

The LORD, a merciful and gracious God,
slow to anger and rich in kindness and
fidelity,
continuing his kindness for a thousand
generations,
and forgiving wickedness and crime and
sin...

Exodus 33

Seventeenth Week in Ordinary Time: July 24 - 30, 2011

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The Seventeenth Week of Ordinary Time

On the **Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time** we see how God admires Solomon because he asked for wisdom rather than riches. Jesus is the source of God's wisdom and teaches us more about the Kingdom of Heaven. We imagine the passion of one discovering a treasure buried in a field or finding a pearl of great value, sacrificing everything to buy what is so deeply desired. A dragnet hauls in fish that can nourish others as well as what is not useful for others. Jesus invites us into deeper reflection on what we value and prepares us for our mission.

Monday is the **Feast of Saint James, apostle**, with its own special readings. Tuesday is the **Memorial of Saint Joachim and Saint Anne, parents of the Blessed Virgin Mary**. Friday is the **Memorial of St. Martha**, with special readings.

This is the third and final week from the **Book of Exodus**. Moses carries down the Ten Commandments from God but breaks them in a fury when he sees the people worshipping a golden calf. He meets face to face with God in a tent in the desert and invites God to come with them on their journey. Moses' face is so radiant after meeting with God, it is covered with a veil. Moses builds a movable meeting tent for their journey, and puts the arc of the commandments in it, and in a cloud by day and with fire by night, God was with them. On Friday and Saturday we have two days of readings from the **Book of Leviticus** which is the third book of the set of five books that begin the scriptures, called the

Daily Prayer This Week

This whole week could be a time for each of us to grow in a sense of what we most deeply desire. If we let Sunday's gospel open our hearts we might find ourselves asking, begging God for what we need.

And we can let the daily gospels renew our hope. Have we become cynical and jaded a bit? The world does seem to be like a field someone sowed weeds into. God's reign in this world doesn't seem to be growing, and the seeds seem so small. This is a good week to get in touch with what is discouraged in our hearts and to let the courage the Lord is offering us renew us. He promises that even small seeds work and that even a little yeast allows dough to grow. The process is sometimes imperceptible, but that's why Jesus reminds us to place our trust in him. Our own hearts might be full of weeds, but the Lord doesn't want us ripping ourselves apart. He is full of mercy and healing reconciliation. Jesus does not want us to be scandalized by the evil we see in the world. God is patient. And, God alone will judge.

So every day this week, we can begin our day, establishing a focus. This might be while standing next to our bed for a brief minute, or while pouring ourselves a cup of coffee, or while in the shower or getting dressed. This is the time that can transform any busy day into a more focused time of connection with our Lord. Using all sorts of background times

Pentateuch. It is a book of liturgical practices governing the ministry of the priestly descendants of Levi. Here we read about the great Jewish festivals and Jubilee years.

The gospels are from **Matthew's Gospel**, with wonderful stories worth pondering and reflecting on. We hear of the tiny mustard seed which grows into a towering bush, the explanation of the parable of the weeds in the field. Then we again hear how the Kingdom is like a treasure or a pearl a merchant makes great sacrifices to obtain. With the story of the fishing net tossed into the sea, we consider how everyone is gathered by God at the end of time to be judged. Jesus comes to his hometown to teach but took offense at him. "A prophet is not without honor except in his native place and in his own house." We end the week with the sad story of Herod, not wanting to be embarrassed in front of his guests, ordering John the Baptist beheaded.

On the **Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time** we celebrate in **Matthew** how Jesus fed the crowds by making it possible for the disciples to give the people what they had. It was not enough, but became enough because of the compassion Jesus had for the people. **Isaiah 55** invites us to come to the water when we are thirsty, to come and eat though we have no money. We can stop spending on what fails to satisfy. Paul consoles us, too, by reminding us that nothing can "separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

throughout the day will take no "extra" time for prayer, but will make it possible to let these powerful scriptures interact with the daily events and relationships with which we are involved.

One morning we might begin our day, simply by saying, "Lord, thank you for this day. Help me to pay attention to what and who I'm treasuring today." Or, "Lord, be with me this day and help me check my need to judge others. Help me place my trust in you today." While in the shower or driving to work I might talk with the Lord about the day ahead, asking for particular help, focus, or a new way of valuing during that difficult 10 a.m. meeting or with the clients or students or patients I will see. While doing the wash or shopping or preparing meals or while taking time with my family or friends in the evening, I can let myself have these 30 second friend-to-friend conversations with the Lord. The readings provide a compass for our daily journey, but it is the continual practice at connecting with our Lord that carries us through the day. Looking back and saying "thank you" every night, if even for 30 seconds, will gradually transform us and give us more courage and hope.

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