You pay tithes of mint and dill and cummin,
and have neglected the weightier things
of the law: judgment and mercy and fidelity.
Matthew 23

Twenty-First Week of Ordinary Time

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.”

Tuesday is the Memorial of Saint Monica. Wednesday is the Memorial of Saint Augustine, Bishop and Doctor of the Church. Thursday is the Memorial of the Passion of Saint John the Baptist.

The first readings this week are from Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians, the oldest book in the New Testament. The letters are affectionate and frank reminders of the humiliation and challenges that Paul met in preaching to this community he loved so much. These readings are a wonderful reminder that the letters of Paul were just that - letters to teach, encourage and support early communities of Christians.

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

Daily Prayer This Week

The old Baltimore Catechism defined Prayer as “raising the mind and heart to God.” It reminds us that prayer is not simply saying words to God, or even thinking over religious things in our heads. Real prayer becomes a matter of the heart. We understand prayer best when we think of it as a relationship. Growing in prayer is to grow in love, in intimacy, in a type of communication that is “heart to heart.” So, on the human level, if we have a difficult time receiving love or in surrendering our self-absorption and giving love or if we just haven't had much experience of being intimate and vulnerable with another human being, then it will be difficult for us to do that with God. Conversely, anything we can do to develop our relationship skills, to de-selfish ourselves and practice accepting love and loving generously will help us grow in our relationship with God. Praying can often become easier, more personal and intimate.

This week, we can go from hearing these wonderful readings to listening to Jesus with our hearts. It is great to begin this week asking for the grace to reflect throughout the day on how we will enter “the narrow gate”, by how we go about our day, interact with people, or return home from work. Then we can reflect on how we can humble ourselves and what that means for our day to day choices.

We could ask for the grace to go deeper than the externals and rules and get to the heart of our faith - loving others with the same compassion and love that Jesus shows us. For some of us, it might be extremely helpful this
you appear righteous, but inside you are filled with hypocrisy and evildoing.” Jesus teaches about preparation: Stay awake! For you do 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.

Sunday is the **Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time**. We are encouraged to embrace humility. The first reading from the *Book of Sirach* says it simply: “Humble yourself the more, the greater you are, and you will find favor with God.” In *Luke's gospel* is a beloved story of Jesus saying, “do not recline at table in the place of honor” at a banquet. “For every one who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

As we prepare for Sunday, we can begin to reflect upon giving up the honors in our lives. We can begin each day praying, “Lord, help me humble myself today, put myself last in caring for my family, in doing my job with a more selfless sense of service. Help me forgive people who aren't performing well or behaving well. Help me see the way you give me life in this surrender, in this freedom to spend brief moments today in talking with you, friend-to-friend, in heart-felt connection with you, for others.”

---

**Send us an e-mail**

[Creighton U Online Ministries](http://www.creighton.edu/ministries/) | [Weekly Guide for Daily Prayer](http://www.creighton.edu/ministries/) | [Tell a Friend about these Weekly Guides](http://www.creighton.edu/ministries/)

Visit the [Daily Reflections Each Day This Week](http://www.creighton.edu/ministries/)