

## Guide for Prayer for the week of September 4-10, 2005

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### The Twenty-Third Week of Ordinary Time

For the **Twenty-Third week in Ordinary Time** we are encouraged to "love one another." **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."

Thursday is the **Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary**. Friday is the **Memorial of St. Peter Claver, S.J.**, a truly great Jesuit saint..

The first part of the week, the first readings are from the **Letter to the Colossians**. Paul is in prison, encouraging this community to put their trust in Christ, not mystical teachings and powers. He challenges them to live their baptism and to walk in the union they have with and in Jesus. Saturday we begin reading for Paul's **First Letter to Timothy**. The opening words boldly proclaim that Paul is the "foremost" among sinners and a sign of God's mercy.

In the first part of this week, following **Luke's Gospel**, Jesus heals a man with a withered hand, on the Sabbath, in front of his religious critics. Then Jesus goes up on a mountain to pray and comes down to name his twelve apostles - all of whom seem to be unknown or questionable at best. The people bring all their sick to hear him and to be healed. Jesus tells them of their blessedness and warns them of the dangers. We can't be blind guides. We must have the humility to acknowledge and be forgiven our own sins before we can help others. Jesus tells us that our goodness will be seen in what we do and that our only security is in building our lives on him.

For the **Twenty-Fourth week in Ordinary Time** we are invited to reflect on how we forgive. Peter asks Jesus "how often" we must forgive, asking the extent of Jesus' call for mercy. The parable of the forgiven servant who can't forgive is meant to give us clear guidance for our lives as followers of Jesus: if we are forgiven, we must forgive others.

### Daily Prayer This Week

When we place Jesus at the center of our lives, as Paul calls the Colossians to do, two marvelous graces are given us. We experience God's love for us in the mercy and forgiveness of Jesus. As grateful sinners, we then are able to forgive others.

As we begin each day this week, we can let these two graces be part of our reflection. We can ask our Lord to show us his love. We can fear-less-ly ask to understand who we are as sinners, in the concrete ways each of us falls short, gets distracted, becomes uncentered and makes very unfree choices. We can ask to be forgiven and healed. This journey each day might take us into specific patterns, habits, ruts we're in. We may even want to prepare to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation this week, in preparation for celebrating the upcoming Sunday's readings.

We can choose to focus carefully this week on those people we ask for the grace to forgive. Whose faults do I pay most attention to? Whom do I judge harshly? From whom do I withhold forgiveness? If we begin each day, asking our Lord to reveal the answers to these questions, throughout our day, our days this week will show us deeper places where the Lord can forgive us and where we can share that mercy.

From the beginning of the week, we might ask Mary to gently guide us to trust her Son's love and to be more tender in loving those people her Son invites us to forgive and be a source of healing.

Throughout this week, we can also give thanks for the ways we are called to be Jesus' followers - not because we are extremely talented or because we are perfect, but because he saw in us something that he could heal and then send us to heal others. We can be especially attentive to the ways we are blessed in our poverty and in the ways we sometimes experience rejection as his disciples.

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