

Liturgical lessons 2007 (Dec 3, 2006 First Advent start)

December 3, 2006 Jeremiah 33:14-16; Psalms 25:4-5, 8-10, 14; 1 Thes 3:12-4:2; Luke 21:25-28, 34-36

First Reading: Jeremiah 33:14-16

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

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

To you, O Lord, I lift my soul. 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, and for you I wait all the day. Good and upright is the LORD; thus he shows sinners the way. He guides the humble to justice, and teaches the humble his way. All the paths of the LORD are kindness and constancy toward those who keep his covenant and his decrees. The friendship of the LORD is with those who fear him, and his covenant, for their instruction.

Second Reading: 1 Thessalonians 3:12-4:2

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

Gospel: Luke 21:25-28, 34-36

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

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

December 3, 2006 (1st Advent) Jeremiah 33:14-16; Psalms 25:4-5, 8-10, 14; 1 Thes 3:12-4:2; Luke 21:25-28, 34-36

I WILL MAKE A VIRTUOUS BRANCH GROW FOR DAVID, WHO SHALL
PRACTICE HONESTY & INTEGRITY IN THE LAND.

"There will be signs in the sun & moon & stars... men dying of fear as they await what menaces the world.

They will see the Son of Man coming with power & glory. Stand erect, hold your head high.

Your liberation is near at hand."

During the day: Be honest with yourself in the use of your freedom--it was bought back for you at great price. Get comfortable with integrity; hold your head high so others can see it in your eyes. Stand erect, the better to support those who depend on you, & shake off those who try to pull you down.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is sharing humanity with the Son of Man. Prayer is awareness of him aware of you. Prayer shares his vision, discovers your place in it. Prayer is gratitude, expressed in trust. Prayer stabilizes commitment. Prayer sows, reaps, then enjoys the harvest. Prayer is indispensable.

December 10, 2006 Baruch 5:1-9; Psalms 126:1-6; Philippians 1:4-6, 8-11; Luke 3:1-6

First Reading: Baruch 5:1-9

Jerusalem, take off your robe of mourning and misery; put on the splendor of glory from God forever: wrapped in the cloak of justice from God, bear on your head the mitre that displays the glory of the eternal name. For God will show all the earth your splendor: you will be named by God forever the peace of justice, the glory of God(s) worship. Up, Jerusalem! stand upon the heights; look to the east and see your children gathered from the east and the west at the word of the Holy One, rejoicing that they are remembered by God. Led away on foot by their enemies they left you: but God will bring them back to you

borne aloft in glory as on royal thrones. For God has commanded that every lofty mountain be made low, and that the age-old depths and gorges be filled to level ground, that Israel may advance secure in the glory of God. The forests and every fragrant kind of tree have overshadowed Israel at God(s) command; for God is leading Israel in joy by the light of his glory, with his mercy and justice for company.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 126:1-6

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

Second Reading: Philippians 1:4-6, 8-11

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

Gospel: Luke 3:1-6

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

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

December 10, 2006 (2nd Advent) Baruch 5:1-9; Psalms 126:1-6; Philippians 1:4-6, 8-11; Luke 3:1-6

JERUSALEM, TAKE OFF YOUR DRESS OF SORROW & DISTRESS. GOD
WILL SHOW YOUR SPLENDOR TO EVERY NATION UNDER HEAVEN.

"Prepare a way for the Lord, make rough roads smooth.

All mankind shall see the salvation of God."

During the day: We're all brothers & sisters, children of one Father-Mother. Live & love that truth. Do your bit--govern your thoughts, words & deeds accordingly. That's really all you can do to make a better world; God, however apparently, is using all such to make it happen.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is that subliminal radar that detects God's approach in every human being beneath the surface of their thoughts, words & deeds. Prayer governs the reactions to the latter with respect for the former. God uses each encounter as instrument of salvation for both; each is free to do likewise.

December 17, 2006 (3rd Advent) Zeph 3:14-18; Isaiah 12:2-6; Phil 4:4-7; Luke 3:10-18

First Reading: Zephaniah 3:14-18a

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

Responsorial Psalm: Isaiah 12:2-6

Cry out with joy and gladness: for among you is the great and Holy One of Israel. God indeed is my savior; I am confident and unafraid. My strength and my courage is the LORD, and he has been my savior. With joy you will draw water at the fountain of salvation. Give thanks to the LORD, acclaim his name; among the nations make known his deeds, proclaim how exalted is his name. Sing praise to the LORD for his glorious achievement; let this be known throughout all the earth. Shout with exultation, O city of Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel!

Second Reading: Philippians 4:4-7

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

Gospel: Luke 3:10-18

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

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

December 17, 2006 (3rd Advent) Zeph 3:14-18; Isaiah 12:2-6; Phil 4:4-7; Luke 3:10-18

BE GLAD & EXULT WITH ALL YOUR HEART. THE KING OF ISRAEL, THE LORD,
IN YOUR MIDST. YOU HAVE NO FURTHER MISFORTUNE TO FEAR.

"John said, 'I baptize you with water, but one mightier than I is coming.
He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit & fire.'"

During the day: Don't fear misfortune. Sure, be cautious & prudent as it happens, but don't be afraid of it, i.e. don't let fear govern your reactions; face it rather with courage. Trust there's a Providence bringing good out of it you may never see. That's what makes it true.

ABOUT PRAYER: Advent prayer is vigilant. Alert to the hidden mechanics of the Spirit, prayer stokes the fire of enthusiasm for what's to come. Aware there's a loving power to surrender to, prayer becomes the pregnancy of new life in the heart, both human & divine.

December 24, 2006 (4th Advent) Micah 5:1-4a; Psalms 80; Hebrews 10:5-10; Luke 1:39-45

First Reading: Micah 5:1-4a

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

Responsorial Psalm: 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.

Second Reading: Hebrews 10:5-10

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

Gospel: Luke 1:39-45

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

**Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Mighty Mississippi by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ
December 24, 2006 (4th Advent) Micah 5:1-4a; Psalms 80; Hebrews 10:5-10; Luke 1:39-45**

**FROM YOU, BETHLEHEM, WILL COME ONE WHO SHALL SHEPHERD HIS FLOCK
BY THE STRENGTH OF THE LORD. HE SHALL BE PEACE.**

"Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you would be fulfilled."

During the day: The mind was made to recognize truth. Train it. Settle for nothing less. Learn to ally judgment with intuition. Allow both to be illumined by Absolute Truth. Then let the will kick in & make your choices accordingly.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is not planning. It's studying the Plans & consulting the Architect. Prayer brings both mind & will into focus on your responsibilities in the project, then moves into action with trust in both your own ability & His wisdom & power; after all, He gave the job to you.

December 31, 2006 Holy Family: 1Sam 1.20-28; 1Jn 3.1-2, 21-24; LK 2.41-52

First Reading: 1 Samuel 1:20-22,24-28

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

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 128:1-5

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

Second Reading: 1 John 3:1-2,21-24

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

Gospel: Luke 2:41-52

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

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

December 31, 2006 Holy Family: 1Sam 1.20-28; 1Jn 3.1-2, 21-24; LK 2.41-52

HANNAH SAID TO ELKANAH HER HUSBAND, 'ONCE THE CHILD IS WEANED
I WILL TAKE HIM TO APPEAR BEFORE THE LORD & TO REMAIN THERE FOREVER.
I WILL OFFER HIM AS A PERPETUAL NAZIRITE.'

"His mother kept all these things in her heart.

And Jesus advanced in wisdom & age & favor before God & man."

During the day: You can't help advancing in age, but you can sure be a little wiser. Fit the situation, don't make it fit you. God'll take care of the details, & others will be friendlier. And ponder.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer ponders. Both the situation, & the things of the heart. Prayer searches the divine perspective. The Father-Mother obliges, & the mother who helped her Son discern, helps us too.

January 7, 2007 Isaiah 60:1-6; Psalms 72; Eph 3:2-3a, 5-6; Matthew 2:1-12

First Reading: 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.

Second Reading: Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6

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

Gospel: 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 Mighty Mississippi by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ

January 7, 2007 Isaiah 60:1-6; Psalms 72; Eph 3:2-3a, 5-6; Matthew 2:1-12

ARISE! THOUGH NIGHT STILL COVERS THE EARTH & DARKNESS ITS PEOPLES.

LIFT UP YOUR EYES & LOOK ROUND, FOR YOUR LIGHT HAS COME.

"There in front of them was the star. It went forward to the place where the child was."

During the day - Look round. Look at people. SEE them! Forget yourself for a moment & wonder at the darkness in some, the light in others. Let this latter illumine you & lift your spirits. In all likelihood, it's their childlike innocence. Cleansed, reflect it to the ones who need it.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer lights the inner candle. For a while, it admires the beauty of the flame; then begins to notice the items its light reveals, resting in its warmth as it does so. Prayer ponders, allowing truth & love to work their magic.

JAN 14, 2007 2nd of yr.: Isa 62.1-5; 1Cor 12.4-11; JN 2.1-12

First Reading: Isaiah 62:1-5

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

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 96:1-2, 7-9

Proclaim his marvelous deeds to all the nations. 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. Give to the LORD, you families of nations, give to the LORD glory and praise; give to the LORD the glory due his name! Worship the LORD in holy attire. Tremble before him, all the earth; Say among the nations: The LORD is king. He governs the peoples with equity.

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:4-11

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

Gospel: John 2:1-11

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

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

JAN 14, 2007 2nd of yr.: Isa 62.1-5; 1Cor 12.4-11; JN 2.1-12

AS THE BRIDEGROOM REJOICES IN HIS BRIDE, SO WILL GOD REJOICE IN YOU.

"The mother of Jesus said to him, 'They have no wine.' Jesus replied, 'Why turn to me? My hour has not yet come.' She said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.'"

During the day: Do whatever he tells you. God knows when & how to communicate with you, even if you don't with him. Listen. He speaks through people & situations. Be generous. God is never outdone in generosity.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is the subliminal antenna that picks up the Spirit's wavelength. Prayer conditions, not so much the mind to recognize, as the will to activate. 'Yes, Lord.' is the ultimate prayer.

JAN 21, 2007 3rd of yr: Neh 8.2-10; 1Cor 12.12-30; LK 1.1-4;4.14-21

First Reading: Nehemiah 8: 2-10

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

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 19:8-10, 15

Your words, Lord, are Spirit and life. The law of the LORD is perfect, refreshing the soul; The decree of the LORD is trustworthy, giving wisdom to the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The command of the LORD is clear, enlightening the eye. The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever; The ordinances of the LORD are true, all of them just. Let the words of my mouth and the thought of my heart find favor before you, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:12-30

Brothers and sisters: As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit. Now the body is not a single part, but many. If a foot should say, "Because I am not a hand I do not belong to the body," it does not for this reason belong any less to the body. Or if an ear should say, "Because I am not an eye I do not belong to the body," it does not for this reason belong any less to the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God placed the parts, each one of them, in the body as he intended. If they were all one part, where would the body be? But as it is, there are many parts, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I do not need you," nor again the head to the feet, "I do not need you." Indeed, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are all the more necessary, and those parts of the body that we consider less honorable we surround with greater honor, and our less presentable parts are treated with greater propriety, whereas our more presentable parts do not need this. But God has so constructed the body as to give greater honor to a part that is without it, so that there may be no division in the body, but that the parts may have the same concern for one another. If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy. Now you are Christ's body, and individually parts of it. Some people God has designated in the church to be, first, apostles; second, prophets; third, teachers; then, mighty deeds; then gifts of healing, assistance, administration, and varieties of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work mighty deeds? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret?

Gospel: Luke 1: 1-4, 4:14-21

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

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

JAN 21, 2017 3rd of yr: Neh 8.2-10; 1Cor 12.12-30; LK 1.1-4;4.14-21

EZRA READ FROM THE BOOK OF THE LAW OF GOD. 'DO NOT BE SADDENED,
DO NOT WEEP. REJOICING IN THE LORD MUST BE YOUR STRENGTH.'

"The Spirit of the Lord has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor,
proclaim liberty to captives, sight to the blind, let the oppressed go free.'

During the day: Weep to grieve loss, but let tears water hope. There's a law for God, too: to keep his promises. He does; but in his own time & way. Hope turns to faith when charity perceives his love. Even in tragedy & failure, there's a good to be found. Look for it.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is the candle we light in the dark. That is, if you can see. If you're blind, you just grope. Whichever, there's security in recognizing the familiar. Prayer gets us familiar with the things of God. Infinite & absolute, they empower unlimited strength.

JAN 28, 2007 4th of yr: Jer 1.4-5,17-19; 1Cor 12.31-13.13; LK 4.21-30

First Reading: Jeremiah 1:4-5. 17-19

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

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 71:1-6, 15-17

I will sing of your salvation. In you, O LORD, I take refuge; let me never be put to shame. In your justice rescue me, and deliver me; incline your ear to me, and save me. Be my rock of refuge, a stronghold to give me safety, for you are my rock and my fortress. O my God, rescue me from the hand of the wicked. For you are my hope, O Lord; my trust, O God, from my youth. On you I depend from birth; from my mother's womb you are my strength. My mouth shall declare your justice, day by day your salvation. O God, you have taught me from my youth, and till the present I proclaim your wondrous deeds.

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:31 – 13:13

Brothers and sisters: Strive eagerly for the greatest spiritual gifts. But I shall show you a still more excellent way. If I speak in human and angelic tongues, but do not have love, I am a resounding gong or a clashing cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy, and comprehend all mysteries and all knowledge; if I have all faith so as to move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away everything I own, and if I hand my body over so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, it is not pompous, It is not inflated, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails. If there are prophecies, they will be brought to nothing; if tongues, they will cease; if knowledge, it will be brought to nothing. For we know partially and we prophesy partially, but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. When I was a child, I used to talk as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, I put aside childish things. At present we see indistinctly, as in a mirror, but then face to face. At present I know partially; then I shall know fully, as I am fully known. So faith, hope, love remain, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

Gospel: Luke 4:21-30

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

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

JAN 28, 2007 4th of yr: Jer 1.4-5,17-19; 1Cor 12.31-13.13; LK 4.21-30

BEFORE I FORMED YOU IN THE WOMB, I KNEW YOU.

STAND UP & TELL THEM ALL THAT I COMMAND YOU.

"All spoke highly of him & were amazed at his gracious words.

He passed through the midst of them & went away."

Missing Jack's Thoughts for this week

FEB 4, 2007 5th of yr: Isa 6.1-8; 1Cor 15.1-11; LK 5.1-11

First Reading: Isaiah 6:1-8

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

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 138:1-8

In the sight of the angels I will sing your praises, Lord. I will give thanks to you, O LORD, with all my heart, for you have heard the words of my mouth; in the presence of the angels I will sing your praise; I will worship at your holy temple and give thanks to your name. Because of your kindness and your truth; for you have made great above all things your name and your promise. When I called, you answered me; you built up strength within me. All the kings of the earth shall give thanks to you, O LORD, when they hear the words of your mouth; and they shall sing of the ways of the LORD: "Great is the glory of the LORD." Your right hand saves me. The LORD will complete what he has done for me; your kindness, O LORD, endures forever; forsake not the work of your hands.

Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

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

Gospel: Luke 5:1-11

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

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

FEB 4, 2007 5th of yr: Isa 6.1-8; 1Cor 15.1-11; LK 5.1-11

I SAW THE LORD SEATED ON LOFTY THRONE. 'WOE IS ME, I AM DOOMED! A MAN OF UNCLEAN LIPS, I HAVE SEEN THE LORD!' THEN A SERAPHIM TOUCHED MY LIPS WITH AN EMBER, 'YOUR WICKEDNESS IS REMOVED, YOUR SIN PURGED.' I HEARD THE LORD SAY, 'WHOM SHALL I SEND?' 'HERE I AM' I SAID. 'SEND ME.'

"Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man.' Jesus said to Simon,
'Don't be afraid. from now on you will be catching men."

During the day:: Be sent. For what? For people, not projects. Purge your lips. Speak well of others as you go--your words proceed you. Recognize their effectiveness. Words touch hearts; truth prevails, love converts.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer purifies, rights the balance, calms the emotions, seeks the truth. Prayer penetrates it, ponders the good & the bad, finds God in the good, perceives fear in the bad. Prayer exacts the mission: serve the good, assuage the fear. Prayer evaluates the effort, offers it to God.

FEB 11, 2007 6th of yr: Jer 17.5-8; 1Cor 12-20; LK 6.17-26

First Reading: Jeremiah 17:5-6

Thus says the LORD: Cursed is the one who trusts in human beings, who seeks his strength in flesh, whose heart turns away from the LORD. He is like a barren bush in the desert that enjoys no change of season, but stands in a lava waste, a salt and empty earth. Blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD, whose hope is the LORD. He is like a tree planted beside the waters that stretches out its roots to the stream: it fears not the heat when it comes; its leaves stay green; in the year of drought it shows no distress, but still bears fruit.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 1:1-4, 6

Blessed are they who hope in the Lord. Blessed the man who follows not the counsel of the wicked, nor walks in the way of sinners, nor sits in the company of the insolent, but delights in the law of the LORD and meditates on his law day and night. He is like a tree planted near running water, that yields its fruit in due season, and whose leaves never fade. Whatever he does, prospers. Not so the wicked, not so; they are like chaff which the wind drives away. For the LORD watches over the way of the just, but the way of the wicked vanishes.

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:12, 16-20

Brothers and sisters: If Christ is preached as raised from the dead, how can some among you say there is no resurrection of the dead? If the dead are not raised, neither has Christ been raised, and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is vain; you are still in your sins. Then those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are the most pitiable people of all. But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

Gospel: Luke 6:17, 20-26

Jesus came down with the twelve and stood on a stretch of level ground with a great crowd of his disciples and a large number of the people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon. And raising his eyes toward his disciples he said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for the kingdom of God is yours. Blessed are you who are now hungry, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who are now weeping, for you will laugh. Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude and insult you, and denounce your name as evil on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice and leap for joy on that day! Behold, your reward will be great in heaven. For their ancestors treated the prophets in the same way. But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. Woe to you who are filled now, for you will be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will grieve and weep. Woe to you when all speak well of you, for their ancestors treated the false prophets in this way."

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

FEB 11, 2007 6th of yr: Jer 17.5-8; 1Cor 12-20; LK 6.17-26

BLESSED IS THE ONE WHOSE HOPE IS THE LORD. HE'S LIKE A TREE
PLANTED BY THE WATERS THAT STRETCHES OUT ITS ROOTS TO THE STREAM.

"Blessed are you who are now weeping, for you will laugh."

During the day: Keep your sense of humor; especially when it's all you've got left. If it's human loss you're grieving, may take a little time to reach the stream. If material, look around for others worse off & give them a helping hand--you'll find you're working shoulder to shoulder with the Lord.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer transcends experience, overcomes emotions with sentiments born of truths not rational but not unreasonable. Prayer seeks a God whose love heals all; first, tho, prayer rids the heart of hatred & resentment where Love can't penetrate. Prayer waits.

Feb 18, 2007 7th of yr.: 1Sam 26:2, 7-13, 22-23; 1Cor 15:45-49; Luke 6:27-38

First Reading: 1 Samuel 26:2, 7-13, 22-23

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

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

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, heals all your ills. He redeems your life from destruction, 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.

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:45-49

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

Gospel: Luke 6:27-38

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

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

Feb 18, 2007 7th of yr.: 1Sam 26:2, 7-13, 22-23; 1Cor 15:45-49; Luke 6:27-38

THE LORD WILL REWARD EACH MAN FOR HIS JUSTICE & FAITHFULNESS

"Love your enemies, do good to them. Your reward will be great, you will be children of the Most High.

He himself is kind to the ungrateful & wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful."

During the day: Be more faithful in practicing divine justice than human justice. The latter protects you from the other; the former puts you at his service; which, after all, is the divine destiny of humanity. Your fulfillment depends on it. Like Father, like son.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer anticipates rewards, ponders their prerequisites. Prayer subdues blind resentment, tempers it, gives it a purpose: forgiveness. Not just emotionally, but materially as well. Prayer relishes the satisfaction of being Godlike.

FEB 25, 2007 1st Lent: Deuteronomy 26.4-10; Romans 10.8-13; Luke 4.1-13

First Reading: Deuteronomy 26:4-10

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

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 91:1-2,10-15

Be with me, Lord, when I am in trouble. You who dwell in the shelter of the Most High, who abide in the shadow of the Almighty, say to the LORD, "My refuge and fortress, my God in whom I trust." No evil shall befall you, nor shall affliction come near your tent, For to his angels he has given command about you, that they guard you in all your ways. Upon their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone. You shall tread upon the asp and the viper; you shall trample down the lion and the dragon. Because he clings to me, I will deliver him; I will set him on high because he acknowledges my name. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in distress; I will deliver him and glorify him.

Second Reading: Romans 10:8-13

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

Gospel: Luke 4:1-13

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

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

FEB 25, 2007 1st Lent: Deuteronomy 26.4-10; Romans 10.8-13; Luke 4.1-13

SAY 'I'VE BROUGHT YOU, O LORD, THE FIRST FRUITS OF THE SOIL YOU HAVE GIVEN ME.'
HAVING SET THEM BEFORE THE LORD YOUR GOD, YOU SHALL BOW DOWN IN HIS PRESENCE.

"The devil showed him all the kingdoms of the world: 'All this will be yours if you worship me.'

Jesus said, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, & him alone shall you serve.'

During the day: Authority, if abused, corrupts; don't. Used wisely, it's a service; serve. It's a gift, not a privilege; a responsibility to & for others, not a right. Exercised as authorized, the Author spins the tale that works his wonder.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is of the imagination & the will more than of the intellect & emotions. The latter have their place, but relative; the Absolute inspires dreams that bring order out of chaos, & prayer cherishes their realization.

March 04, 2007 2nd Sunday of Lent: Genesis 15:5-18; Philippians 3:17-4.1; Luke 9:28-36

First Reading: Genesis 15:5-12, 17-18

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

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 27:1 7-9, 13-14

The Lord is my light and my salvation. The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom should I fear? The LORD is my life's refuge; of whom should I be afraid? Hear, O LORD, the sound of my call; have pity on me, and answer me. Of you my heart speaks; you my glance seeks. Your presence, O LORD, I seek. Hide not your face from me; do not in anger repel your servant. You are my helper: cast me not off. I believe that I shall see the bounty of the LORD in the land of the living. Wait for the LORD with courage; be stouthearted, and wait for the LORD.

Second Reading: Philippians 3: 17 – 4:1

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

Gospel: Luke 9:28b-36

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

Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Mighty Mississippi by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ
March 04, 2007 2nd Sunday of Lent: Genesis 15:5-18; Philippians 3:17-4.1; Luke 9:28-36

ABRAM PUT HIS FAITH IN THE LORD, WHO CREDITED
IT TO HIM AS AN ACT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

"From the cloud came a voice. "This is my chosen Son; listen to him."

During the day: Be right, but not self-righteous. Be right because it's true, not because you think it is. If not sure, have an opinion, not a conviction. To clarify, go listen to someone with truth's authority--your inner sense of God's presence will confirm.

ABOUT PRAYER: The practice of prayer hones the inner quest for truth. Prayer expands the capacity to perceive it, assures the will the truth embraced is of God, is God; listening to him brings its own conviction.

March 11, 2007 3rd Sunday of Lent: Exodus 3:1-8,13-15; 1 Corinthians 10:1-6,10-12; Luke 13:1-9

First Reading: Exodus 3:1-8, 13-15

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

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 103:1-4, 6-8, 11

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, heals all your ills, He redeems your life from destruction, crowns you with kindness and compassion. The LORD secures justice and the rights of all the oppressed. He has made known his ways to Moses, and his deeds to the children of Israel. Merciful and gracious is the LORD, slow to anger and abounding in kindness. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so surpassing is his kindness toward those who fear him.

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 10:1-6, 10-12

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

Gospel: Luke 13:1-9

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

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

March 11, 2007 3rd Sunday of Lent: Exodus 3:1-8,13-15; 1 Corinthians 10:1-6,10-12; Luke 13:1-9

THE BUSH, THOUGH ON FIRE, WAS NOT CONSUMED.

"Sir, leave it another year, & I shall cultivate it;
it may bear fruit in the future. If not, you can cut it down."

During the day: Bear fruit. To do so, cultivate your virtues, discipline your vices; the former are you forever, the latter cut you down. Which do you prefer?

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer, cultivated, consumes. It purifies selfishness: discovers the true self, renounces the superficial. Prayer grafts us onto Christ, assured the fruit borne is his, ripe forever.

MARCH 18, 2007 4th Lent: Joshua 5.9-12; 2Cor 5.17-21; LK 15.1-3,11-32

First Reading Joshua 5:9a – 12

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

Responsorial Psalm: 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.

Reading II: 2 Corinthians 5:17-21

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

Gospel: Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

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

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

MARCH 18, 2007 4th Lent: Joshua 5.9-12; 2Cor 5.17-21; LK 15.1-3,11-32

ON THAT SAME DAY AFTER THE PASSOVER ON WHICH THEY ATE
THE PRODUCE OF THE LAND, THE MANNA CEASED.

"I shall get up & go to my Father & say to him, 'I have sinned against heaven & against you. I'm not worthy to be called your son-- treat me as one of your servants.'"

During the day: Why die of hunger? Be humble & go begging. Go to those who can help you & want to. Just because you're cold-hearted & proud doesn't mean they are too. Mercy is unconditional love; give someone a chance to practice it, then learn to yourself.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer serves. It acknowledges truth; not emotionally but objectively. Prayer evaluates alternatives, makes the 'sensible' choice, activating the spiritual sense tuned to authentic love-- love that labors, beginning with forgiveness.

March 25, 2007 5th Lent: Isaiah 43.16-21; Philippians 3.8-14; John 8.1-11

First Reading Isaiah 43:16-21

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

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 126:1-6

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

Reading II: Philippians 3:8-14

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

Gospel: John 8:1-11

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

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

March 25, 2007 5th Lent: Isaiah 43.16-21; Philippians 3.8-14; John 8.1-11

'Thus says the lord; 'see, I am doing something new!'

"Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?"

'No one, Sir.' Then neither do I. Go, & sin no more.'

During the day: Condemn the action, not the person. Better still, reserve judgement on the action till you've understood the person. The motive may not justify the action, but at least you'll sidestep your own self-righteous reaction.

About Prayer: Prayer climbs into the heart of Christ & looks at everyone with compassion. Prayer tunes to his concern for each's improvement. Prayer ponders what to say, what to do, when to say or do it, that Christ's healing love might touch the heart of the other. Something new happens.

APRIL 1, 2007 Palm Sunday: Isa 50.4-7; Phil 2.6-11; LK 22.14-23,56

First Reading : Isaiah 50:4-7

The Lord GOD has given me 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, 17-20, 23-24

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

Second Reading: 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: Luke 22:14-23, 56

When the hour came, Jesus took his place at table with the apostles. He said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer, for, I tell you, I shall not eat it again until there is fulfillment in the kingdom of God." Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and said, "Take this and share it among yourselves; for I tell you that from this time on I shall not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." Then he took the bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which will be given for you; do this in memory of me." And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which will be shed for you. "And yet behold, the hand of the one who is to betray me is with me on the table; for the Son of Man indeed goes as it has been determined; but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed." And they began to debate among themselves who among them would do such a deed.

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

"Simon, Simon, behold Satan has demanded to sift all of you like wheat, but I have prayed that your own faith may not fail; and once you have turned back, you must strengthen your brothers." He said to him,

“Lord, I am prepared to go to prison and to die with you.” But he replied, “I tell you, Peter, before the cock crows this day, you will deny three times that you know me.”

He said to them, “When I sent you forth without a money bag or a sack or sandals, were you in need of anything?” “No, nothing,” they replied. He said to them, “But now one who has a money bag should take it, and likewise a sack, and one who does not have a sword should sell his cloak and buy one. For I tell you that this Scripture must be fulfilled in me, namely, He was counted among the wicked; and indeed what is written about me is coming to fulfillment.” Then they said, “Lord, look, there are two swords here.” But he replied, “It is enough!” Then going out, he went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples followed him. When he arrived at the place he said to them, “Pray that you may not undergo the test.” After withdrawing about a stone’s throw from them and kneeling, he prayed, saying, “Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me; still, not my will but yours be done.” And to strengthen him an angel from heaven appeared to him. He was in such agony and he prayed so fervently that his sweat became like drops of blood falling on the ground. When he rose from prayer and returned to his disciples, he found them sleeping from grief. He said to them, “Why are you sleeping?

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

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

The men who held Jesus in custody were ridiculing and beating him. They blindfolded him and questioned him, saying, “Prophecy! Who is it that struck you?” And they reviled him in saying many other things against him. When day came the council of elders of the people met, both chief priests and scribes, and they brought him before their Sanhedrin. They said, “If you are the Christ, tell us,” but he replied to them, “If I tell you, you will not believe, and if I question, you will not respond. But from this time on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God.” They all asked, “Are you then the Son of God?” He replied to them, “You say that I am.” Then they said, “What further need have we for testimony? We have heard it from his own mouth.”

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

On hearing this Pilate asked if the man was a Galilean; and upon learning that he was under Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod who was in Jerusalem at that time. Herod was very glad to see Jesus; he had been wanting to see him for a long time, for he had heard about him and had been hoping to see him perform some sign. He questioned him at length, but he gave him no answer. The chief priests and scribes, meanwhile, stood by accusing him harshly. Herod and his soldiers treated him contemptuously and mocked him, and after clothing him in resplendent garb, he sent him back to Pilate. Herod and Pilate became friends that very day, even though they had been enemies formerly. Pilate then summoned the chief priests, the rulers, and the people and said to them, "You brought this man to me and accused him of inciting the people to revolt.

I have conducted my investigation in your presence and have not found this man guilty of the charges you have brought against him, nor did Herod, for he sent him back to us. So no capital crime has been committed by him. Therefore I shall have him flogged and then release him." But all together they shouted out, "Away with this man! Release Barabbas to us." — Now Barabbas had been imprisoned for a rebellion that had taken place in the city and for murder. — Again Pilate addressed them, still wishing to release Jesus, but they continued their shouting, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Pilate addressed them a third time, "What evil has this man done? I found him guilty of no capital crime. Therefore I shall have him flogged and then release him." With loud shouts, however, they persisted in calling for his crucifixion, and their voices prevailed. The verdict of Pilate was that their demand should be granted. So he released the man who had been imprisoned for rebellion and murder, for whom they asked, and he handed Jesus over to them to deal with as they wished.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

APRIL 1, 2007 Palm Sunday: Isa 50.4-7; Phil 2.6-11; LK 22.14-23,56

I OFFERED MY BACK TO THOSE WHO STRUCK ME. THE LORD COMES TO MY HELP --
I AM UNTOUCHED BY THE INSULTS.

"Father, forgive them. They know not what they do."

During the day: Be as sinless as you can in a sinful world. Expect & understand maliciousness in others - be more concerned about its effect on them than on yourself. Sponge it out of them; then squeeze it out of yourself with compassion.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is the sun warmth that dries the sponge: the moisture of resentment & revenge slips away. Prayer turns to the One using us to absorb the insecurity of self-centeredness of others, his gratitude the soothing balm that heals our wounds.

APRIL 8, 2007 Easter: Acts 10.34-43; 1Cor 5.6-8; LK24.13-35

First Reading Acts 10:34a, 37-43

Peter proceeded to speak and said: "You know what has happened all over Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached, how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power. He went about doing good and healing all those oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. We are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree. This man God raised on the third day and granted that he be visible, not to all the people, but to us, the witnesses chosen by God in advance, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. He commissioned us to preach to the people and testify that he is the one appointed by God as judge of the living and the dead. To him all the prophets bear witness, that everyone who believes in him will receive forgiveness of sins through his name."

Responsorial Psalm: 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: 1 Corinthians 5:6-8

Brothers and sisters: Do you not know that a little yeast leavens all the dough? Clear out the old yeast, so that you may become a fresh batch of dough, inasmuch as you are unleavened. For our paschal lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed. Therefore, let us celebrate the feast, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

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 Mighty Mississippi by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ

APRIL 8, 2007 Easter: Acts 10.34-43; 1Cor 5.6-8; LK24.13-35

TO HIM ALL THE PROPHETS BEAR WITNESS THAT EVERYONE WHO BELIEVES
IN HIM WILL RECEIVE FORGIVENESS OF SINS THROUGH HIS NAME.

"You foolish men! So slow to believe the full message of the prophets!

Was it not ordained that the Christ should suffer & so enter into his glory?"

During the day: Don't be foolish; only fools close their minds to truth-- the wise leave them open & discover unfathomable riches. Truth has its own authority, inner peace its confirmation.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is the agent of discernment--will & intellect interact. The will disposes; the intellect ponders, then judges; grace illumines, & the will embraces God's proposal & purpose. Prayer flows into action, & cost becomes reward.

April 15, 2007 Acts 5:12-16; Psalm: Psalms 118:2-4, 13-15, 22-24; Revelation 1:9-13, 17-19; John 20:19-31

Reading 1: Acts 5:12-16

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

Responsorial Psalm: 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.

Reading II Revelation 1:9-13, 17-19

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

Once I was dead, but now I am alive forever and ever. I hold the keys to death and the netherworld. Write down, therefore, what you have seen, and what is happening, and what will happen afterwards."

Gospel 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 Mighty Mississippi by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ

April 15, 2007 Acts 5:12-16; Psalm: Psalms 118:2-4, 13-15, 22-24; Revelation 1:9-13, 17-19; John 20:19-31

MANY SIGNS & WONDERS WERE DONE AMONG THE PEOPLE

AT THE HANDS OF THE APOSTLES.

"Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you."

During the day: Go. Sent, use time & energy, freedom & intelligence on the projects of Another. Being his, they imply his total commitment. In this case, a 'win-win' situation.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer refreshes the confidence & renews the indifference of working for the Lord; he knows what he's about & never fails to achieve his purpose. Prayer reminds us we don't, since he doesn't always clue us in. On his business, even when we fail, we succeed.

APRIL 22, 2007 3rd Easter: Acts 5.27-32,40-41; Rev 5.11-14; JN 21.1-19

Reading 1: Acts 5:27-32, 40b-41

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

Responsorial Psalm: 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.

Reading II: Revelation 5: 11-14

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

Gospel: John 21:1-19

At that time, Jesus revealed himself again to his disciples at the Sea of Tiberias. He revealed himself in this way. Together were Simon Peter, Thomas called Didymus, Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, Zebedee's sons, and two others of his disciples. Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We also will come with you." So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. When it was already dawn, Jesus was standing on the shore; but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, "Children, have you caught anything to eat?" They answered him, "No." So he said to them, "Cast the net over the right side of the boat and you will find something." So they cast it, and were not able to pull it in because of the number of fish. So the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord." When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he tucked in his garment, for he was lightly clad, and jumped into the sea. The other disciples came in the boat, for they were not far from shore, only about a hundred yards, dragging the net with the fish. When they climbed out on shore, they saw a charcoal fire with fish on it and bread. Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you just caught." So Simon Peter went over and dragged the net ashore full of one hundred fifty-three large fish. Even though there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, "Come, have breakfast." And none of the disciples dared to ask him, "Who are you?" because they realized it was the Lord. Jesus came over and took the bread and gave it to them, and in like manner the fish. This was now the third time Jesus was revealed to his disciples after being raised from the dead. When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" Simon Peter answered him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs." He then said to Simon Peter a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Simon Peter answered him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Tend my sheep." Jesus said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was distressed that Jesus had said to him a third time, "Do you love me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep. Amen, amen, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to dress yourself and go where you wanted; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." He said this signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when he had said this, he said to him, "Follow me."

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

APRIL 22, 2007 3rd Easter: Acts 5.27-32,40-41; Rev 5.11-14; JN 21.1-19

**WE MUST OBEY GOD RATHER THAN MEN. WE ARE WITNESSES OF THESE THINGS,
AS IS THE HOLY SPIRIT WHOM GOD HAS GIVEN TO THOSE WHO OBEY HIM.**

"Have you caught anything to eat? 'No!' 'Cast your net on the right side, and you will find something."

During the day: Obey legitimate authority, aware that immorality robs it of legitimacy. Obedience is freedom's wisest choice, when God's will not contravened. Indeed, Creator of both freedom & authority, He supposes it.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer confirms the right side of action, the only thing we're sure of: satisfying the Christ within. Prayer guarantees it's his will flowing through our actions, their results his purpose, whether we recognize it or not. Sometimes obedience is blind.

APRIL 29, 2007 4th Easter: Acts 13.14,43-52; Rev 7.9-17; JN 10.27-30

Reading 1: Acts 13:14-33, 52

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

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 100:1-3, 5

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

Reading II: Revelation 7:9, 14b-17

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

Gospel: John 10:27-30

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

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

APRIL 29, 2007 4th Easter: Acts 13.14,43-52; Rev 7.9-17; JN 10.27-30

I HAVE MADE YOU A LIGHT TO THE GENTILES THAT YOU MAY BE AN INSTRUMENT OF SALVATION TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH.

"My sheep hear my voice; they follow me.

I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish."

During the day: Be an instrument of salvation, a liberator. Look around, see the needs. Help free one from fear, another from embarrassment, still another from debt. We're all in this together, we all need a helping hand. The ripple effect goes 'round the world.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer takes our minds off our own worries, looks through God's eyes at those of others. Prayer wills what's good for them, then suggests gestures that might help--sometimes they do, sometimes they don't; but our own always end up back in perspective.

MAY 6, 2007 5th Easter: Acts 14.21-27; Rev 21.1-5; JN 13.31-35

Reading 1: Acts 14:21-27

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

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 145:8-13

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

Reading II: Revelation 21:1-5a

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

Gospel: John 13:31-35

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

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

MAY 6, 2007 5th Easter: Acts 14.21-27; Rev 21.1-5; JN 13.31-35

**WE ALL HAVE TO EXPERIENCE MANY HARDSHIPS
TO ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD.**

"I give you a new commandment.

Love one another just as I have loved you."

During the day: Will the other well, always. Then watch it happen. Choice made, it will. At no little price to you. Pay it. Literally, you'll never regret it. God'll see to that.

ABOUT PRAYER: All authentic prayer, willy-nilly, is the prayer of Christ. Prayer is action raised to the divine level. Thus prayer's fruit not always perceived. But infallibly effective.

MAY 13, 6th Easter: Acts 15.1-2,22-29; Rev 21.10-14,22-23 JN 14.23-29

Reading 1: Acts 15: 1-2, 22-29

Some who had come down from Judea were instructing the brothers, “Unless you are circumcised according to the Mosaic practice, you cannot be saved.” Because there arose no little dissension and debate by Paul and Barnabas with them, it was decided that Paul, Barnabas, and some of the others should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders about this question. The apostles and elders, in agreement with the whole church, decided to choose representatives and to send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. The ones chosen were Judas, who was called Barsabbas, and Silas, leaders among the brothers. This is the letter delivered by them: “The apostles and the elders, your brothers, to the brothers in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia of Gentile origin: greetings. Since we have heard that some of our number who went out without any mandate from us have upset you with their teachings and disturbed your peace of mind, we have with one accord decided to choose representatives and to send them to you along with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, who have dedicated their lives to the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. So we are sending Judas and Silas who will also convey this same message by word of mouth: ‘It is the decision of the Holy Spirit and of us not to place on you any burden beyond these necessities, namely, to abstain from meat sacrificed to idols, from blood, from meats of strangled animals, and from unlawful marriage. If you keep free of these, you will be doing what is right. Farewell.’”

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

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 II: Revelation 21:10-14, 22-23

The angel took me in spirit to a great, high mountain and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God. It gleamed with the splendor of God. Its radiance was like that of a precious stone, like jasper, clear as crystal. It had a massive, high wall, with twelve gates where twelve angels were stationed and on which names were inscribed, the names of the twelve tribes of the Israelites. There were three gates facing east, three north, three south, and three west. The wall of the city had twelve courses of stones as its foundation, on which were inscribed the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. I saw no temple in the city for its temple is the Lord God almighty and the Lamb. The city had no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gave it light, and its lamp was the Lamb.

Gospel: John 14:23-29

Jesus said to his disciples: “Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; yet the word you hear is not mine but that of the Father who sent me. “I have told you this while I am with you. The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid. You heard me tell you, ‘I am going away and I will come back to you.’ If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father; for the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you this before it happens, so that when it happens you may believe.”

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

MAY 13, 6th Easter: Acts 15.1-2,22-29; Rev 21.10-14,22-23 JN 14.23-29

SOME WHO WENT OUT WITHOUT ANY MANDATE HAVE DISTURBED YOUR PEACE OF MIND.
WE SEND REPRESENTATIVES TO YOU TO CONVEY THIS MESSAGE.

"The word you hear is not mine but that of the Father who sent me. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid."

During the day: Loyal to your mandate, be careful with the words of the One who made & sent you. They have their own power of communication; share intuition, don't disturb with opinion. The Spirit of Truth conveys courage, not fear.

ABOUT PRAYER: Assimilating words, prayer ponders; the new life of truth gestates, eventually hatches, thanks to prayer's nourishment. Prayer's intuitions shared with others brings common faith to a common sense, & a community will assume. The Kingdom of God has arrived.

MAY 20, 2007 Ascension: Acts 1.1-11; Eph 1.17-23; Lk 24.46-53

Reading 1 Acts 1:1-11

In the first book, Theophilus, I dealt with all that Jesus did and taught until the day he was taken up, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. He presented himself alive to them by many proofs after he had suffered, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. While meeting with them, he enjoined them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for “the promise of the Father about which you have heard me speak; for John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” When they had gathered together they asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” He answered them, “It is not for you to know the times or seasons that the Father has established by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” When he had said this, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him from their sight. While they were looking intently at the sky as he was going, suddenly two men dressed in white garments stood beside them. They said, “Men of Galilee, why are you standing there looking at the sky? This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven will return in the same way as you have seen him going into heaven.”

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 47:2-3, 6-9

God mounts his throne to shouts of joy: a blare of trumpets for the Lord. All you peoples, clap your hands, shout to God with cries of gladness, For the LORD, the Most High, the awesome, is the great king over all the earth. God mounts his throne amid shouts of joy; the LORD, amid trumpet blasts. Sing praise to God, sing praise; sing praise to our king, sing praise. For king of all the earth is God; sing hymns of praise. God reigns over the nations, God sits upon his holy throne.

Reading II Ephesians 1:17-23

Brothers and sisters: May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, give you a Spirit of wisdom and revelation resulting in knowledge of him. May the eyes of your hearts be enlightened, that you may know what is the hope that belongs to his call, what are the riches of glory in his inheritance among the holy ones, and what is the surpassing greatness of his power for us who believe, in accord with the exercise of his great might, which he worked in Christ, raising him from the dead and seating him at his right hand in the heavens, far above every principality, authority, power, and dominion, and every name that is named not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things beneath his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of the one who fills all things in every way.

Gospel: Luke 24:46-53

Jesus said to his disciples: “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. And behold I am sending the promise of my Father upon you; but stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.” Then he led them out as far as Bethany, raised his hands, and blessed them. As he blessed them he parted from them and was taken up to heaven. They did him homage and then returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and they were continually in the temple praising God.

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

MAY 20, 2007 Ascension: Acts 1.1-11; Eph 1.17-23; Lk 24.46-53

JOHN BAPTIZED WITH WATER, BUT IN A FEW DAYS

YOU WILL BE BAPTIZED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT.

"It is written that the Christ would rise from the dead, & repentance for the forgiveness of sins preached in his name to all nations.'

During the day: Preach & practice forgiveness. The Spirit of God doesn't hold grudges, neither should yours. Your spirit, only if in harmony with God's, works the wonders that fulfill your destiny. Keep that harmony habitual.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is of the will: begins with the choice to discern God's will, ends with the choice to fulfill it. Inner harmony confirms unfolding discernment. Growing trust in the mercy of a forgiving Father dissolves resistance to pass it on to others.

MAY 27, 2007 PENTECOST: Acts 2.1-11; 1Cor 12. 3-7,12-13; JN 20.19-23

Reading 1 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.

Reading II: 1 Corinthians 12:3b-6, 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. **or**

Romans 8:8-17

Brothers and sisters: Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh; on the contrary, you are in the spirit, if only the Spirit of God dwells in you. Whoever does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is alive because of righteousness. If the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, the one who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also, through his Spirit that dwells in you. Consequently, brothers and sisters, we are not debtors to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh, you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. 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: 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 Mighty Mississippi by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ

MAY 27, 2007 PENTECOST: Acts 2.1-11; 1Cor 12. 3-7,12-13; JN 20.19-23

THEY WERE ALL IN ONE PLACE TOGETHER. THEY BEGAN TO SPEAK IN DIFFERENT
TONGUES AS THE SPIRIT ENABLED THEM TO PROCLAIM.

"The doors were locked. Jesus came & stood in their midst & said 'Peace be with you.'"

During the day: Stick together. Be it family or friendship, community or company, don't let tensions boil over into conflict. Speak different tongues maybe, but let sincerity & mutual respect sustain the inner peace of communion.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer speaks a tongue that nobody else understands but God. Trouble is, he doesn't always answer in one WE understand! Prayer empowers the trust that brings the promised peace of Christ.

JUNE 3, 2007 Holy Trinity: Proverbs 8.22-31; Rms 5.1-5; JN 16.12-15

Reading 1 Proverbs 8:22-31

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

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 8:4-9

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

Reading II Romans 5:1-5

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

Gospel John 16:12-15

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

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

JUNE 3, 2007 Holy Trinity: Proverbs 8.22-31; Rms 5.1-5; JN 16.12-15

THUS SAYS THE WISDOM OF GOD, "THE LORD POSSESSED ME, THE BEGINNING OF HIS WAYS. FROM OF OLD I WAS BROUGHT FORTH, BEFORE THE EARTH. I WAS HIS CRAFTSMAN, PLAYING BEFORE HIM ON THE EARTH, AND I FOUND DELIGHT IN THE HUMAN RACE."

"When he comes, the Spirit of truth, he will speak what he hears. He will take from what is mine & declare it to you. Everything the Father has is mine."

During the day: Be human, Be truthful. Be the craftsman of God. Delight in being guided by the Wisdom of God. Don't be shy: declare it to others, & play it out before him on the surface of the earth.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is plugging in to the love affair between divinity & humanity. It's fruit--the humanized wisdom of God--possesses as possessed, sharing everything that is of God. Prayer takes its time savoring it.

JUNE 10, 2007 Body & Blood of Christ: Gen 14.18-20; 1Cor 11.23-26; LK 9.11-17

Reading 1 Genesis 14:18-20

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

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 110:1-4

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

Reading II: 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

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

Gospel: Luke 9:11b-17

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

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

JUNE 10, 2007 Body & Blood of Christ: Gen 14.18-20; 1Cor 11.23-26; LK 9.11-17

MELCHIZEDEK BROUGHT OUT BREAD & WINE.

BEING A PRIEST OF GOD HE BLESSED ABRAM.

"Dismiss the crowd so they can go & find provisions.' Jesus said,
'Give them some food yourselves.' They all ate & were satisfied."

During the day: Don't dismiss, feed. Not much, maybe, but enough to let the other know she's welcome; send her home happy. When shared, there's always enough to go around. The other is blessed, & God is glorified.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is the food the spirit needs. Feed yourself; & while you're at it, feed others. Praying for others is your way of sharing spiritually with them. At the same time, prayer gives God the opportunity to nudge you into action on their behalf.

JUNE 17, 2007 11th of yr: 2Sam 12.7-13; Gal 2.16-21

Reading 1: 2 Samuel 12:7-10, 13

Nathan said to David: "Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'I anointed you king of Israel. I rescued you from the hand of Saul. I gave you your lord's house and your lord's wives for your own. I gave you the house of Israel and of Judah. And if this were not enough, I could count up for you still more. Why have you spurned the Lord and done evil in his sight? You have cut down Uriah the Hittite with the sword; you took his wife as your own, and him you killed with the sword of the Ammonites. Now, therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised me and have taken the wife of Uriah to be your wife.' Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." Nathan answered David: "The LORD on his part has forgiven your sin: you shall not die."

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 32: 1-2, 5, 7, 11

Lord, forgive the wrong I have done. Blessed is the one 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. 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. You are my shelter; from distress you will preserve me; with glad cries of freedom you will ring me round. Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, you just; exult, all you upright of heart.

Reading II: Galatians 2: 16, 19-21

Brothers and sisters: We who know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified. For through the law I died to the law, that I might live for God. I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me; insofar as I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who has loved me and given himself up for me. I do not nullify the grace of God; for if justification comes through the law, then Christ died for nothing.

Gospel: Luke 7:36-8:3

A Pharisee invited Jesus to dine with him, and he entered the Pharisee's house and reclined at table. Now there was a sinful woman in the city who learned that he was at table in the house of the Pharisee. Bringing an alabaster flask of ointment, she stood behind him at his feet weeping and began to bathe his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them, and anointed them with the ointment. When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, that she is a sinner." Jesus said to him in reply, "Simon, I have something to say to you." "Tell me, teacher," he said. "Two people were in debt to a certain creditor; one owed five hundred days' wages and the other owed fifty. Since they were unable to repay the debt, he forgave it for both. Which of them will love him more?" Simon said in reply, "The one, I suppose, whose larger debt was forgiven." He said to him, "You have judged rightly." Then he turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? When I entered your house, you did not give me water for my feet, but she has bathed them with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but she has not ceased kissing my feet since the time I entered. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she anointed my feet with ointment. So I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven because she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven, loves little." He said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." The others at table said to themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" But he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace." Afterward he journeyed from one town and village to another, preaching and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. Accompanying him were the Twelve and some women who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward Chuza, Susanna, and many others who provided for them out of their resources.

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

JUNE 17, 2007 11th of yr: 2Sam 12.7-13; Gal 2.16-21

WHY HAVE YOU SPURNED THE LORD AND DONE EVIL IN HIS SIGHT?

"The one to whom little is forgiven, little loves."

During the day: Don't spurn the Lord. Don't make choices irrespective of his regard. If self-love your motive, self-love your reward. Life & love go together; designed to live for others, put your heart into it.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer develops the two dimensions of forgiveness: forgiven, one forgives; forgiving, one is forgiven. Prayer lifts both to the divine: forgiving God the tragedies of life discovers his mercy. Exercised, mercy heals--love becomes life, & life becomes love.

JUNE 24, 2007 John the Baptist: Isa 49.1-6; Acts 13.22-26; LK 1.57-66,80

Reading 1: Isaiah 49:1-6

Hear me, O coastlands, listen, O distant peoples. The LORD called me from birth, from my mother's womb he gave me my name. He made of me a sharp-edged sword and concealed me in the shadow of his arm. He made me a polished arrow, in his quiver he hid me. You are my servant, he said to me, Israel, through whom I show my glory. Though I thought I had toiled in vain, and for nothing, uselessly, spent my strength, yet my reward is with the LORD, my recompense is with my God. For now the LORD has spoken who formed me as his servant from the womb, that Jacob may be brought back to him and Israel gathered to him; and I am made glorious in the sight of the LORD, and my God is now my strength! It is too little, he says, for you to be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and restore the survivors of Israel; I will make you a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 139:1-3, 13-15

I praise you, for I am wonderfully made. O LORD, you have probed me, you know me: you know when I sit and when I stand; you understand my thoughts from afar. My journeys and my rest you scrutinize, with all my ways you are familiar. Truly you have formed my inmost being; you knit me in my mother's womb. I give you thanks that I am fearfully, wonderfully made; wonderful are your works. My soul also you knew full well; nor was my frame unknown to you When I was made in secret, when I was fashioned in the depths of the earth.

Reading II: Acts 13:22-26

In those days, Paul said: "God raised up David as king; of him God testified, I have found David, son of Jesse, a man after my own heart; he will carry out my every wish. From this man's descendants God, according to his promise, has brought to Israel a savior, Jesus. John heralded his coming by proclaiming a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel; and as John was completing his course, he would say, 'What do you suppose that I am? I am not he. Behold, one is coming after me; I am not worthy to unfasten the sandals of his feet.' "My brothers, sons of the family of Abraham, and those others among you who are God-fearing, to us this word of salvation has been sent."

Gospel: Luke 1: 57-66, 80

When the time arrived for Elizabeth to have her child she gave birth to a son. Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy toward her, and they rejoiced with her. When they came on the eighth day to circumcise the child, they were going to call him Zechariah after his father, but his mother said in reply, "No. He will be called John." But they answered her, "There is no one among your relatives who has this name." So they made signs, asking his father what he wished him to be called. He asked for a tablet and wrote, "John is his name," and all were amazed. Immediately his mouth was opened, his tongue freed, and he spoke blessing God. Then fear came upon all their neighbors, and all these matters were discussed throughout the hill country of Judea. All who heard these things took them to heart, saying, "What, then, will this child be?" For surely the hand of the Lord was with him.

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

JUNE 24, 2007 John the Baptist: Isa 49.1-6; Acts 13.22-26; LK 1.57-66,80

THOUGH I THOUGHT I HAD TOILED IN VAIN AND FOR NOTHING SPENT MY STRENGTH,
YET MY REWARD IS WITH THE LORD, MY RECOMPENSE IS WITH MY GOD.

"Her neighbors & relatives heard that the Lord had shown his
great mercy toward her and they rejoiced with her."

During the day: Even when passed over, rejoice in the good fortune of others. Love lavished on another is a hidden gift to the openhearted bystander ever eager to wish the other well; such growth in the capacity to love guarantees its fulfillment in the Lover of us all.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is perseverance in hope. Prayer burrows into absolute truth & taps its strength. Prayer shrugs off defeat, spurns rejection, absorbs sadness, smiles at hardship. Prayer is the restful pause between rounds with reality. Prayer is the assurance of ultimate victory.

JULY 1, 2007 13th of yr: 1Kings 19.16-21; Gal 5.1,13-18; LK 9.51-62

Reading 1: I Kings 19:16b, 19-21

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

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 16:1-2, 5, 7-11

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

Reading II: Galatians 5:1,13-18

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

Gospel: Luke 9:51-62

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

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

JULY 1, 2007 13th of yr: 1Kings 19.16-21; Gal 5.1,13-18; LK 9.51-62

ELISHA LEFT THE OXEN, RAN AFTER ELIJAH. 'PLEASE, LET ME KISS MY
FATHER & MOTHER GOODBYE, AND I WILL FOLLOW YOU.'

"No one who sets a hand to the plow and looks to what
was left behind is fit for the kingdom of God."

During the day: Don't let nostalgia for what was threaten the fulfillment of its purpose. Move on, not back. God is, & so are you. You're his, your destiny in his hands. Give him the freedom he gave you to realize it through love.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer seeks the mother in God, rests in her arms, nourishes at her breast. Prayer is the security of being hers, her being, sent out, up & away. Prayer is the inseparable bond that keeps her ever present.

JULY 8, 14th of yr: Isa 66.10-14; Gal 6.14-18; LK 10.1-12,17-20

Reading 1 – Isaiah 66:10-14c

Thus says the LORD: Rejoice with Jerusalem and be glad because of her, all you who love her; exult, exult with her, all you who were mourning over her! Oh, that you may suck fully of the milk of her comfort, that you may nurse with delight at her abundant breasts! For thus says the LORD: Lo, I will spread prosperity over Jerusalem like a river, and the wealth of the nations like an overflowing torrent. As nurslings, you shall be carried in her arms, and fondled in her lap; as a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you; in Jerusalem you shall find your comfort. When you see this, your heart shall rejoice and your bodies flourish like the grass; the LORD's power shall be known to his servants.

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

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

Reading II – Galatians 6: 14-18

Brothers and sisters: May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither does circumcision mean anything, nor does uncircumcision, but only a new creation. Peace and mercy be to all who follow this rule and to the Israel of God. From now on, let no one make troubles for me; for I bear the marks of Jesus on my body. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers and sisters. Amen.

Gospel: Luke 10: 1-12, 17-20

At that time the Lord appointed seventy-two others whom he sent ahead of him in pairs to every town and place he intended to visit. He said to them, "The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest. Go on your way; behold, I am sending you like lambs among wolves. Carry no money bag, no sack, no sandals; and greet no one along the way. Into whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this household.' If a peaceful person lives there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you. Stay in the same house and eat and drink what is offered to you, for the laborer deserves his payment. Do not move about from one house to another. Whatever town you enter and they welcome you, eat what is set before you, cure the sick in it and say to them, 'The kingdom of God is at hand for you.' Whatever town you enter and they do not receive you, go out into the streets and say, 'The dust of your town that clings to our feet, even that we shake off against you.' Yet know this: the kingdom of God is at hand. I tell you, it will be more tolerable for Sodom on that day than for that town." The seventy-two returned rejoicing, and said, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us because of your name." Jesus said, "I have observed Satan fall like lightning from the sky. Behold, I have given you the power to 'tread upon serpents' and scorpions and upon the full force of the enemy and nothing will harm you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice because the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice because your names are written in heaven."

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

JULY 8, 14th of yr: Isa 66.10-14; Gal 6.14-18; LK 10.1-12,17-20

AS A MOTHER COMFORTS HER CHILD SO WILL I COMFORT YOU.

THE LORD'S POWER SHALL BE KNOWN TO HIS SERVANTS.

"Behold I am sending you like lambs among wolves. Cure the sick, eat what they give you, & say to them: 'The Kingdom of God is at hand for you.'"

During the day: Comfort each other. Be cured curing. Share a meal, nourish yourselves on the inner strength of truth & goodness. The kingdom of God is made up of little things--& makes the prowling wolves curious.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is the power cord to the heart of God. Kept plugged in, his power is always there. The day's first prayer gives it back to God; that's all he needs to make, 'Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done' come true.

JULY 15, 2007 15th of yr: Dt 30.10-14; Col 1.15-20; LK 10.25-37

Reading 1: Deuteronomy 30:10-14

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

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 69:14, 17, 30-31, 33-34, 36, 37

Turn to the Lord in your need, and you will live. I pray to you, O LORD, for the time of your favor, O God! In your great kindness answer me with your constant help. Answer me, O LORD, for bounteous is your kindness: in your great mercy turn toward me. I am afflicted and in pain; let your saving help, O God, protect me. I will praise the name of God in song, and I will glorify him with thanksgiving. "See, you lowly ones, and be glad; you who seek God, may your hearts revive! For the LORD hears the poor, and his own who are in bonds he spurns not." For God will save Zion and rebuild the cities of Judah. The descendants of his servants shall inherit it, and those who love his name shall inhabit it.

Reading II: Colossians 1:15-20

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

Gospel: Luke 10:25-37

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

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

JULY 15, 2007 15th of yr: Dt 30.10-14; Col 1.15-20; LK 10.25-37

MOSES SAID, 'THE COMMAND I ENJOIN ON YOU TODAY IS NOT TOO MYSTERIES & REMOTE FOR YOU. NO, IT IS VERY NEAR YOU, ALREADY IN YOUR MOUTHS & IN YOUR HEARTS. YOU HAVE ONLY TO CARRY IT OUT.'

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart & all your being, all your strength & all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.' Jesus replied, 'Do this & you will live.'"

During the day: When another is in distress, be neighborly. Allow others to be neighborly when you're in distress. Neighborliness begets service, & service begets authentic charity: mutual love--which includes God, & lasts forever.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer of petition is for one's own needs, prayer of intercession for the needs of others. Both must be persevering & both must be action-oriented. We don't demand miracles, just the promised grace & strength to help ourselves & others.

JULY 22, 2007 16th of y: Gen 18.1-10; Col 1.24-28; LK10.38-42

Reading 1: Genesis 18:1-10a

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

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 15:2-5

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

Reading II: Colossians 1:24-28

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

Gospel: Luke 10: 38-42

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

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

JULY 22, 2007 16th of y: Gen 18.1-10; Col 1.24-28; LK10.38-42

THE LORD APPEARED TO ABRAHAM AT THE ENTRANCE OF HIS TENT. 'SIR, LET ME BRING YOU A LITTLE FOOD THAT YOU MAY REFRESH YOURSELVES, THEN YOU MAY GO ON YOUR WAY.

"Jesus entered a village, & Martha welcomed him. 'Lord, do you not care that my sister left me to do all the serving?' 'Martha, you are busy about many things; only one is important."

During the Day: Be yourself, & allow the other to be herself-- don't gripe about apparent laziness. Be a little lazy yourself: slow down & enjoy life--enjoy God! He's all around you, giving himself in nature, in others, in success, in failure. Finding him is all that really matters. Everything else is distraction.

ABOUT PRAYER: Follow your heart. Trust it, but mark well the trail--you may have to find your way back! Distinguish clearly sentiments from emotions & appetites. Use your head as lamp of the heart, but not its judge or manipulator. Don't be afraid of making mistakes, but be humble enough to acknowledge them.

JULY 29, 2007 17th of yr: Gen 18.20-32; Col 2.12-14; LK 11.1-13

Reading 1: Genesis 18:20-32

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

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

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

Reading II: Colossians 2:12-14

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

Gospel: Luke 11:1-13

Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray just as John taught his disciples." He said to them, "When you pray, say: Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread and forgive us our sins for we ourselves forgive everyone in debt to us, and do not subject us to the final test." And he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend to whom he goes at midnight and says, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, for a friend of mine has arrived at my house from a journey and I have nothing to offer him,' and he says in reply from within, 'Do not bother me; the door has already been locked and my children and I are already in bed. I cannot get up to give you anything.' I tell you, if he does not get up to give the visitor the loaves because of their friendship, he will get up to give him whatever he needs because of his persistence. "And I tell you, ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. What father among you would hand his son a snake when he asks for a fish? Or hand him a scorpion when he asks for an egg? If you then, who are wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?"

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

JULY 29, 2007 17th of yr: Gen 18.20-32; Col 2.12-14; LK 11.1-13

ABRAHAM SAID, 'WILL YOU SWEEP AWAY THE INNOCENT WITH THE
GUILTY? WHAT IF THERE ARE TEN INNOCENT PEOPLE THERE?'

'FOR THE SAKE OF THOSE TEN, I WILL NOT DESTROY IT.'

"Ask & you will receive; seek & you will find. If you who are wicked know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him."

During the day: When you need something, ask the person who can & wants to help--not one who can but doesn't want to, nor one who wants to but can't. Don't be discouraged by the first 'no'; foot in the door, keep asking--just make sure you want the right thing for the right reasons. If the 'no' is final, trust the Lord & look elsewhere.

ABOUT PRAYER: Perseverance in prayers of petition & intercession suppose the Lord can if he wants to; he tests our faith by delaying his response, counting on us to be instruments of the graces we're asking for: prayer & action go together.

AUG 5, 2007 18th of yr: Eccl 1.2,2.21-13; Col 3.1-5,9-11; LK 12.13-21

Ecclesiastes 1:2, 2:21-23

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

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 90: 3-6, 12-14, 17

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

Colossians 3:1-5, 9-11

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

Gospel: Luke 12:13-21

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

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

AUG 5, 2007 18th of yr: Eccl 1.2,2.21-13; Col 3.1-5,9-11; LK 12.13-21

**WHAT PROFIT COMES TO A MAN FOR ALL THE TOIL & ANXIETY
OF HEART WITH WHICH HE HAS LABORED UNDER THE SUN?**

"Take care to guard against greed, for though one may be rich, one's life does not consist of possessions."

During the day: Be on your guard against avarice. Stop being impressed by the other's wealth, & come to appreciate him for what he IS, not what he has. Qualities & character communicate inner security, the true measure of achievement. Grateful trust in a loving Father will be the everlasting measure of your own.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer settles us down comfortably in the Lord's presence, tunes everything else out & him in. The mind turns off & the will floats around in his, 'yes, Lord' murmured to the images & sensations that present themselves. Prayer is being just a grain of sand on the Lord's beach, enjoying the sunshine.

AUG 12, 2007 19th of yr: Wis 18.6-9; Heb 11.1-2,18-19. LK 12. 32-48

Reading 1: Wisdom 18:6-9

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

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 33: 1, 12, 18-22

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

Reading II: Hebrews 11: 1-2, 8-19

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

Gospel: Luke 12: 32-48

Jesus said to his disciples: “Do not be afraid any longer, little flock, for your Father is pleased to give you the kingdom. Sell your belongings and give alms. Provide money bags for yourselves that do not wear out, an inexhaustible treasure in heaven that no thief can reach nor moth destroy. For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be. “Gird your loins and light your lamps and be like servants who await their master’s return from a wedding, ready to open immediately when he comes and knocks. Blessed are those servants whom the master finds vigilant on his arrival. Amen, I say to you, he will gird himself, have them recline at table, and proceed to wait on them. And should he come in the second or third watch and find them prepared in this way, blessed are those servants. Be sure of this: if the master of the house had known the hour when the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. You also must be prepared, for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come.” Then Peter said, “Lord, is this parable meant for us or for everyone?” And the Lord replied, “Who, then, is the faithful and prudent steward whom the master will put in charge of his servants to distribute the food allowance at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master on arrival finds doing so. Truly, I say to you, the master will put the servant in charge of all his property. But if that servant says to himself, ‘My master is delayed in coming,’ and begins to beat the menservants and the maidservants, to eat and drink and get drunk, then that servant’s master will come on an unexpected day and at an unknown hour and will punish the servant severely and assign him a place with the unfaithful. That servant who knew his master’s will but did not make preparations nor act in accord with his will shall be beaten severely; and the servant who was ignorant of his master’s will but acted in a way deserving of a severe beating shall be beaten only lightly. Much will be required of the person entrusted with much, and still more will be demanded of the person entrusted with more.”

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

AUG 12, 2007 19th of yr: Wis 18.6-9; Heb 11.1-2,18-19. LK 12. 32-48

YOUR PEOPLE AWAITED THE SALVATION OF THE JUST. THE HOLY CHILDREN OF THE GOOD PUT INTO EFFECT WITH ONE ACCORD THE DIVINE INSTITUTION.

"Your Father is pleased to give you the kingdom. Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.
Blessed are those servants whom the master finds vigilant on his arrival.

During the day: Follow your heart. But mark well the trail--you may have to find your way back if it leads you in the wrong direction. Distinguish sentiments of the heart from appetites & emotions, wholesome but blind. The head is the lamp of the heart, not its judge or manipulator. Don't be afraid of mistakes, just humble enough to acknowledge them.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer serves as lungs of the spirit. Prayerfully we breathe in God's vitality in the events of each day; then breathe out the resentment & anxiety that resist his Spirit. At times we hold each Breath that it might reach the hidden recesses of the soul. Prayer is the rhythm of renewal.

AUG 19, 2007 20th of yr: Jer 38.4-10; Heb 12.1-4 LK 12.49-53

Reading 1: Jeremiah 38:4-6, 8-10

In those days, the princes said to the king: "Jeremiah ought to be put to death; he is demoralizing the soldiers who are left in this city, and all the people, by speaking such things to them; he is not interested in the welfare of our people, but in their ruin." King Zedekiah answered: "He is in your power"; for the king could do nothing with them. And so they took Jeremiah and threw him into the cistern of Prince Malchiah, which was in the quarters of the guard, letting him down with ropes. There was no water in the cistern, only mud, and Jeremiah sank into the mud. Ebed-melech, a court official, went there from the palace and said to him: "My lord king, these men have been at fault in all they have done to the prophet Jeremiah, casting him into the cistern. He will die of famine on the spot, for there is no more food in the city." Then the king ordered Ebed-melech the Cushite to take three men along with him, and draw the prophet Jeremiah out of the cistern before he should die.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 40:2-4, 18

Lord, come to my aid! I have waited, waited for the LORD, and he stooped toward me. The LORD heard my cry. He drew me out of the pit of destruction, out of the mud of the swamp; he set my feet upon a crag; he made firm my steps. And he put a new song into my mouth, a hymn to our God. Many shall look on in awe and trust in the LORD. Though I am afflicted and poor, yet the LORD thinks of me. You are my help and my deliverer; O my God, hold not back!

Reading II: Hebrews 12:1-4

Brothers and sisters: Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us rid ourselves of every burden and sin that clings to us and persevere in running the race that lies before us while keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the leader and perfecter of faith. For the sake of the joy that lay before him he endured the cross, despising its shame, and has taken his seat at the right of the throne of God. Consider how he endured such opposition from sinners, in order that you may not grow weary and lose heart. In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood.

Gospel: Luke 12:49-53

Jesus said to his disciples: "I have come to set the earth on fire, and how I wish it were already blazing! There is a baptism with which I must be baptized, and how great is my anguish until it is accomplished! Do you think that I have come to establish peace on the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. From now on a household of five will be divided, three against two and two against three; a father will be divided against his son and a son against his father, a mother against her daughter and a daughter against her mother, a mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law."

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

AUG 19, 2007 20th of yr: Jer 38.4-10; Heb 12.1-4 LK 12.49-53

THE PRINCES SAID TO THE KING, 'JEREMIAH SHOULD BE PUT TO DEATH!
HE IS DEMORALIZING THE PEOPLE BY SAYING SUCH THINGS TO THEM.

"Do you think I have come to establish peace? No, but rather division."

During the day: Don't let tensions boil over into conflicts. Takes two to make a crisis; if one backs off, no harm done. Truth, awaiting a better moment, isn't compromised by respectful silence. Stubborn anger-- more emotional than rational--will with time ponder firm but patient convictions. Relationship secure.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is the vanguard of truth. In prayer we consider others' attitudes from God's point of view, with open mind & heart. Prayer presupposes the vastness of truth, presumes our common quest for it, seeks it in the opinions & beliefs of others, defends without imposing our own. God does the rest.

AUG 26, 2007 21st of yr: Isa 66.18-21; Heb 12.5-7,11-13; LK 13.22-30

Reading 1: Isaiah 66:18-21

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

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 117: 1-2

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

Reading II: Hebrews: 12:5-7,11-13

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

Gospel: Luke 13:22-30

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

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

AUG 26, 2007 21st of yr: Isa 66.18-21; Heb 12.5-7,11-13; LK 13.22-30

I KNOW THEIR WORKS & THEIR THOUGHTS; I COME TO GATHER NATIONS OF EVERY LANGUAGE.

"Strive to enter by the narrow gate. After the master has locked the door, you will stand outside knocking. Some are last who will be first, & some are first who will be last.

During the day: Enter by the narrow gate: honest responsibility. Don't be attracted by quick-fix solutions. Doing things the hard way may mean turning up last, but better last with a job well-done than at the top of the heap with hollow prestige. Aim to please God, not others.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer knocks on the heart of Jesus & asks, 'May I come in, Lord?' The answer is always yes. But once inside, he lectures us gently but firmly on our own self-centeredness. Prayer listens with humility, & responds with generosity; neither last nor first, the niche of each secured.

SEPT 2, 2007 22nd of yr: Sirac 3.3.17-20,28-29; Heb 12.18-24; LK 14.1,7-14.

Reading 1: Sirach 3:17-18, 20, 28-29

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

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 68:4-7, 10-11

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

Reading II: Hebrews: 12:18-19, 22-24a

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

Gospel: Luke 14:1, 7-14

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

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

SEPT 2, 2007 22nd of yr: Sirac 3.3.17-20,28-29; Heb 12.18-24; LK 14.1,7-14.

MY SON, CONDUCT YOUR AFFAIRS WITH HUMILITY; YOU'LL BE LOVED
MORE THAN A GIVER OF GIFTS. HUMBLE YOURSELF THE GREATER
YOU ARE, & YOU WILL FIND FAVOR WITH GOD.

"When you've been invited, go sit in the lowest place. Your host will
approach you & say, 'Friend, come up higher.'"

During the day: If in your own mind you're superior to others, that's the way you'll treat them. Fact is, you're neither better nor worse than anyone else--just better or worse than yourself. Observe & listen with an open mind; you'll learn, & be the better for it.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer leads back to childhood innocence. Children don't see poverty or race or social standing--they just play together; maybe a little maliciously at times; but observant adults correct their behavior. So too with prayer: an inner sense of right & wrong ponders our choices, & God attracts to goodness.

SEPT 9, 2007 23rd of yr: Phlm 9-17; Wis 9.13-18 LK 14.25-33

Reading 1: Wisdom 9:13-18b

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

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 90:3-6, 12-17

In every age, O Lord, you have been our refuge. You turn man back to dust, saying, "Return, O children of men." For a thousand years in your sight are as yesterday, now that it is past, or as a watch of the night. You make an end of them in their sleep; the next morning they are like the changing grass, Which at dawn springs up anew, but by evening wilts and fades. Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain wisdom of heart. Return, O LORD! How long? Have pity on your servants! Fill us at daybreak with your kindness, that we may shout for joy and gladness all our days. And may the gracious care of the LORD our God be ours; prosper the work of our hands for us! Prosper the work of our hands!

Reading II: Philemon 9: 10, 12-17

I, Paul, an old man, and now also a prisoner for Christ Jesus, urge you on behalf of my child Onesimus, whose father I have become in my imprisonment; I am sending him, that is, my own heart, back to you. I should have liked to retain him for myself, so that he might serve me on your behalf in my imprisonment for the gospel, but I did not want to do anything without your consent, so that the good you do might not be forced but voluntary. Perhaps this is why he was away from you for a while, that you might have him back forever, no longer as a slave but more than a slave, a brother, beloved especially to me, but even more so to you, as a man and in the Lord. So if you regard me as a partner, welcome him as you would me.

Gospel: Luke 14:25-33

Great crowds were traveling with Jesus, and he turned and addressed them, "If anyone comes to me without hating his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. Which of you wishing to construct a tower does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if there is enough for its completion? Otherwise, after laying the foundation and finding himself unable to finish the work the onlookers should laugh at him and say, 'This one began to build but did not have the resources to finish.' Or what king marching into battle would not first sit down and decide whether with ten thousand troops he can successfully oppose another king advancing upon him with twenty thousand troops? But if not, while he is still far away, he will send a delegation to ask for peace terms. In the same way, anyone of you who does not renounce all his possessions cannot be my disciple."

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

SEPT 9, 2007 23rd of yr: Phlm 9-17; Wis 9.13-18 LK 14.25-33

WHEN THINGS ARE IN HEAVEN, WHO CAN SEARCH THEM OUT,

UNLESS YOU HAD GIVEN WISDOM & SENT YOUR SPIRIT FROM ON HIGH?

"If anyone comes to me without turning his back on his father & mother & indeed on his very self, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not renounce all his possessions cannot be my disciple."

During the day: Love of family & friends is rooted in loyalty to the Kingdom of God. Only if God holds first place in our hearts will family ties & friend- ships be divinized.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is the liberating agent that frees the soul of the junk the flesh accumulates. In prayer we acknowledge the things that matter. It's prayer that enables us to see God in others, & love them for his sake rather than our own.

SEPT 16, 2007 24th of yr: Ex 32.7-14; 1Tim 1.12-17; LK 15.1-32.

Reading 1: Exodus 32: 7-11, 13-14

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

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 51:3-4, 12-13, 17, 19

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

Reading II: 1 Timothy 1:12-17

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

Gospel: :Luke 15:1-32

Tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to listen to Jesus, but the Pharisees and scribes began to complain, saying, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.” So to them he addressed this parable. “What man among you having a hundred sheep and losing one of them would not leave the ninety-nine in the desert and go after the lost one until he finds it? And when he does find it, he sets it on his shoulders with great joy and, upon his arrival home, he calls together his friends and neighbors and says to them, ‘Rejoice with me because I have found my lost sheep.’ I tell you, in just the same way there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need of repentance. “Or what woman having ten coins and losing one would not light a lamp and sweep the house, searching carefully until she finds it? And when she does find it, she calls together her friends and neighbors and says to them, ‘Rejoice with me because I have found the coin that I lost.’ In just the same way, I tell you, there will be rejoicing among the angels of God over one sinner who repents.” Then he said, “A man had two sons, and the younger son said to his father, ‘Father give me the share of your estate that should come to me.’ So the father divided the property between them. After a few days, the younger son collected all his belongings and set off to a distant country where he squandered his inheritance on a life of dissipation. When he had freely spent everything, a severe famine struck that country, and he found himself in dire need. So he hired himself out to one of the local citizens

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

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

SEPT 16, 2007 24th of yr: Ex 32.7-14; 1Tim 1.12-17; LK 15.1-32.

MOSES IMplored THE LORD, 'WHY SHOULD YOUR WRATH BLAZE UP AGAINST YOUR PEOPLE WHOM YOU BROUGHT OUT WITH SUCH GREAT POWER & A STRONG HAND?' THE LORD RELENTED.

"My son, everything I have is yours. But now we must celebrate & rejoice.
Your brother was dead & has come to life, was lost & has been found."

During the day: Rejoice when the offender seeks to repair the ruptured relationship. If your grudge runs deeper than his sincerity, then it's you who are at fault & bear the greater responsibility. In the solidarity of sin, forgiveness is the only key to peace.

ABOUT PRAYER: In prayer we wrestle with God for those we love (Col 4.12); we want the dead to come back to life! God doesn't communicate grace on our schedule--his delays test our faith. Not always a peaceful plea, prayer at times cries to heaven in frustrated agony. The Lord gives & the Lord takes away. Blessed be the Name of the Lord.

SEPT. 23, 2007 25th of yr: Amos 8.4-7; 1Tim 2.1-8; LK 16.1-13

Reading 1: Amos 8:4-7

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

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 113:1-2, 4-8

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

Reading II: 1 Timothy 2:1-8

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

Gospel: Luke 16:1-13

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

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

SEPT. 23, 2007 25th of yr: Amos 8.4-7; 1Tim 2.1-8; LK 16.1-13

HEAR THIS, YOU WHO TRAMPLE THE NEEDY & DESTROY THE POOR OF THE LAND! THE LORD HAS SWORN BY THE PRIDE OF JACOB: NEVER WILL I FORGET A THING THEY HAVE DONE!

"No servant can serve two masters. You cannot give yourself to God & money."

During the day: Be trustworthy, the one others turn to for a job well done. Take little requests as seriously as big ones--serve the little people as diligently as you serve the important. God is no respecter of persons, & appreciates our likewise attitude.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is not about manipulating God, getting him to do our will; rather it's an expression of our willingness to do his. Thus positioning our will through prayer, we discern his better, & receive the strength to realize it. In persevering prayer, doubts & misgivings diminish, & prayer flows into action.

SEPT. 30, 2007 Amos 6. 1, 4-7; 1Tim 6. 11-16; LK 16.19-31

Reading 1: Amos 6:1a, 4-7

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

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 147: 7-10

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

Reading II: 1 Timothy 6:11-16

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

Gospel: Luke 16: 19-31

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

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

SEPT. 30, 2007 Amos 6. 1, 4-7; 1Tim 6. 11-16; LK 16.19-31

WOE TO THE COMPLACENT OF ZION, TO THE OVERCONFIDENT ON THE MOUNT OF SAMARIA.
THEIR WANTON REVELRY SHALL BE DONE AWAY WITH.

"If they will not listen to Moses & the prophets neither
will they be persuaded if someone would rise from the dead."

During the day: Have fun, but always within reason & with dignity. Free spirits relish the wholesomeness of good taste; concern for the sensibilities & realities of others leaves none excluded from their revelry. Joy is contagious.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer immerses the reality of here & now in the security of eternity. Absence of prayer inflates the here & now & renders it valueless. Hopefully, a Moses will make a difference.

October 7, 2007 27th of yr: Hab 1.2-3&2.2-4; 2Tim6-8,13-14; LK 17.5-10

Reading 1: Habakkuk 1:2-3; 2:2-4

How long, O LORD? I cry for help but you do not listen! I cry out to you, "Violence!" but you do not intervene. Why do you let me see ruin; why must I look at misery? Destruction and violence are before me; there is strife, and clamorous discord. Then the LORD answered me and said: Write down the vision clearly upon the tablets, so that one can read it readily. For the vision still has its time, presses on to fulfillment, and will not disappoint; if it delays, wait for it, it will surely come, it will not be late. The rash one has no integrity; but the just one, because of his faith, shall live.

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

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

Reading II: 2 Timothy 1:6-8, 13-14

Beloved: I remind you, to stir into flame the gift of God that you have through the imposition of my hands. For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice but rather of power and love and self-control. So do not be ashamed of your testimony to our Lord, nor of me, a prisoner for his sake; but bear your share of hardship for the gospel with the strength that comes from God. Take as your norm the sound words that you heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Guard this rich trust with the help of the Holy Spirit that dwells within us.

Gospel: Luke 17:5-10

The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith." The Lord replied, "If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it would obey you. "Who among you would say to your servant who has just come in from plowing or tending sheep in the field, 'Come here immediately and take your place at table'? Would he not rather say to him, 'Prepare something for me to eat. Put on your apron and wait on me while I eat and drink. You may eat and drink when I am finished'? Is he grateful to that servant because he did what was commanded? So should it be with you. When you have done all you have been commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants; we have done what we were obliged to do.'"

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

October 7, 2007 27th of yr: Hab 1.2-3&2.2-4; 2Tim6-8,13-14; LK 17.5-10

HOW LONG, O LORD? I CRY FOR HELP BUT YOU DO NOT LISTEN!

THE LORD ANSWERED, 'THE RASH ONE HAS NO INTEGRITY;

BUT THE JUST ONE, BECAUSE OF HIS FAITH, SHALL LIVE.'

The apostles said, "Increase our faith." "If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, 'be uprooted & planted in the sea,' & it would obey you."

During the day : Cultivate your mustard seed. Faith is of the will, not the intellect--in fact, doubts help. Faith is trusting Someone, not believing something. Friendship is a gift, not a right; if I know the other loves me, I let him. Trusting his goodness, in spite of doubts I make his will mine, test of my integrity.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer immerses doubts & fears in childlike confidence in a parent's care. Prayer seeks not to understand, simply to embrace, to entrust oneself to the will of Another. Prayer is of the moment, secure in the love that ignores past failures & defies future dangers. Prayer is gratitude of the beloved.

OCT 14, 28th of yr: 2Kings 5.14-17; 2Tim 2.8-13; LK 17.11-19

Reading 1: 2 Kings 5:14-17

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

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.

Reading II: 2 Timothy 2:8-13

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

Gospel: Luke 17:11-19

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

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

OCT 14, 28th of yr: 2Kings 5.14-17; 2Tim 2.8-13; LK 17.11-19

NAAMAN PLUNGED 7 TIMES INTO THE JORDAN

AT THE WORD OF ELISHA, MAN OF GOD.

One of them, realizing he had been healed, returned, glorifying God,
fell at the feet of Jesus & thanked him.

During the day: When a person you know is 'of God' speaks, listen. If what he/she is saying makes sense--to the gut--, do it. Faith is intuitional, both in God's spokesperson & the rest of us. Trust God, not the prophet; it's God's purpose you're fulfilling, & his the consequence.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer begins & ends with gratitude. Gratitude is both the alpha & omega of love. In prayer, our utter dependence on God is acknowledged, with wonder at the gratuitousness of all we are & have; & in prayer, we relish the beloved Lover's gratefulness for our own complete surrender.

OCT 21, 2007 29th of yr: Exodus 17.8-13; 2Tim 3.14-4.2; LK 18.1-8

Reading 1: Exodus 17:8-13

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

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 121:1-8

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

Reading II: 2 Timothy 3:14–4:2

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

Gospel: Luke 18:1-8

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

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

OCT 21, 2007 29th of yr: Exodus 17.8-13; 2Tim 3.14-4.2; LK 18.1-8

AS LONG AS MOSES KEPT HIS HANDS RAISED UP,
ISRAEL HAD THE BETTER OF THE FIGHT.

AARON & HUR SUPPORTED HIS HANDS TILL SUNSET.

"Will not God secure the rights of his chosen ones who call on him day & night?
But when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

During the day: Join the chosen: depend on God day & night. Quick to offer support, be as quick to accept it--we're all in this together, Christ included; the common good our goal, his norms the rule.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is our guarantee that Christ find faith on earth: prayer at the beginning of the day, to underpin our wills with his; & pray at sunset, to look back & see what it was. Closing the gap 'tween ours & his spells victory.

OCT 28, 2007 30th of yr: Sirach 35.12-18; 2Tim 4.6-8,16-18; LK 18.9-14

Reading 1: Sirach 35: 12-14, 16-18

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

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 34: 2-3, 17-19, 23

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

Reading II: 2 Timothy 4:6-8. 16-18

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

Gospel; Luke 18:9-14

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

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

OCT 28, 2007 30th of yr: Sirach 35.12-18; 2Tim 4.6-8,16-18; LK 18.9-14

THE LORD IS A GOD OF JUSTICE WHO KNOWS NO FAVORITES. THE
PRAYER OF THE LOWLY PIERCES THE CLOUDS, NOR WITHDRAWS TILL
THE MOST HIGH RESPONDS, JUDGES JUSTLY & AFFIRMS THE RIGHT

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

During the day: Be right. Not by purely human criteria, but by a standard that requires & seeks the best for all concerned. Humble enough to request God's guidance, count on it. Make decisions with courage & fidelity to the truth as he reveals it to you. Rest secure in his Providence.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer breathes deeply & rests in the inner reality. Prayer moves in orbit around the fact of God. Existing because loved, the one at prayer trusts; possessed by Justice, prayer strengthens his resolve to be its instrument of communion with others. Prayer is the medium of harmony between those who can & those who can't.

NOV 4, 2007 31st of yr: Wis 11.22-12.2; 2Thess 1.11-2.2; LK 19.1-10

Reading 1: Wisdom 11:22 – 12:2

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

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

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

Reading II: 2 Thessalonians 1:11-2:2

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

Gospel: Luke 19:1-10

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

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

NOV 4, 2007 31st of yr: Wis 11.22-12.2; 2Thess 1.11-2.2; LK 19.1-10

BEFORE YOU THE WHOLE UNIVERSE IS AS A GRAIN FROM A
BALANCE, OR A DROP OF MORNING DEW. YOU OVERLOOK
THE SINS OF MEN THAT THEY MAY REPENT.

Jesus looked up & said, "Zacchaeus, come down quickly, for today I must stay at your house.
Today salvation has come to this house, for the Son of Man has come to seek & save what was lost."

During the day: Just be a drop of morning dew--don't take yourself so seriously. You belong to Someone Else who can & does take good care of you & yours. May not seem like it at times, but trust him; it's not simple to save someone who is lost. Stop resisting.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer faces down anxieties, & cuddles up in the arms of a loving FatherMother. Prayer assuages emotional insecurity with thoughts of utter dependence on a Providence that never loses control. The will embrace, & pays the price of love.

NOV 11, 2007 32nd of yr: 2Macc 7.1-2,9-14; 2Thess 2.16-3.5; LK 20.34-38

Reading 1: 2 Maccabees 7:1-2, 9-14

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

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 17:1, 5-6, 8, 15

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

Reading II: 2 Thessalonians 2:16 –3:5

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

Gospel: Luke 20:27, 34-38

Some Sadducees, those who deny that there is a resurrection, came forward. Jesus said to them, "The children of this age marry and remarry; but those who are deemed worthy to attain to the coming age and to the resurrection of the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage. They can no longer die, for they are like angels; and they are the children of God because they are the ones who will rise. That the dead will rise even Moses made known in the passage about the bush, when he called out 'Lord,' the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; and he is not God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive."

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

NOV 11, 2007 32nd of yr: 2Macc 7.1-2,9-14; 2Thess 2.16-3.5; LK 20.34-38

**YOU ARE DEPRIVING US OF THIS PRESENT LIFE, BUT THE KING OF THE WORLD WILL
RAISE US UP TO LIVE AGAIN FOREVER. IT IS FOR HIS LAWS THAT WE ARE DYING.**

"That the dead will rise Moses made known when he called 'Lord', the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob. He is not God of the dead but of the living. To him, all are alive."

During the day: Keep the law of God; respect the order he placed in creation. Death is not God's idea--he wills unending life. Death is the choice of a person who lives without God. Anyone concerned about the 'dead' areas in his daily routine & attitudes need but be more law-abiding; an invigorating sense of inner harmony confirms fulfillment.

ABOUT PRAYER: At prayer we live the after-death dimension of our true selves. Regretting disobedience, we are alive in the hereafter, here- and-now. Prayer reveals our true identify: Emmanuel, 'God is with us'; prayer nourishes the life that lasts forever.

NOV 18, 2007 33rd of yr: Mal 3.19-20a; Thess 3.7-12; LK 21 5-19

Reading 1: Malachi 3: 19-20a

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

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 98:5-9

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

Reading II: 2 Thessalonians 3:7-12

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

Gospel: Luke 21:5-19

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

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

NOV 18, 2007 33rd of yr: Mal 3.19-20a; Thess 3.7-12; LK 21 5-19

LO, THE DAY IS COMING WHEN ALL THE PROUD & EVILDOERS WILL BE LIKE STUBBLE!

"I myself will give you a wisdom that all your adversaries will be powerless to refute. You will be hated by all because of my name. By your perseverance you will secure your lives."

During the day: Persevere. Don't give up, be it for fear or frustration, laziness or disappointment. Measure the project by its worth to God & to others, not just to you. If just for you, it's mere stubble & eventually worthless; if for others, per God's plan, it's everlasting.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is risky--it's either authentic or it's word play. If the latter, it nourishes a shallow, superficial spirituality that fails when put to the test. If the former, it deepens to a degree of generous abandon that welcomes hardship as the medium of both love & faith. No turning back.

NOV 25, 2007 CHRIST THE KING: 2Sam 5.1-3; Col 1.12-20; LK 25.30-43

Reading 1: 2 Samuel 5:1-3

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

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 122:1-5

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

Reading II: Colossians 1:12-20

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

Gospel: Luke 23:35-43

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

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

NOV 25, 2007 CHRIST THE KING: 2Sam 5.1-3; Col 1.12-20; LK 25.30-43

THE LORD SAID TO YOU, 'YOU SHALL SHEPHERD MY PEOPLE ISRAEL,
& SHALL BE COMMANDER OF ISRAEL.'

Then he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.'

He replied, 'Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.'

During the day: Live today in paradise. Lift yourself out of your own doldrums, & look around you: there's Truth, Beauty, & Goodness everywhere! Nourish yourself on that side of reality, then roll up your sleeves & get back to work on the other. That's what you exist for.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is what enables us to find the essential truth, the authentic beauty, & the lasting goodness in every person & every situation. Taking time to immerse ourselves in the living source of love at the beginning & end of each day strengthens our character as its transforming agents in our little corners of the world.