

"I am the Bread of Life."
- John 6

Guide for the Third Week of Easter: Apr. 22 - 28, 2007

Third Week of Easter

John's Gospel brings us a wonderful story for the **Third Sunday of Easter**. After the events of Good Friday and the joy of Easter Sunday, Peter longs to return to his old life. "I am going fishing," he says. In a scene reminiscent of the original call of Peter, Jesus appears after a futile night of fishing but is unrecognized by his followers. He calls out to Peter in the boat and tells him where to drop his fishing nets. The fish overflow the nets and they suddenly recognize, "It is the Lord." Jesus cooks them breakfast and asks Peter three times if he loves him. Peter, puzzled affirms three times that he loves Jesus - just as he denied him three times during the Passion. "Feed my sheep," Jesus says to him.

Wednesday is the **Feast of Saint Mark, evangelist**.

In our first readings from **Acts of the Apostles** this week, we read of one of the earliest martyrs, Stephen and of Philip converting an Ethiopian slave along the road. Next is the story of Saul, persecutor of Christians being blinded and then healed by Ananias in the name of Jesus. The week ends with Peter traveling the region and healing.

The gospel for this week is from Chapter 6 of **John's Gospel** on Jesus as the "Bread of Life." Like so many stories in this gospel, Jesus teaches from one layer of understanding to another, taking us deeper into understanding his gift of himself to us in the Eucharist. Jesus says, "Do not work for food that perishes but for the food that endures for eternal life." "The bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst." "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." "Whoever eats my Flesh and drinks my Blood remains in me and I in him." This marvelous dialogue ends with this exchange with his disciples: "Jesus then said to the Twelve, 'Do you also want to leave?' Simon Peter answered him, 'Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and are convinced that you are

Daily Prayer This Week

This can be a very good week to grow in a sense of and practice with the notion of being a "contemplative in the midst of action." We have practically a whole week of gospels about Jesus' gift of himself to us as the "Bread of Life." This gives us the opportunity to let that mystery be in the background of our consciousness every day this week, as we go about our everyday tasks. What makes it "contemplative" is that we will be asking for graces each morning, and we will let our desires and our activity interact.

We can begin reflecting upon how often we "work for food that perishes." The pay-off, the success, the accomplishment, the reward we receive for what we do is often quite passing and unsatisfying. It would be important to be able to sense anything that appears to be food that doesn't last and name it as such this week. The real food, the life-giving nourishment that our Lord offers us is himself.

If we can't celebrate the Eucharist daily this week, we can make what we used to call a "spiritual communion" simply by opening our hearts and desiring to receive our Lord, so that he remain in us and we remain in him. We can practice consciously choosing union with Jesus, our Risen Lord and only Savior, and experiencing how that would affect the choices we need to make throughout our day. If we begin each day, asking for the grace of this union, and renew the desire at brief moments we have at various times in the day, our focus and attention begins to change. We will experience a peace and a gifted lack of hunger and thirst for so many of the things that draw us away from him, from loving, from mercy, from consciousness on those in need.

If the background focus of each day this

the Holy One of God."

On the **Fourth Sunday of Easter**, the **Acts of the Apostles** shows us Paul and Barnabas and the turmoil they faced. The Gentiles were delighted with the good news of Jesus and but the Jews were angry and expelled them from their territory. In a brief, but powerful story from **John's Gospel**, Jesus offers comfort to those who follow him: "My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me."

week is to desire to be fed by a closeness with my Lord, it doesn't matter how busy I am, or how many conflicts I have to face, or what suffering I or my loved ones must endure. His flesh and blood are real food and drink because they are the real sacrifice that takes away the power of sin and death itself. United with his surrender to the Father, we are set free from whatever can take away the life he gained for us. For this gift, for this faith, we can give thanks for every night, as we review our union with our Lord each night.