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24 Wednesday

WEDNESDAY, 25th WEEK of YEAR

Ezra 9: 5-9

Tobias 13: 2-5, 8

Luke 9: 1-6

The Old Testament book of Ezra is about the return of God's people from their exile and captivity in Babylon. Ezra the priest was one of the leaders in this return to Jerusalem and in re-establishing the temple and its worship. Today's reading is a prayer Ezra addresses to God after the temple service has been restored. He acknowledges God's merciful hand behind the political developments that allowed the people to return, but also acknowledges the people's continuing sinfulness. What was most appalling to him was Jewish people intermarrying with pagans during the captivity years, a practice which he soon put an end to. The background and circumstances of Ezra's prayer may not seem very relevant for a Christian's prayer today, but we can still use his words with a genuine and sincere heart, whether praying privately and personally about our own individual situations, or praying for and in the name of our Christian community. To feel ashamed in God's presence and recognise the sins and wrongs we've done, to become aware that our sin has consequences and effects in our own and others' lives ---- this is a necessary part of prayer, leading to a deeper appreciation of all that the Lord has done for us, to a lively sense of His great mercy and kindness, to a greater feeling of gratefulness. We still await the fullness of delivery from our slavery, even while we celebrate the liberation that Christ has won for us.

Lord, help us to come to You with honesty and humility in our prayer, confessing our weakness and our needs; help us to see Your hand in the events of life, Your merciful kindness leading us to shelter, safety and peace.

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