

## ST LUKE'S GOSPEL

This year (Year C of the three year cycle of Sunday readings) we will read from Luke's Gospel. The Australian Jesuit priest and scripture scholar Brendan Byrne believes that the idea of "hospitality" is a key feature of Luke's Gospel. He has given his very readable book on Luke's Gospel the title, *The Hospitality of God*.

Many important moments in Luke's Gospel are in the context of meals where Jesus offers hospitality or shares in the hospitality of others. But even more significant is the idea that Jesus offers us the "Hospitality of God". As Byrne puts it "Luke sees the whole life and ministry of Jesus as a visitation on God's part to Israel and the world."

Another key theme for Luke is the journey to Jerusalem. It is towards the end of the journey that Jesus comes to Jericho where he meets a tax collector named Zacchaeus (Lk 19:1-10).

Zacchaeus is an outsider in the society yet Jesus asks to stay at his home. Zacchaeus is delighted to be asked and offers Jesus hospitality. When the people complain yet again about Jesus eating with sinners and outcasts, Jesus comes to the defence of Zacchaeus: "Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham." Jesus the guest becomes Jesus the host!

Byrne suggests that this scene is not just about Zacchaeus and his need to change his life. The challenge facing Luke's community is "Why do some people respond to the invitation while others reject it?" It is the tension between God's invitation and our freedom to turn away.

For Luke the invitation to share in the hospitality of God is not just at the end of the journey, it is the journey itself. The invitation is to live our life with God now. The words of Jesus to the crowd are also directed to us: "Today salvation has come to this house."

Brendan Byrne, *The Hospitality of God*, is published by St Paul Publications, [www.stpauls.com.au](http://www.stpauls.com.au)

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