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Jesus said, ... “Then come, follow me.”
When the young man heard this
statement, he went away sad, for he had
many possessions.
Matthew 19

Twentieth Week of Ordinary Time: August 18 - 24, 2013

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Twentieth Week of Ordinary Time

Sunday is the **Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time**. In **Luke's Gospel**, Jesus says, “I have come to set the earth on fire.” He warns us that the divisions we see, even in our own families, are too often caused by the choices people make about his mission.

Tuesday is the **Memorial of Saint Bernard, Abbot and Doctor of the Church**. Wednesday is the **Memorial of Saint Pius X, Pope** and Thursday the **Memorial of the Queenship of the Blessed Virgin Mary**. Saturday is the **Feast of Saint Bartholomew, Apostle**.

In the first part of the week, we have readings from the **Book of Judges**. We read of how Israel worshiped other gods and fell into the power of their enemies; how God called Gideon to be a leader of his tribe; of Gideon's son Abimelech who was unfairly 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 **Psalm** 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.

Matthew's Gospel this week includes some favorite parables, like the rich young man. Jesus says “it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for one who is rich to enter

Daily Prayer This Week

This week we can be moved by the powerful fidelity of a woman like Ruth. And the familiar gospel stories will guide us through the week most with practical advice and challenging ideas.

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. We want to live each day more reflectively.

So, if I know the gospel is going to ask me to ponder 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

the Kingdom of God,” and we know he is introducing the counter-cultural idea that riches may make it more difficult to be saved. Those are followed by stories of the Master of the vineyard who leaves us with the phrase “The last will be first and the first, last.” Jesus tells the parable of the landowner who hires workers throughout the day, including the last hours. When he pays them all the same, those who worked all day grumbled. “Are you envious because I am generous?” He offers the parable of the guests who are too busy to attend the wedding feast of the king's son. Friday, Jesus tells us to love our neighbors as ourselves. Saturday, Jesus says, “Whoever exalts himself will be humbled; but whoever humbles himself will be exalted.”

On the **Twenty-First Sunday of Ordinary Time** Jesus cautions us about the difficulty of the Christian life, saying many will be unable to “enter through the narrow gate.” Jesus indicates it is those we do not expect who will be the first in the Kingdom: “Some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last.”

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 about those desires in the small, quiet moments that are tucked into each day, the “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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