

## Guide for Prayer for the week of August 14-20, 2005

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### The Twentieth Week of Ordinary Time

God's love belongs to all of us, according to the readings of the **Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time**. In **Isaiah**, God promises "my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples." Paul, in his **Letter to the Romans**, tells us "the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable" and refers to himself as the "apostle to the Gentiles." In **Matthew's Gospel**, Jesus hears the pleas of a "foreign" woman, a Canaanite who begs Jesus to heal her daughter.

Monday we have special readings for the **Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary**. The **Revelation** reading tells of "a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet" who gives birth to a son, "destined to rule all nations." In **Luke's Gospel** Mary greets her pregnant cousin, Elizabeth, and Elizabeth prays, "How does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?"

Starting Tuesday, we have three days of readings from the **Book of Judges**. We read of God's call of Gideon to be a leader of his tribe; of Gideon's son Abimelech who unfairly was made king and his brother Jotham's response; and of Jephtha's promise to God to sacrifice the first person he saw if only he was victorious in battle. After his victory, Jephtha's only child ran to greet him and he sacrificed her. The **Psalms** reading for that day reminds us that "Sacrifice or oblation you wished not, but ears open to obedience."

Two days of readings from the **Book of Ruth** tell the moving story of Naomi and her loving daughter-in-law Ruth. Ruth leaves her own homeland to return with Naomi to Bethlehem, where Ruth remarries and has a child, Obed, who will become the grandfather of the great king, David.

In the continuing stories of **Matthew's Gospel**, Jesus tells parables which introduce the counter-cultural idea that riches may make it more difficult to be saved, the story of the Master of the vineyard who leaves us with the phrase "The last will be first and the first, last," and the guests who are too busy to attend the wedding feast of the king's son. Friday,

### Daily Prayer This Week

The prayer that St. Ignatius made to Mary can be ours this week: "Place me with your Son." It can be Mary, the lowly servant of God, who can help us this week to walk through our daily lives with greater attention to her Son and to let his words penetrate our hearts.

We can be helped to read what happens when the people try to govern themselves, and how powerful the fidelity of a woman like Ruth can be. Perhaps the gospels will guide us through the week most powerfully.

It is good to begin by recognizing our own issues with God. For many of us, the graces with which we will be asking God to bless us have to do with our freedom from being so "independent." For some of us, it will be to ask to keep our priorities straight this week. It may mean that we let this be a week when we ask what "success" really means for us. It could be a week to try to name more clearly what our purpose, our mission in life is: what the Lord calling us to do with our lives.

The real grace of finding intimacy with God in the midst of our busy everyday lives is that it helps keep us focused. When we get really busy, it can be like being on a tread mill. We begin our day in the morning, go where the day takes us and jump off at night. Our desire here is to live with more choice, more freedom, more reflectively.

So, if I know the gospel is going to ask me to chew how the lure of having more and more money can become an impediment to my salvation, or how generous and merciful God is, or how my busyness leads me to forget or lose my priorities, then I can choose to let those reflections shape my week. The way I can do that is by beginning each day with focus. What gives focus is recognizing and naming a desire, a grace or gift I ask of God, for that day, conscious of what I will be experiencing, what will challenge me, what opportunities will be offered me. What really makes this effective, is to keep talking with Jesus

Jesus tells us to love our neighbors as ourselves. Saturday, the **Memorial of Saint Bernard**, Jesus says. "Whoever exalts himself will be humbled; but whoever humbles himself will be exalted."

The readings for the **Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time** offer us a reading from **Isaiah**, where a servant is named a ruler and given the keys to the House of David. The **Letter to the Romans** is grateful and passionate as Paul cries out, "Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!" In the **Matthew's Gospel**, Jesus asks Peter, "Who do you say that I am?" and Peter's proclamation to Jesus in front of the other disciples, "You are the Christ" prompts Jesus to offer Peter the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven as he calls him the rock on which his church would be built.

about those desires in the momentary, in between times of the day.

The effect is that more and more of the details of our lives are interacting with the Word of God and the desires which God is inspiring in our hearts. As we move toward the weekend, we can prepare to hear Jesus ask us who we say he is - who he is for us. Connecting with Jesus in our daily lives allow him to become my Savior and the intimate friend who knows me through and through and is helping me come to know myself with great honesty, integrity, freedom and peace.

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