

**But the seed sown on rich soil  
is the one who hears the word and  
understands it,  
who indeed bears fruit| and yields a  
hundred or sixty or thirtyfold.**  
Matthew 13

## Sixteenth Week of Ordinary Time: July 19- 25, 2009

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### Sixteenth Week of Ordinary Time

On the **Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time** we read from the **Book of the Prophet Jeremiah** that God himself will shepherd his people and that a descendant of David will rule with wisdom and justice. **Mark's Gospel** paints a picture of Jesus trying to gather his disciples for a rest together but the people kept coming to them: "his heart was moved with pity for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.

Wednesday we remember **St. Mary Magdalene**. Saturday is the **Feast of Saint James, Apostle**, with its own special readings.

The daily readings continue our second week from the **Book of Exodus** continuing the story of God's faithful deliverance of the people from slavery in Egypt. Pharaoh has a change of heart and chases the fleeing Israelites. Moses tells them to "Fear not! Stand your ground, and you will see the victory the Lord will win for you today." With Moses' outstretched arm, they pass through the sea on dry land, while their pursuers drown. Still the people grumble against God in the desert and God gives them manna to eat, with Moses saying, "This is the bread which the Lord has given you to eat." Then God gives Moses the Ten Commandments and Moses shares them

### Daily Prayer This Week

These weekly guides offer us an opportunity to practice being "contemplatives in action." For us busy people, it is possible to pray - "to lift our minds and hearts to God" - in the midst of our everyday, active lives. Prayer is really about our relationship with the Lord, a relationship that is always a gift of the Holy Spirit. That relationship can stay alive, and grow in its intimacy, to the degree we can let the daily events, responsibilities and relationships of our lives become a part of our relationship with our Lord. All it takes is a little focus and some practice.

Every morning this week, we can begin our day with a brief conversation with our Lord that expresses a desire that comes from within us and is shaped by the scriptures this week. We might say, "O Lord, help me trust your presence in what you call me to do today, letting me remember how tiny seeds grow." I may pray: "Dear Lord, thank you for this day. Let me trust your care for me. Let me not be afraid or grumble, but fill me with the nourishment of your presence today." Or we might ask, "Lord, let me do your will today, and experience the closeness you offer me as I do so." Perhaps, we can pray, "Thank you, Lord, for the gift of my children. Help me to trust that not everything I say or do will seem to work, but that you will take care of them and allow my efforts to be fruitful." And, on the weekend, we might be praying,

with the people in a covenant ceremony, sprinkling the blood of sacrificed bulls on the altar, saying, "This is the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you."

In **Matthew's Gospel** this week some people come up and ask Jesus for a sign. He answers mysteriously by saying that the only sign they will receive is the sign of Jonah the prophet, whose preaching brought about conversion. His family comes looking for Jesus and he again asks the mysterious question about who is really a relative, an intimate, with him. His answer is that all of us who do the will of his Father. Then we hear the parable of the sower. It is important for us not to be discouraged because all of the seed doesn't find its way to good soil. Jesus encourages us to be sowers of the Word. He will guarantee a rich harvest. To understand his parables is Jesus' gift to us. Finally, we hear the parable about the weeds in the field again.

The **Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time** begins several weeks of Sunday reflections on Chapter 6 of **John's Gospel** on Jesus as the **Bread of Life**. This Sunday is the miracle of the five barley loaves and two fishes.

"Dear Lord, the relationship you are offering me is like a treasure that makes me want to sell what has seemed to be so important to me so that I might buy that field - investing more deeply in my relationship with you."

Throughout each day, we can repeat and refine these desires and prayers in our hearts. Each thing we do, each person we relate to, each request that is made of us will help us say this or that expression of gratitude or request for grace.

The practice comes in doing this ongoing conversation and connections with our Lord "in the background" of our day - in the brief in between times: in the shower, while getting dressed, on the way to work, while walking to a meeting, during a meeting, while shopping, as we transition from any part of our day to the next. It all comes together as we take a brief bit of time at night, before we go to bed, to say thanks for the graces we have received, for the opportunity to feel connected and know that we are not alone throughout the day. Sometimes, we'll ask the same thing for several days. At times, we'll notice a "pattern" in what we are asking for and what we experience ourselves as receiving. In this very simple way, with just a little focus and practice, we will find a pearl of great value - a growing relationship with our Lord that transforms our spirits in the midst of our busy lives.

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