

8TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – 2 MARCH 2025



COLLECT

Grant us, O Lord, we pray,
that the course of our world
may be directed by your peaceful rule
and that your Church may rejoice,
untroubled in her devotion.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

READINGS AND REFLECTIONS

The blind leading the blind. What an amazing image! It is concise and vivid. However, it is not an original saying of Jesus. It can be traced back to Indian literature 800 years before Christ. It was used by the classical Roman poets in the century before Christ. But it is through the gospels that it has become a well-known phrase in so many languages down through the centuries. Curiously, it has more relevance today than ever. In these days of social media, when everyone has a voice, it is easy to be led astray by those who actually haven't got a clue... How much notice do we (should we) take of 'influencers'?

Pithy sayings or proverbs like this do not give much explanation but are very effective in provoking thought. We see good examples today from the book of Ecclesiasticus and the teaching of Jesus in the gospel.

A reading from the book of Ecclesiasticus
27:4–7

In a shaken sieve the rubbish is left behind,
so too the defects of a man appear in his talk.
The kiln tests the work of the potter,
the test of a man is in his conversation.
The orchard where the tree grows is judged
on the quality of its fruit,
similarly a man's words betray what he feels.
Do not praise a man before he has spoken,
since this is the test of men.

First Reading

Ecclesiasticus is often named Sirach after its self-identified author Ben Sirach. It is a long compilation of quite short sayings or proverbs. This puts it in the category of Wisdom writings which are concerned with questions of everyday living – how to live well, justly, humanely and happily. It is a teacher's manual for right living.

In this brief excerpt, by means of three concrete examples (the sieve, the potter, the fruit tree), Sirach proposes that a person's true character may be estimated by their words. One can judge a person's ideas and attitudes by what they say. This point resonates with the saying at the very end of today's gospel reading.

The images will help the reader to convey the message clearly, but the repeated use of 'man' and 'he/his' will be a stumbling block to many hearers in the assembly. Using the NRSV translation found later in this book is advised on this occasion.

Responsorial Psalm **Ps 91:2–3,13–16**

R. Lord, it is good to give thanks to you.

It is good to give thanks to the Lord
to make music to your name, O Most High,
to proclaim your love in the morning
and your truth in the watches of the night. **R.**

The just will flourish like the palm-tree
and grow like a Lebanon cedar. **R.**

Planted in the house of the Lord
they will flourish in the courts of our God,
still bearing fruit when they are old,
still full of sap, still green,
to proclaim that the Lord is just.
In him, my rock, there is no wrong. **R.**

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 91/92 is a hymn of thanksgiving in praise of God who sustains us and makes us fruitful. Yes, it is indeed good for us to raise our voices to thank God and to rejoice in God's goodness to us. The image of trees flourishing and bearing fruit prepares us for Jesus' use of the image in today's gospel.

Making music to God's name suggests strongly that the psalm should be sung. Even if the verses are read, the antiphon should be sung by all.

The main trap in proclaiming this psalm is handling the verses of different lengths. In the second, the cadence will need to call forth the response from the people after just two lines. In the third, it will need to hold back for six lines – especially tricky with the short, independent final line.

**A reading from the first letter of St Paul
to the Corinthians 15:54– 58**

When this perishable nature has put on imperishability, and when this mortal nature has put on immortality, then the words of scripture will come true: Death is swallowed up in victory. Death, where is your victory? Death, where is your sting? Now the sting of death is sin, and sin gets its power from the Law. So let us thank God for giving us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Never give in then, my dear brothers, never admit defeat; keep on working at the Lord's work always, knowing that, in the Lord, you cannot be labouring in vain.

**A reading from the holy Gospel
according to Luke 6:39–45**

Jesus told a parable to his disciples, 'Can one blind man guide another? Surely both will fall into a pit? The disciple is not superior to his teacher; the fully trained disciple will always be like his teacher. Why do you observe the splinter in your brother's eye and never notice the plank in your own? How can you say to your brother, "Brother, let me take out the splinter that is in your eye," when you cannot see the plank in your own? Hypocrite! Take the plank out of your own eye first, and then you will see clearly enough to take out the splinter that is in your brother's eye.

'There is no sound tree that produces rotten fruit, nor again a rotten tree that produces sound fruit. For every tree can be told by its own fruit: people do not pick figs from thorns, nor gather grapes from brambles. A good man draws what is good from the store of goodness in his heart; a bad man draws what is bad from the store of badness. For a man's words flow out of what fills his heart.'

Second Reading

A strong conclusion to Paul's chapter on resurrection from which we have read over recent weeks. This is about victory and never admitting defeat. Even Death itself is swallowed up in Victory. Christ is the one who defeated death when God raised him to life. We who are united with Christ share in this glorious victory.

The rhetorical questions (*Death, where is your victory? Death, where is your sting?*) allow for an emphatic proclamation which demonstrates something of Christ's victory. The reader might best treat the sentence about sin as a reflective digression.

The first sentence is rather abstract. It is important not to lose the listeners at this point. The double contrast *perishable/imperishable* and *mortal/immortal* should be used to lead the assembly into central affirmation. (Practise aloud the words 'perishable' and 'imperishability' so that you can speak them confidently without stumbling.)

Paul concludes by using Christ's triumph to encourage the people of Corinth to continue the work of the gospel: Christ will ensure that their labour will not be in vain.

Gospel

Jesus' teaching in this passage begins with two shorter sayings and ends with two more developed parables. The blind leading the blind and the disciple and the teacher are both evocative images which bear meditation.

The parable of the splinter and the plank takes up the theme from last week's reading: do not judge; do not condemn. As is often the case with Jesus' parables, he uses extreme exaggeration to draw his contrast strongly and make his point. We should not take literally the prospect of finding a plank in our own eye!

The final images come from fruit trees. Every tree can be identified by the fruit it bears. First is the image of good tree/rotten fruit and rotten tree/good fruit. Then there is the image of harvesting figs from thorns or grapes from brambles. Both sets of images head in the same direction. A good person draws from a good heart and speaks good words.

The imagery may not originate with Jesus, but he uses the parables effectively to call the disciple to integrity.

CONCLUDING PRAYER

May the Lord bless us and keep us.

Amen.

May he let his face shine upon us
and show us his mercy.

Amen.

May he turn his countenance towards us
and give us his peace.

Amen.

And may the blessing of almighty God,
the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
come down on us and remain with us for ever.

Amen.

(Adapted from the Solemn Blessing for Ordinary Time I, Roman Missal p. 714)

An alternative translation of the scripture readings is given here from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). This may be particularly useful for those in parishes which use the NRSV Lectionary.

EIGHTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

FIRST READING (NRSV)

A reading from the book of Sirach 27:4–7

When a sieve is shaken, the refuse appears;
so do a person's faults when one speaks.
The kiln tests the potter's vessels;
so the test of a person is in conversation.

Its fruit discloses the cultivation of a tree;
so a person's speech discloses the cultivation of the mind.
Do not praise people before they speak,
for this is the way people are tested.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (NRSV)

Psalm 92.1-2, 12-13, 14-15 (R.1)

R. Lord, it is good to give thanks to you.

It is good to give thanks to the Lord,
to sing praises to your name, O Most High;
to declare your steadfast love in the morning,
and your faithfulness by night. **R.**

The righteous flourish like the palm tree,
and grow like a cedar in Lebanon.
They are planted in the house of the Lord;
they flourish in the courts of our God. **R.**

In old age they still produce fruit;
they are always green and full of sap,
showing that the Lord is upright;
he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him. **R.**

SECOND READING (NRSV)

A reading from the first letter of Paul to the Corinthians 15:54-58

When this perishable body puts on imperishability,
and this mortal body puts on immortality,
then the saying that is written will be fulfilled:

"Death has been swallowed up in victory."

"Where, O death, is your victory?

Where, O death, is your sting?"

The sting of death is sin,
and the power of sin is the law.
But thanks be to God,
who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, my beloved,
be steadfast, immovable,
always excelling in the work of the Lord,
because you know that in the Lord your labour is not in vain.

GOSPEL (NRSV)

A reading from the holy gospel according to Luke 6:39–45

Jesus told his disciples a parable:

"Can a blind person guide a blind person?

Will not both fall into a pit?

A disciple is not above the teacher,
but everyone who is fully qualified will be like the teacher.

"Why do you see the speck in your neighbour's eye,
but do not notice the log in your own eye?

Or how can you say to your neighbour,

'Friend, let me take out the speck in your eye,'

when you yourself do not see the log in your own eye?

You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye,

and then you will see clearly

to take the speck out of your neighbour's eye.

"No good tree bears bad fruit,
nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit;
for each tree is known by its own fruit.
Figs are not gathered from thorns,
nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush.

"Out of the good treasure of the heart,
the good person produces good,
and out of evil treasure,
the evil person produces evil;
for it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks."