

Archived at the Flinders Academic Commons:

<http://dspace.flinders.edu.au/dspace/>

This is the publisher's copyrighted version of this article.

The original can be found at: <http://compassreview.org/archive.html>

© 2007 Compass

Published version of the paper reproduced here in accordance with the copyright policy of the publisher. Personal use of this material is permitted. However, permission to reprint/republish this material for advertising or promotional purposes or for creating new collective works for resale or redistribution to servers or lists, or to reuse any copyrighted component of this work in other works must be obtained from Compass.

# PREPARING TO CELEBRATE THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

JULY—OCTOBER

*From the Fourteenth to the Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time of Year C*

Prepared by Michael Trainor

## PART ONE: OVERVIEW OF THE READINGS

The following is a brief overview of the readings of the Liturgy of the Word for major celebrations proclaimed while this issue of *Compass* is current. It focuses on the readings for Sundays between mid-July and late October, from the Fourteenth to the Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time of Year C. Please feel free to use or adapt these reflections, with the customary acknowledgement of source.

**1. The First readings** have been collated with the theme of the Gospel in mind. While this might lock these readings into a particular interpretation, the power of these important readings should not be forgotten, especially as the Christian community and its homilist draws on their unique, ancient insights always needing to be celebrated. Two themes from these readings over this period concern wisdom and wealth.

- During this time of the year (August—October), several readings are drawn from that body of Old Testament literature called ‘Wisdom.’ These are found in our readings from Ecclesiastes, the Book of Wisdom, and Sirach—also called ‘Ecclesiasticus’. Wisdom was a central gift for the Israelite people, and reflected God’s wisdom and presence among them. These readings focus on several features of God’s wisdom reflected in creation and among human beings: The gift of wisdom itself (OT 18), communion with God (OT 19), the need for discernment (OT 22), interiority (OT 23), God’s concern for the poor (OT 30),

and the all-pervading nature of God’s Spirit (OT 31).

- A second insight comes from the prophetic literature (beginning in the 8<sup>th</sup> cent BCE with Amos, OT 19 & 26) and invites us to consider the use of wealth and the exploitation of the poor. This theme dovetails with appropriate passages from Luke’s Gospel.

**2. The Second Reading** is drawn from the letters of the New (or Second) Testament. Only two are from Paul himself. *Philemon* (OT 23) was written by Paul in the mid 50s to a Christian slave owner to welcome back his runaway slave, Onesimus. Though Paul presumes the institution of slavery, his letter invites a way of relating based on the Gospel and spirit of Jesus than social convention. Several other selections for the second reading give us a feast of passages drawn from letters written after Paul’s death and called ‘post-Pauline.’ These early Christian letters, though conventionally attributed to Paul, were written by one of his disciples: *Colossians* dated in the late 60s or early 70s (OT 18), reflects on the nature of Jesus and what he offers the Christian community. There are selections from two other post-Pauline letters. These are more explicitly about pastoral issues concerning Christian leaders and their communities: *1 Timothy* (OT 25-26) and *2 Timothy* (OT 27-30) are written to address concerns about correct teaching, fidelity to the tradition about Jesus and ministry stability. These letters written towards the

end of the first century CE indicate that the Christian community was entering a new era in its development.

**3. The Gospel readings** during August-October are taken from Luke's Gospel, and the section of the gospel dealing with Jesus' journey to Jerusalem (Lk 9-19). Luke's gospel presumes an urban audience of c. 85 CE. The writer is keen that Greco-Roman Christians are able to live authentically in their world with a sense of authenticity in their union with Jesus. The journey narrative of the gospel (Lk 9-19) provides the evangelist with an oppor-

tunity to explore the main attitudes which disciples need in their following of Jesus in the journey of daily living. These attitudes are about possessions and wealth (OT 18, 23, 25, 26, 30) sensitivity to God's presence (OT 19), membership in Jesus' community (OT 20, 28), hospitality (OT 22, 31), mercy and forgiveness (OT 24), faith (OT 27), and confident prayerfulness (OT 29). All these discipleship themes provide a contemporary Christian community with ways of reflecting on the vitality of its own life, and celebrating various local expressions of discipleship.

## PART TWO: NOTES ON THE READINGS

**July 8—Ordinary Time 14.** *Is 66:10-14.* God's desire to comfort the disconsolate is tangibly and powerfully expressed in this beautiful hymn. *Gal 6:14-18.* Paul's desire of his total union with Jesus, even in suffering. *Lk 10:1-12.17-20.* Jesus sends his disciples on a difficult and, at times, unappreciated mission. *Theme—Union with Jesus.* Paul exemplifies the meaning of Christian living—union with Jesus that permeates his whole life to the point that it becomes a reflection of Jesus' own life. There are many examples of those who live this kind of life today. These might be celebrated.

**July 15—Ordinary Time 15:** *Dt 30:10-14.* Moses reminds the people that God's Word ('Law'), is accessible, personal and interior. *Col 1:15-20.* A powerful hymn to the Sophia-Jesus, celebrating his cosmic authority to reconcile all. *Lk 10:25-37.* A parable that subverts the traditional and expected patterns of preferential behaviour *Theme—Our World:* From *Colossians*, Jesus' presence imbues the whole universe. Therefore the world is good. This challenges the conventional commercial and industrial treatment of our world. It also invites into a spirit of reconciliation.

**July 22—Ordinary Time 16:** *Gen 18:1-10.* Abraham offers hospitality to unexpected and unrecognised angelic visitors, and is blessed.

*Col 1:24-28.* The writer encourages a disposition to make God's Word fully known, to teach through Jesus in all wisdom and bring others to genuine maturity. *Lk 10:38-42.* Luke offers us a snapshot of ministerial tension, to get all the work done or focus on Jesus. The encouragement is to focus on Jesus in the midst of life's concerns. *Theme—Hospitality.* A life of busyness and time of upheaval can leave us diving for self-survival. The readings (1<sup>st</sup> and Gospel) encourage a disposition of hospitality practically open to others and essentially focussed on God.

**July 29—Ordinary Time 17:** *Gen 18:20-32.* God is revealed as compassionate, forgiving and conversational. *Col 2:6-14.* The writer celebrates the communion that the baptised Christian shares with Jesus. *Lk 11:1-13.* This is Luke's insight into Jesus' teaching on prayer. *Theme—Communion with God.* Two readings (1<sup>st</sup> and Gospel) invite reflection on the centrality of prayer in our lives, as conversation with a God who is open. In a NT highpoint, *Colossians* presents Jesus as God's tangible expression in bodily form. Both themes are important and not mutually exclusive. They invite us into communion with God through Jesus.

**August 5—Ordinary Time 18:** *Eccl 1:2; 2:21-23.* The ancient wisdom-poet asks: What

is true Wisdom after all our labouring?. *Col 3:1-5,9-11*. The writer encourages our focus to be on Jesus. This brings about renewal. *Lk 12:13-21*. Jesus warns against a greed that forgets about what is most important, true life. *Theme—Wisdom*: We celebrate the gift of wisdom which God offers us, through this community and our union with Jesus. Wisdom is a gift necessary at a time when we seem concerned with other issues of justice, peace and well-being. What is the wisdom that this community needs today?

**August 12—Ordinary Time 19:** *Wisdom 18:6-9*. God invites the holy people of God to be blessed by divine wisdom. *Heb 11:1-2,8-19*. A beautiful and powerful narrative of the faith as lived by Israel's ancestors. *Lk 12:32-48*. Disciples are encouraged to be alert to God's coming. *Theme—Being Blessed*. We are blessed by God, who walks with us in faith as we journey through life. We are alert to God's presence around us which is revealed in this community and its elders.

**August 19—Ordinary Time 20:** *Jer 38:4-6,8-10*. The prophet suffers for his commitment to God and is imprisoned in a sewer. *Heb 12:1-4*. We are encouraged in life by those faithful witnesses of faith who have gone before us; we are encouraged to focus on Jesus the 'pioneer' of what it means to believe. *Lk 12:49-53*. Commitment to Jesus comes at a cost, which sometimes is difficult. *Theme—The cost of Fidelity*: *Jer* and *Lk* offer us two insights into commitment: Jeremiah finds himself in the local city sewer and Jesus teaches how commitment will even cause tension within families. The gospel does not predict what will happen, but is happening in *Lk*'s households in the Greco-Roman world where commitment to the one God is costly that expects total allegiance to the god-king Caesar. Many examples abound in our local community of lived faithful commitment the give heart and strengthen us.

**August 26—Ordinary Time 21:** *Is 66:18-21*. God's vision for community. *Heb 12:5-7,11-13*. The writer's encouragement and reassur-

ance to those who suffer. *Lk 13:22-30*. The unexpected and unpredictable membership in Jesus' community of disciples *Theme—Community*: An important moment to reflect on the meaning of true religious community, to encourage inclusion and to identify those who might be excluded from our parish or community life.

**September 2—Ordinary Time 22:** *Sirach 3:17-20, 28-29*. An encouragement towards living humbly with our focus on God and others, rather than from arrogance. *Heb 12:18-19,22-24*. Acclamation of God's nature and ourselves as 'citizens' of the 'city of the living God. *Lk 14:1.7-14*. An story about honour and inclusive hospitality set in *Lk*'s Greco-Roman world of social etiquette and status. *Theme—Eucharistic hospitality*. The Gospel offers an opportunity to celebrate the way the local community is inclusive, and expresses this liturgically. Who are those touched by this Eucharist? How does this Eucharist touch the local community, the nation, the world and cosmos?

**September 9—Ordinary Time 23:** *Wis 9:13-18*. This song celebrates Wisdom, God's gift is revealed in the world and known by human beings. *Philemon 9-10.12-17*. Paul encourages Philemon to welcome back his runaway slave, Onesimus, as 'a beloved brother.' *Lk 14:25-33*. The disciple is focussed on Jesus and nothing compromises this relationship. *Theme—Riches and poverty*. Luke challenges a world that sees possessions as a sign of divine blessing or favour. The gospel invites us to know a deeper wisdom celebrated in the first reading. Can we celebrate those local heroes, perhaps unnamed or unrecognised, who live by wisdom and from a sense of total commitment to God and God's community?

**September 16—Ordinary Time 24:** *Ex 32:7-11,13-14* Moses intercedes to God on behalf of the people. *1Tim 1:12-17*. Jesus reveals God's mercy; we live out of and reflect this same mercy to others. *Lk 15:1-32*. Luke's central parables about mercy and forgiveness. This is the heart of Luke's Gospel. Though tempted, don't shorten the reading. The elder

brother's conduct needs reflection. *Theme—Mercy.* Every Eucharist is a celebration of forgiveness and mercy. This gift, from God, is needed in our world today. Mercy and forgiveness rather than vindictiveness and enmity is encouraged.

**September 23—Ordinary Time 25:** *Amos 8:4-7.* The prophet names unjust practices that target the poor. *1Tim 2:1-8.* The writer urges prayers for civic leaders and the centrality of Jesus in the act of intercession with God. *Lk 16:1-13.* The steward acts to ensure that he will always be welcomed into village life. Acting judiciously brings acclaim to his master and a new appraisal. *Theme—Acting Justly.* The weak, poor and marginalised are victims of exploitation in our nation. We are invited to name those victimised and be advocates of the exploited. This Eucharist joins us to Jesus and the wider community of the just; we are in communion with all who suffer.

**September 30—Ordinary Time 26:** *Amos 6:1a,4-7* The prophet targets those who benefit from the exploitation of the poor. *1Tim 6:11-16.* A late first century NT summary about Jesus' ministry and exaltation. *Lk 16:19-31.* Jesus' challenging parable about how wealth must be used to alleviate the needs of the poor. *Theme—Use of Wealth.* In Luke's day, a wealthy person was a greedy person. The readings encourage us not to be possessed by our possessions but to use them for others.

**October 7—Ordinary Time 27:** *Hab 1:2-3; 2:2-4.* The prophet cries to God for deliverance from violence. God offers a vision of the possible. *2 Tim 1:6-8, 13-14.* The leader is encouraged to be a person of integrity, reflection and trust. *Lk 17:5-10* The disciple is encouraged to be a person of faith who acts authentically. *Theme—Acting in Faith.* In a world of violence, the disciple is encouraged to retain a perspective and trust centred on God.

Local communities abound with living examples of such contemporary disciples.

**October 14—Ordinary Time 28:** *2 Kings 5:14-17.* A Syrian (and foreign) army-officer obeys God's prophet from Israel and is healed of leprosy. He seeks to offer the prophet a gift for his healing. *2 Tim 2:8-13.* A revered early Christian hymn about Jesus that encourages closeness to him. *Lk 17:11-19.* Jesus heals those who are excluded from community life because of their disease. *Theme—Exclusion:* The first reading and the Gospel invite a reflection on the power of exclusion which suffering and illness brings. How does the local Christian community seek to include those who are excluded into its life? Who are the true healers in our community?

**October 21—Ordinary Time 29.** *Ex 17:8-13.* Moses' prayer for victory is effective. *2 Tim 3:14-4:2.* The minister is encouraged to be faithful to what has been taught, to Scripture, and to the task of courageous proclamation. *Lk 18:1-8.* An unnamed widow's persistence gains justice and response from an elite judge. *Theme—Prayer:* The Eucharist is the local church's moment of prayer for and union with all humanity and creation. What are the current situations and events that could be the focus of our Eucharist celebration and intercession today?

**October 28—Ordinary Time 30** *Sirach 35:15-17,20-22.* According to the wisdom writer, God shows deference to the poor whose prayer 'pierces' the clouds. *2 Tim 4:6-8, 16-18.* The writer affirms God's fidelity in a time of suffering and trial. *Lk 18:9-14.* Jesus' God subverts the socially expectation of favour and privilege. *Theme—God listens.* God responds to our cries in times of difficulty, loneliness and distress. God seeks to be with all who struggle. What makes us sad? What is difficult?