

How to use the Mercy Partners Prayer Resource

About the Prayer Resource

The Prayer Resource contains twelve prayers focused on the Parables of Jesus.



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For ease of use, the prayer resource is presented in a folder which contains 10 copies of each of the twelve prayers, and an Acknowledgement of Country.

The prayer cards contain the parable, a reading/reflection on the parable, a follow up reflection/discussion question as well as a quote from *Fratelli Tutti* and a prayer (references are included for all sources).

Prayer is essential at the commencement of meetings in a Catholic ministry for focus, to reinforce Catholic identity and to call God's blessings on the proceedings. Prayer time is also formative as it allows those present to examine aspects of life, faith and experience.

Jesus Taught them in Parables

There is a saying among storytellers: The story begins when the teller stops talking. Jesus is a master teacher and a master storyteller. When we read the synoptic Gospels, we see much of Jesus' teaching coming in story form, as parables. By their nature, parables are meant to involve hearers and challenge them to change their perspective, their hearts, and their behaviour. The parables invite us to live in a new way, in a way worthy of the Gospel. (Getty-Sullivan, M. *Parables of the Kingdom*. 2007. p.1).

We need to keep the reality reflected in the parables before us. And we don't have to get too psychological, spiritual, personal – or even theological – to understand the reality of these stories. We do need open ears and open minds and open hearts. For the parables don't simply recount a clever tale. They start out that way, grounded in the most commonplace experiences and locations, but then they jerk the rug from under us, turning our world upside down and challenging some of our basic assumptions about ourselves, our neighbours, our world, our God... and ultimately, of course, the insights and enlightenment they provide encourage us – drive us! – to change our way of being human, of being Christian. (McKenna, M. *Parables: The Arrows of God*. 1994. p.2).

**When
have you
experienced a
change in perspective
on what it means
to be a
Christian?**

**May the words
of the parables inspire
us to live in new ways worthy
of the Gospel call to mercy and
compassion.**

**May our hearts be opened to seeing
and responding to the call of love.**

**May our ears hear the cries
of the vulnerable.**

**Jesus, teacher, help us to accept
your invitation to become
fully human in our service
of others.**

Amen

Parable of the Sower

He began to teach them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them: "Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and it sprang up quickly, since it had no depth of soil. And when the sun rose, it was scorched; and since it had no root, it withered away. Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. Other seed fell into good soil and brought forth grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirty and sixty and a hundredfold." And he said, "Let anyone with ears to hear listen!" (Mark 4:2-9)

The challenge is up to the seed. All the warmth and water in the world won't create another plant unless the seed's husk is broken and shed... The inner home of humans is a lot like the heart of a seed. Like seeds, we have great potential for receiving the word of God, for becoming who we are meant to be. Deep within us there are many gifts and virtues that have never been sown. (Rupp, J. *Fresh Bread*. 1995. p.70).

If this seed has been sown in us for years, then sooner or later we must become the sower and go out into the world, the other fields, and sow there what has been sown in us. After the resurrection, Jesus' first words to his disciples when he breaks into their locked room are, *Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me so I send you.* We are the adult children of God, called to become not just seed for the bread, but seed for the sowing and the sower. This is the job, the mission and vocation that has been entrusted to all of us by the resurrection. (McKenna, M. *Parables: The Arrows of God*. 1994. p.42).

Creator God

**Help us to be grateful
for the seeds planted
and nurtured in us.**

**Enable us to make the most
of life's sunshine and rain
to grow and be fruitful.**

**May we become seed for the
sowing of your Kingdom
of justice, mercy,
compassion and love.**

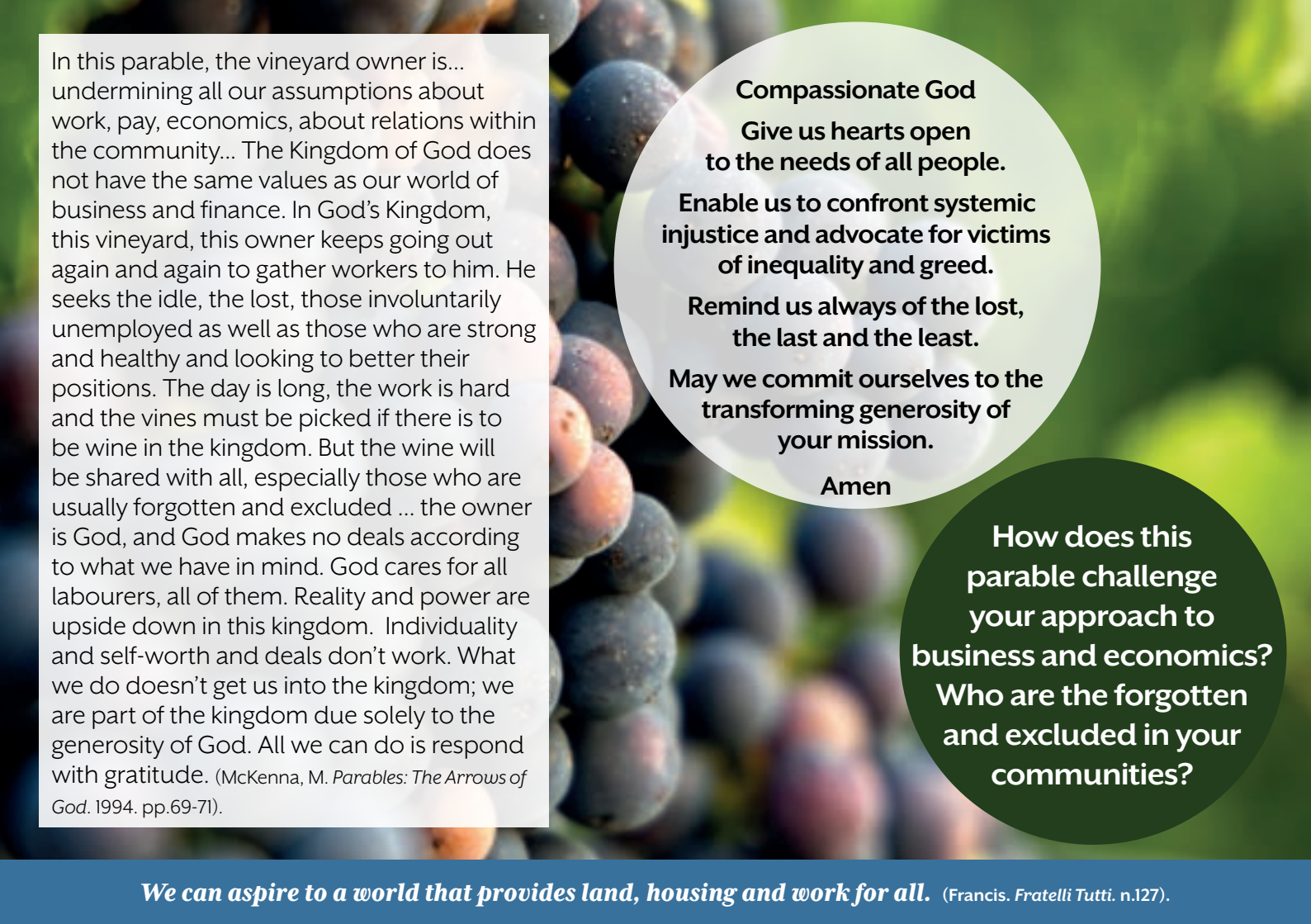
Amen

**What
has been
planted and
nurtured in you
that you have
passed on?**

**... it is truly noble to place our hope in the hidden power of the seeds of goodness we sow,
and thus to initiate processes whose fruits will be reaped by others.** (Francis. *Fratelli Tutti*. n.196).

Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard

“For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire labourers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the labourers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. When he went out, about nine o’clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace; and he said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.’ So they went. When he went out again about noon and about three o’clock, he did the same. And about five o’clock he went out and found others standing around; and he said to them, ‘Why are you standing here idle all day?’ They said to him, ‘Because no one has hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard.’ When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, ‘Call the labourers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first.’ When those hired about five o’clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage. Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage. And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, saying, ‘These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.’ But he replied to one of them, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?’ So, the last will be first, and the first will be last.” (Matthew 20:1-16)



In this parable, the vineyard owner is... undermining all our assumptions about work, pay, economics, about relations within the community... The Kingdom of God does not have the same values as our world of business and finance. In God's Kingdom, this vineyard, this owner keeps going out again and again to gather workers to him. He seeks the idle, the lost, those involuntarily unemployed as well as those who are strong and healthy and looking to better their positions. The day is long, the work is hard and the vines must be picked if there is to be wine in the kingdom. But the wine will be shared with all, especially those who are usually forgotten and excluded ... the owner is God, and God makes no deals according to what we have in mind. God cares for all labourers, all of them. Reality and power are upside down in this kingdom. Individuality and self-worth and deals don't work. What we do doesn't get us into the kingdom; we are part of the kingdom due solely to the generosity of God. All we can do is respond with gratitude. (McKenna, M. *Parables: The Arrows of God*. 1994. pp.69-71).

Compassionate God

**Give us hearts open
to the needs of all people.**

**Enable us to confront systemic
injustice and advocate for victims
of inequality and greed.**

**Remind us always of the lost,
the last and the least.**

**May we commit ourselves to the
transforming generosity of
your mission.**

Amen

**How does this
parable challenge
your approach to
business and economics?
Who are the forgotten
and excluded in your
communities?**

Parable of the Lost Coin

“What woman having ten silver coins, if she loses one of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbours, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.’ Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.” (Luke 15:8-10)

The Lost Coin is one of a collection of lost and found parables in Luke's Gospel: the woman, the shepherd and the merciful father are all images of God.

The story of the woman's search, although very brief, is detailed: she lights a lamp, sweeps the house, searches carefully. The woman is focused. She cannot interrupt her search until she finds the coin and puts it back with the others. But as Jesus' listeners can imagine her overflowing gratitude for what has been lost, so, we are told, there will be rejoicing among the angels of God over one sinner who repents. Commentators have noted that 'repenting' here in Luke seems to indicate the mere act of being found. (Getty-Sullivan. 2007. *Parables of the Kingdom*. p.153).

Despite the minimal value of the coin, the housewife commits herself wholeheartedly to finding it... Her dedication and joy, and not the nominal value of the coin, is actually what confers real value. A coin is inanimate, which underscores even more that conversion is not conceived of as a human response but as an action of grace by God... The housewife searches for the individual coin because of the value it has for her and not because it is similar to the other drachmas. (Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelisation. *The Parables of Mercy*. 2015. p.36).

**Remind us
God of Grace and Mercy**

**that every person we meet
is precious, worthy and valuable.**

**Inspire us to work with dedication
and passion to protect and nurture life.**

**Give us compassionate hearts
to change the way we view others
and guide us in love
to seek the lost.**

Amen

**How can
your ministry
reinforce the
dignity and value
of every
person?**

We cannot be indifferent to suffering; we cannot allow anyone to go through life as an outcast. (Francis. *Fratelli Tutti*. n.68).

Parable of the Sheep and the Shepherd

“What do you think? If a shepherd has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. So it is not the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little ones should be lost.” (Matthew 18:12-14)

Jesus' parable is paradoxical... the paradox is found in the question that Jesus asks to describe the shepherd's choice. In terms of who would make such a choice, no-one would really leave ninety-nine sheep in the desert to look for a missing one because he would risk losing the ninety-nine... without any assurance of finding the missing one. The paradoxical manner in which the shepherd acts explains Jesus' approach... (Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelisation. *The Parables of Mercy*. 2015. p.34).

The little ones, the lowly... those of no account, expendable, the least, not counted, uncared about, shunted to the side, these are the first of the children of God. This image of the children of God includes all of those in society without power... the one-third of the human race that at any one time is homeless, landless, without a country, migrant, on the move. They are those who fall through the cracks in nations, organisations and church. The lowly are those who have no say in the decision-making processes, no political clout, no access to money... (McKenna, M. *Parables: The Arrows of God*. 1994. p.79).

**Where
have you seen
the practice of
radical
inclusivity?**

Good Shepherd

**Inspire us to seek ways to
include everyone in our
communities.**

To recognise exclusion and othering.

To hear the cries of those made vulnerable.

**To consider the impact of loneliness
and powerlessness.**

**To act with compassion,
justice and hospitality always.**

**Good Shepherd, give us hearts
for your kingdom of love.**

Amen

Our love for others, for who they are, moves us to seek the best for their lives. (Francis. *Fratelli Tutti*. n.94).

Parable of the Merciful Father

Jesus said, “There was a man who had two sons. The younger said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.’ So he divided his property between them... the younger son gathered all he had and travelled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place... and he began to be in need. He hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.”’... While he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him... the father said to his slaves, ‘Quickly, bring out a robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get the fatted calf and kill it, let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!’ And they began to celebrate.

Now his elder son was in the field... he heard music and dancing. He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. He replied, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.’ Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. But he answered, ‘Listen! For years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!’ Then the father said, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.’” (Luke 15:11-32)

This parable is aimed at the hearts of people who have lost hope and whose despair is expressed in the constant repetition of lifestyles that cannot bring happiness... Going into a far country in search of happiness was a tragedy because true security, independence, and affection were all present in his father's house and the prodigal son did not know it. (Keating, T. *Meditations on the Parables of Jesus*. 2010. p.52).

The story invites the audience to feel the older brother's anger and maybe recognise in themselves several aspects of his resistance: the 'contract' mentality, the concern over property squandered, the resentment that others are getting favoured treatment instead of what they seem to deserve. It leaves the question: Well, where are you in the end? Inside, joining in the celebration, or stuck outside, hearing the music and dancing but too angry to go in? (Byrne, B. *The Hospitality of God*. 2015. p.147).

**May forgiveness be
at the heart of all that we do:
in our thoughts, words and deeds.**

**May we seek:
paths of reconciliation and respect
in times of conflict,
paths of compassion and understanding
when there is hurt**

**paths of justice and empathy for those
who are marginalised and excluded.**

**God of love, give us eyes, ears
and hearts for forgiveness.**

Amen

**Where
have you
seen radical
forgiveness
cause anger in
others?**

Kindness facilitates the quest for consensus; it opens new paths where hostility and conflict would burn all bridges.

(Francis. *Fratelli Tutti*. n.224).

Parable of the Judge and the Widow

Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart. He said, “In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people. In that city there was a widow who kept coming to him and saying, ‘Grant me justice against my opponent.’ For a while he refused; but later he said to himself, ‘Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming.’” And the Lord said, “Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long in helping them? I tell you, he will quickly grant justice to them.” (Luke 18:1-8)

According to the social hierarchy of Jesus' time, the judge is a symbol of maximum power, especially in an environment characterised by people's illiteracy and scant familiarity with the law... At the other end of the scale there is the widow whose status, together with the status of orphans, represents the most precarious of human conditions... the height of power and the lowest point of powerlessness are juxtaposed here. In addition to not fearing or believing in the God of Israel, he (the judge) renders judgement according to his own pleasure. More than being a dishonest judge, he is an unjust judge who lacks a compassionate heart because he does not believe in God. (Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelisation. *The Parables of Mercy*. 2015. pp.66-67).

This parable addresses the temptation to give up hope and lose heart in the midst of the evils of the time... The parable hardly means to suggest that God needs to be worn down like the judge. Basically, it commends an attitude of trust in God that would motivate such persistence... The parable offers a sharp challenge in a world where so much injustice prevails and where the poor, like the widow, continue to cry out for justice day and night. Those whose actions or inertia allow the world to remain for the majority, an unjust and inhospitable place, must reckon with the truth that God is a God of justice. (Byrne, B. *The Hospitality of God*. 2015. p.159).

**When we need
help and hope and heart,**

**Strengthen us God
of patience and mercy:**

**To persist in our actions for
justice and compassion,**

To look out for those who suffer,

**To slow down and look for ways
of finding joy and peace,**

**To turn our hearts and minds to you,
and let your love reflect in the
way we live and respond to
our world.**

Amen

**When have
you felt like
giving up hope in
the midst of the
evils of
the time?**

Hope can... make life more beautiful and worthwhile. Let us continue, then, to advance along the paths of hope.

(Francis. *Fratelli Tutti*. n.55).

Parable of the Good Samaritan

But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbour?” Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while travelling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, ‘Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.’ Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?” He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.” (Luke 10:29-37)

Centuries of holding together the adjective 'good' and the noun 'Samaritan' have dulled us to the explosive tension of the phrase in the world of Jesus... The story compels its (Jewish) audience to disentangle from the word 'Samaritan' the inevitable label 'bad', to hold together the previously antipathetic notions 'Samaritan' and 'good'... The Samaritan in the parable did not see 'a Jew' or an alien. He simply saw a fellow human being in dire need. His multiple actions of care and kindness flowed from that vision. This is the fundamental transformation that the parable, then as now, seeks to promote. (Byrne, B. *The Hospitality of God*. 2015. pp.114-116).

... the Good Samaritan was not intended by Jesus as a simple example story, a straightforward moral lesson, a positive paradigm for compassionate behaviour. The story presumes that a compassionate response is the proper response... Rather it is better understood as a challenge parable, a story that challenges listeners to think long and hard about their social prejudices, their cultural presumptions, and, yes, even their most sacred religious traditions. (Crossan, J.D. *The Power of Parable*. 2013. p.62).

**What
contemporary
social prejudices
are challenged
by Jesus in this
parable?**

**Jesus,
storyteller.**
**May we accept your
challenge to 'go and do likewise'.
To be true Good Samaritans in our
support for those who are not like us.
For those who are marginalised because
of cultural or religious beliefs.
For those who are shunned for social
transgressions.
For those who don't fit in.
Embolden us to notice those who
have fallen by the wayside
and to act!
Amen**

The story of the Good Samaritan is constantly being repeated. (Francis. *Fratelli Tutti*. n.71).

Parable of the Leaven

And again Jesus said, “To what should I compare the kingdom of God? It is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened.” (Luke 13:20-21)

This parable presents a feminine image of God, and if the kingdom is like leaven, kneaded by the woman, ... Jesus' teaching is absolutely revolutionary. In the ancient Israelite world, leaven – today's yeast – was a symbol of corruption. Modern English usage has given it a positive sense – fermentation and new life. But for the people of Israel, leaven was the archetype of corruption... Unleavened bread was the proper symbol of the holy, the sacred, the feast. Why was leaven regarded as such a lively symbol of corruption? In ancient times leaven was made by placing a piece of bread in a dark, damp place until it rotted and stank... The Jewish religion of the time identified everyday life with corruption, and the sacred with temple rituals and the great feasts. Jesus teaches us that everyday life is the place of the sacred... Everyday life is the arena where the kingdom is most powerful. (Keating, T. *Meditations on the Parables of Jesus*. 2019. pp.19-21).

The kingdom of God exerts its influence from within, not from without. Yeast makes dough rise from within. God first changes the heart of a person, and that internal change has external manifestations. The gospel influence in a culture works the same way: Christians within a culture act as agents of change, slowly transforming that culture from within. (accessed at gotquestions.org/parable-leaven.html).

**May we
be leaven
in our communities,
transforming cultures from
within.**

**May our words and actions
inspire and support others to walk
the gospel paths of justice, compassion,
forgiveness, peace and hope.**

**Strengthen us God of love,
to be agents of change,
social advocacy,
and reconciliation.**

Amen

**In what ways
is your ministry
a place of
the sacred?**

Precisely because it entails esteem and respect for others, once kindness has become a culture within society it transforms lifestyles, relationships and the way ideas are discussed and compared. (Francis. *Fratelli Tutti*. n.224).

Parable of the Rich Man and the Beggar Lazarus

“There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man’s table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores. The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. In Hades, where he was being tormented, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side. He called out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in agony in these flames.’ But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony. Besides all this, between you and us a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who might want to pass from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to us.’ He said, ‘Then, father, I beg you to send him to my father’s house—for I have five brothers—that he may warn them, so that they will not also come into this place of torment.’ Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them.’ He said, ‘No, Father Abraham; but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’ He said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.’” (Luke 16:19-31)

The rich man is clothed as a ruler, but his name is not recorded; the poor man covered in sores has a name, and it is the only name recorded in all of Jesus' parables... The law of counterpoint is already set in motion since the rich man, clothed like a king, is destined to anonymity while the poor man has a name that is recorded for eternity... When the rich man is in Hades and sees Lazarus in Abraham's bosom, he recognises him and calls him by name twice. He thus condemns himself through his own words. He knew exactly who Lazarus was during his earthly life but had always ignored him... Lazarus is hungry, but the rich man does not give him even the leftovers from his table; he is sick and full of sores, but the rich man did not visit him; he is naked but the rich man did not clothe him; he is a pilgrim who has come to the front door but the rich man did not show him hospitality. (Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelisation. *The Parables of Mercy*. 2015. pp.55, 59).

The kingdom of God in Jesus' preaching presupposes solidarity with the community and its needs. In this light we begin to see what was wrong with the rich man's behaviour. No particular misdeeds of his are listed. The parable indicates that it was not his wealth that was the cause of his undoing but his use of it. He failed to share with the community the abundance that God had given him. (Keating. T. *Meditations on the Parables of Jesus*. 2010. p.109).

**We give thanks
for the lessons of the
parables.**

**May Jesus' dream of a world where
wealth is shared inspire us in our work.**

**Let us be open to the spirit of mercy and
compassion which drove Jesus' ministry
and give thanks to those who have walked
before us in courageous service of the
mission.**

**Loving God, open our hearts
and minds to the need for
a kinder and fairer world.
Amen**

**Who are
the Lazarus
figures in
your life and
ministry?**

If one person lacks what is necessary to live with dignity, it is because another person is detaining it.

(Francis. Fratelli Tutti. n.119).

Parable of the Mustard Seed

He also said: “With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.” (Mark 4:30-32)

Jesus proposed this parable. 'What is the kingdom of God really like? It is like a mustard seed' – proverbially the smallest and most insignificant of all seeds – 'that someone took and sowed in his garden.' For an alert hearer of Jesus' day, the detail about the garden would be a tip-off. In the Jewish view of the world, order was identified with holiness and disorder with uncleanness. Hence there were very strict rules about what could be planted in a household garden... A mustard plant was forbidden... because it was fast spreading and would tend to invade the veggies. In stating that this man planted a mustard seed... the hearers are alerted to the fact that he was doing something illegal. An unclean image thus becomes the starting point for Jesus' vision of the kingdom of God... Steeped in their cultural images of the great cedar of Lebanon, the hearers would be expecting the mustard seed... to grow into a mighty apocalyptic tree. Jesus' point is exactly the opposite. It just becomes a bush. (Keating, T. *Meditations on the Parables of Jesus*. 2010. pp.7-8).

This parable suggests that... God's greatest works are not done on a grandiose level. Not in cathedrals, big buildings or large mausoleums... The kingdom is in everyday life with its ups and downs, and above all, in its insignificance. (Keating, T. *Meditations on the Parables of Jesus*. 2010. p.10).

**Where
have you
experienced
actions which seem
small but have
the greatest
impact?**

**Jesus,
teacher.**

**Grant us the courage to read
your parables with open ears,
open hearts and open minds.**

**Awaken us to new ways of building
community – ways that are inclusive and
welcoming.**

**Strengthen us for service and instil in us the
courage to confront injustice in all its forms.**

**Interrupt our self-absorption with
reminders of the needs which exist in our
communities.**

**Fill us with gratitude for the gifts we
have been given – kingdom gifts
for building a kinder world.**

Amen

Let us take an active part in renewing and supporting our troubled societies. (Francis. *Fratelli Tutti*. n.77).

Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector

He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt: “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, was praying thus, ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income.’ But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even look up to heaven, but was beating his breast and saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other; for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted.” (Luke 18:9-14)

Prayer, as the Pharisee failed to see, consists not in our telling God how things are, but in allowing God to communicate to us the divine vision of life and reality. Two people came up to God's house to pray. Only one found the hospitality that was there. (Byrne, B. *The Hospitality of God*. 2015. p.161).

For centuries this parable has been interpreted as a criticism of the Jewish religion: the Pharisee equals the Jews and the tax collector the Christians. Actually, Jesus intends to set the scene of two contrasting ways of relating to God and neighbour that can happen in any religious sphere... The risk of considering oneself guiltless and the need to downgrade others to exalt oneself is unfortunately present throughout all of humanity... (Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelisation. *The Parables of Mercy*. 2015. p.80).

**Where
have you seen
the tendency to
downgrade others
to exalt the
self?**

**May prayer fire
our hearts into loving
action.**

**May prayer encourage us to untie the
knots of busyness which bind our lives.**

**May prayer mend the nets of pain and
despair which hinder our efforts to reach out.**

**May prayer embolden us to the radical love,
compassion, forgiveness and kindness called
for in the parables.**

**May prayer enrich our relationships and
our connections with others.**

**May prayer bring us closer to you
God of patience and welcome.**

Amen

The mere sum of individual interests is not capable of generating a better world for the whole human family.

(Francis. Fratelli Tutti. n.105).