

Reflecting

On Sunday's Readings

October 2025

The following series is **free, downloadable small-group materials** based on each week's Mass readings and the seasons of the liturgical year. Each study provides an introductory reflection on some aspect of the readings or on personal spirituality. Each of the readings is provided along with a few questions designed to engage the heart and stimulate the group's discussion. These small-group materials will be provided on a continuing basis in monthly segments.

We would suggest the following 60-to-90 minutes format for the small group:

1. Open with a moment of quiet reflection and prayer.
2. Discuss the introductory reflection with a question or comment like, "What do you feel is important for us to grasp in this introduction?" or "What stood out to you from these opening paragraphs?" As the facilitator of the discussion be ready to share one or two things which were important to you from the introduction.
3. Have someone read the First Reading and ask several people to share their answers to the reflection questions. **Effective group-dynamic techniques should be used to further stimulate the discussion and affirm the participation.** (The booklet *A Facilitator's Guide* is available from Emmaus Journey to provide additional practical training for leading lively and informative small-group discussions.)
4. The Responsorial Psalm provides a reflective transition from the First Reading to the Gospel Reading, so have the Psalm read aloud. You may do this without additional comment, or you may want to draw their attention to something you feel is pertinent.
5. You can either read this week's Second Reading next and ask several people to share their answers to the reflection questions, or cover the Second Reading after you cover the Gospel Reading. The Second Reading does not always have a clear connection to the other Sunday Mass readings, **so do not feel like you need to force a connection.** However, you can provide an opportunity for the Holy Spirit to draw a connection by asking, "How do you see that this passage ties into the theme of the readings?"
6. Move on to the Gospel Reading, repeating the process by asking several people to share their answers to the reflection questions.
7. Approximately equal time for discussion should be given to each of the sections: Introduction, First Reading, Gospel Reading, and the Second Reading. Obviously, if one section is especially stimulating, you should give some additional time to discussing it.
8. Close the discussion with group prayer, using various prayer formats.

We trust that God will use these materials to make His Word more meaningful to you, both within the small group environment and during Mass as you hear Scripture read and taught. **We would appreciate knowing if you are using the *Reflecting on Sunday's Readings*, and would welcome your feedback, either through the Emmaus Journey web page form, or by direct e-mail.**

Sincerely,

Reflecting

On Sunday's Readings

THE TWENTY-SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME—October 5, 2025

Introduction: It is helpful to know the context of this week's Gospel reading in order to understand its meaning and application to our lives. In the previous verses, Luke 17:1-4, Jesus explains to the disciples, "*Take heed to yourselves; if your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him; and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, and says, 'I repent,' you must forgive him.*" These are very strong words that advise the disciples to be gracious and unrelenting in their forgiveness of another's sin, even if it means forgiving a person seven times a day.

Now most of us, probably not unlike the disciples, will tend to be pretty skeptical of a person's repentance if after the fourth or fifth time the same day they have committed the same sin and have repeatedly repented and asked for forgiveness, they then commit it again. Our tendency will be to be rather unconvinced, and probably pretty unforgiving. However, Jesus' warning and admonition, "you must forgive," is very compelling.

It is out of this dilemma that the disciples asked Jesus to, "increase our faith." We can hear the disciples thinking, "How can we believe in this person's repentance again when they have already violated our trust four or five times today? I don't have that much faith in this person's repentance, in my ability to forgive again, or in the power of forgiveness to bring about conversion in this person. If you want me to forgive this way, then you must increase my faith."

In response, Jesus points out to them that the power of faith is not based on the quantity of our faith but the quality. Whether it is accepting the reality of our own repentance and forgiveness after multiple failures, or accepting the repentance of another and granting them forgiveness after their multiple failures, it requires quality faith to believe that Jesus died for *all* sin, and that his forgiveness is *without limit*. **When we refuse to forgive, either our own sinfulness or another's, we deny the reality of forgiveness.** We basically confirm that repentance will go unrewarded, due to our lack of faith to fully forgive and trust in the power of redemption.

Humanly speaking this kind of sacrificial forgiving of numerous and oft repeated sins may occasion within us feelings of martyrdom and self-righteousness. After all, look how many times we have had to be merciful. Jesus anticipating this natural human response explains that a servant, when he has done his job, should not incur a sore arm by patting himself on the back. He has, after all, only done what was expected of him. The point for his disciples, and for us, is that we are servants of Christ. As his servants, the responsibility to carry the message of forgiveness and mercy to others is what he expects from us. After all, that is the essence of the Good News and of our Savior's purpose; forgiveness and redemption. So when we find an occasion to respond to someone's profession of repentance, it isn't our job to examine and analyze the sincerity of the repentance, but to find it in our heart to forgive once again. Offering that forgiveness freely to those we encounter is our job, our role, and our responsibility. It is what being a Christian servant of Christ is all about.

Fr. Henri Nouwen, in explaining the discipline of confession, also helps us understand the spiritual chemistry of forgiveness; "Confession and forgiveness are precisely the disciplines by which spiritualization and carnality can be avoided and true incarnation lived. Through confession, the dark powers are taken out of their carnal isolation, brought into the light, and made visible to the community. Through forgiveness they are disarmed and dispelled and a new integration between *body and spirit is made possible*." (From *In the Name of Jesus*) So along with praying for God to increase our faith, we should also pray that God will enable us to do our duty and exercise our faith by being forgiving—always.

First Reading — Habakkuk 1:2-3; 2:2-4

² O LORD, how long shall I cry for help, and thou wilt not hear? Or cry to thee "Violence!" and thou wilt not save? ³ Why dost thou make me see wrongs and look upon trouble? Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise. ...

^{2:2} And the LORD answered me: “Write the vision; make it plain upon tablets, so he may run who reads it. ³ For still the vision awaits its time; it hastens to the end—it will not lie. If it seem slow, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay. ⁴ Behold, he whose soul is not upright in him shall fail, but the righteous shall live by his faith.

1. What responsibility do the righteous have for taking the message to those who live in turmoil?

Responsorial Reading — Psalm 95:1-2, 6-9

¹ O come, let us sing to the LORD; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! ² Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise! ...

⁶ O come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker! ⁷ For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. O that today you would hearken to his voice! ⁸ Harden not your hearts, as at Meribah, as on the day at Massah in the wilderness, ⁹ when your fathers tested me, and put me to the proof, though they had seen my work

Second Reading — 2 Timothy 1:6-8, 13-14

⁶ Hence I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands; ⁷ for God did not give us a spirit of timidity but a spirit of power and love and self-control. Do not be ashamed then of testifying to our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel in the power of God, ... ¹³ Follow the pattern of the sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus; ¹⁴ guard the truth that has been entrusted to you by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us.

2. What is the hardest part about keeping your faith alive and vibrant?
3. What part does sharing in the suffering of Christ have to do with testifying about our Lord with power and effectiveness?

Gospel Reading — Luke 17:5-10

⁵ The apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith!”

⁶ And the Lord said, “If you had faith as a grain of mustard seed, you could say to this sycamine tree, ‘Be rooted up, and be planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you. ⁷ “Will any one of you, who has a servant plowing or keeping sheep, say to him when he has come in from the field, ‘Come at once and sit down at table’?

⁸ Will he not rather say to him, ‘Prepare supper for me, and gird yourself and serve me, till I eat and drink; and afterward you shall eat and drink’? ⁹ Does he thank the servant because he did what was commanded? ¹⁰ So you also, when you have done all that is commanded you, say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.’”

4. What changes have you seen in the quality and quantity of your faith during recent years?
5. Describe the difference between being a servant of Christ and occasionally serving Christ.
6. What attitudes are necessary to be a willing servant of Christ?

Reflecting

On Sunday's Readings

THE TWENTY-EIGHTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME—October 12, 2025

Introduction: Those who have contracted a serious illness or who have undergone a difficult operation recognize that during the recuperation process they had to not only recover physically but also cope emotionally and spiritually. For when ill health confronts us it is not uncommon for our thoughts to turn inward questioning God's love in allowing the medical condition. Quite often people search within asking, "Why me?" endeavoring to ascertain what sin they have committed that warrants such punishment. Naturally praying for God's intervention, they often question their own lack of faith when they do not receive the answers they expected. So, in the face of physical debilitation, emotional and spiritual debilitation often come as well. Sometimes these latter illnesses provide more and longer lasting difficulty than does the former.

In this week's Gospel reading Jesus encounters ten lepers who were in need of healing. **Ten lepers were cleansed, or cured, of their leprosy, but only one was healed.** When the ten cried out "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us," they were aware of their physical need to stop the decay and rotting of their flesh, and to restore the vibrancy to their body, which Jesus did. Whether it was because of the disease alone, or the social ostracism that came with leprosy, most of the ten seemed oblivious to the weightier sickness of their soul. Who knows, perhaps the emotional and spiritual sickness of the soul, the estrangement of their heart from God, was present long before they contracted leprosy. In any case, they cared enough for their physical well being to ask Jesus for mercy. Their lack of praise and thanks to God after being cleansed of their leprosy reflects that their emotional and spiritual healing was not complete. So though ten were cured, nine went away to be pronounced clear of leprosy, but they were oblivious to their leprosy of soul.

Only one, a Samaritan, was fully healed, body, mind, and soul. When he recognized that his leprosy was gone, he also recognized that this was a miracle and a gift from God. He could proceed no further in the cleansing process without turning back to Jesus to offer praise and thanks to God with a loud and exuberant voice. His emotional and spiritual healing was manifest by his faith, and his faith was manifest by his thanksgiving and praise. He not only was cured, but he also was healed, through-and-through.

This side of heaven we have no assurance that God will *always* cure us, but we can be fully confident that he will always heal us, if necessary, even in the midst of our illness. Spiritually and emotionally, through faith in Jesus, we are able to thrive even as our outer shell perishes. Perhaps Saint Pope John Paul II in his latter years of ill health better illustrated this truth than anyone in my lifetime. The best time and place to discover this healing faith is not after ill health has invaded our bodies but during the times of wellbeing. As Saint Paul suggests, we need to constantly "rekindle the gift of God" that we have received, and not allow our faith to remain dormant during times of wellbeing. Saint Elizabeth Seton encouraged this practice. Early in her faith as a Catholic Christian she wrote, "We must pray literally without ceasing—without ceasing; in every occurrence and employment of our lives." In writing to one of her children she encouraged, "You know I mean that prayer of the heart which is independent of place or situation, or which is, rather, a habit of lifting up the heart to God, as in a constant communication with him. ... in every disappointment, great or small, let your dear heart fly direct to him, your dear Savior, throwing yourself in his arms for refuge against every pain and sorrow. He never will leave you or forsake you." (*The Soul of Elizabeth Seton* by J.I. Dirvin)

We cannot expect to thank and praise God in the dark, if we do not thank and praise him in the light.

First Reading — 2 Kings 5:14-17

¹⁴ So he went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

¹⁵ Then he returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and he came and stood before him; and he said, "Behold, I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel; so accept now a present from your servant." ¹⁶ But he said, "As the LORD lives, whom I serve, I will receive none." And he urged him to take it, but

he refused. ¹⁷ Then Naaman said, “If not, I pray you, let there be given to your servant two mules’ burden of earth; for henceforth your servant will not offer burnt offering or sacrifice to any god but the LORD.

1. How does God sometimes use illness to reveal himself to us?

Responsorial Reading — Psalm 98:1-4

¹ O sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done marvelous things! His right hand and his holy arm have gotten him victory. ² The LORD has made known his victory, he has revealed his vindication in the sight of the nations. ³ He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our God.

⁴ Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and sing praises!

Second Reading — 2 Timothy 2:8-13

⁸ Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descended from David, as preached in my gospel, ⁹ the gospel for which I am suffering and wearing fetters like a criminal. But the word of God is not fettered. ¹⁰ Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain salvation in Christ Jesus with its eternal glory. ¹¹ The saying is sure: If we have died with him, we shall also live with him; ¹² if we endure, we shall also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us; ¹³ if we are faithless, he remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself.

2. How does God sometimes use sickness or misfortune in our lives to spiritually work in others’ lives?

Gospel Reading — Luke 17:11-19

¹¹ On the way to Jerusalem he was passing along between Samaria and Galilee. ¹² And as he entered a village, he was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance ¹³ and lifted up their voices and said, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.” ¹⁴ When he saw them he said to them, “Go and show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went they were cleansed. ¹⁵ Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; ¹⁶ and he fell on his face at Jesus’ feet, giving him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan. ¹⁷ Then said Jesus, “Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine?” ¹⁸ Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?” ¹⁹ And he said to him, “Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well.”

3. Have you ever had a severe medical condition? If so, with what emotional and spiritual issues did you encounter?

4. What part do you think faith plays in physical healing?

5. What physical maladies do you see in our society that also carry a form of social ostracism?

6. How can we be a means of Jesus’ mercy to people who are undergoing health problems?

Reflecting

On Sunday's

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THE TWENTY-NINTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME—October 19, 2025

Introduction: We observe an amazing victory in this week's first reading, as Israel "mowed down" the Amalekites in battle. To what should we contribute this profound victory, if not to prayer? Moses stood throughout the battle with his arms lifted up holding the rod of God. When Moses lowered his arms due to weariness the battle shifted against Israel, and when he raised them Joshua and Israel's army prevailed. Two men, Hur and Aaron came to Moses' assistance and joined him in his appeal to God by helping to hold up his arms until the victory was won.

Since the earliest of times, praying with hands lifted up to God was the accepted posture of prayer. With arms and hands lifted to God we can ascribe to him the praise and glory that is due his name or we can appeal for his power and participation in our lives. Can there be any better visual representation of prayer than Moses lifting his arms with the rod of God appealing for help. Can there be any better visual representation of the power of prayer than to see this ebb and flow of victory wrought by Moses' appeal? **We are challenged by Jesus' words that we "ought always to pray and not lose heart."** (Luke 18:1)

Tertullian in his treatise *On Prayer* explains why we should pray and not become weary and faint in our hearts. "Prayer is the one thing that can conquer God. Christ has willed that it should work no evil. And has given it all power over good. Its only art is to call back the soul of the dead from the very journey into death, to give strength to the weak, to heal the sick, to exorcise the possessed, to open prison cells, to free the innocent from their chains. Prayer cleanses from sin, drives away temptations, stamps out persecutions, comforts the faint-hearted, gives new strength to the courageous, brings travelers safely home, calms the waves, confounds robbers, feeds the poor, overrules the rich, lifts up the fallen, supports those who are falling, sustains those who stand firm. ... What more need be said on the duty of prayer? Even the Lord himself prayed. To him be honor and power forever and ever. Amen." *

It is no wonder that Jesus talked, and taught so much about prayer with his disciples. It is the most powerful discipline we have at our disposal for invoking the power of God. In this week's Gospel reading Jesus teaches a valuable aspect of prayer, the one Moses illustrated—persist, don't give up, don't ever give up when you believe you are praying according to God's will. We need to learn this lesson and learn it well. For when we begin to pray for things that are dear to our heart, and which we believe are dear to the heart of God, it is easy to become discouraged if we do not receive an immediate answer. But we should continue to cry out to the Father in prayer, day and night. Who knows but whether he will hear and answer us in the affirmative?

When we quit praying, we are making the decision for God that the things about which we are praying are not really important enough for him to respond. Or our failure to persist in prayer can be our judgment against God that he either doesn't care for us enough to answer, or that he is impotent to do anything about it. Of course, if through his Word, through the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, or through the counsel of holy people we become convinced that we are not praying according to the Father's will, then we should stop.

Another lesson from Moses' experience is that it is important to have companions who will prevail with us in prayer when we are spiritually weary and are about to give up. The help and encouragement Aaron and Hur gave Moses is not unlike that which spiritual companions can give us when they decide to share the burden of praying for God's will in a situation. However, Aaron and Hur did not simply happen upon the scene. They were part of Moses' team and had a relationship and commitment with him for some time. This points up the importance of being in community with a small band of fellow believers with whom we are growing and sharing our lives. These are the ones who will rally to our aid when we are weary, and prevail with us in prayer. It is important to develop these types of relationships and commitments now when they may not be needed, so that when they are needed, they are available. We must also realize that it is important for us to be this type of a committed companion for others also.

* Tertullian, priest, from a treatise On Prayer, as found in *The Liturgy of the Hours, Vol II*, page 250.

First Reading — Exodus 17:8-13

⁸ Then came Amalek and fought with Israel at Rephidim. ⁹ And Moses said to Joshua, “Choose for us men, and go out, fight with Amalek; tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand.” ¹⁰ So Joshua did as Moses told him, and fought with Amalek; and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. ¹¹ When-ever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed; and whenever he lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed. ¹² But Moses’ hands grew weary; so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat upon it, and Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; so his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. ¹³ And Joshua mowed down Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.

1. What has been your experience with spiritual battles?

Responsorial Reading — Psalm 121:1-8

¹ I lift up my eyes to the hills. From whence does my help come? ² My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth.

³ He will not let your foot be moved, he who keeps you will not slumber. ⁴ Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. ⁵ The LORD is your keeper; the LORD is your shade on your right hand. ⁶ The sun shall not smite you by day, nor the moon by night. ⁷ The LORD will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life. ⁸ The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and for evermore.

Second Reading — 2 Timothy 3:14—4:2

¹⁴ But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it ¹⁵ and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

^{4:1} I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: ² preach the word, be urgent in season and out of season, convince, rebuke, and exhort, be unfailing in patience and in teaching.

2. How can sacred Scripture help you practice persistence in your life of prayer?

Gospel Reading — Luke 18:1-8

¹ And he told them a parable, to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. ² He said, “In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor regarded man; ³ and there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, ‘Vindicate me against my adversary.’ ⁴ For a while he refused; but afterward he said to himself, ‘Though I neither fear God nor regard man, ⁵ yet because this widow bothers me, I will vindicate her, or she will wear me out by her continual coming.’” ⁶ And the Lord said, “Hear what the unrighteous judge says. ⁷ And will not God vindicate his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? ⁸ I tell you, he will vindicate them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of man comes, will he find faith on earth?”

3. Describe a time when you persisted in prayer to the Father. What kept you motivated to pray?
4. Compare and contrast the Father’s response to us with the judge’s response to the widow.
5. What does our prayer-life tell us about our faith-life?

Reflecting

On Sunday's Readings

THE THIRTIETH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME—October 26, 2025

Introduction: Our self-image, especially our spiritual self-image, is a funny thing. So often it can be totally unreliable because it is based on erroneous information. Rather than basing our self-image on serious, prayerful reflection—"I bid every one among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith which God has assigned him" (Romans 12:3)—, we more often base it on distorted feedback, the comparing of ourselves with others. Comparing ourselves with others, especially to determine how we are doing spiritually, provides the same unreliable feedback as do the distortions of a fun-house mirror. When we compare ourselves with others some parts of our being are made larger than they are, while other parts are made more diminutive, it just depends on the mirror, or the person, against whom the comparison is made.

Jesus in this week's Gospel reading deplores the inevitable self-righteousness that grows from these illegitimate comparisons. They are illegitimate because the comparison is invariably with people whom we believe are greater sinners than are we. When we compare the spiritual grayness of our life over against the utter blackness of a greater sinner, our spiritual self-image is greatly distorted and made to appear quite a bit lighter and brighter than it really may be. However, when we compare the spiritual grayness of our life over against the brilliant light of Jesus' righteousness, and his expectations for our holiness, we see our spiritual grayness for what it truly is, a terrible darkness in need of cleansing.

That is undoubtedly why Jesus commended the tax collector for his attitude of contrition, for he rightly assessed his spiritual condition. With a little bit of effort the publican could have undoubtedly found someone with whom to compare himself whose sins were greater than his own and who would have made him look a little better, but he didn't. He refused to justify himself, instead he compared himself against his understanding of God's standard and found himself wanting. So in honest and vulnerable contrition he prayed for mercy.

Jesus commended the publican for his spiritual honesty rather than condemning him for being such a terrible sinner. This is an important concept to grasp. **As far as Jesus is concerned honest contrition warrants justification whereas dishonest self-justification warrants condemnation.** When we attempt to justify ourselves and distort our spiritual record by comparing our self with others we are saying to God, "I don't need you to justify me, I can do it myself." However, when we recognize our sinfulness and in true contrition ask for his mercy, and when we admit that we cannot justify ourself but are deserving of God's condemnation, Jesus steps forward in his mercy and justifies us through his sacrifice on the cross.

Dietrich Von Hilderbrand, in the book *Transformation in Christ*, captures the process that true contrition entails, based on an accurate assessment of our spiritual self. "The initial step of the soul's meeting with God bears the mark of contrition. The man whose heart is smitten by the word of Christ, whom Jesus' face has brought to his knees, will at first say with St. Peter: 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.' (Luke 5:8) Confrontation of our own selves with God renders us conscious of our unworthiness and sinfulness." Then when we come to this self-realization and repudiate evil, and revert to God, we are ready for his cleansing of the stain of guilt. Von Hilderbrand goes on to explain, "That guilt can only be eliminated by God's act of pardon, and be compensated for by the blood of Christ, of which it is said in the hymn of St. Thomas: 'Of which a single drop, for sinners spilt, can purge the entire world from all its guilt.'"

First Reading — Sirach 35:12-14, 16-18

¹² ... for the Lord is the judge, and with him is no partiality. ¹³ He will not show partiality in the case of a poor man; and he will listen to the prayer of one who is wronged. ¹⁴ He will not ignore the supplication of the fatherless, nor the widow when she pours out her story. ... ¹⁶ He whose service is pleasing to the Lord will be

accepted, and his prayer will reach to the clouds. ¹⁷The prayer of the humble pierces the clouds, and he will not be consoled until it reaches the Lord; he will not desist until the Most High visits him, and does justice for the righteous, and executes judgment. ¹⁸And the Lord will not delay, neither will he be patient with them, till he crushes the loins of the unmerciful and repays vengeance on the nations; till he takes away the multitude of the insolent, and breaks the scepters of the unrighteous;

1. What does this passage tell us about God's response to our prayers?

Responsorial Reading — Psalm 34:1-2, 16-18, 22 (Psalm 34:2-3, 17-19, 23 NAB)

¹I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth. ²My soul makes its boast in the LORD; let the afflicted hear and be glad. ...

¹⁶The face of the LORD is against evildoers, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. ¹⁷When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles. ¹⁸The LORD is near to the brokenhearted, and saves the crushed in spirit. ...

²²The LORD redeems the life of his servants; none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned.

Second Reading — 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18

⁶For I am already on the point of being sacrificed; the time of my departure has come. ⁷I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing. ...

¹⁶At my first defense no one took my part; all deserted me. May it not be charged against them!

¹⁷But the Lord stood by me and gave me strength to proclaim the message fully, that all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. ¹⁸The Lord will rescue me from every evil and save me for his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

2. How do you view Paul's statements of self-assessment?

Gospel Reading — Luke 18:9-14

⁹He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others: ¹⁰"Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank thee that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹²I fast twice a week, I give tithes of all that I get.' ¹³But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' ¹⁴I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for every one who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

3. How can we maintain a good self-image but not end up trusting in ourselves?
4. How can we accurately acknowledge our sinfulness without developing a negative self-image?
5. What mistakes did the Pharisee make in evaluating his own righteousness?
6. Fasting and tithing are normally viewed as good things. What was it in the Pharisee's life that made these disciplines fairly meaningless?

Scripture text is from the *Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition*, (New York: The National Council of Churches) 1997, c1994.
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