

**You shall love the Lord, your God,
with all your heart, with all your
soul, and with all your mind.**

**This is the greatest and the first
commandment.**

The second is like it:

**You shall love your neighbor as
yourself.**

- Matthew 22

Twentieth Week of Ordinary Time: Aug. 17- 23, 2008

The Twentieth Week of Ordinary Time

God's love belongs to all of us, according to the readings of the **Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time**. In **Isaiah**, God promises "my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples." Paul, in his **Letter to the Romans**, tells us "the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable" and refers to himself as the "apostle to the Gentiles." In **Matthew's Gospel**, Jesus hears the pleas of a "foreign" woman, a Canaanite who begs Jesus to heal her daughter.

Wednesday is the **Memorial of Saint Bernard**, abbot and doctor of the Church. Thursday is the **Memorial of Saint Pius X**, pope. Friday is the **Memorial of the Queenship of the Blessed Virgin Mary**.

We continue reading from the **Book of the Prophet Ezekiel**. We are treated to some of the best of Ezekiel's prophesy this week. He is sharp and biting in his calls for conversion and comforting in his prophesy about God's fidelity and mercy, especially in the field of dry bones that come to life.

In this week's selection from **Matthew's Gospel** we read some wonderful words of Jesus about being his follower. Jesus tells a rich, young man to sell what he has and give it to the poor. "Then come, follow me." The man went away with sadness because "he had many possessions." When Jesus tells his disciples how hard it is for the rich to be saved, his disciples worry, but he says "for God all things are possible." Jesus says there will be a great turning of the tables - the last being the first and the first falling to last place. But, he tells them the parable of the landowner that hires workers throughout the day, including the last hours. When he pays them all the same, the workers who worked all day grumbled. Jesus asks, "Are you envious because I am

Daily Prayer This Week

As we go through our everyday life this week, we carry this week's gospels and their vivid descriptions of our relationship with Jesus. What is he asking of us this week?

Each day, we begin with the practice of briefly pausing at our bedside to focus the day with a 15-30 second prayer. It is helpful to develop this habit by simply doing it three or four days in a row. Even if I say that I'm half-awake at this time, we can discover what a difference this way of beginning the day can be. With practice, it gets easier to say, "Thank you for this day, Lord. Please, be with me today, especially when I do _____ this morning and this afternoon as I _____. Give me more patience, love and trust in you."

While washing up and dressing, I can expand this prayer, in a simple friend-to-friend conversation with our Lord. This kind of bond or checking-in with our Lord at the beginning of the day, lets a background relationship with develop and grow, while I'm doing many things. It changes my consciousness and takes my fundamental relationship with God and unites and integrates it with the things I'm doing, whether they are pleasant, routine or quite difficult.

Throughout the week I might be thinking of what it would mean for me to sell what I have, give it to the poor, and really follow Jesus. What is preventing me from following the Lord more completely? Are there "riches" that I know are barriers to my surrendering to God's will more freely? What seems to possess me? Recognizing our lack of freedom in one or another area is the first step in being able to ask for the grace of freedom from the things that possess me - even when I know they are not good for me.

generous?" He adds again, "The last will be first, and the first will be last." A king gives a wedding banquet for his son but many were too busy to come. Others killed the servants who carried the invitation. "Many are invited, but few are chosen." When asked the greatest commandment he gives the double command of loving God and neighbor. Jesus warns against the self serving ways of the religious elite. He says, "The greatest among you must be your servant."

Keys are central to readings for the **Twenty-First Sunday of Ordinary Time**. The first reading from **Isaiah** offers the story of the faithful servant Eliakim, who will be given the keys for his master's palace. Paul's brief reading from the **Letter to the Romans** is a moving prayer filled with awe at the depth and unknowing ways of our Lord. In **Matthew's Gospel**, Jesus asks his followers what people are saying about him. Then he asks the real question, "Who do *you* say I am?" Peter's direct answer, "You are the Christ" prompts Jesus' reply that Peter would be given the keys to the kingdom of heaven and would be the rock upon which his church would be built.

We might also ask the Lord to show us what he desires that we be "free for." "Freedom from" is the first part of our relationship. Then, we are free to be sent. What am I being freed for? What loving, what new generosity, what type of self-giving? What neighbor, in my family, or the poor of the world, am I being called to notice and serve? We might ask the Lord to reveal to us this week how we are called to be servant.

We will still do what is on our schedule, respond to all our commitments. The difference will be that we will do it while we are more "in touch" with the Lord. Staying focused and connecting with our Lord throughout the day is at the heart of prayer, "Raising our minds and hearts to God."

And, at the end of each day, we give thanks for this gifted presence that day.