

A man going on a journey called in his servants and entrusted his possessions to them. To one he gave five talents; to another, two; to a third, one— to each according to his ability.

- Matthew 25

Creighton University's Weekly Guide for Daily Prayer Twenty-First Week in Ordinary Time: August 26 - September 1, 2012

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Twenty-First Week in Ordinary Time

On the **Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time**, we continue with **John's Gospel** and the Bread of Life discussion, with many of the disciples finding Jesus' call to be nourished on his body and blood as tough to swallow. And they leave him. Peter speaks for the others: "Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

Monday is the **Memorial of Saint Monica**.
On Tuesday, we remember Monica's son, with the **Memorial of St. Augustine, Bishop and Doctor of the Church**.
Wednesday is the **Memorial of the Martyrdom of Saint John the Baptist**, with its own special readings.

For the first reading we begin with a few selections from the **Second Letter of Paul to the Thessalonians** and then we move to readings from the **First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians** for the next several weeks.

Matthew's Gospel this week includes stories of Jesus strongly challenging the Pharisees. He saw how they made people's lives so difficult by their insistence on the rules and appearances while neglecting mercy and good faith. He chides them for paying attention to the extraneous and not the message: "Blind guides, who strain out the gnat and swallow the camel!" His criticism grows stronger: "On the outside you appear righteous, but inside you are filled with hypocrisy and evildoing." Jesus teaches about preparation: Stay awake! For you do

Daily Prayer This Week

Like physical exercises which build strength and stamina, these exercises for finding intimacy with God in our everyday lives involve practice. Nobody ever got good at soccer or baseball, running or dancing without careful practice that becomes a habit, a way of life. And, no one even attempts such a regimen without great desire. The same is true with having a better relationship with our Lord. It takes great desire to sustain a routine of reflection and affective, intimate conversation. Such prayerful focus and connectedness takes discipline, but it quickly becomes natural. And, the rewards are phenomenal.

We can practice this week by asking ourselves some deep questions in the background of our life each day. Beginning each day by briefly expressing a desire to be more self-aware and transparent with our Lord, we can ask ourselves some probing questions.

In what ways am I a hypocrite? How do I use a double standard - harsher on others than I am on myself? How do I like to appear as a religious person, but actually lack mercy and deeds of charity? Am I a good steward of the gifts with which God has entrusted me?

As I grow in the ability to reflect throughout the day, I might try to recognize my inner spirit, my attitudes, the ways I respond. It is a way of staying alert and places me with my Lord in conversation, in the background as I make decisions, as I experience my reactions to events and people. Sometimes, I might just

not know on which day your Lord will come.” In the parable of the ten maidens who go out to meet the bridegroom, many of the women did not prepare for the meeting and do not have enough oil for their lamps and Jesus says again, “Stay awake.” Saturday's gospel is the dramatic story of the three servants who are given resources by their master and rewarded or punished for what they did with the resources they had.

On the **Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time**, the Gospel flows from the readings this past week. When Jesus is challenged because his disciples don't follow the ritual washings, he defends them, quoting Isaiah: “This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.” Jesus calls us to an inner cleanliness: “From within people, from their hearts, come evil thoughts, unchastity, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, licentiousness, envy, blasphemy, arrogance, folly. All these evils come from within and they defile.”

be saying “Thank you, Lord,” expressing gratitude for what I've been given. At other times, that will quickly turn to a reflection on how I will be a good steward of those gifts. Hearing the readings this week, I might want to monitor how my fears or my laziness might prevent me from being bold about using the gifts the Lord has given me to build up the Kingdom in my world.

Preparing for celebrating God's love on Sunday, I can focus on the readings for and ask to be more humble in my life. Who is “the poor, the crippled, the lame” person who needs to be invited more deeply into my life?

Help me Lord to hear your word to me, even when it challenges me. Open my heart and guide me to use my talents to serve you. Teach me to be generous, Lord.

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