

Guide for Prayer for the week of August 7-13, 2005

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The Nineteenth Week of Ordinary Time

On the **Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time**, Elijah finds God not in the thunder and driving wind, but in a gentle breeze. Peter's fear gets the best of him, when Jesus calls him out of his boat in a stormy sea. Peter takes his eyes off of Jesus and would have perished without Jesus' rescuing him.

Monday is the **Memorial of Saint Dominic**. Wednesday is the **Feast of St. Lawrence, deacon and martyr** with the beautiful gospel about the grain of wheat that must die to bear fruit. Thursday is the **Memorial of Saint Clare**.

In the first reading this week we hear about the entry into the promised land. Moses says farewell to the people. Then we have three readings from the **Book of Josuah**, who was the successor of Moses. The people cross the Jordan, with the Arc of the Covenant clearing a path through the river. Josuah speaks to the people as a prophet and recounts all God has done for them. The people renew their covenant at Schechem.

In the daily readings from **Matthew's Gospel**, Jesus again warns his disciples about his upcoming passion, death and resurrection, but they are "overwhelmed with grief." Jesus resolves the temple tax question, as if to say, "it will be given you." When the disciples are wondering about "who is the greatest," Jesus points to a child and says the greatest is the one who is humble, like the defenseless child. He also says that anyone who receives, embraces, cares for a defenseless one, receives and embraces Jesus himself. When Peter asks Jesus how many times we must forgive, Jesus tells the powerful parable of the servant who is forgiven his debt but doesn't forgive his debtors. Jesus urges us to forgive from our hearts. Jesus tells his disciples about the sacredness of marriage. The disciples tried to prevent people from bringing children to Jesus and he said, "Let the children come to me, and do not prevent them; for the Kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

This brings us to the **Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time**. A Canaanite woman appeals to Jesus to heal her daughter. At first, he says he was sent for the "lost sheep of the house of Israel." Her persistent

Daily Prayer This Week

It is marvelous how each week's readings offer us a new way to open our hearts to God's grace. Sometimes, like Elijah, we find God is with us in the gentlest of breezes blowing around us. Like Israel, it is good for us to look back from time to time and gratefully remember all God has done for us and to renew our "Amen" to the new covenant God makes with us in Jesus.

Throughout this week, each of us can find the connection between some part of the readings and a desire, a need, a longing in our unique situation. If we begin each day - at the side of our beds, in the shower, while getting dressed, over a cup of coffee - simply talking with our Lord about our upcoming day, we will have a wonderfully reflective week. It doesn't have to be long. It just needs to be focused and focusing. That is, we need to keep uncovering something inside of us that we can talk with our Lord about, at various "in between" times during the day. Like a song that keeps playing in the back of our head all day, a desire we express in the morning will focus our day and our relationship with Jesus throughout the day. At night we can all pause to give thanks for times of connection with Jesus during the day, and the gifts God gives us.

This week, it might be Jesus' prediction of his passion, death and resurrection that unsettles us, as we realize he's calling us to follow him. It might be the battle for being the greatest that the disciples are caught up in, and that I might myself be caught up in, as I compete with and judge others. So, Jesus' words about our emulating the little, humble child can open our hearts. His call to embrace the child, the defenseless one, might allow us to pray this week about an openness to a particularly defenceless person or to hearing the cry of the poor in our city or in the world. And, who can't be opened up by the parable of the servant who doesn't forgive as he's been forgiven? Each day we might name people we struggle to forgive. We could make a focused effort to thank God for the mercy, compassion and unconditional love we've experienced, as ask for the grace to share that with others. For some of us, it will be important to spend a day or more asking for the

faith moves him and he heals the girl.

grace to be faithful in our marriage - in all the ways that will call us to die to ourselves and think of the needs of our spouse before my own. Finally, as we approach Sunday, we can imitate the woman who is persistent i begging God for something we need very much.

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