

THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS WITH HELEN

31 AUGUST 2025

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

First Reading: Ecclesiasticus 3:19-21, 30-31

Second Reading: Hebrews 12:18-19, 22-24a

Gospel: Luke: 14: 1, 7-14

THOUGHTS FROM THE WORD

Our First Reading this week is from the Book of Ecclesiasticus. Ecclesiasticus is a collection of wisdom teachings from Ben Sirach and it was written about 200 years before the birth of Christ. A major theme of the writings is the justice of God who punishes evil but is compassionate and rewards wisdom in the way life is lived. The root of the term Ecclesiasticus is "church". The writings therefore are teachings to create and support unity in community.

Our text is from a section concerned with humility and charity. Pride is viewed as an evil growth. All who live humbly and who listen and learn will find favour with both God and humankind. As teachers we can relate to Ben Sirach's observation that a student who displays an attentive ear is the Sage's (teacher's) dream. We cannot learn wisdom if we are puffed up with pride and a sense of our own importance and entitlement.

After all, as Paul reminds us in the Letter to the Hebrews, it is Christ's sacrifice of himself that has brought about a new Covenant, a new relationship with God. Through Jesus, we are made perfect. We have a new status as first-born sons and daughters. This is the only source and cause for our pride.

Richard Rohr from the Centre for Action and Contemplation (2025), describes Jesus as a wisdom teacher who liberates us from the ties of the world and the lies we fool ourselves with. His teachings have the power to enable us to live life in fullness and happiness today and into eternity. Mediterranean society in the time of Jesus was based on a patronage system that bred toadying (what we might call sucking up). People from lesser social classes courted favour from the rich or privileged.

In the Gospel text, again Jesus teaches us to look with the eyes of God and not from a human perspective. Luke describes a simple scene.

Jesus is invited to a meal. He is watched by the others around him but he is also watching them. He sees the way people take their places according to their status.

Better to be raised up in status than to be embarrassed at having to take a lower place, Jesus urges his disciples to take the humble path. The second part of this week's text focuses on the need to seek favour from others, wanting to find favour from patrons. Jesus teaches his followers to be free from the regard of others and to be generous and open handed with hospitality. Jesus' guest list invites all to table-fellowship: the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind... all those on the margins. Jesus was very Woke! His followers should be too: always alert to the opportunity for invitation, welcome and inclusion.

As leaders in Catholic Education today what does humility and charity mean? As Pope Francis is reported to have stated, "The world tells us to seek success, power and money; GOD tells us to seek humility, service and love".

Jesus teaches what we might call emotional intelligence: to lead with justice, acting with good intentions within the industrial award and sound human resources management. To develop a listening and compassionate heart, not relying on titles and honours looking to approval from others. Instead, relying on one's own sense of worth and achievement. In responding to the Word of God we will exercise humble and charitable leadership, looking towards the growth and good of others, especially our staff, students and families in our care.

MEDITATION

As a leader Pope Leo XIV is described as a "quiet achiever" who carries forward the Gospel spirit of Pope Francis, emphasising humility and a focus on serving the people.

- In your quiet time this week, think about the many ways you demonstrate this kind of leadership through your own role.
- How is your role a call, a mission, a vocation? How would you describe your approach to leadership?
- Give appreciation and thanks to God for all you have received.

INTERCESSIONS

LEADER: We bring our prayers and our needs to our God who leads us with humility and charity.

RESPONSE: Loving Presence, enable us to lead with humility and charity.

LEADER: As we strive to welcome all into community, we pray:

RESPONSE: Loving Presence, enable us to lead with humility and charity.

LEADER: As we work to fulfil our mission in the world today, we pray:

RESPONSE: Loving Presence, enable us to lead with humility and charity.

LEADER: As we journey towards a Church of compassion and wholeness, we pray:

RESPONSE: Loving Presence, enable us to lead with humility and charity.

LEADER: As we create a community of the People of God, harnessing a variety of spiritual gifts in laity and clergy, we pray:

RESPONSE: Loving Presence, enable us to lead with humility and charity.

LEADER: As we work for peace in our lives, our families and our community, we pray:

RESPONSE: Loving Presence, enable us to lead with humility and charity.

LEADER: As we offer our personal needs to you, we pray:

RESPONSE: Loving Presence, enable us to lead with humility and charity.

Loving God we trust in your teaching to lead with humility and charity. We bring our prayers to you and humbly ask that they are answered through Jesus Christ. Amen

REFERENCE

Pope Francis (2025) *Quotes*. Google search Thursday 14 August 2025.

Rohr, Richard (OFM) (2025) *Centre for Action and Contemplation Newsletter*. Friday 8 August 2025.



Dr Helen Healy (PhD; M.Ed; Grad. Dip. RE; B.Ed; Dip. T.) is the recently retired principal of St Mary Magdalen's School in Chadstone Victoria. She is an educator with 45 years' experience in school leadership. Helen contributed to a number of publications and RE curricula for Melbourne and Hobart Archdioceses and worked for many years in the professional development of religious educators. Helen's doctoral thesis married her two great loves of teacher development and religious education. Helen also served as Vice President of the VACPSP and as an ACPPA Board Member.

Helen has three adult children and four grandchildren. She lives with her husband in Edithvale, Victoria.