

## Visit the [Daily Reflections](#) Each Day This Week

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### The Twenty-First Week of Ordinary Time

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 the **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.

Monday is the **Memorial of the Queenship of Mary**. The first readings this week are from Paul's **First Letter to the Thessalonians**, the oldest book in the New Testament. Paul remembers with the Thessalonians his first visit there. 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** begins this week with 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 "matters of law, justice and mercy and good faith."

Wednesday is the **Feast of St. Bartholomew the Apostle**, with special readings from **The Book of Revelation** and the **Gospel of John**.

For the rest of the week's gospels, Jesus teaches about preparation for the Kingdom of God. "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

### Daily Prayer This Week

The old Baltimore Catechism defined Prayer as "raising the mind and heart to God." It's not a bad definition, especially in reminding 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 him with our hearts. It is great to begin this week asking for the grace to reflect throughout the day on who we say Jesus is, by how we get up, go about our day, interact with people, or return home from work. Then we can reflect on who we want to say Jesus is for us, 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 week to take the word "awake" and to carry it all day long. "Help me stay awake, Lord: to be alert and attentive, focused and reflective today. It will be busy, but I ask that you help me be consciously aware that you will be with me all day." We may want to ask, "Lord, let me be conscious of the many gifts and blessings you have given me. Let me reflect upon how I use each gift gratefully and for others. Let me really see today if there are gifts that I am neglecting, squandering, or simply are

had. Saturday is the **Memorial of St. Monica**.

Our week ends as we look to the **Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time**. We see a glimpse of the Prophet **Jeremiah** who understands the pain of following the Lord and decides not to speak the Lord's name again, "but then it becomes like fire burning in my heart." Paul's letter to the **Romans** encourages those ancient Romans - and us - not to conform to this age but to discern the will of God. In **Matthew's Gospel**, Jesus corrects his disciples' resistance to his own passion and death, telling them that if they try to save their lives, they'll lose them. "Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me."

afraid to use. Then, give me the courage to give you thanks and to be a good steward of your gifts."

As we prepare for Sunday, we can begin to reflect upon the paradox about finding and losing our lives. We can begin each day praying, "Lord, help me lose myself today. Lose myself in caring for my family. In doing my job with a more self-less sense of service. In forgiving people who aren't performing well or behaving well. In thinking of the needs of others first. 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."

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