

This is the start of Liturgical Year 2003B

December 1, 2002 First Sunday of Advent

Reading Old Testament: [Is 63:16b-17, 19b; 64:2-7](#)

Reading New Testament: [1Cor 1:3-9](#)

Gospel: [Mk 13:33-37](#)

From the Banks of the Mighty Mississippi – Father Jack Vessels

During the day: Be on watch. Think of your affairs as God's, not yours. Keep his directives in mind as you go about the day's business. Apply his principles to problems, his objectives to projects. If you make the effort it will eventually become second nature - divine as well as human. You won't even know the difference; nor will he.

ABOUT PRAYER: In prayer one gets familiar with the attitudes & values of Jesus; we recall them with the memory, ponder them with the intellect, embrace them with the will. Thru prayer we learn to think & feel about things the way he does, & end up wanting what he wants. Such harmony guarantees fulfillment.

December 8, 2002 Second Sunday of Advent

Old Testament: [Is 40:1-5, 9-11](#)

Reading New Testament: [2 Pt 3:8-14](#)

Gospel: [Mk 1:1-8](#)

From the Banks of the Mighty Mississippi – Father Jack Vessels

During the day - Be concerned about people, not projects & problems. Don't use people to promote projects & solve problems; rather, use problems & projects to 'make straight the way of the Lord' into the hearts of others. His problems are people, his only projects serving & saving them. In your little corner of the world, be his instrument. Do the best you can.

ABOUT PRAYER - Advent prayer prepares us to spend another year in the School of Jesus. Prayerfully we remind ourselves that we're just as important in his scheme of things as the men & women who walked with him the trails of Galilee. Hopefully more mature this year than last, our prayer supposes sensible generosity, resolute courage. Mark's words, prayed again, sound the same; but the living truth communicated reveals new facets of the Master & his mission. In personal prayer we assimilate them; in community prayer we discern them; in liturgical prayer we assume them - with him.

December 15, 2002 Third Sunday of Advent

Reading Old Testament: [Is 61:1-2a, 10-11](#)

Reading New Testament: [1 Thes 5:16-24](#)

Gospel [Jn 1:6-8, 19-28](#)

From the Banks of the Mighty Mississippi – Father Jack Vessels

During the day: Be a witness, not a messiah. Don't try to save the situation, just remind others of the One who can, if he wants to. Let your calm & absolute trust in his Providence relax others & inspire them to do their best, as you are doing. Appear unconcerned, satisfied he has the power & wisdom always to succeed, even in failure; he'll gather up the pieces & put them together in a beautiful mosaic only he can design.

ABOUT PRAYER: In prayer we get accustomed to moving out of center stage & letting the spotlight, at least in our own lives, rest on Christ. In prayer we reread the script & take our cues from him. We're there to enhance his role, not ours; the less attention we call to ourselves, the more the gaze of others stays fixed on him. At times he may share the limelight with us, and, even if only in prayer, we sense the love with which he appreciates our cooperation.

December 22, 2002 Fourth Sunday of Advent

Reading Old Testament: [2 Sm 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16](#)

Reading New Testament: [Rom 16:25-27](#)

Gospel: [Lk 1:26-38](#)

From the Banks of the Mighty Mississippi – Father Jack Vessels

During the day: If the end seems worthy & pleasing to God, attempt the impossible. Give it a try; give him a chance. If you don't, he can't. Even if he lets you down, you'll form the habit of doing things not for what you get out of it but what he does, if he wants it. You'll enjoy it even when you fail & have deeper inner satisfaction when you succeed.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer sharpens our ability to discern truth. At prayer the mind scans evidence with faith. In prayer the will embraces its counterpart in God; docile to his Spirit, our own becomes the handmaid of the Lord.

Missing

12/29/2002 And 1/05/2003

January 12, 2003 The Baptism of the Lord

Reading Old Testament: [Is 42:1-4, 6-7](#)

Reading New Testament: [Acts 10:34-38](#)

Gospel: [Mk 1:7-11](#)

From the Banks of the Mighty Mississip:

During the day - Confident Christ lives within you, immerse those you encounter in his presence. Don't have to do anything - just be yourself. Habitually keen to his directives, your demeanor is the Spirit's tool maturing their attitudes & values into those of Jesus. Reciprocal, the Spirit's action shapes yours with theirs. The Jesus formed in each becomes the Christ in all.

ABOUT PRAYER - In prayer, we take each other's sinfulness to the Lord for forgiveness; more, in prayer we assume with Him each other's sinfulness. Schooled through prayer in Christ's behavior, we correct each other's with courage & discretion; more, in the patience born of prayer, we suffer with love its consequences.

January 19, 2003 Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading Old Testament: [1 Sm 3:3b-10, 19](#)

Reading New Testament: [1 Cor 6:13c-15a, 17-20](#)

Gospel: [Jn 1:35-42](#)

From the Banks of the Mighty Mississip:

During the day: Keep your focus on what you're looking for. Most especially, be sure the proximate is in sink with the remote, the immediate with the ultimate, the relative with the absolute. Harmony flows from the keen perception of what present circumstances imply for convinced commitments. Ultimately interpersonal, one's destiny is inseparable from Christ's.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is always a quest. The person at prayer is never satisfied. The spiritual appetite is insatiable, knows no limits. The richer the experience of God, the more unfathomable the separating chasm. Fortunately for us, it's bridged. Prayer rests in Christ - a refreshing respite restoring inspiration.

January 26, 2003 Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading Old Testament: [Jonah 3:1-5, 10](#)

Reading New Testament: [1 Cor 7:29-31](#)

Gospel: [Mk 1:14-20](#)

From the Banks of the Mighty Mississip

During the day: Repent. That is, acknowledge mistakes. Apologize. More important, correct them. More important still, distinguish between mistakes of bad judgement & mistakes of bad will - judge yourself harshly for the latter, not the former. Recognize unGodlike choices for what they are: evil. And remember that the grace of forgiveness, always guaranteed, must be sought.

ABOUT PRAYER: No one likes to admit mistakes; the humility to do so is the fruit of regular prayer. Authentic prayer is based on the assumption that we are all sinners, totally dependent of God's help as we strive honestly to correct our behavior. Honesty in prayer supposes a keen sense of truth; without it there can be no spiritual progress - the only kind that matters.

February 2, 2003 Feast of the Presentation of the Lord

Reading Old Testament: [Mal 3:1-4](#)

Reading New Testament: [Heb 2:14-18](#)

Gospel: Lk 2:22-40

From the Banks of the Mighty Mississip:

During the day - Wonder at the things said about the Christ. As a situation develops, weigh your convictions, ponder your doubts. Swayed by both, take your time making decisions. Truth has it's own authority - give it a chance. Experience verifies faith is intuitional - though reasonable, not always rational. Grappling with doubts is the only way faith can grow.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer occasionally urges a leap in the dark. Prayer's true purpose is to bring the one at prayer into harmony with God's will, not vice versa - but God owes no one clarity of vision. Trusting Him, one learns at prayer to measure the sincerity of one's own intentions. Convinced, choices are made & consequences assumed, knowing He does too.

February 9, 2003 Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading Old Testament: [Jb 7:1-4, 6-7](#)

Reading New Testament: [1 Cor 9:16-19, 22-23](#)

Gospel: [Mk 1:29-39](#)

From the Banks of the Mighty Mississip – Fr Jack Vessels comments:

During the day: Glance at those around you. See if anyone needs lifting up. If one does, set other things aside & do so. An encouraging smile; a cup of coffee; a discreet inquiry; a stroll together. Relaxed, help him (or her) relax. Don't worry about the time it takes - you couldn't spend it better! As the other goes back to more useful service, give yourself credit for yours; as Jesus does.

ABOUT PRAYER: The prayer of petition is frequently for good health; the prayer of intercession frequently for the good health of others. In both cases, it's not health that's the objective of prayer, but rather service to the Kingdom of God - that's what we're building, & that's what we need health for. It's the implicit condition of our request, & the reason explicit in God's answer.

February 16, 2003 Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading Old Testament: [Lev 13:1-2, 44-46](#)

Reading New Testament: [1 Cor 10:31--11:1](#)

Gospel: [Mk 1:40-45](#)

From the Banks of the Mighty Mississip:

During the day: Speak freely about God. Not fanatically, but as among friends about a friend. Share experiences, the good & the not-so-good. His presence, though hidden, is sensed in the telling. Faith grows on faith; the unique faith of each contributes to the common faith of all.

ABOUT PRAYER: In prayer we go looking for the Christ others tell us about. Elusive, he doesn't always let himself be found. Perseverance in prayer nourishes the quest, intensifies the effort, deepens the friendship once he's found. The Christ we commune with in prayer is the Jesus we introduce to others.

February 23, 2003 Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading Old Testament: [Is 43:18-19, 21-22, 24b-25](#)

Reading New Testament: [2 Cor 1:18-22](#)

Gospel: [Mk 2:1-12](#)

From the Banks of the Mighty Mississip:

During the day: Forgiven, forgive. Unforgiving? Unforgiven! Emotions are blind; don't let anger & resentment & a false sense of pride close your heart. If you do, He can't get in! Think truth, the only key that unlocks a door with no outside handle. Truth #1: only God forgives the offender, & that's exactly what he became man to do - ALL sinners, including you. Truth #2: leave the offender to God & forgive the offense; if you don't, your offense is greater. Sincere repentance saves you both.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is immersion in mercy. In prayer we fill the spirit - the mind & heart - with God's, that it might overflow on others. Without judgement or condemnation, in prayer we recall our own mistakes of bad will & sinful tendencies, & sense the healing Love that strengthens. We bring to prayer those whose selfishness & indifference offend, join hands, & turn together to the Sun of unconditional pardon.

March 2, 2003 Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading Old Testament: [Hos 2:16b, 17b, 21-22](#)

Reading New Testament: [2 Cor 3:1b-6](#)

Gospel: [Mk 2:18-22](#)

From the Banks of the Mighty Mississip:

During the day: Fast. What you don't need, don't eat; practice temperance. What you do need, eat less; practice penance. Health requires disciplined appetites. Physical health, a sensible diet; spiritual health, freedom. The spirit feeds on the words of Christ. 'You want to be my disciple? Deny yourself, take up your cross & follow me.' With him we're all in this together; a proud, sinful, selfish society needs all the strength its members can muster!

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer enjoys the presence of the Bridegroom - his gaze, his smile, his encouraging words, shared experiences, his comforting embrace. Prayer is possessing, being possessed; in prayer we burrow deep into the heart of Christ to conceive the day's activities, fruit of indefinable intimacy.

March 9, 2003 First Sunday of Lent

Reading Old Testament: [Gn 9:8-15](#)

Reading New Testament: [1 Pt 3:18-22](#)

Gospel: [Mk 1:12-15](#)

From the Banks of the Mighty Mississip:

During the day - Get accustomed to the desert - your desert. Keep struggling with temptations. They're good opportunities to do God's will, not your own. Win some, lose some; but keep loyal to your option, 'Your will, Lord, not mine.' Trust the Spirit to steer you through them, avoiding the big one: to think you can do without God.

ABOUT PRAYER - Regular prayer sharpens the quest for truth: the desire to find it, the courage to embrace it, the strength to live it. Deceptions rarely pass the test of authentic prayer. Even when they do, ongoing prayer recognizes them for what they are & the source from which they come. Prayer then invokes the Judge, Who sends them on their way.

March 16, 2003 Second Sunday of Lent

Reading Old Testament: [Gn 22:1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18](#)

Reading New Testament: [Rm 8:31b-34](#)

Gospel: [Mk 9:2-10](#)

From the Banks of the Mighty Mississip:

During the day: Dazzle others. Turn on the charm. Give those around you all your attention. Be a good listener; they'll enjoy your presence, since you're obviously enjoying theirs. Nourish the intimacy of friendship - it lasts forever. Be sincere, be authentic, be yourself; the Christ in you will light you up, his the warmth that radiates.

ABOUT PRAYER: In prayer we hear the words, 'You are my child, my beloved' & know he's talking to each of us & all of us. Prayerfully we ponder Abraham's arm raised, ready to give God his precious son, & hear with him the words 'Because you withhold nothing from me I bless you abundantly'. We marvel at the unspoken words, 'It's my own son's life I take to give you yours'; then rest in the mutual love of Father & Son, open to the Spirit that is its fruit.

March 23, 2003 Third Sunday of Lent

Reading Old Testament: [Ex 20:1-17](#) or [20:1-3, 7-8, 12-17](#)

Reading New Testament: [1 Cor 1:22-25](#)

Gospel: [Jn 2:13-25](#)

From the Banks of the Mighty Mississip:

During the day: Don't back away from the difficult; it's not going to go away. Handle it with firmness, with respect for the dignity of those involved - compassion, even, when circumstances warrant. Your own integrity is the measure of your concern, whatever the consequences of your action. Temple of the Holy Spirit, your behavior reflects his wisdom, your courage his pleasure.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is the moment to soothe emotions. Blind, both good & bad tend to express themselves blindly. In prayer we use the intellect to ponder the truth of the matter, till calm enough to act accordingly. Decisions made in prayer assume long as well as short range consequences. Prayfully directed emotions enrich the experience.

From the Banks of the Mighty Mississip:

MAR 30, 2003 - 4th Lent: 2Chr 36.14-23; Eph 2.4-10; JN 3.14-21

DURING THE DAY: Love your little corner of the world - the people, the places, the situations. Though much to condemn, don't. Plan your presence; make your world the better, not the worse for it. By the reactions of others, measure yourself as a source of light for them rather than a cause of confusion. As their trust in you grows, act ever more responsibly on their behalf. Prove your value to society. And to Christ.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is recognition. In prayer, truths come into focus. Strengths as strengths, weaknesses as weaknesses. Prayer is acknowledgement. Again, both strengths & weaknesses. Prayer fosters responsibility - to exercise the strengths & strengthen the weaknesses. Prayer inspires the courage to do both, for love of a Christ who neither condemns our weaknesses nor loves us more for our strengths; but simply loves us the way we are.

From the banks of the Mighty Mississip -
Apr 6, 2003 -5th Lent: Jer 31.33-34; Heb 5.7-9; JN 12.20-33

During the day: Produce fruit. A lot of it - don't be lazy. Pay the price – your energy, your time, your attention, your patience, your respect & understanding, your money, self-denial -- whatever's called for. Fruit as a gift can be given in a minute; but it takes a lifetime to produce it. Be the seed who knows how to disappear once it produces the fruit (the gift) within. Be Christlike.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is the expression of faith in the life within; action its communication. In prayer we commune with the Lord whose life we live; through action we communicate this life to others. Prayer cultivates our fruitfulness; action fertilizes it. Prayer programs its harvesting; action distributes it to those for whom God intends it. Prayer transcends all human activity; action is the Spirit at work integrating it into human history, making it eternally divine.

From the Banks of the Mighty Mississip:
APR 13, 2003 Palm Sun: Is 50.4-7; Phil 2.6-11; MK 15.1-39

During the day: Give your back to those who beat you. Keep your cool. They know not what they do. And even if they do, let them get it out of their system - they'll be the better for it. You'll survive & be the better for it, too, having taught them truths they would not otherwise have learned. 'Truly, this person is a child of God!'

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer anticipates the day's threats. It focuses them in God's perspective. In prayer we build up our reserve of courage, secure in the hand we cling to. Prayer enables us to believe in the value of suffering when embraced as an opportunity to love. Faith & love - inseparable - only increase their capacity through exercise. Prayer is study time with the Master's textbook, learning his techniques.

From the Banks of the Mighty Mississip:
Apr 20, 2003 - Easter Sunday: Acts 10. 34a, 37-43; Col 3.1-4; JN 20.1-9

During the day: Run faster. And if you get there first, respect your competitors. Best way to enjoy success is to share it. In all authentic achievement, Christ is the victor. One with him in his humanity, our efforts realize his own dream of a renewed society. Grateful as we are for his inspiration & help, even more so is he for our willing instrumentality. Be our goals lofty or modest, the love that motivates them is his reward for the price he pays for our redemption

ABOUT PRAYER: In prayer, we rattle around in an empty tomb. We really don't know what to expect, nor how to make sense of random thoughts & feelings. Prayer takes stock of the void we're in & simply concludes that he's alive & well, & that's all that matters. If we listen carefully, we can hear his soft sigh of satisfaction.

From the Banks of the Mighty Mississipp:

APR 27, 2003 - 2nd Easter: Acts 4.32-35; 1Jn 5.1-6; JN 20.19-31

During the day: Be yourself: be obstinate. Don't agree just to be agreeable. Trust your intellect & wait for evidence. Truth has its own authority & will exercise it in its own sweet time; just be honest & humble enough to recognize it when it does. Once convinced, you'll be yourself - to the end of the world & the end of time.

ABOUT PRAYER: In prayer we climb into the hole in the heart of Jesus; human like our own, we feel at home there. Its warmth removes the chill in our own hearts, its beat revives our spirit. Slowly we relax in the reality of his love, his life. Doesn't take long to feel refreshed, & ready to hit the road again. In no hurry, we hang around for awhile; we know we're welcome as long as we care to stay.

From the Banks of the Mighty Mississipp:

May 4, 2003 - 3rd Easter: Acts 3:13-19; 1 Jn 2:1-5; Luke 24:35-48

During the day: Do the Easter thing: tell the story of Jesus. Not in so many words, maybe, but make sure others know he's alive & well in you. They'll look inside themselves & see him sitting at table waiting to be served. Of a sudden you'll be aware of his presence together, right there & then. His new life is a community thing--healthy, holy relationships; all in the family way waiting to give birth in the hearts of those who don't yet know him.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer nurtures the life within; his, not ours. Or rather, his in ours. Prayer is our own free choice to be grafted onto him & allow his Spirit to circulate his attitudes & values throughout our activities. Prayer matures his love for others in us, fruit that may fall to the ground, its seed a long time germinating. Patient, prayer doesn't expect to see results.

From the Banks of the Mighty Mississipp:

May 11, 2003 - 4th Easter Acts 4.8-12; 1Jn 3.1-2; JN 10.11-18

During the day: Don't scatter. Integrate. Don't antagonize; congregate. Don't jeopardize; consolidate. Sure, you've got lots of tensions inside you; keep them there! Don't let them boil over & cause conflict. Any relationship is a responsibility. Yours are the only ones got; don't ruin them. As a matter of fact, they're the only things that matter in your life: living realization of the Kingdom of God. Christ does his best to be a Good Shepherd. Do yours!

ABOUT PRAYER

In prayer we harmonize with the human intelligence of Christ, filter thru which the divine intelligence governs our affairs. Prayer fails to plumb the depths of the carpenter's oneness with the Godhead--doesn't even try. Rather, prayer relives the ordinary ups & downs of the day & shares them with the Friend who's been there, done that & enjoys the reminiscing. To rest in prayer--no words, no thoughts--is to give him the opportunity to share his, too; back door to divinity.

From the Banks of the Mighty Mississip:
May 18, 2003 – 5th Easter Acts 4.8-12; 1Jn 3.1-2; JN 10.11-18

During the day - Don't scatter. Integrate. Don't antagonize; congregate. Don't jeopardize; consolidate. Sure, you've got lots of tensions inside you; keep them there! Don't let them boil over & cause conflict. Any relationship is a responsibility. Yours are the only ones got; don't ruin them. As a matter of fact, they're the only things that matter in your life: living realization of the Kingdom of God. Christ does his best to be a Good Shepherd. Do yours!

ABOUT PRAYER- In prayer we harmonize with the human intelligence of Christ, filter thru which the divine intelligence governs our affairs. Prayer fails to plumb the depths of the carpenter's oneness with the Godhead--doesn't even try. Rather, prayer relives the ordinary ups & downs of the day & shares them with the Friend who's been there, done that & enjoys the reminiscing. To rest in prayer--no words, no thoughts--is to give him the opportunity to share his, too; back door to divinity.

From the Banks of the Mighty Mississip:
MAY 25, 2003 - 6th Easter: Acts 10.25-48; IJn 4.7-10; JOHN 15.9-17

During the day: Ask. Ask questions. Ask favors. Expect neither answers nor concessions. No one owes you anything, least of all God. Favors are always gratuitous, information often privileged. Forthcoming only if requested, they are conditioned by the nature of the need & the consequences of their use. Truth & goodness, when shared, are reproductive of life & love. God is the source of both, the Sun we reflect on each other.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is choosing to be chosen. In prayer we bask in the Beloved's need to communicate the life of the Lover. Prayerfully, we acknowledge our unworthy unlovableness, product of our self-centered failures to love others. Joyfully we suspect he finds this admission irresistible. Prayer is the transforming embrace we yearn to learn to give others.

From the Banks of the Mighty Mississip:
June 1, 2003 The Ascension of the Lord Acts 1.1-11; Eph 4.1-13; MK 16.15-20

During the day: Learn from yourself. Tell yourself what to do, but not how to do it. Make your choice, then let it happen. You'll be amazed how much quicker & better you do things if the mind stops getting in the way, just backs off & watches. Even the impossible becomes possible, the improbable probable. Like the Lord says.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is the lesson plan that integrates spirit, mind & body. Prayer helps the mind humbly step back & let the spirit take charge. In prayer, both mind & body relax while the spirit, connatural to God's, tunes it in. Through prayer, the Spirit communicates the attitudes & values, virtues & projects of Jesus. Lesson learned, prayer flows into action; mind & body execute the plan. The Risen Humanity of Christ walks again, in each & all together, serving the needs of others.

From the Banks of the Mighty Mississip:
JUNE 8, 2003 PENTECOST: Acts 2.1-11; 1Cor 12.3-13; JOHN 20.19-23

During the day: Witness truth. Let it flow thru you with power & finality. Beautiful, even in tragedy. Reality is a timeless rock that can't be hidden nor hidden behind. Sustained by the Spirit, courage assumes truth's consequences. Cowardice, on the other hand, creates confusion & renders aid from the Spirit inoperable. If you forgive errors, they're absorbed; if you don't, they perpetuate the chaos. Your fault.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is wondering what love is all about. Waiting for it to happen. Sometimes it does, sometimes it doesn't. When it does, it's prayer's reward. When it doesn't, prayer enunciates hope with phrases like 'You exist, & I am Yours;' 'You love me, & I trust You;' 'You use me, & I'm available,' & rests. Truth rolls over from prayer into action & makes it happen.

From the Banks of the Mighty Mississip:
June 15, 2003 - Dt 4.32-34,30-40; Rm 8.14-17; MT 28.16-20

During the day: Overcome hesitations. Work as a team member even when unconvinced--others will respect your caution. Team effort requires decisive leadership, alert to correct mistaken judgments. Wisdom bespeaks humility, key to the obedience that helps Authority achieve its ultimate purpose with love for all concerned.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is sitting next to Jesus listening to his Abba story again. Always with a different ending, sometimes happy, sometimes sad. Sometimes no ending at all - he just gets up & moves away. Hearing someone murmur, 'Wish I had a Dad like that' he turns & says, 'You do!' After he's gone the Spirit he left behind tells us what he meant.

From the Banks of the Mighty Mississip:
June 22, 2003 Body of Christ: Ex 24.3-8; Heb 9.11-15; MK 14.12-16

During the day: Go into the city. Do your job, run your errands. Sit around at lunch sharing your experiences with others. Observe; listen; speak respectfully; learn. Be nourished by this communion with friends & colleagues. Sense its depth. Weary, head home relishing the satisfaction of a job well done, a community strengthened. Unperturbed, leave tomorrow's problems for the Boss to worry about. He knows how.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer turns fate into faith. In prayer we immerse happenings & bruised selves in the soothing balm of destiny. Prayer helps us bounce, land on our feet, & keep running. Prayer shelves the 'what ifs', evaluates challenges, measures the resources, ponders alternatives, rests a moment in discernment, then makes a choice. Fruit of prayer, such decisions make it difficult for God to do anything but shrug & make the most of it. He does it all the time.

From the Banks of the Mighty Mississip:

June 29, 2003 - Peter & Paul, Aps mt16.13-19 + acts12.1-11, 2tim4.6-8,17-18

During the day: Be a rock. Just a pebble, maybe, but rock solid. Your faith a gift from God, let those around you sense it, presume it, draw strength from it. Yourself, sense how a common faith binds you to some, distances you from others, obliges you to the wanderers in between. Building with the Carpenter, herding with the Shepherd, observe how uniquely your routine fulfills these responsibilities - the other dimension, the real dimension, that gives meaning to your life.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is the mirror that reflects the inner self - the real self. The you God sees, loves, blesses abundantly & uses. The beloved son or daughter. The mixture of hero & coward. The on-again, off-again assistant. In prayer, we don't avert our gaze from the less pleasant, but neither do we concentrate on it. Rather, with God, we try to see the whole, the better to take courage & set the inner house in order; the Lord's there to lend a helping hand.

From the Banks of the Mighty Mississip:

July 6, 2003 – 14th Ordinary Time ot: Ezek 2.2-5; 2Cor 12.7-10; MK 6.1-6

During the day -

Cure a few sick people. You have no idea how gratefully Christ uses a friendly visit or phone call (or e-mail) to improve the health of an ailing person. Nothing you are doing would please him as much. Too busy? Tell Him that. Whatever it is, it'll still be there waiting for you. And you'll feel a whole lot healthier yourself when you get back to it. Maybe you're the one he wants to heal!

ABOUT PRAYER

In prayer, we climb outside of time & place ourselves in communion with those we love. They may not know it; but we do, & so does the Lord. Spiritual presence is every bit as vital as physical presence; moreso, since it transcends distance, time & death. And once we get used to it, it's even more real. It's what the Lord uses to communicate the the grace of growth in mutual love, human & divine.

From the Banks of the Mighty Mississip:

July 13, 2003 15th Ordinary Time Amos 7.12-15; Eph 1.3-14; MK 6.7-13

During the day: Don't work alone. Be a loner if you like, but be a team member when it comes to projects. A job is only as important as the people who are doing it & the people they're doing it for. You grow when you get to know your co-workers better; even more as you learn together from the people you serve. The enrichment that lasts forever is in the heart of each, but shared in the common experience of all.

ABOUT PRAYER: Thru prayer we get to know God better, Who makes it easy by becoming one of us. In prayer we rest in Christ - his words, his gestures, his feelings, his purpose. We follow him into action, & learn with him from the people met along the way: The sick, the sinner, the beggar, the powerful, the youth, the blind. Each has something to teach, & prayerfully we stand with Christ in awe at so much goodness hidden in human trappings. The kinship is eternal.

From the Banks of the Mighty Mississip:
July 20, 2003 16th of yr: Jer 23.1-5; Eph 2.13-18; MK 6.30-34

During the day: Look at the crowd around you & take pity. Stop feeling sorry for yourself long enough to wonder what you might do to cheer others up. Sit back, relax, nod & smile at whoever's eye you catch, inquire about someone who interests the other. After a while go quietly back to work & note how tension has eased around you. Body language is a great healer; be the doctor.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is going off by yourself for a few minutes to be alone with the Lord. He appreciates it & lets you know how much. Doesn't take long to feel refreshed, to know a friend is always nearby, to experience again the satisfaction of being on his team. Prayerful interludes are opportunities to smooth out difficulties, manifest regret for negligence, sense a deepening communion. Prayer leaves you pleased you've pleased him, convinced it's the only reward worth having.

From the Banks of the Mighty Mississip:
JULY 27, 2003 - 17th of yr: 2Kings 4.42-44; Eph 4.1-6; John 6.1-15

During the day: Learn & practice thrift. Take only what you need. Use only what you need. Share what you have with those whose need is greater. Throw nothing useful away - someone needs it. Fulfill the spiritual as well as material purpose of everything you touch - God's creature, made to express his love.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is atonement. Prayer puts us at one with everyone & everything around us. In prayer we enter into what we are: Creation! A grain of sand on God's beach. A blade of grass on God's lawn. A drop of ink in God's pen. A toothpick in God's kitchen. The apple of his eye. The love in his heart. In prayer we atone for the mistakes we make, freely determine to help get things back on track the way they ought to be. In prayer we see God smile.

From the Banks of the Mighty Mississip:
AUG 3, 2003 - 18th of yr: Ex 16.2-4, 12-15; Eph 4.17, 20-24; John 6.24-35

During the day: Don't work for food that can't last - set your sights higher than money & what it buys. Dream away, for 'when you stop dreaming, you die.' Matter of fact, when you dream nobly, you don't die: after-death sees you working more successfully than ever at your masterpiece, a dream come true! Believe in the one God sent? Know, then, that he believes in you. And your dream.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is not doing something; it's being someone: the only one of me God made. In prayer we formulate questions & ponder answers; who are you, God? I AM. Who am I? MINE! A ray of My light. A whisper of My breath. A branch on My vine. Fruit of My love. Prayer adjusts us to realities beyond our comprehension, becoming what we will be for all eternity.

From the Banks of the Mighty Mississip:
AUG 10, 2003 - 19th of yr: 1Kings 19.4-8; Eph 4.30-5.2; JOHN 6.41-51

During the day: Live forever. Here. Now. This moment, whatever the circumstances. Live this experience fully, abundantly. Experience never ends, it just blooms, blossoms, fructifies. But make sure true love for another is the major ingredient; that's what makes human experience divine, synonym for eternal.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is awareness, acknowledgement: there's more to you than you realize! Sometimes in prayer you dive inwards, deeper into the Center of your own being. Sometimes you expand outwards, beyond the limits of Whatever's out there. In prayer you touch God, your Father-Mother. You hear Him, you see Her. You smell Him, you taste Her - you're alive in Him, & She in you. Through Christ, our Lord.

From the Banks of the Mighty Mississip:
Aug 17, 2003 - 20th of yr: Prov 9.1-6; Eph 5.15-20; JOHN 6. 51-58

During the day: Give your flesh for your little corner of the world. You exist for it, not it for you. Developing it completes you. Don't sweat the details, just focus on the needs you serve; your own take care of themselves as you concern yourself with others.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer ponders less what we do than why & how we do it. In prayer, we flow as an organism, not an organization. The life of the whole circulates in each of the members as they function contributing to the health of the person - in this case, Christ. It's not the mind that directs the body, it's the spirit integrating mind & body. Prayer tunes to the Spirit of God & relaxes in Its movements; It never loses control.

From the Banks of the Mighty Mississip:
August 24, 2003 - 21st Sunday Josh 24.1-2,15-18; Eph 5.21-32; JOHN 6.60-69

During the day: Struggle to reestablish the spirit's dominance over mind & body. Till you do your value system is disordered. Human spirit is connatural with the Spirit from which it came; listen to it. It has its own way of communicating uniquely with each, so you'll have to find your own. The Word of God humanized itself to help. Let him. He's not going to force himself on you; love doesn't work that way.

ABOUT PRAYER: In prayer the mind scans rather than rationalizes, then rests when it encounters a peaceful moment; healthy harmony renews all systems. The will turns meditation into prayer by opening itself to the divine – an unspoken 'yes, Lord.' Imagination does the rest, at the service of both.

From the Banks of the Mighty Mississip

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From the Banks of the Mighty Mississip

September 7, 2003 23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time Is 35.4-7; Jms 2.1-5; MK 7.31-37

During the day: If you want to correct some one, do so in private; that is, if you want him to hear you & not just be humiliated. Health is more of the spirit than of the body, for both of you. The other's dignity & your integrity are the contact points for God's love to flow in both directions. Don't abuse the opportunity.

ABOUT PRAYER: Sometimes in prayer we're tongue-tied: our thoughts confused, our feelings raw, our purpose pointless. We don't have to leave the crowd to be alone for a moment with Christ & let the Spirit do the groaning; they understand each other pretty well - the healing balm of peace soon reaches our hearts. Back to work the problem's still there, but vision cleared.

From the Banks of the Mighty Mississip

SEPT 14, 2003 - Triumph of the Cross: Num 21.4-9; Phil 2.6-11; JN 3.13-17

During the day: Before condemning, save the salvageable. Things can be replaced, people can't. Something in every human relationship needs to be retained, woven as the fabric of Christ's own living body. Takes time, patience & suspended judgement to discover that something. Take it.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer always lifts us up. Sometimes we feel it, sometimes we don't. Sometimes with baggage, sometimes without; if with, often it's stuff we'd prefer to leave behind but can't - the hurt, the pain, the resentment, the fear, the disappointment, the despair. We know the purpose, so in prayer we reach out & touch the cross, & join it to his own. For a moment his eyes flick open & look at us with gratitude. Makes it all worth while. .

From the Banks of the Mighty Mississip
SEPT 21, 2003 - 25th of yr: Wis 2.12-20; Jms 3.16-4.3; MK 9.30-37

During the day: Bring up the rear. Observe the others: some doing fine, others need help; some too cocky, several hesitant; a few lazy & disinterested, not a few uptight & about to explode. As opportunity presents itself, nudge each accordingly; quietly, without others noticing. Then fall back in step with Christ again, two kids waiting to be sent on Dad's business. Without another care in the world.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer's like sitting back & watching a good movie. Entertaining. Relaxing. Moving, sometimes to tears, sometime to laughter through tears. In prayer we identify with the gospel characters - feel their feelings, think their thoughts, adopt their plans. Prayer good, we don't want it to end. When it does, the glow stays the rest of the day. We've grown.

From the Banks of the Mighty Mississip
SEPT 28, 2003 - 26th of yr: Num 11.25-29; James 5.1-6; Mk 9.38-48

During the day: Cast out a few devils. Not others; some of your own. You know them by name - don't pretend they're not around. Greed? Give, don't get. Lust? Grow up! Put first things first! Anger? Slow down, keep your sense of humor. Three down, four to go. Pride's the root, so keep chopping away. You can't do it alone, but neither can God without you. So make up your will, not your mind, & get with it.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer prepares us for Purgatory - that pause at the Door when we look back & see all the hurt we've caused others; not another step forward till we've had a chance to repair the damage. Sure, Christ has already paid the price; but now, unrestricted by space & time, we want to get into the hearts we've wounded & share their suffering; & with love - his & ours - heal the hurt, free the bonds of resentment. Thru prayer we anticipate the process.

From the Banks of the Mighty Mississip
OCT 5, 2003 - 27th of yr: Gen 2. 18-24; Heb 2.9-11; MK 10.2-12

During the day: Don't separate what God has joined. You do so at your own risk. Whatever is in your ken is of God & there for a purpose. Respect its presence even when conflict necessitates adjustment. Mistakes acknowledged, unwilled conflicts assumed, harmonize adjustment with God's design as fully & keenly as possible. Judge not. Condemn not. Just keep on loving all concerned. As God does.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer brings out the child in us & expresses our earliest religious sentiments. Balanced or not, they were planted by those who love us, then nourished by God's own gift of faith. Prayer reaffirms our absolute trust in the One Who Is in whom we are. Enriched by other sentiments - gratitude, regret, courage, joy, generosity - authentic prayer overflows & determines the character of our actions. A healthy combination.

From the Banks of the Mighty Mississip
October 12, 2003 28th Wisdom 7:7-11, Hebrews 4:12-13; Mark 10:17-30

During the day: Move a little faster, try to catch up. Too much 'stuff' weighing you down? Get rid of some of it. Be great if you got rid of all of it, but at least a start will make a difference. You'll feel the freedom, intuit the reason, then get rid of a little more. Moving faster, you'll know you're closing the gap. Eventually tempted to junk it all, you'll notice the less privileged around you urging you on. And not for the reason you think!

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer inflates the gift of self. Prayer breathes God in, then holds itself while the Spirit takes possession & continues It's work. Prayer is of the will, & we sit there willing whatever it that grafts our attitudes & values onto those of Christ. Undetectably enriched, we move from prayer to action to test the Spirit's success. Observing ours, He waits, tools in hand, for the next opportunity to make adjustments. Prayerfully, we soon hold our breath again & tune ourselves to the harmony of God's creation.

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Mighty Mississip by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ
October 19, 2003 29th Sunday Isaiah 53:10-11; Hebrews 4:14-16; Mark 10;35-45

During the day: Over or under, get to the heart of authority. If over, make it felt – in the right way, for the right reasons. If under, be as one with it, embrace the reason. Reason: always the common good. Way: respect for the persons served & the persons serving. Projects are for persons, not persons for projects. Command with love & you'll be obeyed with love. Obey with love, & love is its own reward.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is not something you do, it's something that happens; let it. Something the Trinity does; let them. The Father-Mother nourishing her children. The Divine Mechanic tinkering with his love machine. The God-Man toning the muscles of his body. Feel it. Taste it. Smell it. Hear it. See it. Love it! Love them! Love their masterpiece: each other! All as one.

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Mighty Mississip by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ
October 26, 2003 30th, Jeremiah 31:7-9; Hebrews 5:1-6; Mark 10:46-52

During the day: If it's important & you need to be heard, shout the louder. Otherwise, speak softly; there's more conviction in firmness than noise. Be effective for Truth's sake, not your own. Once the blind see, fall back in place as a follower & let the Way lead the pack to Life.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is sensing without seeing - we even close our eyes to sense better. A Presence. Imagination probes; others have told us about It, but this is different. It's here, now, with me. I feel It's gaze, It's touch. I rest in it, aware It's communicating. In response I open my heart more fully. As It moves away, I follow.

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Mighty Mississip by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ

November 2, 2003, Isaiah 25:6-9; Romans 6:3-9; John 6:37-40

During the day: Lose nothing that has been given you. Every true gift is a gift of self, wrapped in the material of symbolic gesture. Gifts are alive with the life of the giver, forever precious bond between giver & receiver. With a life of its own, when shared with others the gift keeps radiating out till it runs full cycle & returns to its source, God - All in all.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is a bond uniting us with those whose gift of life we've shared, now fully one with the Love That Is. Prayer is our chat room in the communion of saints where sinners pick up counsel & courage from those whose love radiates Christ as he enlivens us all. Prayer is our consolation in sadness, our joy in tragedy, our hope in failure. Prayer is of God, Christ's will victorious.

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Mighty Mississip by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ

November 9, 2003 - 32nd Sunday, Ezra 47:1-2, 8-9, 12; 1 Cor 3:9-11, 16-17; John 2:13-22

During the day: Be tough when justice requires it - tougher on yourself than on others. It's the offense you're after, not the offender. Corrected, if he acknowledges his error the offender changes. Sometimes you tell him, sometimes you show him, as gently or forcefully as necessary. The motive for words & action the other's good, time eventually bears them fruit.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is love, possessing while being possessed. Prayer cleanses the temple of the heart, allows the values & attitudes of Christ gradually to take possession. A new Lord acknowledged, prayer adjusts to his priorities. Two personalities blend, & Christ's humanity restores the Divine title to your domain. The price to pay is surrender.

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Mighty Mississip by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ

November 16, 2003 33rd Sunday, Daniel 12:1-3; Hebrews 10:11-14, 18; Mark 13:24-32

During the day: Learn a lesson from the fig tree. Be alert to signs - body language, innuendo, exchanged looks, unusual situations, all such things. Don't jump to conclusions, just pay attention. Observe developments objectively, ready to react in a way that secures the common good. Build on truth, not supposition. Human affairs are guided, but not manipulated, by divine wisdom - be It's instrument; respect the freedom of others, firm in your own decisions.

ABOUT PRAYER: In prayer we hang loose, ready for anything. Prayer tunes the human to the divine. Prayer is humble enjoyment of the larger picture - being a part, not the whole; in orbit, not the center. In prayer we dive beneath troubled waters to the deeper calm below; prayer rebuilds energies, renews courage, ignites faith, then launches us back into the order or chaos of the moment. Like David, we laugh as we run to meet Goliath!

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Mighty Mississip by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ

Nov 23, CHRIST THE KING: Dan 7.13-14; Rev 1.5-8; JN 18.33-37

'I came into the world for this: to bear witness to the truth.'

During the day: Bear witness to the truth. Dreamer, you like to think reality is other than it is, more in your favor than against you. Tempted to project your own perspective onto the scene, don't. It's Christ's, & he knows what he's doing; be a help, not a hinderance. Truth is not an abstraction, it's a developing design being realized. There's a Will behind it that wants what's best for everyone, yourself included, even when the situation calls for crucifixion. Sometimes you just have to hang there.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is the regal acceptance of being a beggar. Prayer helps govern by humble submission to Another's authority. Prayer guides decisions through a maze of alternatives to discern what's truly best – the beggar's plea for light from above & the courage to exercise the power of freedom with nobility.