

This is the start of Liturgical Year 2004C

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Mighty Mississipp by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ
NOV 30, 2003 - 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.

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Mighty Mississipp 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Mighty Mississip 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.

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.

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.

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Texas Trinidad 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.

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.

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.

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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.

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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.

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March 7, 2004 During the day & About Prayer - Not available as of Monday

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.

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.

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.

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.

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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!)

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Texas Trinidad 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.

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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.

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.

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Texas Trinidad 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.

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.

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.

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Texas Trinidad 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.

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Texas Trinidad 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.

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.

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 Thoughts from Jack

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.

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.

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

JULY 25, 2004 - 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.

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

AUG 1, 2004 - 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.

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.

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

AUG 15, 2004 - 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!

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

Aug 22, 2004 - 1st of Year 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.

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Texas Trinity 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.

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.

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Texas Trinity 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.

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Texas Trinity 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.

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Texas Trinity 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.

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Texas Trinity 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.

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.

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.

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Texas Trinidad 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.