

Thursday 6 February

Today is Thursday the 6 February, in the fourth week of Ordinary time.

In our journeying this day, keep us, Father, in your way. Let me make this my prayer today, to know God's closeness to me, here, right now, And never to lose sight of it. To let myself be loved, enlivened and guided by God.

Today's reading is from the Gospel of Mark.

As he sends out the twelve on their mission, Jesus gives them quite specific instructions about handling acceptance and rejection, success and failure. 'If you are welcomed, stay. If you are not, shake the dust off your feet and move on.' It's simple enough advice – obvious, you might say – yet not always followed. Am I ever embarrassed to accept generosity, or welcome, or support from other people, as if I really ought to be able to manage without it?

And when I meet rejection or failure, do I "shake the dust off my feet" and move on, or do I take it personally, and feel hurt and resentful, and let all this smoulder away inside me?

Jesus is also quite specific about how these followers of his are to behave, travelling light, not relying on their own resources, but on the kindness of strangers, on the welcome of those they meet. As I listen to the reading again, I can perhaps ask myself, do these words of Jesus describe how I operate, as one of his disciples today?

It would be all too easy to spot where I fail to live up to the standards Jesus sets here, and feel accused or judged or just 'not good enough'. But the point of these words is a positive one, to encourage me and reassure me: When I am working for God, 'the Lord will provide,' -- God will give me the help I need. What help, what grace from God do I most feel the need for now? In my own words, can I ask God for that grace?