



**LEADERSHIP
EQUALS SERVICE**

(LUKE 12:32-48)

Stained glass depiction of Jesus washing the feet of his disciples, in the Cathedral of the Assumption, Bangkok

Our Gospel reading today turns towards the final judgement at the coming of the Son of Man. Jesus' audience are advised to remain in a constant state of readiness, as they do not know when the Master will return. However, judgement is ongoing in the present, as the Lord is aware whether people are living up to their responsibilities or taking advantage of the master's absence.

It is difficult to overemphasise the shock of the householder's reaction towards the faithful and watchful servants who are awaiting his return. He does not expect them to serve him a meal, but instead puts on an apron, sits them down and waits on them himself. Such a reversal of roles would be unthinkable in a society where a person's position in the social hierarchy would determine their behaviour. But we do find in the Gospels this idea of authority as service, expressed here as table service and, elsewhere, Jesus sets this out as the model of leadership for his disciples.

Jesus responds to Peter's question about to whom this parable applies, but Jesus answers generally with another parable, this one about what kind of person the steward in charge of the household should be. This official was responsible not just for carrying out the instructions of the owner of the house, but also for the welfare of the servants in his charge. So, to be a faithful steward to the master, this person had to be attentive to the needs of the other members of the household. Thus, service is not just vertical, upwards to the one above, but also horizontal, towards the other members of the community. ■

REFLECT

It is difficult to avoid the practice of distinguishing between members of human society in terms of social hierarchy. Even nations which pride themselves on having abolished noble classes find themselves promoting certain individuals over others.

Luke's presentation of Jesus' teaching on authority and the way it is exercised among disciples is nothing short of revolutionary in the thinking of his time – and ours. We find the same idea of authority as service demonstrated in the Gospel of John, where Jesus washes the feet of his disciples, a task that a Jewish slave could not be forced to perform. This would apply to the faithful steward, who is rewarded for conscientious fidelity.

Our reading carries a warning about the abuse of authority on the part of those entrusted with such a role, with examples of the fate of those who fail in the exercise of their duties: abusing their position of authority or neglecting to carry out their responsibilities, even for not knowing what their position actually entailed.

It is easy to imagine that the Gospels refer only to the religious authorities of Jesus' time, or that of the evangelists. But the scriptures have a permanent significance: they apply just as much to our time, our present church community. Any leader is in a position of trust: much will be expected. ■

LEARN

A steward was the official left in charge to manage the household while the owner was away.

The steward was responsible for the well-being of the other members of the household.

In the Gospel of Luke, authority in the community of disciples is expressed in service.

Leaders are given more responsibility and will be held to higher account.

DO

When you are helping someone else, remember that this is what discipleship is all about.

SAY

Happy are the people the Lord has chosen as his own.

(Psalm 32:12)



ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Look to your covenant, O Lord,
and forget not the life of your poor ones
for ever.

Arise, O God, and defend your cause,
and forget not the cries of those who seek
you.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

COLLECT

Almighty ever-living God,
whom, taught by the Holy Spirit,
we dare to call our Father,
bring, we pray, to perfection in our hearts
the spirit of adoption as your sons and
daughters,
that we may merit to enter into the inheritance
which you have promised.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of
the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING

Wisdom 18:6-9

A reading from the book of Wisdom.

That night had been foretold to our
ancestors, so that,
once they saw what kind of oaths they had
put their trust in
they would joyfully take courage.
This was the expectation of your people,
the saving of the virtuous and the ruin of
their enemies;
for by the same act with which you took
vengeance on our foes
you made us glorious by calling us to you.
The devout children of worthy men offered
sacrifice in secret
and this divine pact they struck with one
accord:
that the saints would share the same
blessings and dangers alike;
and forthwith they had begun to chant the
hymns of the fathers.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 32

Response:

Happy are the people the Lord has chosen as
his own.

1. Ring out your joy to the Lord, O you just;
for praise is fitting for loyal hearts.
They are happy, whose God is the Lord,
the people he has chosen as his own. (R.)
2. The Lord looks on those who revere him,
on those who hope in his love,
to rescue their souls from death,
to keep them alive in famine. (R.)
3. Our soul is waiting for the Lord.
The Lord is our help and our shield.
May your love be upon us, O Lord,
as we place all our hope in you. (R.)

SECOND READING Hebrews 11:1-2, 8-19

(Shorter form: Hebrews 11:1-2, 8-12)

A reading from the letter to the Hebrews.

Only faith can guarantee the blessings that we
hope for, or prove the existence of the realities
that at present remain unseen. It was for faith
that our ancestors were commended.

It was by faith that Abraham obeyed the
call to set out for a country that was the
inheritance given to him and his descendants,
and that he set out without knowing where he
was going. By faith he arrived, as a foreigner,
in the Promised Land, and lived there as if in
a strange country, with Isaac and Jacob, who
were heirs with him of the same promise.
They lived there in tents while he looked
forward to a city founded, designed and built
by God.

It was equally by faith that Sarah, in spite
of being past the age, was made able to
conceive, because she believed that he who
had made the promise would be faithful to it.
Because of this, there came from one man,
and one who was already as good as dead
himself, more descendants than could be
counted, as many as the stars of heaven or the
grains of sand on the seashore.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!
Blessed are you, Father,
Lord of heaven and earth,
for revealing the mysteries of the kingdom
to mere children.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Luke 12:32-48

(For shorter form, read between > <)

A reading from the holy Gospel according to
Luke.

>Jesus said to his disciples:< "There is
no need to be afraid, little flock, for it has
pleased your Father to give you the kingdom.

"Sell your possessions and give alms.
Get yourselves purses that do not wear out,
treasure that will not fail you, in heaven
where no thief can reach it and no moth
destroy it. For where your treasure is, there
will your heart be also.

>"See that you are dressed for action and
have your lamps lit. Be like men waiting for
their master to return from the wedding feast,
ready to open the door as soon as he comes
and knocks. Happy those servants whom the
master finds awake when he comes. I tell you
solemnly, he will put on an apron, sit them
down at table and wait on them. It may be in
the second watch he comes, or in the third,
but happy those servants if he finds them
ready. You may be quite sure of this, that if
the householder had known at what hour the

burglar would come, he would not have let
anyone break through the wall of his house.
You too must stand ready, because the Son
of Man is coming at an hour you do not
expect."<

Peter said, "Lord, do you mean this parable
for us, or for everyone?" The Lord replied,
"What sort of steward, then, is faithful and
wise enough for the master to place him over
his household to give them their allowance
of food at the proper time? Happy that
servant if his master's arrival finds him at
this employment. I tell you truly, he will place
him over everything he owns. But as for the
servant who says to himself, 'My master
is taking his time coming', and sets about
beating the menservants and the maids, and
eating and drinking and getting drunk, his
master will come on a day he does not expect
and at an hour he does not know. The master
will cut him off and send him to the same fate
as the unfaithful.

"The servant who knows what his master
wants, but has not even started to carry out
those wishes, will receive very many strokes
of the lash. The one who did not know, but
deserves to be beaten for what he has done,
will receive fewer strokes. When a man has
had a great deal given him, a great deal will
be demanded of him; when a man has had a
great deal given him on trust, even more will
be expected of him."

>The Gospel of the Lord. <

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in God,
the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
(all bow during the next two lines)

who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of God the
Father almighty;
from there he will come to judge the living
and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting.
Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Be pleased, O Lord, to accept the offerings of
your Church,
for in your mercy you have given them to be
offered
and by your power you transform them
into the mystery of our salvation.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

O Jerusalem, glorify the Lord,
who gives you your fill of finest wheat.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

May the communion in your Sacrament
that we have consumed, save us, O Lord,
and confirm us in the light of your truth.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.