

The Lord will guard us as a shepherd guards his flock.

-Responsorial Psalm for Jer. 31

## Eighteenth Week of Ordinary Time: Aug. 6-12, 2006

### The Eighteenth Week of Ordinary Time

Sunday is the **Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord**. The gospel is **Mark's** version of the Transfiguration. Jesus prepares Peter, James and John for the scandal of the cross.

Tuesday is the **Memorial of St. Dominic, priest**. Thursday is the **Feast of Saint Lawrence, deacon and martyr**. This early martyr's feast has the wonderful gospel of the grain of wheat falling to the ground to die and bear much fruit. Friday is the Memorial of Saint Clare, virgin.

This week we complete our readings from the **Book of the Prophet Jeremiah**. Friday and Saturday have the brief, consoling readings from the **Prophet Nahum** and the **Prophet Habakkuk**, "the vision still has its time."

In **Matthew's Gospel** this week we hear some marvelous words about faith and discipleship. Monday is Matthew's version of the Miracle of the loaves and fishes. On Tuesday there is the choice between two gospels: Jesus comes to his disciples across the water in a storm, and invites Peter to come to him, across the water; when Peter comes he takes his eyes off Jesus and goes down. The Pharisee ask why Jesus' disciples don't follow the dietary laws and Jesus says, "It is not what enters one's mouth that defiles the man; but what comes out of the mouth is what defiles one." In contrast to the lack of faith of the religious leaders, Jesus delights in the faith and trust of a non-Jew, a woman in the enemy Gentile territory to the north. Jesus sums up our discipleship wonderfully: *"Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. What profit would there be for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? Or what can one give in exchange for his life?"* 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 of Ordinary Time we take up the 6th chapter of **John's Gospel** to meditate on the words of Jesus who reveals that he is the bread of life. Some of his hearers grumble about this shocking works. Jesus say, "I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world."

### 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 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, anti-foreignerism, hostility against the poor, judgmentalism about sinners,

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 need 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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