

# SACRED SPACE

SAMPLE

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## Sacred Space Prayer

Bless all who worship you, almighty God,  
from the rising of the sun to its setting:  
from your goodness enrich us,  
by your love inspire us,  
by your Spirit guide us,  
by your power protect us,  
in your mercy receive us,  
now and always.

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## Preface

In 1999 an Irish Jesuit named Alan McGuckian had the simple—but at the time radical—idea of bringing daily prayer to the Internet. No one imagined that his experimental project would grow into a global community with volunteers translating the prayer experience into seventeen different languages.

Millions of people, from numerous Christian traditions, visit [www.sacredspace.ie](http://www.sacredspace.ie) each year, and what they find is an invitation to step away from their busy routine for a few minutes each day to concentrate on what is really important in their lives. Sacred Space offers its visitors the opportunity to grow in prayerful awareness of their friendship with God.

Besides the daily prayer experience, Sacred Space also offers Living Space, with commentaries on the Scripture readings for each day's Catholic Mass. The Chapel of Intentions allows people to add their own prayers, while Pray with the Pope joins the community to the international Apostleship of Prayer. In addition, Sacred Space provides Lenten and Advent retreats, often in partnership with Pray as You Go, an audio prayer service from the British Jesuits.

The contents of this printed edition, first produced in 2004, are taken directly from our Internet site. Despite the increased use of Sacred Space on mobile devices, many people want a book they can hold and carry, and this book has proven especially helpful for prayer groups.

In 2014 the Irish Jesuits entered into an apostolic agreement with the Chicago-Detroit Jesuits, and Sacred Space now operates in partnership with Loyola Press.

I am delighted to bring you the *Sacred Space* book, and I pray that your prayer life will flourish with its help.

Yours in Christ,

Paul Brian Campbell, SJ

## Introduction to *Sacred Space*, 2018

Saint Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Society of Jesus, is famously known for wanting to find God in all things. *Is that even possible?* you might ask. He believed it was, but only as a gift from God and only as the fruit of our paying attention to our experience. Ignatius developed an optimistic spiritual practice that assumed the presence of God at every moment of our existence. While we tend to think of God's presence as a "sometimes thing," Ignatius came to believe that our perception of God's presence as a sometimes occurrence is a major spiritual hindrance. Ignatius believed that God is always creating this universe, always keeping it in existence, always working to bring about God's purpose in creation, and always trying to move us to join God in the great adventure of bringing about what Jesus called the kingdom of God.

In order to experience this ever-present God, we need to develop a regular spiritual practice, a practice Ignatius had learned from his experience as a relatively untutored layman. Ignatius began to teach people and to write down the spiritual practices that helped him move toward uniting himself with God's purposes and thus toward finding God in all things. *Spiritual Exercises* is Ignatius's manual for those who want to follow his example of helping others get in touch with our ever-present God. God wants a close personal relationship with each of us, and he wants each of us to join him in the great work of bringing about a world where peace and justice prevail. Over the almost five centuries since the time of Ignatius, Jesuits and many others have found through these spiritual practices the answer to their own deepest desires.

Over the centuries, the Spiritual Exercises have been adapted in many ways. Jesuits originally followed Ignatius's own practice of giving the Exercises to individuals for thirty days. But they also used the methods of prayer suggested in the Exercises in their preaching, missions, and talks to larger groups. Eventually, houses were set aside for the giving of the Exercises to individuals and large groups. One of the adaptations suggested by Ignatius himself was to make the Exercises in daily life under the direction of someone trained in giving them. In this format, an individual maintained his or her regular daily life and work but promised to devote time every day to the spiritual practices suggested by Ignatius and to see the spiritual director

once a week. In the past fifty years, this adaptation has seen a worldwide resurgence and has touched many lives. It has also been used with groups to great advantage. In modern times, the giving of the Spiritual Exercises has become something of a cottage industry in many countries.

Enter the age of the Internet. Could this new tool be used to help large numbers of people move toward finding God in all things? The answer is a resounding *yes!* Many websites, in multiple languages, try to help people become more aware of God's presence in their lives, using practices stemming from the Spiritual Exercises. One example is the book you have in your hands. In 1999 the Irish Jesuits started to offer daily prompts for prayer based on Ignatius's Exercises on the website Sacred Space ([www.sacredspace.ie](http://www.sacredspace.ie)). The English edition was soon translated into other languages, and the site now features twenty-one languages that span the globe.

In my work as a spiritual director and in my travels, I have come across many, many people of various walks of life who use the daily prompts for prayer provided through Sacred Space. People find the site and the daily suggestions to be user-friendly, inviting, and—in keeping with Ignatian spirituality—optimistic. The suggestions help them pay attention to their experience, notice intimations of God's presence in that experience, and engage in honest conversations with God.

For each week, there is an overarching suggested theme and a method for spending time with God each day. One of the methods is to turn to the Scripture and reflections suggested for each day of the week. Each day's text is taken from the Gospel reading for Mass that day. Thus, someone who follows Sacred Space every day will, in the course of a year, work prayerfully through all four of the Gospels. No wonder that so many have been enthralled by this site.

In spite of the digital age, many of us still like the feel of a book in our hands. The book *Sacred Space*, which you now hold in your hands, was designed for the likes of us. I am very happy to introduce the book and even happier that Loyola Press, a Jesuit institution, is now the publisher. Ignatian spiritual practice has brought me closer to God, for which I am immensely grateful. Through Ignatius's spiritual practices I have experienced God's desire for my friendship, and I figure, if God wants *my* friendship, he wants *everyone's* friendship. If you take this book seriously and engage in the relationship with God that it suggests, you will, I'm sure, find as much joy in God's friendship as I have. Try it—you'll like it.

William A. Barry, SJ

## How to Use This Book

During each week of the Liturgical year, begin by reading the “Something to think and pray about each day this week.” Then proceed through “The Presence of God,” “Freedom,” and “Consciousness” steps to prepare yourself to hear the word of God in your heart. In the next step, “The Word,” turn to the Scripture reading for each day of the week. Inspiration points are provided if you need them. Then return to the “Conversation” and “Conclusion” steps. Use this process every day of the year.

**Please note: In Scripture text, paragraph breaks are indicated by //.**

SAMPLE

### **The Presence of God**

“Be still, and know that I am God!” Lord, may your spirit guide me to seek your loving presence more and more for it is there I find rest and refreshment from this busy world.

### **Freedom**

By God’s grace I was born to live in freedom. Free to enjoy the pleasures he created for me. Dear Lord, grant that I may live as you intended, with complete confidence in your loving care.

### **Consciousness**

How am I today?

Where am I with God? With others?

Do I have something to be grateful for? Then I give thanks.

Is there something I am sorry for? Then I ask forgiveness.

### **The Word**

God speaks to each of us individually. I need to listen, to hear what he is saying to me. Read the text a few times, then listen. (Please turn to the Scripture on the following pages. Inspiration points are there should you need them. When you are ready, return here to continue.)

### **Conversation**

How has God’s word moved me? Has it left me cold?

Has it consoled me or moved me to act in a new way?

I imagine Jesus standing or sitting beside me.

I turn and share my feelings with him.

### **Conclusion**

I thank God for these moments we have spent together and for any insights I have been given concerning the text.



## Sunday 31st December

### The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph

*Luke 2:22–40*

When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord”), and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, “a pair of turtle-doves or two young pigeons.” Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying,

“Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace,  
according to your word;  
for my eyes have seen your salvation,  
which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,  
a light for revelation to the Gentiles  
and for glory to your people Israel.”

And the child’s father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, “This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too.”

There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband for seven years after her marriage, then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshipped there with fasting and prayer night and day. At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.

- Jesus comes not in splendor, but as a baby in his mother's arms. Lord, I see you here in the vulnerable flesh of a child, a sign that will be spoken against. Already the shadow of Calvary falls on Mary as Simeon tells her that a sword will pierce her soul.
- Jesus, you share my humanity in every way. Like you, I want to grow and become strong, filled with wisdom. I still have miles to go before I sleep. May the favor of God be with me as with you.

## Monday 1st January

### The Solemnity of Mary, The Holy Mother of God

*Luke 2:16–21*

So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

After eight days had passed, it was time to circumcise the child; and he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

- We start the year, as we start our life, under the protection of a mother. Today we celebrate the most passionate and enduring of all human relationships, that of mother and child. As Mary looked at her baby and gave him her breast, she knew that there was a dimension here beyond her imagining.
- Christians contemplated Mary for three centuries before the Council of Ephesus, when they dared to consecrate the title *theotokos*, Mother of God. Like Mary, I treasure the words spoken about Jesus, and ponder them in my heart.

## Tuesday 2nd January

*John 1:19–28*

This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?” He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, “I am not the Messiah.” And they asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?” He said, “I am not.” “Are you the prophet?”

He answered, “No.” Then they said to him, “Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?” He said,

“I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness,  
‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’”  
as the prophet Isaiah said.

Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. They asked him, “Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?” John answered them, “I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal.” This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

- John understood who he was—and who he wasn’t. He had a strong sense of the role he played in God’s plan. He could not allow his own ego or others’ expectations to distract or distort his mission.
- God, I want a better sense of who I am—and who I am not. I want to embrace fully the mission you have for me. I do not want my own ego or others’ expectations to get in the way of my walking the path you have set before me.

## **Wednesday 3rd January**

*John 1:29–34*

The next day he saw Jesus coming towards him and declared, “Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, ‘After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me.’ I myself did not know him; but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel.” And John testified, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God.”

- “Lamb of God” evokes Old Testament passages: of the Passover lamb, and of the suffering servant in Isaiah, led like a lamb to the slaughter, bearing our sins.

- Lord, whenever I hear of some atrocious barbarism and of the injustice and pain people suffer through others' wickedness, I remember that this is the world you entered, the burden you took on yourself. You had a strong back to carry the evil that is in the world. Remind me to rely on your strength and compassion.

## Thursday 4th January

*John 1:35–42*

The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!" The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, "Rabbi" (which translated means Teacher), "where are you staying?" He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon. One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated Anointed). He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter).

- "What are you looking for?" Such a searching question that is! Many would say, "I'm not looking for anything. I am just trying to survive." But in sober moments we realize that we would like our lives to amount to more than just getting and spending, eating and sleeping.
- Lord, I want you to look at me as you looked at Simon. Invite me to see where you are to be found and to remain with you.

## Friday 5th January

*John 1:43–51*

The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth." Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." When Jesus saw Nathanael

coming toward him, he said of him, “Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!” Nathanael asked him, “Where did you get to know me?” Jesus answered, “I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you.” Nathanael replied, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!” Jesus answered, “Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these.” And he said to him, “Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.”

- “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Nathanael (identified with Bartholomew from the ninth century on) could have missed the chance to meet Jesus, but he heard Philip’s gentle invitation, “Come and see.”
- How often, Lord, have I tried to pigeon-hole people by looking down at their gender, origin, race, or family. Save me from the stupidity of those who try to seem smart by despising others. May I heed Philip and “come and see” who you are and what you offer me.

## **Saturday 6th January**

*Mark 1:7–11*

[John] proclaimed, “The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”

- Do we ever consider that Jesus needed to hear these words from his heavenly Father—“You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased”? He was about to embark on his ministry. In fact, from this place of baptism he would first be severely tempted in the wilderness. He was divine but also human, and these words from heaven came at the right time.
- Lord, when I realize that you love me and are well pleased with me, I experience true freedom. I can do anything you ask. I can endure whatever is required. I can grow strong in faith and hope and love.

The Epiphany of The Lord/The First Week of Ordinary Time  
**January 7—January 13**

Something to think and pray about each day this week:

**A Simple Plan**

Rather than compose elaborate resolutions for the year to come, simply do, in some small way, what you intend to do all year:

- Say “Thank you” to at least one person.
- Make one healthy choice about your body—food or drink or rest or motion.
- Do one generous act, big or small.
- Say “yes” to the day’s gifts.
- Get quiet for five minutes, just to be still.
- Let one person know that you appreciate him or her.
- Do one creative act, big or small.
- Allow yourself to consider what someone else is going through.
- Do one thing well and with full attention.
- Open your arms—and your heart—to God.

If you did it today, you can do it again, and again.

—Vinita Hampton Wright on *dotMagis*, the blog of  
*IgnatianSpirituality.com*

### **The Presence of God**

Dear Jesus, I come to you today longing for your presence. I desire to love you as you love me. May nothing ever separate me from you.

### **Freedom**

Lord, grant me the grace to be free from the excesses of this life. Let me not get caught up with the desire for wealth. Keep my heart and mind free to love and serve you.

### **Consciousness**

Where do I sense hope, encouragement, and growth in my life? By looking back over the past few months, I may be able to see which activities and occasions have produced rich fruit. If I do notice such areas, I will determine to give those areas both time and space in the future.

### **The Word**

God speaks to each of us individually. I listen attentively, to hear what he is saying to me. Read the text a few times, then listen. (Please turn to the Scripture on the following pages. Inspiration points are there should you need them. When you are ready, return here to continue.)

### **Conversation**

What is stirring in me as I pray? Am I consoled, troubled, left cold? I imagine Jesus standing or sitting at my side, and I share my feelings with him.

### **Conclusion**

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,  
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be,  
World without end. Amen.

## Sunday 7th January

### The Epiphany of the Lord

*Matthew 2:1–12*

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, “Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.” When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

‘And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,  
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;  
for from you shall come a ruler  
who is to shepherd my people Israel.’

Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.” When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

- There is a Bavarian custom of chalking G M B (Gaspar, Melchior, Balthasar) on the wall of each room of the house on Epiphany morning. These are the names that tradition assigns to the Magi, representing all the nations of the world. More and more, the nations of the world move to our shores and come into our homes. If the Magi arrived here today, would they be welcome?



- When people come to my home, Lord, do they discover you there? If justice and love are to be found in my home, then visitors, like the Magi, will be overwhelmed with joy, and they will pay you homage.

## **Monday 8th January**

### **The Baptism of the Lord**

*Mark 1:7–11*

John proclaimed, “The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptised you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.” In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”

- Imagine yourself witnessing the scene, perhaps standing in the shallows, the water flowing around your ankles. Picture the scene and allow it to unfold. What is it like? The young man from Nazareth joins the queue waiting for John’s baptism; a symbol of purifying but also of birth—coming up out of the waters of the womb into a new life as God’s beloved child.
- Lord, when I realize that you love me and are well pleased with me, it is like the start of a new life. As I hear your voice, I know that I have a purpose and a destiny.

## **Tuesday 9th January**

*Mark 1:21–28*

When the sabbath came, Jesus entered the synagogue and taught. They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, and he cried out, “What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.” But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be silent, and come out of him!” And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, “What is this? A new teaching—with authority!

He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.” At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

- At some point in their lives, people may feel themselves being brought to their knees by urges and forces that are too strong for them. They need to turn to a power above and beyond themselves.
- Jesus, with that above-and-beyond power, you come close to us—in your teaching, in the Christian community, and in the church. Remind me to ask for your help as I face other powers that seek to hold me back from your love and grace.

## Wednesday 10th January

*Mark 1:29–39*

As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon’s mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them. // That evening, at sunset, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. And the whole city was gathered around the door. And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him. // In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. And Simon and his companions hunted for him. When they found him, they said to him, “Everyone is searching for you.” He answered, “Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do.” And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

- Jesus does his tour, preaching and casting out devils. And we’re given to understand that these two are practically the same thing—and that, were it not for the devils (who here want to find their voice!), even disease and sickness would disappear. Jesus is going into battle, head to head, with the kingdom of evil.
- When I feel powerless before outside events, and before wayward tendencies in my own heart—I ask Jesus, the strong one, to come to my side.

## Thursday 11th January

Mark 1:40–45

A leper came to him begging him, and kneeling he said to him, “If you choose, you can make me clean.” Moved with pity, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, “I do choose. Be made clean!” Immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. After sternly warning him he sent him away at once, saying to him, “See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.” But he went out and began to proclaim it freely, and to spread the word, so that Jesus could no longer go into a town openly, but stayed out in the country; and people came to him from every quarter.

- The leper doesn’t think, *I’ve tried others for a cure; now I’ll try Jesus.* No, he just knows that Jesus has the power. His only worry is: *Will he use that power for me?* Jesus looks at me, too, ready to use his power for my good.
- Finally, the leper is so thankful that he can’t stop telling people. I, too, can be aware of great things that have been done for me and can express gratitude for them in my prayer.

## Friday 12th January

Mark 2:1–12

When Jesus returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. So many gathered around that there was no longer room for them, not even in front of the door; and he was speaking the word to them. Then some people came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. And when they could not bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and after having dug through it, they let down the mat on which the paralytic lay. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven.” Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, “Why does this fellow speak in this way? It is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?” At once Jesus perceived in his spirit that they were discussing these questions among themselves; and he said to them, “Why do you raise such questions in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Stand up and take your mat

and walk'? But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the paralytic—"I say to you, stand up, take your mat and go to your home." And he stood up, and immediately took the mat and went out before all of them; so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"

- I too sometimes feel paralyzed by fears or by lack of energy. And I come before Jesus, not disguising my helplessness. I allow the strength of Jesus to take over.
- Jesus also puts my neediness in proportion; he wants me to see that his support is not just for me; it is also there for the whole world.

## **Saturday 13th January**

*Mark 2:13–17*

Jesus went out again beside the sea; the whole crowd gathered around him, and he taught them. As he was walking along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he got up and followed him. And as he sat at dinner in Levi's house, many tax collectors and sinners were also sitting with Jesus and his disciples—for there were many who followed him. When the scribes of the Pharisees saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, they said to his disciples, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?" When Jesus heard this, he said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have come to call not the righteous but sinners."

- As Jesus preached by the lakeside, his words had a different impact from person to person. For some he was just a novelty. Others, perhaps, were half-interested. But the reports reaching Levi sitting in his office-booth nearby must have stirred his heart, for when Jesus invited him to be a coworker for the kingdom, Levi rose immediately with not even a thought for the career he was leaving behind.
- Levi's job—collecting the taxes for the occupying Roman government—did not endear him to his countrymen. Yet it was he who had the more attuned ear for the changed relationship with God ushered in by Jesus of Nazareth. May my heart be as well tuned, in this time and place, to what God is doing.