

Love your enemies and do good to them,
and lend expecting nothing back;
then your reward will be great.

- Luke 6

Twenty-Third Week of Ordinary Time: Sept. 5-11, 2010

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Twenty-Third Week of Ordinary Time

On the **Twenty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time** we hear Wisdom marvel at God's ways. Paul writes to his friend, Philemon, about Philemon's slave, Onesimus, who is now a convert and in prison with Paul. Paul asks that he be taken back as a son or a brother. In **Luke's Gospel**, Jesus tells the crowd that following him will involve radical conversion and require that each person discern if they can prepare for the self-denial required.

Wednesday is the **Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary**, with its own special readings.

In our first reading, we continue with Paul's **First Letter to the Corinthians**, an intimate look at the struggles of an early Church community.

In **Luke's Gospel** this week we see Jesus healing a man on the Sabbath, in a synagogue, right in front of his religious critics who plot to deal with him. Jesus then spends a night in prayer and calls his twelve closest followers. When people come to him from all over, he heals them. Jesus announces that the poor, the hungry, those who weep, and those hated or excluded or denounced because of him are the blessed. He warns those who are rich, filled, laughing and spoken well of, for their fates will be reversed. He cautions not to be quick to see the splinter in someone else's eye when we do not notice the "wooden beam" in our own eyes. He says that we will be known by our fruit. It is only by building our lives upon him, as a firm foundation, can we hope to survive crises.

God's loving mercy and forgiveness to us is

Daily Prayer This Week

This week's daily communion with our Lord can be about the mysteries of self-sacrifice and healing. In the back of our minds each day, we can have a desire to take time out of our busy days just as Jesus did, for prayer and speaking to his Father. We can be aware of the judgmental religious leaders of Jesus' time, who ignored the beam of wood in their own eyes to point out the splinter in someone else's eye. We can also ask for the vision to see how we might be blind to our own snap judgments of others.

If we begin each morning by praying a desire, the rest will follow for the day. *"Good morning, Lord. Thank you for this day. Help me today to bring to you the parts of myself that need your healing. Be with me as I face the poverty, hunger or tears of this day."* We can go into this prayer, in more depth or detail while we are in the shower or getting dressed. If we let these desires make their way into the background of our day, we can focus our consciousness no matter what we are doing.

Even in activities that require "our full consciousness" and attention, it is possible to shape that consciousness in the context of our desires. For example, I might be in an important meeting, that doesn't allow me to go day dreaming. But, I can walk into that meeting room saying in my heart, *"Okay, Lord, be with me here. While I'm so tempted to be seen as a 'success' here, heal all of that focus on myself and free me to do my best and to be attentive to the needs of others. Let me focus on you and your desires for the greater good here."*

Especially when we are facing something

the central message in **Luke's Gospel** for the **Twenty-Fourth Sunday of Ordinary Time**. Knowing that his audience includes not only the sinners but also the judgmental religious leaders, Jesus offers three parables about mercy, ending with the powerful story of the Prodigal Son. He says to the jealous older son, "You are here with me always; everything I have is yours. But now we must celebrate and rejoice, because your brother was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found."

that is quite difficult, requiring real self-sacrifice and genuine love, we can let our background conversation with the Lord release us from our "typical" response or behavior. *"Lord, I'm so full of fear sometimes. I see you boldly heal the man with the withered hand in front of the steely gaze of your critics. You healed because you knew it was the right and compassionate thing to do. Help me to be more courageous in choosing the right thing in my life today."*

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