

When the disciples saw him walking on the sea they were terrified. ... they cried out in fear.

Jesus spoke to them, "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid."

Matthew 14

Eighteenth Week in Ordinary Time: July 31 - August 6, 2011

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The Eighteenth Week of Ordinary Time

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."

Monday is the **Memorial of Saint Alphonsus Liguori, bishop and doctor of the Church**. Thursday is the **Memorial of Saint John Mary Vianney, priest**. Saturday is the **Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord**, with its own special readings.

We continue the story of Moses leading the Israelites out of Egypt. This week our readings are from the **Book of Numbers** for the first several days and from the **Book of Deuteronomy** on Friday.

In **Matthew's Gospel** this week we hear some marvelous words about faith and discipleship. The "feeding of the 5,000" comes after the disciples ask Jesus to send the crowd away because they didn't know how to feed them. Jesus tells them to "give them some food yourselves" and blesses the loaves and fishes. Jesus comes to his disciples across the water in a storm, and invites Peter to

Daily Prayer This Week

This week we can ask, in the variety of ways, in the situations of our daily lives, that our eyes might be opened to see Jesus as he really is - glorified, with the Father, and ready to renew our faith and trust in him.

As we begin our day, and at brief times throughout our day, we can pull our consciousness together by letting the themes of this week's reading guide us.

One day, we might ask to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus as we go through a day full of strong wind and waves. We can ask again and again, as things get tougher and more challenging. Another day, we might focus on what comes out of our mouths. Is there cynicism, judgments, distortions of the truth, divisive and self-serving manipulation, yelling and hurtful put-downs? How do I practice using my voice to give praise to God by affirming others, forgiving them, by telling the truth, by defending the poor and the voiceless, by giving God thanks?

Another day, I might be conscious of those I regard as "dogs," those I disdain or think of as "the enemy." I might ask for the grace to open my heart to whatever faith in God they have, however different from mine. I might ask for a sense of solidarity with them, not because it is my desire or inclination, but because it is God's desire for me. How can I heal and reconcile, at least in my heart, what needs healing: racism, sexism, anti-Semitism, anti-Muslimism, fear and hatred of foreigners, hostility against the poor or my harsh judgments about "sinners."

come to him, across the water; when Peter comes, he takes his eyes off Jesus and goes down. A persistent Canaanite woman begs Jesus for help for her daughter. When he refuses, she persists and he replies, "O woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish." Jesus asks his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" and Peter replies, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." But when Peter tries to stop Jesus from talking about the hardships that are ahead, Jesus tells him, "Get behind me, Satan!" He gives his followers a guide for their lives: "Whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." The disciples wonder why they could not drive out a demon from a boy, Jesus answers, "Because of your little faith." Faith "the size of a mustard seed" is enough.

On the **Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time**, Elijah finds God not in the thunder and driving wind, but in a gentle breeze. We repeat the gospel we heard a few days ago as Peter's fear gets the best of him, when Jesus calls him out of his boat in a stormy sea. Peter takes his eyes off of Jesus and would have perished without Jesus' rescuing him.

Later in the week, we can get in touch with the call of Jesus to deny ourselves. This is not self-denial for its own sake. This is the dying to self that comes from loving in the self-sacrificing way that Jesus did. Who in my family, friends, relative, co-workers, members of my parish or congregation needs my self-denying love? How have I focused on "gaining the world" and lost some of my true self in the process? Is there some way this week that I can taste discovering my true self in giving some time, some compassion, some love, some special care to someone who needs this from me?

And throughout the week, perhaps at a special time of powerlessness or some time when I feel that I don't have the energy or gifts to do the "more," to move a mountain, I can ask for faith the size of a mustard seed. And, each night I can give thanks to God for being generous to me all week, for this simple focus on our relationship every day.

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