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The Twenty-Second Week of Ordinary Time

“What profit would there be for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his life?” Traces of this profound question from Jesus are seen in the readings of the **Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time**. The Prophet **Jeremiah** speaks strong words to God about the cost of his ministry. In **Matthew’s Gospel**, Peter tries to stop Jesus from going to the suffering that awaits him. Jesus tells him that any follower of his “must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.”

Monday is the **Memorial of the Martyrdom of Saint John the Baptist**.

Paul’s **First Letter to the Thessalonians** concludes this week and on Wednesday, we begin a week of readings from the **Letter to the Colossians**, with its gracious salutation and encouragement. The readers are exhorted to see Christ as the “head of the body” noting that all is created “in and through him.”

We now move from Matthew to **Luke’s Gospel**, which we will read on weekdays from now until Advent begins. We will feel the special way the evangelist will highlight healing, mercy, the poor, women, prayer, the Spirit and a gospel for a new, all inclusive, Israel.

Jesus heals a man with demons, Simon’s mother-in-law, and all the sick they brought him. He calls out to three discouraged fishermen to lower their nets, to show them his power. Peter is overwhelmed and protests he is unworthy. At Jesus’ persistence, Peter, James and John leave their nets to follow Jesus. The week ends with Jesus’ tangling with the Pharisees who challenge the fasting of his disciples. He deflects the criticism by telling them “no one pours new wine into old wineskins.”

Saturday is the **Memorial of Saint Gregory the Great, pope and doctor of the Church**.

This brings us to the **Twenty-Third week in Ordinary Time**. As faithful followers, we are encouraged to “love one another” throughout the readings. **Ezekiel** tells us that we are responsible for each other and Paul’s letter to the **Romans** offers: “Owe nothing to anyone, except to love one another.” In the **Matthew’s Gospel**, Jesus tells us to challenge each other on our behavior and to pray, “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”

Daily Prayer This Week

As we get into this pattern of letting the readings interact with the desires of our hearts, one week flows into the next. So, we begin this week continuing to reflect on the purpose of our lives. We can measure our resistance to self-denial for the sake of loving others more and ask for the Lord’s healing and grace.

Our pattern of finding intimacy with our Lord in the unique context of our busy, complicated days begins with a morning moment of focus, the earlier the better. Soon after we wake up, we can pause briefly to give a faith filled shape to our day. While making coffee, starting a load of wash, taking a shower, getting dressed, we can begin our day with the Lord, begin our day in a relationship. At first, it may take practice to replace what usually goes on in our heads and hearts, with this kind of prayerful desiring. It can quickly become a very natural way to anticipate, plan and prepare for our day.

Reading this guide over the weekend or early in the week helps, as does reading the Daily Reflection for the day. But these resources work best when they provide a support for our inner conversation with the Lord as we go through the real experiences, relationships, conflicts and challenges of our day. Then the scriptures, the unique details of our lives, and the desires of our hearts simply come together in an ongoing dialogue with the Lord that takes place in the background of our days and shapes our choices and reveals deeper desires.

This week, we might ask Jesus to confront the demons that seem to dominate the upcoming week. We may have many mothers-in-law or friends that need healing that we can entrust to the Lord’s care. We might experience discouragement in our work as spouses or parents or in our jobs or ministries and take the opportunity to ask the Lord to show us his power there. And, when we are tempted to feel unworthy or to be humbled by the task ahead, we can let Jesus call us again to follow him. Perhaps this week we will feel the call to a real renewal, to not just keep trying to pour new wine into our old wineskins but to ask the Lord to make us new, and ready for the new calls, new graces he is offering us. Hopefully, we can find a few moments every evening to look back on these days of connecting with our Lord, and to express our gratitude for his presence and the new freedom and graces we are receiving.