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## The Fourth Week of Ordinary Time

On the **Fourth Sunday of Ordinary Time**, Jesus commands unclean spirits to leave a man in the synagogue. The people are astonished, because he taught with authority in ways the scribes did not and they marveled that even the unclean spirits obey him.

Tuesday is the **Memorial of Saint John Bosco**. Thursday, forty days after Christmas, is the **Feast of the Presentation of the Lord** with special readings.

The story of David we have been following for the past two weeks will end with his death as we conclude the readings from the **Book of Samuel**. As the narrative moves to the **Book of Kings**, David's son Solomon, has succeeded him on the throne and for the next week, the tale of notable leaders of Israel's history continues to unfold.

In **Mark's Gospel** this week, Jesus continues to heal and teach. A man in the Gerasenes is healed of unclean spirits and wants to stay with Jesus but he tells the man, "Go home to your family and announce to them all that the Lord in his pity has done for you." The young daughter of a synagogue official is sick and on the way, as Jesus stood in a crowd, he felt the power go out of him as a woman with a hemorrhage touched his cloak. "Your faith has saved you," he reassures her. To the daughter he says, "Do not be afraid; just have faith." He teaches in the synagogue in his hometown "and they took offense at him." He was not able to perform miracles there, because of their lack of faith. Though the demons know who Jesus is, Herod thinks he is John the Baptist, whom Herod had beheaded. Jesus encourages his busy disciples, "Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while." But as they tried to get away "and saw the vast crowd, his heart was moved with pity for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things."

The **Fifth Sunday of Ordinary Time** deals with the common human condition of suffering and our need for healing. The first reading from the **Book of Job** is a moving look at Job's anguish at the edge of despair. The response from **Psalms 147** is, "Praise the Lord, who heals the brokenhearted." **Mark's Gospel**

## Daily Prayer This Week

This is a wonderful week to use the brief background times of our lives to talk with the Lord about our need for healing. We can begin each day by naming some desire we have for healing and deeper wholeness and peace. Putting these desires into words, early each day, as soon as we get up or while in the shower or while dressing, helps us give focus to our relationship with the Lord that day. "Lord, thank you for this day. Be with me as I face the challenges before me today. I especially need patience and more compassion, Lord. Heal the anger I feel, and give me peace, so that I can love the way I know you want me to." Each of us can make this 30 second prayer specific to what we need to do each day, and what graces we need to do it. Getting in the habit of naming what I need and asking for it will shape how we spend the day, confidently aware of our Lord's presence with us.

Throughout the day, we can continue our simple conversation with our Lord, speaking friend to friend. We may encounter some spirits within ourselves that aren't very clean. Anger or resentment, fear or paralysis, jealousy or pride, lust or greed, self-pity or judging of others are all spirits that distort our ability to love others the way we are loved by our Lord. When we encounter them, we can ask the Lord to heal us, to drive these spirits from our hearts. Each experience of our need for a Savior can deepen our desire, and our ability to name them each morning.

The healing stories in the gospels make it clear that faith is key to the healing. When the people in Jesus' home time say, "Isn't this just the carpenter's son?" their lack of faith is saying, "He can't heal us." In our own struggle with letting Jesus be our Savior, two things can get in the way. First of all, we need to know we need healing and want to be healed. If I cling to being angry or have become comfortable being afraid, I will first need to acknowledge what a difference freedom would mean in my life and come to desire healing. Then, I need to believe our Lord can heal me. The rest is easy. This honest dialogue with our Lord, throughout our days, no matter what we are doing, can help us grow in faith in the One who wants nothing more than to keep freeing us to

returns to the story of the healing of Simon Peter's mother-in-law and he heals many sick and continues his ministry of preaching and driving out demons throughout Galilee.

know his love for us and to share it generously with others.

The integrating element of this daily prayer is the gratitude we express each evening before we sleep, giving thanks for the grace to be able to connect with our Savior throughout this busy day.

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