

Jesus said, ... "Then come, follow me."

When the young man heard this statement, he went away sad, for he had many possessions.

Matthew 19

Twentieth Week of Ordinary Time: August 16-22, 2009

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Twentieth Week of Ordinary Time

On the **Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time** the key question the people are asking in **John's Gospel** is: "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" Jesus tells us the eating his flesh and drinking blood is real food and drink. It gives us life, eternal life. We are one with him and he is one with us.

Thursday is the **Memorial of Saint Bernard, abbot and doctor of the Church**. Friday is the **Memorial of Saint Pius X, pope**. Saturday is the **Memorial of the Queenship of the Blessed Virgin Mary**.

The first four weekdays we have readings from the **Book of Judges**. We read of how Israel worshiped other gods and fell into the power of their enemies; how God called Gideon to be a leader of his tribe; of Gideon's son Abimelech who unfairly was made king and his brother Jotham's response; and of Jephtha's promise to God to sacrifice the first person he saw if only he was victorious in battle. After his victory, Jephtha's only child ran to greet him and he sacrificed her. The **Psalm** reading for that day reminds us that "Sacrifice or oblation you wished not, but ears open to obedience."

Two days of readings from the **Book of Ruth** tell the moving story of Naomi and her loving daughter-in-law Ruth. Ruth leaves her own homeland to return with

Daily Prayer This Week

This week we can be moved by the powerful fidelity of a woman like Ruth. And the familiar gospel stories will guide us through the week most with practical advice and challenging ideas.

It is good to begin by recognizing our own issues with God. For many of us, the graces with which we will be asking God to bless us have to do with our freedom from being so "independent." For some of us, it will be to ask to keep our priorities straight this week. It may mean that we let this be a week when we ask what "success" really means for us. It could be a week to try to name more clearly what our purpose, our mission in life is: what the Lord calling us to do with our lives.

The real grace of finding intimacy with God in the midst of our busy everyday lives is that it helps keep us focused. When we get really busy, it can be like being on a tread mill. We begin our day in the morning, go where the day takes us and jump off at night. Our desire here is to live with more choice, more freedom, more reflectively.

So, if I know the gospel is going to ask me to ponder how the lure of having more and more money can become an impediment to my salvation, or how generous and merciful God is, or how my busyness leads me to forget or lose

Naomi to Bethlehem, where Ruth remarries and has a child, Obed, who will become the grandfather of the great king, David.

Matthew's Gospel this week includes some favorite parables, like the rich young man and introduces the counter-cultural idea that riches may make it more difficult to be saved. Those are followed by stories of the Master of the vineyard who leaves us with the phrase "The last will be first and the first, last," and the guests who are too busy to attend the wedding feast of the king's son. Friday, Jesus tells us to love our neighbors as ourselves. Saturday, Jesus says, "Whoever exalts himself will be humbled; but whoever humbles himself will be exalted."

On the **Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time**, we continue with **John's Gospel** and the Bread of Life discussion, with many of the disciples finding Jesus' call to be nourished on his body and blood as tough to swallow. And they leave him. Peter speaks for the others: "Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

my priorities, then I can choose to let those reflections shape my week. The way I can do that is by beginning each day with focus. What gives focus is recognizing and naming a desire, a grace or gift I ask of God, for that day, conscious of what I will be experiencing, what will challenge me, what opportunities will be offered me. What really makes this effective, is to keep talking with Jesus about those desires in the momentary, in between times of the day.

The effect is that more and more of the details of our lives are interacting with the Word of God and the desires which God is inspiring in our hearts. As we move toward the weekend, we can prepare to hear Jesus ask us who we say he is - who he is for us. Connecting with Jesus in our daily lives allow him to become my Savior and the intimate friend who knows me through and through and is helping me come to know myself with great honesty, integrity, freedom and peace.

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