

"See to it that no one captivate you with an empty, seductive philosophy ... according to the elemental powers of the world and not according to Christ."
Colossians 2

Twenty-Third Week in Ordinary Time: Sept. 9-15, 2007

The Twenty-Third Week in Ordinary Time

On the **Twenty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time** we hear Wisdom marvel at God's ways. Paul writes to his friend, Philemon, about Onesimus, his slave, who is now a convert and in prison with Paul. Paul asks that he be taken back as a son or a brother. In **Luke's gospel**, Jesus just turns to tell the crowd that following him will involve radical conversion and require that each person discern if they can prepare for the self-denial required.

Thursday is the **Memorial of Saint John Chrysostom, bishop and doctor of the Church**. Friday is the **Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross**. Saturday is the **Memorial of Our Lady of Sorrows**. These days offer us a contemplation on how central the cross is in our lives and a glimpse of the mystery of God's love for us and the power of self-giving love.

The first part of the week, the first readings are from the **Letter to the Colossians**. Paul is in prison, encouraging this community to put their trust in Christ, not mystical teachings and powers. He challenges them to live their baptism and to walk in the union they have with and in Jesus.

Following **Luke's Gospel**, Jesus heals a man with a withered hand, on the Sabbath, in front of his religious critics. Then Jesus goes up on a mountain to pray and comes down to name his twelve apostles - all of whom seem to be unknown or questionable at best. The people bring all their sick to hear him and to be healed. Jesus tells them of their blessedness and warns them of the dangers. "Stop judging and you will not be judged.... For the measure with which you measure will in return be measured out to you."

God's loving mercy and forgiveness to us is the central message in the **Twenty-Fourth Sunday of Ordinary Time**. Knowing that his audience includes not only the sinners but also the judgemental religious leaders, Jesus offers three parables about mercy, ending with the powerful story of the Prodigal Son. "My son, you are here with me

Daily Prayer This Week

When we place Jesus at the center of our lives, two marvelous graces are given us. We experience God's love for us in the mercy and forgiveness of Jesus. As grateful sinners, we then are able to forgive others.

As we begin each day this week, we can let these two graces be part of our reflection. We can ask our Lord to show us his love. We can fear-less-ly ask to understand who we are as sinners, in the concrete ways each of us falls short, gets distracted, becomes uncentered and makes very unfree choices. We can ask to be forgiven and healed. This journey each day might take us into specific patterns, habits, ruts we're in. We may even want to prepare to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation this week, in preparation for celebrating the upcoming Sunday's readings.

We can choose to focus carefully this week on those people we ask for the grace to forgive. Whose faults do I pay most attention to? Whom do I judge harshly? From whom do I withhold forgiveness? If we begin each day, asking our Lord to reveal the answers to these questions, throughout our day, our days this week will show us deeper places where the Lord can forgive us and where we can share that mercy.

From the beginning of the week, we might ask Mary to gently guide us to trust her Son's love and to be more tender in loving those people her Son invites us to forgive and be a source of healing.

Throughout this week, we can also give thanks for the ways we are called to be Jesus' followers - not because we are extremely talented or because we are perfect, but because he saw in us something that he could heal and then send us to heal others. We can be especially attentive to the ways we are blessed in our poverty and in the ways we sometimes experience rejection

always; everything I have is yours. But now we must celebrate and rejoice, because your brother was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.”

as his disciples.