

Reading for Weekday in Ordinary Time

17th July 2026

First reading

Isaiah 38:1-6, 21-22, 7-8

‘I have heard your prayer; I have seen your tears.’

In those days Hezekiah became sick and was at the point of death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came to him, and said to him, ‘Thus says the Lord: Set your house in order, for you shall die, you shall not recover.’ Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the Lord, and said, ‘Please, O Lord, remember how I have walked before you in faithfulness and with a whole heart, and have done what is good in your sight.’ And Hezekiah wept bitterly.

Then the word of the Lord came to Isaiah: ‘Go and say to Hezekiah, Thus says the Lord, the God of David your father: I have heard your prayer; I have seen your tears. Behold, I will add fifteen years to your life. I will deliver you and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria, and will defend this city.

Now Isaiah had said, ‘Let them take a cake of figs and apply it to the boil, that he may recover.’ Hezekiah also had said, ‘What is the sign that I shall go up to the house of the Lord?’

‘This shall be the sign to you from the Lord, that the Lord will do this thing that he has promised: Behold, I will make the shadow cast by the declining sun on the dial of Ahaz turn back ten steps.’ So the sun turned back on the dial the ten steps by which it had declined.

Responsorial Psalm

Is 38:10. 11. 12a-d. 16. R cf. 17b

The canticle of Hezekiah

You, Lord, have saved my soul lest it perish.

I said: In the midst of my days I must depart.

I am consigned to the gates of Sheol for the rest of my years.

I said, I shall not see the Lord in the land of the living;

no more shall I look on the human race, on those who inhabit the world.

My dwelling is pulled up and removed from me like a shepherd’s tent;

he has rolled up my life like a weaver, who severs me from the last thread.

O Lord, in you my heart hopes, my spirit lives; heal me and give me life.

Gospel Acclamation

John 10:27

Alleluia, alleluia.

My sheep hear my voice, says the Lord,

and I know them, and they follow me.

Alleluia.

Gospel

Matthew 12:1-8

‘The Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath.’

At that time Jesus went through the cornfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck ears of corn and to eat. But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, ‘Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath.’ He said to them, ‘Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him to eat nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? Or have you not read in the Law how on the Sabbath the priests in the Temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless? I tell you, something greater than the Temple is here. And if you had known what this means, “I desire mercy, and not sacrifice”, you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath.’

Short reflection on the reading for today

The Pharisees in Christ's day cared more about legal regulations than on the basic purpose and meaning of religion. This made them suspicious of Jesus and sharp, and led them to many verbal clashes with him. As he and his hungry disciples walked through the fields on a Sabbath day, they began to pluck the heads of corn and eat them. This was not stealing, since the corn was standing free and unfenced, and farmers were encouraged to leave some portion for the poor at the edge of each field (Lev 19:9).

However, in the eyes of strict observers it violated the prohibition of all work on the Sabbath, and so they complained about it.

Jesus did not reject the traditional practices that had developed, insofar as they fostered a good quality of life. But he countered the objectors on their own grounds by citing biblical passages about David and referring to the work of priests on temple duty. The Scriptures, he says, do not endorse the strict interpretation made by the Pharisees. For if God "wants mercy, not sacrifice," then the Sabbath is better celebrated by affirming life than by ritual; indeed, life gives ritual its true meaning. The people in the temple, like David or the priests, are more important than the temple itself, so the disciples could act as they did for the sake of life. Since Jesus interpreted the Sabbath regulations so freely, then the later church concluded that he was "Lord of the Sabbath." Similarly, the same early church changed the Sabbath celebration from Saturday to Sunday.

Whether we live or die, are in the bloom of health or suffer from some illness, God wants life to be celebrated, and eventually to grant us eternal life in the heavenly Sabbath.