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The Ninth Week of Ordinary Time

Our week begins with the great **Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ**. We celebrate this Sunday with profound gratitude for the gift of the Eucharist. This renewal of our sense of Jesus' presence among us can sustain us all week. (It's the 9th Sunday in Ordinary Time for the rest of the world - building on a firm foundation, rather than sand.)

This week we will have three feasts: Tuesday is the **Feast of the Visitation** of Mary to Elizabeth; Friday is the **Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus**; and Saturday is the **Memorial of the Immaculate Heart of Mary**. So, as we go through the Ordinary Time readings, we can let these special days be rich highlights for the week.

This week is our only exposure to the **Book of Tobit** in the two year cycle of readings. The Book of Tobit is a novel in the Wisdom literature tradition. We read the story of the misfortunes Tobit and a young woman, named Sarah. The story is about God's fidelity, even though they are tested, and their perseverance in prayer and works of charity. The songs of praise in Tobit this week are extraordinary.

As we continue the Jerusalem ministry of Jesus in **Matthew**, we see Jesus in conflict with the religious establishment of Israel. They are angry at Jesus for telling them a parable that reveals them as unfaithful stewards. They try to reduce the notion of resurrection to an absurdity. Finally, Jesus focuses on the two great commandments: love of God and love of our neighbor.

The **10th Sunday in Ordinary Time** allows us to reflect upon the call of the tax collector, Matthew, because Jesus is criticized for eating and drinking with sinners. Jesus calls his critics and us to go learn the meaning of these words:

*'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.'
I did not come to call the righteous
but sinners.'*

Daily Prayer This Week

This is a great week for rich reflections on the Word and the feasts as they relate to the various movements going on in our lives this week. We can make this week special by entering into Sunday's celebration of the Body and Blood of Christ with longing and desire. Each of us can prepare - even as we are washing up and getting dressed - to walk into our parish church or congregation, asking our Lord to be the Bread that gives Life to us, this day. We can simplify the background of our Saturday or Sunday, to enter into our hungers and thirsts. We can let this wonderful gift of our Lord to us become a reality so that when we open our hands to say "Amen," we are opening our hearts to receive a love than can transform us into Bread, given for one another and our world.

This fits so well with a reflection on the Visitation. The meeting of Mary's faith and Elizabeth's fidelity can stir our hearts to extol God's goodness to us, mindful of God's own mercy and preferential love for the poor.

The feasts of Jesus and Mary - focusing on the image of their loving hearts can help our gratitude all week. We are not loved and transformed by ideas, but by lovers, who give of themselves to help us be sacred, immaculate, self-sacrificing hearts for others.

All week, we can let the Tobit story and Jesus in Jerusalem interact with our reflecting and desiring. We can turn to God, in faith and hope, as Tobit and Sarah do. We can practice asking to be able to persevere in difficult times.

Lord, help me respond in gratitude with you with at least more of my heart, more of my whole self. And, Lord, let me love my spouse, my children, my parents, my neighbors here and around the world with more patience and reverent care. All week, let me chat with you about them and their needs, so that I might learn to love, with the profound love you with which you have loved me.

And, let's prepare to be renewed in our call, like Matthew - loved sinners, who practice mercy to all who are placed in our path, to all who need forgiveness.

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