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The Third Week of Ordinary Time

On the **Third Sunday of Ordinary Time** we read of the call of the disciples in **Mark's Gospel**. Simon and his brother, Andrew; abandoned their way of life to follow Jesus. A short time later, James and his brother, John also left their father in the boat and their fishing and followed him.

Tuesday is the Memorial of **Saint Francis de Sales, bishop and doctor of the Church**. Wednesday is the Feast of the **Conversion of Saint Paul, Apostle**. Thursday is the Memorial of **Saints Timothy and Titus, bishops**. Saturday is the Memorial of **Saint Thomas Aquinas, priest and doctor of the Church**.

This is the third week of readings from Samuel, this week from the **Second Book of Samuel**. A young David is anointed King of Israel and with his army, captures the city of Zion. In the festivities that followed, Samuel offers the delightful image of a joyful David at the Ark of the Covenant, "dancing before the LORD with abandon ... with shouts of joy and to the sound of the horn." David sees Bathsheba, the beautiful wife of Uriah the Hittite and after having relations with her, he orders Uriah to the front of a battle where he is killed. The prophet Nathan confronts David who repents: "I have sinned against the LORD." David prays to the Lord to save his son, who is ill.

In **Mark's Gospel** this week, we have many familiar stories. The scribes, hearing of his many healings, accuse Jesus of being possessed by Satan. He replies that a house is divided against itself cannot stand. Mary and other relatives arrive at a home where Jesus is teaching, but Jesus does not go to them, saying, "Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother." He encourages his disciples not to hide their light "under a bushel basket" and tells the story of the mustard seed, the tiniest seed which grows into one of the largest bushes. In Saturday's gospel the apostles are frightened on a boat in a storm until Jesus awakens to calm the wind and seas.

On the **Fourth Sunday of Ordinary Time** Mark's Gospel brings us the story of Jesus driving out unclean spirits from a man in the synagogue. The people are impressed because he taught with authority in ways

Daily Prayer This Week

The week begins with the call of the Apostles, the same call that we can set aside our fears and insecurities long enough to hear it.

"I'm not very good at prayer," we might say. "I don't have the time to pray." Jesus is not waiting for us to be perfect before we talk to him - he is simply waiting, right now, for us to come to him in our own humanity. This week we are invited to uncover the light of our faith, the light that warms the longing we feel in our souls for something different or deeper in our relationship with God. At this beginning of the year, we might step back and examine the way we talk with Jesus - and the ways we hold him at arm's length.

We are being called into a relationship, a friendship, with someone who delights in us and waits for us to release our fears and come out of hiding. Where do we start? With the desire.

It can be so simple to take the empty moments of our day and just tell the Lord what is in our hearts. In the early morning moments before we get out of bed, while in the shower or traveling to work, cooking or walking the dog - we can stop and open our hearts. "Jesus, you know what is in my heart. You know what my needs are. Help me to be more open to the way you are calling me in my life."

Our prayer can be as simple as opening our hands on our lap for a moment and saying in our own words, "Show me how to come out of hiding. Give me the courage to let go of my fears and bring my self to you in honesty. Let me drop the many defenses I carry that keep me from feeling how deeply you love and accept me."

There is no right or wrong way to approach Jesus - the only right thing is that we come with an open heart and our own desire for something deeper.

Every evening as we end our day, we can sit at the edge of our bed with our hands open and say, "Thank you." We can reflect on the many ways we felt the love of God in our lives that day. What tiny seed was planted in my life to bloom? Where did I shine the light of my own faith on someone?

the scribes did not and they marveled that even the unclean spirits obey him.

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