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The Sixteenth Week of Ordinary Time

This **Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time** we are reminded that God has sown good seed, but, of course, an enemy has sown weeds in the same field. We are not supposed to go out there judgmentally pulling up weeds, but to leave judgment to God. The way the Kingdom of God grows is the way tiny seeds grow and the way yeast makes dough rise: it is surprising and slow and almost imperceptible. If we have ears, we ought to hear.

Friday we celebrate the **Memorial of St. Mary Magdalene** and have as our special gospel the wonderful resurrection story of the Risen Jesus sending Mary to be the "Apostle to the Apostles."

The daily readings continue our second week from the **Book of Exodus** continuing the story of God's faithful deliverance of the people from slavery in Egypt. Pharaoh has a change of heart and chases the fleeing Israelites. Moses tells them to "Fear not! Stand your ground, and you will see the victory the Lord will win for you today." With Moses' outstretched arm, they pass through the sea on dry land, while their pursuers drown. Still the people grumble against God in the desert and God gives them manna to eat, with Moses saying, "This is the bread which the Lord has given you to eat." Then God gives Moses the Ten Commandments and Moses shares them with the people in a covenant ceremony, sprinkling the blood of sacrificed bulls on the altar, saying, "This is the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you."

In **Matthew's Gospel** this week some people come up and ask Jesus for a sign. He answers mysteriously by saying that the only sign they will receive is the sign of Jonah the prophet, whose preaching brought about conversion. His family comes looking for Jesus and he again asks the mysterious question about who is really a relative, an intimate, with him. His answer is that all of us who do the will of his Father. Then we get to hear the parable of the sower, again. It is important for us not to be discouraged because all of the seed doesn't find its way to good soil. Jesus encourages us to be sowers of the Word. He will guarantee a rich harvest. To understand his parables is Jesus' gift to us. Finally, we hear the parable about the weeds in the field again..

Daily Prayer This Week

These weekly guides offer us an opportunity to practice being "contemplatives in action." For us busy people, it is possible to pray - "to lift our minds and hearts to God - in the midst of our everyday, active lives. Prayer is really about our relationship with the Lord, a relationship that is always a gift of the Holy Spirit. That relationship can stay alive, and grow in its intimacy, to the degree we can let the daily events, responsibilities and relationships of our lives become a part of our relationship with our Lord. All it takes is a little focus and some practice.

Every morning this week, we can begin our day with a brief conversation with our Lord that expresses a desire that comes from within us and is shaped by the scriptures this week. We might say, "O Lord, help me trust your presence in what you call me to do today, letting me remember how yeast works and how tiny seeds grow." I may pray: "Dear Lord, thank you for this day. Let me trust your care for me. Let me not be afraid or grumble, but fill me with the nourishment of your presence today." Or we might ask, "Lord, let me do your will today, and experience the closeness you offer me as I do so." Perhaps, we can pray, "Thank you, Lord, for the gift of my children. Help me to trust that not everything I say or do will seem to work, but that you will take care of them and allow my efforts to be fruitful." And, on the weekend, we might be praying, "Dear Lord, the relationship you are offering me is like a treasure that makes me want to sell what has seemed to be so important to me so that I might buy that field - investing more deeply in my relationship with you."

Throughout each day, we can repeat and refine these desires and prayers in our hearts. Each thing we do, each person we relate to, each request that is made of us will help us say this or that expression of gratitude or request for grace.

The practice comes in doing this ongoing conversation and connections with our Lord "in the background" of our day - in the brief in between times: in the shower, while getting dressed, on the way to work, while walking to a meeting, during a meeting, while shopping, as we transition from any part of our day to the next. It all comes together as we take a brief bit of time at night, before we go to

This prepares us for the **Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time**. Next Sunday we hear Solomon asking God, not for riches or honors but for wisdom. We hear Jesus as the source of God's wisdom teach us more about the Kingdom of Heaven. Our passion for it should be like that of one discovering a treasure buried in a field or finding a pearl of great value, sacrificing everything to achieve our deepest desires. And, it is like the case of a dragnet that hauls in fish that can nourish others as well as what is not useful for others. There will be a great sorting out some day.

bed, to say thanks for the graces we have received, for the opportunity to feel connected and know that we are not alone throughout the day. Sometimes, we'll ask the same thing for several days. At times, we'll notice a "pattern" in what we are asking for and what we experience ourselves as receiving. In this very simple way, with just a little focus and practice, we will find a pearl of great value - a growing relationship with our Lord that transforms our spirits in the midst of our busy lives.

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