

**Can I not do to you, house of Israel,  
as this potter has done? says the  
LORD.**

**Indeed, like clay in the hand of the  
potter,  
so are you in my hand, house of  
Israel.**

- Jeremiah 18

## Seventeenth Week of Ordinary Time: July 27- Aug. 2, 2008

### 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.

Tuesday is the **Memorial of Saint Martha** with its own special readings. On Thursday, Jesuit and lay partners from around the world celebrate the **Memorial of Saint Ignatius of Loyola**, the founder of the Society of Jesus. Friday we remember **Saint Alphonsus Liguori**, bishop and doctor of the Church. Saturday is the memorial of a foundational Jesuit, **Saint Peter Faber**.

The first readings this week continue to be from the **Book of the Prophet Jeremiah**. Jeremiah delivers God's messages about the laxity of the rulers. It is a powerful call to conversion for all of us today.

We continue to read from **Matthew's Gospel** this week, entering into sayings of Jesus about the Kingdom of God. God's reign is like mustard seeds and it is like yeast. It's coming and growth is small and slow, but it is assured. The Kingdom is like a buried treasure or a merchant's search for a really fine pearl. It is worth investing all we have in it. The Kingdom is like the dragnet used for fishing which gathers everything in it. It is at the end of time when God will gather all to separate the good from the evil. We hear that Jesus could not work miracles in his home town, because of their lack of faith in him. They thought they knew him and therefore took him for granted. Herod arrested John because

### Daily Prayer This Week

It can be an important week to give thanks for the priests and ministers among us who have responded to the call to serve. Saints Ignatius and Alphonsus Liguori are wonderful examples of priest servants. We might write a note to priests we know to thank them for their fidelity in service for us.

This is also a wonderful week to reflect and break open these parables about the Kingdom of God among us. Jesus must have been wanting to assure his disciples and followers who could have been vulnerable, like us, to being discouraged. Sometimes, we get confused or down about how it seems that evil wins out over good, that God's presence is so imperceptible that it tempts our faith in God's presence at all.

In the habit of reflecting in the midst of our daily lives that we have been practicing, we can spend several days noticing the growth and grace offered us - as powerful as yeast or as small as a tiny seed. This can change our spirits and give us more hope and trust. We can spend several days placing our trust in God in the midst of those days when it just seems like there are so many "weeks" standing the way of whatever good we try to do.

It would be great to spend a few days keeping our focus on the buried treasure being offered us - in this particular day or in my life in general. Am I willing to let go of so many smaller rewards in order to embrace that treasure? What will it cost me? Where are my greatest resistances? We tend to do or give our energies to what we really want. How can we grow in our desire for what God wants to give us? We can ask for that grace a number of times this week.

John's preaching was bothering his conscience. He had John beheaded to honor a drunken promise to his niece and an oath to impress his guests.

On the **Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time** we celebrate 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."

We can also reflect on the people in our midst - in our homes, or family relations, in our faith community, in our association of friends - who need our presence in their lives in some way. We can reflect on how we are being called to be present to those people, even those we think we can't help very much, because we know them too well.

Every evening we can continue our practice of returning thanks to God who has showered blessings upon us and we focus our background reflections this week.