



*Light and
Love in the
darkness*

CELEBRATING AT HOME 26TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

*Disobedient obedience
& obedient disobedience
(Mt 21:28-32)*

This resource is presented by the Carmelites of Australia & Timor-Leste at a time when we cannot gather together as we usually do to celebrate the Eucharist. We are conscious that Christ is present not only in the Blessed Sacrament but also in the Scriptures and in our hearts. Even when we are on our own we remain part of the Body of Christ.

In the room you decide to use for this prayer you could have a lighted candle, a crucifix and the Bible. These symbols help keep us mindful of the sacredness of our time of prayer and can help us feel connected with our local worshipping communities.

This text is arranged with parts for a leader and for all to pray, but the leader's parts can be shared among those present.

As you use this prayer know that the Carmelites will be remembering in our prayer all the members of our family at this time.

CELEBRATING AT HOME

26TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

The Lord is here, present among us.

**We are gathered with the whole Church
in this moment of prayer.**

Preparing to hear the Word

We have been called by God
to be the Church,
**the Body of Christ and the Kingdom of God
in this world.**

Eternal God,
you show your mighty power
in mercy and forgiveness.

**May the power of your love be in our hearts
to bring your forgiveness and your kingdom
to all we meet.**

Scripture Reading (Matthew 21:28-32)

Jesus said to the chief priests and elders of the people, 'What is your opinion? A man had two sons. He went and said to the first, 'My boy, you go and work in the vineyard today.' He answered, 'I will not go,' but afterwards thought better of it and went. The man went and said the same thing to the second who answered, 'Certainly, Sir,' but did not go. Which of the two did the father's will?' 'The first,' they said. 'Jesus said to them, 'I tell you solemnly, tax collectors and prostitutes are making their way into the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you, a pattern of true righteousness, but you did not believe him, and yet the tax collectors and prostitutes did. Even after seeing that, you refused to think better of it and believe in him.

Reflection - *Disobedient obedience & obedient disobedience*

Over the next three Sundays we will listen to three parables where Jesus, having cleansed the temple, addresses the Jerusalem priests and elders. These "parables of judgement" voice God's judgement against Israel – especially her leaders – for their rejection of Jesus.

The message, however, is also for us.

In this Sunday's parable, the message could not be simpler: *action speaks louder than words.*

The tax collectors and prostitutes acted like the first son. Initially they said no to God, but hearing John the Baptist's preaching they converted and did what pleased God.

The chief priests and elders are like the second son. They too heard John's preaching and saw the responses of the tax collectors and prostitutes. They pretended acceptance of God, but refused to accept John as a messenger from God. It is the tax collectors and the prostitutes and not the leaders who will enter the Kingdom of God – because they have not done the will of the Father.

It is easy to say that we are going to do something to please someone. But the real honour comes in doing. If we really want to honour our God, we must find ways to do the will of God. Sometimes it won't be easy, sometimes it will put us out.

We are not called to 'police' God's mercy – to decide who is deserving of it and who is not. If we have truly heard the Word of God we will be more concerned about extending the reign of God's mercy and love to everyone, especially to those most despised in the world.

Prayers of Intercession

Listening attentively to your word,
make us into the living presence of Christ.

May we work with energy and love
and recognise you in one another.

May your vision light our eyes,
**your love warm our hearts
and your will fill our minds.**

Lord's Prayer

Following the teaching and example of Jesus,
we pray:

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.**

Thy kingdom come.

**Thy will be done on earth
as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread
and forgive us our trespasses**

as we forgive those who trespass against us.

**And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.**

Closing Prayer

God of goodness,
fill our eyes with your vision,
our hearts with your love,
and our minds with your will.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

About Matthew's Gospel

For most of the rest of this year we will read from Matthew's Gospel each Sunday. Matthew's Gospel, written about the year 85, is addressed to a community of converted Jews who lived in Syria-Palestine. They were going through a deep identity crisis concerning their past. When they accepted Jesus as the awaited Messiah, they continued to go to the synagogue and to observe the law and the ancient traditions. Moreover, they had a certain affinity with the Pharisees, and after the revolution of the Jews in Palestine against the Romans (65 to 72), they and the Pharisees were the only two groups to have survived the Roman oppression.

From the 80s, these Jewish brothers, Pharisees and Christians, only survivors, began to fight among themselves as to who had inherited the promises of the Old Testament. Each claimed to be the inheritors. Gradually, tension grew between them and they began to excommunicate each other. The Christians could no longer attend the synagogue and were cut off from their past. Each group began to regroup: the Pharisees in the synagogue, the Christians in church. This added to the identity problem of the community of Jewish Christians because it raised serious questions in need of urgent solutions. "Who has inherited the promises of the Old Testament, those of the synagogue or those of the church? On whose side is God? Who are really the people of God?"

Now, Matthew writes his Gospel to help these communities overcome their crisis and to find an answer to their problems. His Gospel is, first of all, a Gospel of revelation showing how Jesus is the true Messiah, the new Moses, the culmination of the whole of the history of the Old Testament and its promises. It is also the Gospel of consolation for those who felt excluded and persecuted by their Jewish brothers. Matthew wants to console and help them to overcome the trauma of the split. It is the Gospel of the new practice because it shows the way to achieve a new justice, greater than that of the Pharisees. It is the Gospel of openness and shows that the Good News of God that Jesus brought cannot be hidden, but must be placed on a lampstand so that it may enlighten the life of all peoples.