“Let me take it upon myself to speak to the Lord.  
Suppose twenty are found there.”  
The Lord answered,  
“For the sake of twenty I will not destroy it.”  
Then Abraham said,  
“Oh do not let the Lord be angry if I speak just once more.  
Suppose ten are found there.”  
The Lord answered,  
“For the sake of ten I will not destroy it.”



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

The WORD of the LORD.

*Thanks be to God.*

2<sup>nd</sup> Reading  
next page



## SECOND READING – C 17

A reading from the letter of Saint Paul to the Colossians.

Pause – and look up at the assembly

Brothers and sisters:

When you were buried with Christ in baptism,  
you were also raised with him  
through faith in the power of God,  
who raised Christ from the dead.  
And when you were dead in trespasses  
and the uncircumcision of your flesh,  
God made you alive together with him,  
when he forgave us all our trespasses,  
erasing the record that stood against us with its legal demands.  
He set this aside, nailing it to the cross.



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

The WORD of the LORD.

*Thanks be to God.*

## GOSPEL READING – C 17

The Lord be with you.

A reading from the holy gospel according to Luke.

*And with your spirit.*

*Glory to you, O Lord.*

Jesus was praying in a certain place,  
and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him,  
“Lord, teach us to pray,  
as John taught his disciples.”  
He said to them, “When you pray, say:  
‘Father, hallowed be your name.  
Your kingdom come.  
Give us each day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our sins,  
for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us.  
And lead us not into temptation.’”



## GOSPEL READING – C 17 [CONTINUED]

And Jesus said to the disciples,  
“Suppose one of you has a friend,  
and you go to him at midnight and say to him,  
‘Friend, lend me three loaves of bread;  
for a friend of mine has arrived,  
and I have nothing to set before him.’  
And your friend answers from within,  
‘Do not bother me;  
the door has already been locked,  
and my children are with me in bed;  
I cannot get up and give you anything.’  
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.  
So I say to you,  
Ask, and it will be given you;  
search, and you will find;  
knock, and the door will be opened for you.  
For everyone who asks receives,  
and everyone who searches finds,  
and for everyone who knocks,  
the door will be opened.  
Is there a father among you who,  
if your child asks for a fish,  
will give a snake instead of a fish?  
Or if the child asks for an egg, will give a scorpion?  
If you then, who are evil,  
know how to give good gifts to your children,  
how much more will the heavenly Father  
give the Holy Spirit to those who ask”



The GOSPEL of the LORD.

*Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.*

## SCRIPTURES IN DEPTH

### Reading I: Genesis 18:20-32

This is another reading from the Abraham cycle. Its context is clear: God is about to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah.

The J (Yahwist) tradition from which this comes uses the occasion as an opportunity to reflect on the problem of divine justice, and casts its reflections in the form of a dialogue between Abraham and YHWH.

Abraham is the mouthpiece of the conviction that YHWH, as a God of justice, would not destroy Sodom if it also meant the destruction of a few righteous persons along with the guilty majority.

Pleading his case by a kind of Dutch auction, Abraham arrives at the point where he asks YHWH if ten righteous persons would be enough to save the city and is assured that it would. The dialogue is then broken off, but the city is not spared.

So in the Genesis narrative the dialogue throws the wickedness of Sodom into even sharper relief—there were not even ten righteous persons there.

### Responsorial Psalm: 138:1-2, 2-3, 6-7, 7-8

As the reference to the temple in verse 2 suggests, Psalm 138 is a liturgical psalm of thanksgiving for deliverance. It forms a suitable response to the reading from Genesis, in which God is depicted as a God of mercy as well as of justice.

### Reading II: Colossians 2:12-14

Here is another passage in which Colossians differs from the undoubted letters of Paul.

In Rom 6 Paul says that in baptism we share the death of Christ but that our rising with him is conditional on our (daily) dying to sin and walking in newness of life. It awaits its final fulfillment at the final resurrection.

Colossians abandons this reservation and speaks of the baptized as already risen, though a little later it emphasizes the necessity of implementing the resurrection by ethical obedience, so it is not so far removed from the position in Romans after all.

The picture of Christ's nailing to the cross "the bond which stood against us" is intriguing. A 'bond' is a kind of I.O.U. The precise background of the metaphor is uncertain.

Is the writer thinking of the titulus on the cross, so that "The king of the Jews" means that Jesus is king of his people because he forgives them their sins? Or is it derived from the

tropaion, the post on which a triumphant military commander would hang the spoils he had taken from the enemy?

If the source of the imagery is uncertain, the meaning is clear: in the cross Christ achieved the forgiveness of sin. All Christian experience throughout the ages has known this, even if the various theories of the atonement are intellectually unsatisfying.

Gospel: Luke 11:1-13

This pericope consists of two parts: the delivery of the Lord's Prayer, followed by a catena of sayings on petitionary prayer.

The Lucan text of the Lord's Prayer in the RSV is shorter than the Matthean version, consisting of only five petitions, compared to Matthew's seven. The RSV follows the earlier Greek texts. The later text was assimilated to the Matthean form, which became traditional in the liturgy.

The additional petitions of Matthew ("Thy will be done" and "But deliver us from evil") are probably liturgical expansions, each of the extra clauses being elucidations of the petition immediately preceding it. The simple address "Father" (Abba) was characteristic of Jesus. "Our Father in heaven" (Matthew) is again a formalized liturgical expansion.

A Jew of Jesus' day would have shrunk from calling God "Abba," for this was the familiar address of the child to his or her father. God would have been addressed as "our Father" or "my Father."

Here lies the unique filial consciousness of Jesus, which is the foundation of his own life of obedience and of the Church's later Christological interpretation of his person.

"Hallowed be thy name" is usually called the first petition, but it is probably a glorifying of the name of God, which in Jewish prayer always precedes petition. Each of the succeeding petitions is susceptible of an eschatological interpretation.

Obviously this is the case with "Thy kingdom come." But the "bread" of the third petition (literally, "tomorrow's bread") quite likely means the messianic banquet. These two petitions pray for a foretaste already here and now of the blessings of the end.

"Forgive us our sins" in the fourth petition refers to the last judgment but is likewise anticipated in our justification. Our forgiveness of others does not earn God's forgiveness for us but is the condition of our continuance in forgiveness (see the parable of the unforgiving servant in Mt 18:22-35).

In the next petition, "temptation" (Greek: peirasmos) is a technical term for the messianic woes. It is a prayer, not that God would stop tempting us to sin (for God does not do this, as St. James correctly observes), but rather for our preservation during the messianic woes, the final great tribulation, anticipated in the trials of faith during the Christian's life.

Matthew's comment on the Our Father takes up the petition for forgiveness; Luke's takes up the whole idea of petitionary prayer. Some modern devotional writers are squeamish about petitionary prayer, but in Jesus' teaching petition is prayer par excellence.

Prayer in the Bible is primarily not mystical experience but working with God in carrying out his purposes in salvation history. The supreme petition of Christian prayer is for the Holy Spirit (Lk 11:13).

It is interesting that some ancient texts of Luke read: "Let the Holy Spirit come upon us and cleanse us," instead of the petition for tomorrow's bread. This is unlikely to be the true reading, but it is a significant early interpretation that supports the eschatological interpretation of "tomorrow's bread."

The doxology to the Lord's Prayer that appears in late texts of Matthew is not part of the original text. But it was Jewish custom to add a doxology, and Jesus probably expected his disciples to follow this. Here the Missale Romanum was more faithful to the letter of Scripture, while Orthodoxy and Protestantism are truer to the probable implicit intention of it!

There are parallels in Jewish prayers to every petition of the Our Father. But this does not deprive it of its originality. The meaning of each of Jesus' petitions is formed by his proclamation of the kingdom of God, not as a purely future hope, but as a reality already proleptically present in his own person.

Reginald H. Fuller