

This is the start of Liturgical Year 2005A

November 28, 2004 - First Sunday of Advent

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

This is what Isaiah, son of Amoz, saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. In days to come, the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established as the highest mountain and raised above the hills. All nations shall stream toward it; many peoples shall come and say: "Come, let us climb the LORD's mountain, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may instruct us in his ways, and we may walk in his paths." For from Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and impose terms on many peoples. They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; one nation shall not raise the sword against another, nor shall they train for war again. O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the LORD!

Responsorial Psalm: [Ps 122:1-2, 3-4, 4-5, 6-7, 8-9](#)

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. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem! May those who love you prosper! May peace be within your walls, prosperity in your buildings. Because of my brothers and friends I will say, "Peace be within you!" Because of the house of the LORD, our God, I will pray for your good.

Reading New Testament: [Rom 13:11-14](#)

Brothers and sisters: You know the time; it is the hour now for you to awake from sleep. For our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed; the night is advanced, the day is at hand. Let us then throw off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; let us conduct ourselves properly as in the day, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in promiscuity and lust, not in rivalry and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the desires of the flesh.

Gospel: [Mt 24:37-44](#)

Jesus said to his disciples: "As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. In those days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day that Noah entered the ark. They did not know until the flood came and carried them all away. So will it be also at the coming of the Son of Man. Two men will be out in the field; one will be taken, and one will be left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken, and one will be left. Therefore, stay awake! For you do not know on which day your Lord will come. Be sure of this: if the master of the house had known the hour of night when the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and not let his house be broken into. So too, you also must be prepared, for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come."

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

NOV 28, 2004 - 1st Advent: Is 2.1-5; Rm 11.13-14; MT 24.37-44

[This begins a new liturgical year, Yr A, first in the 3-yr cycle; most gospel texts taken from Matthew. These reflections can be found at www.elpasojesuit.org] "As in the days of Noah, they suspected nothing till the flood came & swept them all away. So will it be at the coming of the Son of Man."

During the day - Swept away, grab a hold of something or somebody & go with the flow. You don't control events, you adjust to them. Others depend on you, so calm down & use your head. Cut your losses, minimize the risks, make decisions based on goodness & truth; you'll never regret them.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is recourse to God's dominion. Prayer seeks & sometimes finds the security of absolute trust, the sense that God controls without manipulating. Prayer works thru fears & doubts to express the love that embraces destiny with vigor. Chaos turns to order as the pattern of God's design appears & human effort responds, generously & with courage.

December 5, 2004 - Second Sunday of Advent

Reading Old Testament: [Is 11:1-10](#)

On that day, a shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse, and from his roots a bud shall blossom. The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him: a spirit of wisdom and of understanding, a spirit of counsel and of strength, a spirit of knowledge and of fear of the LORD, and his delight shall be the fear of the LORD. Not by appearance shall he judge, nor by hearsay shall he decide, but he shall judge the poor with justice, and decide aright for the land's afflicted. He shall strike the ruthless with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall slay the wicked. Justice shall be the band around his waist, and faithfulness a belt upon his hips. Then the wolf shall be a guest of the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; the calf and the young lion shall browse together, with a little child to guide them. The cow and the bear shall be neighbors, together their young shall rest; the lion shall eat hay like the ox. The baby shall play by the cobra's den, and the child lay his hand on the adder's lair. There shall be no harm or ruin on all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be filled with knowledge of the LORD, as water covers the sea. On that day, the root of Jesse, set up as a signal for the nations, the Gentiles shall seek out, for his dwelling shall be glorious.

Responsorial Psalm: [Ps 72:1-2, 7-8, 12-13, 17](#)

Justice shall flourish in his time, and fullness of peace for ever. O God, with your judgment endow the king, and with your justice, the king's son; he shall govern your people with justice and your afflicted ones with judgment. Justice shall flower in his days, and profound peace, till the moon be no more. May he rule from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth. For he shall rescue the poor when he cries out, and the afflicted when he has no one to help him. He shall have pity for the lowly and the poor; the lives of the poor he shall save. May his name be blessed forever; as long as the sun his name shall remain. In him shall all the tribes of the earth be blessed; all the nations shall proclaim his happiness.

Reading New Testament: [Rom 15:4-9](#)

Brothers and sisters: Whatever was written previously was written for our instruction, that by endurance and by the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to think in harmony with one another, in keeping with Christ Jesus, that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Welcome one another, then, as Christ welcomed you, for the glory of God. For I say that Christ became a minister of the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, to confirm the promises to the patriarchs, but so that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written: Therefore, I will praise you among the Gentiles and sing praises to your name.

Gospel: [Mt 3:1-12](#)

John the Baptist appeared, preaching in the desert of Judea and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" It was of him that the prophet Isaiah had spoken when he said: A voice of one crying out in the desert, Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths. John wore clothing made of camel's hair and had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. At that time Jerusalem, all Judea, and the whole region around the Jordan were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins. When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce good fruit as evidence of your repentance. And do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you, God can raise up children to Abraham from these stones. Even now the ax lies at the root of the trees. Therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. I am baptizing you with water, for repentance, but the one who is coming after me is mightier than I. I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize

you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in his hand. He will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

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

DEC 5: 2004 - 2nd Advent: Is 11.1-10; Rm 15.4-9; MT 3.1-12

"John the Baptist appeared, preaching in the desert, 'Repent! The Kingdom of God is at hand - produce good fruit as evidence of your repentance.'"

During the day - Produce good fruit from mistakes made, be they of bad judgment or of bad will. Big difference between shame & sorrow: shame hides mistakes, sorrow takes responsibility for them & repairs the damage. Relationships are healed by humble recognition & Godlike forgiveness. Latter lacking, the offended becomes the offender. His grudge understandable, remain at peace.

ABOUT PRAYER: The first fruit of prayer is gratitude; the second is repentance, i.e. the recognition & regret that graces received haven't been used for the purposes intended; the third is trust that we're loved not less for our failures but more, since love always seeks the betterment of the beloved. Gratefully, sorrowfully & with trust, prayer acknowledges our mistakes & disposes us to be more responsible with graces received.

December 12, 2004 Third Sunday of Advent

Reading Old Testament: [Is 35:1-6a, 10](#)

The desert and the parched land will exult; the steppe will rejoice and bloom. They will bloom with abundant flowers, and rejoice with joyful song. The glory of Lebanon will be given to them, the splendor of Carmel and Sharon; they will see the glory of the LORD, the splendor of our God. Strengthen the hands that are feeble, make firm the knees that are weak, say to those whose hearts are frightened: Be strong, fear not! Here is your God, he comes with vindication; with divine recompense he comes to save you. Then will the eyes of the blind be opened, the ears of the deaf be cleared; then will the lame leap like a stag, then the tongue of the mute will sing. Those whom the LORD has ransomed will return and enter Zion singing, crowned with everlasting joy; they will meet with joy and gladness, sorrow and mourning will flee.

Responsorial Psalm: [Ps 146:6-7, 8-9, 9-10](#)

Lord, come and save us. The LORD God 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.

Reading New Testament: [Jas 5:7-10](#)

Be patient, brothers and sisters, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. You too must be patient. Make your hearts firm, because the coming of the Lord is at hand. Do not complain, brothers and sisters, about one another, that you may not be judged. Behold, the Judge is standing before the gates. Take as an example of hardship and patience, brothers and sisters, the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

Gospel: [Mt 11:2-11](#)

When John the Baptist heard in prison of the works of the Christ, he sent his disciples to Jesus with this question, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?" Jesus said to them in reply, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them. And blessed is the one who takes no offense at me." As they were going off, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John, "What did you go out to the desert to see? A reed swayed by the wind? Then what did you go out to see? Someone dressed in fine clothing? Those who wear fine clothing are in royal palaces. Then why did you go out? To see a prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written: Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you; he will prepare your way before you. Amen, I say to you, among those born of women there has been none greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

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

DEC 12, 2004 - 3rd Advent: Is 35.1-6,10; James 5.7-10; MT 11.2-11

"What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed swayed by the wind? Someone dressed in fine clothing? A prophet? Yes, & more than a prophet, 'the messenger who prepares the way before you'."

During the day - Don't sway in the wind. Be loyal to the truth as you see it. Don't be stubborn, be firm. Stubbornness is resistance to change, inability to grasp reasons for doing so. Conviction based on a sense of what is right & true provides a beacon for those in doubt. Authentic values enrich, false values impoverish; whichever attracts the most followers wins the day, & leaves the field to future prophets.

ABOUT PRAYER We take our doubts to prayer; we ponder them with the light of reason, open to the light of inspiration. The mind discerns: seeks inner peace as it scans the alternatives. The basic premise of prayer is to want what God wants, to see things as he sees them. He seldom fails to grant to the intellect & will so disposed a sense of direction. Followed cautiously a step at a time, his presence confirms the quest.

December 19, 2004 Fourth Sunday of Advent

Reading Old Testament: [Is 7:10-14](#)

The LORD spoke to Ahaz, saying: Ask for a sign from the LORD, your God; let it be deep as the netherworld, or high as the sky! But Ahaz answered, "I will not ask! I will not tempt the LORD!" Then Isaiah said: Listen, O house of David! Is it not enough for you to weary people, must you also weary my God? Therefore the LORD himself will give you this sign: the virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall name him Emmanuel.

Responsorial Psalm: [Ps 24:1-2, 3-4, 5-6](#)

Let the Lord enter; he is king of glory. The LORD's are the earth and its fullness; the world and those who dwell in it. For he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers. Who can ascend the mountain of the LORD? or who may stand in his holy place? One whose hands are sinless, whose heart is clean, who desires not what is vain. He shall receive a blessing from the LORD, a reward from God his savior. Such is the race that seeks for him, that seeks the face of the God of Jacob.

Reading New Testament: [Rom 1:1-7](#)

Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised previously through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, the gospel about his Son, descended from David according to the flesh, but established as Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness through resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord. Through him we have received the grace of apostleship, to bring about the obedience of faith, for the sake of his name, among all the Gentiles, among whom are you also, who are called to belong to Jesus Christ; to all the beloved of God in Rome, called to be holy. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Gospel: [Mt 1:18-24](#)

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. When his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found with child through the Holy Spirit. Joseph her husband, since he was a righteous man, yet unwilling to expose her to shame, decided to divorce her quietly. Such was his intention when, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel, which means "God is with us." When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took his wife into his home.

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

DEC 19, 2004 - 4th Advent: Is 7.10-14; Rom 1.1-7; MT 1.18-24

"Joseph her husband, a righteous man, was unwilling to shame her & decided to divorce her quietly; but an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream."

During the day - Before making a decision consider the consequences for others; let the angel in you put their interests above your own. Judging words & actions may be justified; judging persons never. The commandment to love one another stipulates no exceptions. On the contrary, whatever the other's mistakes of bad judgment or bad will, they're just that: mistakes. Correction is called for, not condemnation.

ABOUT PRAYER Make serious choices prayerfully; consult the Christ who lives within you. He's as stuck with them as you are, & pays a far greater price for the results. Prayer submits blind emotional reactions - all emotions are blind - to the intellectual scanning of fact; which in turn glances at Christ in faith to discern his assessment. Prayer petitions both to see it clearly & adopt it courageously.

December 26, 2004 Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph

Reading Old Testament: [Sir 3:2-6, 12-14](#)

God sets a father in honor over his children; a mother's authority he confirms over her sons. Whoever honors his father atones for sins, and preserves himself from them. When he prays, he is heard; he stores up riches who reveres his mother. Whoever honors his father is gladdened by children, and, when he prays, is heard. Whoever reveres his father will live a long life; he who obeys his father brings comfort to his mother. My son, take care of your father when he is old; grieve him not as long as he lives. Even if his mind fail, be considerate of him; revile him not all the days of his life; kindness to a father will not be forgotten, firmly planted against the debt of your sins --a house raised in justice to you.

Responsorial Psalm: [Ps 128:1-2, 3, 4-5](#)

Blessed are those who fear the Lord and walk in his ways. Blessed is everyone who fears the LORD, who walks in his ways! For you shall eat the fruit of your handiwork; blessed shall you be, and favored. Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine in the recesses of your home; your children like olive plants around your table. Behold, thus is the man blessed who fears the LORD. The LORD bless you from Zion: may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life.

Reading New Testament: [Col 3:12-21 or 3:12-17](#)

Brothers and sisters: Put on, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if one has a grievance against another; as the Lord has forgiven you, so must you also do. And over all these put on love, that is, the bond of perfection. And let the peace of Christ control your hearts, the peace into which you were also called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as in all wisdom you teach and admonish one another, singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Wives, be subordinate to your husbands, as is proper in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and avoid any bitterness toward them. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this is pleasing to the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, so they may not become discouraged.

Gospel: [Mt 2:13-15, 19-23](#)

When the magi had departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him." Joseph rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt. He stayed there until the death of Herod, that what the Lord had said through the prophet might be fulfilled, Out of Egypt I called my son. When Herod had died, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead." He rose, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go back there. And because he had been warned in a dream, he departed for the region of Galilee. He went and dwelt in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, He shall be called a Nazorean.

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

DEC 26, 2004 - Holy Family: Sirach 3.2-6,12-14; Col 3.12-21; MT 2.13-15,19-23

"He rose, took the child & his mother & went to dwell in a town called Nazareth."

During the day - Dwell wherever destiny decrees. Harmonize with all around you. Nature provides the setting, people the motivation. There is peace to be found in both when it radiates from your own heart. Don't let externals overwhelm the interior - they're intended to enrich it. The civilization of love is within. Savour each moment.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is the stabilizer that absorbs the shock of things gone wrong & people gone crazy. Prayer is our anchor in the heart of a God who can only love, & suffers with us the agony of bringing order out of chaos. Prayer is the reminder that it all has to start in my own heart - the only hearth I truly control. Warmth, forgiveness, freedom from fear & resentment, door open to any who wander in. Always & forever.

January 2, 2005 - 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. O God, with your judgment endow the king, and with your justice, the king's son; He shall govern your people with justice and your afflicted ones with judgment. Justice shall flower in his days, and profound peace, till the moon be no more. May he rule from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth. The kings of Tarshish and the Isles shall offer gifts; the kings of Arabia and Seba shall bring tribute. All kings shall pay him homage, all nations shall serve him. For he shall rescue the poor when he cries out, and the afflicted when he has no one to help him. He shall have pity for the lowly and the poor; the lives of the poor he shall save.

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 Texas Trinity by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ

JAN 2, 2005 - Epiphany: Sirach 3.2-6, 12-14; Col. 3.12-21; MT 2.13-23

"We saw his star & have come to give him homage."

During the day - Admire stellar people. Performance improves with appreciation. Let them know you do - honoring service honors the served. We serve each other - the person in need, not the need. Time, energy, character, possessions - all constitute human wealth. Shared, they enrich rather than impoverish & become the common heritage God intends for all. The Babe grown to manhood.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer seeks the Infinite in the infinitesimal, finds it reducing thought to almost nothingness. Prayer rests in little things - the touch of clothing, a sound, a smell, a breath, our hands. Prayer prepares for encounters with the little people, so precious to God because so worthless to everyone else. Prayer returns us to the little child within, who with innocent trust brings their needs to the Child who came to save.

January 9, 2005 - The Baptism of the Lord (First Sunday in Ordinary Time)

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

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](#)

The Lord will bless his people with peace. Give to the LORD, you sons of God, give to the LORD glory and praise, Give to the LORD the glory due his name; adore the LORD in holy attire. The voice of the LORD is over the waters, the LORD, over vast waters. The voice of the LORD is mighty; the voice of the LORD is majestic. The God of glory thunders, and in his temple all say, "Glory!" The LORD is enthroned above the flood; the LORD is enthroned as king forever.

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

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: [Mt 3:13-17](#)

Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. John tried to prevent him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and yet you are coming to me?" Jesus said to him in reply, "Allow it now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he allowed him. After Jesus was baptized, he came up from the water and behold, the heavens were opened for him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming upon him. And a voice came from the heavens, saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

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

JAN 9, 2005 - Baptism of Jesus: Is 42.1-7; Acts 10.34-38; MT 3.13-17

"After Jesus was baptized he came up from the water & the Spirit of God descended on him like a dove. A voice came from heaven, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.'"

During the day - Come up from the water. Enough of recreation, time to go to work. There's a job to do & it won't wait. Your spirit is designed to follow a guiding Spirit. Do. As the mind peacefully ponders alternatives with the will ready to pounce, let it when a voice - not yours - wordlessly says 'Yes!' It's usually the hardest, but when you choose it you'll hear 'That's my boy!'

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is voluntary immersion in the presence of God. Spiritual exercise, prayer involves all the faculties: mind & will, memory & imagination, body & senses - harmonious kaleidoscope of on-going communion with the divine, immanent & transcendent. No two prayers are alike, no two pray-ers. Find the best time & place for you, develop your own effective preliminary exercises & let God do the rest. Even if he seems he's not around, he is. So stick to it.

January 16, 2005 - Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading Old Testament: [Is 49:3, 5-6](#)

The LORD said to me: You are my servant, Israel, through whom I show my glory. Now the LORD has spoken who formed me as his servant from the womb, that Jacob may be brought back to him and Israel gathered to him; and I am made glorious in the sight of the LORD, and my God is now my strength! It is too little, the LORD says, for you to be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and restore the survivors of Israel; I will make you a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.

Responsorial Psalm: [Ps 40:2, 4, 7-8, 8-9, 10](#)

Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will. I have waited, waited for the LORD, and he stooped toward me and heard my cry. And he put a new song into my mouth, a hymn to our God. Sacrifice or offering you wished not, but ears open to obedience you gave me. Holocausts or sin-offerings you sought not; then said I, "Behold I come." "In the written scroll it is prescribed for me, to do your will, O my God, is my delight, And your law is within my heart!" I announced your justice in the vast assembly; I did not restrain my lips, as you, O LORD, know.

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

Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, to the church of God that is in Corinth, to you who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be holy, with all those everywhere who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Gospel: [Jn 1:29-34](#)

John the Baptist saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. He is the one of whom I said, 'A man is coming after me who ranks ahead of me because he existed before me.' I did not know him, but the reason why I came baptizing with water was that he might be made known to Israel." John testified further, saying, "I saw the Spirit come down like a dove from heaven and remain upon him. I did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'On whomever you see the Spirit come down and remain, he is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' Now I have seen and testified that he is the Son of God."

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

JAN 16, 2005 - 2nd of yr: Is 49.3-6; 1 Cor 1.1-3; JOHN 1.29-34

**'I WILL MAKE YOU A LIGHT TO THE NATIONS THAT MY SALVATION
MAY REACH TO THE END OF THE EARTH.'**

"John saw Jesus coming toward him & said, behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."

During the day - When goodness & honesty demand it, be a lamb. Calmly but firmly, be willing to pay the price. You may lose your job. You may lose friends, even members of your family. But loyalty to truth is loyalty to the God of love whose Spirit sows seeds of fidelity in the hearts witnessing your sacrifice. The harvest may be a long time coming - you may not even see it. But the joy of its certainty only Christ can share.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is the charger that restores moral & spiritual strength; which in turn refresh body, mind & heart. Prayer encourages the cynical optimist within to trust absolutely in the wisdom, power & love of the Spirit, even as things around one appear to disintegrate. Prayer nourishes a sense of humor that turns tears into chuckles even as one picks up the pieces. "Cheer up, the worst is yet to come!"

January 23, 2005 - Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading Old Testament: [Is 8:23..9:3](#)

First the LORD degraded the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali; but in the end he has glorified the seaward road, the land west of the Jordan, the District of the Gentiles. Anguish has taken wing, dispelled is darkness: for there is no gloom where but now there was distress. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shone. You have brought them abundant joy and great rejoicing, as they rejoice before you as at the harvest, as people make merry when dividing spoils. For the yoke that burdened them, the pole on their shoulder, and the rod of their taskmaster you have smashed, as on the day of Midian.

Responsorial Psalm: [Ps 27:1, 4, 13,14](#)

The Lord is my light and my salvation. The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom should I fear? The LORD is my life's refuge; of whom should I be afraid? One thing I ask of the LORD; this I seek: to dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, that I may gaze on the loveliness of the LORD and contemplate his temple. I believe that I shall see the bounty of the LORD in the land of the living. Wait for the LORD with courage; be stouthearted, and wait for the LORD.

Reading New Testament: [1 Cor 1:10,13, 17](#)

I urge you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree in what you say, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and in the same purpose. For it has been reported to me about you, my brothers and sisters, by Chloe's people, that there are rivalries among you. I mean that each of you is saying, "I belong to Paul," or "I belong to Apollos," or "I belong to Cephas," or "I belong to Christ." Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with the wisdom of human eloquence, so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its meaning.

Gospel: [Mt 4:12,23 or 4:12-17](#)

When Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. He left Nazareth and went to live in Capernaum by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali, that what had been said through Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled: Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the way to the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles, the people who sit in darkness have seen a great light, on those dwelling in a land overshadowed by death light has arisen. From that time on, Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." As he was walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon who is called Peter, and his brother Andrew, casting a net into the sea; they were fishermen. He said to them, "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men." At once they left their nets and followed him. He walked along from there and saw two other brothers, James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John. They were in a boat, with their father Zebedee, mending their nets. He called them, and immediately they left their boat and their father and followed him. He went around all of Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and curing every disease and illness among the people.

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

JAN 23, 2005 - 3rd of yr: Is 8.23-9.3; 1Cor 1.10-13,17; Mt 4:12.23

**THERE IS NO GLOOM WHERE BUT NOW THERE WAS DISTRESS. THOSE WHO
WALKED IN DARKNESS HAVE SEEN A GREAT LIGHT.**

**"As he walked by the Sea of Galilee he saw Peter & Andrew casting a net into the
sea. 'Come after me, & I will make you fishers of men.'"**

During the day - Fish for men, not fame or fortune. Everything you do has to do with people. They're the reason for each day's existence - consider them so. Let purpose predominate priority. Whatever the relationship - professional, social, familial, friend, stranger, enemy - there's just the two of you & God, inside & between. Healer, helper, lover, guide, God uses you & the other as instruments. Make his day! He'll be eternally grateful & you forever proud.

ABOUT PRAYER - Pray people. Pray their needs. Be specific. Near & dear or far & foreign, will their good - God does, & joining him increases love, melts hate. Prayer is both retroactive & reflexive. With living faith prayer places past moments of intense emotion good or bad in God's healing heart. Wisdom absorbs pain, love communicates new life. Finding this happening in your own, continue praying with hope it does so in the other's as well. Perseverance in prayer has a way with God.

January 30, 2005 - Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading Old Testament: [Zep 2:3; 3:12-13](#)

Seek the LORD, all you humble of the earth, who have observed his law; seek justice, seek humility; perhaps you may be sheltered on the day of the LORD's anger. But I will leave as a remnant in your midst a people humble and lowly, who shall take refuge in the name of the LORD: the remnant of Israel. They shall do no wrong and speak no lies; nor shall there be found in their mouths a deceitful tongue; they shall pasture and couch their flocks with none to disturb them.

Responsorial Psalm: [Ps 146:6-7, 8-9, 9-10](#)

(Mt 5:3) Blessed are the poor in spirit; the kingdom of heaven is theirs! The LORD 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 the LORD sustains, but the way of the wicked he thwarts. The LORD shall reign forever; your God, O Zion, through all generations.

Reading New Testament: [1 Cor 1:26-31](#)

Consider your own calling, brothers and sisters. Not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. Rather, God chose the foolish of the world to shame the wise, and God chose the weak of the world to shame the strong, and God chose the lowly and despised of the world, those who count for nothing, to reduce to nothing those who are something, so that no human being might boast before God. It is due to him that you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, as well as righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, so that, as it is written, "Whoever boasts, should boast in the Lord."

Gospel: [Mt 5:1-12a](#)

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and after he had sat down, his disciples came to him. He began to teach them, saying: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you falsely because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven."

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

JAN 30, 2005 - 4th of yr: Zeph 2.3,3.12-13; 1Cor 1.26-31; MT 5.1-12

SEEK THE LORD, ALL YOU HUMBLE OF THE EARTH! (Zephaniah 2.3)

"When Jesus saw the crowds he began to teach them saying,

'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God.'

During the day - Look at the crowds. Study the faces of strangers. Note the contentment, the peace, the serenity; the purpose, self-confidence, respect. Notice the exceptions - impatience, disrespect, indifference, selfishness. Ponder the multitude's struggle to survive & improve, together, & its sense of satisfaction that success is on the way. Perceive the God inside each making this dream come true.

ABOUT PRAYER : Prayer is getting to know God better, which we can only do thru analogy. When, however, the purpose of our prayer is to know Christ better, we can directly since he is human like us. We can read or hear his words, share his feelings, understand his purpose, admire his compassion, trust his love. We can become his friends. So when we pray with him, we come to know God directly. Father- Mother of us all, (s)he sends the Only begotten to make the introductions. Communion mutually accepted, our destiny is realized.

February 6, 2005 - Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading [Is 58:7-10](#)

Thus says the LORD: Share your bread with the hungry, shelter the oppressed and the homeless; clothe the naked when you see them, and do not turn your back on your own. Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your wound shall quickly be healed; your vindication shall go before you, and the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer, you shall cry for help, and he will say: Here I am! If you remove from your midst oppression, false accusation and malicious speech; if you bestow your bread on the hungry and satisfy the afflicted; then light shall rise for you in the darkness, and the gloom shall become for you like midday.

Responsorial Psalm: [Ps 112:4-5, 6-7, 8-9](#)

The just man is a light in darkness to the upright. Light shines through the darkness for the upright; he is gracious and merciful and just. Well for the man who is gracious and lends, who conducts his affairs with justice. He shall never be moved; the just one shall be in everlasting remembrance. An evil report he shall not fear; his heart is firm, trusting in the LORD. His heart is steadfast; he shall not fear. Lavishly he gives to the poor; his justice shall endure forever; his horn shall be exalted in glory.

Reading New Testament: [1 Cor 2:1-5](#)

When I came to you, brothers and sisters, proclaiming the mystery of God, I did not come with sublimity of words or of wisdom. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear and much trembling, and my message and my proclamation were not with persuasive words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of Spirit and power, so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God.

Gospel: [Mt 5:13-16](#)

Jesus said to his disciples: "You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its taste, with what can it be seasoned? It is no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket; it is set on a lampstand, where it gives light to all in the house. Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father."

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

FEB 6, 2005 - 5th of yr: Is 58.7-10; 1Cor 21-5; MT 5.13-16

**SHARE YOUR BREAD WITH THE HUNGRY, SHELTER THE HOMELESS, CLOTHE THE NAKED
& DO NOT TURN YOUR BACK ON YOUR OWN. THEN YOUR LIGHT WILL BREAK FORTH
LIKE THE DAWN. Is.58.7 "You are the salt of the earth, the light of the world."**

During the day - Don't worry about being too salty. Life is for living & God wants you happy. He wants us happy together & appreciates what we do to liven-up each other. We show others the way by the light of truth shining in our own hearts. Even in the toughest situations our loyalty to what's good in ourselves & others is the strength that sees us through. Hope is anchored in the roots of truth & goodness - never lose it!

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is a source of courage. In prayer we remind ourselves that we are God's & our problems his. He's a better worrier than we are & well equipped to suggest solutions. Prayer learns to turn other voices down & God's up; or rather, to listen for clues to his advise in the words of others. Our prayer reminds us - & the Boss - that as we strive to follow his directives he needs to provide the wherewithal. He always does, tho the results fit his designs, not ours.

February 13, 2005 - First Sunday of Lent

Reading Old Testament: [Gn 2:7-9; 3:1-7](#)

The LORD God formed man out of the clay of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and so man became a living being. Then the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and placed there the man whom he had formed. Out of the ground the LORD God made various trees grow that were delightful to look at and good for food, with the tree of life in the middle of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Now the serpent was the most cunning of all the animals that the LORD God had made. The serpent asked the woman, "Did God really tell you not to eat from any of the trees in the garden?" The woman answered the serpent: "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; it is only about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden that God said, 'You shall not eat it or even touch it, lest you die.'" But the serpent said to the woman: "You certainly will not die! No, God knows well that the moment you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods who know what is good and what is evil." The woman saw that the tree was good for food, pleasing to the eyes, and desirable for gaining wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate it; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized that they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.

Responsorial Psalm: [Ps 51:3-4, 5-6, 12-13, 17](#)

Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned. 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. For I acknowledge my offense, and my sin is before me always: "Against you only have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight." 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. Give me back the joy of your salvation, and a willing spirit sustain in me. O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.

Reading New Testament: [Rom 5:12-19](#)

Brothers and sisters: Through one man sin entered the world, and through sin, death, and thus death came to all men, inasmuch as all sinned -- for up to the time of the law, sin was in the world, though sin is not accounted when there is no law. But death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who did not sin after the pattern of the trespass of Adam, who is the type of the one who was to come. But the gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one, the many died, how much more did the grace of God and the gracious gift of the one man Jesus Christ overflow for the many. And the gift is not like the result of the one who sinned. For after one sin there was the judgment that brought condemnation; but the gift, after many transgressions, brought acquittal. For if, by the transgression of the one, death came to reign through that one, how much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of justification come to reign in life through the one Jesus Christ. In conclusion, just as through one transgression condemnation came upon all, so, through one righteous act, acquittal and life came to all. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so, through the obedience of the one, the many will be made righteous.

Gospel: [Mt 4:1-11](#)

At that time Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was hungry. The tempter approached and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become loaves of bread." He said in reply, "It is written: One does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes forth from the mouth of God." Then the devil took him to the holy city, and made him stand on the parapet of the temple, and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down. For it is written: He will command his angels concerning you and with their hands they will support you, lest you dash your foot against a stone." Jesus answered him,

"Again it is written, You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test." Then the devil took him up to a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in their magnificence, and he said to him, "All these I shall give to you, if you will prostrate yourself and worship me." At this, Jesus said to him, "Get away, Satan! It is written: The Lord, your God, shall you worship and him alone shall you serve." Then the devil left him and, behold, angels came and ministered to him.

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

FEB 13, 2005 - 1 Lent: Gen 2.7-9, 3.1-7; Rom 5.12-19; MT 4.1-11

THE LORD GOD FORMED MAN, BLEW INTO HIS NOSTRILS THE BREATH OF LIFE.(Gen 2.7) "Not on bread alone does man live but on every word that comes from the mouth of God."

During the day - Don't live by bread alone. Nourish life intellectually & spiritually as well as materially. Read a good book. Say a few prayers. Do both regularly. Cut down on things material - eat less, be more thrifty, slow down, give time to people rather than projects. Life is an on-going test of values. Pass it.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is time spent in the classroom of Jesus; or sometimes a stroll with the Master going over some of the difficulties. He's learned from experience; among other things he knows about hunger, ambition & power. Wisely, he lets us talk first, then helps us discover for ourselves the truths hidden in the alternatives. Prayer is a moment of mutual trust between master & disciple. Neither pushes; both wait for the right moment to nod.

February 20, 2005 Second Sunday of Lent

Reading Old Testament: Gn 12:1-4a

The LORD said to Abram: "Go forth from the land of your kinsfolk and from your father's house to a land that I will show you. "I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you. All the communities of the earth shall find blessing in you." Abram went as the LORD directed him.

Responsorial Psalm: Ps 33:4-5, 18-19, 20, 22

Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you. Upright is the word of the LORD, and all his works are trustworthy. He loves justice and right; of the kindness of the LORD the earth is full. 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: 2 Tm 1:8b-10

Beloved: Bear your share of hardship for the gospel with the strength that comes from God. He saved us and called us to a holy life, not according to our works but according to his own design and the grace bestowed on us in Christ Jesus before time began, but now made manifest through the appearance of our savior Christ Jesus, who destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

Gospel: Mt 17:1-9

Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them; his face shone like the sun and his clothes became white as light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, conversing with him. Then Peter said to Jesus in reply, "Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud cast a shadow over them, then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." When the disciples heard this, they fell prostrate and were very much afraid. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Rise, and do not be afraid." And when the disciples raised their eyes, they saw no one else but Jesus alone. As they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, "Do not tell the vision to anyone until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.

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

February 20, 2005 Second Sunday of Lent **Gen 12:1-4; 2 Timothy 1:8-10; Matthew 17:1-9**

"This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. Listen to him." When the disciples heard this they fell prostrate with fear. Jesus came, & touched them & said, " Rise, do not be afraid."

I WILL MAKE YOU A GREAT NATION. ABRAM WENT AS THE LORD DIRECTED HIM.

During the day -

Stand up. Don't be afraid. Fear (blind emotion) paralyzes. Turn on the cold light of reason. You can handle it, & if you can't, there are others who want to & can. You are bigger than any problem. Mind, will & courage confront danger with confidence. Security radiates from within, flows from a source that transcends problems & dangers. Peril is reduced to opportunity.

ABOUT PRAYER

Prayer absorbs emotions. Through prayer, control passes to the spirit. Prayer senses the presence of power. Prayer trusts a providence that entrusts. Surface storms don't ruffle the calm waters where faith is anchored. A strength beyond ones own is tapped & never fails. Whatever the outcome.

February 27, 2005 Third Sunday of Lent

Reading Old Testament: Exodus 17:3-7

In those days, in their thirst for water, the people grumbled against Moses, saying, "Why did you ever make us leave Egypt? Was it just to have us die here of thirst with our children and our livestock?" So Moses cried out to the LORD, "What shall I do with this people? a little more and they will stone me!" The LORD answered Moses, "Go over there in front of the people, along with some of the elders of Israel, holding in your hand, as you go, the staff with which you struck the river. I will be standing there in front of you on the rock in Horeb. Strike the rock, and the water will flow from it for the people to drink." This Moses did, in the presence of the elders of Israel. The place was called Massah and Meribah, because the Israelites quarreled there and tested the LORD, saying, "Is the LORD in our midst or not?"

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 95: 1-2, 6-9

If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts. Come, let us sing joyfully to the LORD; let us acclaim the Rock of our salvation. Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us joyfully sing psalms to him. Come, let us bow down in worship; let us kneel before the LORD who made us. For he is our God, and we are the people he shepherds, the flock he guides. Oh, that today you would hear his voice: "Harden not your hearts as at Meribah, as in the day of Massah in the desert, Where your fathers tempted me; they tested me though they had seen my works."

Reading New Testament: Romans 5: 1-2, 5-8

Brothers and sisters: 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. And hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. For Christ, while we were still helpless, died at the appointed time for the ungodly. Indeed, only with difficulty does one die for a just person, though perhaps for a good person one might even find courage to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us.

Gospel: John 4:5-42

Jesus came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of land that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there. Jesus, tired from his journey, sat down there at the well. It was about noon. A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." His disciples had gone into the town to buy food. The Samaritan woman said to him, "How can you, a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink?" --For Jews use nothing in common with Samaritans.-- Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God and who is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him and he would have given you living water." The woman said to him, "Sir, you do not even have a bucket and the cistern is deep; where then can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us this cistern and drank from it himself with his children and his flocks?" Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again; but whoever drinks the water I shall give will never thirst; the water I shall give will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may not be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water." Jesus said to her, "Go call your husband and come back." The woman answered and said to him, "I do not have a husband." Jesus answered her, "You are right in saying, 'I do not have a husband.' For you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true." The woman said to him, "Sir, I can see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain; but you people say that the place to worship is in Jerusalem." Jesus said to her, "Believe me, woman, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You people worship what you do not understand; we worship what we understand,

because salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth; and indeed the Father seeks such people to worship him. God is Spirit, and those who worship him must worship in Spirit and truth." The woman said to him, "I know that the Messiah is coming, the one called the Christ; when he comes, he will tell us everything." Jesus said to her, "I am he, the one speaking with you." At that moment his disciples returned, and were amazed that he was talking with a woman, but still no one said, "What are you looking for?" or "Why are you talking with her?" The woman left her water jar and went into the town and said to the people, "Come see a man who told me everything I have done. Could he possibly be the Christ?" They went out of the town and came to him. Meanwhile, the disciples urged him, "Rabbi, eat." But he said to them, "I have food to eat of which you do not know." So the disciples said to one another, "Could someone have brought him something to eat?" Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of the one who sent me and to finish his work. Do you not say, 'In four months the harvest will be here'? I tell you, look up and see the fields ripe for the harvest. The reaper is already receiving payment and gathering crops for eternal life, so that the sower and reaper can rejoice together. For here the saying is verified that 'One sows and another reaps.' I sent you to reap what you have not worked for; others have done the work, and you are sharing the fruits of their work." Many of the Samaritans of that town began to believe in him because of the word of the woman who testified, "He told me everything I have done." When the Samaritans came to him, they invited him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. Many more began to believe in him because of his word, and they said to the woman, "We no longer believe because of your word; for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the savior of the world."

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

Feb 27, 2005 – 3rd Lent Exodus 17:3-7; Psalms 95: 1-2, 6-9; Romans 5: 1-2, 5-8; John 4:5-42

"The hour is coming when true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit & truth." Jn 4.23

STRIKE THE ROCK & WATER WILL FLOW FROM IT FOR THE PEOPLE TO DRINK. Ex 17.6

During the day: Worship truth. Don't manipulate it. Understand its place in your destiny. Build on it alone - subterfuge erodes. Truth frees, hiding it enslaves. Loyalty to truth strengthens integrity. Goodness & truth are inseparable; on their base relationships thrive or aren't worth having. Unvarnished truth is the measure of honesty. Only the dishonest reject its judgment, & theirs leads nowhere. Sense inner harmony with the courageous who follow it whatever the cost. Of such are the Kingdom of God, the civilization of love. .

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is truth's embrace - guarantee, if authentic, of insecurity's security. Prayer reflects the human condition, sinful & sorrowful. Prayer distinguishes mistakes of bad judgment from mistakes of bad will, flows with the divine condition, corrects the former, forgives the latter. Both one's own & others'. Through prayer we arrive at God's way of achieving the impossible.

March 6, 2005 Fourth Sunday of Lent

Reading Old Testament: I Samuel 16: 1b, 6-7, 10-13a

The LORD said to Samuel: "Fill your horn with oil, and be on your way. I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem, for I have chosen my king from among his sons." As Jesse and his sons came to the sacrifice, Samuel looked at Eliab and thought, "Surely the LORD's anointed is here before him." But the LORD said to Samuel: "Do not judge from his appearance or from his lofty stature, because I have rejected him. Not as man sees does God see, because man sees the appearance but the LORD looks into the heart." In the same way Jesse presented seven sons before Samuel, but Samuel said to Jesse, "The LORD has not chosen any one of these." Then Samuel asked Jesse, "Are these all the sons you have?" Jesse replied, "There is still the youngest, who is tending the sheep." Samuel said to Jesse, "Send for him; we will not begin the sacrificial banquet until he arrives here." Jesse sent and had the young man brought to them. He was ruddy, a youth handsome to behold and making a splendid appearance. The LORD said, "There--anoint him, for this is the one!" Then Samuel, with the horn of oil in hand, anointed David in the presence of his brothers; and from that day on, the spirit of the LORD rushed upon David.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 23 (with an interpretation)

The Lord is my Shepherd - That's Relationship!

I shall not want. - That's Supply!

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. - That's Rest!

He leadeth me beside the still waters. - That's Refreshment!

He restoreth my soul. - That's Healing!

He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness, - That's Guidance!

For His name sake. - That's Purpose!

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, - That's Testing!

I will fear no evil. - That's Protection!

For Thou art with me. - That's Faithfulness!

Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me. - That's Discipline!

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine - enemies. - That's Hope!

Thou annointest my head with oil. - That's Consecration!

My cup runneth over. - That's Abundance!

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. - That's Blessing!

And I will dwell in the house of the Lord, - That's Security!

Forever. - That's Eternity!

Reading New Testament: Ephesians 5:8-14

Brothers and sisters: You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light, for light produces every kind of goodness and righteousness and truth. Try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the fruitless works of darkness; rather expose them, for it is shameful even to mention the things done by them in secret; but everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for everything that becomes visible is light. Therefore, it says: "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light."

Gospel: John 9:1, 6-9, 13-17, 34-38

As Jesus passed by he saw a man blind from birth. He spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva, and smeared the clay on his eyes, and said to him, "Go wash in the Pool of Siloam"--which means Sent--. So he went and washed, and came back able to see. His neighbors and those who had seen him earlier as a beggar said, "Isn't this the one who used to sit and beg?" Some said, "It is," but others said, "No, he just looks like him." He said, "I am." They brought the one who was once blind to the Pharisees. Now Jesus had made clay and opened his eyes on a sabbath. So then the Pharisees also asked him how he was able

to see. He said to them, "He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and now I can see." So some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, because he does not keep the sabbath." But others said, "How can a sinful man do such signs?" And there was a division among them. So they said to the blind man again, "What do you have to say about him, since he opened your eyes?" He said, "He is a prophet." They answered and said to him, "You were born totally in sin, and are you trying to teach us?" Then they threw him out. When Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, he found him and said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" He answered and said, "Who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?" Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he." He said, "I do believe, Lord," and he worshiped him.

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

MAR 6, 2005 - 4th Lent: 1Sam 16.1,6-7,10-13; Eph 5.8-14; JN 9.1-41

"Jesus spat, made clay with the saliva, put it on his eyes & said, 'Go, wash in the pool of Siloam.' He went, he washed, he saw." THE LORD SAID TO SAMUEL 'THERE! ANOINT HIM! THIS IS THE ONE!'

During the day: The other seems blind to the truth? Don't rub his face in it, just dab a little on his eyes. Let him discover it for himself - curiosity wins more victories over stubbornness than humility. It's truth that matters, not your opinion. His insights may prove richly revealing - don't be surprised if he dabs a little on your eyes, too.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is listening. Before seeing. God's language in prayer is inner silence. He communicates himself. The clarity of conviction is absolute, however beyond our ken; 'Who is he, Sir, that I may believe?' our prayerful response.

March 13, 2005 Fifth Sunday of Lent

Reading Old Testament: Ezekiel 37:12-14

Thus says the LORD GOD: O my people, I will open your graves and have you rise from them, and bring you back to the land of Israel. Then you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves and have you rise from them, O my people! I will put my spirit in you that you may live, and I will settle you upon your land; thus you shall know that I am the LORD. I have promised, and I will do it, says the LORD.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 130: 1-8

With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption. Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD; LORD, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to my voice in supplication. If you, O LORD, mark iniquities, LORD, who can stand? But with you is forgiveness, that you may be revered. I trust in the LORD; my soul trusts in his word. More than sentinels wait for the dawn, let Israel wait for the LORD. For with the LORD is kindness and with him is plenteous redemption; And he will redeem Israel from all their iniquities.

Reading New Testament: Romans 8: 8-11

Brothers and sisters: Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh; on the contrary, you are in the spirit, if only the Spirit of God dwells in you. Whoever does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is alive because of righteousness. If the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, the One who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also, through his Spirit dwelling in you.

Gospel: John 11: 1-45

The sisters of Lazarus sent word to Jesus, saying, "Master, the one you love is ill." When Jesus heard this he said, "This illness is not to end in death, but is for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it." Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So when he heard that he was ill, he remained for two days in the place where he was. Then after this he said to his disciples, "Let us go back to Judea." When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him; but Mary sat at home. Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever you ask of God, God will give you." Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise." Martha said, "I know he will rise, in the resurrection on the last day." Jesus told her, "I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" She said to him, "Yes, Lord. I have come to believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who is coming into the world." He became perturbed and deeply troubled, and said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Sir, come and see." And Jesus wept. So the Jews said, "See how he loved him." But some of them said, "Could not the one who opened the eyes of the blind man have done something so that this man would not have died?" So Jesus, perturbed again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay across it. Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the dead man's sister, said to him, "Lord, by now there will be a stench; he has been dead for four days." Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believe you will see the glory of God?" So they took away the stone. And Jesus raised his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you for hearing me. I know that you always hear me; but because of the crowd here I have said this, that they may believe that you sent me." And when he had said this, he cried out in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, tied hand and foot with burial bands, and his face was wrapped in a cloth. So Jesus said to them, "Untie him and let him go." Now many of the Jews who had come to Mary and seen what he had done began to believe in him.

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

March 13, 2005 Fifth Sunday of Lent - Ez 37.12-14; Rms 8.8-11; JN 11.1-45

“Lazarus, come out!” The dead man came out, tied hand & foot. WHEN I OPEN YOUR GRAVES & HAVE YOU RISE FROM THEM, I WILL PUT MY SPIRIT IN YOU THAT YOU MAY LIVE & KNOW THAT I AM LORD. Ez 37.14

During the day - Respond to the challenge to come fully alive. Whatever it is you're dying of - boredom, inertia, resentment, doubt - dive deep inside the inner tomb where will is dormant & plug it in the Sustaining Will that created you. Designed to work in partnership, do. Choose to make the effort, & watch it happen. Be patient; the pace is his, not yours.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer encourages the discouraged to go on hoping. Prayer accepts & forgives past mistakes, ponders the disordered priorities at their roots, petitions the Good God to give help us untie the bonds that bind us to them. Prayer brings us out into the sunlight of self-confidence, energized by love that lives.

March 20, 2005 Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion

This week's lesson being Palm Sunday is longer than the usual lesson; however, the message is the heart of our Christian faith because God loves us more than we can possibly apprehend.

At the Procession with Palms Gospel: [Mt 21:1-11](#)

When Jesus and the disciples drew near Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find an ass tethered, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them here to me. And if anyone should say anything to you, reply, 'The master has need of them.' Then he will send them at once." This happened so that what had been spoken through the prophet might be fulfilled: Say to daughter Zion, "Behold, your king comes to you, meek and riding on an ass, and on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden." The disciples went and did as Jesus had ordered them. They brought the ass and the colt and laid their cloaks over them, and he sat upon them. The very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and strewed them on the road. The crowds preceding him and those following kept crying out and saying: "Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is the he who comes in the name of the Lord; hosanna in the highest." And when he entered Jerusalem the whole city was shaken and asked, "Who is this?" And the crowds replied, "This is Jesus the prophet, from Nazareth in Galilee."

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](#)

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: [Mt 14--27:66 or 27:11-54](#)

One of the Twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, "What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?" They paid him thirty pieces of silver, and from that time on he looked for an opportunity to hand him over.

On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the disciples approached Jesus and said, "Where do you want us to prepare for you to eat the Passover?" He said, "Go into the city to a certain man and tell

him, "The teacher says, "My appointed time draws near; in your house I shall celebrate the Passover with my disciples.""" The disciples then did as Jesus had ordered, and prepared the Passover.

When it was evening, he reclined at table with the Twelve. And while they were eating, he said, "Amen, I say to you, one of you will betray me." Deeply distressed at this, they began to say to him one after another, "Surely it is not I, Lord?" He said in reply, "He who has dipped his hand into the dish with me is the one who will betray me. The Son of Man indeed goes, as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed. It would be better for that man if he had never been born." Then Judas, his betrayer, said in reply, "Surely it is not I, Rabbi?" He answered, "You have said so."

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and giving it to his disciples said, "Take and eat; this is my body." Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, from now on I shall not drink this fruit of the vine until the day when I drink it with you new in the kingdom of my Father." Then, after singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Then Jesus said to them, "This night all of you will have your faith in me shaken, for it is written: I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be dispersed; but after I have been raised up, I shall go before you to Galilee." Peter said to him in reply, "Though all may have their faith in you shaken, mine will never be." Jesus said to him, "Amen, I say to you, this very night before the cock crows, you will deny me three times." Peter said to him, "Even though I should have to die with you, I will not deny you." And all the disciples spoke likewise.

Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." He took along Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to feel sorrow and distress. Then he said to them, "My soul is sorrowful even to death. Remain here and keep watch with me." He advanced a little and fell prostrate in prayer, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet, not as I will, but as you will." When he returned to his disciples he found them asleep. He said to Peter, "So you could not keep watch with me for one hour? Watch and pray that you may not undergo the test. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." Withdrawing a second time, he prayed again, "My Father, if it is not possible that this cup pass without my drinking it, your will be done!" Then he returned once more and found them asleep, for they could not keep their eyes open. He left them and withdrew again and prayed a third time, saying the same thing again. Then he returned to his disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Behold, the hour is at hand when the Son of Man is to be handed over to sinners. Get up, let us go. Look, my betrayer is at hand."

While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived, accompanied by a large crowd, with swords and clubs, who had come from the chief priests and the elders of the people. His betrayer had arranged a sign with them, saying, "The man I shall kiss is the one; arrest him." Immediately he went over to Jesus and said, "Hail, Rabbi!" and he kissed him. Jesus answered him, "Friend, do what you have come for." Then stepping forward they laid hands on Jesus and arrested him. And behold, one of those who accompanied Jesus put his hand to his sword, drew it, and struck the high priest's servant, cutting off his ear. Then Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back into its sheath, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Do you think that I cannot call upon my Father and he will not provide me at this moment with more than twelve legions of angels? But then how would the Scriptures be fulfilled which say that it must come to pass in this way?" At that hour Jesus said to the crowds, "Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to seize me? Day after day I sat teaching in the temple area, yet you did not arrest me. But all this has come to pass that the writings of the prophets may be fulfilled." Then all the disciples left him and fled.

Those who had arrested Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled. Peter was following him at a distance as far as the high priest's courtyard, and going inside he sat down with the servants to see the outcome. The chief priests and the entire Sanhedrin kept trying to obtain false testimony against Jesus in order to put him to death, but they found none, though many false witnesses came forward. Finally two came forward who stated, "This man said, 'I can destroy the temple of God and within three days rebuild it.'" The high priest rose and addressed him, "Have you no answer? What are these men testifying against you?" But Jesus was silent. Then the high priest said to him, "I order you to tell us under oath before the living God whether you are the Christ, the Son of God." Jesus said to him in reply, "You have said so. But I tell you: From now on you will see 'the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power' and 'coming on the clouds of heaven.'" Then the high priest tore his robes and said, "He has blasphemed! What further need have we of witnesses? You have now heard the blasphemy; what is your opinion?" They said in reply, "He deserves to die!" Then they spat in his face and struck him, while some slapped him, saying, "Prophecy for us, Christ: who is it that struck you?"

Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. One of the maids came over to him and said, "You too were with Jesus the Galilean." But he denied it in front of everyone, saying, "I do not know what you are talking about!" As he went out to the gate, another girl saw him and said to those who were there, "This man was with Jesus the Nazorean." Again he denied it with an oath, "I do not know the man!" A little later the bystanders came over and said to Peter, "Surely you too are one of them; even your speech gives you away." At that he began to curse and to swear, "I do not know the man." And immediately a cock crowed. Then Peter remembered the word that Jesus had spoken: "Before the cock crows you will deny me three times." He went out and began to weep bitterly.

When it was morning, all the chief priests and the elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death. They bound him, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate, the governor.

Then Judas, his betrayer, seeing that Jesus had been condemned, deeply regretted what he had done. He returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, "I have sinned in betraying innocent blood." They said, "What is that to us? Look to it yourself." Flinging the money into the temple, he departed and went off and hanged himself. The chief priests gathered up the money, but said, "It is not lawful to deposit this in the temple treasury, for it is the price of blood." After consultation, they used it to buy the potter's field as a burial place for foreigners. That is why that field even today is called the Field of Blood. Then was fulfilled what had been said through Jeremiah the prophet, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the value of a man with a price on his head, a price set by some of the Israelites, and they paid it out for the potter's field just as the Lord had commanded me.

Now Jesus stood before the governor, and he questioned him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" Jesus said, "You say so." And when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he made no answer. Then Pilate said to him, "Do you not hear how many things they are testifying against you?" But he did not answer him one word, so that the governor was greatly amazed.

Now on the occasion of the feast the governor was accustomed to release to the crowd one prisoner whom they wished. And at that time they had a notorious prisoner called Barabbas. So when they had assembled, Pilate said to them, "Which one do you want me to release to you, Barabbas, or Jesus called Christ?" For he knew that it was out of envy that they had handed him over. While he was still seated on the bench, his wife sent him a message, "Have nothing to do with that righteous man. I suffered much in a dream today because of him." The chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas but to destroy Jesus. The governor said to them in reply, "Which of the two do you want me to release to you?" They answered, "Barabbas!" Pilate said to them, "Then what shall I do with Jesus called Christ?"

They all said, "Let him be crucified!" But he said, "Why? What evil has he done?" They only shouted the louder, "Let him be crucified!" When Pilate saw that he was not succeeding at all, but that a riot was breaking out instead, he took water and washed his hands in the sight of the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood. Look to it yourselves." And the whole people said in reply, "His blood be upon us and upon our children." Then he released Barabbas to them, but after he had Jesus scourged, he handed him over to be crucified.

Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus inside the praetorium and gathered the whole cohort around him. They stripped off his clothes and threw a scarlet military cloak about him. Weaving a crown out of thorns, they placed it on his head, and a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him, they mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" They spat upon him and took the reed and kept striking him on the head. And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the cloak, dressed him in his own clothes, and led him off to crucify him. As they were going out, they met a Cyrenian named Simon; this man they pressed into service to carry his cross.

And when they came to a place called Golgotha --which means Place of the Skull--,they gave Jesus wine to drink mixed with gall. But when he had tasted it, he refused to drink. After they had crucified him, they divided his garments by casting lots; then they sat down and kept watch over him there. And they placed over his head the written charge against him: This is Jesus, the King of the Jews. Two revolutionaries were crucified with him, one on his right and the other on his left. Those passing by reviled him, shaking their heads and saying, "You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself, if you are the Son of God, and come down from the cross!" Likewise the chief priests with the scribes and elders mocked him and said, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. So he is the king of Israel! Let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now if he wants him. For he said, 'I am the Son of God.'" The revolutionaries who were crucified with him also kept abusing him in the same way.

From noon onward, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And about three o'clock Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Some of the bystanders who heard it said, "This one is calling for Elijah." Immediately one of them ran to get a sponge; he soaked it in wine, and putting it on a reed, gave it to him to drink. But the rest said, "Wait, let us see if Elijah comes to save him." But Jesus cried out again in a loud voice, and gave up his spirit. Here all kneel and pause for a short time.

And behold, the veil of the sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth quaked, rocks were split, tombs were opened, and the bodies of many saints who had fallen asleep were raised. And coming forth from their tombs after his resurrection, they entered the holy city and appeared to many. The centurion and the men with him who were keeping watch over Jesus feared greatly when they saw the earthquake and all that was happening, and they said, "Truly, this was the Son of God!" There were many women there, looking on from a distance, who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to him. Among them were Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea named Joseph, who was himself a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus; then Pilate ordered it to be handed over. Taking the body, Joseph wrapped it in clean linen and laid it in his new tomb that he had hewn in the rock. Then he rolled a huge stone across the entrance to the tomb and departed. But Mary Magdalene and the other Mary remained sitting there, facing the tomb. The next day, the one following the day of preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate and said, "Sir, we remember that

this impostor while still alive said, 'After three days I will be raised up.' Give orders, then, that the grave be secured until the third day, lest his disciples come and steal him and say to the people, 'He has been raised from the dead.' This last imposture would be worse than the first." Pilate said to them, "The guard is yours; go, secure it as best you can." So they went and secured the tomb by fixing a seal to the stone and setting the guard.

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Texas Trinidad by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ
March 20, 2005 Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion Is 50.4-7; Phil 2.6-11; MT 26.14-27.66

THE LORD GOD IS MY HELP; I SHALL NOT BE DISGRACED. Is 50.7

"One of the Twelve went to the chief priests & said, 'What will you give me if I hand him over to you?'"

During the day - Don't be a Judas, even in little things. Loyalty is not negotiable. Friendship is too precious a gift to be sacrificed to self-gratification. Measure the loss to others before closing a deal. Keep your mouth shut when conversation turns to gossip. Protect personal integrity against sudden onslaughts of material or ambitious avarice. Kiss with love, not for show. Betrayals either haunt or destroy - be quick to regret & repair, forgiveness your reward.

ABOUT PRAYER - In prayer, the heart opens to the Christ within & the Christ without. Sometimes he comes up, sometimes he comes in, sometimes both. We pray with Jesus within by diving deep into our own interior, growing in awareness of possessing while being possessed. We pray with the Christ above & all around us, immersed with him in that eternal moment on the cross when his dying humanity exploded into his transcendent divinity. He brings both to the encounter of prayer.

March 27, 2005 - Easter Sunday The Resurrection of the Lord The Mass of Easter Day

New Testament: [Acts 10:34a, 37-43](#)

Peter proceeded to speak and said: "You know 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. We are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree. This man God raised on the third day and granted that he be visible, not to all the people, but to us, the witnesses chosen by God in advance, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. He commissioned us to preach to the people and testify that he is the one appointed by God as judge of the living and the dead. To him all the prophets bear witness, that everyone who believes in him will receive forgiveness of sins through his name."

Responsorial Psalm: [Ps 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23](#)

This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad. Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his mercy endures forever. Let the house of Israel say, "His mercy endures forever." "The right hand of the LORD has struck with power; the right hand of the LORD is exalted. I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the LORD." The stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. By the LORD has this been done; it is wonderful in our eyes.

New Testament II: [Col 3:1-4](#)

Brothers and sisters: If then 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.

Gospel: [Luke 24: 13-35](#)

On the first day of the week, Mary of Magdala came to the tomb early in the morning, while it was still dark, and saw the stone removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and told them, "They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don't know where they put him." So Peter and the other disciple went out and came to the tomb. They both ran, but the other disciple ran faster than Peter and arrived at the tomb first; he bent down and saw the burial cloths there, but did not go in. When Simon Peter arrived after him, he went into the tomb and saw the burial cloths there, and the cloth that had covered his head, not with the burial cloths but rolled up in a separate place. Then the other disciple also went in, the one who had arrived at the tomb first, and he saw and believed. For they did not yet understand the Scripture that he had to rise from the dead.

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Texas Trinidad by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ
March 27, 2005 - Easter Sunday The Resurrection of the Lord The Mass of Easter Day
Acts 10.34-43; Col 3.1-4; JN 20.1-9

THIS MAN GOD RAISED ON THE THIRD DAY THAT HE BE VISIBLE,
NOT TO ALL BUT TO THOSE CHOSEN TO BE WITNESSES.

"Mary of Magdala came to the tomb early in the morning while it
was still dark & saw the stone removed from the tomb."

During the day: Start the day early, while it's still dark. Let the dawn of each new day reveal an empty tomb, the stone of yesterday rolled back. Sure, it's still there; but not the obstacle it was - unless you deny the Rising Sun the opportunity to be the new beginning it always is. New too are you, if you're allowing faith to grow.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer deepens the awareness that God lives within. Imperceptibly, prayer turns the inside out, & the one at prayer finds himself in God; one's own humanity becomes the humanity of the risen Christ, & morning prayer evolves into the daily routine of serving others. Embrace it.

April 3, 2005 Second Sunday of Easter or Divine Mercy Sunday

Reading [Acts 2:42-47](#)

They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of bread and to the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their property and possessions and divide them among all according to each one's need. Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple area and to breaking bread in their homes. They ate their meals with exultation and sincerity of heart, praising God and enjoying favor with all the people. And every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

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; let us be glad and rejoice in it.

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

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in his great mercy gave us a new birth to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you who by the power of God are safeguarded through faith, to a salvation that is ready to be revealed in the final time. In this you rejoice, although now for a little while you may have to suffer through various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold that is perishable even though tested by fire, may prove to be for praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Although you have not seen him you love him; even though you do not see him now yet believe in him, you rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, as you attain the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

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 Trinidad by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ

April 3, 2005 Second Sunday of Easter or Divine Mercy Sunday

Acts 2.42-47; 1Peter 1.3-9; JN 20.19-31

THE NEW CONVERTS REMAINED FAITHFUL TO THE TEACHING OF THE APOSTLES.

"You believe, Thomas, because you have seen. Blessed are those who have not seen, yet believed."

During the day: Be blessed. Run the risks inherent in believing in others. Self-confidence is buoyed by trust, diminished by doubt. The effort encouraged by expectation is boosted by grace. God designed us for success; even when well-intentioned efforts fail, future fruits are seeded by loving trust. Relationships are nurtured by effort, not by success. Provide both others & yourself the necessary ingredient.

ABOUT PRAYER: All Christian prayer is the prayer of the Risen Christ. So, too, is all other authentic prayer, even if unknowingly. Prayer is the exchange between human & divine, consecrated forever & for all by Christ's loving victory over death. Made available to each & every one as gateway to the road home.

April 10, 2005 Third Week of Easter

Reading Acts: Acts 2:14, 22-33

Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice, and proclaimed: "You who are Jews, indeed all of you staying in Jerusalem. Let this be known to you, and listen to my words. You who are Israelites, hear these words. Jesus the Nazorean was a man commended to you by God with mighty deeds, wonders, and signs, which God worked through him in your midst, as you yourselves know. This man, delivered up by the set plan and foreknowledge of God, you killed, using lawless men to crucify him. But God raised him up, releasing him from the throes of death, because it was impossible for him to be held by it. For David says of him: I saw the Lord ever before me, with him at my right hand I shall not be disturbed. Therefore my heart has been glad and my tongue has exulted; my flesh, too, will dwell in hope, because you will not abandon my soul to the netherworld, nor will you suffer your holy one to see corruption. You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence' "My brothers, one can confidently say to you about the patriarch David that he died and was buried, and his tomb is in our midst to this day. But since he was a prophet and knew that God had sworn an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants upon his throne, he foresaw and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that neither was he abandoned to the netherworld nor did his flesh see corruption. God raised this Jesus; of this we are all witnesses. Exalted at the right hand of God, he received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father and poured him forth, as you see and hear."

Responsorial Psalm: Ps 16:1-2, 5, 7-8, 9-10, 11

Lord, you will show us the path of life. 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, abounding joy in your presence, the delights at your right hand forever.

Reading New Testament: 1 Pt 1:17-21

Beloved: If you invoke as Father him who judges impartially according to each one's works, conduct yourselves with reverence during the time of your sojourning, realizing that you were ransomed from your futile conduct, handed on by your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold but with the precious blood of Christ as of a spotless unblemished lamb. He was known before the foundation of the world but revealed in the final time for you, who through him believe in God who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

Gospel: Lk 24:13-35

That very day, the first day of the week, two of Jesus' disciples were going to a village seven miles from Jerusalem called Emmaus, and they were conversing about all the things that had occurred. And it happened that while they were conversing and debating, Jesus himself drew near and walked with them, but their eyes were prevented from recognizing him. He asked them, "What are you discussing as you walk along?" They stopped, looking downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, said to him in reply, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know of the things that have taken place there in these days?" And he replied to them, "What sort of things?" They said to him, "The things that happened to Jesus the Nazorean, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, how our chief priests and rulers both handed him over to a sentence of death and crucified him. But we were hoping that he would be the one to redeem Israel; and besides all this, it is now the third day since this took place. Some women from our group, however, have astounded us: they were at the tomb early in the morning and did not find his body; they came back and reported that they had indeed seen a vision of

angels who announced that he was alive. Then some of those with us went to the tomb and found things just as the women had described, but him they did not see." And he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are! How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them what referred to him in all the Scriptures. As they approached the village to which they were going, he gave the impression that he was going on farther. But they urged him, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them. And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he spoke to us on the way and opened the Scriptures to us?" So they set out at once and returned to Jerusalem where they found gathered together the eleven and those with them who were saying, "The Lord has truly been raised and has appeared to Simon!" Then the two recounted what had taken place on the way and how he was made known to them in the breaking of bread.

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

April 10, 2005 Third Week of Easter

Acts 2:14, 22-33; Ps 16:1-2, 5, 7-8, 9-10, 11; 1 Pt 1:17-21; Lk 24:13-35

YOU HAVE MADE KNOWN THE WAY OF LIFE TO ME.

"As they talked Jesus himself came up & walked with them. They didn't recognize him."

During the day - Look around you. Climb out of your own woes long enough to see the goodness & happiness of others, even though they bear the scars of suffering. The threat of failure, even death, is but the harbinger of fuller life here & now as well as hereafter. Hope doesn't die with defeat; truth survives in one form or another. Build on it - you'll be surprised at your own potential for new & greater things. Above all, keep your sense of humor.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer's roots are in the old family bible. Prayerfully we thumb through it trying to find that passage that fits the present situation. Our hearts burn within us when we find it - the Spirit that inspired it also illumines our minds as he fits it to our needs. Courage is born of hope as prayer brings faith to focus on God's will rather than our own. Eventually we realize he knows best.

APRIL 17, 2005 4th Easter

Reading: Acts 2:14a, 36-41

Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice, and proclaimed: "Let the whole house of Israel know for certain that God has made both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified." Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and they asked Peter and the other apostles, "What are we to do, my brothers?" Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is made to you and to your children and to all those far off, whomever the Lord our God will call." He testified with many other arguments, and was exhorting them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand persons were added that day.

Responsorial Psalm: Ps 23: 13a, 3b4, 5, 6

The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want. The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. In verdant pastures he gives me repose; beside restful waters he leads me; he refreshes my soul. He guides me in right paths for his name's sake. Even though I walk in the dark valley I fear no evil; for you are at my side with your rod and your staff that give me courage. You spread the table before me in the sight of my foes; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Only goodness and kindness follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD for years to come.

Reading New Testament: 1 Pt 2:20b-25

Beloved: If you are patient when you suffer for doing what is good, this is a grace before God. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his footsteps. He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth. When he was insulted, he returned no insult; when he suffered, he did not threaten; instead, he handed himself over to the one who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body upon the cross, so that, free from sin, we might live for righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. For you had gone astray like sheep, but you have now returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.

Gospel: Jn 10:1-10

Jesus said: "Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever does not enter a sheepfold through the gate but climbs over elsewhere is a thief and a robber. But whoever enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens it for him, and the sheep hear his voice, as the shepherd calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has driven out all his own, he walks ahead of them, and the sheep follow him, because they recognize his voice. But they will not follow a stranger; they will run away from him, because they do not recognize the voice of strangers." Although Jesus used this figure of speech, the Pharisees did not realize what he was trying to tell them.

So Jesus said again, "Amen, amen, I say to you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. A thief comes only to steal and slaughter and destroy; I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly."

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

APRIL 17, 2005 4th Easter Acts 2.14,36-41; 1Peter 2.20-25; JN 10.1-10

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

GOD HAS MADE THE JESUS YOU CRUCIFIED BOTH LORD & CHRIST.

"I have come that they [my sheep] may have life & have it to the full."

During the day - Put your heart on hinges that open both in & out. The flow of fully fruitful love is in both directions. The easier the exit for you & access for others, the more likely an authentic encounter. You're not loved because you're lovable; you're lovable because you're loved. Awareness of another's affection sparks gratitude; which fans the flame, not of passion, but of wanting what's best for the other. Wanting it, seek it. Love is shown in deeds rather than in words.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is of the will rather than intellect or emotion. In prayer one is keen to the sense of God - his being, his will, his doing, all one & the same. Prayer plugs one in, willing what he's willing-doing-being, whatever that might be - concepts frequently don't fully grasp the situation. Like sheep, we're tuned to the voice of the shepherd, & follow wherever he leads.

APRIL 24, 2005 - 5th Easter

Reading Acts: Acts 6:1-7

As the number of disciples continued to grow, the Hellenists complained against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. So the Twelve called together the community of the disciples and said, "It is not right for us to neglect the word of God to serve at table. Brothers, select from among you seven reputable men, filled with the Spirit and wisdom, whom we shall appoint to this task, whereas we shall devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." The proposal was acceptable to the whole community, so they chose Stephen, a man filled with faith and the Holy Spirit, also Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicholas of Antioch, a convert to Judaism. They presented these men to the apostles who prayed and laid hands on them. The word of God continued to spread, and the number of the disciples in Jerusalem increased greatly; even a large group of priests were becoming obedient to the faith.

Responsorial Psalm: Ps 33:1-2, 4-5, 18-19

Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you. Exult, you just, in the LORD; praise from the upright is fitting. Give thanks to the LORD on the harp; with the ten-stringed lyre chant his praises. Upright is the word of the LORD, and all his works are trustworthy. He loves justice and right; of the kindness of the LORD the earth is full. 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.

Reading New Testament: 1 Pt 2:4-9

Beloved: Come to him, a living stone, rejected by human beings but chosen and precious in the sight of God, and, like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it says in Scripture: Behold, I am laying a stone in Zion, a cornerstone, chosen and precious, and whoever believes in it shall not be put to shame. Therefore, its value is for you who have faith, but for those without faith: The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone, and a stone that will make people stumble, and a rock that will make them fall. They stumble by disobeying the word, as is their destiny. You are "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, so that you may announce the praises" of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

Gospel: Jn 14:1-12

Jesus said to his disciples: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God; have faith also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If there were not, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be. Where I am going you know the way." Thomas said to him, "Master, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, then you will also know my Father. From now on you do know him and have seen him." Philip said to him, "Master, show us the Father, and that will be enough for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you for so long a time and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on my own. The Father who dwells in me is doing his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else, believe because of the works themselves. Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever believes in me will do the works that I do, and will do greater ones than these, because I am going to the Father."

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

APRIL 24, 2005 - 5th Easter Acts 6.1-7; 1Peter 2.4-9; JN 14.1-12

**THE WORD OF THE LORD CONTINUED TO SPREAD, & THE
NUMBER OF DISCIPLES INCREASED.**

"Whoever believes in me will perform the works I do, & even greater."

During the day - Godlike, work as designed. Responsibly. Honestly. Generously. For the common good. Cheerfully. Patiently. Respectfully. Considerately. Courageously. Know yourself. Be yourself, in all your uniqueness - you're the only you God made. Expect him to use you as designed. Produce the fruits he expects of you; let him provide whatever miracle necessary to so do. It's a matter of trust.

ABOUT PRAYER - Prayer purifies the will till it wants what God wants, irrespective of one's own desires. Prayer ambitions God's goals, sight unseen. Prayer initiates action, then evaluates it when day is done. Prayer uses God's perspective to measure success, recalling that for him there is no such thing as failure. Only love, or the lack of it.

May 1, 2005 Sixth Sunday of Easter

When the Ascension of the Lord is celebrated the following Sunday, the second reading and Gospel from the Seventh Sunday of Easter may be read on the Sixth Sunday of Easter.

Reading Acts 8:5-8, 14-17

Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed the Christ to them. With one accord, the crowds paid attention to what was said by Philip when they heard it and saw the signs he was doing. For unclean spirits, crying out in a loud voice, came out of many possessed people, and many paralyzed or crippled people were cured. There was great joy in that city. Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent them Peter and John, who went down and prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit, for it had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 66: 1-7, 16, 20

Let all the earth cry out to God with joy. Shout joyfully to God, all the earth, sing praise to the glory of his name; proclaim his glorious praise. Say to God, "How tremendous are your deeds! "Let all on earth worship and sing praise to you, sing praise to your name!" Come and see the works of God, his tremendous deeds among the children of Adam. He has changed the sea into dry land; through the river they passed on foot; therefore let us rejoice in him. He rules by his might forever. Hear now, all you who fear God, while I declare what he has done for me. Blessed be God who refused me not my prayer or his kindness!

Reading New Testament: 1 Peter 3:15-18

Beloved: Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts. Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope, but do it with gentleness and reverence, keeping your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who defame your good conduct in Christ may themselves be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that be the will of God, than for doing evil. For Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the sake of the unrighteous, that he might lead you to God. Put to death in the flesh, he was brought to life in the Spirit.

Gospel: John 14:15-21

Jesus said to his disciples: "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot accept, because it neither sees nor knows him. But you know him, because he remains with you, and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me, because I live and you will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father and you are in me and I in you. Whoever has my commandments and observes them is the one who loves me. And whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and reveal myself to him."

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

May 1, 2005 Sixth Sunday of Easter Acts 8:5-8, 14-17; Psalms 66: 1-7, 16, 20; 1 Peter 3:15-18; John 14:15-21

PETER & JOHN WENT DOWN, PRAYED FOR THE SAMARITANS,
LAID HANDS ON THEM & THEY RECEIVED THE HOLY SPIRIT.

"The Father will give you another advocate to be with your forever, the Spirit of truth,
whom the world cannot accept since it neither sees nor knows him."

During the day: Even in little things, be loyal to truth. It's at the heart of everything vital. Paradoxically, you'll be going against the grain, both yours & others; it's hard & demanding, even in little things, & we always prefer the easy way out. Yet the spirit of each is designed for the common good, & the courage to be truthful provides also the gentleness of compassion..

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is hanging in there, muttering 'You exist & I am Yours' when every other source of security fails. Once peace begins to take hold, prayer adds 'You love me & I trust You.' As the mind then registers 'You're using me for something - there's purpose to this', prayer moves to the will: 'I'm available.'

May 8, 2005 Seventh Sunday of Easter

Acts 1:1-11

Jesus Taken Up Into Heaven

1In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach 2until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. 3After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. 4On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. 5For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." 6So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" 7He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. 8But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." 9After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. 10They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. 11"Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

Eph 1.17-23

17I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. 18I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, 19and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, 20which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 21far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. 22And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, 23which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

MT 28:16-20 (The Great Commission)

16Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. 17When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. 18Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

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

May 8, 2005 Seventh Sunday of Easter - Acts 1.1-11; Eph 1.17-23; MT 28:16-20

YOU WILL RECEIVE POWER FROM THE HOLY SPIRIT & BE MY

WITNESSES TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

**"Go, make disciples of all, baptize in the name of the Father, Son
& Holy Spirit, teach to observe all that I have commanded you."**

During the day: Observe whatever has been commanded by legitimate authority. You are as free to do the wrong thing as the right. Use this freedom to create order, not chaos. There is power in working together - order, if doing the right thing; chaos, if doing the wrong. The witness of properly used freedom is itself the spirit that inspires others to do likewise. The bond created is love. Everlasting.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer opens the doors of both mind & heart to the power of the Spirit: light to the intellect, courage to the will. Both are gifts, to be either accepted or rejected. The predisposition of prayer is generosity, the presumption trust. When both kick in, the Spirit adjusts the prayers & actions of all to the good of the whole: A civilization of love, the kingdom of God.

May 15, 2005 Pentecost Sunday Mass During the Day

Reading 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 104: 1, 24, 29-31, 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 I Corinthians 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: John 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 15, 2005 - Acts 2:1-11; Psalm 104: 1, 24, 29-31, 34; I Cor. 12: 3b-7, 12-13; Gospel: John 20: 19-23

During the day - Breathe forgiveness. Breathe it in; breathe it out - new life into ruptured relationships. Pardon needs to be sought to be granted. Once sought, taken for granted, only key to progress. Retained? Progress stalls, fault now of the offended. If you don't breathe, you die.

ABOUT PRAYER - The lungs pray always, breathing God in, breathing God out, praising him just by being lungs. That's the way we praise God best, too: just being. You, the person you are; me, the person I am - the only one of me he made! No better, no worse than anyone else - just better or worse than myself. Prayer helps me evaluate myself, not the other fellow. Prayer shows me when I've been offensive & suggests I apologize; it's the other's problem to forgive, & I hope he does, for his sake. When the shoe's on the other foot, I hope I do too.

Sunday MAY 22, 2005 - Trinity Sunday

Reading Old Testament: Exodus 34: 4b-6, 8-9

Early in the morning Moses went up Mount Sinai as the LORD had commanded him, taking along the two stone tablets. Having come down in a cloud, the LORD stood with Moses there and proclaimed his name, "LORD." Thus the LORD passed before him and cried out, "The LORD, the LORD, a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger and rich in kindness and fidelity." Moses at once bowed down to the ground in worship. Then he said, "If I find favor with you, O LORD, do come along in our company. This is indeed a stiff-necked people; yet pardon our wickedness and sins, and receive us as your own."

Responsorial Psalm: Daniel 3: 52-56

Glory and praise for ever! Blessed are you, O Lord, the God of our fathers, praiseworthy and exalted above all forever; And blessed is your holy and glorious name, praiseworthy and exalted above all for all ages. Blessed are you in the temple of your holy glory, praiseworthy and glorious above all forever. Blessed are you on the throne of your kingdom, praiseworthy and exalted above all forever. Blessed are you who look into the depths from your throne upon the cherubim, praiseworthy and exalted above all forever.

Reading New Testament: 2 Corinthians 13: 11-13

Brothers and sisters, rejoice. Mend your ways, encourage one another, agree with one another, live in peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the holy ones greet you. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.

Gospel John 3: 16-18

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him will not be condemned, but whoever does not believe has already been condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

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

Sunday MAY 22, 2005 -Trinity Sunday - Exodus 34.4-9; 2Cor 13.11-13; JN 3.16-18

THE LORD, A MERCIFUL & GRACIOUS GOD, SLOW TO ANGER & RICH IN KINDNESS & MERCY

"God so loved the world he gave his only Son, that everyone who
believes in him might not perish but have eternal life."

During the day - Love your little corner of the world. You may not be able to do much about the rest of it, but your love can make a difference where you live. What goes on around you is your business. A responsible, friendly reaction defuses explosive situations. A respectful, firm defense of truth changes people's minds. The courage to withdraw from a damaging project while remaining committed to the community's welfare may point to a better solution down the road. Good will is abundant, it just needs leadership.

ABOUT PRAYER - In prayer we attempt God's perspective, outside of time, beyond space. Prayer is awareness of the whole world in the palm of his hand, all history now. Prayer plunges us into the real world, not the illusion we're living. Daunted, prayer follows Christ into the sub world of pain & suffering, drugs & violence, physical & sexual abuse, worthlessness & despair - & wonders what he's doing there! Prayer shows us, & we hear him say 'go & do likewise.'

May 29, 2005 - The Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ

Reading Old Testament: Deut. 8: 2-3, 14b-16a

Moses said to the people: "Remember how for forty years now the LORD, your God, has directed all your journeying in the desert, so as to test you by affliction and find out whether or not it was your intention to keep his commandments. He therefore let you be afflicted with hunger, and then fed you with manna, a food unknown to you and your fathers, in order to show you that not by bread alone does one live, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of the LORD. "Do not forget the LORD, your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that place of slavery; who guided you through the vast and terrible desert with its saraph serpents and scorpions, its parched and waterless ground; who brought forth water for you from the flinty rock and fed you in the desert with manna, a food unknown to your fathers."

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 147: 12-15, 19-20

Praise the Lord, Jerusalem. Glorify the LORD, O Jerusalem; praise your God, O Zion. For he has strengthened the bars of your gates; he has blessed your children within you. He has granted peace in your borders; with the best of wheat he fills you. He sends forth his command to the earth; swiftly runs his word! He has proclaimed his word to Jacob, his statutes and his ordinances to Israel. He has not done thus for any other nation; his ordinances he has not made known to them. Alleluia.

Reading New Testament: I Corinthians 10: 16-17

Brothers and sisters: The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because the loaf of bread is one, we, though many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.

Gospel: John 6: 51-58

Jesus said to the Jewish crowds: "I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world." The Jews quarreled among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" Jesus said to them, "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him. Just as the living Father sent me and I have life because of the Father, so also the one who feeds on me will have life because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Unlike your ancestors who ate and still died, whoever eats this bread will live forever."

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

May 29, 2005 - Dt. 8:2-3, 14-16; 1 Cor 10:16-17; John 6:51-58

**NOT BY BREAD ALONE DOES MAN LIVE BUT BY EVERY WORD
THAT COMES FROM THE MOUTH OF THE LORD.**

"The bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world."

During the day - Feed others. Feed them with your time & attention, your friendship & respect, your energy & talents. Make a difference in the lives of the people you share it with. You're worth more than you know; don't let doubt tie you up. Others' hunger is sated by the dignity with which you honor them. Just being there & being yourself is a word of encouragement that nourishes, strengthens, inspires. Speak it. .

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer feeds on the word of God It chews - discerns it, assimilates it, assumes it. Prayer is communication - listening/responding. The integrity of prayer reflects the purity of the truth perceived, its humility refracts it to the searching hearts of the confused. God does the rest.

June 5, 2005 - Tenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading Hosea 6:3-6

In their affliction, people will say: "Let us know, let us strive to know the LORD; as certain as the dawn is his coming, and his judgment shines forth like the light of day! He will come to us like the rain, like spring rain that waters the earth." What can I do with you, Ephraim? What can I do with you, Judah? Your piety is like a morning cloud, like the dew that early passes away. For this reason I smote them through the prophets, I slew them by the words of my mouth; for it is love that I desire, not sacrifice, and knowledge of God rather than holocausts.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 50: 1, 8, 12-15

To the upright I will show the saving power of God. God the LORD has spoken and summoned the earth, from the rising of the sun to its setting. "Not for your sacrifices do I rebuke you, for your holocausts are before me always." "If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for mine are the world and its fullness. Do I eat the flesh of strong bulls, or is the blood of goats my drink?" "Offer to God praise as your sacrifice and fulfill your vows to the Most High; then call upon me in time of distress; I will rescue you, and you shall glorify me."

Reading Romans 4: 18-25

Brothers and sisters: Abraham believed, hoping against hope, that he would become "the father of many nations," according to what was said, "Thus shall your descendants be." He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body as already dead--for he was almost a hundred years old-- and the dead womb of Sarah. He did not doubt God's promise in unbelief; rather, he was strengthened by faith and gave glory to God and was fully convinced that what he had promised he was also able to do. That is why it was credited to him as righteousness. But it was not for him alone that it was written that it was credited to him; it was also for us, to whom it will be credited, who believe in the one who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was handed over for our transgressions and was raised for our justification.

Gospel Matthew 9: 9-13

As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the customs post. He said to him, "Follow me." And he got up and followed him. While he was at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat with Jesus and his disciples. The Pharisees saw this and said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" He heard this and said, "Those who are well do not need a physician, but the sick do. Go and learn the meaning of the words, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' I did not come to call the righteous but sinners."

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

June 5, 2005 - Tenth Sunday in Ordinary Time Hosea 6:3-6; Romans 4:18-25; Mt 9:9-13

IT IS LOVE I DESIRE, NOT SACRIFICE, KNOWLEDGE OF GOD RATHER THAN HOLOCAUSTS.

"Go & learn the meaning of the words 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice'.

I did not come to call the righteous but sinners."

During the day - Be a good sinner. Have a healthy sense of sin, not a guilt complex. Define your options: the you you want to be. Then work at it thoroughly & continuously. Reward the successes, correct the failures. The Friend you're trying to please is always there to help. Let him.

ABOUT PRAYER - A sinner's prayer is regret born of gratitude. Regret for the mistakes of bad will, recognition they violate the options made. Authentic regret recommits one to improve & assume responsibility for damage done. Prayer petitions God's patience, help & guidance, aware the divine designer knows better than we the flaws & how to fix them. Prayer reminds us we're loved not in spite of our sins but because of them. Hope born of the security of knowing we're not rejected is the motor that drives, faith the rudder that steers as we stay the course that brings us to true & eternal love.

June 12, 2005 Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading Exodus 19: 2-6a

In those days, the Israelites came to the desert of Sinai and pitched camp. While Israel was encamped here in front of the mountain, Moses went up the mountain to God. Then the LORD called to him and said, "Thus shall you say to the house of Jacob; tell the Israelites: You have seen for yourselves how I treated the Egyptians and how I bore you up on eagle wings and brought you here to myself. Therefore, if you hearken to my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my special possession, dearer to me than all other people, though all the earth is mine. You shall be to me a kingdom of priests, a holy nation."

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 100: 1-3, 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 Romans 5: 6-11

Brothers and sisters: Christ, while we were still helpless, yet died at the appointed time for the ungodly. Indeed, only with difficulty does one die for a just person, though perhaps for a good person one might even find courage to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us. How much more then, since we are now justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath. Indeed, if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, how much more, once reconciled, will we be saved by his life. Not only that, but we also boast of God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Gospel Matthew 9:36 - 10:8

At the sight of the crowds, Jesus' heart was moved with pity for them because they were troubled and abandoned, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest." Then he summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits to drive them out and to cure every disease and every illness. The names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon called Peter, and his brother Andrew; James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew, Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James, the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddeus; Simon from Cana, and Judas Iscariot who betrayed him. Jesus sent out these twelve after instructing them thus, "Do not go into pagan territory or enter a Samaritan town. Go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As you go, make this proclamation: 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, drive out demons. Without cost you have received; without cost you are to give."

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

June 12, 2005 – 11th Ordinary Time Ex:19:2-6; Rms 5:6-11; Mt 9:36 – 10:8

YOU SHALL BE TO ME A KINGDOM OF PRIESTS, A HOLY NATION

"Without cost you have received; without cost you are to give."

During the day - Give without expecting payment. Whatever you charge for your services, know that the gift of self is not for sale. You're not yours to give. You belong to Another; by design his gift to others. Fulfillment is not in payment, it's in the harvest. Labor's worth is in its fruits: finding the lost, healing the broken-hearted, raising the dead from their despair, driving out the demons of weakness & fear. A tender touch; a genuine smile; an understanding nod proclaim an inner kingdom where love is all that matters.

ABOUT PRAYER - Ignatius prayed it this way: 'Lord, teach me to be generous. To serve you as you deserve. to give & not to count the cost; to fight & not to heed the wounds; to toil & not to seek for rest; to labor & ask for no reward save knowing I do your will.'

JUNE 19, 2005 - 12th of yr:

Reading Jeremiah 20:10-13

Jeremiah said: "I hear the whisperings of many: 'Terror on every side! Denounce! let us denounce him!' All those who were my friends are on the watch for any misstep of mine. 'Perhaps he will be trapped; then we can prevail, and take our vengeance on him.' But the LORD is with me, like a mighty champion: my persecutors will stumble, they will not triumph. In their failure they will be put to utter shame, to lasting, unforgettable confusion. O LORD of hosts, you who test the just, who probe mind and heart, let me witness the vengeance you take on them, for to you I have entrusted my cause. Sing to the LORD, praise the LORD, for he has rescued the life of the poor from the power of the wicked!"

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 69:8-10, 14, 17, 33-35

Lord, in your great love, answer me. For your sake I bear insult, and shame covers my face. I have become an outcast to my brothers, a stranger to my children, because zeal for your house consumes me, and the insults of those who blaspheme you fall upon me. I pray to you, O LORD, for the time of your favor, O God! In your great kindness answer me with your constant help. Answer me, O LORD, for bounteous is your kindness; in your great mercy turn toward me. "See, you lowly ones, and be glad; you who seek God, may your hearts revive! For the LORD hears the poor, and his own who are in bonds he spurns not. Let the heavens and the earth praise him, the seas and whatever moves in them!"

Reading Romans 5:12-15

Brothers and sisters: Through one man sin entered the world, and through sin, death, and thus death came to all men, inasmuch as all sinned -- for up to the time of the law, sin was in the world, though sin is not accounted when there is no law. But death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who did not sin after the pattern of the trespass of Adam, who is the type of the one who was to come. But the gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, how much more did the grace of God and the gracious gift of the one man Jesus Christ overflow for the many.

Gospel Matthew 10:26-33

Jesus said to the Twelve: "Fear no one. Nothing is concealed that will not be revealed, nor secret that will not be known. What I say to you in the darkness, speak in the light; what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. And do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather, be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna. Are not two sparrows sold for a small coin? Yet not one of them falls to the ground without your Father's knowledge. Even all the hairs of your head are counted. So do not be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. Everyone who acknowledges me before others I will acknowledge before my heavenly Father. But whoever denies me before others, I will deny before my heavenly Father."

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

JUNE 19, 2005 - 12th of yr: Jer 20.10-13; Rms 5.12-15; MT 10.26-33

THE LORD IS WITH ME, LIKE A MIGHTY CHAMPION

"Do not be afraid of those who can kill the body but cannot kill the soul.

Rather be afraid of the one who can destroy both body & soul."

During the day - Stay alive. Don't be the living dead. Fearless of death, go the limit of life. Inside & out. First the inner, as deep as you can: to the Center that radiates a life that dies only if contact with the center broken. The only one who can break it is you. Don't. So the only one to fear is you. Do.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer harmonizes outer & inner, pulls the outer in, explodes the inner out. Prayer embraces things & people, absorbs situations & challenges, seeks grandeur in the small, senses simplicity in the grand. Prayer inhales the goodness in beauty, the beauty in truth, the truth in life. Life, order as endless as truth & beauty, is the expression of love. Prayer resists the blind attraction to chaos & locks in to the humanity of Christ, sole circuit with the divine.

JUNE 26, 2005 - 13th of yr:

Reading 2 Kings 4:8-11,14-16a

One day Elisha came to Shunem, where there was a woman of influence, who urged him to dine with her. Afterward, whenever he passed by, he used to stop there to dine. So she said to her husband, "I know that Elisha is a holy man of God. Since he visits us often, let us arrange a little room on the roof and furnish it for him with a bed, table, chair, and lamp, so that when he comes to us he can stay there." Sometime later Elisha arrived and stayed in the room overnight. Later Elisha asked, "Can something be done for her?" His servant Gehazi answered, "Yes! She has no son, and her husband is getting on in years." Elisha said, "Call her." When the woman had been called and stood at the door, Elisha promised, "This time next year you will be fondling a baby son."

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 89:2-3, 16-19

For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord. The promises of the LORD I will sing forever, through all generations my mouth shall proclaim your faithfulness. For you have said, "My kindness is established forever;" in heaven you have confirmed your faithfulness. Blessed the people who know the joyful shout; in the light of your countenance, O LORD, they walk. At your name they rejoice all the day, and through your justice they are exalted. You are the splendor of their strength, and by your favor our horn is exalted. For to the LORD belongs our shield, and the Holy One of Israel, our king.

Reading Romans 6:3-4, 8-11

Brothers and sisters: Are you unaware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life. If, then, we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. We know that Christ, raised from the dead, dies no more; death no longer has power over him. As to his death, he died to sin once and for all; as to his life, he lives for God. Consequently, you too must think of yourselves as dead to sin and living for God in Christ Jesus.

Gospel: Matthew 10: 37-42

Jesus said to his apostles: "Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me. Whoever receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and whoever receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will receive a righteous man's reward. And whoever gives only a cup of cold water to one of these little ones to drink because the little one is a disciple-- amen, I say to you, he will surely not lose his reward."

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

JUNE 26, 2005 - 13th of yr: 2 Kings, 4.8-11,14-16; Rms 6.3-4,8-11; MT 10.37-42

'THIS TIME NEXT YEAR YOU WILL BE FONDLING A BABY SON'

"Whoever receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receives a prophet's reward."

During the day - Be a prophet. Announce & denounce. Announce what's good & right, denounce the obstacles to what is. Start in your own heart. Share with others what you know to be good & right about yourself, wrestle to correct what isn't. Promote opinions, not because they're yours but because you believe them to be true. Listen with respect to what others honestly believe to be true, disregard what's obviously only self-interest. Seeking what's good & right together, you'll find it - that's what we're made for.

ABOUT PRAYER: Pray with self-confidence in your own integrity. After all, a good God made you; he ought to know how to take care of you. Puzzled? Expect guidance. Discouraged? Ask for strength. Defeated? Hang on to hope. Successful? Don't forget to say thanks, & be sure to fulfill his purpose, not your own. Prayer shapes one's niche in humanity's history, indispensable to the healing of the not-so-good by Goodness itself. The human Christ gets all the credit, we take all the blame.

JULY 3, 2005 - 14th of yr:

Reading Zechariah 9: 9-10

Thus says the LORD: Rejoice heartily, O daughter Zion, shout for joy, O daughter Jerusalem! See, your king shall come to you; a just savior is he, meek, and riding on an ass, on a colt, the foal of an ass. He shall banish the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem; the warrior's bow shall be banished, and he shall proclaim peace to the nations. His dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 145: 1-2, 8-14

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 Romans 8: 9-13

Brothers and sisters: You are not in the flesh; on the contrary, you are in the spirit, if only the Spirit of God dwells in you. Whoever does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. If the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, the one who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also, through his Spirit that dwells in you. Consequently, brothers and sisters, we are not debtors to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh, you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

Gospel: Matthew 11: 25-30

At that time Jesus exclaimed: "I give praise to you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to little ones. Yes, Father, such has been your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him." "Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light."

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

JULY 3, 2005 - 14th of yr: Zec 9.9-10; Rms 8.9-13; MT 11.25-30

SEE, YOUR KING - JUST SAVIOR IS HE - COMES TO YOU, MEEK & RIDING ON AN ASS

"Father, although you've hidden these things from the wise & learned, you've revealed them to the little ones.

Come to me all you who labor & are burdened, & I will give you rest."

During the day - Fatigued? Should be, if you're working hard. Burdened? Obviously, if you're taking your responsibilities seriously. Letting others help you? or preferring to do it all yourself? Why not wise up & be the little one you really are, & reach out for help to those who love you? You'll discover the whole new world of what life is really all about.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer researches reality; first identifies the transience of experience, then ponders the transcendence of its essentials. Prayer discovers the quality of relationships, then recognizes the permanence of presence. Finally, prayer rests the fatigue of living in becoming what we are; then - refreshed - prayer dissolves again into fruitful action & works on with Christ forever, enjoying partnership with the divine.

JULY 10, 2005 - 15th of yr.

Reading Isaiah 55:10-11

Thus says the LORD: Just as from the heavens the rain and snow come down and do not return there till they have watered the earth, making it fertile and fruitful, giving seed to the one who sows and bread to the one who eats, so shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; my word shall not return to me void, but shall do my will, achieving the end for which I sent it.

Responsorial Psalm 65:10-14

The seed that falls on good ground will yield a fruitful harvest. You have visited the land and watered it; greatly have you enriched it. God's watercourses are filled; you have prepared the grain. Thus have you prepared the land: drenching its furrows, breaking up its clods, softening it with showers, blessing its yield. You have crowned the year with your bounty, and your paths overflow with a rich harvest; the untilled meadows overflow with it, and rejoicing clothes the hills. The fields are garmented with flocks and the valleys blanketed with grain. They shout and sing for joy.

Reading Romans 8:18-23

Brothers and sisters: I consider that the sufferings of this present time are as nothing compared with the glory to be revealed for us. For creation awaits with eager expectation the revelation of the children of God; for creation was made subject to futility, not of its own accord but because of the one who subjected it, in hope that creation itself would be set free from slavery to corruption and share in the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that all creation is groaning in labor pains even until now; and not only that, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, we also groan within ourselves as we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.

Gospel Matthew 13:1-23

On that day, Jesus went out of the house and sat down by the sea. Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat down, and the whole crowd stood along the shore. And he spoke to them at length in parables, saying: "A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky ground, where it had little soil. It sprang up at once because the soil was not deep, and when the sun rose it was scorched, and it withered for lack of roots. Some seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it. But some seed fell on rich soil, and produced fruit, a hundred or sixty or thirtyfold. Whoever has ears ought to hear." The disciples approached him and said, "Why do you speak to them in parables?" He said to them in reply, "Because knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven has been granted to you, but to them it has not been granted. To anyone who has, more will be given and he will grow rich; from anyone who has not, even what he has will be taken away. This is why I speak to them in parables, because they look but do not see and hear but do not listen or understand. Isaiah's prophecy is fulfilled in them, which says: You shall indeed hear but not understand, you shall indeed look but never see. Gross is the heart of this people, they will hardly hear with their ears, they have closed their eyes, lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their hearts and be converted, and I heal them. "But blessed are your eyes, because they see, and your ears, because they hear. Amen, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it. "Hear then the parable of the sower. The seed sown on the path is the one who hears the word of the kingdom without understanding it, and the evil one comes and steals away what was sown in his heart. The seed sown on rocky ground is the one who hears the word and receives it at once with joy. But he has no root and lasts only for a time. When some tribulation or persecution comes because of the word, he immediately falls away. The seed sown among thorns is the one who hears the word, but then worldly anxiety and the lure of riches choke the word and it bears no fruit. But the seed sown on rich soil is the one who hears the

word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields a hundred or sixty or thirtyfold."

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

JULY 10, 2005 - 15th of yr: Is 55.10-11; Rms 8.18-23; MT 13.1-23

JUST AS FROM THE HEAVENS THE RAIN & SNOW COME DOWN & DON'T
RETURN TILL THEY HAVE WATERED THE EARTH, MADE IT FERTILE & FRUITFUL,
SO SHALL MY WORD BE THAT GOES FORTH FROM MY MOUTH

"A sower went out to sow. Some seed fell among thorns; the thorns grew up & choked it.
Some seed fell on rich soil & produced fruit, a hundred, sixty or thirtyfold."

During the day - Enrich the soil of daily life. You have to water it in dry spells, fertilize it when necessary, even bring in some good top soil from elsewhere if possible. Made to be loved, let others in to render your heart fertile - hard to love others, till you're humbly grateful for theirs. Your fruitfulness depends, not just on returned love to the lover but consummated love's service, together, to the needs of those around you. Don't let thorns of self-doubt & partnership in selfishness sterilize you both. Love nourishes the inner life of lovers only when consumed by hungry outsiders. Fruit gives of itself for the abundant life of others, till nothing's left. That's when the eternal joys of love begin.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer plows the surface of daily routine, receives the seed of the Word, closes the heart around it, love the only condition It needs to release the Life within. The Good News is always good & it's always new. Prayer nourishes the unique divine vitality of this text in this heart at this moment! Prayer ponders with the intellect the truth discerned, embraces with the will the life it communicates. Then awaits with the secure conviction of faith the - at times unseen - fruitfulness of love's consummation.

JULY 17, 2005 - 16th of yr:

Reading Wisdom 12: 13, 16-19

There is no god besides you who have the care of all, that you need show you have not unjustly condemned. For your might is the source of justice; your mastery over all things makes you lenient to all. For you show your might when the perfection of your power is disbelieved; and in those who know you, you rebuke temerity. But though you are master of might, you judge with clemency, and with much lenience you govern us; for power, whenever you will, attends you. And you taught your people, by these deeds, that those who are just must be kind; and you gave your children good ground for hope that you would permit repentance for their sins.

Responsorial Psalms 86: 5-6, 9-10, 15-16

Lord, you are good and forgiving. You, O LORD, are good and forgiving, abounding in kindness to all who call upon you. Hearken, O LORD, to my prayer and attend to the sound of my pleading. All the nations you have made shall come and worship you, O LORD, and glorify your name. For you are great, and you do wondrous deeds; you alone are God. You, O LORD, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in kindness and fidelity. Turn toward me, and have pity on me; give your strength to your servant.

Reading Romans 8: 26-27

Brothers and sisters: The Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes with inexpressible groanings. And the one who searches hearts knows what is the intention of the Spirit, because he intercedes for the holy ones according to God's will.

Gospel Matthew 13:24-43

Jesus proposed another parable to the crowds, saying: "The kingdom of heaven may be likened to a man who sowed good seed in his field. While everyone was asleep his enemy came and sowed weeds all through the wheat, and then went off. When the crop grew and bore fruit, the weeds appeared as well. The slaves of the householder came to him and said, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where have the weeds come from?' He answered, 'An enemy has done this.' His slaves said to him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?' He replied, 'No, if you pull up the weeds you might uproot the wheat along with them. Let them grow together until harvest; then at harvest time I will say to the harvesters, 'First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles for burning; but gather the wheat into my barn.''" He proposed another parable to them. "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that a person took and sowed in a field. It is the smallest of all the seeds, yet when full-grown it is the largest of plants. It becomes a large bush, and the 'birds of the sky come and dwell in its branches.'" He spoke to them another parable. "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed with three measures of wheat flour until the whole batch was leavened." All these things Jesus spoke to the crowds in parables. He spoke to them only in parables, to fulfill what had been said through the prophet: I will open my mouth in parables, I will announce what has lain hidden from the foundation of the world. Then, dismissing the crowds, he went into the house. His disciples approached him and said, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field." He said in reply, "He who sows good seed is the Son of Man, the field is the world, the good seed the children of the kingdom. The weeds are the children of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. Just as weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all who cause others to sin and all evildoers. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears ought to hear."

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

JULY 17, 2005 - 16th of yr: Wis 12. 13-19; Rms 8.26-27; MT 13.24-43

THOUGH YOU ARE MASTER OF MIGHT YOU JUDGE WITH CLEMENCY.

YOU TAUGHT YOUR PEOPLE THAT THOSE WHO ARE JUST MUST BE KIND.

"If you pull up the weeds you might uproot the wheat along with them. Let them grow together till harvest; then collect the weeds in bundles for burning, but gather the wheat into my barn."

During the day - Know yourself. Credit the wheat, acknowledge the weeds. Don't be surprised they're both you. Tolerate the weeds, not only in yourself but in others as well. Acceptance is one thing; resignation is something else. Undeterred by weakness, don't be unperturbed. On the contrary, assume the justice of responsibility for your weakness' consequences & work diligently to keep them at a minimum. Faults acknowledged, virtue grows: the real & lasting you, in tune with Christ, lives on forever. The waste we leave behind.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is getting comfortable with truth. Being humble. Facing up to responsibilities. Trusting God to bring good out of your evil, even as you're struggling to diminish it. Prayer reaffirms your healthy options, disowns & disciplines uncontrollable tendencies. Prayer searches for the roots of these tendencies, begs God to help you do something about them. Prayer looks around at people with a kinder eye, knowing they're on the same battleground you are.

JULY 24, 2005 - 17th of yr:

Old Testament Reading: 1 Kings 3: 5, 7-12

The LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream at night. God said, "Ask something of me and I will give it to you." Solomon answered: "O LORD, my God, you have made me, your servant, king to succeed my father David; but I am a mere youth, not knowing at all how to act. I serve you in the midst of the people whom you have chosen, a people so vast that it cannot be numbered or counted. Give your servant, therefore, an understanding heart to judge your people and to distinguish right from wrong. For who is able to govern this vast people of yours?" The LORD was pleased that Solomon made this request. So God said to him: "Because you have asked for this-- not for a long life for yourself, nor for riches, nor for the life of your enemies, but for understanding so that you may know what is right-- I do as you requested. I give you a heart so wise and understanding that there has never been anyone like you up to now, and after you there will come no one to equal you."

Responsorial Psalms 119: 57, 72, 76-77, 127-130

Lord, I love your commands. I have said, O LORD, that my part is to keep your words. The law of your mouth is to me more precious than thousands of gold and silver pieces. Let your kindness comfort me according to your promise to your servants. Let your compassion come to me that I may live, for your law is my delight. For I love your command more than gold, however fine. For in all your precepts I go forward; every false way I hate. Wonderful are your decrees; therefore I observe them. The revelation of your words sheds light, giving understanding to the simple.

New Testament Reading: Romans 8: 28-30

Brothers and sisters: We know that all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. For those he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And those he predestined he also called; and those he called he also justified; and those he justified he also glorified.

Gospel: Matthew 13: 44-52

Jesus said to his disciples: "The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure buried in a field, which a person finds and hides again, and out of joy goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant searching for fine pearls. When he finds a pearl of great price, he goes and sells all that he has and buys it. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net thrown into the sea, which collects fish of every kind. When it is full they haul it ashore and sit down to put what is good into buckets. What is bad they throw away. Thus it will be at the end of the age. The angels will go out and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth. "Do you understand all these things?" They answered, "Yes." And he replied, "Then every scribe who has been instructed in the kingdom of heaven is like the head of a household who brings from his storeroom both the new and the old."

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

JULY 24, 2005 - 17th of yr: 1Kings 3.5-12; Rms 8.28-30; MT 13.44-52

I GIVE YOU A HEART SO WISE & UNDERSTANDING THAT THERE
HAS NEVER BEEN ANYONE LIKE YOU NOR WILL BE TO EQUAL YOU

"Everyone who has been instructed in the kingdom of heaven is like the
head of a household who brings from the storeroom both the new & the old."

During the day: You're the only one of you God made, no better nor worse than anyone else, your destiny yours alone to determine. Uniquely precious to creator-parent, your Father-Mother is always at your side, protecting you, not from sickness or death, pain or suffering, mistakes or failure, but from fear of them & their consequences. If wise enough to trust her absolutely, you'll soon learn how much he trusts you!

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer links past to future, inspires us to embrace the blossoming of events with courage & enthusiasm, while cautiously defending core values. Prayer humbly ponders new ideas, tests them with inner norms of truth, tunes into God's will, recognizes them as his design (or not). If so discerned, one confidently steps from prayer to action, maintaining the prayerful mode to evaluate the transcendent unity between Absolute & relative. Satisfied, prayer marvels with awe & gratitude the ever-exploding beauty of God's creation.

July 31, 2005 - 18th of yr.

Old Testament: Isaiah 55:1-3

Thus says the LORD: All you who are thirsty, come to the water! You who have no money, come, receive grain and eat; Come, without paying and without cost, drink wine and milk! Why spend your money for what is not bread; your wages for what fails to satisfy? Heed me, and you shall eat well, you shall delight in rich fare. Come to me heedfully, listen, that you may have life. I will renew with you the everlasting covenant, the benefits assured to David.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 145: 8-9, 15-18

The hand of the Lord feeds us; he answers all our needs. 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. The eyes of all look hopefully to you, and you give them their food in due season; you open your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing. The LORD is just in all his ways and holy in all his works. The LORD is near to all who call upon him, to all who call upon him in truth.

Reading New Testament: Romans 8: 35, 37-39

Brothers and sisters: What will separate us from the love of Christ? Will anguish, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword? No, in all these things we conquer overwhelmingly through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Gospel: Matthew 14: 13-21

When Jesus heard of the death of John the Baptist, he withdrew in a boat to a deserted place by himself. The crowds heard of this and followed him on foot from their towns. When he disembarked and saw the vast crowd, his heart was moved with pity for them, and he cured their sick. When it was evening, the disciples approached him and said, "This is a deserted place and it is already late; dismiss the crowds so that they can go to the villages and buy food for themselves." Jesus said to them, "There is no need for them to go away; give them some food yourselves." But they said to him, "Five loaves and two fish are all we have here." Then he said, "Bring them here to me," and he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, he said the blessing, broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, who in turn gave them to the crowds. They all ate and were satisfied, and they picked up the fragments left over-- twelve wicker baskets full. Those who ate were about five thousand men, not counting women and children.

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

July 31, 2005 - 18th of yr: Is 55.1-3; Rms 8.37-39; MT 14.13-21

YOU WHO HAVE NO MONEY COME, RECEIVE GRAIN & EAT. HEED ME & YOU SHALL EAT WELL. I WILL RENEW WITH YOU THE EVERLASTING COVENANT

"There is no need for them to go away. Give them some food yourselves."

During the day: Share. Your time, your talents, your energy, your possessions, yourself. Why? All are gift, & the purpose of the giver is communal, not individual. We have one Father, our heritage mutual & belonging to all. Our most precious gifts are intelligence & freedom; used in harmony for the common good, they guarantee - ultimately - the giver's purpose. It's a hard lesson to learn, but we've got a good Master.

ABOUT PRAYER: All prayer is eucharistic. Christ nourishes even those who don't know him. Prayer complements human weakness with divine strength. Prayer is time given to digesting the head's directives & the energy communicated to carry them out. Prayer is recognition of the organic nature of our commitment to each other. Gratitude is a constituent in all authentic prayer - we're truly grateful for each other.

AUG 7, 2005 - 19th of yr

Reading Old Testament: I Kings 19: 9a, 11-13a

At the mountain of God, Horeb, Elijah came to a cave where he took shelter. Then the LORD said to him, "Go outside and stand on the mountain before the LORD; the LORD will be passing by." A strong and heavy wind was rending the mountains and crushing rocks before the LORD-- but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake-- but the LORD was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake there was fire-- but the LORD was not in the fire. After the fire there was a tiny whispering sound. When he heard this, Elijah hid his face in his cloak and went and stood at the entrance of the cave.

Responsorial Psalms 85: 9-14

Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation. I will hear what God proclaims; the LORD--for he proclaims peace. Near indeed is his salvation to those who fear him, glory dwelling in our land. Kindness and truth shall meet; justice and peace shall kiss. Truth shall spring out of the earth, and justice shall look down from heaven. The LORD himself will give his benefits; our land shall yield its increase. Justice shall walk before him, and prepare the way of his steps.

Reading New Testament: Romans 9:1-5

Brothers and sisters: I speak the truth in Christ, I do not lie; my conscience joins with the Holy Spirit in bearing me witness that I have great sorrow and constant anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my own people, my kindred according to the flesh. They are Israelites; theirs the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; theirs the patriarchs, and from them, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.

Gospel: Matthew 14: 22-33

After he had fed the people, Jesus made the disciples get into a boat and precede him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. After doing so, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When it was evening he was there alone. Meanwhile the boat, already a few miles offshore, was being tossed about by the waves, for the wind was against it. During the fourth watch of the night, he came toward them walking on the sea. When the disciples saw him walking on the sea they were terrified. "It is a ghost," they said, and they cried out in fear. At once Jesus spoke to them, "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid." Peter said to him in reply, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." He said, "Come." Peter got out of the boat and began to walk on the water toward Jesus. But when he saw how strong the wind was he became frightened; and, beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" Immediately Jesus stretched out his hand and caught Peter, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" After they got into the boat, the wind died down. Those who were in the boat did him homage, saying, "Truly, you are the Son of God."

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

AUG 7, 2005 - 19th of yr: 1Kings 19.9-13; Rms 9.1-5; MT 14.22-33

**GO OUTSIDE & STAND ON THE MOUNTAIN BEFORE THE LORD - THE LORD WILL BE
PASSING BY... AFTER THE FIRE THERE WAS A TINY WHISPERING SOUND,
& ELIJAH HID HIS FACE IN HIS CLOAK.
"Take courage, it is I. Do not be afraid."**

During the day: Take courage. Whatever the obstacles, take courage. However impossible the challenge, take courage. However deep the fear & despair, take courage. You've been here before & you'll be here again - courage always sees you through. Obstacles & challenges are of the mind, fear & despair of the feelings; courage is of the will. Move! Go! Do it! God'll pull you out if you out if you're drowning - trust him!

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer promotes the process of turning gifts into fruits. Gifts are gratuitous & come from another. Fruits grow to maturity when gift is used by the beloved for the purpose intended by the giver. Faith, hope & charity are gifts that, when practiced, become virtues - habits of human activity that have divine effect. Prayer ponders the challenges, sidesteps the feelings, encourages the will to step out into what appears to be thin air. It isn't; the gentle whispering breeze reminds you it's God's presence & power. He's the doer; you be his instrument.

AUG 14, 2005 - 20th of yr:

Old Testament Reading: Isaiah 56: 1, 6-7

Thus says the LORD: Observe what is right, do what is just; for my salvation is about to come, my justice, about to be revealed. The foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, ministering to him, loving the name of the LORD, and becoming his servants-- all who keep the sabbath free from profanation and hold to my covenant, them I will bring to my holy mountain and make joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be acceptable on my altar, for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 67: 2-3, 5, 6, 8

O God, let all the nations praise you! May God have pity on us and bless us; may he let his face shine upon us. So may your way be known upon earth; among all nations, your salvation. May the nations be glad and exult because you rule the peoples in equity; the nations on the earth you guide. May the peoples praise you, O God; may all the peoples praise you! May God bless us, and may all the ends of the earth fear him!

New Testament Reading: Romans 11: 13-15, 29-32

Brothers and sisters: I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I glory in my ministry in order to make my race jealous and thus save some of them. For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? For the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable. Just as you once disobeyed God but have now received mercy because of their disobedience, so they have now disobeyed in order that, by virtue of the mercy shown to you, they too may now receive mercy. For God delivered all to disobedience, that he might have mercy upon all.

Gospel: Matthew 15: 21-28

At that time, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a Canaanite woman of that district came and called out, "Have pity on me, Lord, Son of David! My daughter is tormented by a demon." But Jesus did not say a word in answer to her. Jesus' disciples came and asked him, "Send her away, for she keeps calling out after us." He said in reply, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But the woman came and did Jesus homage, saying, "Lord, help me." He said in reply, "It is not right to take the food of the children and throw it to the dogs." She said, "Please, Lord, for even the dogs eat the scraps that fall from the table of their masters." Then Jesus said to her in reply, "O woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish." And the woman's daughter was healed from that hour.

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

AUG 14, 2005 - 20th of yr: Is 56.1,6-7; Rms 11.13-15,29-32; MT 15.21-28

FOREIGNERS WHO JOIN THE LORD BECOMING HIS SERVANTS, THEM I WILL BRING TO MY HOLY MOUNTAIN & MAKE JOYFUL IN MY HOUSE OF PRAYER

"Please Lord, even the dogs eat the scraps that fall from the table of the masters."

Jesus replied, "O woman, great is your faith! Let it be done as you wish."

During the day: When it happens, be content with the scrapes. Swallow your pride, smile grimly at the irony, don't hold grudges. Adjust yourself to the situation, not it to you. You're a part, not the center; concentrate on serving well, however insignificant the responsibility. It's not what you do, but why & how you do it that gives service its (ever)lasting value. The quilt made of scraps, the mosaic of tiny bits of broken stone are beautiful, thanks to the artisan & his design. We're free to choose to be used or not. If we so choose, we'll sense rather than see the importance of the decision.

ABOUT PRAYER: Busying itself with the 'to be' list, prayer leaves the 'to do' list to God, God only shows us the 'what' one step at a time. Though curious about what the next step is in the current project, prayer focuses on the ultimate purpose of every human endeavor: a peaceful, just & mutually respecting community. Despite the resentment, irritation & negative reactions of the moment, prayer's aim is to deepen the heart's capacity to love. Whatever the other contributions to the job at hand, the love for all concerned with which it is performed guarantees one's place on the honor roll of God.

AUG 21, 2005 - 21st of yr:

Old Testament Reading: Isaiah 22: 19-23

Thus says the LORD to Shebna, master of the palace: "I will thrust you from your office and pull you down from your station. On that day I will summon my servant Eliakim, son of Hilkiah; I will clothe him with your robe, and gird him with your sash, and give over to him your authority. He shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah. I will place the key of the House of David on Eliakim's shoulder; when he opens, no one shall shut when he shuts, no one shall open. I will fix him like a peg in a sure spot, to be a place of honor for his family."

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 138: 1-3, 6, 8

Lord, your love is eternal; do not forsake the work of your hands. 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. I will give thanks to your name, because of your kindness and your truth: 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. Your kindness, O LORD, endures forever; forsake not the work of your hands.

New Testament Reading: Romans 11: 33-36

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How inscrutable are his judgments and how unsearchable his ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord or who has been his counselor? Or who has given the Lord anything that he may be repaid? For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

Gospel: Matthew 16: 13-20

Jesus went into the region of Caesarea Philippi and he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter said in reply, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus said to him in reply, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father. And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Then he strictly ordered his disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.

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

AUG 21, 2005 - 21st of yr: Is 22.19-23; Rms 11.33-36; MT 16.13-20

**I WILL PLACE THE KEY OF THE HOUSE OF DAVID ON ELIAKIM'S SHOULDER.
WHEN HE OPENS NO ONE SHALL SHUT, & WHEN HE SHUTS NO ONE SHALL OPEN.**

"I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

During the day: You're the only one with a key to your heart. God gave it to you - not even he can get in if you don't want him to. What you bind is bound; what you loose is loosed. Take care in the why & how you do either. You're designed & commissioned to serve the needs of others. Self-centered goals bind; a heart open to compassion releases the energy of love, not only yours but God's as well. His works miracles.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer, too, is for others. Whatever the content that occupies the mind, the will is busy wanting what God wants. All authentic prayer is the prayer of Jesus - Christian prayer explicitly, other prayer implicitly. The human mind of Christ knows precisely what humanity needs, collectively & individually. And his human will proved his love & paid the price, in submission to the Father's just & loving way of serving these needs. The only thing he asks of us is trust - & the efforts that accompany our prayer.

AUG 28, 2005 - 22nd of yr:

Old Testament: Jeremiah 20: 7-9

You duped me, O LORD, and I let myself be duped; you were too strong for me, and you triumphed. All the day I am an object of laughter; everyone mocks me. Whenever I speak, I must cry out, violence and outrage is my message; the word of the LORD has brought me derision and reproach all the day. I say to myself, I will not mention him, I will speak in his name no more. But then it becomes like fire burning in my heart, imprisoned in my bones; I grow weary holding it in, I cannot endure it.

Responsorial Psalm 63: 2-6, 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.

New Testament: Romans 12: 1-2

I urge you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship. Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect.

Gospel: Matthew 16: 21-27

Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer greatly from the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed and on the third day be raised. Then Peter took Jesus aside and began to rebuke him, "God forbid, Lord! No such thing shall ever happen to you." He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle to me. You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do." Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. What profit would there be for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? Or what can one give in exchange for his life? For the Son of Man will come with his angels in his Father's glory, and then he will repay all according to his conduct."

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

AUG 28, 2005 - 22nd of yr: Jer 20.7-9; Rms 12.1-2; MT 16.21-27

YOU DUPED ME, LORD, & I LET MYSELF BE DUPED. YOU WERE TOO STRONG FOR ME & YOU TRIUMPHED. I SAY TO MYSELF 'I WILL SAY HIS NAME NO MORE.' BUT IT BECOMES LIKE A FIRE BURNING IN MY HEART.

"Jesus told his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem, suffer greatly, be killed & on the third day be raised. Peter said, 'God forbid, Lord! No such thing shall happen to you.' Jesus replied, 'Get behind me, Satan. You are thinking not as God does but as humans do.'"

During the day: Think about things the way God does, the way they really are; not the way you'd like them to be. Perspectives vary; each, perhaps, with something of the truth; but only one with the total truth. Granted, in it's totality truth can't be grasped fully; but a tip of it can, & it's important to latch on to the right tip. So don't pick one just because it pleases you. Take a good look at all of them, trust the mind designed by it's creator to recognize truth. Truth has its own authority - keep keen to the sense of it, whatever the pain.

ABOUT PRAYER: In prayer, the mind & the will are partners. The mind ponders & judges, the will makes it choice. However, a prayerful choice doesn't always follow a reasonable judgment. Truth influences the will thru ways other than reason. The will is the faculty of love, & love wants what's good for the other - wills, chooses that good, however unreasonable the action required. Prayer calibrates the human to the divine, exacts & awaits the courage to comply.

SEPT 4, 2005 - 23rd of yr:

Old Testament: Ezra: 33: 7-9

Thus says the LORD: You, son of man, I have appointed watchman for the house of Israel; when you hear me say anything, you shall warn them for me. If I tell the wicked, "O wicked one, you shall surely die," and you do not speak out to dissuade the wicked from his way, the wicked shall die for his guilt, but I will hold you responsible for his death. But if you warn the wicked, trying to turn him from his way, and he refuses to turn from his way, he shall die for his guilt, but you shall save yourself.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 95: 1-2, 6-9

If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts. Come, let us sing joyfully to the LORD; let us acclaim the rock of our salvation. Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us joyfully sing psalms to him. Come, let us bow down in worship; let us kneel before the LORD who made us. For he is our God, and we are the people he shepherds, the flock he guides. Oh, that today you would hear his voice: "Harden not your hearts as at Meribah, as in the day of Massah in the desert, Where your fathers tempted me; they tested me though they had seen my works."

New Testament: Romans 13: 8-10

Brothers and sisters: Owe nothing to anyone, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery; you shall not kill; you shall not steal; you shall not covet," and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this saying, namely, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no evil to the neighbor; hence, love is the fulfillment of the law.

Gospel: Matthew 18: 15-20

Jesus said to his disciples: "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have won over your brother. If he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, so that 'every fact may be established on the testimony of two or three witnesses.' If he refuses to listen to them, tell the church. If he refuses to listen even to the church, then treat him as you would a Gentile or a tax collector. Amen, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again, amen, I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything for which they are to pray, it shall be granted to them by my heavenly Father. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

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

SEPT 4, 2005 - 23rd of yr: Ez 33.7-9; Rms 13.8-10; MT 18.15-20

IF I TELL THE WICKED 'YOU SHALL SURELY DIE & YOU DO NOT SPEAK OUT TO DISSUADE HIM FROM HIS WAY, HE SHALL DIE FOR HIS GUILT, BUT I WILL HOLD YOU RESPONSIBLE.

"If your brother sins against you, go & tell him his fault, you & him alone....

Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

During the day: Sin is a mistake of bad will, not just a mistake of bad judgment. When you & the other are the only two who know of his mistake, don't make matters worse by telling others. With more regard for his correction than your own damaged pride or welfare, pick the right time & the right manner to speak with him about it. Let the grace of God & the other's latent sense of justice do the rest.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer recalls the presence of Jesus. He, in turn, reminds me my own faults are as numerous & bad as the other guy's & I better do something about my own before I talk to him about his. Christ is there to help us both if we want it. Sometimes admitting my own struggle with sinful tendencies is a good way to get the other thinking about his own. If we get a little prayerful as we share, Jesus turns up the light & we both begin to know ourselves & each other better; we might even discover ways to help each other improve. Christ knows his business.

SEPT 11, 2005 - 24th of yr:

Old Testament: Sirach 27: 30 - 28:7

Wrath and anger are hateful things, yet the sinner hugs them tight. The vengeful will suffer the LORD's vengeance, for he remembers their sins in detail. Forgive your neighbor's injustice; then when you pray, your own sins will be forgiven. Could anyone nourish anger against another and expect healing from the LORD? Could anyone refuse mercy to another like himself, can he seek pardon for his own sins? If one who is but flesh cherishes wrath, who will forgive his sins? Remember your last days, set enmity aside; remember death and decay, and cease from sin! Think of the commandments, hate not your neighbor; remember the Most High's covenant, and overlook faults.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 103:1-4, 9-12

The Lord is kind and merciful, slow to anger, and rich in compassion. Bless the LORD, O my soul; and all my being, bless his holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits. He pardons all your iniquities, heals all your ills. redeems your life from destruction, he crowns you with kindness and compassion. He will not always chide, nor does he keep his wrath forever. Not according to our sins does he deal with us, nor does he requite us according to our crimes. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so surpassing is his kindness toward those who fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far has he put our transgressions from us.

New Testament: Romans 14:7-9

Brothers and sisters: None of us lives for oneself, and no one dies for oneself. For if we live, we live for the Lord, and if we die, we die for the Lord; so then, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. For this is why Christ died and came to life, that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

Gospel: Matthew 18:21-25

Peter approached Jesus and asked him, "Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive? As many as seven times?" Jesus answered, "I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times. That is why the kingdom of heaven may be likened to a king who decided to settle accounts with his servants. When he began the accounting, a debtor was brought before him who owed him a huge amount. Since he had no way of paying it back, his master ordered him to be sold, along with his wife, his children, and all his property, in payment of the debt. At that, the servant fell down, did him homage, and said, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back in full.' Moved with compassion the master of that servant let him go and forgave him the loan. When that servant had left, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a much smaller amount. He seized one of his fellow servants and started to choke him, demanding, 'Pay back what you owe.' Falling to his knees, his fellow servant begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.' But he refused. Instead, he had the fellow servant put in prison until he paid back the debt. Now when his fellow servants saw what had happened, they were deeply disturbed, and went to their master and reported the whole affair. His master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you your entire debt because you begged me to. Should you not have had pity on your fellow servant, as I had pity on you?' Then in anger his master handed him over to the torturers until he should pay back the whole debt. So will my heavenly Father do to you, unless each of you forgives your brother from your heart."

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

SEPT 11, 2005 - 24th of yr: Sirach 27.30-28.7; Rms 14.7-9; MT 18.21-35

WRATH & ANGER ARE HATEFUL THINGS, YET THE SINNER HUGS THEM
TIGHT. THE VENGEFUL WILL SUFFER THE LORD'S VENGEANCE,
FOR HE REMEMBERS THEIR SINS IN DETAIL.

"You wicked servant! I forgave you your entire debt because you begged me to.
Should not you have had pity on your fellow servant, as I had pity on you?"

During the day: We're all in this together. Don't make matters worse for the other - that just adds to the common misery. Transcendent Justice is personal, not impersonal, & the way we treat each other comes back to put the shoe on the other foot, painfully or comfortably. Compassion is both a natural & a supernatural virtue; nurture & practice the natural, that the supernatural assist the creator in recreating a happier, healthier, holier human society.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is redemptive, as concerned with the other's weaknesses as one's own. Prayer is awareness of God's healing current reaching the heart & lungs of the soul. Prayer enables mind & emotions to adjust to the flow, & radiate out to what ails the other. Prayer perceives the organic nature of our mutual interdependence, identifies with the other's vices & virtues, that the Christ in both better achieve our common destiny, redemption.

SEPT 18, 2005 - 25th of yr.

Old Testament: Isaiah 55:6-9

Seek the LORD while he may be found, call him while he is near. Let the scoundrel forsake his way, and the wicked his thoughts; let him turn to the LORD for mercy; to our God, who is generous in forgiving. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are my ways above your ways and my thoughts above your thoughts.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 145: 2-3, 8-9. 17-18

The Lord is near to all who call upon him. Every day will I bless you, and I will praise your name forever and ever. Great is the LORD and highly to be praised; his greatness is unsearchable. 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. The LORD is just in all his ways and holy in all his works. The LORD is near to all who call upon him, to all who call upon him in truth.

New Testament: Romans 1: 20c-24, 27a

Brothers and sisters: Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me life is Christ, and death is gain. If I go on living in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. And I do not know which I shall choose. I am caught between the two. I long to depart this life and be with Christ, for that is far better. Yet that I remain in the flesh is more necessary for your benefit. Only, conduct yourselves in a way worthy of the gospel of Christ.

Gospel: Matthew 20: 1-16a

Jesus told his disciples this parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out at dawn to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with them for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. Going out about nine o'clock, the landowner saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and he said to them, 'You too go into my vineyard, and I will give you what is just.' So they went off. And he went out again around noon, and around three o'clock, and did likewise. Going out about five o'clock, the landowner found others standing around, and said to them, 'Why do you stand here idle all day?' They answered, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You too go into my vineyard.' When it was evening the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, 'Summon the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and ending with the first.' When those who had started about five o'clock came, each received the usual daily wage. So when the first came, they thought that they would receive more, but each of them also got the usual wage. And on receiving it they grumbled against the landowner, saying, 'These last ones worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us, who bore the day's burden and the heat.' He said to one of them in reply, 'My friend, I am not cheating you. Did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? Take what is yours and go. What if I wish to give this last one the same as you? Or am I not free to do as I wish with my own money? Are you envious because I am generous?' Thus, the last will be first, and the first will be last."

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

SEPT 18, 2005 25th of yr: Isa 55.6-9; Romans 1.20-27; MT 20.1-6

MY THOUGHTS ARE NOT YOUR THOUGHTS, MY WAYS ARE NOT YOURS.

THE HEAVENS ARE AS HIGH ABOVE EARTH AS MY WAYS ARE ABOVE

YOUR WAYS, & MY THOUGHTS ABOVE YOUR THOUGHTS.

"Have I no right to do what I like with my own? Why be envious because I am generous?

The last will be first, and the first last."

During the day: You're neither better nor worse than anyone else, neither more nor less deserving. You're just you, the only one of you God made. Your destiny is unique, product of his design & your cooperation, fruit of his generous love & your unconditional gratitude. Do your job the best you can, humbly, without regard for status, helping others do even better if they can. We're all in this together, & no matter how secular the job, it's the work of the Lord & sacred in its purpose. When all is said & done, there's no first & last, just one gloriously happy & successful human family.

ABOUT PRAYER: In prayer we attempt the impossible: to think the thoughts of God! That's why, the deeper we get into prayer, we simply turn the mind off & let an inner awareness of unfathomable security, God, calm the emotions & strengthen the will. However chaotic in appearance, we embrace his designs, wise in both origin & fulfillment.

SEPT 25, 2005 - 26th of yr:

Old Testament: Ezra 18:25-28

Thus says the LORD: You say, "The LORD's way is not fair!" Hear now, house of Israel: Is it my way that is unfair, or rather, are not your ways unfair? When someone virtuous turns away from virtue to commit iniquity, and dies, it is because of the iniquity he committed that he must die. But if he turns from the wickedness he has committed, he does what is right and just, he shall preserve his life; since he has turned away from all the sins that he has committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 25:4-5, 8-10, 14

Remember your mercies, O Lord. Your ways, O LORD, make known to me; teach me your paths, guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my savior. Remember that your compassion, O LORD, and your love are from of old. The sins of my youth and my frailties remember not; in your kindness remember me, because of your goodness, O LORD. Good and upright is the LORD; thus he shows sinners the way. He guides the humble to justice, and teaches the humble his way.

New Testament: Philemon 2:1-11

Brothers and sisters: If there is any encouragement in Christ, any solace in love, any participation in the Spirit, any compassion and mercy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, with the same love, united in heart, thinking one thing. Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vainglory; rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourselves, each looking out not for his own interests, but also for those of others. Have in you the same attitude that is also in Christ Jesus, Who, 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: Matthew 21:28-32

Jesus said to the chief priests and elders of the people: "What is your opinion? A man had two sons. He came to the first and said, 'Son, go out and work in the vineyard today.' He said in reply, 'I will not,' but afterwards changed his mind and went. The man came to the other son and gave the same order. He said in reply, 'Yes, sir,' but did not go. Which of the two did his father's will?" They answered, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Amen, I say to you, tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God before you. When John came to you in the way of righteousness, you did not believe him; but tax collectors and prostitutes did. Yet even when you saw that, you did not later change your minds and believe him."

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

SEPT 25, 2005 -26th of yr: Ez 18.25-28; Phil 2.1-11; MT 21.28-32

**WHEN THE VIRTUOUS TURNS AWAY FROM VIRTUE, HE DIES; BUT
IF HE TURNS FROM THE WICKEDNESS TO WHAT IS RIGHT & JUST,
HE SHALL PRESERVE HIS LIFE**

"Son, go & work in the vineyard.' 'I will not!' but changed his mind & went. To the other son he said the same. 'Yes sir', but didn't go. Which of the two did the father's will?"

During the day: Think twice before disobeying legitimate authority. It has its responsibility; so do you. Common goals are only reached by coordinated common action. The rot that condemns a project to failure is in the will, not the reason. Recognized & removed, wholesomeness restored. True health is in relationships, not results.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer goes to the core: God's authority is exercised with love & for love, & authentic obedience to his authority likewise. The mind may dissent but the will consents. Love is of the heart, not always of the mind. Prayer is the battleground of humility vs. pride, responsibility vs. cop-out, solidarity vs. cowardice. Prayer purifies the mind of doubt, the emotions of fear & resentment, the will of self-centeredness. Prayer always ends up as an act of love.

OCT 2, 2005 - 27th of yr.

Old Testament: Isaiah 5:1-7

Let me now sing of my friend, my friend's song concerning his vineyard. My friend had a vineyard on a fertile hillside; he spaded it, cleared it of stones, and planted the choicest vines; within it he built a watchtower, and hewed out a wine press. Then he looked for the crop of grapes, but what it yielded was wild grapes. Now, inhabitants of Jerusalem and people of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard: What more was there to do for my vineyard that I had not done? Why, when I looked for the crop of grapes, did it bring forth wild grapes? Now, I will let you know what I mean to do with my vineyard: take away its hedge, give it to grazing, break through its wall, let it be trampled! Yes, I will make it a ruin: it shall not be pruned or hoed, but overgrown with thorns and briers; I will command the clouds not to send rain upon it. The vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the people of Judah are his cherished plant; he looked for judgment, but see, bloodshed! for justice, but hark, the outcry!

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 80:9, 12-16, 19-20

The vineyard of the Lord is the house of Israel. A vine from Egypt you transplanted; you drove away the nations and planted it. It put forth its foliage to the Sea, its shoots as far as the River. Why have you broken down its walls, so that every passer-by plucks its fruit, The boar from the forest lays it waste, and the beasts of the field feed upon it? Once again, O LORD of hosts, look down from heaven, and see; take care of this vine, and protect what your right hand has planted the son of man whom you yourself made strong. Then we will no more withdraw from you; give us new life, and we will call upon your name. O LORD, God of hosts, restore us; if your face shine upon us, then we shall be saved.

New Testament: Philemon 4:6-9

Brothers and sisters: 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. Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing what you have learned and received and heard and seen in me. Then the God of peace will be with you.

Gospel: Matthew 21:33-43

Jesus said to the chief priests and the elders of the people: "Hear another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a hedge around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a tower. Then he leased it to tenants and went on a journey. When vintage time drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants to obtain his produce. But the tenants seized the servants and one they beat, another they killed, and a third they stoned. Again he sent other servants, more numerous than the first ones, but they treated them in the same way. Finally, he sent his son to them, thinking, 'They will respect my son.' But when the tenants saw the son, they said to one another, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and acquire his inheritance.' They seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. What will the owner of the vineyard do to those tenants when he comes?" They answered him, "He will put those wretched men to a wretched death and lease his vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the proper times." Jesus said to them, "Did you never read in the Scriptures: The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; by the Lord has this been done, and it is wonderful in our eyes? Therefore, I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that will produce its fruit."

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

OCT 2, 2005 - 27th of yr: Isa 5.1-7; Phil 4.6-9; MT 21.33-43

HE LOOKED FOR A CROP OF FINE GRAPES, BUT WILD GRAPES WAS WHAT IT YIELDED.

"The kingdom of God will be taken away from you & given to a people who will produce its fruit."

During the day: What are you after? Why? What will be the lasting fruit of your efforts? Does it matter? Should it? Anything worth doing is worth doing well. Well for whom? Just you? Or does the welfare of others enter into your motivation? How far down on your list of priorities is it? Move it up a notch & note the difference.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer takes the what & asks why. It strips pride of its dishonesty, acknowledges shallow self-centeredness. Prayer seeks & finds the higher ground, embraces a purpose beyond its ken. Prayer invokes a wisdom that inspires trust, no matter the risks. Prayer is the key to an inner peace that is strong & unafraid. Prayer determines the character of action.

OCT 9, 2005 - 28th Sunday of yr:

Old Testament: Isaiah 26:6-10

On this mountain the LORD of hosts will provide for all peoples a feast of rich food and choice wines, juicy, rich food and pure, choice wines. On this mountain he will destroy the veil that veils all peoples, the web that is woven over all nations; he will destroy death forever. The Lord GOD will wipe away the tears from every face; the reproach of his people he will remove from the whole earth; for the LORD has spoken. On that day it will be said: "Behold our God, to whom we looked to save us! This is the LORD for whom we looked; let us rejoice and be glad that he has saved us!" For the hand of the LORD will rest on this mountain.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 23: 1-6

The Lord is my Shepherd - That's Relationship!

I shall not want - That's Supply!

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures - That's Rest!

He leadeth me beside the still waters - That's Refreshment!

He restoreth my soul - That's Healing!

He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness - That's Guidance!

For His name sake - That's Purpose!

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death - That's Testing!

I will fear no evil - That's Protection!

For Thou art with me - That's Faithfulness!

Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me - That's Discipline!

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies - That's Hope!

Thou anointest my head with oil - That's Consecration!

My cup runneth over - That's Abundance!

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life - That's Blessing!

And I will dwell in the house of the Lord - That's Security!

Forever - That's Eternity!

New Testament: Philippians 4:12-14, 19-29

Brothers and sisters: I know how to live in humble circumstances; I know also how to live with abundance. In every circumstance and in all things I have learned the secret of being well fed and of going hungry, of living in abundance and of being in need. I can do all things in him who strengthens me. Still, it was kind of you to share in my distress. My God will fully supply whatever you need, in accord with his glorious riches in Christ Jesus. To our God and Father, glory forever and ever. Amen.

Gospel: Matthew 22:1-14

Jesus again in reply spoke to the chief priests and elders of the people in parables, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be likened to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son. He dispatched his servants to summon the invited guests to the feast, but they refused to come. A second time he sent other servants, saying, 'Tell those invited: "Behold, I have prepared my banquet, my calves and fattened cattle are killed, and everything is ready; come to the feast."' Some ignored the invitation and went away, one to his farm, another to his business. The rest laid hold of his servants, mistreated them, and killed them. The king was enraged and sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. Then he said to his servants, 'The feast is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy to come. Go out, therefore, into the main roads and invite to the feast whomever you find.' The servants went out into the streets and gathered all they found, bad and good alike, and the hall was filled with guests. But when the king came in to meet the guests, he saw a man there not dressed in a wedding garment. The king said to him, 'My friend, how is it that you came in here without a wedding garment?' But he was reduced to silence. Then

the king said to his attendants, 'Bind his hands and feet, and cast him into the darkness outside, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.' Many are invited, but few are chosen."

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

OCT 9, 2005 - 28th Sunday of yr: Isa 25.6-10; Phil 4.12-14,19-20; MT 22.1-14

ON THE MOUNTAIN THE LORD PROVIDES A FEAST OF RICH FOOD & CHOICE WINES.

'THIS IS THE LORD FOR WHOM WE LOOKED! LET US REJOICE & BE GLAD
THAT HE HAS SAVED US.'

"Some ignored the invitation & went away. He said to his servants, 'The feast is ready;
go out & invite whomever you find.' Many are invited but few are chosen."

During the day: Don't ignore invitations. Be grateful; be courteous. Let inner harmony guarantee harmony with others. Take little things as seriously as big, be cordial (but firm) with everyone, especially yourself. Let reasonable considerations influence your decisions - though insignificant, they may determine unforeseen consequences. We build God's kingdom as we go.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is the reverent obeisance to the Source from whom all good things come. The effectiveness of that very goodness depends on the humility with which it is acknowledged. Prayer submits to a divine plan working it's way, through human cooperation, towards a civilization of love, justice & peace. These constitute the objective of prayer: to be their instruments, always, in my little corner of the world.

OCT 16, 2005 29th of yr:

Old Testament: Isaiah 45:1, 4-6

Thus says the LORD to his anointed, Cyrus, whose right hand I grasp, subduing nations before him, and making kings run in his service, opening doors before him and leaving the gates unbarred: For the sake of Jacob, my servant, of Israel, my chosen one, I have called you by your name, giving you a title, though you knew me not. I am the LORD and there is no other, there is no God besides me. It is I who arm you, though you know me not, so that toward the rising and the setting of the sun people may know that there is none besides me. I am the LORD, there is no other.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 96:1, 3-10

Give the Lord glory and honor. Sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all you lands. Tell his glory among the nations; among all peoples, his wondrous deeds. For great is the LORD and highly to be praised; awesome is he, beyond all gods. For all the gods of the nations are things of nought, but the LORD made the heavens. Give to the LORD, you families of nations, give to the LORD glory and praise; give to the LORD the glory due his name! Bring gifts, and enter his courts. Worship the LORD, in holy attire; tremble before him, all the earth; say among the nations: The LORD is king, he governs the peoples with equity.

New Testament: 1 Thessalonians 1:1-5b

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: grace to you and peace. We give thanks to God always for all of you, remembering you in our prayers, unceasingly calling to mind your work of faith and labor of love and endurance in hope of our Lord Jesus Christ, before our God and Father, knowing, brothers and sisters loved by God, how you were chosen. For our gospel did not come to you in word alone, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with much conviction.

Gospel: Matthew 22:15-21

The Pharisees went off and plotted how they might entrap Jesus in speech. They sent their disciples to him, with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that you are a truthful man and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. And you are not concerned with anyone's opinion, for you do not regard a person's status. Tell us, then, what is your opinion: Is it lawful to pay the census tax to Caesar or not?" Knowing their malice, Jesus said, "Why are you testing me, you hypocrites? Show me the coin that pays the census tax." Then they handed him the Roman coin. He said to them, "Whose image is this and whose inscription?" They replied, "Caesar's." At that he said to them, "Then repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God."

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

OCT 16, 2005 - 29th of yr: Isa 45.1,4-6; Thess 1.1-5; MT 22.15-21

I AM THE LORD, THERE IS NO OTHER. THERE IS NO GOD BESIDES ME.

IT IS I WHO ARM YOU, THOUGH YOU KNOW ME NOT.

"You are a truthful man & teach the way of God in truth;
you are not concerned with anyone's opinion;
you do not regard a person's status."

During the day: Be authentic. Be true to God, & you'll be true to yourself. Let your authenticity show; without your saying a word, others will learn the way of God in truth. The proud will be humbled; the humble will be encouraged. Situations & their solutions are only as important as the character of the persons involved; when others lack it, be the foundation.

ABOUT PRAYER: In prayer we discern hypocrisy, our own & others'. Prayer recognizes both as weakness, not strength, & turns to God for help. With humble confidence that he's always there for those who correct themselves, prayer motivates the courage that pays the price of truth. Others, feeling threatened, may seek to punish & destroy; those who feel shamed may be inspired to turn to prayer themselves.

OCT 23, 2005 - 30th of yr:

Old Testament: Exodus 22:20-26

Thus says the LORD: "You shall not molest or oppress an alien, for you were once aliens yourselves in the land of Egypt. You shall not wrong any widow or orphan. If ever you wrong them and they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry. My wrath will flare up, and I will kill you with the sword; then your own wives will be widows, and your children orphans. "If you lend money to one of your poor neighbors among my people, you shall not act like an extortioner toward him by demanding interest from him. If you take your neighbor's cloak as a pledge, you shall return it to him before sunset; for this cloak of his is the only covering he has for his body. What else has he to sleep in? If he cries out to me, I will hear him; for I am compassionate."

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 18:2-4, 47, 51

I love you, Lord, my strength. I love you, O LORD, my strength, O LORD, my rock, my fortress, my deliverer. My God, my rock of refuge, my shield, the horn of my salvation, my stronghold! Praised be the LORD, I exclaim, and I am safe from my enemies. The LORD lives and blessed be my rock! Extolled be God my savior. You who gave great victories to your king and showed kindness to your anointed.

New Testament: 1 Thessalonians: 1:5c-10

Brothers and sisters: You know what sort of people we were among you for your sake. And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, receiving the word in great affliction, with joy from the Holy Spirit, so that you became a model for all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth not only in Macedonia and in Achaia, but in every place your faith in God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything. For they themselves openly declare about us what sort of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God and to await his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus, who delivers us from the coming wrath.

Gospel: Matthew 22:34-40

When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a scholar of the law tested him by asking, "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" He said to him, "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments."

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

OCT 23, 2005 30th of yr: Exodus 22.20-26; 1Thess 1.5-10; MT 22.34-40

IF YOU TAKE ANOTHER'S CLOAK AS A PLEDGE, GIVE IT BACK BEFORE SUNSET.
IT IS ALL HE HAS; WHAT ELSE WOULD HE SLEEP IN? IF HE CRIES TO ME, I WILL
LISTEN, FOR I AM FULL OF PITY.

"You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul & mind. You must love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang the whole Law & the Prophets."

During the day: Purify love. Question the practice, not the feeling. Want what's good for the other; will it & do it. Love is in deeds, not words. Capacity to love grows with exercise, the harder the better. Made to love another, don't limit it by self-purpose. Love's object is universal, beginning with the Maker. No one exists that can't be bettered by being loved & loving. Love is the outside-of-time human activity that goes on forever. Don't waste your in-time opportunities; they're all around you.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer rests in another's embrace - God's. At times sensual, prayer may be accompanied by consoling awareness of God's presence. Intellectual, it may at times perceive clearly a guiding truth intuitively communicated. Intimate, prayer shares with the Beloved, perhaps wordlessly & without concepts, the depth of one's anxieties & desires, joys & sadness, hopes & disappointments. As it matures, prayer becomes more concerned with the needs & sentiments of others. Authentic channel of God's love for neighbor; prayer flows into God-powered action. Whatever the human results, the divine effect is guaranteed

OCT 30, 2005 - 31st of yr:

Old Testament: Malachi 1:14b-2:2b, 8-10

A great King am I, says the LORD of hosts, and my name will be feared among the nations. And now, O priests, this commandment is for you: If you do not listen, if you do not lay it to heart, to give glory to my name, says the LORD of hosts, I will send a curse upon you and of your blessing I will make a curse. You have turned aside from the way, and have caused many to falter by your instruction; you have made void the covenant of Levi, says the LORD of hosts. I, therefore, have made you contemptible and base before all the people, since you do not keep my ways, but show partiality in your decisions. Have we not all the one father? Has not the one God created us? Why then do we break faith with one another, violating the covenant of our fathers?

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 131:1-3

In you, Lord, I have found my peace. O LORD, my heart is not proud, nor are my eyes haughty; I busy not myself with great things, nor with things too sublime for me. Nay rather, I have stilled and quieted my soul like a weaned child. Like a weaned child on its mother's lap, so is my soul within me. O Israel, hope in the LORD, both now and forever.

New Testament: 1 Thessalonians 2:7b-9, 13

Brothers and sisters: We were gentle among you, as a nursing mother cares for her children. With such affection for you, we were determined to share with you not only the gospel of God, but our very selves as well, so dearly beloved had you become to us. You recall, brothers and sisters, our toil and drudgery. Working night and day in order not to burden any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.

And for this reason we too give thanks to God unceasingly, that, in receiving the word of God from hearing us, you received not a human word but, as it truly is, the word of God, which is now at work in you who believe.

Gospel: Matthew 23:1-12

Jesus spoke to the crowds and to his disciples, saying, "The scribes and the Pharisees have taken their seat on the chair of Moses. Therefore, do and observe all things whatsoever they tell you, but do not follow their example. For they preach but they do not practice. They tie up heavy burdens hard to carry and lay them on people's shoulders, but they will not lift a finger to move them. All their works are performed to be seen. They widen their phylacteries and lengthen their tassels. They love places of honor at banquets, seats of honor in synagogues, greetings in marketplaces, and the salutation 'Rabbi.' As for you, do not be called 'Rabbi.' You have but one teacher, and you are all brothers. Call no one on earth your father; you have but one Father in heaven. Do not be called 'Master'; you have but one master, the Christ. The greatest among you must be your servant. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled; but whoever humbles himself will be exalted."

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

OCT 30, 2005 - 31st of yr: Malachi 1.4-2.2,8-10; 1Thess 2.7-9,13; MT 23.1-12

**A GREAT KING AM I, SAYS THE LORD, & MY NAME WILL BE REVERED.
PRIESTS, THIS COMMANDMENT IS FOR YOU. IF YOU DO NOT LISTEN &
LAY IT TO HEART, I WILL SEND A CURSE UPON YOU.**

**"The greatest among you must be your servant. Whoever exalts himself
will be humbled; but whoever humbles himself will be exalted."**

During the day: Be exalted. But let God do the exalting. Glory in your success; but give God the credit. Cherish a good reputation, but let it be for service to others. You have only one authentic destiny to achieve, the one for which you were designed. The realization of your potential for greatness isn't found in the pursuit of self-aggrandizement; rather, in the fullest possible exercise of your faculties, material & spiritual - yourself - to serve the need at hand, yours or another's. The chaos we create when we all seek to meet our own needs first is the undesired curse we bring on ourselves. It's only solution is repentance & reform.

ABOUT PRAYER: All Christian prayer is the prayer of Christ, prayer of a priestly people. Praying Scriptures, Christ discovered his own prophetic, pastoral & priestly character. Praying with Christ the Old Testament, we share his insights into ministry. Praying the New Testament illumined by his Spirit, we discern individually the particular charism to which each is called, & collectively the balance of these charisms in the community of faith. Thus fully priestly, pastoral & prophetic, the community brings Christ to the world & the world to Christ. He does the rest.

NOV 6, 2005 - 32nd of yr:

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Texas Trinidad by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ
Old Testament: Wisdom 6:12-16

Resplendent and unfading is wisdom, and she is readily perceived by those who love her, and found by those who seek her. She hastens to make herself known in anticipation of their desire; Whoever watches for her at dawn shall not be disappointed, for he shall find her sitting by his gate. For taking thought of wisdom is the perfection of prudence, and whoever for her sake keeps vigil shall quickly be free from care; because she makes her own rounds, seeking those worthy of her, and graciously appears to them in the ways, and meets them with all solicitude.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 63: 2-8

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. I will remember you upon my couch, and through the night-watches I will meditate on you: You are my help, and in the shadow of your wings I shout for joy.

New Testament: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

We do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, about those who have fallen asleep, so that you may not grieve like the rest, who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose, so too will God, through Jesus, bring with him those who have fallen asleep. Indeed, we tell you this, on the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will surely not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself, with a word of command, with the voice of an archangel and with the trumpet of God, will come down from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore, console one another with these words.

Gospel: Matthew 25: 1-13

Jesus told his disciples this parable: "The kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise. The foolish ones, when taking their lamps, brought no oil with them, but the wise brought flasks of oil with their lamps. Since the bridegroom was long delayed, they all became drowsy and fell asleep. At midnight, there was a cry, 'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!' Then all those virgins got up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise ones replied, 'No, for there may not be enough for us and you. Go instead to the merchants and buy some for yourselves.' While they went off to buy it, the bridegroom came and those who were ready went into the wedding feast with him. Then the door was locked. Afterwards the other virgins came and said, 'Lord, Lord, open the door for us!' But he said in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, I do not know you.' Therefore, stay awake, for you know neither the day nor the hour."

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

NOV 6, 2005 - 32nd of yr: Wisdom 6.12-16; 1Thess 4.13-18; MT 25.1-13

**RESPLENDENT & UNFADING IS WISDOM, READILY PERCEIVED BY
THOSE WHO SEEK HER. WHOEVER FOR HER SAKE KEEPS VIGIL SHALL
QUICKLY BE FREE FROM CARE.**

"Then the door was locked. The others came & said, 'Lord, open the door.'
He said, 'I do not know you.' So stay awake. You know neither the day nor the hour."

During the day: Be sensible. Leave your mind free to scan the senses. The mind was made to scan, ponder & judge; in that order. Don't keep it so busy thinking about a dozen different things that it can't be alert enough to the job at hand to make wise judgments - once the will kicks in & makes its choice, it may be too late to back up & reconsider. Trim your lamps, relax, take things one at a time. Be humble enough to make mistakes, & courageous enough to correct them. You'll find your Wise Boss makes allowances if you're honest enough to admit them.

ABOUT PRAYER: A sensible person begins each day with prayer, not yet knowing either that day nor its hour. Prayerfully, one thanks God for it, then endorses it & gives it back. Each day has its own 'fullness of time'. In some way, perhaps many, 'the hour has come.' Trick is, as the day develops stay alert to the divine dimension. The Spirit's at work. You know not what, but prayer keeps you tuned to it, sight unseen. At evening prayer, he'll fill you in.

NOV 13, 2005 - 33rd of yr: Proverbs

Old Testament: Proverbs 31:10-13, 19-20, 30-31

When one finds a worthy wife, her value is far beyond pearls. Her husband, entrusting his heart to her, has an unfailing prize. She brings him good, and not evil, all the days of her life. She obtains wool and flax and works with loving hands. She puts her hands to the distaff, and her fingers ply the spindle. She reaches out her hands to the poor, and extends her arms to the needy. Charm is deceptive and beauty fleeting; the woman who fears the LORD is to be praised. Give her a reward for her labors, and let her works praise her at the city gates.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 128:1-5

Blessed are those who fear the Lord. Blessed are you who fear the LORD, who walk in his ways! For you shall eat the fruit of your handiwork; blessed shall you be, and favored. Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine in the recesses of your home; Your children like olive plants around your table. Behold, thus is the man blessed who fears the LORD. The LORD bless you from Zion: may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life.

New Testament: 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6

Concerning times and seasons, brothers and sisters, you have no need for anything to be written to you. For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief at night. When people are saying, "Peace and security," then sudden disaster comes upon them, like labor pains upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness, for that day to overtake you like a thief. For all of you are children of the light and children of the day. We are not of the night or of darkness. Therefore, let us not sleep as the rest do, but let us stay alert and sober.

Gospel: Matthew 25: 14-30

Jesus told his disciples this parable: "A man going on a journey called in his servants and entrusted his possessions to them. To one he gave five talents; to another, two; to a third, one-- to each according to his ability. Then he went away. Immediately the one who received five talents went and traded with them, and made another five. Likewise, the one who received two made another two. But the man who received one went off and dug a hole in the ground and buried his master's money. After a long time the master of those servants came back and settled accounts with them. The one who had received five talents came forward bringing the additional five. He said, 'Master, you gave me five talents. See, I have made five more.' His master said to him, 'Well done, my good and faithful servant. Since you were faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities. Come, share your master's joy.' Then the one who had received two talents also came forward and said, 'Master, you gave me two talents. See, I have made two more.' His master said to him, 'Well done, my good and faithful servant. Since you were faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities. Come, share your master's joy.' Then the one who had received the one talent came forward and said, 'Master, I knew you were a demanding person, harvesting where you did not plant and gathering where you did not scatter; so out of fear I went off and buried your talent in the ground. Here it is back.' His master said to him in reply, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I did not plant and gather where I did not scatter? Should you not then have put my money in the bank so that I could have got it back with interest on my return? Now then! Take the talent from him and give it to the one with ten. For to everyone who has, more will be given and he will grow rich; but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. And throw this useless servant into the darkness outside, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.'"

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

NOV 13, 2005 - 33rd of yr: Proverbs 10-20,30-31; 1Thess 5.1-6; MT 25.14-30

A WORTHY WIFE IS FAR BEYOND PEARLS. HER HUSBAND, ENTRUSTING HIS HEART TO HER, HAS AN UNFAILING PRIZE. SHE BRINGS HIM GOOD, NOT EVIL, ALL THE DAYS OF HER LIFE.

"Well done, good & faithful servant. Because you were faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities."

During the day: Some gifts are external, some internal. Prize them all. Ultimately, they're all from the God who made you, & designed each uniquely for you. The place you have in the hearts of others is the two way passage to the heart of God. Responsible loyalty to both expresses your gratitude & exercises your metal. Your life.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer - at best with the other, at least individually - is the space in our lives where tensions are subdued & conflicts avoided. Indispensable, the sincerity of our prayer of petition precludes the infallibly effective response of the Giver, however tested our patience & fortitude. Measure of unconditional love, prayer nurtures the inner peace that humbles.

NOV 20, 2005 - Christ the King:

I Old Testament: Ezekiel 34:11-12, 15-17

Thus says the Lord GOD: I myself will look after and tend my sheep. As a shepherd tends his flock when he finds himself among his scattered sheep, so will I tend my sheep. I will rescue them from every place where they were scattered when it was cloudy and dark. I myself will pasture my sheep; I myself will give them rest, says the Lord GOD. The lost I will seek out, the strayed I will bring back, the injured I will bind up, the sick I will heal, but the sleek and the strong I will destroy, shepherding them rightly. As for you, my sheep, says the Lord GOD, I will judge between one sheep and another, between rams and goats.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 23:1-6

(Visit: <http://morningmeal.totallywell.us/Inspiration/Psalm23.html>)

The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want. The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. In verdant pastures he gives me repose. Beside restful waters he leads me; he refreshes my soul. He guides me in right paths for his name's sake. You spread the table before me in the sight of my foes; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Only goodness and kindness follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD for years to come.

R New Testament: 1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 28

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. When everything is subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to the one who subjected everything to him, so that God may be all in all.

Gospel: Matthew 25:31-46

Jesus said to his disciples: "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne, and all the nations will be assembled before him. And he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the king will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.' Then the righteous will answer him and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?' And the king will say to them in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of the least brothers of mine, you did for me.' Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, a stranger and you gave me no welcome, naked and you gave me no clothing, ill and in prison, and you did not care for me.' Then they will answer and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or ill or in prison, and not minister to your needs?' He will answer them, 'Amen, I say to you, what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me.' And these will go off to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

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

NOV 20, 2005 - Christ the King: Ezekiel 34.11-17; 1Cor 15.20-28; MT 25.31-46

I MYSELF TEND MY SHEEP & GIVE THEM REST.

THE LOST I WILL SEEK, THE INJURED BIND UP. THE SICK HEAL.

I WILL JUDGE BETWEEN ONE & ANOTHER, BETWEEN RAMS & GOATS.

"Whatever you did for one of the least brothers of mine you did for me!

Come, blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you."

During the day: Claim your inheritance now, as you earn it. True, you 'earn' it not by right, but by promise & the fulfillment of its conditions. Enjoy now the joy that only freely proffered service provides. It's not a need you serve; it's a person in need - one with whom God identifies. God himself loves by serving both served & serving. Be then servant, & deserve his service.

ABOUT PRAYER: The prayer of intercession is itself a powerful service. Not because it changes God's determinations, but because - depending on its willfulness - it joins the human will of Christ in healing the broken members of his body. Our prayer for each other as members of his body is unconditional, implicit offering of ourselves for whatever purpose would serve his renewing love.