

2006 Liturgical Year B

This is only a partial year of lesson – Started when  
Jack Vessels went down the college campus in Mississippi.

It has been said that the New Testament lies in the Old Testament and the Old Testament is revealed in the New Testament. The Old Testament Reading and the New Testament readings for the liturgical calendar help us understand the meaning of this statement. The letters and books of the New Testament other than the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) help to guide us in our applications of the messages found in the Gospels.

This is the start on Lessons At A Glance  
Jack Vessels moved to Mississippi from  
St. Ignatius House but continued Email

**NOV 27, 2005 - 1st Advent: Isa 63.16-19, 64.2-7; 1Cor 1.3-9; MK 13.33-37**

**Old Testament: Isaiah 63:16b-17, 19b, 64:2-7**

You, LORD, are our father, our redeemer you are named forever. Why do you let us wander, O LORD, from your ways, and harden our hearts so that we fear you not? Return for the sake of your servants, the tribes of your heritage. Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down, with the mountains quaking before you, while you wrought awesome deeds we could not hope for, such as they had not heard of from of old. No ear has ever heard, no eye ever seen, any God but you doing such deeds for those who wait for him. Would that you might meet us doing right, that we were mindful of you in our ways! Behold, you are angry, and we are sinful; all of us have become like unclean people, all our good deeds are like polluted rags; we have all withered like leaves, and our guilt carries us away like the wind. There is none who calls upon your name, who rouses himself to cling to you; for you have hidden your face from us and have delivered us up to our guilt. Yet, O LORD, you are our father; we are the clay and you the potter: we are all the work of your hands.

**Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 80:2-3, 15-16, 18-19**

**Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved.** O shepherd of Israel, hearken, from your throne upon the cherubim, shine forth. Rouse your power, and come to save us. 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. May your help be with the man of your right hand, with 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.

**New Testament: 1 Corinthians 1:3-9**

Brothers and sisters: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I give thanks to my God always on your account for the grace of God bestowed on you in Christ Jesus, that in him you were enriched in every way, with all discourse and all knowledge, as the testimony to Christ was confirmed among you, so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ. He will keep you firm to the end, irreproachable on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, and by him you were called to fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Gospel: Mark 13:33-37**

Jesus said to his disciples: (Be watchful! Be alert! You do not know when the time will come. It is like a man traveling abroad. He leaves home and places his servants in charge, each with his own work, and orders the gatekeeper to be on the watch. Watch, therefore; you do not know when the Lord of the house is coming, whether in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or in the morning. May he not come suddenly and find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to all: (Watch!)

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

**NOV 27, 2005 - 1st Advent: Isa 63.16-19, 64.2-7; 1Cor 1.3-9; MK 13.33-37**

[This Sunday begins a new liturgical year. The gospel readings will be mainly from St. Mark.]

**WHY DO YOU LET US WANDER, LORD, FROM YOUR WAYS, HARDEN OUR  
HEARTS & FEAR YOU NOT? WE ARE THE CLAY & YOU THE POTTER:**

**WE ARE ALL THE WORK OF YOUR HANDS.**

"Be watchful. Be alert. "A man traveling leaves home & places his servants in charge.

May he not come suddenly, & find you sleeping."

During the day: Doze to get a little rest, but don't lie down & go to sleep! You've a job to do, so get it done. You're accountable to Another. Your freedom to do it your way is a gift, both a responsibility & a guarantee. Aware your purpose transcends your efforts, you entrust them to it, secure in the Absolute you serve.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer harmonizes the moral forces that keep us in orbit. The centrifugal does as much on it's own as it can, seeking outer limits; the centripetal acknowledges utter dependence on the source of all energy. Prayer turns the tension into love, exulting in it's freedom to will the will of the Beloved. Such love is unlimited.

**DEC 4, 2005 - 2nd Advent: Isa 40.1-5,9-11; 2Peter. 3-8-14; MK 1.1-8**

**Old Testament: Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11**

Comfort, give comfort to my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her service is at an end, her guilt is expiated; indeed, she has received from the hand of the LORD double for all her sins. A voice cries out: In the desert prepare the way of the LORD! Make straight in the wasteland a highway for our God! Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill shall be made low; the rugged land shall be made a plain, the rough country, a broad valley. Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

Go up on to a high mountain, Zion, herald of glad tidings; cry out at the top of your voice, Jerusalem, herald of good news! Fear not to cry out and say to the cities of Judah: Here is your God! Here comes with power the Lord GOD, who rules by his strong arm; here is his reward with him, his recompense before him. Like a shepherd he feeds his flock; in his arms he gathers the lambs, carrying them in his bosom, and leading the ewes with care.

**Responsorial Psalm: 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 to his people. 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.

**New Testament: 2 Peter 3:8-14**

Do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years and a thousand years like one day. The Lord does not delay his promise, as some regard “delay,” but he is patient with you, not wishing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a mighty roar and the elements will be dissolved by fire, and the earth and everything done on it will be found out. Since everything is to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be, conducting yourselves in holiness and devotion, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved in flames and the elements melted by fire. But according to his promise we await new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, since you await these things, be eager to be found without spot or blemish before him, at peace.

**Gospel: Mark 1:1-8**

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God. As it is written in Isaiah the prophet: Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you; he will prepare your way. A voice of one crying out in the desert: “Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.” John the Baptist appeared in the desert proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. People of the whole Judean countryside and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins. John was clothed in camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist. He fed on locusts and wild honey. And this is what he proclaimed: “One mightier than I is coming after me. I am not worthy to stoop and loosen the thongs of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

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

**DEC 4, 2005 - 2nd Advent: Isa 40.1-5,9-11; 2Peter. 3-8-14; MK 1.1-8**

GIVE COMFORT TO MY PEOPLE. SPEAK TENDERLY TO JERUSALEM.

PROCLAIM TO HER THAT HER SERVICE IS AT AN END -

HER GUILT IS EXPIATED.

"John the Baptist appeared in the desert proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins."

During the day: Try a little tenderness. Be keen to what's going on in the lives of others. Their anxieties come from self-doubt, self-doubt from past mistakes. Show them these are no obstacle to the healing power of love. Take care of God's children - he'll take care of you.

ABOUT PRAYER: In prayer, beat your breast about past mistakes of bad will - prayer soothes & assumes their consequences. Humility is truth, & the truth is God holds no grudges - if we're honestly sorry, we're forgiven. Prayer joins Christ in picking up the pieces, not just of our own, but of the sins of others. We're all in this together, with him.

## **DEC 11, 2005 2nd Advent:**

### **Old Testament: Isaiah 61:1-2, 10-11**

The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners, to announce a year of favor from the LORD and a day of vindication by our God. I rejoice heartily in the LORD, in my God is the joy of my soul; for he has clothed me with a robe of salvation and wrapped me in a mantle of justice, like a bridegroom adorned with a diadem, like a bride bedecked with her jewels. As the earth brings forth its plants, and a garden makes its growth spring up, so will the Lord GOD make justice and praise spring up before all the nations.

### **Responsorial Psalm:**

(Is 61:10b) **My soul rejoices in my God.** My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked upon his lowly servant. From this day all generations will call me blessed: the Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is his Name. He has mercy on those who fear him in every generation. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. He has come to the help of his servant Israel for he has remembered his promise of mercy,

### **New Testament: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24**

Brothers and sisters: Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophetic utterances. Test everything; retain what is good. Refrain from every kind of evil. May the God of peace make you perfectly holy and may you entirely, spirit, soul, and body, be preserved blameless for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will also accomplish it.

### **Gospel: John 1:6-8,19-28**

A man named John was sent from God. He came for testimony, to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to testify to the light. And this is the testimony of John. When the Jews from Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to him to ask him, "Who are you?" He admitted and did not deny it, but admitted, "I am not the Christ." So they asked him, "What are you then? Are you Elijah?" And he said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" He answered, "No." So they said to him, "Who are you, so we can give an answer to those who sent us? What do you have to say for yourself?" He said: "I am the voice of one crying out in the desert, 'make straight the way of the Lord,' as Isaiah the prophet said." Some Pharisees were also sent. They asked him, "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ or Elijah or the Prophet?" John answered them, "I baptize with water; but there is one among you whom you do not recognize, the one who is coming after me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to untie." This happened in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Texas Trinidad by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ  
**DEC 11, 2005 2nd Advent: Isa 61.1-2,10-11; 1Thes 5.16-24; JN 1.6-8,19-28**  
THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, SENT TO BRING GLAD TIDINGS TO THE  
POOR. THE LORD GOD WILL MAKE JUSTICE & PEACE BLOSSOM BEFORE ALL.

"There is one among you whom you do not recognize, the one who is coming  
after me, whose sandal I am not worthy to untie."

During the day: Try harder to scratch the surface of the people you work & live with. Divine what truly moves them. Judge less from appearances, ponder other possibilities. Be fair; recognize alternative values to your own. Enriched, perhaps humbled, grow with the insights of others, even when less privileged than yourself.

ABOUT PRAYER: We take people to prayer that the Christ in us might chat with the Christ in them, leaving the Spirit free to work its wonder in the hearts of all. Prayer heals, corrects, forgives, prepares, strengthens, rewards - all for the price of a little bit of time. Make it!

## DEC 18, 2005 - 4th of Advent:

### Old Testament: 2 Samuel 7:1-5,8-12,14,16

When King David was settled in his palace, and the LORD had given him rest from his enemies on every side, he said to Nathan the prophet, "Here I am living in a house of cedar, while the ark of God dwells in a tent!" Nathan answered the king, "Go, do whatever you have in mind, for the LORD is with you." But that night the LORD spoke to Nathan and said: "Go, tell my servant David, 'Thus says the LORD: Should you build me a house to dwell in?' "It was I who took you from the pasture and from the care of the flock to be commander of my people Israel. I have been with you wherever you went, and I have destroyed all your enemies before you. And I will make you famous like the great ones of the earth. I will fix a place for my people Israel; I will plant them so that they may dwell in their place without further disturbance. Neither shall the wicked continue to afflict them as they did of old, since the time I first appointed judges over my people Israel. I will give you rest from all your enemies. The LORD also reveals to you that he will establish a house for you. And when your time comes and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your heir after you, sprung from your loins, and I will make his kingdom firm. I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me. Your house and your kingdom shall endure forever before me; your throne shall stand firm forever."

### Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 89:2-5, 27, 29

**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. "I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn to David my servant: Forever will I confirm your posterity and establish your throne for all generations." "He shall say of me, 'You are my father, my God, the Rock, my savior.' Forever I will maintain my kindness toward him, and my covenant with him stands firm."

### New Testament: Romans 16:25-27

Brothers and sisters: To him who can strengthen you, according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret for long ages but now manifested through the prophetic writings and, according to the command of the eternal God, made known to all nations to bring about the obedience of faith, to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ be glory forever and ever. Amen.

### Gospel: Luke 1:26-38

The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. And coming to her, he said, "Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you." But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. "Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." But Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?" And the angel said to her in reply, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren; for nothing will be impossible for God." Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

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

**DEC 18, 2005 - 4th of Advent: 2Sam 7.1-5,8-12,14-16; Rom 16.25-27; LK 1.26-38**

I WILL BE A FATHER TO HIM & HE WILL BE A SON TO ME.

I WILL MAKE HIS KINGDOM FIRM.

Elizabeth your cousin, she who was called barren, has conceived a son in her old age. Nothing is impossible for God. Mary said, 'I am the handmaid of the Lord.'

During the day: Kinship engenders respect - honor it. Holding a grudge self-destructs - dissolve it. Kinship also implies responsibilities - assume them; dodging them weakens the core of human solidarity. Loyalty to the Father of all is expressed in service to others. Begin with those nearest to the heart. God's redeeming love has no other vehicle.

ABOUT PRAYER: Family prayer is for the family & with the family, tho not necessarily at the same time. No easier way to pray than to take each member of the family to prayer. Going out from the inner circle of immediate family to others in the larger family, we pray for both living & dead - in prayer, the dead come alive. The prayerful presence of God when we pray as families strengthens bonds than no amount of discord can destroy. If you're not practicing it, do.

## DEC 25, 2005 Nativity of the Lord

### Old Testament: Isaiah 9:1-6

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. For every boot that tramped in battle, every cloak rolled in blood, will be burned as fuel for flames. For a child is born to us, a son is given us; upon his shoulder dominion rests. They name him Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero, Father-Forever, Prince of Peace. His dominion is vast and forever peaceful, from David's throne, and over his kingdom, which he confirms and sustains by judgment and justice, both now and forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this!

### Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 96: 1-3, 11-13

**Today is born our Savior, Christ the Lord.** Sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all you lands. Sing to the LORD; bless his name. Announce his salvation, day after day. Tell his glory among the nations; among all peoples, his wondrous deeds. Let the heavens be glad and the earth rejoice; let the sea and what fills it resound; let the plains be joyful and all that is in them! Then shall all the trees of the forest exult. They shall exult before the LORD, for he comes; for he comes to rule the earth. He shall rule the world with justice and the peoples with his constancy.

### New Testament: Titus 2: 11-14

Beloved: The grace of God has appeared, saving all and training us to reject godless ways and worldly desires and to live temperately, justly, and devoutly in this age, as we await the blessed hope, the appearance of the glory of our great God and savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to deliver us from all lawlessness and to cleanse for himself a people as his own, eager to do what is good.

### Gospel: Luke 2: 1-14

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole world should be enrolled. This was the first enrollment, when Quirinius was governor of Syria. So all went to be enrolled, each to his own town. And Joseph too went up from Galilee from the town of Nazareth to Judea, to the city of David that is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. While they were there, the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. Now there were shepherds in that region living in the fields and keeping the night watch over their flock. The angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were struck with great fear. The angel said to them, (Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Christ and Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. (And suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying: (Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.)

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

**DEC 25, 2005 Nativity of the Lord: Isa 9.1-6; Titus 2.11-14; LK 2.1-14**

THE PEOPLE WHO WALKED IN DARKNESS HAVE SEEN A GREAT LIGHT --  
A CHILD IS BORN TO US: WONDER-COUNSELOR, GOD-HERO,  
FATHER-FOREVER, PRINCE OF PEACE!

"An angel appeared to them. 'Do not be afraid. I give you great news for all the people: Today a savior has been born for you."

During the day: God plays no favorites - he is not a respecter of persons. Creator of all, he values every person. He wills all to be his children, to share a common inheritance. Of those who've received more, more is expected. Hoarding is not in the plan. It abhors the light, prefers the darkness. Inheritance squandered.

ABOUT PRAYER: In prayer we huddle with the team: the Father who designs; the Son who executes; the Spirit who divinizes; the mother who humanizes; us who channel them to every situation; our angels who humorize, helping us laugh through all the tears of hardship.

## **JAN 1, 2006 - Octave of Christmas**

### **Reading Old Testament: Numbers 6:22-27**

The LORD said to Moses: "Speak to Aaron and his sons and tell them: This is how you shall bless the Israelites. Say to them: The LORD bless you and keep you! The LORD let his face shine upon you, and be gracious to you! The LORD look upon you kindly and give you peace! So shall they invoke my name upon the Israelites, and I will bless them."

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

**May God bless us in his mercy.** 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!

### **Reading New Testament: Galatians 4:4-7**

Brothers and sisters: When the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to ransom those under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. As proof that you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!" So you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then also an heir, through God.

### **Gospel: Luke 2:16-21**

The shepherds went in haste to Bethlehem and found Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known the message that had been told them about this child. All who heard it were amazed by what had been told them by the shepherds. And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart. Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been told to them. When eight days were completed for his circumcision, he was named Jesus, the name given him by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

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

**JAN 1, 2006 - Octave of Christmas: Num 6.22-27 Gal 4.4-7; LK 2.16-21**

SAY TO THEM: THE LORD BLESS YOU & KEEP YOU!

THE LORD LET HIS FACE SHINE UPON YOU & BE GRACIOUS TO YOU!

THE LORD LOOK UPON YOU KINDLY & GIVE YOU PEACE!

SO SHALL THEY INVOKE MY NAME & I WILL BLESS THEM.

"When eight days were completed for the circumcision, he was named Jesus."

During the day: Think the name of a person who loves you & rest in that love. Think the name of a person you love & rest in that love. Think of lots of people who love you & whom you love & let the power of love renew you, encourage you, console you. The power of love is divine - for God, nothing is impossible. Nor for you, if authentic love is what drives you.

ABOUT PRAYER: Take your name to prayer. Whatever it is, remember it tags the only one of you God made. Your destiny is yours alone. Prayer is your daily recharge - don't neglect it; but if so, not for long. Prayer is holding hands with the Lord who is always by your side. He never lets go. Don't pull away.

## **JAN 8, 2006 - The Epiphany of the Lord**

Old Testament: Isaiah 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: Psalms 72:1-2,7-8,10-13

**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.

New Testament: Ephesians 3:2-6

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: Matthew 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 Trinidad by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ**

**JAN 8, 2006 - Epiphany: Isa 60.1-6; Eph 3.2-6; MT 2.1-12**

**YOU SHALL BE RADIANT AT WHAT YOU SEE, YOUR HEART THROB & OVERFLOW.**

"On entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother.

They prostrated themselves & did him homage."

During the day: Homage what sustains you. You're not the source of your being. Dependence on it is the norm, not the exception. Acknowledged, it governs the thrust of daily activities. Far from a trap of insecurity, it's the fountain of absolute & unending security. Yours if you want it.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is faith groping, the intellect prostrated by a sense of the unattainable attained.

Untouchable sun absorbed. Light perceived, tho darkness total. Truth plumbed. Unknown grown comfortable.

Inner peace permeating all dimensions. Unfulfilled fulfillment.

**JAN 15, 2006 - 2nd of yr: 1Sam 3.3-10,19; 1Cor 6.13-20; JN 1.35-42**

**Old Testament: 1 Samuel 3:3b-10,19**

Samuel was sleeping in the temple of the LORD where the ark of God was. The LORD called to Samuel, who answered, "Here I am." Samuel ran to Eli and said, "Here I am. You called me." "I did not call you," Eli said. "Go back to sleep." So he went back to sleep. Again the LORD called Samuel, who rose and went to Eli. "Here I am," he said. "You called me." But Eli answered, "I did not call you, my son. Go back to sleep." At that time Samuel was not familiar with the LORD, because the LORD had not revealed anything to him as yet. The LORD called Samuel again, for the third time. Getting up and going to Eli, he said, "Here I am. You called me." Then Eli understood that the LORD was calling the youth. So he said to Samuel, "Go to sleep, and if you are called, reply, Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening." When Samuel went to sleep in his place, the LORD came and revealed his presence, calling out as before, "Samuel, Samuel!" Samuel answered, "Speak, for your servant is listening." Samuel grew up, and the LORD was with him, not permitting any word of his to be without effect.

**Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 40:2, 4, 7-10**

**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.

**New Testament: 1 Corinthians 6: 13c-15a, 17-20**

Brothers and sisters: The body is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body; God raised the Lord and will also raise us by his power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? But whoever is joined to the Lord becomes one Spirit with him. Avoid immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the immoral person sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been purchased at a price. Therefore glorify God in your body.

**Gospel: John 1:35-42**

John was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he said, "Behold, the Lamb of God." The two disciples heard what he said and followed Jesus. Jesus turned and saw them following him and said to them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, "Rabbi" - which translated means Teacher - , "where are you staying?" He said to them, "Come, and you will see." So they went and saw where Jesus was staying, and they stayed with him that day. It was about four in the afternoon. Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, was one of the two who heard John and followed Jesus. He first found his own brother Simon and told him, "We have found the Messiah" - which is translated Christ - . Then he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John; you will be called Cephas" - which is translated Peter.

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

**JAN 15, 2006 - 2nd of yr: 1Sam 3.3-10,19; 1Cor 6.13-20; JN 1.35-42**

**IF YOU ARE CALLED, REPLY 'SPEAK, LORD, YOUR SERVANT IS LISTENING.'**

**SAMUEL GREW UP & THE LORD WAS WITH HIM,**

**NOT PERMITTING ANY WORD OF HIS TO BE WITHOUT EFFECT.**

"Jesus turned & said, 'What are you looking for?'

They replied, 'Rabbi, where are you staying?'

He said to them, 'Come & see.'

During the day: Remain tuned to the will of others. If proper, adjust--make it your own. If not, discuss; reason with the other, that truth might prevail. If immoral, withdraw. If not, be obedient to authority, trusting in the wisdom of yet higher authorities. There'll always be another day. Keep your vision high.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer slides into the underbelly of reality, awaits hidden lights to illumine hidden secrets. Communication between the divine & the human, prayer learns to discern the authentic from the tinsel. Of the will more than of the intellect, prayer assumes challenges, partnership strengthened & put to the test.

## **JAN 22, 2006 - 3rd of yr**

### **Old Testament: Jonah 3:1-5, 10**

The word of the LORD came to Jonah, saying: "Set out for the great city of Nineveh, and announce to it the message that I will tell you." So Jonah made ready and went to Nineveh, according to the LORD's bidding. Now Nineveh was an enormously large city; it took three days to go through it. Jonah began his journey through the city, and had gone but a single day's walk announcing, "Forty days more and Nineveh shall be destroyed," when the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast and all of them, great and small, put on sackcloth. When God saw by their actions how they turned from their evil way, he repented of the evil that he had threatened to do to them; he did not carry it out.

### **Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 25:4-9**

**Teach me your ways, 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. 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: 1 Corinthians 7:29-31**

I tell you, brothers and sisters, the time is running out. From now on, let those having wives act as not having them, those weeping as not weeping, those rejoicing as not rejoicing, those buying as not owning, those using the world as not using it fully. For the world in its present form is passing away.

### **Gospel: Mark 1: 14-20**

After John had been arrested, Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God: "This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel." As he passed by the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting their nets into the sea; they were fishermen. Jesus said to them, "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men." Then they abandoned their nets and followed him. He walked along a little farther and saw James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John. They too were in a boat mending their nets. Then he called them. So they left their father Zebedee in the boat along with the hired men and followed him.

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

**JAN 22, 2006 - 3rd of yr: Jonah 3.1-5,10; 1Cor 7.29-31; MK 1.14-20**

JONAH ANNOUNCED GOD'S MESSAGE.

THE PEOPLE OF NINEVEH BELIEVED & PROCLAIMED A FAST.

WHEN GOD SAW HOW THEY TURNED AWAY FROM EVIL,

HE DID NOT CARRY OUT WHAT HE HAD THREATENED.

"Come follow me, & I will make you fishers of men."

**During the day:** Be a follower, the humble way to leadership. The measure of team effort is mutual trust & respect, far more valuable & lasting than goal achieved. Human bonds of friendship with colleagues & love for the served turn divine as the chaos of self-aggrandizement, renounced, allows the project to be God's. God smiles, & works his wonders.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer weaves strength into projects. Each test taken to prayer injects faith into human affairs. The wisdom & power of God flow through prayer, if imperceptibly. Gratitude in prayer anticipates results, prepares to garner a harvest of God's design. Prayer turns failures into victories.

**JAN 29, 2006 - 4th of yr**

**Old Testament: Deuteronomy 18:15-20**

Moses spoke to all the people, saying: "A prophet like me will the LORD, your God, raise up for you from among your own kin; to him you shall listen. This is exactly what you requested of the LORD, your God, at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, 'Let us not again hear the voice of the LORD, our God, nor see this great fire any more, lest we die.' And the LORD said to me, 'This was well said. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their kin, and will put my words into his mouth; he shall tell them all that I command him.' Whoever will not listen to my words which he speaks in my name, I myself will make him answer for it. But if a prophet presumes to speak in my name an oracle that I have not commanded him to speak, or speaks in the name of other gods, he shall die."

**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: 1 Corinthians 7:32-35**

Brothers and sisters: I should like you to be free of anxieties. An unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord. But a married man is anxious about the things of the world, how he may please his wife, and he is divided. An unmarried woman or a virgin is anxious about the things of the Lord, so that she may be holy in both body and spirit. A married woman, on the other hand, is anxious about the things of the world, how she may please her husband. I am telling you this for your own benefit, not to impose a restraint upon you, but for the sake of propriety and adherence to the Lord without distraction.

**Gospel: Mark 1:21-28**

Then they came to Capernaum, and on the sabbath Jesus entered the synagogue and taught. The people were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes. In their synagogue was a man with an unclean spirit; he cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are – the Holy One of God!" Jesus rebuked him and said, "Quiet! Come out of him!" The unclean spirit convulsed him and with a loud cry came out of him. All were amazed and asked one another, "What is this? A new teaching with authority. He commands even the unclean spirits and they obey him." His fame spread everywhere throughout the whole region of Galilee.

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

**JAN 29, 2006 - 4th of yr: Deut 18.15-20; 1Cor 7.32-35; MK 1.21-28**

THE LORD SAID [to Moses] 'I WILL RAISE UP FROM AMONG  
THEM A PROPHET LIKE YOU & PUT MY WORDS IN HIS MOUTH;  
WHOEVER WILL NOT LISTEN WHEN HE SPEAKS IN MY NAME,  
I MYSELF WILL MAKE HIM ANSWER FOR IT.'

"On the Sabbath Jesus entered the synagogue & taught.

All were amazed; 'What is this? A new teaching with authority!

He commands even the unclean spirits & they obey!"

**During the day:** Be a good listener. Set aside private judgment as you ponder the words of others. Truth has its own authority; keep the mind open - it sometimes comes in the back door, finding the front one locked. Don't be afraid.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer expresses belief in someone, not certainty about something. Belief is trust, & rises above intellectual perception. The mind is made for truth, the heart for goodness; the holy one prayer looks for is the infinity of both. In prayer, the heart fills with what surpasses the mind.

**FEB 5, 2006 - 5th of yr**

**Reading Old Testament: Job 7:1-4.6-7**

Job spoke, saying: Is not man's life on earth a drudgery? Are not his days those of hirelings? He is a slave who longs for the shade, a hireling who waits for his wages. So I have been assigned months of misery, and troubled nights have been allotted to me. If in bed I say, "When shall I arise?" then the night drags on; I am filled with restlessness until the dawn. My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle; they come to an end without hope. Remember that my life is like the wind; I shall not see happiness again.

**Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 147:1-6**

**Praise the Lord, who heals the brokenhearted.** Praise the LORD, for he is good; sing praise to our God, for he is gracious; it is fitting to praise him. The LORD rebuilds Jerusalem; the dispersed of Israel he gathers. He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. He tells the number of the stars; he calls each by name. Great is our Lord and mighty in power; to his wisdom there is no limit. The LORD sustains the lowly; the wicked he casts to the ground.

**Reading New Testament: 1 Corinthians 9:16-19, 22-23**

Brothers and sisters: If I preach the gospel, this is no reason for me to boast, for an obligation has been imposed on me, and woe to me if I do not preach it! If I do so willingly, I have a recompense, but if unwillingly, then I have been entrusted with a stewardship. What then is my recompense? That, when I preach, I offer the gospel free of charge so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel. Although I am free in regard to all, I have made myself a slave to all so as to win over as many as possible. To the weak I became weak, to win over the weak. I have become all things to all, to save at least some. All this I do for the sake of the gospel, so that I too may have a share in it.

**Gospel: Mark 1:29-39**

On leaving the synagogue Jesus entered the house of Simon and Andrew with James and John. Simon's mother-in-law lay sick with a fever. They immediately told him about her. He approached, grasped her hand, and helped her up. Then the fever left her and she waited on them. When it was evening, after sunset, they brought to him all who were ill or possessed by demons. The whole town was gathered at the door. He cured many who were sick with various diseases, and he drove out many demons, not permitting them to speak because they knew him. Rising very early before dawn, he left and went off to a deserted place, where he prayed. Simon and those who were with him pursued him and on finding him said, "Everyone is looking for you." He told them, "Let us go on to the nearby villages that I may preach there also. For this purpose have I come." So he went into their synagogues, preaching and driving out demons throughout the whole of Galilee.

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

**FEB 5, 2006 - 5th of yr: Job 7.1-7; 1Cor 9.16-23; MK 1.29-39**

THE NIGHT DRAGS ON; I AM FILLED WITH RESTLESSNESS UNTIL THE DAWN.

"Rising before dawn, Jesus went off to a deserted place to pray.

Simon found him & said, 'Everyone's looking for you!' He replied,

'Let us go on to nearby villages that I may preach there also.

For this purpose have I come.

**During the day:** Practice what you preach. Preach truth, practice goodness. The better you do both, the holier you'll become. Meaning what? That, designed to be a channel of absolute Truth & Goodness, the more you are, the more you'll partake of Their essence.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer provides the day's orientation. Sight unseen, God's perspective adopted with total trust. Dawn's prayer re-immerses one in the cleansing waters of baptism. Prayer reaffirms commitment: to take one step at a time in harmony with God's will. He does what he will, & we tag along.

**FEB 12, 2006 - 6th of yr.**

**Reading Old Testament: Leviticus 13:1-2, 44-46**

The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "If someone has on his skin a scab or pustule or blotch which appears to be the sore of leprosy, he shall be brought to Aaron, the priest, or to one of the priests among his descendants. If the man is leprous and unclean, the priest shall declare him unclean by reason of the sore on his head. "The one who bears the sore of leprosy shall keep his garments rent and his head bare, and shall muffle his beard; he shall cry out, 'Unclean, unclean!' As long as the sore is on him he shall declare himself unclean, since he is in fact unclean. He shall dwell apart, making his abode outside the camp."

**Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 32: 1-2, 5, 11**

**I turn to you, Lord, in time of trouble, and you fill me with the joy of salvation.** Blessed is he whose fault is taken away, whose sin is covered. Blessed the man to whom the LORD imputes not guilt, in whose spirit there is no guile. Then I acknowledged my sin to you, my guilt I covered not. I said, "I confess my faults to the LORD," and you took away the guilt of my sin. Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, you just; exult, all you upright of heart.

**Reading 1 Corinthians 10:32 - 11:1**

Brothers and sisters, Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God. Avoid giving offense, whether to the Jews or Greeks or the church of God, just as I try to please everyone in every way, not seeking my own benefit but that of the many, that they may be saved. Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.

**Gospel: Mark 1: 40-45**

A leper came to Jesus and kneeling down begged him and said, "If you wish, you can make me clean." Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand, touched him, and said to him, "I do will it. Be made clean." The leprosy left him immediately, and he was made clean. Then, warning the him sternly, he dismissed him at once. He said to him, "See that you tell no one anything, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses prescribed; that will be proof for them." The man went away and began to publicize the whole matter. He spread the report abroad so that it was impossible for Jesus to enter a town openly. He remained outside in deserted places, and people kept coming to him from everywhere.

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

**FEB 12, 2006 - 6th of yr: Lev 13.1-2,44-46; 1Cor 10.31-11.1; MK 1.40-45**

THE ONE WHO BEARS THE SORE SHALL KEEP HIS GARMENTS RENT &  
HIS HEAD BARE, MUFFLE HIS BEARD & CRY OUT 'UNCLEAN, UNCLEAR!'

'A leper came to Jesus. 'If you wish, you can make me clean.'

Moved with pity, Jesus stretched out his hand, touched him & said

'I do will it. Be made clean.'

**During the day:** Be more concerned about the health of the spirit than of the body--uncleanliness of heart is far more destructive than a skin-deep disease. Physical ills & handicaps are challenges the spirit either succumbs to or utilizes; brought to its knees, the human will adjust sensibly to its own limitations, lovingly to absolute dependence on a Providence with infinite power, wisdom & love: 'Thy will be done.'

**ABOUT PRAYER:** There's something human about God & it's name is Jesus. Solidarity with the suffering demands compassion; fidelity to mission exacts patience. Redeemer's love seeks the good of the person, not of its conditions; the latter he assumes with the former, guaranty of an inner strength found only in prayer.

**FEB 19, 2006 - 7th of yr.**

**Reading Old Testament: Isaiah 43: 18-25**

Thus says the LORD: Remember not the events of the past, the things of long ago consider not; see, I am doing something new! Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? In the desert I make a way, in the wasteland, rivers. The people I formed for myself, that they might announce my praise. Yet you did not call upon me, O Jacob, for you grew weary of me, O Israel. You burdened me with your sins, and wearied me with your crimes. It is I, I, who wipe out, for my own sake, your offenses; your sins I remember no more.

**Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 41: 2-5,13-14**

**Lord, heal my soul, for I have sinned against you.** Blessed is the one who has regard for the lowly and the poor; in the day of misfortune the LORD will deliver him. The LORD will keep and preserve him; and make him blessed on earth, and not give him over to the will of his enemies. The LORD will help him on his sickbed, he will take away all his ailment when he is ill. Once I said, "O LORD, have pity on me; heal me, though I have sinned against you." But because of my integrity you sustain me and let me stand before you forever. Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, from all eternity. Amen. Amen.

**New Testament Reading: 2 Corinthians 1:18-22**

Brothers and sisters: As God is faithful, our word to you is not "yes" and "no." For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was proclaimed to you by us, Silvanus and Timothy and me, was not "yes" and "no," but "yes" has been in him. For however many are the promises of God, their Yes is in him; therefore, the Amen from us also goes through him to God for glory. But the one who gives us security with you in Christ and who anointed us is God; he has also put his seal upon us and given the Spirit in our hearts as a first installment.

**Gospel: Mark 2: 1-12**

When Jesus returned to Capernaum after some days, it became known that he was at home. Many gathered together so that there was no longer room for them, not even around the door, and he preached the word to them. They came bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. Unable to get near Jesus because of the crowd, they opened up the roof above him. After they had broken through, they let down the mat on which the paralytic was lying. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Child, your sins are forgiven." Now some of the scribes were sitting there asking themselves, "Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming. Who but God alone can forgive sins?" Jesus immediately knew in his mind what they were thinking to themselves, so he said, "Why are you thinking such things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, pick up your mat and walk?' But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority to forgive sins on earth" —he said to the paralytic, "I say to you, rise, pick up your mat, and go home." He rose, picked up his mat at once, and went away in the sight of everyone. They were all astounded and glorified God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this."

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

**FEB 19, 2006 - 7th of yr: Isa 43,18-25; 2Cor 1.18-22; MK 2.1-12**

YOU BURDENED ME WITH YOUR SINS, WEARIED ME WITH YOUR CRIMES.

IT IS I WHO WIPE OUT, FOR MY OWN SAKE,  
YOUR OFFENSES; YOUR SINS I REMEMBER NO MORE.

"Which is easier to say: 'Your sins are forgiven', or 'Pick up your mat & walk?'  
That you may know that the Son of Man has authority to forgive sins on earth,'  
he said to the paralytic, 'Pick up your mat & go home.'"

**During the day:** Be sorry. Don't doubt the power of another's forgiveness. It's the human will, in harmony with the divine, that determines human history. The acknowledgment of mistakes, both of bad judgment & of bad will, & the corresponding recognition of the other that reconciliation has thus been restored, guarantees the healing presence of God. His plan may be abandoned, but never thwarted.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** The prayer of gratitude is followed by the prayer of regret. Gratitude is not for the gift, but for the friendship & love of the giver. Almost automatic is the regret that one hasn't reciprocated that love fully; in prayer we mingle gratitude with recognition that we've failed our God in using his gifts as we should. Both lead to the prayer of trust, the ultimate proof of love. Knowing we're forgiven, we relish the unquestionable power of his mercy.

**FEB 26, 2006**

**Reading Old Testament: Hosea 2:16-17, 21-22**

Thus says the LORD: I will lead her into the desert and speak to her heart. She shall respond there as in the days of her youth, when she came up from the land of Egypt. I will espouse you to me forever: I will espouse you in right and in justice, in love and in mercy; I will espouse you in fidelity, and you shall know the LORD.

**Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 103:1-4,8,10,12-13**

**The Lord is kind and merciful.** 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, he heals all your ills. He redeems your life from destruction, he crowns you with kindness and compassion. Merciful and gracious is the LORD, slow to anger and abounding in kindness. Not according to our sins does he deal with us, nor does he requite us according to our crimes. As far as the east is from the west, so far has he put our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him.

**Reading New Testament: 2 Corinthians 3:1-6**

Brothers and sisters: Do we need, as some do, letters of recommendation to you or from you? You are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by all, shown to be a letter of Christ ministered by us, written not in ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets that are hearts of flesh. Such confidence we have through Christ toward God. Not that of ourselves we are qualified to take credit for anything as coming from us; rather, our qualification comes from God, who has indeed qualified us as ministers of a new covenant, not of letter but of spirit; for the letter brings death, but the Spirit gives life.

**Gospel: Mark 2:18-22**

The disciples of John and of the Pharisees were accustomed to fast. People came to him and objected, "Why do the disciples of John and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" Jesus answered them, "Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them they cannot fast. But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast on that day. No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old cloak. If he does, its fullness pulls away, the new from the old, and the tear gets worse. Likewise, no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the skins are ruined. Rather, new wine is poured into fresh wineskins."

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

**FEB 26, 2006 - Hosea 2.16-22; 2Cor 1-6; MK 2.18-22**

I WILL LEAD HER INTO THE DESERT & SPEAK TO HER HEART: I WILL ESPOUSE YOU  
TO ME FOREVER IN RIGHT & JUSTICE, IN LOVE & MERCY, & IN FIDELITY,  
AND YOU SHALL KNOW THE LORD.

"Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? No one pours new wine into old wineskins-- the wine will burst the skins, & both wine & skins are ruined. Rather, new wine is poured into new wineskins."

**During the day:** Be faithful to truth, but in the ever-changing ways circumstances demand. Bring justice to every endeavor, no matter the uniqueness of the challenge. Love every person you meet, for love is of the Lord. Practice largesse, & show others with each new day you're just as new as it is!

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer is where time & timelessness meet, fountain of eternal youth. Every prayer reveals new aspects of God, falls in love with him all over again. The Good News is always new, its Incarnate Word possessed & possessing in every act of loving prayer. Surrender with abandon to the creating & redeeming Lord who wants you!

## MAR 5, 2006 - 1st Lent

### Reading Old Testament: Genesis 9:8-15

God said to Noah and to his sons with him: "See, I am now establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you and with every living creature that was with you: all the birds, and the various tame and wild animals that were with you and came out of the ark. I will establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all bodily creatures be destroyed by the waters of a flood; there shall not be another flood to devastate the earth." God added: "This is the sign that I am giving for all ages to come, of the covenant between me and you and every living creature with you: I set my bow in the clouds to serve as a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth, and the bow appears in the clouds, I will recall the covenant I have made between me and you and all living beings, so that the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all mortal beings."

### Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 25:4-9

**Your ways, O Lord, are love and truth to those who keep your covenant.** 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. 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 he teaches the humble his way.

### New Testament Reading: 1 Peter 3:18-22

Beloved: Christ 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. In it he also went to preach to the spirits in prison, who had once been disobedient while God patiently waited in the days of Noah during the building of the ark, in which a few persons, eight in all, were saved through water. This prefigured baptism, which saves you now. It is not a removal of dirt from the body but an appeal to God for a clear conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers subject to him.

### Gospel: Mark 1:12-15

The Spirit drove Jesus out into the desert, and he remained in the desert for forty days, tempted by Satan. He was among wild beasts, and the angels ministered to him. After John had been arrested, Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God: "This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."

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

**MAR 5, 2006 - 1st Lent: Gen 9.15; 1Peter 3.18-22; MK 1.12-15**

**GOD SAID TO NOAH: I SET MY BOW IN THE CLOUDS AS A SIGN OF MY COVENANT.**

**Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God: 'This is the time of fulfillment.**

**The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, & believe in the gospel.'**

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**During the day:** Be Godlike, & keep your word. And when you make a mistake, acknowledge it, both to yourself & others. Personal integrity is both humble & dependable. Every human choice either contributes to the healing of humanity or to its ills. Divine love is only as transforming as its human partners requite.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** We take each day to prayer presuming the News is Good. We don't see the rainbow, but we know it's there. We pray to a God hidden in his cloud, unseen but seeing, unfelt but feeling. Love trusts, or it isn't love. His entrusts us with life & its responsibilities, our prayers the lungs that breathe it in, then out to others

**MAR 12, 2006 - 2nd Lent: Gen 22.1-2,9-18; Rms 8.31-34; MK 9.2-10**

**Reading Old Testament: Genesis 22:1-2, 9-13,15-18**

God put Abraham to the test. He called to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am!" he replied. Then God said: "Take your son Isaac, your only one, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah. There you shall offer him up as a holocaust on a height that I will point out to you." When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. Then he reached out and took the knife to slaughter his son. But the LORD's messenger called to him from heaven, "Abraham, Abraham!" "Here I am!" he answered. "Do not lay your hand on the boy," said the messenger. "Do not do the least thing to him. I know now how devoted you are to God, since you did not withhold from me your own beloved son." As Abraham looked about, he spied a ram caught by its horns in the thicket. So he went and took the ram and offered it up as a holocaust in place of his son. Again the LORD's messenger called to Abraham from heaven and said: "I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you acted as you did in not withholding from me your beloved son, I will bless you abundantly and make your descendants as countless as the stars of the sky and the sands of the seashore; your descendants shall take possession of the gates of their enemies, and in your descendants all the nations of the earth shall find blessing—all this because you obeyed my command."

**Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 116:10, 15-19**

**I will walk before the Lord, in the land of the living.** I believed, even when I said, "I am greatly afflicted." Precious in the eyes of the LORD is the death of his faithful ones. O LORD, I am your servant; I am your servant, the son of your handmaid; you have loosed my bonds. To you will I offer sacrifice of thanksgiving, and I will call upon the name of the LORD. My vows to the LORD I will pay in the presence of all his people, In the courts of the house of the LORD, in your midst, O Jerusalem.

**Reading New Testament: Romans 8:31-34**

Brothers and sisters: If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but handed him over for us all, how will he not also give us everything else along with him? Who will bring a charge against God's chosen ones? It is God who acquits us, who will condemn? Christ Jesus it is who died . or, rather, was raised . who also is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us.

**Gospel: Mark 9:2-10**

Jesus took Peter, James, and John and led them up a high mountain apart by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no fuller on earth could bleach them. Then Elijah appeared to them along with Moses, and they were conversing with Jesus. Then Peter said to Jesus in reply, "Rabbi, it is good that we are here! Let us make three tents: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." He hardly knew what to say, they were so terrified. Then a cloud came, casting a shadow over them; from the cloud came a voice, "This is my beloved Son. Listen to him." Suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone but Jesus alone with them. As they were coming down from the mountain, he charged them not to relate what they had seen to anyone, except when the Son of Man had risen from the dead. So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what rising from the dead meant.

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

**MAR 12, 2006 - 2nd Lent: Gen 22.1-2,9-18; Rms 8.31-34; MK 9.2-10**

ABRAHAM, DO NOT LAY YOUR HAND ON THE BOY.

I KNOW NOW HOW DEVOTED YOU ARE TO ME.

BECAUSE YOU ACTED AS YOU DID, I WILL BLESS YOU ABUNDANTLY.

"From the cloud came a voice from heaven: 'This is my beloved son. Listen to him.'"

**During the day:** Be worthy of the love of others. Be grateful for that love, & your gratitude will be its loving return. Love is of God, & cannot but fulfill his purpose. The greater the submission of human love to the divine, the greater a grateful God's gratitude, assurance of eternal fruitfulness for all concerned..

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer is the struggle to bring one's will to submit to Another's; seeks blindly for reasons to do so. Agonizing, it chooses between trust & security. In prayer, we sort through Christ's words for guidance, strength & inner peace. All are gift, his to dispense as he interprets the Father's will. Prayer rests in hope.

**MARCH 19, 2006 - 3rd lent: Ex 20.1-17; 1Cor 1.22-25; JN 2.13-25**

**Old Testament Reading: Exodus 20:1-17**

In those days, God delivered all these commandments: "I, the LORD, am your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that place of slavery. You shall not have other gods besides me. You shall not carve idols for yourselves in the shape of anything in the sky above or on the earth below or in the waters beneath the earth; you shall not bow down before them or worship them. For I, the LORD, your God, am a jealous God, inflicting punishment for their fathers( wickedness on the children of those who hate me, down to the third and fourth generation; but bestowing mercy down to the thousandth generation on the children of those who love me and keep my commandments. "You shall not take the name of the LORD, your God, in vain. For the LORD will not leave unpunished the one who takes his name in vain. "Remember to keep holy the sabbath day. Six days you may labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD, your God. No work may be done then either by you, or your son or daughter, or your male or female slave, or your beast, or by the alien who lives with you. In six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them; but on the seventh day he rested. That is why the LORD has blessed the sabbath day and made it holy. "Honor your father and your mother, that you may have a long life in the land which the LORD, your God, is giving you. You shall not kill. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male or female slave, nor his ox or ass, nor anything else that belongs to him."

**Responsorial Psalms: Psalms 19:8-11**

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

**New Testament Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:22-25**

Brothers and sisters: Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are called, Jews and Greeks alike, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

**Gospel: John 2:13-25**

Since the Passover of the Jews was near, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. He found in the temple area those who sold oxen, sheep, and doves, as well as the money changers seated there. He made a whip out of cords and drove them all out of the temple area, with the sheep and oxen, and spilled the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables, and to those who sold doves he said, "Take these out of here, and stop making my Father's house a marketplace." His disciples recalled the words of Scripture, Zeal for your house will consume me. At this the Jews answered and said to him, "What sign can you show us for doing this?" Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and you will raise it up in three days?" But he was speaking about the temple of his body. Therefore, when he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they came to believe the Scripture and the word Jesus had spoken. While he was in Jerusalem for the feast of Passover, many began to believe in his name when they saw the signs he was doing. But Jesus would not trust himself to them because he knew them all, and did not need anyone to testify about human nature. He himself understood it well.

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

**MARCH 19, 2006 - 3rd lent: Ex 20.1-17; 1Cor 1.22-25; JN 2.13-25**

I THE LORD AM YOUR GOD WHO BROUGHT YOU OUT OF EGYPT, THAT PLACE OF SLAVERY. YOU SHALL NOT HAVE OTHER GODS BESIDES ME!

"Many began to believe in him when they saw the signs he was doing. But Jesus would not trust himself to them because he knew them all, & did not need anyone to testify about human nature. He himself understood it all.

**During the day:** Well, be human, but be the best one you can be. Remember, you're no better nor worse than anyone else, just better or worse than yourself; & while you're understanding your own foibles, take those of others in stride as well--they're just as human as you are! The God who made us is too, made so to show us the Way. Be smart, & follow.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Sneak inside behind the exasperated Lord Jesus &, as he turns, notice the twinkle in his eye as he drives the money-changers out of the Temple. Sometimes love has to play tough! Take to prayer the way he seems to be treating you--he may just be trying to bring you to your senses. But, whatever, he trusts you to trust him. Do.

## **MARCH 26,2006 - 4th Lent: 2Chr 36.14-23; 2Eph.4-10; JN 3.14-21**

### **Old Testament Reading: 2 Chronicles 36:14-23**

In those days, all the princes of Judah, the priests, and the people added infidelity to infidelity, practicing all the abominations of the nations and polluting the LORD's temple which he had consecrated in Jerusalem. Early and often did the LORD, the God of their fathers, send his messengers to them, for he had compassion on his people and his dwelling place. But they mocked the messengers of God, despised his warnings, and scoffed at his prophets, until the anger of the LORD against his people was so inflamed that there was no remedy. Their enemies burnt the house of God, tore down the walls of Jerusalem, set all its palaces afire, and destroyed all its precious objects. Those who escaped the sword were carried captive to Babylon, where they became servants of the king of the Chaldeans and his sons until the kingdom of the Persians came to power. All this was to fulfill the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah: "Until the land has retrieved its lost sabbaths, during all the time it lies waste it shall have rest while seventy years are fulfilled." In the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah, the LORD inspired King Cyrus of Persia to issue this proclamation throughout his kingdom, both by word of mouth and in writing: "Thus says Cyrus, king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the LORD, the God of heaven, has given to me, and he has also charged me to build him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever, therefore, among you belongs to any part of his people, let him go up, and may his God be with him!"

### **Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 137:1-6**

**Let my tongue be silenced, if I ever forget you!** By the streams of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion. On the aspens of that land we hung up our harps. For there our captors asked of us the lyrics of our songs, And our despoilers urged us to be joyous: "Sing for us the songs of Zion!" How could we sing a song of the LORD in a foreign land? If I forget you, Jerusalem, may my right hand be forgotten! May my tongue cleave to my palate if I remember you not, If I place not Jerusalem ahead of my joy.

### **New Testament Reading Ephesians 2:4-10**

Brothers and sisters: God, who is rich in mercy, because of the great love he had for us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, brought us to life with Christ -. by grace you have been saved -, raised us up with him, and seated us with him in the heavens in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not from you; it is the gift of God; it is not from works, so no one may boast. For we are his handiwork, created in Christ Jesus for the good works that God has prepared in advance, that we should live in them.

### **Gospel: John 3:14-21**

Jesus said to Nicodemus: "Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life." For 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. And this is the verdict, that the light came into the world, but people preferred darkness to light, because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come toward the light, so that his works might not be exposed. But whoever lives the truth comes to the light, so that his works may be clearly seen as done in God.

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

**MARCH 26,2006 - 4th Lent: 2Chr 36.14-23; 2Eph.4-10; JN 3.14-21**

THE LORD GOD TIRELESSLY SENT THEM MESSENGER AFTER  
MESSENGER. BUT THEY RIDICULED THE MESSENGERS OF GOD,  
DESPISED HIS WORDS, & LAUGHED AT HIS PROPHETS.

"Everyone who hates the light avoids it for fear his actions will be exposed. But the one who lives by the truth comes out into the light, so that it may be plainly seen that what he does is done in God."

**During the day:** Live by the truth. When you make a mistake, own up to it. There's a difference between being ashamed & being sorry: shame hides the mistake, sorrow brings it to light, apologizes, & assumes the consequences. Gives God a chance to help you set things right.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer immerses itself in the Scriptures, both old & new, chewing slowly the ever fresh bread come down from heaven, relishing with the mind & spirit the wisdom of the words of Jesus & the prophets, visualizing as though present the episodes described. Knowing exactly what we need from God at that moment, the Spirit so communicates, & the open mind & heart wills & does, in the simple routine of everyday life, the work of God.

**April. 2, 2006 Jeremiah 31:31-34; Psalms 51:3-4, 12-15; Hebrews 5:7-9; Gospel: John 12: 20-33**

**Old Testament: Jeremiah 31:31-34**

The days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their fathers the day I took them by the hand to lead them forth from the land of Egypt; for they broke my covenant, and I had to show myself their master, says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD. I will place my law within them and write it upon their hearts; I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer will they have need to teach their friends and relatives how to know the LORD. All, from least to greatest, shall know me, says the LORD, for I will forgive their evildoing and remember their sin no more.

**Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 51:3-4, 12-15**

**Create a clean heart in me, O God.** Have mercy on me, O God, in your goodness; in the greatness of your compassion wipe out my offense. Thoroughly wash me from my guilt and of my sin cleanse me. A clean heart create for me, O God, and a steadfast spirit renew within me. Cast me not out from your presence, and your Holy Spirit take not from me. Give me back the joy of your salvation, and a willing spirit sustain in me. I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners shall return to you.

**New Testament: Hebrews 5:7-9**

In the days when Christ Jesus was in the flesh, he offered prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered; and when he was made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.

**Gospel: John 12: 20-33**

Some Greeks who had come to worship at the Passover Feast came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, "Sir, we would like to see Jesus." Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Amen, amen, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will preserve it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there also will my servant be. The Father will honor whoever serves me. "I am troubled now. Yet what should I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But it was for this purpose that I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it and will glorify it again." The crowd there heard it and said it was thunder; but others said, "An angel has spoken to him." Jesus answered and said, "This voice did not come for my sake but for yours. Now is the time of judgment on this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself." He said this indicating the kind of death he would die.

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

**April. 2, 2006 Jeremiah 31:31-34; Psalms 51:3-4, 12-15; Hebrews 5:7-9; Gospel: John 12: 20-33**

I SHALL MAKE A NEW COVENANT WITH ISRAEL. I WILL PLACE MY LAW WITHIN THEM & WRITE IT UPON THEIR HEARTS. I WILL BE THEIR GOD & THEY MY PEOPLE.

"What should I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But it was for this purpose that I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!. A voice came from heaven, 'I have, & I will again.'

**Reflection on the Word:**

During the day: Some hours are more terrifying than others. Let prudence, not cowardice, be motive for postponing the encounter with what threatens. Or it may counsel you to stand firm & seek the good here & now. Whichever, the victory is yours. You may fail in the endeavor, but courage in the face of failure guarantees the glory God always reserves for the just.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer adopts the divine perspective. Junior partner in God's business, the human instrument uses prayer to familiarize itself with the will & purpose of the Owner. With the intellect, prayer seeks to understand the directives &, with the heart, the love to carry them out. The former without the latter is worthless.

**APRIL 9, Palm Sunday: Isaiah 50.4-7; Psalms 22: 8-9, 17-24; Philippians 2.6-11; Mark 14.1-15.47**

Opening of the Word Questions:

1. If Jesus could humble himself and allow others to spit upon him, then why do we allow pride, arrogance and selfishness to stand in our way of being Christlike?
2. Do you every feel abandoned by God or have you ever denied God's existence?
3. How could God so love the world to send His Son to face the trials He faced for us?

Word for the Week:

**Old Testament: Isaiah 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: Psalms 22: 8-9, 17-24**

**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: Philippians 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: Mark 14:1-15:47**

**Jesus Anointed at Bethany**

1Now the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were only two days away, and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were looking for some sly way to arrest Jesus and kill him. 2"But not during the Feast," they said, "or the people may riot." 3While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head. 4Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, "Why this waste of perfume? 5It could have been sold for more than a year's wages and the money given to the poor." And they rebuked her harshly. 6"Leave her alone," said Jesus. "Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. 7The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. 8She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. 9I tell you the truth, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her." 10Then Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Jesus to

them. 11They were delighted to hear this and promised to give him money. So he watched for an opportunity to hand him over.

### **The Lord's Supper**

12On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, when it was customary to sacrifice the Passover lamb, Jesus' disciples asked him, "Where do you want us to go and make preparations for you to eat the Passover?" 13So he sent two of his disciples, telling them, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him. 14Say to the owner of the house he enters, 'The Teacher asks: Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?'" 15He will show you a large upper room, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there." 16The disciples left, went into the city and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover. 17When evening came, Jesus arrived with the Twelve. 18While they were reclining at the table eating, he said, "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me—one who is eating with me." 19They were saddened, and one by one they said to him, "Surely not I?" 20"It is one of the Twelve," he replied, "one who dips bread into the bowl with me. 21The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born." 22While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take it; this is my body." 23Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, and they all drank from it. 24"This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many," he said to them. 25"I tell you the truth, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it anew in the kingdom of God." 26When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

### **Jesus Predicts Peter's Denial**

27"You will all fall away," Jesus told them, "for it is written: 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.' 28But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee." 29Peter declared, "Even if all fall away, I will not." 30"I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "today—yes, tonight—before the rooster crows twice you yourself will disown me three times." 31But Peter insisted emphatically, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." And all the others said the same.

### **Gethsemane**

32They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." 33He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. 34"My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death," he said to them. "Stay here and keep watch." 35Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. 36"Abba, Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will." 37Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Simon," he said to Peter, "are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? 38Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak." 39Once more he went away and prayed the same thing. 40When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. They did not know what to say to him. 41Returning the third time, he said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. 42Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!"

### **Jesus Arrested**

43Just as he was speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, appeared. With him was a crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders. 44Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: "The one I kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard." 45Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, "Rabbi!" and kissed him. 46The men seized Jesus and arrested him. 47Then one of those standing near drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear. 48"Am I leading a rebellion," said Jesus, "that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture

me? 49Every day I was with you, teaching in the temple courts, and you did not arrest me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled." 50Then everyone deserted him and fled. 51A young man, wearing nothing but a linen garment, was following Jesus. When they seized him, 52he fled naked, leaving his garment behind.

### **Before the Sanhedrin**

53They took Jesus to the high priest, and all the chief priests, elders and teachers of the law came together. 54Peter followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. There he sat with the guards and warmed himself at the fire. 55The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death, but they did not find any. 56Many testified falsely against him, but their statements did not agree. 57Then some stood up and gave this false testimony against him: 58"We heard him say, 'I will destroy this man-made temple and in three days will build another, not made by man.' " 59Yet even then their testimony did not agree. 60Then the high priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, "Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?" 61But Jesus remained silent and gave no answer. Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?" 62"I am," said Jesus. "And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven." 63The high priest tore his clothes. "Why do we need any more witnesses?" he asked. 64"You have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?" They all condemned him as worthy of death. 65Then some began to spit at him; they blindfolded him, struck him with their fists, and said, "Prophecy!" And the guards took him and beat him.

### **Peter Disowns Jesus**

66While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came by. 67When she saw Peter warming himself, she looked closely at him. "You also were with that Nazarene, Jesus," she said. 68But he denied it. "I don't know or understand what you're talking about," he said, and went out into the entryway. 69When the servant girl saw him there, she said again to those standing around, "This fellow is one of them." 70Again he denied it. After a little while, those standing near said to Peter, "Surely you are one of them, for you are a Galilean." 71He began to call down curses on himself, and he swore to them, "I don't know this man you're talking about." 72Immediately the rooster crowed the second time. Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken to him: "Before the rooster crows twice you will disown me three times." And he broke down and wept.

### **Jesus Before Pilate**

1Very early in the morning, the chief priests, with the elders, the teachers of the law and the whole Sanhedrin, reached a decision. They bound Jesus, led him away and handed him over to Pilate. 2"Are you the king of the Jews?" asked Pilate. "Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied. 3The chief priests accused him of many things. 4So again Pilate asked him, "Aren't you going to answer? See how many things they are accusing you of." 5But Jesus still made no reply, and Pilate was amazed. 6Now it was the custom at the Feast to release a prisoner whom the people requested. 7A man called Barabbas was in prison with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the uprising. 8The crowd came up and asked Pilate to do for them what he usually did. 9"Do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews?" asked Pilate, 10knowing it was out of envy that the chief priests had handed Jesus over to him. 11But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have Pilate release Barabbas instead. 12"What shall I do, then, with the one you call the king of the Jews?" Pilate asked them. 13"Crucify him!" they shouted. 14"Why? What crime has he committed?" asked Pilate. But they shouted all the louder, "Crucify him!" 15Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.

### **The Soldiers Mock Jesus**

16The soldiers led Jesus away into the palace (that is, the Praetorium) and called together the whole

company of soldiers. 17They put a purple robe on him, then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on him. 18And they began to call out to him, "Hail, king of the Jews!" 19Again and again they struck him on the head with a staff and spit on him. Falling on their knees, they paid homage to him. 20And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

### **The Crucifixion**

21A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross. 22They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means The Place of the Skull). 23Then they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it. 24And they crucified him. Dividing up his clothes, they cast lots to see what each would get. 25It was the third hour when they crucified him. 26The written notice of the charge against him read: THE KING OF THE JEWS. 27They crucified two robbers with him, one on his right and one on his left. 29Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, "So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, 30come down from the cross and save yourself!" 31In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him among themselves. "He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! 32Let this Christ, this King of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe." Those crucified with him also heaped insults on him.

### **The Death of Jesus**

33At the sixth hour darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour. 34And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"—which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" 35When some of those standing near heard this, they said, "Listen, he's calling Elijah." 36One man ran, filled a sponge with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink. "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to take him down," he said. 37With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last. 38The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. 39And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, heard his cry and saw how he died, he said, "Surely this man was the Son of God!" 40Some women were watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. 41In Galilee these women had followed him and cared for his needs. Many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem were also there.

### **The Burial of Jesus**

42It was Preparation Day (that is, the day before the Sabbath). So as evening approached, 43Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Council, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. 44Pilate was surprised to hear that he was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him if Jesus had already died. 45When he learned from the centurion that it was so, he gave the body to Joseph. 46So Joseph bought some linen cloth, took down the body, wrapped it in the linen, and placed it in a tomb cut out of rock. Then he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. 47Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where he was laid.

**Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Texas Trinidad by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ**  
**Palm Sunday: Isaiah 50.4-7; Psalms 22: 8-9, 17-24; Philippians 2.6-11; Mark 14.1-15.47**

I GIVE MY BACK TO THOSE WHO BEAT ME...  
DO NOT SHIELD MY FACE FROM BUFFETS & SPITTING.  
THE LORD GOD IS MY HELP, I SET MY FACE LIKE FLINT,  
KNOWING I SHALL NOT BE PUT TO SHAME.

"Abba, Father, all things are possible for you.

Take this chalice away from me!

But not what I will, but what you will.

**During the day:** Separate your thinking from your feelings & your willing from both. Feelings, both physical & psychological, are blind--they need the intellect to guide them, not vice versa. The will, though guided, is not dependent on the intellect, but on God.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** There is no shame in being Christlike. Prayer reminds us that loyalty to truth & goodness can get us into all kinds of trouble. Regular prayer prepares us for it, strengthens us during it, consoles us after it. Daily prayer's a good idea!

**APRIL 16, Easter Sunday: Acts 10.34-43; Col 3.1-4; MK 16.1-7**

**First Reading: Acts 10: 34,37-43**

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: Psalms 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.

**Second Reading: Colossians 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: John 20: 1-9**

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**

**Easter Sunday: Acts 10.34-43; Col 3.1-4; MK 16.1-7**

**WE ATE & DRANK WITH HIM AFTER HE ROSE FROM THE DEAD.**

**HE HAS ORDERED US TO PROCLAIM THIS TO HIS PEOPLE.**

"They had been saying to one another, 'Who will roll away the stone for us?'"

**During the day:** Roll away the stone that's bothering the other; take him out to lunch & find out what's wrong--you just might say the very thing that cheers him up & inspires him with a new perspective. We don't have to think our feelings or will our thoughts; sometimes the spontaneity of grace does the trick.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Morning prayer tunes us to the will of God. Thoughts & feelings are non-essentials. The will simply immerses itself in the timeless divine, & so defines he upcoming day: to be one with the Christ in whom we live & move & have our being. The stones of the day are far less important than the people to whom we'll bring his love.

**APRIL 23, 2006 - Acts 4:32-35; Psalms 118:2-4, 13-15, 22-24; 1 John 5: 1-6; John 20: 19-31**

**First Reading: Acts 4: 32-35**

The community of believers was of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in common. With great power the apostles bore witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great favor was accorded them all. There was no needy person among them, for those who owned property or houses would sell them, bring the proceeds of the sale, and put them at the feet of the apostles, and they were distributed to each according to need.

**Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 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.

**Second Reading: 1 John 5: 1-6**

Beloved: Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is begotten by God, and everyone who loves the Father loves also the one begotten by him. In this way we know that we love the children of God when we love God and obey his commandments. For the love of God is this, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome, for whoever is begotten by God conquers the world. And the victory that conquers the world is our faith. Who indeed is the victor over the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? This is the one who came through water and blood, Jesus Christ, not by water alone, but by water and blood. The Spirit is the one that testifies, and the Spirit is truth.

**Gospel: John 20: 19-31**

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

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

**APRIL 23, 2006 - Acts 4:32-35; Psalms 118:2-4, 13-15, 22-24; 1 John 5: 1-6; John 20: 19-31**

THE COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS WAS OF ONE MIND & HEART...THEY HAD EVERYTHING IN COMMON.  
THERE WAS NO NEEDY PERSON AMONG THEM.

"Jesus came & stood in their midst. 'Peace be with you.' When he had said this, he showed them his hands & his feet. 'As the Father has sent me, so I send you.'"

**During the day:** Look at peoples' hands. What do you see? Youth & beauty? Age & hardship? Tenderness & compassion? Activity & enthusiasm? Look at your own. Scarred & painful? Lazy & greedy? Or generous & giving? Ready for service, they await your command, be it for your own or the common good.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** One good posture of prayer is to put your hands together, resting on your chest palm to palm, chin on fingertips. Head, hands & heart, in intimate embrace. Prayer rests in the harmony of inner peace, in tune with the God who made you & the Christ who saved you. Stay a while; listen to their love for others

**APRIL 30, 2006 Acts 4:32-35; Psalms 118:2-4, 13-15, 22-24; 1 John 5: 1-6; John 20: 19-31**

**First Reading: Acts 3: 13-19**

Peter said to the people: The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus, whom you handed over and denied in Pilate's presence when he had decided to release him. You denied the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. The author of life you put to death, but God raised him from the dead; of this we are witnesses. Now I know, brothers, that you acted out of ignorance, just as your leaders did; but God has thus brought to fulfillment what he had announced beforehand through the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer. Repent, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be wiped away."

**Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 4: 2, 4, 7-9**

**Lord, let your face shine on us.** When I call, answer me, O my just God, you who relieve me when I am in distress; have pity on me, and hear my prayer! Know that the LORD does wonders for his faithful one; the LORD will hear me when I call upon him. O LORD, let the light of your countenance shine upon us! You put gladness into my heart. As soon as I lie down, I fall peacefully asleep, for you alone, O LORD, bring security to my dwelling.

**Second Reading: 1 John 2:1-5a**

My children, I am writing this to you so that you may not commit sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous one. He is expiation for our sins, and not for our sins only but for those of the whole world. The way we may be sure that we know him is to keep his commandments. Those who say, (I know him, ( but do not keep his commandments are liars, and the truth is not in them. But whoever keeps his word, the love of God is truly perfected in him.

**Gospel: Luke 24:35-48**

The two disciples recounted what had taken place on the way, and how Jesus was made known to them in the breaking of bread. While they were still speaking about this, he stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you." But they were startled and terrified and thought that they were seeing a ghost. Then he said to them, "Why are you troubled? And why do questions arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me and see, because a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you can see I have." And as he said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. While they were still incredulous for joy and were amazed, he asked them, "Have you anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of baked fish; he took it and ate it in front of them. He said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and in the prophets and psalms must be fulfilled." Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. And he said to them, "Thus it is written that the Christ would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day and that repentance, for the forgiveness of sins, would be preached in his name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.

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

**APRIL 30, 2006 Acts 4:32-35; Psalms 118:2-4, 13-15, 22-24; 1 John 5: 1-6; John 20: 19-31**

NOW I KNOW, BROTHERS, THAT YOU ACTED OUT OF IGNORANCE.

REPENT, THEREFORE, & BE CONVERTED,  
THAT YOUR SINS MAY BE WIPED AWAY.

"Jesus said to them, 'It is written that the Christ would suffer & rise from the dead on the third day. and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins be preached to all nations.'

**During the day:** When you make a mistake, have enough sense to admit it; &, if a mistake of bad will, enough heart to be sorry. Those who've been hurt were more injured by your willfulness than by the damage done. Your honest expression of regret shares the pain, & solidarity with others is reestablished. For the One who paid the price, that makes it all worth while!

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer is the heart of Christ within one's own registering & regretting the pain we're causing others; the frequency & regularity of prayer determines how sensitive we become to his reaction, how quickly & completely we renounce & reverse decisions made & actions taken. Prayer provides the courage to assume & repair the damage. Love is restored, & the hearts of all concerned rejoice.

May 7, 2006 Acts 4:8-12; Psalms 118:1, 8-9, 21-23, 26, 28, 29; 1 John 3:1-2; John 10:11-18

**First Reading: Acts 4:8-12**

Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said: "Leaders of the people and elders: If we are being examined today about a good deed done to a cripple, namely, by what means he was saved, then all of you and all the people of Israel should know that it was in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazorean whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead; in his name this man stands before you healed. He is the stone rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. There is no salvation through anyone else, nor is there any other name under heaven given to the human race by which we are to be saved."

**Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 118:1, 8-9, 21-23, 26, 28, 29**

**The stone rejected by the builders has become the cornerstone.** Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his mercy endures forever. It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man. It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in princes. I will give thanks to you, for you have answered me and have been my savior. The stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. By the LORD has this been done; it is wonderful in our eyes. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD; we bless you from the house of the LORD. I will give thanks to you, for you have answered me and have been my savior. Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; for his kindness endures forever.

**Second Reading: 1 John 3:1-2**

Beloved: See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God. Yet so we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now; what we shall be has not yet been revealed. We do know that when it is revealed we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

**Gospel: John 10:11-18**

Jesus said: "I am the good shepherd. A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. A hired man, who is not a shepherd and whose sheep are not his own, sees a wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away, and the wolf catches and scatters them. This is because he works for pay and has no concern for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and I know mine and mine know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I will lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. These also I must lead, and they will hear my voice, and there will be one flock, one shepherd. This is why the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down on my own. I have power to lay it down, and power to take it up again. This command I have received from my Father."

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

**May 7, 2006 Acts 4:8-12; Psalms 118:1, 8-9, 21-23, 26, 28, 29; 1 John 3:1-2; John 10:11-18**

ALL OF YOU & ALL THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL SHOULD KNOW THAT IT WAS IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST THE NAZOREAN, WHOM YOU CRUCIFIED & WHO ROSE FROM THE DEAD, THAT THIS MAN STANDS BEFORE YOU HEALED.

"A hired man, who is not a shepherd, sees a wolf coming & runs away. I am the good shepherd; I know mine & mine know me, just as the Father knows me & I know the Father. I lay down my life for my sheep. I have power to lay it down & take it up again-- I have received this command from my Father."

**Be a shepherd, not a hired man.** The people you work with--your family, your colleagues, your clients, your bosses, your neighbors--are more important than the projects you're working on; be even willing to die for them--people do it all the time. That's why life goes on & the world gets better.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Taking people to prayer is the best way of getting to know them better. The better you know them, the more you love them & more joyfully serve their needs. God's grace illumines prayer, & its his knowledge of the other he shares with you. In prayer, the blind, negative emotions fade, & the more noble sentiments of the soul take hold. Don't let go.

## MAY 14, 5th Easter: Acts 9.26-31; 1John 3.18-24; JN 15.1-8

### First Reading: Acts 9: 26-31

When Saul arrived in Jerusalem he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple. Then Barnabas took charge of him and brought him to the apostles, and he reported to them how he had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus. He moved about freely with them in Jerusalem, and spoke out boldly in the name of the Lord. He also spoke and debated with the Hellenists, but they tried to kill him. And when the brothers learned of this, they took him down to Caesarea and sent him on his way to Tarsus. The church throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria was at peace. It was being built up and walked in the fear of the Lord, and with the consolation of the Holy Spirit it grew in numbers.

### Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 22: 26-32

**I will praise you, Lord, in the assembly of your people.** I will fulfill my vows before those who fear the LORD. The lowly shall eat their fill; they who seek the LORD shall praise him: "May your hearts live forever!" All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD; all the families of the nations shall bow down before him. To him alone shall bow down all who sleep in the earth; before him shall bend all who go down into the dust. And to him my soul shall live; my descendants shall serve him. Let the coming generation be told of the LORD that they may proclaim to a people yet to be born the justice he has shown.

### Second Reading: 1 John 3: 18-24

Children, let us love not in word or speech but in deed and truth. Now this is how we shall know that we belong to the truth and reassure our hearts before him in whatever our hearts condemn, for God is greater than our hearts and knows everything. Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence in God and receive from him whatever we ask, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him. And his commandment is this: we should believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another just as he commanded us. Those who keep his commandments remain in him, and he in them, and the way we know that he remains in us is from the Spirit he gave us.

### Gospel: John 15: 1-8

Jesus said to his disciples: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower. He takes away every branch in me that does not bear fruit, and every one that does he prunes so that it bears more fruit. You are already pruned because of the word that I spoke to you. Remain in me, as I remain in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing. Anyone who does not remain in me will be thrown out like a branch and wither; people will gather them and throw them into a fire and they will be burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask for whatever you want and it will be done for you. By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples."

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

**MAY 14, 5th Easter: Acts 9.26-31; 1John 3.18-24; JN 15.1-8**

THE CHURCH THROUGHOUT JUDEA, GALILEE & SAMARIA WAS AT PEACE

AND WALKED IN THE FEAR OF THE LORD.

WITH THE CONSOLATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IT GREW IN NUMBERS.

"I am the vine, you are the branches. A branch cannot bear fruit unless it remains on the vine.  
Nether can you unless you remain in me. Whoever remains in me & I in him will bear much fruit."

**During the day:** Make sure the sap of truth, love, & goodness flow through your every thought, word & deed--they produce the hidden fruit that lasts. They flow through you, not from you; you take no credit for them. You're member of a Living Organism that transcends both you & the fruits produced, as well as those they nourish. Be humbly grateful for this true life you live forever.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer processes fear of the Lord. Prayer is humble recognition we exist in a God-centered universe, not just the self-centered little corner of it we wander around in. Prayer acknowledges the unknown of the next moment, breathes the promised courage the Spirit inspires, recommits to a day lived lovingly, secure in strength-filled inner peace.

**MAY 21, 6th Easter: Acts 10:25-26, 34-35, 44-48; Psalms 98: 1-4; 1 John 4:7-10; John 15: 9-17**

**First Reading: Acts 10:25-26, 34-35, 44-48**

When Peter entered, Cornelius met him and, falling at his feet, paid him homage. Peter, however, raised him up, saying, "Get up. I myself am also a human being." Then Peter proceeded to speak and said, "In truth, I see that God shows no partiality. Rather, in every nation whoever fears him and acts uprightly is acceptable to him." While Peter was still speaking these things, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who were listening to the word. The circumcised believers who had accompanied Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit should have been poured out on the Gentiles also, for they could hear them speaking in tongues and glorifying God. Then Peter responded, "Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit even as we have?" He ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

**Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 98: 1-4**

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

**Second Reading: 1 John 4:7-10**

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is of God; everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God. Whoever is without love does not know God, for God is love. In this way the love of God was revealed to us: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might have life through him. In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as expiation for our sins.

**Gospel: John 15: 9-17**

Jesus said to his disciples: "As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love. "I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and your joy might be complete. This is my commandment: love one another as I love you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father. It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you. This I command you: love one another."

**Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Texas Trinidad by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ**  
**MAY 21, 6th Easter: Acts 10:25-26, 34-35, 44-48; Psalms 98: 1-4; 1 John 4:7-10; John 15: 9-17**

**GOD SHOWS NO PARTIALITY. IN EVERY NATION WHOEVER FEARS HIM  
AND ACTS UPRIGHTLY IS ACCEPTABLE TO HIM**

"If you keep my commandments you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments & remain in his love. I tell you this so that my joy be in you & your joy be complete. This is my commandment: love one another as I love you."

**During the day:** Created in his image, be Godlike: show no partiality. Use his criterion: respect & cooperate with (or correct) whoever is well-intentioned. Love translates into wanting what's good for the other, & that boils down to wanting--willing--the common good: peace & justice. Reject what God accepts at your own peril.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer is loving surrender. With a will. Prayer calculates no risks, embraces the impossible as well as the difficult--prayer plugs in to the Almighty, for whom nothing is impossible.\* Christlike, prayer wants--wills--what the Father wants, & with the same results: eternal joy. For everyone.

**MAY 28, 2006 Acts 1:15-17, 20-26; Psalms 103:1-2, 11-12, 19-20; 1 John 4:11-16; John 17:11-19**

**First Reading: Acts 1:15-17, 20-26**

Peter stood up in the midst of the brothers -- there was a group of about one hundred and twenty persons in the one place. He said, "My brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand through the mouth of David, concerning Judas, who was the guide for those who arrested Jesus. He was numbered among us and was allotted a share in this ministry. "For it is written in the Book of Psalms: May another take his office. "Therefore, it is necessary that one of the men who accompanied us the whole time the Lord Jesus came and went among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day on which he was taken up from us, become with us a witness to his resurrection." So they proposed two, Judas called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias. Then they prayed, "You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this apostolic ministry from which Judas turned away to go to his own place." Then they gave lots to them, and the lot fell upon Matthias, and he was counted with the eleven apostles.

**Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 103:1-2, 11-12, 19-20**

**The Lord has set his throne in heaven.** 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. 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. The LORD has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all. Bless the LORD, all you his angels, you mighty in strength, who do his bidding.

**Second Reading: 1 John 4:11-16**

Beloved, if God so loved us, we also must love one another. No one has ever seen God. Yet, if we love one another, God remains in us, and his love is brought to perfection in us. This is how we know that we remain in him and he in us, that he has given us of his Spirit. Moreover, we have seen and testify that the Father sent his Son as savior of the world. Whoever acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God remains in him and he in God. We have come to know and to believe in the love God has for us. God is love, and whoever remains in love remains in God and God in him.

**Gospel: John 17:11-19**

Lifting up his eyes to heaven, Jesus prayed saying: "Holy Father, keep them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one just as we are one. When I was with them I protected them in your name that you gave me, and I guarded them, and none of them was lost except the son of destruction, in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled. But now I am coming to you. I speak this in the world so that they may share my joy completely. I gave them your word, and the world hated them, because they do not belong to the world any more than I belong to the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world but that you keep them from the evil one. They do not belong to the world any more than I belong to the world. Consecrate them in the truth. Your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I sent them into the world. And I consecrate myself for them, so that they also may be consecrated in truth."

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**MAY 28, 2006 Acts 1:15-17, 20-26; Psalms 103:1-2, 11-12, 19-20; 1 John 4:11-16; John 17:11-19**

THE FIRST BOOK DEALT WITH EVERYTHING THAT JESUS DID & TAUGHT UNTIL HE WAS TAKEN UP AFTER GIVING INSTRUCTIONS THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT.

"Go into the whole world, proclaim the gospel to every creature.' After he spoke he was taken up into heaven. But they went forth & preached."

**During the day:** Be a preacher. Better still, be a teacher. Even better, be a master: one who preaches & teaches a skill, with deeds, not words. Let your integrity reflect the power of truth & goodness. The Good News is always good & it's always new. Help others live it.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer immerses one in the Good News, then, with others, together. What the disciples learned from experience, we learn in prayer. Outside of time, the same Jesus shares his insights & purpose, his action & success. Prayer is growth in the Christ in whom we live & move & have our being.

**JUNE 4, 2006 Pentecost: Acts 2.1-11; Psalms 104: 1, 24, 29-31, 34; 1Cor 13, 3-13; JN 20.16.12-25**

**First 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: Psalms 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.

**Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:3-7, 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**

**JUNE 4, 2006 Pentecost: Acts 2.1-11; Psalms 104:1, 24, 29-31, 34; 1Cor 13, 3-13; JN 20.16.12-25**

WHEN THE TIME FOR PENTECOST WAS FULFILLED, THEY WERE ALL IN ONE PLACE TOGETHER.

"As the Father has sent me, I send you. Receive the Holy Spirit:

Whose sins you forgive are forgiven. Whose sins you retain are retained."

**During the day:** Stick together. Don't let grudges pull you apart. In unity is strength, in factionalism, chaos. Tensions are healthy, conflicts destructive. Takes two to make a crisis; when one keeps his cool, passions subside. Compromise doesn't diminish commitment, it illumines it.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Take grudges to prayer. Prayer puts offenses in perspective, reveals one's own pettiness. Prayer surrenders to the Spirit, recognizes the rupture is on the other's side, not mine. Prayer absorbs & ignores the hurt, makes it easy for the offender to repair the rupture if he wants to. That's the healing power of forgiveness. Christ knows no other.

**JUNE 11, 2006 Holy Trinity: Deut 4.32-40; Rom 8.14-17; MT 28.16-20**

**First Reading: Deuteronomy 4:32-34, 39-40**

Moses said to the people: "Ask now of the days of old, before your time, ever since God created man upon the earth; ask from one end of the sky to the other: Did anything so great ever happen before? Was it ever heard of? Did a people ever hear the voice of God speaking from the midst of fire, as you did, and live? Or did any god venture to go and take a nation for himself from the midst of another nation, by testings, by signs and wonders, by war, with strong hand and outstretched arm, and by great terrors, all of which the LORD, your God, did for you in Egypt before your very eyes? This is why you must now know, and fix in your heart, that the LORD is God in the heavens above and on earth below, and that there is no other. You must keep his statutes and commandments that I enjoin on you today, that you and your children after you may prosper, and that you may have long life on the land which the LORD, your God, is giving you forever."

**Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 33:4-6.9, 18-22**

**Blessed the people the Lord has chosen to be his own.** 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. By the word of the LORD the heavens were made; by the breath of his mouth all their host. For he spoke, and it was made; he commanded, and it stood forth. 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.

**Second Reading: Romans 8:14-17**

Brothers and sisters: For those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you received a Spirit of adoption, through whom we cry, "Abba, Father!" The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if only we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

**Gospel: Matthew 28:16-20**

The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had ordered them. When they all saw him, they worshiped, but they doubted. Then Jesus approached and said to them, "All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age."

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**JUNE 11, 2006 Holy Trinity: Deut 4.32-40; Rom 8.14-17; MT 28.16-20**

DID ANYTHING SO GREAT EVER HAPPEN BEFORE? FIX IN YOUR HEART THAT THE LORD IS GOD IN THE HEAVENS ABOVE & THE EARTH BELOW. THERE IS NO OTHER.

"I am with you always; yes, to the end of time."

**During the day:** Put the moment in perspective. Pause, scan the circumstances, climb outside of time, see the bigger picture, the eternal one. Know there is a divine design &, however insignificant, 'now' is forever, opportunity to grow in the capacity to love, & build its kingdom.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer turns off the mind for the moment & rests in the will. The will to be. The will to be loved. To be grateful to the One who ever does. To be secure in that love. Guided by it, even if blindly, trusting. Prayer harmonizes with the will of Another, sheds the doubts, embraces the design. Prayer hones its instrument.

**JUNE 18, 2006 Exodus 24:3-8; Psalms 116:12-18; Hebrews 9:11-15; Mark 14:12-16. 22-26**

**First Reading: Exodus 24:3-8**

When Moses came to the people and related all the words and ordinances of the LORD, they all answered with one voice, "We will do everything that the LORD has told us." Moses then wrote down all the words of the LORD and, rising early the next day, he erected at the foot of the mountain an altar and twelve pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel. Then, having sent certain young men of the Israelites to offer holocausts and sacrifice young bulls as peace offerings to the LORD, Moses took half of the blood and put it in large bowls; the other half he splashed on the altar. Taking the book of the covenant, he read it aloud to the people, who answered, "All that the LORD has said, we will heed and do." Then he took the blood and sprinkled it on the people, saying, "This is the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words of his."

**Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 116:12-18**

**I will take the cup of salvation, and call on the name of the Lord.** How shall I make a return to the LORD for all the good he has done for me? The cup of salvation I will take up, and I will call upon the name of the LORD. Precious in the eyes of the LORD is the death of his faithful ones. I am your servant, the son of your handmaid; you have loosed my bonds. To you will I offer sacrifice of thanksgiving, and I will call upon the name of the LORD. My vows to the LORD I will pay in the presence of all his people.

**Second Reading: Hebrews 9:11-15**

Brothers and sisters: When Christ came as high priest of the good things that have come to be, passing through the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made by hands, that is, not belonging to this creation, he entered once for all into the sanctuary, not with the blood of goats and calves but with his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls and the sprinkling of a heifer's ashes can sanctify those who are defiled so that their flesh is cleansed, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from dead works to worship the living God. For this reason he is mediator of a new covenant: since a death has taken place for deliverance from transgressions under the first covenant, those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance.

**Gospel: Mark 14:12-16. 22-26**

On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, when they sacrificed the Passover lamb, Jesus' disciples said to him, "Where do you want us to go and prepare for you to eat the Passover?" He sent two of his disciples and said to them, "Go into the city and a man will meet you, carrying a jar of water. Follow him. Wherever he enters, say to the master of the house, 'The Teacher says, "Where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?"' Then he will show you a large upper room furnished and ready. Make the preparations for us there." The disciples then went off, entered the city, and found it just as he had told them; and they prepared the Passover. While they were eating, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, gave it to them, and said, "Take it; this is my body." Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, and they all drank from it. He said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed for many. Amen, I say to you, I shall not drink again the fruit of the vine until the day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God." Then, after singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

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**JUNE 18, 2006 Exodus 24:3-8; Psalms 116:12-18; Hebrews 9:11-15; Mark 14:12-16. 22-26**

**WE WILL DO EVERYTHING THAT THE LORD HAS TOLD US**

"I shall not drink again the fruit of the vine until I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

**During the day:** Start each day with a sense of purpose, a sense of destiny. Wonder at a new beginning. Shed the old, put on the new. Expect the marvelous; then go looking for it, or you might miss it. Little things. Sip life, refresh yourself, enjoy it.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer is living now in the kingdom of God. Actually, prayer is our awareness of building the kingdom of God, this civilization of love. Prayer looks around, sees the good, notes what's needed, consults the Architect's plans, adjusts. Too early to enjoy its completion, prayer anticipates it, & draws strength.

**JUNE 25, 2006 (12th of yr.) Job 38.1-11; 2 Corinthians 5.14-17; Psalms 107:23-31 Mark 4.35-41**

**First Reading: Job 38:1,8-11**

The Lord addressed Job out of the storm and said: Who shut within doors the sea, when it burst forth from the womb; when I made the clouds its garment and thick darkness its swaddling bands? When I set limits for it and fastened the bar of its door, and said: Thus far shall you come but no farther, and here shall your proud waves be stilled!

**Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 107:23-31**

**Give thanks to the Lord, his love is everlasting.** They who sailed the sea in ships, trading on the deep waters, These saw the works of the LORD and his wonders in the abyss. His command raised up a storm wind which tossed its waves on high. They mounted up to heaven; they sank to the depths; their hearts melted away in their plight. They cried to the LORD in their distress; from their straits he rescued them, He hushed the storm to a gentle breeze, and the billows of the sea were stilled. They rejoiced that they were calmed, and he brought them to their desired haven. Let them give thanks to the LORD for his kindness and his wondrous deeds to the children of men.

**Second Reading: 2 Corinthians 5:14-17**

Brothers and sisters: The love of Christ impels us, once we have come to the conviction that one died for all; therefore, all have died. He indeed died for all, so that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. Consequently, from now on we regard no one according to the flesh; even if we once knew Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know him so no longer. So whoever is in Christ is a new creation: the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come.

**Gospel: Mark 4:35-41**

On that day, as evening drew on, Jesus said to his disciples: "Let us cross to the other side." Leaving the crowd, they took Jesus with them in the boat just as he was. And other boats were with him. A violent squall came up and waves were breaking over the boat, so that it was already filling up. Jesus was in the stern, asleep on a cushion. They woke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" He woke up, rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Quiet! Be still!" The wind ceased and there was great calm. Then he asked them, "Why are you terrified? Do you not yet have faith?" They were filled with great awe and said to one another, "Who then is this whom even wind and sea obey?"

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**JUNE 25, 2006 (12th of yr.) Job 38.1-11; 2 Corinthians 5.14-17; Psalms 107:23-31 Mark 4.35-41**

THE LORD ADDRESSED JOB OUT OF THE STORM: 'WHO SET THE LIMITS OF THE SEA,  
BARRED THE DOOR & SAID, THUS FAR YOU SHALL COME BUT NO FARTHER?'

"A violent storm came up. They woke him. 'Master, We're going down!'

He rebuked the wind, 'Quiet, be still.' There was a great calm, & he asked,  
'Why are you so terrified?'

**During the day:** Don't be terrified during the 'storm'. Get through one, get ready for the next. They come & go. Don't let passing turbulence reach the heart, where the infallible harmony of God's will should reign; it alone is the source of absolute security. Bet on it.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer is the quest for courage when danger threatens & fear rules. Prayer, for those habituated, is automatic invocation of the Friend who can & wills to help. Prayer guides the mind to ponder the alternatives, the will to choose the one most in accord with his norms. Fear gives way to trust, trust to humble alertness as his plan unfolds, 'Thy will be done,' our realistic, not fatalistic, attitude.

**JULY 2, 2006 Wisdom 1:13-15, 2:23-24; Psalms 30:2-6,11-13; 2 Corinthians 8:7-15; Mark 5:21-43**

**First Reading: Wisdom 1: 13-15, 2:23-24**

God did not make death, nor does he rejoice in the destruction of the living. For he fashioned all things that they might have being; and the creatures of the world are wholesome, and there is not a destructive drug among them nor any domain of the netherworld on earth, for justice is undying. For God formed man to be imperishable; the image of his own nature he made him. But by the envy of the devil, death entered the world, and they who belong to his company experience it.

**Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 30: 2,4-6, 11-13**

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

**Second Reading: 2 Corinthians 8:7, 9, 13-15**

Brothers and sisters: As you excel in every respect, in faith, discourse, knowledge, all earnestness, and in the love we have for you, may you excel in this gracious act also. For you know the gracious act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich. Not that others should have relief while you are burdened, but that as a matter of equality your abundance at the present time should supply their needs, so that their abundance may also supply your needs, that there may be equality. As it is written: Whoever had much did not have more, and whoever had little did not have less.

**Gospel: Mark 5: 21-43**

When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a large crowd gathered around him, and he stayed close to the sea. One of the synagogue officials, named Jairus, came forward. Seeing him he fell at his feet and pleaded earnestly with him, saying, "My daughter is at the point of death. Please, come lay your hands on her that she may get well and live." He went off with him, and a large crowd followed him and pressed upon him. There was a woman afflicted with hemorrhages for twelve years. She had suffered greatly at the hands of many doctors and had spent all that she had. Yet she was not helped but only grew worse. She had heard about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak. She said, "If I but touch his clothes, I shall be cured." Immediately her flow of blood dried up. She felt in her body that she was healed of her affliction. Jesus, aware at once that power had gone out from him, turned around in the crowd and asked, "Who has touched my clothes?" But his disciples said to Jesus, "You see how the crowd is pressing upon you, and yet you ask, 'Who touched me?'" And he looked around to see who had done it. The woman, realizing what had happened to her, approached in fear and trembling. She fell down before Jesus and told him the whole truth. He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has saved you. Go in peace and be cured of your affliction." While he was still speaking, people from the synagogue official's house arrived and said, "Your daughter has died; why trouble the teacher any longer?" Disregarding the message that was reported, Jesus said to the synagogue official, "Do not be afraid; just have faith." He did not allow anyone to accompany him inside except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. When they arrived at the house of the synagogue official, he caught sight of a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. So he went in and said to them, "Why this commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but asleep." And they ridiculed him. Then he put them all out. He took along the child's father and mother and those who were with him and entered the room where the child was. He took the child by the hand and said to her, "Talitha koum," which means, "Little girl, I say to you, arise!" The girl, a child of twelve, arose immediately and walked around. At that they were utterly astounded. He gave strict orders that no one should know this and said that she should be given something to eat.

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**JULY 2, 2006 Wisdom 1.13-15, 2.23-24; Psalms 30:2-6,11-13; 2 Corinthians 8.7-15; Mark 5.21-43**

GOD DID NOT MAKE DEATH, NOR DOES HE REJOICE  
IN THE DESTRUCTION OF THE LIVING.

"People from the official's house arrived & said, 'Your daughter has died.'

Jesus said, 'Don't be afraid; just have faith.'

**During the day:** Don't be afraid of death. Don't be afraid of anything. Fear is a blind emotion, its purpose to alert the mind & will to danger. A sensible reaction ignores the fear, judges then chooses the most obvious & adequate solution--even inaction, if called for. Death of the body is inevitable; death of the spirit impossible. Rejection of God's love, if definitive, is the ultimate destruction.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer avoids living death by living life--the life of God. Prayer is recognition of the true dimension of human life: to allow God to love us, & express requited love in gratitude. Prayer is of the will & embraces the Lover-now-Beloved with absolute trust in the timelessness of the embrace. Prayer assimilates the passing threats of human existence with the knowing patience of faith, a virtue called hope.

**JULY 9, 2006: Ezra 2.2-5; Psalms 123:1-4; 2 Corinthians 12.7-10; Mark 6. 1-6**

**First Reading: Ezra 2: 2-5**

As the LORD spoke to me, the spirit entered into me and set me on my feet, and I heard the one who was speaking say to me: Son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites, rebels who have rebelled against me; they and their ancestors have revolted against me to this very day. Hard of face and obstinate of heart are they to whom I am sending you. But you shall say to them: Thus says the LORD GOD! And whether they heed or resist—for they are a rebellious house—they shall know that a prophet has been among them.

**Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 123:1-4**

**Our eyes are fixed on the Lord, pleading for his mercy.** To you I lift up my eyes who are enthroned in heaven — As the eyes of servants are on the hands of their masters. As the eyes of a maid are on the hands of her mistress, So are our eyes on the LORD, our God, till he have pity on us. Have pity on us, O LORD, have pity on us, for we are more than sated with contempt; our souls are more than sated with the mockery of the arrogant, with the contempt of the proud.

**Second Reading: 2 Corinthians 12:7-10**

Brothers and sisters: That I, Paul, might not become too elated, because of the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, an angel of Satan, to beat me, to keep me from being too elated. Three times I begged the Lord about this, that it might leave me, but he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.” I will rather boast most gladly of my weaknesses, in order that the power of Christ may dwell with me. Therefore, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and constraints, for the sake of Christ; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

**Gospel: Mark 6:1-6**

Jesus departed from there and came to his native place, accompanied by his disciples. When the sabbath came he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astonished. They said, “Where did this man get all this? What kind of wisdom has been given him? What mighty deeds are wrought by his hands! Is he not the carpenter, the son of Mary, and the brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him. Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his native place and among his own kin and in his own house.” So he was not able to perform any mighty deed there, apart from curing a few sick people by laying his hands on them. He was amazed at their lack of faith.

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

**JULY 9, 2006: Ezra 2.2-5; Psalms 123:1-4; 2 Corinthians 12.7-10; Mark 6. 1-6**

HARD OF FACE & OBSTINATE OF HEART THOSE TO WHOM I SEND YOU.

SAY TO THEM, 'THUS SAYS THE LORD GOD.' RATHER THEY HEED OR RESIST THEY SHALL KNOW THAT A PROPHET HAS BEEN AMONG THEM.

"A prophet is not without honor except in his native place & among his own kin & in his own house."

**During the day:** Be a prophet. Proclaim the right, denounce the wrong. Don't expect others to agree. Truth, as you see it, is your authority. It's also your responsibility. As you grow in fidelity you will also grow in stature. Those who know you least will sometimes know you best. Truth is of God & melds its own relationships.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer purifies error, illumines the mind, inspires courage. Prayer transcends resistance, forgives opposition, is patient with reluctance. Prayer makes one humble, firm, unafraid. Prayer listens, hears what the other says, seeks & recognizes truth, whatever its disguise. Possessed by it, prayer shares.

**JULY 16, 2006 Amos 7:12-15; Psalms 85:9-14; Ephesians 1:3-14; M ark 6.7-13**

**First Reading: Amos 7:12-15**

Amaziah, priest of Bethel, said to Amos, "Off with you, visionary, flee to the land of Judah! There earn your bread by prophesying, but never again prophesy in Bethel; for it is the king's sanctuary and a royal temple." Amos answered Amaziah, "I was no prophet, nor have I belonged to a company of prophets; I was a shepherd and a dresser of sycamores. The LORD took me from following the flock, and said to me, Go, prophesy to my people Israel."

**Responsorial Psalm: 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.

**Second Reading: Ephesians 1:3-14**

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens, as he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and without blemish before him. In love he destined us for adoption to himself through Jesus Christ, in accord with the favor of his will, for the praise of the glory of his grace that he granted us in the beloved. In him we have redemption by his blood, the forgiveness of transgressions, in accord with the riches of his grace that he lavished upon us. In all wisdom and insight, he has made known to us the mystery of his will in accord with his favor that he set forth in him as a plan for the fullness of times, to sum up all things in Christ, in heaven and on earth. In him we were also chosen, destined in accord with the purpose of the One who accomplishes all things according to the intention of his will, so that we might exist for the praise of his glory, we who first hoped in Christ. In him you also, who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him, were sealed with the promised holy Spirit, which is the first installment of our inheritance toward redemption as God's possession, to the praise of his glory.

**Gospel: Mark 6:7-13**

Jesus summoned the Twelve and began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over unclean spirits. He instructed them to take nothing for the journey but a walking stick—no food, no sack, no money in their belts. They were, however, to wear sandals but not a second tunic. He said to them, "Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave. Whatever place does not welcome you or listen to you, leave there and shake the dust off your feet in testimony against them." So they went off and preached repentance. The Twelve drove out many demons, and they anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.

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

**JULY 16, 2006 Amos 7:12-15; Psalms 85:9-14; Ephesians 1:3-14; M ark 6.7-13**

AMAZIAH SAID TO AMOS 'OFF WITH YOU, VISIONARY,  
FLEE TO THE LAND OF JUDAH!

"Jesus sent the Twelve two by two & gave them authority over unclean spirits, instructing them to take no food, no sack, no money, nothing but a walking stick for the journey."

**During the day:** Be a visionary, a dreamer. The day you stop dreaming you die. Dream people; not money, not success, just service. Dream of healing, cleansing, renewing--freeing from evil, within & without. God has given you that authority. Use it.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer listens. Settles down & listens. Doesn't hear; listens. Drifts loose of moorings, listens. Picks up the pings of divine presence. Rests. Knows it's being programmed. Knows not what; just knows. Every now & then murmurs 'Yes, Lord', comfortable & secure. Then lets the dream unfold.

**JULY 23, 2006 Jeremiah 23:1-6; Psalms 23:1-6; Ephesians 2.13-18; Mark 6.30-34**

**First Reading: Jeremiah 23:1-6**

Woe to the shepherds who mislead and scatter the flock of my pasture, says the LORD. Therefore, thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, against the shepherds who shepherd my people: You have scattered my sheep and driven them away. You have not cared for them, but I will take care to punish your evil deeds. I myself will gather the remnant of my flock from all the lands to which I have driven them and bring them back to their meadow; there they shall increase and multiply. I will appoint shepherds for them who will shepherd them so that they need no longer fear and tremble; and none shall be missing, says the LORD. Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will raise up a righteous shoot to David; as king he shall reign and govern wisely, he shall do what is just and right in the land. In his days Judah shall be saved, Israel shall dwell in security. This is the name they give him: "The LORD our justice."

**Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 23:1-6**

**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.

**Second Reading: Ephesians 2:13-18**

Brothers and sisters: In Christ Jesus you who once were far off have become near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, he who made both one and broke down the dividing wall of enmity, through his flesh, abolishing the law with its commandments and legal claims, that he might create in himself one new person in place of the two, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile both with God, in one body, through the cross, putting that enmity to death by it. He came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near, for through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.

**Gospel: Mark 6: 30-34**

The apostles gathered together with Jesus and reported all they had done and taught. He said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while." People were coming and going in great numbers, and they had no opportunity even to eat. So they went off in the boat by themselves to a deserted place. People saw them leaving and many came to know about it. They hastened there on foot from all the towns and arrived at the place before them. When he disembarked and saw the vast crowd, his heart was moved with pity for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.

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

**JULY 23, 2006 Jeremiah 23:1-6; Psalms 23:1-6; Ephesians 2.13-18; Mark 6.30-34**

I WILL APPOINT SHEPHERDS WHO WILL SHEPHERD THEM  
SO THAT THEY NO LONGER FEAR & TREMBLE.

"When he saw the vast crowd his heart was moved with pity-- they were like sheep without a shepherd. He began to teach them many things."

**During the day:** Don't be a smug deposit of truth; spread it around, be it in a group or individually. But discreetly, with questions--others like to discover the truth for themselves. Face down the fear that freezes; then encourage others with faith-inspired hope. Trusting you, they learn to trust God. Be worthy.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Fear is the shadow of insecurity, often the prelude to prayer. Prayer is humble, acknowledges weakness & unworthiness. Neither diminishes the concern of the Friend who can & wants to help. Blind, fear is controlled by truth, & prayer invokes the Guarantor of our security. The price to pay is abandonment.

**JULY 30, 2006 2Kings 4.42-44; Psalms 145:10-11, 15-18; Ephesians 4.1-6; John 6.1-15**

**First Reading: 2 Kings 4:42-44**

A man came from Baal-shalishah bringing to Elisha, the man of God, twenty barley loaves made from the firstfruits, and fresh grain in the ear. Elisha said, "Give it to the people to eat." But his servant objected, "How can I set this before a hundred people?" Elisha insisted, "Give it to the people to eat." "For thus says the LORD, 'They shall eat and there shall be some left over.'" And when they had eaten, there was some left over, as the LORD had said.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 145:10-11,15-18

**The hand of the Lord feeds us; he answers all our needs.** 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 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.

**Second Reading: Ephesians 4:1-6**

Brothers and sisters: I, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to live in a manner worthy of the call you have received, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another through love, striving to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace: one body and one Spirit, as you were also called to the one hope of your call; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

**Gospel: John 6:1-15**

Jesus went across the Sea of Galilee. A large crowd followed him, because they saw the signs he was performing on the sick. Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat down with his disciples. The Jewish feast of Passover was near. When Jesus raised his eyes and saw that a large crowd was coming to him, he said to Philip, "Where can we buy enough food for them to eat?" He said this to test him, because he himself knew what he was going to do. Philip answered him, "Two hundred days' wages worth of food would not be enough for each of them to have a little." One of his disciples, Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, said to him, "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish; but what good are these for so many?" Jesus said, "Have the people recline." Now there was a great deal of grass in that place. So the men reclined, about five thousand in number. Then Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed them to those who were reclining, and also as much of the fish as they wanted. When they had had their fill, he said to his disciples, "Gather the fragments left over, so that nothing will be wasted." So they collected them, and filled twelve wicker baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves that had been more than they could eat. When the people saw the sign he had done, they said, "This is truly the Prophet, the one who is to come into the world." Since Jesus knew that they were going to come and carry him off to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain alone.

**Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Texas Trinidad by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ**  
**JULY 30, 2006 2Kings 4.42-44; Psalms 145:10-11, 15-18; Ephesians 4.1-6; John 6.1-15**

[The Gospel of Mark is interrupted for five Sundays with John's discourse on the Eucharist]

A MAN BROUGHT ELISHA BREAD, TWENTY BARLEY LOAVES. 'GIVE IT  
TO THE PEOPLE TO EAT.' 'HOW CAN I SERVE THIS TO  
A HUNDRED MEN?' 'GIVE IT TO THE PEOPLE TO EAT.'

"Where can we buy bread for these people to eat? 'There's a boy here with five barley loaves & two fish.' Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks, then gave them out to all."

**During the day:** Whatever you've got, give it to others. To the person, not the need. The gift is only as valuable as the care of the giver. The gift satiates for a while; the affection lasts forever. The service that ennobles induces gratitude, neither measurable in purely human terms. God is eternally satisfied.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer mirrors reality beyond our ken. Prayer humbles the core of our being, immerses it in the Love from which it comes. The sensation of prayer is oneness with the Absolute, union with its reflection. Prayer is the urge to reunify. To share.

**August 6, 2006 Daniel 7:9-19, 13-14; Psalms 97:1-2, 5-6, 9; 2 Peter 1:16-19; Mark 9:2-10**

**First Reading: Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14**

As I watched: Thrones were set up and the Ancient One took his throne. His clothing was bright as snow, and the hair on his head as white as wool; his throne was flames of fire, with wheels of burning fire. A surging stream of fire flowed out from where he sat; Thousands upon thousands were ministering to him, and myriads upon myriads attended him. The court was convened and the books were opened. As the visions during the night continued, I saw: One like a Son of man coming, on the clouds of heaven; When he reached the Ancient One and was presented before him, The one like a Son of man received dominion, glory, and kingship; all peoples, nations, and languages serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not be taken away, his kingship shall not be destroyed.

**Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 97:1-2, 5-6, 9**

**The Lord is king, the Most High over all the earth.** The LORD is king; let the earth rejoice; let the many islands be glad. Clouds and darkness are round about him, justice and judgment are the foundation of his throne. The mountains melt like wax before the LORD, before the LORD of all the earth. The heavens proclaim his justice, and all peoples see his glory. Because you, O LORD, are the Most High over all the earth, exalted far above all gods.

**Second Reading: 2 Peter 1:16-19**

Beloved: We did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we had been eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received honor and glory from God the Father when that unique declaration came to him from the majestic glory, "This is my Son, my beloved, with whom I am well pleased." We ourselves heard this voice come from heaven while we were with him on the holy mountain. Moreover, we possess the prophetic message that is altogether reliable. You will do well to be attentive to it, as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

**Gospel: Mark 9:2-10**

Jesus took Peter, James, and his brother John, and led them up a high mountain apart by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no fuller on earth could bleach them. Then Elijah appeared to them along with Moses, and they were conversing with Jesus. Then Peter said to Jesus in reply, "Rabbi, it is good that we are here! Let us make three tents: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." He hardly knew what to say, they were so terrified. Then a cloud came, casting a shadow over them; from the cloud came a voice, "This is my beloved Son. Listen to him." Suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone but Jesus alone with them. As they were coming down from the mountain, he charged them not to relate what they had seen to anyone, except when the Son of Man had risen from the dead. So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what rising from the dead meant.

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

**August 6, 2006 Daniel 7:9-19, 13-14; Psalms 97:1-2, 5-6, 9; 2 Peter 1:16-19; Mark 9:2-10**

THE ANCIENT ONE TOOK HIS THRONE. THE COURT WAS CONVENED  
AND I SAW ONE LIKE THE SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN.

"He was transfigured before them, his clothes dazzling white. A cloud came & from the  
cloud came a voice, "This is my beloved Son. Listen to him."

**During the day:** Be transparent. Let others see the real you. Not the feelings, not the thoughts, but the heart, the will. You are God's son, God's daughter; worthy, allow his heart to speak through you. Your words work his wonder.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer is our mountain climb to get to God, action the meadows along the way where we care for current responsibilities. Our companion on the climb--a guide who's been there & knows the way--is also a pretty good partner in getting things done during the pauses. At the top, we rest in God, satisfied.

**August 13, 2006 1 Kings 19:4-8;; Psalms 34:2-9; Ephesians 4:30-5:2; John 6:41-51**

**First Reading: 1 Kings 19:4-8**

Elijah went a day's journey into the desert, until he came to a broom tree and sat beneath it. He prayed for death saying: "This is enough, O LORD! Take my life, for I am no better than my fathers." He lay down and fell asleep under the broom tree, but then an angel touched him and ordered him to get up and eat. Elijah looked and there at his head was a hearth cake and a jug of water. After he ate and drank, he lay down again, but the angel of the LORD came back a second time, touched him, and ordered, "Get up and eat, else the journey will be too long for you!" He got up, ate, and drank; then strengthened by that food, he walked forty days and forty nights to the mountain of God, Horeb.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 34:2-9

**Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.** I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise shall be ever in my mouth. Let my soul glory in the LORD; the lowly will hear me and be glad. Glorify the LORD with me, Let us together extol his name. I sought the LORD, and he answered me And delivered me from all my fears. Look to him that you may be radiant with joy. And your faces may not blush with shame. When the afflicted man called out, the LORD heard, And from all his distress he saved him. The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him and delivers them. Taste and see how good the LORD is; blessed the man who takes refuge in him.

Second Reading: Ephesians 4:30-5:2

Brothers and sisters: Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were sealed for the day of redemption. All bitterness, fury, anger, shouting, and reviling must be removed from you, along with all malice. And be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving one another as God has forgiven you in Christ. So be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and handed himself over for us as a sacrificial offering to God for a fragrant aroma.

Gospel: John 6:41-51

The Jews murmured about Jesus because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven," and they said, "Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph? Do we not know his father and mother? Then how can he say, 'I have come down from heaven'?" Jesus answered and said to them, "Stop murmuring among yourselves. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draw him, and I will raise him on the last day. It is written in the prophets: They shall all be taught by God. Everyone who listens to my Father and learns from him comes to me. Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father. Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the desert, but they died; this is the bread that comes down from heaven so that one may eat it and not die. 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."

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

**August 13, 2006 1 Kings 19:4-8;; Psalms 34:2-9; Ephesians 4:30-5:2; John 6:41-51**

ELIJAH LAY DOWN & FELL ASLEEP. AN ANGEL TOUCHED HIM & ORDERED HIM,  
'GET UP & EAT, ELSE THE JOURNEY WILL BE TOO LONG FOR YOU.'

"I am the living bread that came down from heaven.

Whoever eats this bread will live forever.

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

**During the day:** Be bread for others. Everyone around you needs to be fed for the journey. Your time & attention, energy & concern, effort & resources provide the spiritual & material elements they need to keep moving. The genuine unselfishness of your assistance will point them in the right direction.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer is the will to be nourished by the living God--to be grafted on to It's being that It's life circulate throughout us. Whether we know it or not, this prayer is fulfilled through the human will of the Son God sends us. Prayer can never fathom the mystery of God's ways. We simply eat the bread he provides, and move on.

August 20, 2006 Proverbs 9:1-6;; Psalms 34:2-7; Ephesians 5:15-20; John 6:51-58

**First Reading: Proverbs 9:1-6**

Wisdom has built her house, she has set up her seven columns; she has dressed her meat, mixed her wine, yes, she has spread her table. She has sent out her maidens; she calls from the heights out over the city: "Let whoever is simple turn in here; To the one who lacks understanding, she says, Come, eat of my food, and drink of the wine I have mixed! Forsake foolishness that you may live; advance in the way of understanding."

**Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 34:2-7**

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

**Second Reading: Ephesians 5:15-20**

Brothers and sisters: Watch carefully how you live, not as foolish persons but as wise, making the most of the opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore, do not continue in ignorance, but try to understand what is the will of the Lord. And do not get drunk on wine, in which lies debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and playing to the Lord in your hearts, giving thanks always and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father.

**Gospel: John 6:51-58**

Jesus said to the 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**

**August 20, 2006 Proverbs 9:1-6;; Psalms 34:2-7; Ephesians 5:15-20; John 6:51-58**

WISDOM HAS SPREAD HER TABLE. 'COME EAT MY FOOD.

FORSAKE FOOLISHNESS THAT YOU MAY LIVE.

"Just as the living Father sent me & I have life because of the Father,  
so the one who feeds on me will have life because of me."

**During the day:** Forsake foolishness. Grow up. Be wise; or at least give wisdom a chance. Come truly & fully alive. Life is for others, not for yourself. Or rather, you eternalize it by living it in service to others. We all eat at the same table; pass it around.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** In eucharistic prayer we nourish our minds spiritually with the bread of the of the Living Word, our wills--to carry out It's directives--with the body & blood of It's human incarnation. Prayer grafts us onto It, that It's life circulate within & among us, one with the Father & the Son & each other. Much obliged, Spirit of Wisdom!

**August 27, 2006 Joshua 24:1-2a;15-18b; Psalms 34:2-3,16-21; Ephesians 5:21-32; John 6:60-69**

**First Reading: Joshua 24:1-2a;15-18b**

Joshua gathered together all the tribes of Israel at Shechem, summoning their elders, their leaders, their judges, and their officers. When they stood in ranks before God, Joshua addressed all the people: "If it does not please you to serve the LORD, decide today whom you will serve, the gods your fathers served beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose country you are now dwelling. As for me and my household, we will serve the LORD." But the people answered, "Far be it from us to forsake the LORD for the service of other gods. For it was the LORD, our God, who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, out of a state of slavery. He performed those great miracles before our very eyes and protected us along our entire journey and among the peoples through whom we passed. Therefore we also will serve the LORD, for he is our God."

**Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 34:2-3,16-21**

**Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.** I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise shall be ever in my mouth. Let my soul glory in the LORD; the lowly will hear me and be glad. The LORD has eyes for the just, and ears for their cry. The LORD confronts the evildoers, to destroy remembrance of them from the earth. When the just cry out, the LORD hears them, and from all their distress he rescues them. The LORD is close to the brokenhearted; and those who are crushed in spirit he saves. Many are the troubles of the just one, but out of them all the LORD delivers him; he watches over all his bones; not one of them shall be broken.

**Second Reading Ephesians 5:21-32**

Brothers and sisters: Live in love, as Christ loved us. Be subordinate to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives should be subordinate to their husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is head of his wife just as Christ is head of the church, he himself the savior of the body. As the church is subordinate to Christ, so wives should be subordinate to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church and handed himself over for her to sanctify her, cleansing her by the bath of water with the word, that he might present to himself the church in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. So also husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one hates his own flesh but rather nourishes and cherishes it, even as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This is a great mystery, but I speak in reference to Christ and the church.

**Gospel John 6:60-69**

Many of Jesus' disciples who were listening said, "This saying is hard; who can accept it?" Since Jesus knew that his disciples were murmuring about this, he said to them, "Does this shock you? What if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the spirit that gives life, while the flesh is of no avail. The words I have spoken to you are Spirit and life. But there are some of you who do not believe." Jesus knew from the beginning the ones who would not believe and the one who would betray him. And he said, "For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by my Father." As a result of this, many of his disciples returned to their former way of life and no longer accompanied him. Jesus then said to the Twelve, "Do you also want to leave?" Simon Peter answered him, "Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God."

**Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Mighty Mississippi by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ**  
**August 27, 2006 Joshua 24:1-2a;15-18b; Psalms 34:2-3,16-21; Ephesians 5:21-32; John 6:60-69**

JOSHUA GATHERED ALL THE TRIBES OF ISRAEL. 'IF IT DOES NOT PLEASE YOU TO SERVE THE LORD, DECIDE TODAY.' 'FAR BE IT FROM US TO FORSAKE THE LORD OUR GOD!' "DO YOU ALSO WANT TO LEAVE?' 'MASTER, TO WHOM SHALL WE GO? YOU HAVE THE WORDS OF ETERNAL LIFE."

**During the day:** Choose truth; forsake it & you'll be lost in self-deception. Truth transcends rationality; not always recognized by the mind, it illumines the spirit. Trick is to discern its tug on the will from that of pride & the flesh. Humility & courage are discernment's handmaids.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer assimilates the hard words of Scripture. Prayer quests the life of the spirit, not of the flesh. To believe truth is to will it with trust in the Absolute that sustains it. The Word Incarnate humanizes truth's abstractions, prayer renders them palatable. Prayer opens both mind & heart to the Bread of Life; consumed, it nourishes the life of the spirit, eternity guaranteed.

**September 3, 2006 Deuteronomy 4:1-2,6-8; Psalms 15:2-5; James 1:17-27; Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23**

**First Reading: Deuteronomy 4:1-2,6-8**

Moses said to the people: "Now, Israel, hear the statutes and decrees which I am teaching you to observe, that you may live, and may enter in and take possession of the land which the LORD, the God of your fathers, is giving you. In your observance of the commandments of the LORD, your God, which I enjoin upon you, you shall not add to what I command you nor subtract from it. Observe them carefully, for thus will you give evidence of your wisdom and intelligence to the nations, who will hear of all these statutes and say, 'This great nation is truly a wise and intelligent people.' For what great nation is there that has gods so close to it as the LORD, our God, is to us whenever we call upon him? Or what great nation has statutes and decrees that are as just as this whole law which I am setting before you today?"

**Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 15:2-5**

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

**Second Reading: James 1:17-27**

Dearest brothers and sisters: All good giving and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no alteration or shadow caused by change. He willed to give us birth by the word of truth that we may be a kind of first fruits of his creatures. Humbly welcome the word that has been planted in you and is able to save your souls. Be doers of the word and not hearers only, eluding yourselves. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to care for orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

**Gospel: Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23**

When the Pharisees with some scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus, they observed that some of his disciples ate their meals with unclean, that is, unwashed, hands. - For the Pharisees and, in fact, all Jews, do not eat without carefully washing their hands, keeping the tradition of the elders. And on coming from the marketplace they do not eat without purifying themselves. And there are many other things that they have traditionally observed, the purification of cups and jugs and kettles and beds. - So the Pharisees and scribes questioned him, "Why do your disciples not follow the tradition of the elders but instead eat a meal with unclean hands?" He responded, "Well did Isaiah prophesy about you hypocrites, as it is written: This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines human precepts. You disregard God's commandment but cling to human tradition." He summoned the crowd again and said to them, "Hear me, all of you, and understand. Nothing that enters one from outside can defile that person; but the things that come out from within are what defile. "From within people, from their hearts, come evil thoughts, unchastity, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, licentiousness, envy, blasphemy, arrogance, folly. All these evils come from within and they defile."

**Fr. Jack Vessels thoughts:**

**September 3, 2006 Deuteronomy 4:1-2,6-8; Psalms 15:2-5; James 1:17-27; Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23**

MOSES SAID TO THE PEOPLE, WHAT GREAT NATION HAS STATUTES  
& DECREES AS JUST AS THE LAW I SET BEFORE YOU TODAY?

"Well did Isaiah prophesy, 'This people honors me with their lips but their hearts are far from me.  
You disregard God's commandments but cling to human tradition.'"

**During the day:** Harmonize your words & actions. Speak briefly & truthfully, then confirm your words with action; actions speak louder than words. Honesty witnesses to values, & values reveal character. Yours is from God; let him be proud of you.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer is of the will, lofty in the exercise of freedom. Recognizing absolute dependence on divine authority, it embraces the difficult, attempts the impossible. Prayer respects tradition, follows its essentials in the challenge of change. God's law, timeless, programs each day's destiny.

**September 10, 2006 Isaiah 35:4-7; Psalms 146:7-10; James 2:1-5; Mark 7:31-37**

**Old Testament: Isaiah 35:4-7**

Thus says the LORD: 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. Streams will burst forth in the desert, and rivers in the steppe. The burning sands will become pools, and the thirsty ground, springs of water.

**Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 146:7-10**

**Praise the Lord, my soul!** The God of Jacob 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. Alleluia.

**New Testament: James 2:1-5**

My brothers and sisters, show no partiality as you adhere to the faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ. For if a man with gold rings and fine clothes comes into your assembly, and a poor person in shabby clothes also comes in, and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say, "Sit here, please," while you say to the poor one, "Stand there," or "Sit at my feet," have you not made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil designs? Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters. Did not God choose those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom that he promised to those who love him?

**Gospel Mark 7:31-37**

Again Jesus left the district of Tyre and went by way of Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, into the district of the Decapolis. And people brought to him a deaf man who had a speech impediment and begged him to lay his hand on him. He took him off by himself away from the crowd. He put his finger into the man's ears and, spitting, touched his tongue; then he looked up to heaven and groaned, and said to him, "Ephphatha!" - that is, "Be opened!" -- And immediately the man's ears were opened, his speech impediment was removed, and he spoke plainly. He ordered them not to tell anyone. But the more he ordered them not to, the more they proclaimed it. They were exceedingly astonished and they said, "He has done all things well. He makes the deaf hear and the mute speak."

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

**September 10, 2006 Isaiah 35:4-7; Psalms 146:7-10; James 2:1-5; Mark 7:31-37**

SAY TO THOSE WHOSE HEARTS ARE FRIGHTENED,

'BE STRONG, FEAR NOT! HERE IS YOUR GOD,

HE COMES TO SAVE YOU.'

"Astonished, they said, 'He has done all things well.

He makes the deaf hear & the mute speak."

**During the day:** Truth & love are inseparable; be deaf to the truth, & you'll be mute to love. Don't be afraid of the truth; it's always an opportunity to communicate love. Or is it yourself you're loving, & not the other? They, too, are inseparable--but only if the latter has priority.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer is a hearing aid to distinguish more clearly the words of God. Prayer hears not only the words, but senses their meaning. Prayer responds in kind. Having recognized the love of the Speaker, prayer first expresses gratitude, then commitment. Friendship alive & well.

Missing September 17

**September 24, 2006 Wisdom 2:12, 17-20; Psalms 54:3-8 ; James 3.16-43; Mark 9.30-37**

**First Reading: Wisdom 2:12, 17-20**

The wicked say: let us beset the just one, because he is obnoxious to us; he sets himself against our doings, reproaches us for transgressions of the law and charges us with violations of our training. Let us see whether his words be true; let us find out what will happen to him. For if the just one be the son of God, God will defend him and deliver him from the hand of his foes. With revilement and torture let us put the just one to the test that we may have proof of his gentleness and try his patience. Let us condemn him to a shameful death; for according to his own words, God will take care of him.

**Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 54:3-8**

**The Lord upholds my life.** O God, by your name save me, and by your might defend my cause. O God, hear my prayer; hearken to the words of my mouth. For the haughty men have risen up against me, the ruthless seek my life; they set not God before their eyes. Behold, God is my helper; the Lord sustains my life. Freely will I offer you sacrifice; I will praise your name, O LORD, for its goodness.

**Second Reading: James 3:16-43**

Beloved: Where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every foul practice. But the wisdom from above is first of all pure, then peaceable, gentle, compliant, full of mercy and good fruits, without inconstancy or insincerity. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace for those who cultivate peace. Where do the wars and where do the conflicts among you come from? Is it not from your passions that make war within your members? You covet but do not possess. You kill and envy but you cannot obtain; you fight and wage war. You do not possess because you do not ask. You ask but do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.

**Gospel: Mark 9:30-37**

Jesus and his disciples left from there and began a journey through Galilee, but he did not wish anyone to know about it. He was teaching his disciples and telling them, "The Son of Man is to be handed over to men and they will kill him, and three days after his death the Son of Man will rise." But they did not understand the saying, and they were afraid to question him. They came to Capernaum and, once inside the house, he began to ask them, "What were you arguing about on the way?" But they remained silent. They had been discussing among themselves on the way who was the greatest. Then he sat down, called the Twelve, and said to them, "If anyone wishes to be first, he shall be the last of all and the servant of all." Taking a child, he placed it in the their midst, and putting his arms around it, he said to them, "Whoever receives one child such as this in my name, receives me; and whoever receives me, receives not me but the One who sent me."

**Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Mighty Mississippi by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ**  
**September 24, 2006 Wisdom 2:12, 17-20; Psalms 54:3-8 ; James 3.16-43; Mark 9.30-37**

IF THE JUST ONE BE THE SON OF GOD, GOD WILL DEFEND HIM.

"If anyone wishes to be first he shall be last & the servant of all."

**During the day:** Work hard but don't judge yourself by the results. They depend more on your character than on your efforts, on what you are rather than what you do. Hard work, properly motivated, always achieves a purpose; not the one expected maybe, but rich in coin divine for its genuine unselfishness.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Pray as though everything depended on God, work as though everything depended on you. Better still, pray as though everything depended on you, work as though everything depended on God. It does.

**October 1, 2006 Numbers 11.25-29; Psalms 19:8-14; James 5.1-6; Mark 9.38-48**

**First Reading: Numbers 11:25-29**

The LORD came down in the cloud and spoke to Moses. Taking some of the spirit that was on Moses, the LORD bestowed it on the seventy elders; and as the spirit came to rest on them, they prophesied. Now two men, one named Eldad and the other Medad, were not in the gathering but had been left in the camp. They too had been on the list, but had not gone out to the tent; yet the spirit came to rest on them also, and they prophesied in the camp. So, when a young man quickly told Moses, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp," Joshua, son of Nun, who from his youth had been Moses' aide, said, "Moses, my lord, stop them." But Moses answered him, "Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the people of the LORD were prophets! Would that the LORD might bestow his spirit on them all!"

**Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 19:8-14**

**The precepts of the Lord give joy to the heart.** The law of the LORD is perfect, refreshing the soul; the decree of the LORD is trustworthy, giving wisdom to the simple. The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever; the ordinances of the LORD are true, all of them just. Though your servant is careful of them, very diligent in keeping them, Yet who can detect failings? Cleanse me from my unknown faults! From wanton sin especially, restrain your servant; let it not rule over me. Then shall I be blameless and innocent of serious sin.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Reading: James 5:1-6**

Come now, you rich, weep and wail over your impending miseries. Your wealth has rotted away, your clothes have become moth-eaten, your gold and silver have corroded, and that corrosion will be a testimony against you; it will devour your flesh like a fire. You have stored up treasure for the last days. Behold, the wages you withheld from the workers who harvested your fields are crying aloud; and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. You have lived on earth in luxury and pleasure; you have fattened your hearts for the day of slaughter. You have condemned; you have murdered the righteous one; he offers you no resistance.

**Gospel: Mark 9:38-48**

At that time, John said to Jesus, "Teacher, we saw someone driving out demons in your name, and we tried to prevent him because he does not follow us." Jesus replied, "Do not prevent him. There is no one who performs a mighty deed in my name who can at the same time speak ill of me. For whoever is not against us is for us. Anyone who gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ, amen, I say to you, will surely not lose his reward. "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were put around his neck and he were thrown into the sea. If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed than with two hands to go into Gehenna, into the unquenchable fire. And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life crippled than with two feet to be thrown into Gehenna. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. Better for you to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into Gehenna, where 'their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.'"

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

**October 1, 2006 Numbers 11.25-29; Psalms 19:8-14; James 5.1-6; Mark 9.38-48**

WOULD THAT ALL THE PEOPLE OF THE LORD WERE PROPHETS.

WOULD THAT THE LORD MIGHT BESTOW HIS SPIRIT ON THEM ALL.

"No one who performs a deed in my name speaks ill of me. Whoever is not against us is for us."

**During the day:** Be a prophet. Not the kind that foretells the future, but just a spokesperson for God. Witness truth; not fanatically, but with quiet, firm conviction. Truth has its own powerful authority. God never contradicts himself.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Some prayer goes inward, some outward. Prayer is the mirror of the inner person; you adjust your thoughts, your values & priorities, your emotions. You also see the world around you; but, as yourself, in reverse--in the divine, not the human perspective. Prayer helps you get used to it. With time, you become God-centered, rather than self-centered, truly available to his concern for others.

**October 15, 2006 Wisdom 7:7-11; Psalms 90:12-17; Hebrews 4:12-13; Mark 10.17-30**

**First Reading: Wisdom 7:7-11**

I prayed, and prudence was given me; I pleaded, and the spirit of wisdom came to me. I preferred her to scepter and throne, and deemed riches nothing in comparison with her, nor did I liken any priceless gem to her; because all gold, in view of her, is a little sand, and before her, silver is to be accounted mire. Beyond health and comeliness I loved her, and I chose to have her rather than the light, because the splendor of her never yields to sleep. Yet all good things together came to me in her company, and countless riches at her hands.

**Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 90:12-17**

**Fill us with your love, O Lord, and we will sing for joy!** Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain wisdom of heart. Return, O LORD! How long? Have pity on your servants! Fill us at daybreak with your kindness, that we may shout for joy and gladness all our days. Make us glad, for the days when you afflicted us, for the years when we saw evil. Let your work be seen by your servants and your glory by their children; and may the gracious care of the LORD our God be ours; prosper the work of our hands for us! Prosper the work of our hands!

**Second Reading: Hebrews 4:12-13**

Brothers and sisters: Indeed the word of God is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating even between soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and able to discern reflections and thoughts of the heart. No creature is concealed from him, but everything is naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must render an account.

**Gospel: Mark 10:17-30**

As Jesus was setting out on a journey, a man ran up, knelt down before him, and asked him, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus answered him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: You shall not kill; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness; you shall not defraud; honor your father and your mother." He replied and said to him, "Teacher, all of these I have observed from my youth." Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said to him, "You are lacking in one thing. Go, sell what you have, and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." At that statement his face fell, and he went away sad, for he had many possessions. Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!" The disciples were amazed at his words. So Jesus again said to them in reply, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for one who is rich to enter the kingdom of God." They were exceedingly astonished and said among themselves, "Then who can be saved?" Jesus looked at them and said, "For human beings it is impossible, but not for God. All things are possible for God." Peter began to say to him, "We have given up everything and followed you." Jesus said, "Amen, I say to you, there is no one who has given up house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for my sake and for the sake of the gospel who will not receive a hundred times more now in this present age: houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and eternal life in the age to come."

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**October 15, 2006 Wisdom 7:7-11; Psalms 90:12-17; Hebrews 4:12-13; Mark 10.17-30**

I PRAYED, AND PRUDENCE WAS GIVEN ME. I PLEADED,  
AND THE SPIRIT OF WISDOM CAME TO ME.

"Anyone who gives up home, brothers or sisters, mother or father, children or lands for my sake  
& the sake of the gospel will receive (with persecutions) a hundredfold in this age & eternal life in the age to come."

**During the day:** Put God first, then everyone & everything else falls into place. Your destiny is fulfilled after death, not before. Trick is to love & serve God in everyone else now by putting their needs before your own; guarantees absolute & eternal fulfillment.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer resolves apparent contradictions, focuses the light of faith on the mysteries of love. Prayer discerns, from God's perspective, the true good of others & the urgency of their needs, both spiritual & material. Prayer doesn't play favorites in the human family.

**October 22, 2006 Isaiah 53:10-11; Psalms 33:4-5,18-22; Hebrews: 4:14-16; Mark 10:35-45**

**First Reading: Isaiah 53:10-11**

The LORD was pleased to crush him in infirmity. If he gives his life as an offering for sin, he shall see his descendants in a long life, and the will of the LORD shall be accomplished through him. Because of his affliction he shall see the light in fullness of days; through his suffering, my servant shall justify many, and their guilt he shall bear.

**Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 33:4-5,18-22**

**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.

**Second Reading: Hebrews: 4:14-16**

Brothers and sisters: Since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has similarly been tested in every way, yet without sin. So let us confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and to find grace for timely help.

**Gospel: Mark 10:35-45**

James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Jesus and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." He replied, "What do you wish me to do for you?" They answered him, "Grant that in your glory we may sit one at your right and the other at your left." Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Can you drink the cup that I drink or be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" They said to him, "We can." Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink, you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; but to sit at my right or at my left is not mine to give but is for those for whom it has been prepared." When the ten heard this, they became indignant at James and John. Jesus summoned them and said to them, "You know that those who are recognized as rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones make their authority over them felt. But it shall not be so among you. Rather, whoever wishes to be great among you will be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you will be the slave of all. For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many."

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

**October 22, 2006 Isaiah 53:10-11; Psalms 33:4-5,18-22; Hebrews: 4:14-16; Mark 10:35-45**

IF HE GIVES HIS LIFE AS AN OFFERING FOR SIN  
THE WILL OF THE LORD WILL BE ACCOMPLISHED THROUGH HIM.

"Can you drink the cup that I drink, be baptized with the baptism I will?"

"We can." You will; whoever wishes to be first, be slave of all.

The Son of Man didn't come to be served but to give his life as ransom for many."

**During the day:** Stop complaining. You take credit for a lot you don't do, take the blame as well. Rise above the petty things that irritate you. Even the big ones are petty if you embrace the divine design; you're far more important to it than the immediate circumstances that overwhelm you. Learn to float.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer is breathing deeply when you need oxygen for the spirit. If you're going to stay under long, you better learn deep breathing & practice it often. Prayer subdues panic, feels its way through darkness. Prayer helps you keep up with the One who knows the way out.

Missing October 29 to First Advent 2007 (Dec 3, 2007)