

A man going on a journey called in his servants and entrusted his possessions to them. To one he gave five talents; to another, two; to a third, one— to each according to his ability.

- Matthew 25

Twenty-First Week of Ordinary Time: Aug. 22-28, 2010

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Twenty-First Week of Ordinary Time

On the **Twenty-First Sunday of Ordinary Time** Jesus cautions us about the difficulty of the Christian life, saying many will be unable to “enter through the narrow gate.” Jesus indicates it is those we do not expect who will be the first in the Kingdom: “Some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last.”

Tuesday is the **Feast of Saint Bartholomew, Apostle**, with its own special readings. Friday is the **Memorial of Saint Monica**, followed the next day by the Memorial of her son, **Saint Augustine, bishop and doctor of the Church**

For the first reading we begin with a few selections from the **Second Letter of Paul to the Thessalonians** and then we move to readings from the **First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians** for the next several weeks.

We continue to reflect on Jesus' words from **Matthew's Gospel** Jesus condemns the ways of the Pharisees, calling them hypocrites, “blind guides” and “whitened tombs” as he says, “on the outside you appear righteous, but inside you are filled with hypocrisy and evildoing.” In contrast to the ways of the hypocrites, Jesus tells his disciples to “Stay awake!” We are called to be faithful and prudent servants, stewards of what our Master has entrusted to us. If we are this kind of disciple, we will be blessed. He tells them the Parable of the talents. A master goes off on a

Daily Prayer This Week

Like physical exercises which build strength and stamina, these exercises for finding intimacy with God in our everyday lives involve practice. Nobody ever got good at soccer or baseball, running or dancing without careful practice that becomes a habit, a way of life. And, no one even attempts such a regimen without great desire. The same is true with having a better relationship with our Lord. It takes great desire to sustain a routine of reflection and affective, intimate conversation. Such prayerful focus and connectedness takes discipline, but it quickly becomes natural. And, the rewards are phenomenal.

We can practice this week by asking ourselves some deep questions in the background of our life each day. Beginning each day by briefly expressing a desire to be more self-aware and transparent with our Lord, we can ask ourselves some probing questions.

In what ways am I a hypocrite? How do I use a double standard - harsher on others than I am on myself? How do I like to appear as a religious person, but actually lack mercy and deeds of charity? Am I a good steward of the gifts with which God has entrusted me?

As I grow in the ability to reflect throughout the day, I might try to recognize my inner spirit, my attitudes, the ways I respond. It is a way of staying alert and places me with my Lord in conversation, in the background as I make decisions, as I experience my reactions to events and people. Sometimes, I might just be saying “Thank you, Lord,” expressing gratitude for what I've been given. At other times, that will quickly turn to a reflection on how I will be a

journey, entrusting his wealth to three servants. Two invest the money and earn twice as much for their master. The third, out of fear and laziness, won't take any risks and buries the wealth which was entrusted to him.

Sunday is the **Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time**. We are encouraged to embrace humility. The first reading from the **Book of Sirach** says it simply: "Humble yourself the more, the greater you are, and you will find favor with God." In **Luke's gospel** is a beloved story of Jesus saying, "do not recline at table in the place of honor" at a banquet. "For every one who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

good steward of those gifts. Hearing the readings this week, I might want to monitor how my fears or my laziness might prevent me from being bold about using the gifts the Lord has given me to build up the Kingdom in my world.

Preparing for celebrating God's love on Sunday, I can focus on the readings for and ask to be more humble in my life. Who is "the poor, the crippled, the lame" person who needs to be invited more deeply into my life?

Help me Lord to hear your word to me, even when it challenges me. Open my heart and guide me to use my talents to serve you. Teach me to be generous, Lord.

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