

Reading for Thursday in the First Week of Lent

13th March 2025

First reading

Esther 4:17m, 17o-17q, 17x-17z

‘I have no helper but you, Lord.’

Esther the queen seized with deathly anxiety, fled to the Lord; and she prayed to the Lord God of Israel and said: ‘O my Lord, you only are our King; help me, who am alone and have no helper but you, for my danger is in my hand. Ever since I was born I have heard in the tribe of my family that you, O Lord, took Israel out of all the nations and our fathers from among all their ancestors for an everlasting inheritance and that you did for them all that you promised. Remember, O Lord; make yourself known in this time of our affliction and give me courage, O King of the gods and Master of all dominion! Put eloquent speech in my mouth before the lion and turn his heart to hate the man who is fighting against us, so that there may be an end of him and those who agree with him. But save us by your hand and help me, who am alone and have no helper but you, O Lord.’

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 138(137):1-2a. 2b-3. 3. 7c-8. R3a

On the day I called, you answered me, O Lord.

I thank you, Lord, with all my heart;

you have heard the words of my mouth.

In the presence of the angels I praise you.

I bow down towards your holy Temple.

I give thanks to your name

for your merciful love and your faithfulness.

For you have exalted over all

your name and your promise.

On the day I called, you answered me;

you increased the strength of my soul.

With your right hand you save me;

the Lord will accomplish this for me.

O Lord, your merciful love is eternal;

discard not the work of your hands.

Gospel Acclamation

Psalm 51(50):12a, 14a

Glory and praise to you, O Christ.

Create a pure heart for me, O God;

restore in me the joy of your salvation.

Glory and praise to you, O Christ.

Gospel

Matthew 7:7-12

‘Everyone who asks receives.’

At that time: Jesus said to his disciples: ‘Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your

children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him! So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.'

Short reflection on the reading for today

Jesus encourages us to be seekers, 'ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you.' What are we to seek? What should we ask for? The simple answer is to seek the Lord and his will for our lives. Many such seekers are mentioned in the gospels. Zacchaeus comes to mind among many others. His story reminds us that the Lord whom we seek is always seeking us. At table with Zacchaeus, Jesus spoke of himself as the Son of Man who came to seek out and to save the lost.

Because we can never fully find the Lord this side of eternity, we will always be in the role of seekers after him. We are always on a journey towards the Lord, without ever fully arriving at our destination. Like Abraham we are always setting on a journey in response to the Lord's call. In the words of Saint Paul in his letter to the Philippians, we strain 'forward to what lies ahead'; 'we press on towards the goal', or in the words of the letter to the Hebrews, 'we run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus.' Jesus assures us in the gospel that if we remain faithful to that search of the Lord and the journey it gives rise to, we will be given 'good things' by God. In our seeking the Lord, we open ourselves to his many gifts and graces.