

This is the start of Liturgical Year 2004C

November 30, 2003 First Sunday of Advent

Reading Old Testament: [Jer 33:14-16](#)

The days are coming, says the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and Judah. In those days, in that time, I will raise up for David a just shoot; he shall do what is right and just in the land. In those days Judah shall be safe and Jerusalem shall dwell secure; this is what they shall call her: "The LORD our justice."

Responsorial Psalm: [Ps 25:4-5, 8-9, 10, 14](#)

To you, O Lord, I lift my soul.

Reading New Testament: [1 Thes 3:12--4:2](#)

Brothers and sisters: May the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we have for you, so as to strengthen your hearts, to be blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his holy ones. Amen. Finally, brothers and sisters, we earnestly ask and exhort you in the Lord Jesus that, as you received from us how you should conduct yourselves to please God --and as you are conducting yourselves-- you do so even more. For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus.

Gospel: [Lk 21:25-28, 34-36](#)

Jesus said to his disciples: "There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on earth nations will be in dismay, perplexed by the roaring of the sea and the waves. People will die of fright in anticipation of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. But when these signs begin to happen, stand erect and raise your heads because your redemption is at hand. "Beware that your hearts do not become drowsy from carousing and drunkenness and the anxieties of daily life, and that day catch you by surprise like a trap. For that day will assault everyone who lives on the face of the earth. Be vigilant at all times and pray that you have the strength to escape the tribulations that are imminent and to stand before the Son of Man."

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

NOV 30, 1st Advent: [Jer 33.14-16](#); [1Thes 3.12-4.2](#); [LK 21.25-28,34-36](#)

During the day: Stand erect, hold your head high. Face whatever threatens you squarely. It isn't going to go away. Move. Get to the other side one step at a time. Let others help you. Be thrifty with energy & resources. Purify your motives. Trust yourself & the Lord you work for - you work as a team, neither much good without the other.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer liberates. From fear. From other blind emotions. Prayer asks God to show us the next step, encourages us to take it. Then evaluates; repeats the process. Taps Their strength. Rests in their love. Prayer turns night into day. Clarifies vision, corrects focus, modifies perspectives. Prayer believes in victory, theirs, & interprets things accordingly.

December 7, 2003 Second Sunday of Advent

Reading Old Testament: Baruch 5:1-9

Jerusalem, take off your robe of mourning and misery; put on the splendor of glory from God forever: wrapped in the cloak of justice from God, bear on your head the mitre that displays the glory of the eternal name. For God will show all the earth your splendor: you will be named by God forever the peace of justice, the glory of God's worship. Up, Jerusalem! stand upon the heights; look to the east and see your children gathered from the east and the west at the word of the Holy One, rejoicing that they are remembered by God. Led away on foot by their enemies they left you: but God will bring them back to you borne aloft in glory as on royal thrones. For God has commanded that every lofty mountain be made low, and that the age-old depths and gorges be filled to level ground, that Israel may advance secure in the glory of God. The forests and every fragrant kind of tree have overshadowed Israel at God's command; for God is leading Israel in joy by the light of his glory, with his mercy and justice for company.

Responsorial Psalm: Ps 126:1-2, 2-3, 4-5, 6

The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy.

Reading New Testament: Phil 1:4-6, 8-11

Brothers and sisters: I pray always with joy in my every prayer for all of you, because of your partnership for the gospel from the first day until now. I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work in you will continue to complete it until the day of Christ Jesus. God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus. And this is my prayer: that your love may increase ever more and more in knowledge and every kind of perception, to discern what is of value, so that you may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

Gospel: Lk 3:1-6

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the desert. John went throughout the whole region of the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah: A voice of one crying out in the desert: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths. Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill shall be made low. The winding roads shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

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

DEC 7, 2003 2nd Advent: Bar 5.1-9; Phil 1. 4-6,8-11; LK 3.1-6

During the day: Smooth out the rough. You can change neither the other nor yourself, but both can be improved. Like all matters of charity, when attentive to the needs of others, you're the ultimate beneficiary. Grace is operative only through relationships; when genuine, the discrete, firm, patient reaction to the other builds character. You don't see it, but others do, in wonder. God is pleased. And glorified: Their masterpiece is coming along!

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is a means, not an end, its purpose forgiveness. Prayer confronts resentment, turns the spotlight on what really happened, what really matters. Prayer enlightens the blindness of injured pride, distinguishing the offender from his or her deeds; while perhaps condemning the latter, seeks to correct & help save the former. The cocoon of grudge dissolves, & love emerges. Prayer is the flashlight of humility poking around in our own self-hidden reality, ready to forgive & put in order.

December 14, 2003 Third Sunday of Advent

Old Testament: [Zeph 3:14-18a](#)

Shout for joy, O daughter Zion! Sing joyfully, O Israel! Be glad and exult with all your heart, O daughter Jerusalem! The LORD has removed the judgment against you he has turned away your enemies; the King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst, you have no further misfortune to fear. On that day, it shall be said to Jerusalem: Fear not, O Zion, be not discouraged! The LORD, your God, is in your midst, a mighty savior; he will rejoice over you with gladness, and renew you in his love, he will sing joyfully because of you, as one sings at festivals.

Responsorial Psalm: [Is 12:2-3, 4, 5-6](#)

Cry out with joy and gladness: for among you is the great and Holy One of Israel.

New Testament: [Phil 4:4-7](#)

Brothers and sisters: Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again: rejoice! Your kindness should be known to all. The Lord is near. Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Gospel: [Lk 3:10-18](#)

The crowds asked John the Baptist, "What should we do?" He said to them in reply, "Whoever has two cloaks should share with the person who has none. And whoever has food should do likewise." Even tax collectors came to be baptized and they said to him, "Teacher, what should we do?" He answered them, "Stop collecting more than what is prescribed." Soldiers also asked him, "And what is it that we should do?" He told them, "Do not practice extortion, do not falsely accuse anyone, and be satisfied with your wages." Now the people were filled with expectation, and all were asking in their hearts whether John might be the Christ. John answered them all, saying, "I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming. I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." Exhorting them in many other ways, he preached good news to the people.

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

DEC 14, 2003 - Third Advent: Zeph 3.14-18; Phil 4.4-7; LK 3.10-18

During the day: Gather in the wheat, let the chaff blow away. Some things have lasting value (everlasting), some don't. Learn to distinguish, to build on what does & burn away what doesn't even though it hurts. Experience does the winnowing, the Spirit bakes the bread. We nourish each other.

ABOUT PRAYER: Night prayer is the winnowing fan that sifts through the day's experiences. Like all things human, they belong to Christ - they are his experiences, literally. What pleased him the most? What achieved his purpose? What didn't? Why? Night prayer - final chat with Jesus to plan the next day's program - prays with him one last 'Our Father, who art in heaven....' & leaves it all in his hands. So be it.

December 21, 2003 Fourth Sunday of Advent

Old Testament: [Mic 5:1-4a](#)

Thus says the LORD: You, Bethlehem-Ephrathah too small to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel; whose origin is from of old, from ancient times. Therefore the Lord will give them up, until the time when she who is to give birth has borne, and the rest of his kindred shall return to the children of Israel. He shall stand firm and shepherd his flock by the strength of the LORD, in the majestic name of the LORD, his God; and they shall remain, for now his greatness shall reach to the ends of the earth; he shall be peace.

Responsorial Psalm: [Ps 80:2-3, 15-16, 18-19](#)

Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved.

New Testament: [Heb 10:5-10](#)

Brothers and sisters: When Christ came into the world, he said: "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; in holocausts and sin offerings you took no delight. Then I said, 'As is written of me in the scroll, behold, I come to do your will, O God.'" First he says, "Sacrifices and offerings, holocausts and sin offerings, you neither desired nor delighted in." These are offered according to the law. Then he says, "Behold, I come to do your will." He takes away the first to establish the second. By this "will," we have been consecrated through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Gospel: [Lk 1:39-45](#)

Mary set out and traveled to the hill country in haste to a town of Judah, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled."

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

December 21, 2003 4th Advent; Micah 5:1-4; Hebrews 10:5-10; Luke 1:39-45

During the day: Keep the promises you've made, depend on the ones you're made. Mutual trust is the sinew of human & divine relationship. If you don't keep your word, explain why; when the other doesn't, require an explanation - let neither slide. The Trinity works Its will in our lives through human interdependence, apology & renewed commitment as necessary to Their purpose as sincere intention. Keep the faith; God keeps his.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer gives voice to the leaping child within. Sometimes with joy, at times in panic, always in close affinity with Christ. Prayer is pregnant with courage to face together & with him what comes next. Prayer keeps clear the lines of communication - subliminal, perhaps, but none the less effective. Prayer requests & prayer responds. And moves us forward.

December 28, 2003 Feast of the Holy Family

Reading Old Testament: [1 Sm 1:20-22, 24-28](#) In those days Hannah conceived, and at the end of her term bore a son whom she called Samuel, since she had asked the LORD for him. The next time her husband Elkanah was going up with the rest of his household to offer the customary sacrifice to the LORD and to fulfill his vows, Hannah did not go, explaining to her husband, "Once the child is weaned, I will take him to appear before the LORD and to remain there forever; I will offer him as a perpetual nazirite." Once Samuel was weaned, Hannah brought him up with her, along with a three-year-old bull, an ephah of flour, and a skin of wine, and presented him at the temple of the LORD in Shiloh. After the boy's father had sacrificed the young bull, Hannah, his mother, approached Eli and said: "Pardon, my lord! As you live, my lord, I am the woman who stood near you here, praying to the LORD. I prayed for this child, and the LORD granted my request. Now I, in turn, give him to the LORD; as long as he lives, he shall be dedicated to the LORD." Hannah left Samuel there.

Responsorial Psalm: [Ps 84:2-3, 5-6, 9-10](#)

Blessed are they who dwell in your house, O Lord.

Reading New Testament: [1 Jn 3:1-2, 21-24](#) Beloved: See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God. And so we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now; what we shall be has not yet been revealed. We do know that when it is revealed we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence in God and receive from him whatever we ask, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him. And his commandment is this: we should believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another just as he commanded us. Those who keep his commandments remain in him, and he in them, and the way we know that he remains in us is from the Spirit he gave us.

Gospel: [Lk 2:41-52](#) Each year Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover, and when he was twelve years old, they went up according to festival custom. After they had completed its days, as they were returning, the boy Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. Thinking that he was in the caravan, they journeyed for a day and looked for him among their relatives and acquaintances, but not finding him, they returned to Jerusalem to look for him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions, and all who heard him were astounded at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him, they were astonished, and his mother said to him, "Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety." And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what he said to them. He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus advanced in wisdom and age and favor before God and man.

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

December 28, 2003 Feast of the Holy Family 1Sam. 20-28; 1John 3.1-2,21-24; LK 2.41-52

During the day: Be a good listener. Ask intelligent questions. When questioned, give honest, straight forward answers. Gain a reputation for an objective, unprejudiced grasp of things. Be worthy of the respect others have for your sincerity. Grow in wisdom & knowledge.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is our way of keeping good things alive in our heart. In prayer we put out the brush fires of anger & resentment, tame the excesses of jealousy & envy, immerse our fears in hope. Prayer rekindles the graces God's love communicates with each day's experiences. Mission embraced, prayer motivates us to hold steady on course, whatever the obstacles, till the job gets done. Daily prayer is for the long haul.

January 4, 2004 The Epiphany of the Lord

Reading Old Testament: [Is 60:1-6](#)

Rise up in splendor, Jerusalem! Your light has come, the glory of the Lord shines upon you. See, darkness covers the earth, and thick clouds cover the peoples; but upon you the LORD shines, and over you appears his glory. Nations shall walk by your light, and kings by your shining radiance. Raise your eyes and look about; they all gather and come to you: your sons come from afar, and your daughters in the arms of their nurses. Then you shall be radiant at what you see, your heart shall throb and overflow, for the riches of the sea shall be emptied out before you, the wealth of nations shall be brought to you. Caravans of camels shall fill you, dromedaries from Midian and Ephah; all from Sheba shall come bearing gold and frankincense, and proclaiming the praises of the LORD.

Responsorial Psalm: [Ps 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-11, 12-13](#)

Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.

Reading New Testament: [Eph 3:2-3a, 5-6](#)

Brothers and sisters: You have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for your benefit, namely, that the mystery was made known to me by revelation. It was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: that the Gentiles are coheirs, members of the same body, and copartners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

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

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of King Herod, behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage." When King Herod heard this, he was greatly troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. Assembling all the chief priests and the scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it has been written through the prophet: And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; since from you shall come a ruler, who is to shepherd my people Israel." Then Herod called the magi secretly and ascertained from them the time of the star's appearance. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search diligently for the child. When you have found him, bring me word, that I too may go and do him homage." After their audience with the king they set out. And behold, the star that they had seen at its rising preceded them, until it came and stopped over the place where the child was. They were overjoyed at seeing the star, and on entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother. They prostrated themselves and did him homage. Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed for their country by another way.

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

January 4, 2004 The Epiphany of the Lord - Epiphany: Is 60.1-6, Eph 3.2-3; MT 2.1-12

During the day: Don't hoard your treasures. Be they of heart or mind, purse or time, energy or talent, remain open & give generously. The value of all things human & material is their potential for love - divine love at that. Stagnant, the unrealized rots. Tho impoverishing the donor, the 'loss' enriches as one both giver & receiver, eternal homage to the One who designs all purpose.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is unfinding questing - there's always something on the other side of that wall we can't see or grab hold of! We know It's there, seeing us - prayer is resting secure in the notion that It's got a hold on us! Prayer is going back to the day's business or the long journey home with a right sense of direction. We're not alone.

January 11, 2004 Feast of the Baptism of the Lord

Reading Old Testament: [Is 42:1-4, 6-7](#) or [Is 40:1-5, 9-11](#)

Thus says the LORD: Here is my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one with whom I am pleased, upon whom I have put my spirit; he shall bring forth justice to the nations, not crying out, not shouting, not making his voice heard in the street. A bruised reed he shall not break, and a smoldering wick he shall not quench, until he establishes justice on the earth; the coastlands will wait for his teaching. I, the LORD, have called you for the victory of justice, I have grasped you by the hand; I formed you, and set you as a covenant of the people, a light for the nations, to open the eyes of the blind, to bring out prisoners from confinement, and from the dungeon, those who live in darkness.

Responsorial Psalm [Ps 29:1-2, 3-4, 3, 9-10](#): or [Ps 104:1b-2, 3-4, 24-25, 27-28, 29-30](#)

The Lord will bless his people with peace. O bless the Lord, my soul.

Reading New Testament: [Acts 10:34-38](#) or [Ti 2:11-14; 3:4-7](#)

Peter proceeded to speak to those gathered in the house of Cornelius, saying: "In truth, I see that God shows no partiality. Rather, in every nation whoever fears him and acts uprightly is acceptable to him. You know the word that he sent to the Israelites as he proclaimed peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all, what has happened all over Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached, how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power. He went about doing good and healing all those oppressed by the devil, for God was with him."

Gospel: [Lk 3:15-16, 21-22](#)

The people were filled with expectation, and all were asking in their hearts whether John might be the Christ. John answered them all, saying, "I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming. I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." After all the people had been baptized and Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

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

JAN 11, 2004 - Baptism of Jesus: [Is 42.1-7](#); [Acts 10.34-38](#); [LK 3.15-16,21-22](#)

During the day: Be filled with expectation. Great things happen, disguised in the routine. Greatness is the fruit of steady responsibility. Fidelity to goals assumed assures a keener perception of evolving values. Hope sustains courage even in losing situations - gears shift in accord with the Spirit's guidance. The bigger picture supposes absolute confidence in love & truth, freely embraced at every opportunity.

ABOUT PRAYER:

Prayer matures our relationship with the Triune God we adore. Confused as the relationship may be from our side, from theirs it is rich & varied - a parent nourishing, a brother liberating, their spirit grafting onto the tree of the Trinity. Prayer is the wordless, nonconceptual sap flowing thru us all.

January 18, 2004 Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading Old Testament: [Is 62:1-5](#)

For Zion's sake I will not be silent, for Jerusalem's sake I will not be quiet, until her vindication shines forth like the dawn and her victory like a burning torch. Nations shall behold your vindication, and all the kings your glory; you shall be called by a new name pronounced by the mouth of the LORD. You shall be a glorious crown in the hand of the LORD, a royal diadem held by your God. No more shall people call you "Forsaken," or your land "Desolate," but you shall be called "My Delight," and your land "Espoused." For the LORD delights in you and makes your land his spouse. As a young man marries a virgin, your Builder shall marry you; and as a bridegroom rejoices in his bride so shall your God rejoice in you.

Responsorial Psalm: [Ps 96:1-2, 2-3, 7-8, 9-10](#)

Proclaim his marvelous deeds to all the nations.

Reading New Testament: [1 Cor 12:4-11](#)

Brothers and sisters: There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit. To one is given through the Spirit the expression of wisdom; to another, the expression of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to another, faith by the same Spirit; to another, gifts of healing by the one Spirit; to another, mighty deeds; to another, prophecy; to another, discernment of spirits; to another, varieties of tongues; to another, interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit produces all of these, distributing them individually to each person as he wishes.

Gospel: [Jn 2:1-11](#)

There was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the wedding. When the wine ran short, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." And Jesus said to her, "Woman, how does your concern affect me? My hour has not yet come." His mother said to the servers, "Do whatever he tells you." Now there were six stone water jars there for Jewish ceremonial washings, each holding twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus told the them, "Fill the jars with water." So they filled them to the brim. Then he told them, "Draw some out now and take it to the headwaiter." So they took it. And when the headwaiter tasted the water that had become wine, without knowing where it came from --although the servers who had drawn the water knew-- the headwaiter called the bridegroom and said to him, "Everyone serves good wine first, and then when people have drunk freely, an inferior one; but you have kept the good wine until now." Jesus did this as the beginning of his signs at Cana in Galilee and so revealed his glory, and his disciples began to believe in him.

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

JAN 18, 2004 - 2nd of yr: Is 62.1-5; 1Cor 12.4-11; JOHN 2.1-11

During the day: Do what you're told. Your judgment - wiser - may dictate otherwise, but legitimate authority has its place, even if its purpose questionable. Obedience is neither for the benefit of the one directing nor of the one directed but for the common good. For the harmony of good order, submission is the purest exercise of freedom; strongest, too, of links in the divine chain of command as God works for the renewal of the human family.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is the ambience of discernment. In prayer, we struggle to be free of convictions rooted in personal opinion, the better to perceive & ponder alternatives objectively. Prayer helps liberate the will, enabling it to embrace with enthusiasm leadership's decisions, if moral - when clearly immoral, one withdraws. Discernment never closes; prayer accompanies assessment of progress & supplies the courage to insist on improvements when called for. God does the rest.

January 25, 2004 Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading Old Testament: [Neh 8:2-4a, 5-6, 8-10](#)

Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly, which consisted of men, women, and those children old enough to understand. Standing at one end of the open place that was before the Water Gate, he read out of the book from daybreak till midday, in the presence of the men, the women, and those children old enough to understand; and all the people listened attentively to the book of the law. Ezra the scribe stood on a wooden platform that had been made for the occasion. He opened the scroll so that all the people might see it --for he was standing higher up than any of the people-- and, as he opened it, all the people rose. Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and all the people, their hands raised high, answered, "Amen, amen!" Then they bowed down and prostrated themselves before the LORD, their faces to the ground. Ezra read plainly from the book of the law of God, interpreting it so that all could understand what was read. Then Nehemiah, that is, His Excellency, and Ezra the priest-scribe and the Levites who were instructing the people said to all the people: "Today is holy to the LORD your God. Do not be sad, and do not weep"-- for all the people were weeping as they heard the words of the law. He said further: "Go, eat rich foods and drink sweet drinks, and allot portions to those who had nothing prepared; for today is holy to our LORD. Do not be saddened this day, for rejoicing in the LORD must be your strength!"

Responsorial Psalm:[Ps 19:8, 9, 10, 15](#)

Your words, Lord, are Spirit and life.

Reading New Testament: [1 Cor 12:4-11](#)

Brothers and sisters: As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit. Now the body is not a single part, but many. You are Christ's body, and individually parts of it.

Gospel: [Lk 1:1-4; 4:14-21](#) Since many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the events that have been fulfilled among us, just as those who were eyewitnesses from the beginning and ministers of the word have handed them down to us, I too have decided, after investigating everything accurately anew, to write it down in an orderly sequence for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may realize the certainty of the teachings you have received. Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news of him spread throughout the whole region. He taught in their synagogues and was praised by all. He came to Nazareth, where he had grown up, and went according to his custom into the synagogue on the sabbath day. He stood up to read and was handed a scroll of the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord. Rolling up the scroll, he handed it back to the attendant and sat down, and the eyes of all in the synagogue looked intently at him. He said to them, "Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing."

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

JAN 25, 2004 - 3rd of yr: Neh 8.2-10; 1Cor 12.12-30; LK 1.1-4, 14-21

During the day: Bring good news to the poor. Materially or spiritually, they're all around you. Radiate faith - word or deed, makes no difference, just be yourself. We're all in this together; sharing is the only way to survive. God became man to share everything he has with us; least we can do is follow his example. Stick to The Plan.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is our pause to navigate. Prayer is communication, checking with the Tower to set or correct our course. Mutual trust is what brings us home. Prayer overcomes fear, encourages fidelity, inspires generosity. Prayer replaces personal considerations with concern for others. Prayer fuels the will to do what's right. Then rests in the goal achieved.

February 1, 2004 Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading Old Testament: [Jer 1:4-5, 17-19](#)

The word of the LORD came to me, saying: Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I dedicated you, a prophet to the nations I appointed you. But do you gird your loins; stand up and tell them all that I command you. Be not crushed on their account, as though I would leave you crushed before them; for it is I this day who have made you a fortified city, a pillar of iron, a wall of brass, against the whole land: against Judah's kings and princes, against its priests and people. They will fight against you but not prevail over you, for I am with you to deliver you, says the LORD.

Responsorial Psalm: [Ps 71:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 15, 17](#)

I will sing of your salvation.

Reading New Testament: [1 Cor 12:31--13:13](#) or [1 Cor 13:4-13](#)

Brothers and sisters: Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, it is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails. If there are prophecies, they will be brought to nothing; if tongues, they will cease; if knowledge, it will be brought to nothing. For we know partially and we prophesy partially, but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. When I was a child, I used to talk as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, I put aside childish things. At present we see indistinctly, as in a mirror, but then face to face. At present I know partially; then I shall know fully, as I am fully known. So faith, hope, love remain, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

Gospel: [Lk4:21-30](#)

Jesus began speaking in the synagogue, saying: "Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing." And all spoke highly of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They also asked, "Isn't this the son of Joseph?" He said to them, "Surely you will quote me this proverb, 'Physician, cure yourself,' and say, 'Do here in your native place the things that we heard were done in Capernaum.'" And he said, "Amen, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own native place. Indeed, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah when the sky was closed for three and a half years and a severe famine spread over the entire land. It was to none of these that Elijah was sent, but only to a widow in Zarephath in the land of Sidon. Again, there were many lepers in Israel during the time of Elisha the prophet; yet not one of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian." When the people in the synagogue heard this, they were all filled with fury. They rose up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town had been built, to hurl him down headlong. But Jesus passed through the midst of them and went away.

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Texas Trinity by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ

FEB 1, 2004 - 4th of the yr: Jer 1.4-5,17-19; 1Cor 12.31-13.13 ; LK 4.21-30

During the day; Heal yourself. Back-off from what ails you morally, physically, mentally. The ailment is in you, but it's not you. It's in time, now; you're outside of time, yesterday, today & forever. Spirit, you receive & renew the life of the divine Spirit. Ailments are incidental circumstances that occasion growth. Embraced, they serve their purpose, & you become more thoroughly what you will be for all eternity.

ABOUT PRAYER: In prayer we assimilate the word of God, fulfilled as we read or hear it. Knowing precisely what we need for growth at that moment, the Spirit communicates inner, sometimes non-conceptual insights that tune us to his will. In prayer we affirm, in action we confirm the truths revealed. We become that revelation.

February 8, 2004 Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading Old Testament: **Is 6:1-2a, 3-8**

In the year King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a high and lofty throne, with the train of his garment filling the temple. Seraphim were stationed above. They cried one to the other, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts! All the earth is filled with his glory!" At the sound of that cry, the frame of the door shook and the house was filled with smoke. Then I said, "Woe is me, I am doomed! For I am a man of unclean lips, living among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!" Then one of the seraphim flew to me, holding an ember that he had taken with tongs from the altar. He touched my mouth with it, and said, "See, now that this has touched your lips, your wickedness is removed, your sin purged." Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?" "Here I am," I said; "send me!"

Responsorial Psalm: **Ps 138:1-2, 2-3, 4-5, 7-8**

In the sight of the angels I will sing your praises, Lord.

Reading New Testament: **1 Cor 15:1-11 or 1 Cor 15:3-8, 11**

I am reminding you, brothers and sisters, of the gospel I preached to you, which you indeed received and in which you also stand. Through it you are also being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I handed on to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures; that he was buried; that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures; that he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve. After that, Christ appeared to more than five hundred brothers at once, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. After that he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one born abnormally, he appeared to me. For I am the least of the apostles, not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me has not been ineffective. Indeed, I have toiled harder than all of them; not I, however, but the grace of God that is with me. Therefore, whether it be I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

Gospel: **Lk 5:1-11**

While the crowd was pressing in on Jesus and listening to the word of God, he was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret. He saw two boats there alongside the lake; the fishermen had disembarked and were washing their nets. Getting into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, he asked him to put out a short distance from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. After he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch." Simon said in reply, "Master, we have worked hard all night and have caught nothing, but at your command I will lower the nets." When they had done this, they caught a great number of fish and their nets were tearing. They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come to help them. They came and filled both boats so that the boats were in danger of sinking. When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at the knees of Jesus and said, "Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man." For astonishment at the catch of fish they had made seized him and all those with him, and likewise James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners of Simon. Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men." When they brought their boats to the shore, they left everything and followed him.

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Texas Trinidad by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ

FEB 8, 2004 - 5th of yr: Is 6.1-8; 1Cor 15.1-11; LK 5.1-11

During the day: Wash your nets. Be responsible with the tools of your trade. Have confidence in yourself and, kept fit, have confidence in them. Don't be afraid to put out into the deep; cautious, but not afraid. Aware of what threatens & of your own limitations, remember that right intentions bind the Lord to work his will in everything you do. What you do is not as important as why & how you do it. His to decide the results. Go from there.

ABOUT PRAYER: Basic components of prayer are awareness of our sinfulness coupled with awareness of the Trinity's firm but compassionate love. In prayer we rest in both till they blend into the self-forgiveness essential to Their operative mercy. Prayer is the purifying agent that conditions our growth in faith, ever richer participation in Their life & love.

February 15, 2004 Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading Old Testament: [Jer 17:5-8](#) From "The Message

5GOD's Message: "Cursed is the strong one who depends on mere humans, Who thinks he can make it on muscle alone and sets GOD aside as dead weight. 6He's like a tumbleweed on the prairie, out of touch with the good earth. He lives rootless and aimless in a land where nothing grows. 7"But blessed is the man who trusts me, GOD, the woman who sticks with GOD. 8They're like trees replanted in Eden, putting down roots near the rivers-- Never a worry through the hottest of summers, never dropping a leaf, Serene and calm through droughts, bearing fresh fruit every season.

Responsorial Psalm: [Ps 1:1-2, 3, 4 and 6](#) From "The Message" <http://www.biblegateway.com>

Blessed are they who hope in the Lord. 1How well God must like you--you don't hang out at Sin Saloon, you don't slink along Dead-End Road, you don't go to Smart-Mouth College. 2Instead you thrill to GOD's Word, you chew on Scripture day and night. 3You're a tree replanted in Eden, bearing fresh fruit every month, Never dropping a leaf, always in blossom. 4You're not at all like the wicked, who are mere windblown dust--5Without defense in court, unfit company for innocent people. 6GOD charts the road you take. The road they take is Skid Row.

Reading New Testament: [1 Cor 15:12, 16-20](#) From "The Message" <http://www.biblegateway.com>

Brothers and sisters: 12Now, let me ask you something profound yet troubling. If you became believers because you trusted the proclamation that Christ is alive, risen from the dead, how can you let people say that there is no such thing as a resurrection? 16If corpses can't be raised, then Christ wasn't, because he was indeed dead. 17And if Christ wasn't raised, then all you're doing is wandering about in the dark, as lost as ever. 18It's even worse for those who died hoping in Christ and resurrection, because they're already in their graves. 19If all we get out of Christ is a little inspiration for a few short years, we're a pretty sorry lot. 20But the truth is that Christ has been raised up, the first in a long legacy of those who are going to leave the cemeteries.

Gospel: [Lk 6:17, 20-26](#) From "The Message" <http://www.biblegateway.com>

You're Blessed: 17Coming down off the mountain with them, he stood on a plain surrounded by disciples, and was soon joined by a huge congregation from all over Judea and Jerusalem, even from the seaside towns of Tyre and Sidon. 20Then he spoke: You're blessed when you've lost it all. God's kingdom is there for the finding. 21You're blessed when you're ravenously hungry. Then you're ready for the Messianic meal. You're blessed when the tears flow freely. Joy comes with the morning. 22"Count yourself blessed every time someone cuts you down or throws you out, every time someone smears or blackens your name to discredit me. What it means is that the truth is too close for comfort and that that person is uncomfortable. 23You can be glad when that happens--skip like a lamb, if you like!--for even though they don't like it, I do . . . and all heaven applauds. And know that you are in good company; my preachers and witnesses have always been treated like this. Give Away Your Life 24But it's trouble ahead if you think you have it made. What you have is all you'll ever get. 25And it's trouble ahead if you're satisfied with yourself. Your self will not satisfy you for long. And it's trouble ahead if you think life's all fun and games. There's suffering to be met, and you're going to meet it. 26"Here's trouble ahead when you live only for the approval of others, saying what flatters them, doing what indulges them. Popularity contests are not truth contests--look how many scoundrel preachers were approved by your ancestors! Your task is to be true, not popular.

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Texas Trinidad by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ

FEB 15, 2004 - 6th of yr: Jer 17.5-8; 1Cor 15.12,16-20; LK 6.17,20-26

During the day: Stand on level ground. Perceive God's humor in the thing, even as you weep. Give in to your hunger for justice & get involved. Don't be overly concerned with what others think when you do. You may lose money, or even your job; but you'll be a lot healthier inside. If you opt for riches, that's all you'll get.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is where the real struggle is: What do you want, & why do you want it?! Prayer keeps us honest with ourselves, even as we formulate the lies. If authentic, prayer sometimes turns green lights to yellow, or even red. How quickly you obey depends on where your heart is.

February 22, 2004 Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading Old Testament: 1 Sm 26:2, 7-9, 12-13, 22-23

In those days, Saul went down to the desert of Ziph with three thousand picked men of Israel, to search for David in the desert of Ziph. So David and Abishai went among Saul's soldiers by night and found Saul lying asleep within the barricade, with his spear thrust into the ground at his head and Abner and his men sleeping around him. Abishai whispered to David: "God has delivered your enemy into your grasp this day. Let me nail him to the ground with one thrust of the spear; I will not need a second thrust!" But David said to Abishai, "Do not harm him, for who can lay hands on the LORD's anointed and remain unpunished?" So David took the spear and the water jug from their place at Saul's head, and they got away without anyone's seeing or knowing or awakening. All remained asleep, because the LORD had put them into a deep slumber. Going across to an opposite slope, David stood on a remote hilltop at a great distance from Abner, son of Ner, and the troops. He said: "Here is the king's spear. Let an attendant come over to get it. The LORD will reward each man for his justice and faithfulness. Today, though the LORD delivered you into my grasp, I would not harm the LORD's anointed."

Responsorial Psalm: Ps 103:1-2, 3-4, 8, 10, 12-13 - The Lord is kind and merciful.

Reading New Testament: 1 Cor 15:45-49

Brothers and sisters: It is written, The first man, Adam, became a living being, the last Adam a life-giving spirit. But the spiritual was not first; rather the natural and then the spiritual. The first man was from the earth, earthly; the second man, from heaven. As was the earthly one, so also are the earthly, and as is the heavenly one, so also are the heavenly. Just as we have borne the image of the earthly one, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly one.

Gospel: Lk 6:27-38

Jesus said to his disciples: "To you who hear I say, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. To the person who strikes you on one cheek, offer the other one as well, and from the person who takes your cloak, do not withhold even your tunic. Give to everyone who asks of you, and from the one who takes what is yours do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you. For if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do the same. If you lend money to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, and get back the same amount. But rather, love your enemies and do good to them, and lend expecting nothing back; then your reward will be great and you will be children of the Most High, for he himself is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. "Stop judging and you will not be judged. Stop condemning and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven. Give, and gifts will be given to you; a good measure, packed together, shaken down, and overflowing, will be poured into your lap. For the measure with which you measure will in return be measured out to you."

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Texas Trinidad by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ

FEB 22, 2004 -7th of yr: 1Sam 26.2-13,22-23; 1Cor 15.45-49; LK 6.27-38

During the day: Thrifty with money, be lavish with your gift of time & energy. Hard-earned tho it be, money doesn't last; the gift of self - you! - enriches the other forever. Even if a stranger, moreso if unaware, especially if an enemy. Hearts open to funnel the flow are always full - the source of divine life is infinite.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is the bridge from vengeance to pardon, the only way out. Prayer immerses the blind emotions that devour in the healing blood of Christ. He died for a purpose; prayer assumes it as our own. We're all in this together.

February 29, 2004 First Sunday of Lent

Reading Old Testament: [Dt 26:4-10](#)

Moses spoke to the people, saying: "The priest shall receive the basket from you and shall set it in front of the altar of the LORD, your God. Then you shall declare before the LORD, your God, 'My father was a wandering Aramean who went down to Egypt with a small household and lived there as an alien. But there he became a nation great, strong, and numerous. When the Egyptians maltreated and oppressed us, imposing hard labor upon us, we cried to the LORD, the God of our fathers, and he heard our cry and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. He brought us out of Egypt with his strong hand and outstretched arm, with terrifying power, with signs and wonders; and bringing us into this country, he gave us this land flowing with milk and honey. Therefore, I have now brought you the firstfruits of the products of the soil which you, O LORD, have given me.' And having set them before the Lord, your God, you shall bow down in his presence."

Responsorial Psalm: [Ps 91:1-2, 10-11, 12-13, 14-15](#)

Be with me, Lord, when I am in trouble.

Reading New Testament: [Rom 10:8-13](#)

Brothers and sisters: What does Scripture say? The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart --that is, the word of faith that we preach--, for, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved. For the Scripture says, No one who believes in him will be put to shame. For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all, enriching all who call upon him. For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

Gospel: [Lk 4:1-13](#)

Filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the desert for forty days, to be tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and when they were over he was hungry. The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread." Jesus answered him, "It is written, One does not live on bread alone." Then he took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a single instant. The devil said to him, "I shall give to you all this power and glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I may give it to whomever I wish. All this will be yours, if you worship me." Jesus said to him in reply, "It is written: You shall worship the Lord, your God, and him alone shall you serve." Then he led him to Jerusalem, made him stand on the parapet of the temple, and said to him "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written: He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you, and: With their hands they will support you, lest you dash your foot against a stone." Jesus said to him in reply, "It also says, You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test." When the devil had finished every temptation, he departed from him for a time.

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Texas Trinidad by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ

FEB 29, 2004 - 1st Lent: Deut30.15-20; Rm10.8-13; LK4.1-3

During the day - Don't test fate. It owes you nothing. On the contrary: it tests you! Your wisdom; your prudence; your integrity; your authentic empathy with those around you. Think of your project as God's, not yours. Want what God wants. Find out. Before jumping!

ABOUT PRAYER In prayer we find out what God wants by tuning in to what Christ is doing, his human mind & will submissive to the divine. In harmony with the Father, Christ expects us to be in harmony with him. In prayer we assimilate the attitudes & values the Spirit of God forms in each of us. Then apply them with generosity & courage as each situation comes along.

March 7, 2004 Second Sunday of Lent

Reading Old Testament: [Gn 15:5-12, 17-18](#)

The Lord God took Abram outside and said, "Look up at the sky and count the stars, if you can. Just so," he added, "shall your descendants be." Abram put his faith in the LORD, who credited it to him as an act of righteousness. He then said to him, "I am the LORD who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land as a possession." "O Lord GOD," he asked, "how am I to know that I shall possess it?" He answered him, "Bring me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old she-goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon." Abram brought him all these, split them in two, and placed each half opposite the other; but the birds he did not cut up. Birds of prey swooped down on the carcasses, but Abram stayed with them. As the sun was about to set, a trance fell upon Abram, and a deep, terrifying darkness enveloped him. When the sun had set and it was dark, there appeared a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch, which passed between those pieces. It was on that occasion that the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying: "To your descendants I give this land, from the Wadi of Egypt to the Great River, the Euphrates."

Responsorial Psalm: [Ps 27:1, 7-8, 8-9, 13-14](#)

The Lord is my light and my salvation.

Reading New Testament: [Phil 3:17– 4:1](#) or [Phil 3:20 – 4:1](#)

Join with others in being imitators of me, brothers and sisters, and observe those who thus conduct themselves according to the model you have in us. For many, as I have often told you and now tell you even in tears, conduct themselves as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction. Their God is their stomach; their glory is in their "shame." Their minds are occupied with earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we also await a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will change our lowly body to conform with his glorified body by the power that enables him also to bring all things into subjection to himself. Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, in this way stand firm in the Lord.

Gospel: [Lk 9:28b-36](#)

Jesus took Peter, John, and James and went up the mountain to pray. While he was praying his face changed in appearance and his clothing became dazzling white. And behold, two men were conversing with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his exodus that he was going to accomplish in Jerusalem. Peter and his companions had been overcome by sleep, but becoming fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. As they were about to part from him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good that we are here; let us make three tents, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." But he did not know what he was saying. While he was still speaking, a cloud came and cast a shadow over them, and they became frightened when they entered the cloud. Then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my chosen Son; listen to him." After the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. They fell silent and did not at that time tell anyone what they had seen.

Passion of the Christ (Mel Gibson Movie) Suggestion – Before and after seeing the movie read Matthew (chapters 26 and 27 plus 19:28; 20:25-28); Mark (chapters 14 and 15 plus 10:42-45); Luke (chapters 22-23 plus 7:36-50) John (chapters 18 and 19 plus 11:47-53, 12:1-11, 13:1-38, 14:31) and Psalm 22.

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Texas Trinidad by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ

During the day & About Prayer - Not available as of Monday, March 1, 2004 See if they come in later.

March 14, 2004 Third Sunday of Lent

Reading Old Testament: [Ex 3:1-8a, 13-15](#)

Moses was tending the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian. Leading the flock across the desert, he came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There an angel of the LORD appeared to Moses in fire flaming out of a bush. As he looked on, he was surprised to see that the bush, though on fire, was not consumed. So Moses decided, "I must go over to look at this remarkable sight, and see why the bush is not burned." When the LORD saw him coming over to look at it more closely, God called out to him from the bush, "Moses! Moses!" He answered, "Here I am." God said, "Come no nearer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground. I am the God of your fathers," he continued, "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob." Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. But the LORD said, "I have witnessed the affliction of my people in Egypt and have heard their cry of complaint against their slave drivers, so I know well what they are suffering. Therefore I have come down to rescue them from the hands of the Egyptians and lead them out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey." Moses said to God, "But when I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' if they ask me, 'What is his name?' what am I to tell them?" God replied, "I am who am." Then he added, "This is what you shall tell the Israelites: I AM sent me to you." God spoke further to Moses, "Thus shall you say to the Israelites: The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. "This is my name forever; thus am I to be remembered through all generations."

Responsorial Psalm: [Ps 103: 1-2, 3-4, 6-7, 8, 11](#)

The Lord is kind and merciful.

Reading New Testament: [1 Cor 10:1-6, 10-12](#)

I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea, and all of them were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. All ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they drank from a spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was the Christ. Yet God was not pleased with most of them, for they were struck down in the desert. These things happened as examples for us, so that we might not desire evil things, as they did. Do not grumble as some of them did, and suffered death by the destroyer. These things happened to them as an example, and they have been written down as a warning to us, upon whom the end of the ages has come. Therefore, whoever thinks he is standing secure should take care not to fall.

Gospel: [Lk 13:1-9](#)

Some people told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with the blood of their sacrifices. Jesus said to them in reply, "Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were greater sinners than all other Galileans? By no means! But I tell you, if you do not repent, you will all perish as they did! Or those eighteen people who were killed when the tower at Siloam fell on them -- do you think they were more guilty than everyone else who lived in Jerusalem? By no means! But I tell you, if you do not repent, you will all perish as they did!" And he told them this parable: "There once was a person who had a fig tree planted in his orchard, and when he came in search of fruit on it but found none, he said to the gardener, 'For three years now I have come in search of fruit on this fig tree but have found none. So cut it down. Why should it exhaust the soil?' He said to him in reply, 'Sir, leave it for this year also, and I shall cultivate the ground around it and fertilize it; it may bear fruit in the future. If not you can cut it down.'"

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Texas Trinidad by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ

MAR 14, 2004 - 3rd Lent: Ex 3.1-8,13-15; 1Cor 10.1-12; LK 13.1-9

During the day: Don't give up on a barren project. Be creative & try a new approach. Keep hope alive & dig deeper. If there's reason to believe in it, believe in yourself as well. With a life of its own, its struggle to birth depends on your faith; just be sure the love that motivates you is for the people who'll eat the figs, not for the tree itself.

ABOUT PRAYER: Thru prayer hope becomes faith. If indeed the project is God's (not mine), the persistent 'Thy will be done' becomes 'Thy will is being done' as inspiration perceives & confirms the divine design. Prayer is patient acknowledgement that, tho nothing is impossible for God, he shows us what to do only a step at a time. Prayer provides the courage to take that step.

March 21, 2004 Fourth Sunday of Lent

Reading Old Testament: [Jos 5:9a, 10-12](#)

The LORD said to Joshua, "Today I have removed the reproach of Egypt from you." While the Israelites were encamped at Gilgal on the plains of Jericho, they celebrated the Passover on the evening of the fourteenth of the month. On the day after the Passover, they ate of the produce of the land in the form of unleavened cakes and parched grain. On that same day after the Passover, on which they ate of the produce of the land, the manna ceased. No longer was there manna for the Israelites, who that year ate of the yield of the land of Canaan.

Responsorial Psalm: [Ps 34:2-3, 4-5, 6-7](#)

R. (9a) Taste and see the goodness of the Lord. I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise shall be ever in my mouth. Let my soul glory in the LORD; the lowly will hear me and be glad. Glorify the LORD with me, let us together extol his name. I sought the LORD, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears. Look to him that you may be radiant with joy, and your faces may not blush with shame. When the poor one called out, the LORD heard, and from all his distress he saved him.

Reading New Testament: [2 Cor 5:17-21](#)

Brothers and sisters: Whoever is in Christ is a new creation: the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come. And all this is from God, who has reconciled us to himself through Christ and given us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting their trespasses against them and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors for Christ, as if God were appealing through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who did not know sin, so that we might become the righteousness of God in him.

Gospel: [Lk 15:1-3, 11-32](#)

Tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to listen to Jesus, but the Pharisees and scribes began to complain, saying, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." So to them Jesus addressed this parable: "A man had two sons, and the younger son said to his father, 'Father give me the share of your estate that should come to me.' So the father divided the property between them. After a few days, the younger son collected all his belongings and set off to a distant country where he squandered his inheritance on a life of dissipation. When he had freely spent everything, a severe famine struck that country, and he found himself in dire need. So he hired himself out to one of the local citizens who sent him to his farm to tend the swine. And he longed to eat his fill of the pods on which the swine fed, but nobody gave him any. Coming to his senses he thought, 'How many of my father's hired workers have more than enough food to eat, but here am I, dying from hunger. I shall get up and go to my father and I shall say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son; treat me as you would treat one of your hired workers.'" So he got up and went back to his father. While he was still a long way off, his father caught sight of him, and was filled with compassion. He ran to his son, embraced him and kissed him. His son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son.' But his father ordered his servants, 'Quickly bring the finest robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Take the fattened calf and slaughter it. Then let us celebrate with a feast, because this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost, and has been found.' Then the celebration began. Now the older son had been out in the field and, on his way back, as he neared the house, he heard the sound of music and dancing. He called one of the servants and asked what this might mean. The servant said to him, 'Your brother has returned and your father has slaughtered the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.' He became angry, and when he refused to enter the house, his father came out and pleaded with him. He said to his father in reply, 'Look, all these years I served you and not once did I disobey your orders; yet you never gave me even a young goat to feast on with my friends. But when your son returns who swallowed up your property with prostitutes, for him you slaughter the fattened calf.' He said to him, 'My son, you are here with me always; everything I have is yours. But now we must celebrate and rejoice, because your brother was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.'"

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Texas Trinidad by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ

[MAR 21, 2004 -4th Lent: Josh 5.9-12; 2Cor 5.17-21; LK 15.1-3,11-32](#)

During the day: Kill the fatted calf. Don't save it for the County Fair. Someone needs you NOW! Don't hoard your time, your energy, your money. They're not yours, they're God's. Look around & see the ones - dead - God wants to use you to bring to life. Tune to the real purpose of your life & come alive yourself. He's waiting.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is not a time to brood. It's a time to celebrate. In prayer we back off from our own perspective & adopt God's. We dive deep beneath troubled waters to the eternal victory within our own hearts. We immerse ourselves in the communion that flows thru all humanity &, thru Christ's, to communion with the divine. In prayer we rest; we renew ourselves; then return to routine to share God's wisdom & strength with those who reach out to us. With Christ, we save.

March 28, 2004 - Fifth Sunday of Lent

Old Testament: [Is 43:16-21](#)

Thus says the LORD, who opens a way in the sea and a path in the mighty waters, who leads out chariots and horsemen, a powerful army, till they lie prostrate together, never to rise, snuffed out and quenched like a wick. Remember not the events of the past, the things of long ago consider not; see, I am doing something new! Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? In the desert I make a way, in the wasteland, rivers. Wild beasts honor me, jackals and ostriches, for I put water in the desert and rivers in the wasteland for my chosen people to drink, the people whom I formed for myself, that they might announce my praise.

Responsorial Psalm: [Ps 126:1-2, 2-3, 4-5, 6](#)

The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy. When the LORD brought back the captives of Zion, we were like men dreaming. Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with rejoicing. Then they said among the nations, "The LORD has done great things for them." The LORD has done great things for us; we are glad indeed. Restore our fortunes, O LORD, like the torrents in the southern desert. Those that sow in tears shall reap rejoicing. Although they go forth weeping, carrying the seed to be sown, They shall come back rejoicing, carrying their sheaves.

New Testament: [Phil 3:8-14](#)

Brothers and sisters: I consider everything as a loss because of the supreme good of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have accepted the loss of all things and I consider them so much rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having any righteousness of my own based on the law but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God, depending on faith to know him and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by being conformed to his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead. It is not that I have already taken hold of it or have already attained perfect maturity, but I continue my pursuit in hope that I may possess it, since I have indeed been taken possession of by Christ Jesus. Brothers and sisters, I for my part do not consider myself to have taken possession. Just one thing: forgetting what lies behind but straining forward to what lies ahead, I continue my pursuit toward the goal, the prize of God's upward calling, in Christ Jesus.

Gospel: [Jn 8:1-11](#)

Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. But early in the morning he arrived again in the temple area, and all the people started coming to him, and he sat down and taught them. Then the scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery and made her stand in the middle. They said to him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. Now in the law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?" They said this to test him, so that they could have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and began to write on the ground with his finger. But when they continued asking him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." Again he bent down and wrote on the ground. And in response, they went away one by one, beginning with the elders. So he was left alone with the woman before him. Then Jesus straightened up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" She replied, "No one, sir." Then Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go, and from now on do not sin any more."

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Texas Trinidad by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ

MARCH 28, 2004 - 5th Lent: Is 43.16-21; Phil 3.8-14; JN 8.1-11

During the day: When wrong, be sorry rather than ashamed. Shame hides; sorrow shares. Shame shirks blame; sorrow acknowledges it. Shame wants no one to know; sorrow wants everyone to know. Shame sickens; sorrow heals. Shame is of pride, sorrow of love. Shame is concerned with self, sorrow with others. Shame is afraid, sorrow courageous. Shame condemns, sorrow forgives. Shame destroys, sorrow builds - a community of love, peace & justice.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer absorbs shame & generates sorrow. Prayer perceives the solidarity of sinfulness. In prayer we assume with Christ each other's sinfulness, ready to confront together the consequences of our many wrongs. Prayer distinguishes the wrongdoer from the wrong done, loves & corrects the former, prevents & protects from the latter to the extent possible. Midst chaos, in prayer we dive deep into our hearts to rest in the peace only Christ can give to those who are sorry, & hold no grudges.

April 4, 2004 Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion
Extra Readings – Easter Passion – 4 pages

At the Procession with Palms Gospel Reading I: [Lk 19:28-40](#)

Jesus proceeded on his journey up to Jerusalem. As he drew near to Bethphage and Bethany at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples. He said, "Go into the village opposite you, and as you enter it you will find a colt tethered on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it here. And if anyone should ask you, 'Why are you untying it?' you will answer, 'The Master has need of it.'" So those who had been sent went off and found everything just as he had told them. And as they were untying the colt, its owners said to them, "Why are you untying this colt?" They answered, "The Master has need of it." So they brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks over the colt, and helped Jesus to mount. As he rode along, the people were spreading their cloaks on the road; and now as he was approaching the slope of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of his disciples began to praise God aloud with joy for all the mighty deeds they had seen. They proclaimed: "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord. Peace in heaven and glory in the highest." Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples." He said in reply, "I tell you, if they keep silent, the stones will cry out!"

At the Mass Old Testament: [Is 50:4-7](#)

The Lord GOD has given me a well-trained tongue, that I might know how to speak to the weary a word that will rouse them. Morning after morning he opens my ear that I may hear; and I have not rebelled, have not turned back. I gave my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who plucked my beard; my face I did not shield from buffets and spitting. The Lord GOD is my help, therefore I am not disgraced; I have set my face like flint, knowing that I shall not be put to shame.

Responsorial Psalm: [Ps 22:8-9, 17-18, 19-20, 23-24](#)

R. (2a) My God, my God, why have you abandoned me? All who see me scoff at me; they mock me with parted lips, they wag their heads: "He relied on the LORD; let him deliver him, let him rescue him, if he loves him." Indeed, many dogs surround me, a pack of evildoers closes in upon me; They have pierced my hands and my feet; I can count all my bones. They divide my garments among them, and for my vesture they cast lots. But you, O LORD, be not far from me; O my help, hasten to aid me. I will proclaim your name to my brethren; in the midst of the assembly I will praise you: "You who fear the LORD, praise him; all you descendants of Jacob, give glory to him; revere him, all you descendants of Israel!"

New Testament: [Phil 2:6-11](#)

Christ Jesus, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Gospel: [Lk 22:14--23:56](#)

When the hour came, Jesus took his place at table with the apostles. He said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer, for, I tell you, I shall not eat it again until there is fulfillment in the kingdom of God." Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and said, "Take this and share it among yourselves; for I tell you that from this time on I shall not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." Then he took the bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which will be given for you; do this in memory of me." And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which will be shed for you.

"And yet behold, the hand of the one who is to betray me is with me on the table; for the Son of Man indeed goes as it has been determined; but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed." And they began to debate among themselves who among them would do such a deed.

Then an argument broke out among them about which of them should be regarded as the greatest. He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them and those in authority over them are addressed as 'Benefactors'; but among you it shall not be so. Rather, let the greatest among you be as the youngest, and the leader as the servant. For who is greater: the one seated at table or the one who serves? Is it not the one seated at table? I am among you as the one who serves. It is you who have stood by me in my trials; and I confer a kingdom on you, just as my Father has conferred one on me, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom; and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

"Simon, Simon, behold Satan has demanded to sift all of you like wheat, but I have prayed that your own faith may not fail; and once you have turned back, you must strengthen your brothers." He said to him, "Lord, I am prepared to go to prison and to die with you." But he replied, "I tell you, Peter, before the cock crows this day, you will deny three times that you know me."

He said to them, "When I sent you forth without a money bag or a sack or sandals, were you in need of anything?" "No, nothing," they replied. He said to them, "But now one who has a money bag should take it, and likewise a sack, and one who does not have a sword should sell his cloak and buy one. For I tell you that this Scripture must be fulfilled in me, namely, He was counted among the wicked; and indeed what is written about me is coming to fulfillment." Then they said, "Lord, look, there are two swords here." But he replied, "It is enough!"

Then going out, he went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples followed him. When he arrived at the place he said to them, "Pray that you may not undergo the test." After withdrawing about a stone's throw from them and kneeling, he prayed, saying, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me; still, not my will but yours be done." And to strengthen him an angel from heaven appeared to him. He was in such agony and he prayed so fervently that his sweat became like drops of blood falling on the ground. When he rose from prayer and returned to his disciples, he found them sleeping from grief. He said to them, "Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not undergo the test."

While he was still speaking, a crowd approached and in front was one of the Twelve, a man named Judas. He went up to Jesus to kiss him. Jesus said to him, "Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?" His disciples realized what was about to happen, and they asked, "Lord, shall we strike with a sword?" And one of them struck the high priest's servant and cut off his right ear. But Jesus said in reply, "Stop, no more of this!" Then he touched the servant's ear and healed him. And Jesus said to the chief priests and temple guards and elders who had come for him, "Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs? Day after day I was with you in the temple area, and you did not seize me; but this is your hour, the time for the power of darkness."

After arresting him they led him away and took him into the house of the high priest; Peter was following at a distance. They lit a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat around it, and Peter sat down with them. When a maid saw him seated in the light, she looked intently at him and said, "This man too was with him." But he denied it saying, "Woman, I do not know him." A short while later someone else saw him and said, "You too are one of them"; but Peter answered, "My friend, I am not." About an hour later, still another insisted, "Assuredly, this man too was with him, for he also is a Galilean." But Peter said, "My friend, I do not know what you are talking about." Just as he was saying this, the cock crowed, and the Lord turned and looked at Peter; and Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said to him, "Before the cock crows today, you will deny me three times." He went out and began to weep bitterly. The men who held Jesus in custody were ridiculing and beating him. They blindfolded him and questioned him, saying, "Prophecy! Who is it that struck you?" And they reviled him in saying many other things against him.

When day came the council of elders of the people met, both chief priests and scribes, and they brought him before their Sanhedrin. They said, "If you are the Christ, tell us," but he replied to them, "If I tell you, you will not believe, and if I question, you will not respond. But from this time on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God." They all asked, "Are you then the Son of God?" He replied to them, "You say that I am." Then they said, "What further need have we for testimony? We have heard it from his own mouth."

Then the whole assembly of them arose and brought him before Pilate. They brought charges against him, saying, "We found this man misleading our people; he opposes the payment of taxes to Caesar and maintains that he is the Christ, a king." Pilate asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" He said to him in reply, "You say so." Pilate then addressed the chief priests and the crowds, "I find this man not guilty." But they were adamant and said, "He is inciting the people with his teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee where he began even to here."

On hearing this Pilate asked if the man was a Galilean; and upon learning that he was under Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod who was in Jerusalem at that time. Herod was very glad to see Jesus; he had been wanting to see him for a long time, for he had heard about him and had been hoping to see him perform some sign. He questioned him at length, but he gave him no answer. The chief priests and scribes, meanwhile, stood by accusing him harshly. Herod and his soldiers treated him contemptuously and mocked him, and after clothing him in resplendent garb, he sent him back to Pilate. Herod and Pilate became friends that very day, even though they had been enemies formerly. Pilate then summoned the chief priests, the rulers, and the people and said to them, "You brought this man to me and accused him of inciting the people to revolt. I have conducted my investigation in your presence and have not found this man guilty of the charges you have brought against him, nor did Herod, for he sent him back to us. So no capital crime has been committed by him. Therefore I shall have him flogged and then release him."

But all together they shouted out, "Away with this man! Release Barabbas to us." --Now Barabbas had been imprisoned for a rebellion that had taken place in the city and for murder.--Again Pilate addressed them, still wishing to release Jesus, but they continued their shouting, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Pilate addressed them a third time, "What evil has this man done? I found him guilty of no capital crime. Therefore I shall have him flogged and then release him." With loud shouts, however, they persisted in calling for his crucifixion, and their voices prevailed. The verdict of Pilate was that their demand should be granted. So he released the man who had been imprisoned for rebellion and murder, for whom they asked, and he handed Jesus over to them to deal with as they wished.

As they led him away they took hold of a certain Simon, a Cyrenian, who was coming in from the country; and after laying the cross on him, they made him carry it behind Jesus. A large crowd of people followed Jesus, including many women who mourned and lamented him. Jesus turned to them and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep instead for yourselves and for your children for indeed, the days are coming when people will say, 'Blessed are the barren, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed.' At that time people will say to the mountains, 'Fall upon us!' and to the hills, 'Cover us!' for if these things are done when the wood is green what will happen when it is dry?" Now two others, both criminals, were led away with him to be executed.

When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him and the criminals there, one on his right, the other on his left. Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." They divided his garments by casting lots. The people stood by and watched; the rulers, meanwhile, sneered at him and said, "He saved others, let him save himself if he is the chosen one, the Christ of God." Even the soldiers jeered at him. As they approached to offer him wine they called out, "If you are King of the Jews, save yourself." Above him there was an inscription that read, "This is the King of the Jews."

Now one of the criminals hanging there reviled Jesus, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us." The other, however, rebuking him, said in reply, "Have you no fear of God, for you are subject to the same condemnation? And indeed, we have been condemned justly, for the sentence we received corresponds to our crimes, but this man has done nothing criminal." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." He replied to him, "Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

It was now about noon and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon because of an eclipse of the sun. Then the veil of the temple was torn down the middle. Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit"; and when he had said this he breathed his last.

The centurion who witnessed what had happened glorified God and said, "This man was innocent beyond doubt." When all the people who had gathered for this spectacle saw what had happened, they returned home beating their breasts; but all his acquaintances stood at a distance, including the women who had followed him from Galilee and saw these events.

Now there was a virtuous and righteous man named Joseph who, though he was a member of the council, had not consented to their plan of action. He came from the Jewish town of Arimathea and was awaiting the kingdom of God. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. After he had taken the body down, he wrapped it in a linen cloth and laid him in a rock-hewn tomb in which no one had yet been buried. It was the day of preparation, and the sabbath was about to begin. The women who had come from Galilee with him followed behind, and when they had seen the tomb and the way in which his body was laid in it, they returned and prepared spices and perfumed oils. Then they rested on the sabbath according to the commandment.

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Texas Trinidad by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ

APRIL 4, 2004 - PALM SUNDAY: Is 50.4-7; Phil 2.6-11; LK 23.1-49 "This day you will be with me in Paradise."

During the day: When distressed, don't panic. Affirm 'I can get through this.' If 'I CAN'T!' shouts back, recall who can & wants to help. Run through the list: many may want to but can't. Others who can may not want to. Hear the Spirit's 'What about me? I can, & I want to.' Trust him; let him do it his way.

ABOUT PRAYER: Often in prayer we're restless & insecure. So we go the limit & imagine ourselves bereft of all human security: Family? all gone. Friends? None left? Job? just lost it. Money? exhausted. Health? run out. After a spell feeling totally abandoned, we murmur 'You exist, & I am Yours' & repeat it till a deep sense of peace pervades. Then we put family, friends, profession, money, health, etc. back in the picture & note the difference.

April 11, 2004 Easter Sunday The Resurrection of the Lord

2 pages

Reading New Testament: (KJV) Acts 10: 34 Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:) That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.

Responsorial Psalm: This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad.

Psalm 118: O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: because his mercy endureth for ever. Let Israel now say, that his mercy endureth for ever. The right hand of the LORD is exalted: the right hand of the LORD doeth valiantly. I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the LORD. The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the LORD's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes.

Reading New Testament: (KJV) Colossians 3: If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. (KJV) 1 Corinthians 5: Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

Gospel: (KJV) Luke 24: And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know him. And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad? And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days? And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done. Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre; And when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive. And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not. Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he

would have gone further. But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them. And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight. And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures? And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, Saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon. And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread.

(KJV) John 20: The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre. Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the LORD out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him. Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre. So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in. Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie, And the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed. For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead.

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Texas Trinidad by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ

Apr 11, 2004 - EASTER SUNDAY: Acts 10.34-43; Col 3.1-4; JN 20.1-9

During the day: Run faster. But wait for the others to catch up & share the prize. If it turns out to be an empty tomb, hide the hurt & encourage your colleagues -that's leadership. Pick up the pieces & cheerfully try another approach. Unexpected success humbles: didn't depend on you after all! The divine design works its wonders through both success & failure & enriches all, both winners & losers. Trick is to find its purpose.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer prepares for the unexpected. In prayer we absorb the shock of sudden loss. We fill the hole with faith. We immerse ourselves in a cruel love - a love that knows what's best & doesn't shield us from it. A love that brings good out of evil. Prayer embraces the hidden good & suffers the loss with courage, unresigned to the occasioning evil. Prayer heals, albeit slowly, & rests in the resurrection. Even as we witness it with our own scars, prayer strengthens our continuing battle 'longside the Victor. (Cheer up, the worst may be yet to come!)

April 18, 2004 Second Sunday of Easter

Reading New Testament: Acts 5:12-16

Many signs and wonders were done among the people at the hands of the apostles. They were all together in Solomon's portico. None of the others dared to join them, but the people esteemed them. Yet more than ever, believers in the Lord, great numbers of men and women, were added to them. Thus they even carried the sick out into the streets and laid them on cots and mats so that when Peter came by, at least his shadow might fall on one or another of them. A large number of people from the towns in the vicinity of Jerusalem also gathered, bringing the sick and those disturbed by unclean spirits, and they were all cured.

Responsorial Psalm: Ps 118:2-4, 13-15, 22-24

Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, his love is everlasting. Let the house of Israel say, "His mercy endures forever." Let the house of Aaron say, "His mercy endures forever." Let those who fear the LORD say, "His mercy endures forever." I was hard pressed and was falling, but the LORD helped me. My strength and my courage is the LORD, and he has been my savior. The joyful shout of victory in the tents of the just: The stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. By the LORD has this been done; it is wonderful in our eyes. This is the day the LORD has made;

Reading New Testament: Rv 1:9-11a, 12-13, 17-19

I, John, your brother, who share with you the distress, the kingdom, and the endurance we have in Jesus, found myself on the island called Patmos because I proclaimed God's word and gave testimony to Jesus. I was caught up in spirit on the Lord's day and heard behind me a voice as loud as a trumpet, which said, "Write on a scroll what you see." Then I turned to see whose voice it was that spoke to me, and when I turned, I saw seven gold lampstands and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, wearing an ankle-length robe, with a gold sash around his chest. When I caught sight of him, I fell down at his feet as though dead. He touched me with his right hand and said, "Do not be afraid. I am the first and the last, the one who lives. Once I was dead, but now I am alive forever and ever. I hold the keys to death and the netherworld. Write down, therefore, what you have seen, and what is happening, and what will happen afterwards."

Gospel: Jn 20:19-31

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the doors were locked, where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you." When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained." Thomas, called Didymus, one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples said to him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger into the nailmarks and put my hand into his side, I will not believe." Now a week later his disciples were again inside and Thomas was with them. Jesus came, although the doors were locked, and stood in their midst and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands, and bring your hand and put it into my side, and do not be unbelieving, but believe." Thomas answered and said to him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you come to believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed." Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples that are not written in this book. But these are written that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that through this belief you may have life in his name.

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Texas Trinity by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ

APR 18, 2004 - 2nd Easter: Acts 5.12-16; Rev 1.9-19; JN 20.19-31 "He showed them his hands & his side."

During the day: Lock the doors, live in fear, cower in anxiety, wallow in doubt, hold tight to grudges. Or throw away the keys, get outside & look around, see the courage of others, note their inner peace midst conflict; unload the burden, rebuild self-confidence, & be forgiving. Know that you are sent, you have a destiny to fulfill, a mission to accomplish, a vision to restore. Get with it. And see Christ's smile of satisfaction.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is the key to inner peace. Sometimes, open eyed, we inhale the beauty & harmony around us & breath in God. At other times we dive beneath surface storms to the quiet place within where Jesus dwells. Prayer embraces reality in both its dimensions, today's & eternal tomorrow's already begun. The two merge & Love prevails.

April 25, 2004 Third Sunday of Easter - 2 pages

Reading New Testament: [Acts 5:27-32, 40b-41](#)

When the captain and the court officers had brought the apostles in and made them stand before the Sanhedrin, the high priest questioned them, "We gave you strict orders, did we not, to stop teaching in that name? Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and want to bring this man's blood upon us." But Peter and the apostles said in reply, "We must obey God rather than men. The God of our ancestors raised Jesus, though you had him killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as leader and savior to grant Israel repentance and forgiveness of sins. We are witnesses of these things, as is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him." The Sanhedrin ordered the apostles to stop speaking in the name of Jesus, and dismissed them. So they left the presence of the Sanhedrin, rejoicing that they had been found worthy to suffer dishonor for the sake of the name.

Responsorial Psalm: [Ps 30:2, 4, 5-6, 11-12, 13](#)

I will praise you, Lord, for you have rescued me. I will extol you, O LORD, for you drew me clear and did not let my enemies rejoice over me. O LORD, you brought me up from the netherworld; you preserved me from among those going down into the pit. Sing praise to the LORD, you his faithful ones, and give thanks to his holy name. For his anger lasts but a moment; a lifetime, his good will. At nightfall, weeping enters in, but with the dawn, rejoicing. Hear, O LORD, and have pity on me; O LORD, be my helper. You changed my mourning into dancing; O LORD, my God, forever will I give you thanks.

Reading New Testament: [Rv 5:11-14](#)

I, John, looked and heard the voices of many angels who surrounded the throne and the living creatures and the elders. They were countless in number, and they cried out in a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches, wisdom and strength, honor and glory and blessing." Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, everything in the universe, cry out: "To the one who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor, glory and might, forever and ever." The four living creatures answered, "Amen," and the elders fell down and worshiped.

Gospel: [Jn 21:1-19](#) or [Jn 21:1-14](#)

At that time, Jesus revealed himself again to his disciples at the Sea of Tiberias. He revealed himself in this way. Together were Simon Peter, Thomas called Didymus, Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, Zebedee's sons, and two others of his disciples. Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We also will come with you." So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. When it was already dawn, Jesus was standing on the shore; but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, "Children, have you caught anything to eat?" They answered him, "No." So he said to them, "Cast the net over the right side of the boat and you will find something." So they cast it, and were not able to pull it in because of the number of fish. So the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord." When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he tucked in his garment, for he was lightly clad, and jumped into the sea. The other disciples came in the boat, for they were not far from shore, only about a hundred yards, dragging the net with the fish. When they climbed out on shore, they saw a charcoal fire with fish on it and bread. Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you just caught." So Simon Peter went over and dragged the net ashore full of one hundred fifty-three large fish. Even though there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, "Come, have breakfast." And none of the disciples dared to ask him, "Who are you?" because they realized it was the Lord. Jesus came over and took the bread and gave it to them, and in like manner the fish. This was now the third time Jesus was revealed to his disciples after being raised from the dead.

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" Simon Peter answered him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs." He then said to Simon Peter a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Simon Peter answered him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Tend my sheep." Jesus said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was distressed that Jesus had said to him a third time, "Do you love me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep. Amen, amen, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to dress yourself and go where you wanted; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." He said this signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when he had said this, he said to him, "Follow me."

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Texas Trinidad by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ

APRIL 25, 2004 - 3rd Easter: Acts 5.27-41; Rev 5.11-14; JN 21.1-19

"Peter said 'I'm going fishing.' They said 'We'll come too.'"

During the day : Tag along. Follow the leader. Be loyal. If honesty & loyalty clash, be firm; if necessary, withdraw respectfully. Don't split the team, educate it. If keenness for truth seems lacking, stay tuned. With patient objectivity call attention to error. Committed, anticipate consequences & assume them with the others. Christ didn't cut & run; neither should you.

ABOUT PRAYER: Basic prayer is the will affirming 'Yes, Lord.' At every moment, 'Yes, Lord.' In every situation, 'Yes, Lord.' Picking up the pieces, 'Yes, Lord.' God at work, the divine design unfolding - being a part of it, 'Yes, Lord.' Community prayer is trusting common sense consensus, 'Yes, Lord' despite uncertainties. Liturgical prayer is Christ in all his members' 'Yes, Lord, Thy will be done.' Then doing it.

May 2, 2004 Fourth Sunday of Easter

Reading New Testament: [Acts 13:14, 43-52](#)

Paul and Barnabas continued on from Perga and reached Antioch in Pisidia. On the sabbath they entered the synagogue and took their seats. Many Jews and worshipers who were converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who spoke to them and urged them to remain faithful to the grace of God. On the following sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and with violent abuse contradicted what Paul said. Both Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said, "It was necessary that the word of God be spoken to you first, but since you reject it and condemn yourselves as unworthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us, I have made you a light to the Gentiles, that you may be an instrument of salvation to the ends of the earth." The Gentiles were delighted when they heard this and glorified the word of the Lord. All who were destined for eternal life came to believe, and the word of the Lord continued to spread through the whole region. The Jews, however, incited the women of prominence who were worshipers and the leading men of the city, stirred up a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their territory. So they shook the dust from their feet in protest against them, and went to Iconium. The disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit.

Responsorial Psalm: [Ps 100:1-2, 3, 5](#)

We are his people, the sheep of his flock. Sing joyfully to the LORD, all you lands; serve the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful song. Know that the LORD is God; he made us, his we are; his people, the flock he tends. The LORD is good: his kindness endures forever, and his faithfulness, to all generations.

Reading New Testament: [Rv 7:9, 14b-17](#)

I, John, had a vision of a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation, race, people, and tongue. They stood before the throne and before the Lamb, wearing white robes and holding palm branches in their hands. Then one of the elders said to me, "These are the ones who have survived the time of great distress; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. "For this reason they stand before God's throne and worship him day and night in his temple. The one who sits on the throne will shelter them. They will not hunger or thirst anymore, nor will the sun or any heat strike them. For the Lamb who is in the center of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to springs of life-giving water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

Gospel: [Jn 10:27-30](#)

Jesus said: "My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish. No one can take them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one can take them out of the Father's hand. The Father and I are one."

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Texas Trinidad by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ

MAY 2, 2004 - 4th Easter: Acts 13.14&43-52; Rev.7.9&14-17; JN 10.27-30

During the day: Know your followers. Their likes, their dislikes. Their thoughts, feelings; fears, hopes; problems, solutions; strengths, weaknesses; virtues, vices. Most of all their motives, their drives. Merit their trust. Lead them - not just professionally, socially, but spiritually as well. None of your business? Of course it is - you're building God's kingdom, not your own. Or are you on the wrong track? If so, get off now, before the train leaves the station.

ABOUT PRAYER: In prayer we listen. To nothing. That is, to nothing audible; we tune in Silence, the voice of God. We learn to rest in it, without concepts. Wherever he leads, we follow. A sense of trust prevails. As long as it lasts, we remain. Then, programmed, we move securely through the day, knowing it's eternal.

May 9, 2004 Fifth Sunday of Easter

Reading New Testament: [Acts 14:21-27](#)

After Paul and Barnabas had proclaimed the good news to that city and made a considerable number of disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch. They strengthened the spirits of the disciples and exhorted them to persevere in the faith, saying, "It is necessary for us to undergo many hardships to enter the kingdom of God." They appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, commended them to the Lord in whom they had put their faith. Then they traveled through Pisidia and reached Pamphylia. After proclaiming the word at Perga they went down to Attalia. From there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work they had now accomplished. And when they arrived, they called the church together and reported what God had done with them and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.

Responsorial Psalm: [Ps 145:8-9, 10-11, 12-13](#)

I will praise your name for ever, my king and my God. The LORD is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness. The LORD is good to all and compassionate toward all his works. Let all your works give you thanks, O LORD, and let your faithful ones bless you. Let them discourse of the glory of your kingdom and speak of your might. Let them make known your might to the children of Adam, and the glorious splendor of your kingdom. Your kingdom is a kingdom for all ages, and your dominion endures through all generations.

Reading New Testament: [Rv 21:1-5a](#)

Then I, John, saw a new heaven and a new earth. The former heaven and the former earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. I also saw the holy city, a new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, God's dwelling is with the human race. He will dwell with them and they will be his people and God himself will always be with them as their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there shall be no more death or mourning, wailing or pain, for the old order has passed away." The One who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new."

Gospel: [Jn 13:31-33a, 34-35](#)

When Judas had left them, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and God will glorify him at once. My children, I will be with you only a little while longer. I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Texas Trinity by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ

MAY 9, 2004 - 5th Easter: Acts 14.21-27; Rev 21.1-5; JN 13.31-35

During the day: Linger with your children as long as you can. So, too, with friends. Affection grows with presence & provides solace for absence. The deeper the affection, the more stable in spite of absence. Moreso when the affection is shared among several; the absent friend is present when others are one in the love for him that lives in their hearts. Love is of the will, not the mind or emotions. To will the other's good is Godlike. Christlike, we use our humanity to prove it.

ABOUT PRAYER: We take people to prayer to will their well-being. The prayer of intercession puts the needs of others above our own, placing us in union with the divine will at work integrating our destinies. The power of prayer derives from the robust health of the human family healing itself of the wounds we inflict on each other. That's what faith is all about.

May 23, 2004 Seventh Sunday of Easter

Reading New Testament: [Acts 7:55-60](#)

Stephen, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked up intently to heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and Stephen said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." But they cried out in a loud voice, covered their ears, and rushed upon him together. They threw him out of the city, and began to stone him. The witnesses laid down their cloaks at the feet of a young man named Saul. As they were stoning Stephen, he called out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he fell to his knees and cried out in a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them;" and when he said this, he fell asleep.

Responsorial Psalm: [Ps 97:1-2, 6-7, 9](#)

The Lord is king, the most high over all the earth. The LORD is king; let the earth rejoice; let the many islands be glad. Justice and judgment are the foundation of his throne. The heavens proclaim his justice, and all peoples see his glory. All gods are prostrate before him. You, O LORD, are the Most High over all the earth, exalted far above all gods.

Reading New Testament: [Rv 22:12-14, 16-17, 20](#)

I, John, heard a voice saying to me: "Behold, I am coming soon. I bring with me the recompense I will give to each according to his deeds. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." Blessed are they who wash their robes so as to have the right to the tree of life and enter the city through its gates. "I, Jesus, sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the root and offspring of David, the bright morning star." The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." Let the hearer say, "Come." Let the one who thirsts come forward, and the one who wants it receive the gift of life-giving water. The one who gives this testimony says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!

Gospel: [Jn 17:20-26](#)

Lifting up his eyes to heaven, Jesus prayed saying: "Holy Father, I pray not only for them, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me. And I have given them the glory you gave me, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may be brought to perfection as one, that the world may know that you sent me, and that you loved them even as you loved me. Father, they are your gift to me. I wish that where I am they also may be with me, that they may see my glory that you gave me, because you loved me before the foundation of the world. Righteous Father, the world also does not know you, but I know you, and they know that you sent me. I made known to them your name and I will make it known, that the love with which you loved me may be in them and I in them."

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Texas Trinidad by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ

MAY 23, 2004- 7th Easter: Acts 7.55-60; Rev 22.12-20; JN 17.20-26

During the day: Don't sell yourself short. However insignificant your position, your influence on others is proportionate to your integrity. Courage & honesty, courtesy & respect catch the eye of any beholder & have their own power to inspire. Time & circumstances are not conditions of grace. Truth & goodness are, & fidelity to both is ongoing gift to the Father. God, source of unity, cannot but bless with harmony the humble of heart.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer introduces a divine dimension to our human activity. Prayer supposes God is approachable. Incarnate, his words so decree, inviting to trust. Human like us & divine like the Father, Christ hosts the rendezvous. Gifts exchanged, covenant sealed, love thrives.

May 30, 2004 Pentecost Sunday

Reading New Testament: [Acts 2:1-11](#)

When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled, they were all in one place together. And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim. Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven staying in Jerusalem. At this sound, they gathered in a large crowd, but they were confused because each one heard them speaking in his own language. They were astounded, and in amazement they asked, "Are not all these people who are speaking Galileans? Then how does each of us hear them in his native language? We are Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya near Cyrene, as well as travelers from Rome, both Jews and converts to Judaism, Cretans and Arabs, yet we hear them speaking in our own tongues of the mighty acts of God."

Responsorial Psalm: [Ps 104:1, 24, 29-30, 31, 34](#)

Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth. Bless the LORD, O my soul! O LORD, my God, you are great indeed! How manifold are your works, O LORD! the earth is full of your creatures; May the glory of the LORD endure forever; may the LORD be glad in his works! Pleasing to him be my theme; I will be glad in the LORD. If you take away their breath, they perish and return to their dust. When you send forth your spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the earth.

Reading New Testament: [1 Cor 12:3b-7, 12-13](#)

Brothers and sisters: No one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit. There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit. As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit.

Gospel: [Jn 20:19-23](#)

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the doors were locked, where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you." When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained."

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Texas Trinidad by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ

MAY 30, 2004 - PENTECOST: Acts 2.1-11; 1Cor 12.3-13; JN 20.19-23

During the day: Next time you send someone on a job, think about it. Why this person? Why not x,y or z? Do I want him to do it my way, or do I give him the freedom to do it his? Have I provided the necessary wherewithal? Is the item in accord with MY boss's best interests? True, no need to make a simple matter complicated, but good to get even little things done right - the way God wants them.

ABOUT PRAYER: When anxious or agitated, prayer calms. We sit, relax, & take a good breath. We take several, a little deeper each time. We start praying with our lungs, breathing God in, then out to the world around us. Breath is life. Breath is Spirit. Christ's. The more we consider our projects his, the more effective he can be.

June 6, 2004 - The Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity

Reading Old Testament: [Prv 8:22-31](#)

Thus says the wisdom of God: "The LORD possessed me, the beginning of his ways, the forerunner of his prodigies of long ago; from of old I was poured forth, at the first, before the earth. When there were no depths I was brought forth, when there were no fountains or springs of water; before the mountains were settled into place, before the hills, I was brought forth; while as yet the earth and fields were not made, nor the first clods of the world. When the Lord established the heavens I was there, when he marked out the vault over the face of the deep; when he made firm the skies above, when he fixed fast the foundations of the earth; when he set for the sea its limit, so that the waters should not transgress his command; then was I beside him as his craftsman, and I was his delight day by day, playing before him all the while, playing on the surface of his earth; and I found delight in the human race."

Responsorial Psalm: [Ps 8:4-5, 6-7, 8-9](#)

O Lord, our God, how wonderful your name in all the earth! When I behold your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars which you set in place -- What is man that you should be mindful of him, or the son of man that you should care for him? You have made him little less than the angels, and crowned him with glory and honor. You have given him rule over the works of your hands, putting all things under his feet: All sheep and oxen, yes, and the beasts of the field, The birds of the air, the fishes of the sea, and whatever swims the paths of the seas.

Reading New Testament: [Rom 5:1-5](#)

Brothers and sisters: Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith to this grace in which we stand, and we boast in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we even boast of our afflictions, knowing that affliction produces endurance, and endurance, proven character, and proven character, hope, and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

Gospel: [Jn 16:12-15](#)

Jesus said to his disciples: "I have much more to tell you, but you cannot bear it now. But when he comes, the Spirit of truth, he will guide you to all truth. He will not speak on his own, but he will speak what he hears, and will declare to you the things that are coming. He will glorify me, because he will take from what is mine and declare it to you. Everything that the Father has is mine; for this reason I told you that he will take from what is mine and declare it to you."

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Texas Trinity by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ

JUNE 6, 2004 - Trinity Sunday: Prov 8.22-31; Rom 5.1-5; JN 16.12-15

During the day: People are at the heart of truth, so be true to yourself & true to others. Hide nothing from yourself & be transparent to those who love you. Build relationships on solid foundations: you theirs & they yours, forever. That way the community of faith becomes the family of God, All in all.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is scheming to get your inheritance. Making sure the bad guys who lost theirs don't get yours! Prayer is the pause before action to make sure your heart is pure. To choose what is right, not just what you'd like to think is right. Prayer is allowing oneself to be guided, not by inclination but by the quest for authentic goodness. Its name is Holiness.

June 13, 2004 - The Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ

Reading Old Testament: Gn 14:18-20

In those days, Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought out bread and wine, and being a priest of God Most High, he blessed Abram with these words: "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, the creator of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, who delivered your foes into your hand." Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.

Responsorial Psalm: Ps 110:1, 2, 3, 4

You are a priest for ever, in the line of Melchizedek. The LORD said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand till I make your enemies your footstool." The scepter of your power the LORD will stretch forth from Zion: "Rule in the midst of your enemies." "Yours is princely power in the day of your birth, in holy splendor; before the daystar, like the dew, I have begotten you." The LORD has sworn, and he will not repent: "You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek."

Reading New Testament: 1 Cor 11:23-26

Brothers and sisters: I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night he was handed over, took bread, and, after he had given thanks, broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes.

Gospel: Lk 9:11b-17

Jesus spoke to the crowds about the kingdom of God, and he healed those who needed to be cured. As the day was drawing to a close, the Twelve approached him and said, "Dismiss the crowd so that they can go to the surrounding villages and farms and find lodging and provisions; for we are in a deserted place here." He said to them, "Give them some food yourselves." They replied, "Five loaves and two fish are all we have, unless we ourselves go and buy food for all these people." Now the men there numbered about five thousand. Then he said to his disciples, "Have them sit down in groups of about fifty." They did so and made them all sit down. Then taking the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, he said the blessing over them, broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd. They all ate and were satisfied. And when the leftover fragments were picked up, they filled twelve wicker baskets.

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Texas Trinity by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ

JUNE 13, 2004 - Christ's Body&Blood: Gen 14.18-20; 1Cor 11.23-26; LK 9.11-17

During the day: Eat & be satisfied. Better still, make sure others eat & are satisfied. No need for anyone to go hungry. When some do, it behooves those who don't to share. May take effort & energy to find out how, but as with any responsibility, difficulty is no excuse. What one can't do alone he can do with others. Collective inertia thwarts God's design that we be his instruments of care. He gets all the credit, we the blame.

ABOUT PRAYER: Some people look upwards when they pray, some inwards. Same God up there in here - immanent & transcendent. When we pray our own needs, he comes down; when others', he comes out - or would, if we're willing & our prayer authentic. Such prayer makes us available agents of the grace petitioned; with God's blessing, the impossible becomes possible.

June 20, 2004 - Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading Old Testament: Zec 12:10-11; 13:1

Thus says the LORD: I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and petition; and they shall look on him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him as one mourns for an only son, and they shall grieve over him as one grieves over a firstborn. On that day the mourning in Jerusalem shall be as great as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the plain of Megiddo. On that day there shall be open to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, a fountain to purify from sin and uncleanness.

Responsorial Psalm: Ps 63:2, 3-4, 5-6, 8-9

My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God. O God, you are my God whom I seek; for you my flesh pines and my soul thirsts like the earth, parched, lifeless and without water. Thus have I gazed toward you in the sanctuary to see your power and your glory, for your kindness is a greater good than life; my lips shall glorify you. Thus will I bless you while I live; lifting up my hands, I will call upon your name. As with the riches of a banquet shall my soul be satisfied, and with exultant lips my mouth shall praise you. You are my help, and in the shadow of your wings I shout for joy. My soul clings fast to you; your right hand upholds me.

Reading New Testament: Gal 3:26-29

Brothers and sisters: Through faith you are all children of God in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendant, heirs according to the promise.

Gospel: Lk 9:18-24

Once when Jesus was praying in solitude, and the disciples were with him, he asked them, "Who do the crowds say that I am?" They said in reply, "John the Baptist; others, Elijah; still others, 'One of the ancient prophets has arisen.'" Then he said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter said in reply, "The Christ of God." He rebuked them and directed them not to tell this to anyone. He said, "The Son of Man must suffer greatly and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed and on the third day be raised." Then he said to all, "If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it."

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Texas Trinidad by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ

JUNE 20, 2004 - 12th Sun. OT: Zech 12.10-11,13.1; Gal.3.26-29; LK 9.18-24

During the day: Who do people say that you are? Overhear those who like you talking about your faults, those who don't your virtues - hard to disagree with either. That's the you people live with. Satisfied? If so, settle into mediocrity. If not, crank up the motive to be more Christlike, & let the him in you take charge.

ABOUT PRAYER: In prayer we see the scene & hear the words - Christ glancing around at his disciples, then looking right at me: 'Who do YOU say that I am?' Prayer is savoring your own answer. It varies.

June 27, 2004 Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading Old Testament: [1 Kgs 19:16b, 19-21](#)

The LORD said to Elijah: "You shall anoint Elisha, son of Shaphat of Abelmeholah, as prophet to succeed you." Elijah set out and came upon Elisha, son of Shaphat, as he was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen; he was following the twelfth. Elijah went over to him and threw his cloak over him. Elisha left the oxen, ran after Elijah, and said, "Please, let me kiss my father and mother goodbye, and I will follow you." Elijah answered, "Go back! Have I done anything to you?" Elisha left him, and taking the yoke of oxen, slaughtered them; he used the plowing equipment for fuel to boil their flesh, and gave it to his people to eat. Then Elisha left and followed Elijah as his attendant.

Responsorial Psalm: [Ps 16:1-2, 5, 7-8, 9-10, 11](#)

You are my inheritance, O Lord. Keep me, O God, for in you I take refuge; I say to the LORD, "My LORD are you. O LORD, my allotted portion and my cup, you it is who hold fast my lot." I bless the LORD who counsels me; even in the night my heart exhorts me. I set the LORD ever before me; with him at my right hand I shall not be disturbed. Therefore my heart is glad and my soul rejoices, my body, too, abides in confidence because you will not abandon my soul to the netherworld, nor will you suffer your faithful one to undergo corruption. You will show me the path to life, fullness of joys in your presence, the delights at your right hand forever.

Reading New Testament: [Gal 5:1, 13-18](#)

Brothers and sisters: For freedom Christ set us free; so stand firm and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery. For you were called for freedom, brothers and sisters. But do not use this freedom as an opportunity for the flesh; rather, serve one another through love. For the whole law is fulfilled in one statement, namely, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. But if you go on biting and devouring one another, beware that you are not consumed by one another. I say, then: live by the Spirit and you will certainly not gratify the desire of the flesh. For the flesh has desires against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so that you may not do what you want. But if you are guided by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

Gospel: [Lk 9:51-62](#)

When the days for Jesus' being taken up were fulfilled, he resolutely determined to journey to Jerusalem, and he sent messengers ahead of him. On the way they entered a Samaritan village to prepare for his reception there, but they would not welcome him because the destination of his journey was Jerusalem. When the disciples James and John saw this they asked, "Lord, do you want us to call down fire from heaven to consume them?" Jesus turned and rebuked them, and they journeyed to another village. As they were proceeding on their journey someone said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus answered him, "Foxes have dens and birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to rest his head." And to another he said, "Follow me." But he replied, "Lord, let me go first and bury my father." But he answered him, "Let the dead bury their dead. But you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God." And another said, "I will follow you, Lord, but first let me say farewell to my family at home." To him Jesus said, "No one who sets a hand to the plow and looks to what was left behind is fit for the kingdom of God."

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Texas Trinidad by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ

JUNE 27, 2004 - 13th of yr: [1Kings 19.16-21](#); [Gal 5,1,13-18](#); [LK 9.51-62](#)

During the day: Don't look back. Plow ahead. Can't undo the done. If gut confirmed, stick to priorities. Authentic choices presume honesty, common sense & inspiration. Partners with the Lord, you're the junior. Loyalty predisposes to perseverance & success.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer strengthens resolution. Prayer ponders alternatives, prepares for difficulties, entrusts oneself to the spontaneous graces of Providence. Prayer soothes the desolation of failure, relishes the consolation of a healing hand, engenders courage to take the next step in the service of the Lord. Prayer discovers that step in the needs of others.

Missing July 4, 2004's lesson

July 11, 2004 Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading Old Testament: Dt 30:10-14

Moses said to the people: "If only you would heed the voice of the LORD, your God, and keep his commandments and statutes that are written in this book of the law, when you return to the LORD, your God, with all your heart and all your soul. "For this command that I enjoin on you today is not too mysterious and remote for you. It is not up in the sky, that you should say, 'Who will go up in the sky to get it for us and tell us of it, that we may carry it out?' Nor is it across the sea, that you should say, 'Who will cross the sea to get it for us and tell us of it, that we may carry it out?' No, it is something very near to you, already in your mouths and in your hearts; you have only to carry it out."

Responsorial Psalm: Ps 19:8, 9, 10, 11

Your words, Lord, are Spirit and life. The law of the LORD is perfect, refreshing the soul; the decree of the LORD is trustworthy, giving wisdom to the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the command of the LORD is clear, enlightening the eye. The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever; the ordinances of the LORD are true, all of them just. They are more precious than gold, than a heap of purest gold; sweeter also than syrup or honey from the comb.

Reading New Testament: Col 1:15-20

Christ Jesus is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For in him were created all things in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things were created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things he himself might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile all things for him, making peace by the blood of his cross through him, whether those on earth or those in heaven.

Gospel: Lk 10:25-37

There was a scholar of the law who stood up to test him and said, "Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus said to him, "What is written in the law? How do you read it?" He said in reply, "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." He replied to him, "You have answered correctly; do this and you will live." But because he wished to justify himself, he said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" Jesus replied, "A man fell victim to robbers as he went down from Jerusalem to Jericho. They stripped and beat him and went off leaving him half-dead. A priest happened to be going down that road, but when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side. Likewise a Levite came to the place, and when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side. But a Samaritan traveler who came upon him was moved with compassion at the sight. He approached the victim, poured oil and wine over his wounds and bandaged them. Then he lifted him up on his own animal, took him to an inn, and cared for him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper with the instruction, 'Take care of him. If you spend more than what I have given you, I shall repay you on my way back.' Which of these three, in your opinion, was neighbor to the robbers' victim?" He answered, "The one who treated him with mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Texas Trinidad by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ

JULY 11, 2004 - 15th of yr: Deut 30.10-14; Col 1.15-20; LK 10.25-37

During the day: Be neighborly, more than superficially. When others step back, step forward. Be available. Don't cut & run when things get sticky; fit values to reality, not vice versa. Ennoble situations with character that makes it easier for others to believe in trust & mutual respect. Inspired, they'll go & do likewise.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is discernment. Prayer sensitizes. Reactions reflect harmony between goodness in the heart & good achieved. Prayer flows into action spontaneously; time, effort, resources - all contribute to longed for fulfillment. Progress, however infinitesimal, confirms identity with Christ in the workings of the Spirit. Everybody wins.

July 18, 2004 Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading Old Testament: [Gn 18:1-10a](#)

The LORD appeared to Abraham by the terebinth of Mamre, as he sat in the entrance of his tent, while the day was growing hot. Looking up, Abraham saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he ran from the entrance of the tent to greet them; and bowing to the ground, he said: "Sir, if I may ask you this favor, please do not go on past your servant. Let some water be brought, that you may bathe your feet, and then rest yourselves under the tree. Now that you have come this close to your servant, let me bring you a little food, that you may refresh yourselves; and afterward you may go on your way." The men replied, "Very well, do as you have said." Abraham hastened into the tent and told Sarah, "Quick, three measures of fine flour! Knead it and make rolls." He ran to the herd, picked out a tender, choice steer, and gave it to a servant, who quickly prepared it. Then Abraham got some curds and milk, as well as the steer that had been prepared, and set these before the three men; and he waited on them under the tree while they ate. They asked Abraham, "Where is your wife Sarah?" He replied, "There in the tent." One of them said, "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah will then have a son."

Responsorial Psalm: [Ps 15:2-3, 3-4, 5](#)

He who does justice will live in the presence of the Lord. One who walks blamelessly and does justice; who thinks the truth in his heart and slanders not with his tongue. Who harms not his fellow man, nor takes up a reproach against his neighbor; by whom the reprobate is despised, while he honors those who fear the LORD. Who lends not his money at usury and accepts no bribe against the innocent. One who does these things shall never be disturbed.

Reading New Testament: [Col 1:24-28](#)

Brothers and sisters: Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of his body, which is the church, of which I am a minister in accordance with God's stewardship given to me to bring to completion for you the word of God, the mystery hidden from ages and from generations past. But now it has been manifested to his holy ones, to whom God chose to make known the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; it is Christ in you, the hope for glory. It is he whom we proclaim, admonishing everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone perfect in Christ.

Gospel: [Lk 10:38-42](#)

Jesus entered a village where a woman whose name was Martha welcomed him. She had a sister named Mary who sat beside the Lord at his feet listening to him speak. Martha, burdened with much serving, came to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me by myself to do the serving? Tell her to help me." The Lord said to her in reply, Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things. There is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part and it will not be taken from her."

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Texas Trinidad by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ

JULY 18, 2004 - 16th of yr: Gen 18.1-10; Col 1.24-28; LK 10.38-42

During the day: Burdened with serving, concentrate on the one thing necessary. Routine has roots; uproot the unnecessary, & integrate the others with a common purpose. You're the only one of you God made. Why do you suppose he did?

ABOUT PRAYER: At prayer we host the God-man Jesus. We make him comfortable, help him relax, listen to his experiences, let him express his feelings, fix him a good meal, bid him a fond farewell. His presence lingers. Prayerfully we ponder his visit, recall his counsel. Friendship deepened, we recognize its strength. And hope he does too, as he wanders the lonely road of human history.

July 25, 2004 Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading Old Testament: [Gn 18:20-32](#)

In those days, the LORD said: "The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great, and their sin so grave, that I must go down and see whether or not their actions fully correspond to the cry against them that comes to me. I mean to find out." While Abraham's visitors walked on farther toward Sodom, the LORD remained standing before Abraham. Then Abraham drew nearer and said: "Will you sweep away the innocent with the guilty? Suppose there were fifty innocent people in the city; would you wipe out the place, rather than spare it for the sake of the fifty innocent people within it? Far be it from you to do such a thing, to make the innocent die with the guilty so that the innocent and the guilty would be treated alike! Should not the judge of all the world act with justice?" The LORD replied, "If I find fifty innocent people in the city of Sodom, I will spare the whole place for their sake." Abraham spoke up again: "See how I am presuming to speak to my Lord, though I am but dust and ashes! What if there are five less than fifty innocent people? Will you destroy the whole city because of those five?" He answered, "I will not destroy it, if I find forty-five there." But Abraham persisted, saying "What if only forty are found there?" He replied, "I will forbear doing it for the sake of the forty." Then Abraham said, "Let not my Lord grow impatient if I go on. What if only thirty are found there?" He replied, "I will forbear doing it if I can find but thirty there." Still Abraham went on, "Since I have thus dared to speak to my Lord, what if there are no more than twenty?" The LORD answered, "I will not destroy it, for the sake of the twenty." But he still persisted: "Please, let not my Lord grow angry if I speak up this last time. What if there are at least ten there?" He replied, "For the sake of those ten, I will not destroy it."

Responsorial Psalm: [Ps 138:1-2, 2-3, 6-7, 7-8](#)

Lord, on the day I called for help, you answered me. I will give thanks to you, O LORD, with all my heart, for you have heard the words of my mouth; in the presence of the angels I will sing your praise; I will worship at your holy temple and give thanks to your name. Because of your kindness and your truth; for you have made great above all things your name and your promise. When I called you answered me; you built up strength within me. The LORD is exalted, yet the lowly he sees, and the proud he knows from afar. Though I walk amid distress, you preserve me; against the anger of my enemies you raise your hand. Your right hand saves me. The LORD will complete what he has done for me; your kindness, O LORD, endures forever; forsake not the work of your hands.

Reading New Testament: [Col 2:12-14](#)

Brothers and sisters: You were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. And even when you were dead in transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, he brought you to life along with him, having forgiven us all our transgressions; obliterating the bond against us, with its legal claims, which was opposed to us, he also removed it from our midst, nailing it to the cross.

Gospel: [Lk 11:1-13](#)

Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray just as John taught his disciples." He said to them, "When you pray, say: Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread and forgive us our sins for we ourselves forgive everyone in debt to us, and do not subject us to the final test." And he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend to whom he goes at midnight and says, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, for a friend of mine has arrived at my house from a journey and I have nothing to offer him,' and he says in reply from within, 'Do not bother me; the door has already been locked and my children and I are already in bed. I cannot get up to give you anything.' I tell you, if he does not get up to give the visitor the loaves because of their friendship, he will get up to give him whatever he needs because of his persistence. "And I tell you, ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be

opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. What father among you would hand his son a snake when he asks for a fish? Or hand him a scorpion when he asks for an egg? If you then, who are wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?"

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Texas Trinidad by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ

JULY 25, 17th of yr: Gen 18.20-32; Col 2.12-14; LK 11.1-13

During the day: Give good gifts to your children. Not what they want, what they need. A father, even a friend, knows what's best for the other better than he does - subjective judgment is usually clouded. It's the measure of the petitioner's trust that he leave the donor free. Authentic generosity is wise, not detrimental, & makes the other truly happy whatever the disappointment of the moment. Takes courage.

ABOUT PRAYER: In prayer we sometimes compose our own variety of the Lord's Prayer. Something like, 'Momma Dad, holy & eternal, we all come to sip at your fountain of holiness. Your kingdom's a building, your will's a working with us as with You. Bread please, to build your kingdom. Bread please, material & spiritual. Forgive our debts as we all others & assume with you each other's sinfulness. Temptation no, nor evil.' Variety enriches.

August 1, 2004 Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading Old Testament: Ec 1:2; 2:21-23

Vanity of vanities, says Qoheleth, vanity of vanities! All things are vanity! Here is one who has labored with wisdom and knowledge and skill, and yet to another who has not labored over it, he must leave property. This also is vanity and a great misfortune. For what profit comes to man from all the toil and anxiety of heart with which he has labored under the sun? All his days sorrow and grief are their occupation; even at night his mind is not at rest. This also is vanity.

Responsorial Psalm: Ps 90:3-4, 5-6, 12-13, 14, 17

If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts. You turn man back to dust, saying, "Return, O children of men." For a thousand years in your sight are as yesterday, now that it is past, or as a watch of the night. You make an end of them in their sleep; the next morning they are like the changing grass, which at dawn springs up anew, but by evening wilts and fades. Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain wisdom of heart. Return, O LORD! How long? Have pity on your servants! Fill us at daybreak with your kindness, that we may shout for joy and gladness all our days. And may the gracious care of the LORD our God be ours; prosper the work of our hands for us! Prosper the work of our hands!

Reading New Testament: Col 3:1-5, 9-11

Brothers and sisters: If you were raised with Christ, seek what is above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Think of what is above, not of what is on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ your life appears, then you too will appear with him in glory. Put to death, then, the parts of you that are earthly: immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and the greed that is idolatry. Stop lying to one another, since you have taken off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed, for knowledge, in the image of its creator. Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all and in all.

Gospel: Lk 12:13-21

Someone in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, tell my brother to share the inheritance with me." He replied to him, "Friend, who appointed me as your judge and arbitrator?" Then he said to the crowd, "Take care to guard against all greed, for though one may be rich, one's life does not consist of possessions." Then he told them a parable. "There was a rich man whose land produced a bountiful harvest. He asked himself, 'What shall I do, for I do not have space to store my harvest?' And he said, 'This is what I shall do: I shall tear down my barns and build larger ones. There I shall store all my grain and other goods and I shall say to myself, "Now as for you, you have so many good things stored up for many years, rest, eat, drink, be merry!"' But God said to him, 'You fool, this night your life will be demanded of you; and the things you have prepared, to whom will they belong?' Thus will it be for all who store up treasure for themselves but are not rich in what matters to God."

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Texas Trinidad by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ

AUG 1 18th of yr: Ecl 1.2 & 2.21-23; Col 3.1-5,9-11; LK 13.13-21

During the day - Guard against greed. Better still, be greedy for God: never be satisfied, always want more. You have an unlimited capacity to possess the things of God. You are not what you do or have, except when you do & have God. His will? To be possessed; to be loved; to be you, Godlike to others. Make his dream come true.

ABOUT PRAYER The final prayer of the day is the important one. To drift off to sleep with God in your heart. A God grateful you served his interests that day; a God trusting you to do the same tomorrow; a generous God, blank check in hand for your well-intentioned efforts; a wise God, bringing good out of everything you do, no matter the apparent failure. Guarantees a peaceful sleep & a holiday tomorrow.

August 8, 2004 Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading Old Testament: Wis 18:6-9

The night of the passover was known beforehand to our fathers, that, with sure knowledge of the oaths in they put their faith, they might have courage. Your people awaited the salvation of the just and the destruction of their foes. For when you punished our adversaries, in this you glorified us whom you had summoned. For in secret the holy children of the good were offering sacrifice and putting into effect with one accord the divine institution.

Responsorial Psalm: Ps 33:1, 12, 18-19, 20-22

Blessed the people the Lord has chosen to be his own. Exult, you just, in the LORD; praise from the upright is fitting. Blessed the nation whose God is the LORD, the people he has chosen for his own inheritance. See, the eyes of the LORD are upon those who fear him, upon those who hope for his kindness, to deliver them from death and preserve them in spite of famine. Our soul waits for the LORD, who is our help and our shield. May your kindness, O LORD, be upon us who have put our hope in you.

Reading New Testament: Heb 11:1-2, 8-19

Brothers and sisters: Faith is the realization of what is hoped for and evidence of things not seen. Because of it the ancients were well attested. By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance; he went out, not knowing where he was to go. By faith he sojourned in the promised land as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs of the same promise; for he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and maker is God. By faith he received power to generate, even though he was past the normal age --and Sarah herself was sterile-- for he thought that the one who had made the promise was trustworthy. So it was that there came forth from one man, himself as good as dead, descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sands on the seashore. All these died in faith. They did not receive what had been promised but saw it and greeted it from afar and acknowledged themselves to be strangers and aliens on earth, for those who speak thus show that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of the land from which they had come, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better homeland, a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them. By faith Abraham, when put to the test, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was ready to offer his only son, of whom it was said, "Through Isaac descendants shall bear your name." He reasoned that God was able to raise even from the dead, and he received Isaac back as a symbol.

Gospel: Lk 12:32-48

Jesus said to his disciples: "Do not be afraid any longer, little flock, for your Father is pleased to give you the kingdom. Sell your belongings and give alms. Provide money bags for yourselves that do not wear out, an inexhaustible treasure in heaven that no thief can reach nor moth destroy. For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be. "Gird your loins and light your lamps and be like servants who await their master's return from a wedding, ready to open immediately when he comes and knocks. Blessed are those servants whom the master finds vigilant on his arrival. Amen, I say to you, he will gird himself, have them recline at table, and proceed to wait on them. And should he come in the second or third watch and find them prepared in this way, blessed are those servants. Be sure of this: if the master of the house had known the hour when the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. You also must be prepared, for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come." Then Peter said, "Lord, is this parable meant for us or for everyone?" And the Lord replied, "Who, then, is the faithful and prudent steward whom the master will put in charge of his servants to distribute the food allowance at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master on arrival finds doing so. Truly, I say to you, the master will put the servant in charge of all his property. But if that servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed

in coming,' and begins to beat the menservants and the maidservants, to eat and drink and get drunk, then that servant's master will come on an unexpected day and at an unknown hour and will punish the servant severely and assign him a place with the unfaithful. That servant who knew his master's will but did not make preparations nor act in accord with his will shall be beaten severely; and the servant who was ignorant of his master's will but acted in a way deserving of a severe beating shall be beaten only lightly. Much will be required of the person entrusted with much, and still more will be demanded of the person entrusted with more."

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Texas Trinidad by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ

AUG 8, 2004 - 19th of yr: Wis 18.6-9; Heb 11.1-2,8-19; LK 12.32-48

During the day - Be Prepared. Form the habit of awareness. Keep one jump ahead of what's going on around you. Anticipate the other's need. Be caught doing good. If that's not the authentic you, change. Become what you want to be, forever.

ABOUT PRAYER - At prayer we distinguish petition from intercession: I petition what I need for myself, & intercede for the needs of others. They go together, for my concern for the other's needs is only as sincere as my availability to serve authentic - which, quite often, isn't very much. My own basic need is to grow, & healthy growth supposes exercise, spiritually as well as physically. Generosity is the measure of my fitness.

August 15, 2004 Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Reading New Testament: Rev 11:19a; 12:1-6a, 10ab

God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant could be seen in the temple. A great sign appeared in the sky, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. She was with child and wailed aloud in pain as she labored to give birth. Then another sign appeared in the sky; it was a huge red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on its heads were seven diadems. Its tail swept away a third of the stars in the sky and hurled them down to the earth. Then the dragon stood before the woman about to give birth, to devour her child when she gave birth. She gave birth to a son, a male child, destined to rule all the nations with an iron rod. Her child was caught up to God and his throne. The woman herself fled into the desert where she had a place prepared by God. Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: "Now have salvation and power come, and the Kingdom of our God and the authority of his Anointed One."

Responsorial Psalm: Ps 45:10, 11, 12, 16

The queen stands at your right hand, arrayed in gold. The queen takes her place at your right hand in gold of Ophir. Hear, O daughter, and see; turn your ear, forget your people and your father's house. So shall the king desire your beauty; for he is your lord. They are borne in with gladness and joy; they enter the palace of the king.

Reading New Testament: 1 Cor 15:20-27

Brothers and sisters: Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through man, the resurrection of the dead came also through man. For just as in Adam all die, so too in Christ shall all be brought to life, but each one in proper order: Christ the firstfruits; then, at his coming, those who belong to Christ; then comes the end, when he hands over the Kingdom to his God and Father, when he has destroyed every sovereignty and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death, for "he subjected everything under his feet."

Gospel: Lk 1:39-56

Mary set out and traveled to the hill country in haste to a town of Judah, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled." And Mary said: "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my Savior for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant. From this day all generations will call me blessed: the Almighty has done great things for me and holy is his Name. He has mercy on those who fear him in every generation. He has shown the strength of his arm, and has scattered the proud in their conceit. He has cast down the mighty from their thrones, and has lifted up the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. He has come to the help of his servant Israel for he has remembered his promise of mercy, the promise he made to our fathers, to Abraham and his children forever." Mary remained with her about three months and then returned to her home.

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Texas Trinidad by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ

AUG 15, 2004 – 20th of Year Assumption: Rev 11.19,12.1-6,10; I Cor 15.20-26; LK 1.39-56

"He has pulled down princes from their thrones & lifted up the lowly."

During the day -

Lift up the lowly. Whoever he is, respect the other's dignity - it may be the first time anyone did! Neither better nor worse than anyone else, you improve yourself being one with the other as a child in the family of God. Each loved uniquely by the Father-Mother, the reflection of this love one on the other brightens the day for both.

ABOUT PRAYER

Prayer is basking in the sunshine of God's love, just lying there on an imaginary beach - wordlessly, thoughtlessly - absorbing the warmth of his life & strength & presence. Cleansing, refreshing, pacifying - a communion of goodness shared with all the tens or hundreds or thousands stretched out nearby. Relish it!

August 22, 2004 Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading Old Testament: Is 66:18-21

Thus says the LORD: I know their works and their thoughts, and I come to gather nations of every language; they shall come and see my glory. I will set a sign among them; from them I will send fugitives to the nations: to Tarshish, Put and Lud, Mosoch, Tubal and Javan, to the distant coastlands that have never heard of my fame, or seen my glory; and they shall proclaim my glory among the nations. They shall bring all your brothers and sisters from all the nations as an offering to the LORD, on horses and in chariots, in carts, upon mules and dromedaries, to Jerusalem, my holy mountain, says the LORD, just as the Israelites bring their offering to the house of the LORD in clean vessels. Some of these I will take as priests and Levites, says the LORD.

Responsorial Psalm: Ps 117:1, 2

Go out to all the world and tell the Good News. Praise the LORD, all you nations; glorify him, all you peoples! For steadfast is his kindness toward us, and the fidelity of the LORD endures forever.

Reading New Testament: Heb 12:5-7, 11-13

Brothers and sisters, You have forgotten the exhortation addressed to you as children: "My son, do not disdain the discipline of the Lord or lose heart when reproved by him; for whom the Lord loves, he disciplines; he scourges every son he acknowledges." Endure your trials as "discipline"; God treats you as sons. For what "son" is there whom his father does not discipline? At the time, all discipline seems a cause not for joy but for pain, yet later it brings the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who are trained by it. So strengthen your drooping hands and your weak knees. Make straight paths for your feet, that what is lame may not be disjointed but healed.

Gospel: Lk 13:22-30

Jesus passed through towns and villages, teaching as he went and making his way to Jerusalem. Someone asked him, "Lord, will only a few people be saved?" He answered them, "Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I tell you, will attempt to enter but will not be strong enough. After the master of the house has arisen and locked the door, then will you stand outside knocking and saying, 'Lord, open the door for us.' He will say to you in reply, 'I do not know where you are from.' And you will say, 'We ate and drank in your company and you taught in our streets.' Then he will say to you, 'I do not know where you are from. Depart from me, all you evildoers!' And there will be wailing and grinding of teeth when you see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God and you yourselves cast out. And people will come from the east and the west and from the north and the south and will recline at table in the kingdom of God. For behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last."

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Texas Trinidad by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ

August 22, 2004 21st Sunday in Ordinary Time Is 66:18-21; Ps 117:1, 2; Heb 12:5-7, 11-13; Lk 13:22-30

"Lord, will only a few be saved?" "Strive to enter by the narrow gate. Some are last who will be first, & some are first who will be last."

During the day: Get serious. Neither better nor worse than anybody else, just do your best being you. Unpredestined, embrace your destiny, be it pleasant or unpleasant. Make your choices freely but wisely, avoiding the superficial, not intimidated by the difficult. Withal, foster the desire to be more like Christ, poor, chaste & obedient.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer should be a source of strength. Prayer should cut away appearances & get at the heart of the matter. Prayer should face the inner mirror, see the real self in all its poverty & smallness, humbly loving what it sees. Having done so, prayer then rests secure in the love of the Father-Mother committed to aid its every effort to improve; whatever the result, God's glory the reward.

August 29, 2004 Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading Old Testament: Sir 3:17-18, 20, 28-29

My child, conduct your affairs with humility, and you will be loved more than a giver of gifts. Humble yourself the more, the greater you are, and you will find favor with God. What is too sublime for you, seek not, into things beyond your strength search not. The mind of a sage appreciates proverbs, and an attentive ear is the joy of the wise. Water quenches a flaming fire, and alms atone for sins.

Responsorial Psalm: Ps 68:4-5, 6-7, 10-11

God, in your goodness, you have made a home for the poor. The just rejoice and exult before God; they are glad and rejoice. Sing to God, chant praise to his name; whose name is the LORD. The father of orphans and the defender of widows is God in his holy dwelling. God gives a home to the forsaken; he leads forth prisoners to prosperity. A bountiful rain you showered down, O God, upon your inheritance; you restored the land when it languished; your flock settled in it; in your goodness, O God, you provided it for the needy.

Reading New Testament: Heb 12:18-19, 22-24a

Brothers and sisters: You have not approached that which could be touched and a blazing fire and gloomy darkness and storm and a trumpet blast and a voice speaking words such that those who heard begged that no message be further addressed to them. No, you have approached Mount Zion and the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and countless angels in festal gathering, and the assembly of the firstborn enrolled in heaven, and God the judge of all, and the spirits of the just made perfect, and Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and the sprinkled blood that speaks more eloquently than that of Abel.

Gospel: Lk 14:1, 7-14

On a sabbath Jesus went to dine at the home of one of the leading Pharisees, and the people there were observing him carefully. He told a parable to those who had been invited, noticing how they were choosing the places of honor at the table. "When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, do not recline at table in the place of honor. A more distinguished guest than you may have been invited by him, and the host who invited both of you may approach you and say, 'Give your place to this man,' and then you would proceed with embarrassment to take the lowest place. Rather, when you are invited, go and take the lowest place so that when the host comes to you he may say, 'My friend, move up to a higher position.' Then you will enjoy the esteem of your companions at the table. For every one who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted." Then he said to the host who invited him, "When you hold a lunch or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or your wealthy neighbors, in case they may invite you back and you have repayment. Rather, when you hold a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind; blessed indeed will you be because of their inability to repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Texas Trinidad by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ

AUG 29, 2004 - 22nd of yr: Sirach 3.17-29; Ps 68:4-5, 6-7, 10-11; Heb 12-24; LK 14.1,7-14

During the day: When you dine with a friend, be courteous but honest, discreetly objective. Friendly conversation doesn't hide truth; on the contrary, spontaneity guarantees authenticity. Truth has its own authority, & though it sometimes hurts, it heals more than just the pain. Charades entertain; integrity matures.

ABOUT PRAYER: You can't fool God, so in prayer be honest. You may have to wrestle with him in prayer (Col.4-12), but that's just to get the courage to wrestle with yourself. Prayer is tuning in to what's going on, the in-time projection of an outside-of-time God. No wonder we're confused.

September 5, 2004 Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Wisdom 9:13-18 For what man knows God's counsel, or who can conceive what our LORD intends? For the deliberations of mortals are timid, and unsure are our plans. For the corruptible body burdens the soul and the earthen shelter weighs down the mind that has many concerns. And scarce do we guess the things on earth, and what is within our grasp we find with difficulty; but when things are in heaven, who can search them out? Or who ever knew your counsel, except you had given Wisdom and sent your holy spirit from on high? And thus were the paths of those on earth made straight, and men learned what was your pleasure, and were saved by Wisdom.

Psalms 1: 1-6 Happy are they who have not walked in the counsel of the wicked, nor lingered in the way of sinners, nor sat in the seats of the scornful! Their delight is in the law of the LORD, and they meditate on his law day and night. They are like trees planted by streams of water, bearing fruit in due season, with leaves that do not wither; everything they do shall prosper. It is not so with the wicked; they are like chaff which the wind blows away. Therefore the wicked shall not stand upright when judgment comes, nor the sinner in the council of the righteous. For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked is doomed.

Philemon 1-20 Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our dear friend and co-worker, to Apphia our sister, to Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. When I remember you in my prayers, I always thank my God because I hear of your love for all the saints and your faith toward the Lord Jesus. I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective when you perceive all the good that we may do for Christ. I have indeed received much joy and encouragement from your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, my brother. For this reason, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do your duty, yet I would rather appeal to you on the basis of love-- and I, Paul, do this as an old man, and now also as a prisoner of Christ Jesus. I am appealing to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I have become during my imprisonment. Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful both to you and to me. I am sending him, that is, my own heart, back to you. I wanted to keep him with me, so that he might be of service to me in your place during my imprisonment for the gospel; but I preferred to do nothing without your consent, in order that your good deed might be voluntary and not something forced. Perhaps this is the reason he was separated from you for a while, so that you might have him back forever, no longer as a slave but more than a slave, a beloved brother-- especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord. So if you consider me your partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. If he has wronged you in any way, or owes you anything, charge that to my account. I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand: I will repay it. I say nothing about your owing me even your own self. Yes, brother, let me have this benefit from you in the Lord! Refresh my heart in Christ.

Luke 14:25-33 Now large crowds were traveling with Jesus; and he turned and said to them, "Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and estimate the cost, to see whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it will begin to ridicule him, saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.' Or what king, going out to wage war against another king, will not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to oppose the one who comes against him with twenty thousand? If he cannot, then, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for the terms of peace. So therefore, none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions."

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Texas Trinity by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ
SEPT 5, 2004 - 23rd of yr: Wisdom 9.13-18; Philemon 9-17; LK 14.25-33

During the day - Be free: love people for the right reasons. Want good for them rather than from them. Complete fulfillment, to be everlasting, derives from contributing to theirs. Values sometimes collide; be firm when they do, that the other eventually draw strength from your faith. It's God's gift; use it.

ABOUT PRAYER - Prayer looks objectively at our relationships with things & people. Prayer envisions doing without them, anticipates the day of inevitable separation. Prayer perceives a transcendent relationship, discovers its roots in Christ, develops its freedom from the purely human, provides strength for growth as love becomes genuine.

September 12, 2004 Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading Old Testament: [Ex 32:7-11, 13-14](#)

The LORD said to Moses, "Go down at once to your people, whom you brought out of the land of Egypt, for they have become depraved. They have soon turned aside from the way I pointed out to them, making for themselves a molten calf and worshiping it, sacrificing to it and crying out, 'This is your God, O Israel, who brought you out of the land of Egypt!' "I see how stiff-necked this people is," continued the LORD to Moses. Let me alone, then, that my wrath may blaze up against them to consume them. Then I will make of you a great nation." But Moses implored the LORD, his God, saying, "Why, O LORD, should your wrath blaze up against your own people, whom you brought out of the land of Egypt with such great power and with so strong a hand? Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, and how you swore to them by your own self, saying, 'I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky; and all this land that I promised, I will give your descendants as their perpetual heritage.'" So the LORD relented in the punishment he had threatened to inflict on his people.

Responsorial Psalm: [Ps 51:3-4, 12-13, 17, 19](#)

I will rise and go to my father. Have mercy on me, O God, in your goodness; in the greatness of your compassion wipe out my offense. Thoroughly wash me from my guilt and of my sin cleanse me. A clean heart create for me, O God, and a steadfast spirit renew within me. Cast me not out from your presence, and your Holy Spirit take not from me. O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall proclaim your praise. My sacrifice, O God, is a contrite spirit; a heart contrite and humbled, O God, you will not spurn.

Reading New Testament: [1 Tm 1:12-17](#)

Beloved: I am grateful to him who has strengthened me, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he considered me trustworthy in appointing me to the ministry. I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and arrogant, but I have been mercifully treated because I acted out of ignorance in my unbelief. Indeed, the grace of our Lord has been abundant, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. This saying is trustworthy and deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Of these I am the foremost. But for that reason I was mercifully treated, so that in me, as the foremost, Christ Jesus might display all his patience as an example for those who would come to believe in him for everlasting life. To the king of ages, incorruptible, invisible, the only God, honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

Gospel: [Lk 15:1-32](#)

Tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to listen to Jesus, but the Pharisees and scribes began to complain, saying, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." So to them he addressed this parable. "What man among you having a hundred sheep and losing one of them would not leave the ninety-nine in the desert and go after the lost one until he finds it? And when he does find it, he sets it on his shoulders with great joy and, upon his arrival home, he calls together his friends and neighbors and says to them, 'Rejoice with me because I have found my lost sheep.' I tell you, in just the same way there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need of repentance. "Or what woman having ten coins and losing one would not light a lamp and sweep the house, searching carefully until she finds it? And when she does find it, she calls together her friends and neighbors and says to them, 'Rejoice with me because I have found the coin that I lost.' In just the same way, I tell you, there will be rejoicing among the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

Then he said, "A man had two sons, and the younger son said to his father, 'Father give me the share of your estate that should come to me.' So the father divided the property between them. After a few days,

the younger son collected all his belongings and set off to a distant country where he squandered his inheritance on a life of dissipation. When he had freely spent everything, a severe famine struck that country, and he found himself in dire need. So he hired himself out to one of the local citizens who sent him to his farm to tend the swine. And he longed to eat his fill of the pods on which the swine fed, but nobody gave him any. Coming to his senses he thought, 'How many of my father's hired workers have more than enough food to eat, but here am I, dying from hunger. I shall get up and go to my father and I shall say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son; treat me as you would treat one of your hired workers."' So he got up and went back to his father. While he was still a long way off, his father caught sight of him, and was filled with compassion. He ran to his son, embraced him and kissed him. His son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son.' But his father ordered his servants, 'Quickly bring the finest robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Take the fattened calf and slaughter it. Then let us celebrate with a feast, because this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost, and has been found.' Then the celebration began. Now the older son had been out in the field and, on his way back, as he neared the house, he heard the sound of music and dancing. He called one of the servants and asked what this might mean. The servant said to him, 'Your brother has returned and your father has slaughtered the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.' He became angry, and when he refused to enter the house, his father came out and pleaded with him. He said to his father in reply, 'Look, all these years I served you and not once did I disobey your orders; yet you never gave me even a young goat to feast on with my friends. But when your son returns, who swallowed up your property with prostitutes, for him you slaughter the fattened calf.' He said to him, 'My son, you are here with me always; everything I have is yours. But now we must celebrate and rejoice, because your brother was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.'

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Texas Trinidad by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ

SEPT 12, 2004 - 24th of yr: Ex 32.7-14; 1Tim 1.12-17 LK 15.1-32

"Son, you are here with me always; everything I have is yours. But now we must celebrate & rejoice, because your brother was dead & has come to life again, was lost & has been found."

During the day: Celebrate reconciliation. Not necessarily your own. Share the inner peace of others when the offender seeks to heal the reputed relationship. Be wise enough to facilitate it, assuring the offended his self-pity threatens to deepen rather than repair the rupture. Forgiveness is not an option; it's a divine mandate. Holding a grudge is far more devastating to the work of the Father than the original offense. Correct it firmly.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer confronts resentment, faces it down. No room for it in the heart of Christ, nor the Christian's. Prayer cleanses, purifies, sees the other thru Christ's eyes - savable. Prayer adjusts to the offense & assumes the offender. Impossible? Not for God & his grace in willing hearts. We're all in this together.

September 19, 2004 Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading Old Testament: Amos 8:4-7

Hear this, you who trample upon the needy and destroy the poor of the land! "When will the new moon be over," you ask, "that we may sell our grain, and the sabbath, that we may display the wheat? We will diminish the ephah, add to the shekel, and fix our scales for cheating! We will buy the lowly for silver, and the poor for a pair of sandals; even the refuse of the wheat we will sell!" The LORD has sworn by the pride of Jacob: Never will I forget a thing they have done!

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 113:1-2, 4-6, 7-8

Praise the Lord who lifts up the poor. Praise, you servants of the LORD, praise the name of the LORD. Blessed be the name of the LORD both now and forever. High above all nations is the LORD; above the heavens is his glory. Who is like the LORD, our God, who is enthroned on high and looks upon the heavens and the earth below? He raises up the lowly from the dust; from the dunghill he lifts up the poor to seat them with princes, with the princes of his own people.

Reading New Testament: 1 Timothy 2:1-8

Beloved: First of all, I ask that supplications, prayers, petitions, and thanksgivings be offered for everyone, for kings and for all in authority, that we may lead a quiet and tranquil life in all devotion and dignity. This is good and pleasing to God our savior, who wills everyone to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth. For there is one God. There is also one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as ransom for all. This was the testimony at the proper time. For this I was appointed preacher and apostle --I am speaking the truth, I am not lying--, teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth. It is my wish, then, that in every place the men should pray, lifting up holy hands, without anger or argument.

Gospel: Luke 16:1-13

Jesus said to his disciples, "A rich man had a steward who was reported to him for squandering his property. He summoned him and said, 'What is this I hear about you? Prepare a full account of your stewardship, because you can no longer be my steward.' The steward said to himself, 'What shall I do, now that my master is taking the position of steward away from me? I am not strong enough to dig and I am ashamed to beg. I know what I shall do so that, when I am removed from the stewardship, they may welcome me into their homes.' He called in his master's debtors one by one. To the first he said, 'How much do you owe my master?' He replied, 'One hundred measures of olive oil.' He said to him, 'Here is your promissory note. Sit down and quickly write one for fifty.' Then to another the steward said, 'And you, how much do you owe?' He replied, 'One hundred kors of wheat.' The steward said to him, 'Here is your promissory note; write one for eighty.' And the master commended that dishonest steward for acting prudently. "For the children of this world are more prudent in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light. I tell you, make friends for yourselves with dishonest wealth, so that when it fails, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings. The person who is trustworthy in very small matters is also trustworthy in great ones; and the person who is dishonest in very small matters is also dishonest in great ones. If, therefore, you are not trustworthy with dishonest wealth, who will trust you with true wealth? If you are not trustworthy with what belongs to another, who will give you what is yours? No servant can serve two masters. He will either hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and mammon."

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Texas Trinidad by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ

“Read: Listen in Silence & Chew on His Word, then share some simple thought with others.”

SEPT 19, 2004 -25th of yr: Amos 8.4-7; 1Tim 2.1-8; LK 16.1-13

“What shall I do now that I am no longer steward? I'm not strong enough to dig & ashamed to beg.”

During the day: Don't be ashamed to beg. Neither for your own needs nor those of others. Security comes first from doing all you can for yourself (& others); then, acknowledging your own insufficiency, turning to those who can & want to help. The needed good is God's, not theirs - respectfully calling attention to both need & resources is an opportunity for them to discern God's will in the exercise of their stewardship. Do them this favor. The worst they can do is say no.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer ponders alternatives. The challenge in prayer is to transcend the human & be open to the divine. Faith is intuition, not rational. In prayer, God either confirms the reasonable, or communicates insights into his expectations. At prayer we are less concerned about what we do than what we are: his instruments. His to guide, ours to follow.

September 26, 2004 Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

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

Thus says the LORD the God of hosts: Woe to the complacent in Zion! Lying upon beds of ivory, stretched comfortably on their couches, they eat lambs taken from the flock, and calves from the stall! Improvising to the music of the harp, like David, they devise their own accompaniment. They drink wine from bowls and anoint themselves with the best oils; yet they are not made ill by the collapse of Joseph! Therefore, now they shall be the first to go into exile, and their wanton revelry shall be done away with.

Responsorial Psalm: [Ps 146:7, 8-9, 9-10](#)

Praise the Lord, my soul! Blessed he who keeps faith forever, secures justice for the oppressed, gives food to the hungry. The LORD sets captives free. The LORD gives sight to the blind. the LORD raises up those who were bowed down; The LORD loves the just. The LORD protects strangers. The fatherless and the widow he sustains, but the way of the wicked he thwarts. The LORD shall reign forever; your God, O Zion, through all generations. Alleluia.

Reading New Testament: [1 Tm 6:11-16](#)

But you, man of God, pursue righteousness, devotion, faith, love, patience, and gentleness. Compete well for the faith. Lay hold of eternal life, to which you were called when you made the noble confession in the presence of many witnesses. I charge you before God, who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus, who gave testimony under Pontius Pilate for the noble confession, to keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ that the blessed and only ruler will make manifest at the proper time, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, and whom no human being has seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal power. Amen.

Gospel: [Lk 16:19-31](#)

Jesus said to the Pharisees: "There was a rich man who dressed in purple garments and fine linen and dined sumptuously each day. And lying at his door was a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who would gladly have eaten his fill of the scraps that fell from the rich man's table. Dogs even used to come and lick his sores. When the poor man died, he was carried away by angels to the bosom of Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried, and from the netherworld, where he was in torment, he raised his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. And he cried out, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me. Send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am suffering torment in these flames.' Abraham replied, 'My child, remember that you received what was good during your lifetime while Lazarus likewise received what was bad; but now he is comforted here, whereas you are tormented. Moreover, between us and you a great chasm is established to prevent anyone from crossing who might wish to go from our side to yours or from your side to ours.' He said, 'Then I beg you, father, send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, so that he may warn them, lest they too come to this place of torment.' But Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the prophets. Let them listen to them.' He said, 'Oh no, father Abraham, but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.' Then Abraham said, 'If they will not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone should rise from the dead.'"

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Texas Trinidad by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ

SEPT 26, 2004 - 26th of yr: AMOS 6.1-7; 1Tim 6.11-16; LK 16.19-31

"There was a rich man dressed in fine linens who dined sumptuously each day, & lying at his door a poor man named Lazarus."

During the day: Eat less sumptuously. What you don't need, don't eat- that's temperance. What you do need, eat less; that's penance. Why do penance? To strengthen your will (discipline); to acknowledge mistakes of unbridled appetites in the past; to receive a grace you want bad enough to pay a price for it. True, grace is gratuitous; but God doesn't pass it around unless he's sure it's going to be used.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer bridges diversity - a two-way bridge uniting the strong & the weak; also a two-dimensional bridge, spiritual & material, where material abundance challenges the spirit, & material poverty exercises it. Paradoxically, the spiritual strength of the poor frequently aids the spiritual weakness of the wealthy. Prayer takes to heart the Lord's advice to make friends with money so that when it fails, you'll be welcomed into eternal dwellings.

OCT 3, 2004 - 27th of yr

Almighty and everlasting God, you are always more ready to hear than we to pray, and to give more than we either desire or deserve: Pour upon us the abundance of your mercy, forgiving us those things of which our conscience is afraid, and giving us those good things for which we are not worthy to ask, except through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ our Savior; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Habakkuk 1:1-6(7-11)12-13;2:1-4

The oracle that the prophet Habakkuk saw. O LORD, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not listen? Or cry to you "Violence!" and you will not save? Why do you make me see wrong-doing and look at trouble? Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise. So the law becomes slack and justice never prevails. The wicked surround the righteous-- therefore judgment comes forth perverted. Look at the nations, and see! Be astonished! Be astounded! For a work is being done in your days that you would not believe if you were told. For I am rousing the Chaldeans, that fierce and impetuous nation, who march through the breadth of the earth to seize dwellings not their own. [Dread and fearsome are they; their justice and dignity proceed from themselves. Their horses are swifter than leopards, more menacing than wolves at dusk; their horses charge. Their horsemen come from far away; they fly like an eagle swift to devour. They all come for violence, with faces pressing forward; they gather captives like sand. At kings they scoff, and of rulers they make sport. They laugh at every fortress, and heap up earth to take it. Then they sweep by like the wind; they transgress and become guilty; their own might is their god!] Are you not from of old, O LORD my God, my Holy One? You shall not die. O LORD, you have marked them for judgment; and you, O Rock, have established them for punishment. Your eyes are too pure to behold evil, and you cannot look on wrongdoing; why do you look on the treacherous, and are silent when the wicked swallow those more righteous than they? I will stand at my watchpost, and station myself on the rampart; I will keep watch to see what he will say to me, and what he will answer concerning my complaint. Then the LORD answered me and said: Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so that a runner may read it. For there is still a vision for the appointed time; it speaks of the end, and does not lie. If it seems to tarry, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay. Look at the proud! Their spirit is not right in them, but the righteous live by their faith

Psalms 37:1-18 or 37:3-10 Page 633, BCP

1 Do not fret yourself because of evildoers; do not be jealous of those who do wrong. 2 For they shall soon wither like the grass, and like the green grass fade away. 3 Put your trust in the LORD and do good; dwell in the land and feed on its riches. 4 Take delight in the LORD, and he shall give you your heart's desire. 5 Commit your way to the LORD and put your trust in him, and he will bring it to pass. 6 He will make your righteousness as clear as the light and your just dealing as the noonday. 7 Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him. 8 Do not fret yourself over the one who prospers, the one who succeeds in evil schemes. 9 Refrain from anger, leave rage alone; do not fret yourself; it leads only to evil. 10 For evildoers shall be cut off, but those who wait upon the LORD shall possess the land. 11 In a little while the wicked shall be no more; you shall search out their place, but they will not be there. 12 But the lowly shall possess the land; they will delight in abundance of peace. 13 The wicked plot against the righteous and gnash at them with their teeth. 14 The Lord laughs at the wicked, because he sees that their day will come. 15 The wicked draw their sword and bend their bow to strike down the poor and needy, to slaughter those who are upright in their ways. 16 Their sword shall go through their own heart, and their bow shall be broken. 17 The little that the righteous has is better than great riches of the wicked. 18 For the power of the wicked shall be broken, but the LORD upholds the righteous.

2 Timothy 1:(1-5)6-14

[Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, for the sake of the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus, To Timothy, my beloved child: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. I am grateful to God-- whom I worship with a clear conscience, as my ancestors did-- when I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. Recalling your tears, I long to see you so that I may be filled with joy. I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you.] For this reason I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands; for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline. Do not be ashamed, then, of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God, who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace. This grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. For this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher, and for this reason I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know the one in whom I have put my trust, and I am sure that he is able to guard until that day what I have entrusted to him. Hold to the standard of sound teaching that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Guard the good treasure entrusted to you, with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us.

Luke 17:5-10

The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" The Lord replied, "If you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it would obey you. "Who among you would say to your slave who has just come in from plowing or tending sheep in the field, 'Come here at once and take your place at the table'? Would you not rather say to him, 'Prepare supper for me, put on your apron and serve me while I eat and drink; later you may eat and drink'? Do you thank the slave for doing what was commanded? So you also, when you have done all that you were ordered to do, say, 'We are worthless slaves; we have done only what we ought to have done!'

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Texas Trinidad by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ

OCT 3, 2004 - 27th of yr: Habakkuk 1.2-3,2.2-4; 2Tim 1.6-14; LK 17.5-10

"When you have done all you were commanded say, We are unprofitable servants, we have done all we were obliged to do."

During the day: Do what you are, stop trying to be what you do. You aren't loved because you're lovable; you're lovable because you're loved. Beloved, be grateful; gratitude is the first step to loving, to pleasing the Lover & becoming a lover, producing with the now-beloved the fruit of love. There's only one commandment, love one another.

ABOUT PRAYER: Engaged to God, prayer is enjoying the commitment. He reveals himself in the intimacy of silence. Prayer deepens the desire to be possessed & suggests the needed adjustments in attitude & behavior to become possessor as well. The affair climaxes in an eternity of bliss.

October 10, 2004 Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Old Testament: [2 Kgs 5:14-17](#)

Naaman went down and plunged into the Jordan seven times at the word of Elisha, the man of God. His flesh became again like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean of his leprosy. Naaman returned with his whole retinue to the man of God. On his arrival he stood before Elisha and said, "Now I know that there is no God in all the earth, except in Israel. Please accept a gift from your servant." Elisha replied, "As the LORD lives whom I serve, I will not take it;" and despite Naaman's urging, he still refused. Naaman said: "If you will not accept, please let me, your servant, have two mule-loads of earth, for I will no longer offer holocaust or sacrifice to any other god except to the LORD."

Psalm: [Ps 98:1, 2-3, 3-4](#)

The Lord has revealed to the nations his saving power. Sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done wondrous deeds; his right hand has won victory for him, his holy arm. The LORD has made his salvation known: in the sight of the nations he has revealed his justice. He has remembered his kindness and his faithfulness toward the house of Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation by our God. Sing joyfully to the LORD, all you lands: break into song; sing praise.

New Testament: [2 Tm 2:8-13](#)

Beloved: Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, a descendant of David: such is my gospel, for which I am suffering, even to the point of chains, like a criminal. But the word of God is not chained. Therefore, I bear with everything for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, together with eternal glory. This saying is trustworthy: If we have died with him we shall also live with him; if we persevere we shall also reign with him. But if we deny him he will deny us. If we are unfaithful he remains faithful, for he cannot deny himself.

Gospel: [Lk 17:11-19](#)

As Jesus continued his journey to Jerusalem, he traveled through Samaria and Galilee. As he was entering a village, ten lepers met him. They stood at a distance from him and raised their voices, saying, "Jesus, Master! Have pity on us!" And when he saw them, he said, "Go show yourselves to the priests." As they were going they were cleansed. And one of them, realizing he had been healed, returned, glorifying God in a loud voice; and he fell at the feet of Jesus and thanked him. He was a Samaritan. Jesus said in reply, "Ten were cleansed, were they not? Where are the other nine? Has none but this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?" Then he said to him, "Stand up and go; your faith has saved you."

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Texas Trinidad by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ

OCT 10, 2004 - 28th of yr: [2Kings 5.14-17](#); [2Tim 2.8-13](#); [LK 17.11-19](#)

"Where are the other nine? Has none but the foreigner returned to give thanks to God? Stand up & go; your faith has saved you."

During the day - Stand up & go. Grateful for being alive, live. Move forward, don't even look back. Breezes blow, the grass grows. See the goodness, the happiness, the beauty all around you -. Keep looking till you do. Relax & take the next step; that's all God shows you. You're his, so let him do the worrying.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is blowing with the Breeze. Where IT wills. Blown rather than blowing, willing what It wills, at times without knowing. Prayer survives the calms, lashes to the mast in storms. Whatever the weather, prayer is indispensable.

October 17, 2004 Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading Old Testament: [Ex 17:8-13](#)

In those days, Amalek came and waged war against Israel. Moses, therefore, said to Joshua, "Pick out certain men, and tomorrow go out and engage Amalek in battle. I will be standing on top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand." So Joshua did as Moses told him: he engaged Amalek in battle after Moses had climbed to the top of the hill with Aaron and Hur. As long as Moses kept his hands raised up, Israel had the better of the fight, but when he let his hands rest, Amalek had the better of the fight. Moses' hands, however, grew tired; so they put a rock in place for him to sit on. Meanwhile Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side and one on the other, so that his hands remained steady till sunset. And Joshua mowed down Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.

Responsorial Psalm: [Ps 121:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8](#)

Our help is from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. I lift up my eyes toward the mountains; whence shall help come to me? My help is from the LORD, who made heaven and earth. May he not suffer your foot to slip; may he slumber not who guards you: indeed he neither slumbers nor sleeps, the guardian of Israel. The LORD is your guardian; the LORD is your shade; he is beside you at your right hand. The sun shall not harm you by day, nor the moon by night. The LORD will guard you from all evil; he will guard your life. The LORD will guard your coming and your going, both now and forever.

Reading New Testament: [2 Tm 3:14--4:2](#)

Beloved: Remain faithful to what you have learned and believed, because you know from whom you learned it, and that from infancy you have known the sacred Scriptures, which are capable of giving you wisdom for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for refutation, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that one who belongs to God may be competent, equipped for every good work. I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingly power: proclaim the word; be persistent whether it is convenient or inconvenient; convince, reprimand, encourage through all patience and teaching.

Gospel: [Lk 18:1-8](#)

Jesus told his disciples a parable about the necessity for them to pray always without becoming weary. He said, "There was a judge in a certain town who neither feared God nor respected any human being. And a widow in that town used to come to him and say, 'Render a just decision for me against my adversary.' For a long time the judge was unwilling, but eventually he thought, 'While it is true that I neither fear God nor respect any human being, because this widow keeps bothering me I shall deliver a just decision for her lest she finally come and strike me.'" The Lord said, "Pay attention to what the dishonest judge says. Will not God then secure the rights of his chosen ones who call out to him day and night? Will he be slow to answer them? I tell you, he will see to it that justice is done for them speedily. But when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Texas Trinidad by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ

OCT 17, 2004 - 29th of yr: Exodus 17.8-13; 2Tim 3.14-4.2; LK 18.1-8

"There was a judge in a certain town who neither feared God nor respected any human being."

During the day : Respect every human being. Each is another you. Same freedom. Same dignity. Precious to the Father-Mother you share. We belong to each other, forever. Made to love, what a shame to let fear & ignorance prejudice our eternity together. Mutual respect is essential to human integrity & fundamental to our eternal destiny. Respect for the person, whatever his mistakes of bad judgment or bad will, is a divine attribute. We're all in this together.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer immerses in serenity. Sometimes rapidly; sometimes slowly; but always. The only source of Christ's peace is within. May be deep down, but it's there - Christ keeps his promises. Prayer slashes thru the underbrush of anxieties to get at the spring, takes a deep draft of living water, then succumbs to the harmony it induces. Prayer returns us refreshed to the business at hand.

October 24, 2004 Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading Old Testament: [Sir 35:12-14, 16-18](#)

The LORD is a God of justice, who knows no favorites. Though not unduly partial toward the weak, yet he hears the cry of the oppressed. The Lord is not deaf to the wail of the orphan, nor to the widow when she pours out her complaint. The one who serves God willingly is heard; his petition reaches the heavens. The prayer of the lowly pierces the clouds; it does not rest till it reaches its goal, nor will it withdraw till the Most High responds, judges justly and affirms the right, and the Lord will not delay.

Responsorial Psalm: [Ps 34:2-3, 17-18, 19, 23](#)

The Lord hears the cry of the poor. I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise shall be ever in my mouth. Let my soul glory in the LORD; the lowly will hear me and be glad. The LORD confronts the evildoers, to destroy remembrance of them from the earth. When the just cry out, the LORD hears them, and from all their distress he rescues them. The LORD is close to the brokenhearted; and those who are crushed in spirit he saves. The LORD redeems the lives of his servants; no one incurs guilt who takes refuge in him.

Reading New Testament: [2 Tm 4:6-8, 16-18](#)

Beloved: I am already being poured out like a libation, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have competed well; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith. From now on the crown of righteousness awaits me, which the Lord, the just judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me, but to all who have longed for his appearance. At my first defense no one appeared on my behalf, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them! But the Lord stood by me and gave me strength, so that through me the proclamation might be completed and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was rescued from the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil threat and will bring me safe to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Gospel: [Lk 18:9-14](#)

Jesus addressed this parable to those who were convinced of their own righteousness and despised everyone else. "Two people went up to the temple area to pray; one was a Pharisee and the other was a tax collector. The Pharisee took up his position and spoke this prayer to himself, 'O God, I thank you that I am not like the rest of humanity-- greedy, dishonest, adulterous--or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, and I pay tithes on my whole income.' But the tax collector stood off at a distance and would not even raise his eyes to heaven but beat his breast and prayed, 'O God, be merciful to me a sinner.' I tell you, the latter went home justified, not the former; for whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Texas Trinity by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ

OCT 24, 2004 - 30th of yr: Sirach 35.12-18; 2Tim 4.6-8,16-18; LK 18.9-14

"Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, & the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

During the day - Be exalted, but let others do the exalting. A low profile inspires confidence in others when it's based on the quiet self-confidence that one's talents are God-given. The instrument takes no credit for the fruits of its effort. Aware a divine design is in progress, the humble move steadily toward the objective, secure in the assurance of success as God would have it. The applause comes later.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is the channel of holiness. The living link between the Perfect & imperfect. In prayer we wisely acknowledge how far our designs are from God's. Prayer places our weaknesses in his strong hands. Usage transforms, & wholeness is on the way.

October 31, 2004 Thirty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading Old Testament: [Wis 11:22-12:2](#)

Before the LORD the whole universe is as a grain from a balance or a drop of morning dew come down upon the earth. But you have mercy on all, because you can do all things; and you overlook people's sins that they may repent. For you love all things that are and loathe nothing that you have made; for what you hated, you would not have fashioned. And how could a thing remain, unless you willed it; or be preserved, had it not been called forth by you? But you spare all things, because they are yours, O LORD and lover of souls, for your imperishable spirit is in all things! Therefore you rebuke offenders little by little, warn them and remind them of the sins they are committing, that they may abandon their wickedness and believe in you, O LORD!

Responsorial Psalm: [Ps 145:1-2, 8-9, 10-11, 13, 14](#)

I will praise your name for ever, my king and my God. I will extol you, O my God and King, and I will bless your name forever and ever. Every day will I bless you, and I will praise your name forever and ever. The LORD is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness. The LORD is good to all and compassionate toward all his works. Let all your works give you thanks, O LORD, and let your faithful ones bless you. Let them discourse of the glory of your kingdom and speak of your might. The LORD is faithful in all his words and holy in all his works. The LORD lifts up all who are falling and raises up all who are bowed down.

Reading New Testament: [2 Thess 1:11-2:2](#)

Brothers and sisters: We always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and powerfully bring to fulfillment every good purpose and every effort of faith, that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, in accord with the grace of our God and Lord Jesus Christ. We ask you, brothers and sisters, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our assembling with him, not to be shaken out of your minds suddenly, or to be alarmed either by a "spirit," or by an oral statement, or by a letter allegedly from us to the effect that the day of the Lord is at hand.

Gospel: [Lk 19:1-10](#)

At that time, Jesus came to Jericho and intended to pass through the town. Now a man there named Zacchaeus, who was a chief tax collector and also a wealthy man, was seeking to see who Jesus was; but he could not see him because of the crowd, for he was short in stature. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree in order to see Jesus, who was about to pass that way. When he reached the place, Jesus looked up and said, "Zacchaeus, come down quickly, for today I must stay at your house." And he came down quickly and received him with joy. When they all saw this, they began to grumble, saying, "He has gone to stay at the house of a sinner." But Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, "Behold, half of my possessions, Lord, I shall give to the poor, and if I have extorted anything from anyone I shall repay it four times over." And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house because this man too is a descendant of Abraham. For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save what was lost."

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Texas Trinidad by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ

OCT 31, 2004 - 31st of yr: [Wis 11.22-12-2](#); [2Thes 1.11-2.2](#); [LK 19.1-10](#)

"Zacchaeus, come down quickly for today I must stay in your house.' He came down quickly & received him with joy. When the crowd saw this they began to grumble."

During the day: Don't grumble, receive with joy. Whatever the other's purpose in interrupting, look up with a smile - better to be gracious to a nincompoop than irritable with the distressed. The best moments we have - the ones that last forever - are the ones we share with others. Don't waste the opportunities.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer at times is grumbling with God. He's used to it, but expects it to be about serious matters, not trivial. Prayer is human experience filtering thru Christ's to get to the divine. Prayer doesn't expect answers. Rather, questing love's courage & strength, it turns to their source. Prayer is an exercise in trust.

November 7, 2004 Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading Old Testament: [2 Macc 7:1-2, 9-14](#)

It happened that seven brothers with their mother were arrested and tortured with whips and scourges by the king, to force them to eat pork in violation of God's law. One of the brothers, speaking for the others, said: "What do you expect to achieve by questioning us? We are ready to die rather than transgress the laws of our ancestors." At the point of death he said: "You accursed fiend, you are depriving us of this present life, but the King of the world will raise us up to live again forever. It is for his laws that we are dying." After him the third suffered their cruel sport. He put out his tongue at once when told to do so, and bravely held out his hands, as he spoke these noble words: "It was from Heaven that I received these; for the sake of his laws I disdain them; from him I hope to receive them again." Even the king and his attendants marveled at the young man's courage, because he regarded his sufferings as nothing. After he had died, they tortured and maltreated the fourth brother in the same way. When he was near death, he said, "It is my choice to die at the hands of men with the hope God gives of being raised up by him; but for you, there will be no resurrection to life."

Responsorial Psalm: [Ps 17:1, 5-6, 8, 15](#)

Lord, when your glory appears, my joy will be full. Hear, O LORD, a just suit; attend to my outcry; hearken to my prayer from lips without deceit. My steps have been steadfast in your paths, my feet have not faltered. I call upon you, for you will answer me, O God; incline your ear to me; hear my word. Keep me as the apple of your eye, hide me in the shadow of your wings. But I in justice shall behold your face; on waking I shall be content in your presence.

Reading New Testament: [2 Thess 2:16-3:5](#)

Brothers and sisters: May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting encouragement and good hope through his grace, encourage your hearts and strengthen them in every good deed and word. Finally, brothers and sisters, pray for us, so that the word of the Lord may speed forward and be glorified, as it did among you, and that we may be delivered from perverse and wicked people, for not all have faith. But the Lord is faithful; he will strengthen you and guard you from the evil one. We are confident of you in the Lord that what we instruct you, you are doing and will continue to do. May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the endurance of Christ.

Gospel: [Lk 20:27-38](#) or [20:27, 34-38](#)

Some Sadducees, those who deny that there is a resurrection, came forward and put this question to Jesus, saying, "Teacher, Moses wrote for us, If someone's brother dies leaving a wife but no child, his brother must take the wife and raise up descendants for his brother. Now there were seven brothers; the first married a woman but died childless. Then the second and the third married her, and likewise all the seven died childless. Finally the woman also died. Now at the resurrection whose wife will that woman be? For all seven had been married to her." Jesus said to them, "The children of this age marry and remarry; but those who are deemed worthy to attain to the coming age and to the resurrection of the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage. They can no longer die, for they are like angels; and they are the children of God because they are the ones who will rise. That the dead will rise even Moses made known in the passage about the bush, when he called out 'Lord,' the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; and he is not God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive."

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Texas Trinidad by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ

NOV 7, 2004 - 32nd of yr: 2Mac 7.1-2,9-14; 2Thess 2.16-35; LK 20.27-38

"Those who are worthy to attain the coming age can no longer die because they are like angels - children of God & the ones who will rise."

During the day - Be like an angel. Aware your spirit is above mind, body & will. Aware harmony is achieved thru their integration in the spirit, designed connatural to the Spirit of God. The intellect ponders, the will embraces & the body executes God's plan - keenly conscious, withal, that Lucifer, father of lies, is also an angel!

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer keeps us tuned to the Good Spirit, constantly identifying the static of the bad. Prayer's criterion for distinguishing between the two is inner peace. Diving beneath the turbulence of the moment, prayer immerses in alternatives, perceives the degree of peace accompanying each, chooses accordingly. Sometimes turns out to be the hardest - further confirmation that one wants what God wants.

November 14, 2004 Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading Old Testament: [Mal 3:19-20a](#)

Lo, the day is coming, blazing like an oven, when all the proud and all evildoers will be stubble, and the day that is coming will set them on fire, leaving them neither root nor branch, says the LORD of hosts. But for you who fear my name, there will arise the sun of justice with its healing rays.

Responsorial Psalm: [Ps 98:5-6, 7-8, 9](#)

The Lord comes to rule the earth with justice. Sing praise to the LORD with the harp, with the harp and melodious song. With trumpets and the sound of the horn sing joyfully before the King, the LORD. Let the sea and what fills it resound, the world and those who dwell in it; let the rivers clap their hands, the mountains shout with them for joy. Before the LORD, for he comes, for he comes to rule the earth; he will rule the world with justice and the peoples with equity.

Reading New Testament: [2 Thess 3:7-12](#)

Brothers and sisters: You know how one must imitate us. For we did not act in a disorderly way among you, nor did we eat food received free from anyone. On the contrary, in toil and drudgery, night and day we worked, so as not to burden any of you. Not that we do not have the right. Rather, we wanted to present ourselves as a model for you, so that you might imitate us. In fact, when we were with you, we instructed you that if anyone was unwilling to work, neither should that one eat. We hear that some are conducting themselves among you in a disorderly way, by not keeping busy but minding the business of others. Such people we instruct and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to work quietly and to eat their own food.

Gospel: [Lk 21:5-19](#)

While some people were speaking about how the temple was adorned with costly stones and votive offerings, Jesus said, "All that you see here-- the days will come when there will not be left a stone upon another stone that will not be thrown down." Then they asked him, "Teacher, when will this happen? And what sign will there be when all these things are about to happen?" He answered, "See that you not be deceived, for many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he,' and 'The time has come.' Do not follow them! When you hear of wars and insurrections, do not be terrified; for such things must happen first, but it will not immediately be the end." Then he said to them, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be powerful earthquakes, famines, and plagues from place to place; and awesome sights and mighty signs will come from the sky. "Before all this happens, however, they will seize and persecute you, they will hand you over to the synagogues and to prisons, and they will have you led before kings and governors because of my name. It will lead to your giving testimony. Remember, you are not to prepare your defense beforehand, for I myself shall give you a wisdom in speaking that all your adversaries will be powerless to resist or refute. You will even be handed over by parents, brothers, relatives, and friends, and they will put some of you to death. You will be hated by all because of my name, but not a hair on your head will be destroyed. By your perseverance you will secure your lives."

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Texas Trinidad by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ

Nov 14, 2004 - 33rd of yr: Mal 3.19-20; 2Thess 3.7-12; LK 21.5-19

"When you hear of wars & insurrections do not be terrified; for such things must happen first."

During the day - Don't be terrified. That's the terrorists' goal: to destroy confidence in those security depends on, to paralyze with fear. The authentic purpose of fear is to inspire courage: face fears down, reduce threats to solvable dimensions, run necessary risks, strengthen confidence in the combined effort of the committed. Absolute security, though unobtainable, is not unavailable. Placing human efforts in divine hands assures an outcome that transcends all tragedy.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer immerses reality in both its human & divine dimensions. The intellect ponders the human, the will embraces the divine. Christian prayer filters fears through the human will of Christ - others pray, unaware of the filter. Indomitable, it communicates trust in the Father's care. The will provides the courage, the love provides the trust.

November 21, 2004 The Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ the King

Reading Old Testament: [2 Sm 5:1-3](#)

In those days, all the tribes of Israel came to David in Hebron and said: "Here we are, your bone and your flesh. In days past, when Saul was our king, it was you who led the Israelites out and brought them back. And the LORD said to you, 'You shall shepherd my people Israel and shall be commander of Israel.'" When all the elders of Israel came to David in Hebron, King David made an agreement with them there before the LORD, and they anointed him king of Israel.

Responsorial Psalm: [Ps 122:1-2, 3-4, 4-5](#)

Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord. I rejoiced because they said to me, "We will go up to the house of the LORD." And now we have set foot within your gates, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem, built as a city with compact unity. To it the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD. According to the decree for Israel, to give thanks to the name of the LORD. In it are set up judgment seats, seats for the house of David.

Reading New Testament: [Col 1:12-20](#)

Brothers and sisters: Let us give thanks to the Father, who has made you fit to share in the inheritance of the holy ones in light. He delivered us from the power of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For in him were created all things in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things were created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things he himself might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile all things for him, making peace by the blood of his cross through him, whether those on earth or those in heaven.

Gospel: [Lk 23:35-43](#)

The rulers sneered at Jesus and said, "He saved others, let him save himself if he is the chosen one, the Christ of God." Even the soldiers jeered at him. As they approached to offer him wine they called out, "If you are King of the Jews, save yourself." Above him there was an inscription that read, "This is the King of the Jews." Now one of the criminals hanging there reviled Jesus, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us." The other, however, rebuking him, said in reply, "Have you no fear of God, for you are subject to the same condemnation? And indeed, we have been condemned justly, for the sentence we received corresponds to our crimes, but this man has done nothing criminal." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." He replied to him, Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Texas Trinidad by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ

NOV 21, 2004 - CHRIST THE KING: 2Sam 5.1-3; Col 1.12-20; LK 23.35-43

"The rulers sneered at Jesus, 'He saved others, let him save himself.' The soldiers also jeered at him. But one of the criminals said, 'Remember me when you come into your kingdom.' Jesus answered, 'Today you will be with me in Paradise.'"

During the day - Don't sneer; the other may be expressing something beyond your ken. Truths fit together like pieces of a puzzle; be alert to perceive, less quick to discard. Don't jeer; the other may be doing you a favor. Or willing to, if you'd let him; if you judge by appearances, at least leave a side door open.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer prepares reality for paradise. Prayer rests in the promise, already fulfilled outside of time. Prayer is joy anticipated, faith in hope's realization. In prayer we move over, give the driver's seat to Christ; timidly at first, then with greater confidence as he speeds up around the curves! Danger is no threat to him; nor to us as we grow in trust.