

## 2008 Liturgical Year A

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

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

**December 2, 2007**  
**First Sunday Advent**

Reading 1: Isaiah 2:1-5

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

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 122:1-9

**Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord.** I rejoiced because they said to me, "We will go up to the house of the LORD." And now we have set foot within your gates, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem, built as a city with compact unity. To it the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD. According to the decree for Israel, to give thanks to the name of the LORD. In it are set up judgment seats, seats for the house of David. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem! May those who love you prosper! May peace be within your walls, prosperity in your buildings. Because of my brothers and friends I will say, "Peace be within you!" Because of the house of the LORD, our God, I will pray for your good.

Reading II: Romans 13:11-14

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

Gospel: Matthew 24:37-44

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

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

**DEC 2, 2007 - 1st Advent: Isa 2.1-5; Rom 13.11-14; MT 24.37-44**  
ALL NATIONS SHALL STREAM TOWARD IT! 'COME, LET US  
CLIMB THE LORD'S MOUNTAIN THAT HE MAY INSTRUCT US  
IN HIS WAYS & WE MAY WALK IN HIS PATHS.

Jesus said to his disciples, 'Stay awake! You do not know on which day your Lord will come.'

**During the day:** Hang loose. Be prepared for anything. Don't be surprised when things don't go as planned. Be humble enough to learn from experience as situations develop. Don't be distracted by apparent quick-fixes. Renew your commitment to what's right; let others depend on your integrity.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** If cultivated, prayer kicks in when needed: an automatic drive calculates alternative actions; a divine light focuses on each; the will resonates with God's; a sense of confident inner peace confirms a choice. Decision taken, prayer awaits the results, then discerns the next step up the mountain.

## December 1, 2007 First Sunday Advent

Reading 1: Isaiah 2:1-5

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

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## December 8, 2007 Second Sunday Advent

### Reading 1: Isaiah 11:1-10

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

### Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 72:1-2, 7-6, 12-13, 17

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

### Reading II: Romans 15:4-9

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

### Gospel: Matthew 3:1-12

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

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

**DEC 9, 2007 - 2nd Advent: Isa 11.1-10; Rom 15.4-9; MT 3.1-12**

HE SHALL JUDGE THE POOR WITH JUSTICE, DECIDE ARIGHT FOR THE LAND'S AFFLICTED. HE SHALL STRIKE THE RUTHLESS WITH THE ROD OF HIS MOUTH!  
John the Baptist appeared saying 'Repent, the kingdom of heaven is at hand!' When he saw the Pharisees & Sadducees he said, 'Vipers! Who warned you to flee the coming wrath? Produce good fruit as evidence of your repentance.'

**During the day:** Produce fruit. Good fruit. How tell the difference? Who are the afflicted you serve? What justice do you use with the poor? Till repentant, don't pat yourself on the back for all the 'good' you do; by divine criteria, it's worthless.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer joins Christ as he goes to the bottom of the barrel: the blind, the beggar, the prostitute, the leper, the lost sheep, the lame, the paralytic, the marginalized, the outcast, the prisoner, the abandoned dying. He serves the person, not the condition. Prayer turns one inside out, in service to the other.

## December 16, 2007 Third Sunday Advent

### Reading 1: Isaiah 35:1-6a, 10

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

### Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 146:6-10

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

### Reading II: James 5:7-10

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

### Gospel: Matthew 11:2-11

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

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

**DEC 16, 2007 - 3rd Advent: Isa 35.1-10; James 5.7-10; MT 11.2-11**

STRENGTHEN THE HANDS THAT ARE FEEBLE, MAKE FIRM THE KNEES THAT  
ARE WEAK, SAY TO THOSE WHO ARE FRIGHTENED: BE STRONG, FEAR NOT!  
HERE IS YOUR GOD--HE COMES TO SAVE YOU!

"Among those born of women there has been none greater than John the Baptist;  
yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

**During the day:** Encourage the weak, calm the frightened. Their insecurity comes from problems they can't solve, difficulties they can't overcome; security come from having a friend who can & wants to help. Be such, even to a stranger--God himself uses those willing to serve his purpose.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Feeble hands & weak knees are no deterrent to prayer; on the contrary they enhance its usefulness, consoling those thus limited with the assurance of a loving God upon whom they can depend. Least among men, their faith places them high in the eyes of angels.

## December 23, 2007 Fourth Sunday Advent

### Reading 1: Isaiah 7:10-14

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

### Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 24:1-6

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

### Reading II: Romans 1:1-7

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

### Gospel: Matthew 1:18-24

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

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

#### December 23, 2007 Fourth Sunday Advent

THE LORD HIMSELF WILL GIVE YOU THIS SIGN: THE VIRGIN SHALL  
CONCEIVE & BEAR A SON, & YOU SHALL NAME HIM EMMANUEL.

"Joseph,... take Mary into your home. She will bear a son... name him Jesus... he will save his people from their sins... fulfill the prophet: 'name him Emmanuel,' which means, 'God is with us.'"

**During the day:** Think of naming your next kid 'Emmanuel', better still, 'Jesus'. After all, *God is with us*, &--if we let him--saving us from our sinfulness; the reality of every human situation is how much or how little we do to help. The more concerned we are about each other, the less so we need be about ourselves.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer is the human effort to assimilate the divine presence, mind open to ponder God's thoughts, heart open to share the human sentiments of Christ. In prayer we assume with him each other's sinfulness.

## **December 30, 2007 Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph**

### **Reading 1: Sirach 3:2-6. 12-14**

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

### **Responsorial Psalm: 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.

### **Reading II: Colossians 3:12-21**

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

### **Gospel: Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23**

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

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

#### **December 30, 2007 Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph**

KINDNESS TO A FATHER WILL NOT BE FORGOTTEN, FIRMLY PLANTED  
AGAINST THE DEBT OF YOUR SINS-- A HOUSE RAISED IN JUSTICE TO YOU.

He stayed there until the death of Herod, that what the Lord had said through  
the prophet might be fulfilled, 'Out of Egypt I called my son.'

**During the day:** Stay put. Move on only when the call is loud & clear. You belong to Another; follow his schedule. Don't leave behind your tenderness & affection for others; love follows you wherever you go.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer brings out the best in your relationships with others. Prayer knows, then finds, the Christ in the other: forgives his faults, takes him the way he is, tries to be a channel of God's goodness, whatever his needs. The Christ in both does the rest.

January 6, 2008

**Reading 1: 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, 7-13**

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

**Reading II Ephesians 3:2-6**

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

**Gospel Matthew 2:1-12**

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

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

**January 6, 2008 ;Is 60:1-6, Eph 3:2-6, Matthew 2:1-12**

**RISE UP IN SPLendor, JERUSALEM! THE GLORY OF THE LORD SHINES UPON YOU.  
NATIONS SHALL GATHER & COME TO YOU FROM AFAR. YOU SHALL BE RADIANT  
AT WHAT YOU SEE, YOUR HEART THROB & OVERFLOW.**

**"We saw his star & come to do him homage, 'who is to shepherd my people Israel'"**

**During the day:** At night, look up at the stars & recall the immensity of the universe & the God who made it. By day, look up at our own, & recall how each & every one of us live by its light & warmth & energy, sign & channel of God's own individual love for each. Let your smallness bask in the security of his greatness.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer is surrender to the pull of the magnetism of God. Radiant in his presence, the heart throbs in unison with his. Prayer purifies one's spirit as it overflows with his love onto others. Shepherd is the reciprocal role we play in each other's lives. We exercise it gratefully

**January 13, 2008**

**Reading 1 Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7**

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

**Responsorial Psalm Psalms 29:1-4, 9-10**

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

**Reading II Acts:10:34-38**

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

**Gospel Matthew 3:13-17**

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

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

**JAN 13, 2008 - The Baptism of Jesus: Isa 42.1-7; Acs 10.34-38; MT 3.13-17**

THUS SAYS THE LORD: 'HERE IS MY SERVANT,  
MY CHOSEN ONE, WITH WHOM I AM PLEASED.'

*John said, 'I need to be baptized by you yet you are coming to me?'*

**During the day:** Don't question God. Just do what needs to be done, Life is service, not being served. Each has a unique destiny to fulfill; as long as you're still on this side of the tomb, work at it--you're the only one of you God made. Chosen, be humble, be faithful.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer doesn't question, it discerns. God speaks through persons & events, as well as Scripture, & has no trouble communicating. Prayer is the keenness of intellect & will to perceive his purpose, then moves the heart to act accordingly with courage & generosity. 'That's my boy!' you hear him say--or is it, 'That's my girl!?' Whichever, make him proud!

**Jan 20, 2008**

**Reading 1 Isaiah 49:3,5-6**

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

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

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

**Reading II: I Corinthians 1:1-3**

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

**Gospel: John 1:29-34**

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

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

**JAN 20, 2008 - 2nd of yr: Isa 49.3-6; 1Cor 1.1-3; JN 1.29-34**

**'YOU ARE MY SERVANT, ISRAEL,' THE LORD SAID. 'IT IS TOO LITTLE FOR YOU TO BE MY SERVANT-- I WILL MAKE YOU A LIGHT TO THE NATIONS, THAT MY SALVATION MAY REACH TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH.'**

**John the Baptist saw Jesus & said, 'I came baptizing that he be made known to Israel: Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'**

**During the day:** Serve. It's the only way to be God to others. Serve the person, not the need. They go together, but for service to have God's effect, it needs to be personal. You may not even know the beneficiary; but you can think about him, & want (will) what's good for him. That's God's will, & you're his instrument.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer sharpens one's spiritual vision & enables one to see the Spirit hovering like a dove over the other--all others. Prayer listens to the Spirit, & acts accordingly, instinctively. Prayer forgets self, & flows with the Spirit's action instrumentally, unknowing & unconcerned. The Spirit knows what It's about, & that's sufficient.

**January 27, 2008**

**Isaiah 8:23 – 9:3**

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

**Psalms 27:1, 4, 13-14**

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

**1 Corinthians 1:10-13, 17**

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

**Gospel: Matthew 4:12-23**

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

**Prayerful thoughts from the Banks of the Mighty Mississippi by Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ**  
**JAN 27, 2008 - 3rd of yr: Isa 8.23-9.3; 1Cor 1.10-13,17; MT 4,12-2**  
**ANGUISH HAS TAKEN WING, DARKNESS IS DISPELLED. UPON THOSE WHO**  
**DWELT IN THE LAND OF GLOOM, A LIGHT HAS SHOWN.**  
**He went around teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the gospel,**  
**curing every disease & illness among the people.**

**During the day:** Dispel darkness. Be attentive to the gloom of others & be cheerful; let divine optimism melt the human cynicism in your own, that the joy of the Lord might touch the hearts of others. Faith is a torch; pass it around!

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer is a candle &, in Christian prayer, the flame is Jesus. At first, the beauty of the flame holds our attention: what he's saying or doing, thinking & wanting. Then, in prayer, our gaze lifts & sees more clearly the people & things around us, his the Spirit that guides & motivates us. Night becomes day.

**February 3, 2008**

**Zephaniah 2:3; 3:12-13**

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

**Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 146:6-10**

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

**1 Corinthians 1:26-31**

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

**Gospel: Matthew 5:1-12a**

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

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

**FEB 3, 2008 - 4th of yr: Zeph 2.3, 3.12-13; 1Cor 1.26-31; MT 5.1-12**

SEEK THE LORD, HUMBLE OF THE EARTH, WHO HAVE OBSERVED HIS LAW.

SEEK JUSTICE, SEEK HUMILITY.

"Blessed are those who are persecuted in the cause of right-- theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

**During the day:** Defend the one who can't defend himself. You won't get paid for it; might even lose your job for it. Worth it? Depends on how close you're getting to the Lord you seek. Takes courage & humility--only way to grow in both.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer dives deep to find the Lord; then returns to the surface to look around & see things from his perspective. The Lord we seek is always at the bottom of the barrel, caring for the poor & little ones. Prayer suggests we pitch in; sometimes we walk away. Next time, dive deeper.

**February 10, 2008**

**Genesis 2:7-9; 3:1-7**

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

**Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 51:3-6, 12-13, 17**

**Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.** Have mercy on me, O God, in your goodness; in the greatness of your compassion wipe out my offense. Thoroughly wash me from my guilt and of my sin cleanse me. For I acknowledge my offense, and my sin is before me always: "Against you only have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight." A clean heart create for me, O God, and a steadfast spirit renew within me. Cast me not out from your presence, and your Holy Spirit take not from me. Give me back the joy of your salvation, and a willing spirit sustain in me. O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.

**Romans 5: 12-19**

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

**Gospel: Matthew 4:1-11**

At that time Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was hungry. The tempter approached and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become loaves of bread." He said in reply, "It is written: *One does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.*" Then the devil took him to the holy city, and made him stand on the parapet of the temple, and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down. For it is written: *He will command his angels concerning you and with their hands they will support you, lest you dash your foot against a stone.*" Jesus answered him, "Again it is written, *You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test.*" Then the devil took him up to a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in their magnificence, and he said to him, "All these I shall give to you, if you will prostrate yourself and worship me." At this, Jesus said to him, "Get away, Satan! It is written: *The Lord, your God, shall you worship and him alone shall you serve.*" Then the devil left him and, behold, angels came and ministered to him.

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

**FEB 10, 2008 - 1st Lent: Gen 2.7-9,3.1-7; Rms 5.12-19; MT 4.1-11**

**THE LORD GOD PLANTED A GARDEN IN EDEN, WITH THE TREE OF LIFE  
IN THE MIDDLE, & THE TREE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD & EVIL.**

**"Begone, Satan. It is written: The Lord your God shall you worship, & him alone shall you serve."**

**During the day:** Be knowledgeable: avoid evil, & be happy. God didn't create evil, so don't you. Made to serve others, do nothing self-serving that doesn't serve others as well, & fulfills his purpose. You live a life that flows from God; interrupt the flow, & you live death. If that's what you want, it's all you'll get.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer recognizes the temptation to ignore the needs of others & think only of your own. Prayer's aim is not to get God to do your will, but to get you to do his. Prayer resists the urge to exercise authority over others to accomplish your will rather than the common good; Christ like, through prayer you learn to know the difference.

**FEB 17, 2nd Lent: Gen 12.1-4; 2Tim 1.8-10; MT 17.1-9**

**Genesis 12:1-4a**

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

**Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 33:4-5, 18-20, 22**

**Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.** Upright is the word of the LORD, and all his works are trustworthy. He loves justice and right; of the kindness of the LORD the earth is full. See, the eyes of the LORD are upon those who fear him, upon those who hope for his kindness, To deliver them from death and preserve them in spite of famine. Our soul waits for the LORD, who is our help and our shield. May your kindness, O LORD, be upon us who have put our hope in you.

**2 Timothy 1:8b-10**

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

**Gospel: Matthew 17:1-9**

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

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

**FEB 17, 2nd Lent: Gen 12.1-4; 2Tim 1.8-10; MT 17.1-9**

THE LORD SAID TO ABRAM, 'GO FORTH TO A LAND I WILL SHOW YOU.

ALL THE COMMUNITIES OF THE EARTH SHALL FIND BLESSING IN YOU.'

Jesus took them up a mountain & was transfigured before them. Moses & Elijah appeared, conversing with him. From the cloud a voice said, 'This is my beloved son, listen to him.'

The disciples saw no one else but Jesus alone.

**During the day:** Be a Moses: keep the rules! enforce the rules! Be an Elijah: proclaim the truth! denounce the lie! Be Christlike: Be gentle but firm, as you do both.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** In prayer, with Moses we go up the mountain to wrestle with God about our doubts & problems, & the doubts, problems & complaints of others. We come down the mountain away from prayer with God's word & will in our own, sent to share with the people around us his life, his love. Be generous with both.

**FEB 24, 2008 3rd Lent: Ex 17.37; Rms 5.1-8; JN 1.5-42**

**Exodus 17:3-7**

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

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

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

**Romans 5:1-2, 5-8**

Brothers and sisters: Since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith to this grace in which we stand, and we boast in hope of the glory of God. And hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. For Christ, while we were still helpless, died at the appointed time for the ungodly. Indeed, only with difficulty does one die for a just person, though perhaps for a good person one might even find courage to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us.

**Gospel John 4:5-42**

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

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

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

**FEB 24, 2008 3rd Lent: Ex 17.37; Rms 5.1-8; JN 1.5-42**

THE LORD SAID TO MOSES, 'STRIKE THE ROCK; WATER WILL FLOW FOR THE PEOPLE TO DRINK.' THE PLACE IS CALLED MERIBAH, BECAUSE THE ISRAELITES TESTED THE LORD, 'IS THE LORD IN OUR MIDST OR NOT?'

"Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again. The water I shall give will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water!"

**During the day:** Test the Lord. He expects you to. *He* knows he's with you. Let him prove it. 'Course, he may not do the expected. Be prepared for anything! You don't dictate to him; he makes his own choices. He knows what's good for you. He keeps you on the move.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer is drinking deeply from the spring of eternal life. We live a spiritual as well as a material life, & it's thirst can only be sated by saying, 'give me to drink'. We may not be aware of the response; but faithful prayer presumes it, & accepts the mystery of life as it unfolds.

**MAR 3, 2008 3rd Lent: 1Sam 16.1, 6-13; Eph 5.8-14; JN 9.1-41**

**First Reading I Samuel 16:1b. 6-7.10-13a**

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

**Responsorial Psalms 23:1-6**

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

**Second Reading Ephesians 5:8-14**

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

**Gospel: John 9:1-41**

As Jesus passed by he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "Neither he nor his parents sinned; it is so that the works of God might be made visible through him. We have to do the works of the one who sent me while it is day. Night is coming when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva, and smeared the clay on his eyes, and said to him, "Go wash in the Pool of Siloam" —which means Sent—. So he went and washed, and came back able to see. His neighbors and those who had seen him earlier as a beggar said, "Isn't this the one who used to sit and beg?" Some said, "It is, 'but others said, 'No, he just looks like him.'" He said, "I am." So they said to him, "How were your eyes opened?" He replied, "The man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and told me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' So I went there and washed and was able to see." And they said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I don't know." They brought the one who was once blind to the Pharisees. Now Jesus had made clay and opened his eyes on a sabbath. So then the Pharisees also asked him how he was able to see. He said to them, "He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and now I can see." So some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, because he does not keep the sabbath." But others said, "How can a sinful man do such signs?" And there was a division among them. So they said to the blind man again, "What do you have to say about him, since he opened your eyes?" He said, "He is a prophet." Now the Jews did not believe that he had been blind and gained his sight until they summoned the parents of the one who had gained his sight. They asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How does he now see?" His parents answered and said, "We know that this is our son and that he was born blind. We do not know how he sees now, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him, he is of age; he can speak for himself." His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone acknowledged him as the Christ, he would be expelled from the synagogue. For this reason his parents said, "He is of age; question him." So a second time they called the man who had been blind and said to him,

“Give God the praise! We know that this man is a sinner.” He replied, “If he is a sinner, I do not know. One thing I do know is that I was blind and now I see.” So they said to him, “What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?” He answered them, “I told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples, too?” They ridiculed him and said, “You are that man’s disciple; we are disciples of Moses! We know that God spoke to Moses, but we do not know where this one is from.” The man answered and said to them, “This is what is so amazing, that you do not know where he is from, yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if one is devout and does his will, he listens to him. It is unheard of that anyone ever opened the eyes of a person born blind. If this man were not from God, he would not be able to do anything.” They answered and said to him, “You were born totally in sin, and are you trying to teach us?” Then they threw him out. When Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, he found him and said, (Do you believe in the Son of Man?” He answered and said, “Who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?” Jesus said to him, “You have seen him, the one speaking with you is he.” He said, “I do believe, Lord,” and he worshiped him. Then Jesus said, “I came into this world for judgment, so that those who do not see might see, and those who do see might become blind.” Some of the Pharisees who were with him heard this and said to him, “Surely we are not also blind, are we?” Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you are saying, ‘We see,’ so your sin remains.

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

**MAR 3, 2008 3rd Lent: 1Sam 16.1, 6-13; Eph 5.8-14; JN 9.1-41**

NOT AS MAN SEES DOES GOD SEE. MAN SEES THE APPEARANCE,  
BUT GOD LOOKS INTO THE HEART.

Jesus said to the Pharisees, "If you were blind, you would have no sin.  
But you are saying, 'We see,' so your sin remains."

**During the day:** Admit your mistakes; or at least uncertainty. Mistakes of bad judgment are no problem for God; mistakes of bad will are. Correct the former; repent the latter--then God can move in & help pick up the pieces.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer distinguishes mind from heart; we ponder truth with the former, then embrace it with the latter. Prayer overcomes the difficulties of doing both. Prayer is where--& when--God kicks in.

**MAR 9, 2008 5th Lent: Ezk 37.1-14; Rms 8.8-11; JN 11.1-45**

**First Reading: Ezekiel 37:12-14**

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

**Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 130: 1-8**

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

**Second Reading: Romans 8:8-11**

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

**Gospel John 11:1-45**

Now a man was ill, Lazarus from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. Mary was the one who had anointed the Lord with perfumed oil and dried his feet with her hair; it was her brother Lazarus who was ill. So the sisters sent word to him saying, "Master, the one you love is ill." When Jesus heard this he said, "This illness is not to end in death, but is for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it." Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So when he heard that he was ill, he remained for two days in the place where he was. Then after this he said to his disciples, "Let us go back to Judea." The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just trying to stone you, and you want to go back there?" Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in a day? If one walks during the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. But if one walks at night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him." He said this, and then told them, "Our friend Lazarus is asleep, but I am going to awaken him." So the disciples said to him, "Master, if he is asleep, he will be saved." But Jesus was talking about his death, while they thought that he meant ordinary sleep. So then Jesus said to them clearly, "Lazarus has died. And I am glad for you that I was not there, that you may believe. Let us go to him." So Thomas, called Didymus, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go to die with him." When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, only about two miles away. And many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them about their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him; but Mary sat at home. Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever you ask of God, God will give you." Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise." Martha said to him, "I know he will rise, in the resurrection on the last day." Jesus told her, "I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" She said to him, "Yes, Lord. I have come to believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who is coming into the world." When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary secretly, saying, "The teacher is here and is asking for you."

As soon as she heard this, she rose quickly and went to him. For Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still where Martha had met him. So when the Jews who were with her in the house comforting her saw Mary get up quickly and go out, they followed her, presuming that she was going to the tomb to weep there. When Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." When Jesus saw her weeping and the Jews who had come with her weeping, he became perturbed and deeply troubled, and said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Sir, come and see." And Jesus wept. So the Jews said, "See how he loved him." But some of them said, "Could not the one who opened the eyes of the blind man have done something so that this man would not have died?" So Jesus, perturbed again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay across it. Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the dead man's sister, said to him, "Lord, by now there will be a stench; he has been dead for four days." Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believe you will see the glory of God?" So they took away the stone. And Jesus raised his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you for hearing me. I know that you always hear me; but because of the crowd here I have said this, that they may believe that you sent me." And when he had said this, He cried out in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, tied hand and foot with burial bands, and his face was wrapped in a cloth. So Jesus said to them, "Untie him and let him go." Now many of the Jews who had come to Mary and seen what he had done began to believe in him.

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

**MAR 9, 2008 5th Lent: Ezk 37.1-14; Rms 8.8-11; JN 11.1-45**

**YOU SHALL KNOW THAT I AM LORD WHEN I OPEN YOUR  
GRAVES & HAVE YOU RISE FROM THEM.**

"Whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live; everyone who lives &  
believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

**During the day:** Open the graves in your heart; lots of bad memories there. Let 'em out; stop being afraid. Or, worse still, stop holding grudges. As long as you keep them locked in, you're the one who's dead.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer practices the afterlife. Assuming it, prayer settles more comfortably in the divine design. Fears diminish, health improves, truth clarifies. Love flourishes, & life goes on forever.

**MAR 16, 2008 Palm Sunday: Isa 50.4-7; Phil 2.6-11; MT 26.14-27.66**

**First Reading: Matthew 21:1-11**

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

At the Mass Isaiah 50:4-7

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

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 22:8-9, 17-20, 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 Matthew 26:14 – 27:66**

One of the Twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, "What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?" They paid him thirty pieces of silver, and from that time on he looked for an opportunity to hand him over. On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the disciples approached Jesus and said, "Where do you want us to prepare for you to eat the Passover?" He said, "Go into the city to a certain man and tell him, 'The teacher says, (My appointed time draws near; in your house I shall celebrate the Passover with my disciples.'"" The disciples then did as Jesus had ordered, and prepared the Passover.

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

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and giving it to his disciples said, "Take and eat; this is my body." Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, from now on I shall not drink this fruit of the vine until the day when I drink it with you new in the kingdom of my Father." Then, after singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. Then Jesus said to them, "This night all of you will have your faith in me shaken, for it is written: I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be dispersed; but after I have been raised up, I shall go before you to Galilee." Peter said to him in reply, "Though all may have their faith in you shaken, mine will never be." Jesus said to him, "Amen, I say to you, this very night before the cock crows, you will deny me three times." Peter said to him, "Even though I should have to die with you, I will not deny you." And all the disciples spoke likewise.

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

While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived, accompanied by a large crowd, with swords and clubs, who had come from the chief priests and the elders of the people. His betrayer had arranged a sign with them, saying, "The man I shall kiss is the one; arrest him." Immediately he went over to Jesus and said, "Hail, Rabbi!" and he kissed him. Jesus answered him, "Friend, do what you have come for." Then stepping forward they laid hands on Jesus and arrested him. And behold, one of those who accompanied Jesus put his hand to his sword, drew it, and struck the high priest's servant, cutting off his ear. Then Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back into its sheath, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Do you think that I cannot call upon my Father and he will not provide me at this moment with more than twelve legions of angels?"

But then how would the Scriptures be fulfilled which say that it must come to pass in this way?" At that hour Jesus said to the crowds, "Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to seize me? Day after day I sat teaching in the temple area, yet you did not arrest me. But all this has come to pass that the writings of the prophets may be fulfilled." Then all the disciples left him and fled. Those who had arrested Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled. Peter was following him at a distance as far as the high priest's courtyard, and going inside he sat down with the servants to see the outcome. The chief priests and the entire Sanhedrin kept trying to obtain false testimony against Jesus in order to put him to death, but they found none, though many false witnesses came forward. Finally two came forward who stated, "This man said, 'I can destroy the temple of God and within three days rebuild it.'" The high priest rose and addressed him, "Have you no answer? What are these men testifying against you?" But Jesus was silent. Then the high priest said to him, "I order you to tell us under oath before the living God whether you are the Christ, the Son of God." Jesus said to him in reply, "You have said so. But I tell you: From now on you will see 'the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power' and 'coming on the clouds of heaven.'" Then the high priest tore his robes and said, "He has blasphemed! What further need have we of witnesses? You have now heard the blasphemy; what is your opinion?" They said in reply, "He deserves to die!" Then they spat in his face and struck him, while some slapped him, saying, "Prophecy for us, Christ: who is it that struck you?"

Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. One of the maids came over to him and said, "You too were with Jesus the Galilean." But he denied it in front of everyone, saying, "I do not know what you are talking about!" As he went out to the gate, another girl saw him and said to those who were there, "This man was with Jesus the Nazorean." Again he denied it with an oath, "I do not know the man!" A little later the bystanders came over and said to Peter, "Surely you too are one of them; even your speech gives you away." At that he began to curse and to

swear, "I do not know the man." And immediately a cock crowed. Then Peter remembered the word that Jesus had spoken: "Before the cock crows you will deny me three times." He went out and began to weep bitterly.

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

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

Now on the occasion of the feast the governor was accustomed to release to the crowd one prisoner whom they wished. And at that time they had a notorious prisoner called Barabbas. So when they had assembled, Pilate said to them, "Which one do you want me to release to you, Barabbas, or Jesus called Christ?" For he knew that it was out of envy that they had handed him over. While he was still seated on the bench, his wife sent him a message, "Have nothing to do with that righteous man. I suffered much in a dream today because of him." The chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas but to destroy Jesus. The governor said to them in reply, "Which of the two do you want me to release to you?" They answered, "Barabbas!" Pilate said to them, "Then what shall I do with Jesus called Christ?" They all said, "Let him be crucified!" But he said, "Why? What evil has he done?" They only shouted the louder, "Let him be crucified!" When Pilate saw that he was not succeeding at all, but that a riot was breaking out instead, he took water and washed his hands in the sight of the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood. Look to it yourselves." And the whole people said in reply, "His blood be upon us and upon our children." Then he released Barabbas to them, but after he had Jesus scourged, he handed him over to be crucified.

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

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

From noon onward, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And about three o'clock Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "*Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?*" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Some of the bystanders who heard it said, "This one is calling for Elijah." Immediately one of them ran to

get a sponge; he soaked it in wine, and putting it on a reed, gave it to him to drink. But the rest said, "Wait, let us see if Elijah comes to save him." But Jesus cried out again in a loud voice, and gave up his spirit.

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

When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea named Joseph, who was himself a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus; then Pilate ordered it to be handed over. Taking the body, Joseph wrapped it in clean linen and laid it in his new tomb that he had hewn in the rock. Then he rolled a huge stone across the entrance to the tomb and departed. But Mary Magdalene and the other Mary remained sitting there, facing the tomb.

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

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

**MAR 16, 2008 Palm Sunday: Isa 50.4-7; Phil 2.6-11; MT 26.14-27.66**

I GAVE MY BACK TO THOSE WHO BEAT ME. THE LORD GOD IS MY HELP,  
THEREFORE I AM NOT DISGRACED.

"He saved others; he cannot save himself. He trusted in God.

Let him deliver him now if he wants him."

**During the day:** Hope for the best, expect the worst; trust God, & be satisfied with what you get. Circumstances alter the context, they don't determine the results. All depends on how you measure things: Inner security defies disaster.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer is the armor that withstands assaults; whatever their nature, it enables ultimately victorious resistance. Prayer is humble, weathers the storms with patience, puts the pieces back together in the marvelous mosaic only God can design.

**MARCH 23, 2008 Easter Sunday: Acts 10.34-43; Col 3.1-4; JN 20.1-9**

**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 Psalms 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23**

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

**Second Reading Colossians 3:1-4**

Brothers and sisters: If then you were raised with Christ, seek what is above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Think of what is above, not of what is on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ your life appears, then you too will appear with him in glory.

**Gospel John 20:1-9**

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

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

**MARCH 23, 2008 Easter Sunday: Acts 10.34-43; Col 3.1-4; JN 20.1-9**

EVERYONE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL RECEIVE FORGIVENESS IN HIS NAME.

"Oh, how foolish you are! Was it not necessary that Christ should suffer these things, & so enter into his glory?"

**During the day:** Practice forgiveness. It's the most Godlike thing you can do. Personal health is spiritual as well as mental & physical; holding grudges infects the mind & wearies the body. Be sensible: forgiven, forgive.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer opens the pours of the soul to God--he enters however he wishes, whatever the emotions, whatever the experience at hand. Don't be picky; just pray. He knows how to possess you; & be possessed.

## **MARCH 30, 2008 2nd Easter: Acts 2.42-47; 1Peter 1.3-9; JN 20.19-31**

### **First Reading Acts 2:42-47**

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

### **Responsorial Psalm Psalms 118:2-4, 13-15, 22-24**

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

### **Second Reading 1 Peter 1:3-9**

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

### **Gospel 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**  
**MARCH 30, 2008 2nd Easter: Acts 2.42-47; 1Peter 1.3-9; JN 20.19-31**  
THEY DEVOTED THEMSELVES TO THE TEACHING OF THE APOSTLES,  
TO THE COMMUNAL LIFE, TO THE BREAKING OF BREAD & TO PRAYERS.

"Have you come to believe because you have seen me?  
Blessed are those who have not seen & have believed."

**During the day:** Stop disagreeing with everybody; look for common denominators & start cooperating. Life is organic: every cell puts itself on the line for the good of the whole. Try it; you might end up a little happier.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer looks at the wounds of others, then goes to work tending them; healing is believing, & a common bond of health-- spiritual as well as physical, divine as well as human--joins healed to healer: bonds eternal.

**April 6, 2008 3rd Easter: Acts 2.14,22-23; 1Peter 1.17-21; LK 24.13-35**

**First Reading Acts 2:14, 22-33**

Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice, and proclaimed: “You who are Jews, indeed all of you staying in Jerusalem. Let this be known to you, and listen to my words. You who are Israelites, hear these words. Jesus the Nazarene was a man commended to you by God with mighty deeds, wonders, and signs, which God worked through him in your midst, as you yourselves know. This man, delivered up by the set plan and foreknowledge of God, you killed, using lawless men to crucify him. But God raised him up, releasing him from the throes of death, because it was impossible for him to be held by it. For David says of him:

*I saw the Lord ever before me, with him at my right hand I shall not be disturbed. Therefore my heart has been glad and my tongue has exulted; my flesh, too, will dwell in hope, because you will not abandon my soul to the netherworld, nor will you suffer your holy one to see corruption. You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence.*

“My brothers, one can confidently say to you about the patriarch David that he died and was buried, and his tomb is in our midst to this day. But since he was a prophet and knew that God had sworn an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants upon his throne, he foresaw and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that neither was he abandoned to the netherworld nor did his flesh see corruption. God raised this Jesus; of this we are all witnesses. Exalted at the right hand of God, he received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father and poured him forth, as you see and hear.”

**Responsorial Psalm Psalms 16:1-2. 5. 7-11**

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

**Second Reading 1 Peter 1:17-21**

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

**Gospel Luke 24:13-35**

That very day, the first day of the week, two of Jesus’ disciples were going to a village seven miles from Jerusalem called Emmaus, and they were conversing about all the things that had occurred. And it happened that while they were conversing and debating, Jesus himself drew near and walked with them, but their eyes were prevented from recognizing him. He asked them, “What are you discussing as you walk along?” They stopped, looking downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, said to him in reply, “Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know of the things that have taken place there in these days?” And he replied to them, “What sort of things?” They said to him, “The things that happened to Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, how our chief priests and rulers both handed him over to a sentence of death and crucified him. But we were

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

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

**April 6, 2008 3rd Easter: Acts 2.14,22-23; 1Peter 1.17-21; LK 24.13-35**

**GOD RAISED HIM UP, RELEASING HIM FROM THE THROES OF DEATH,  
BECAUSE IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE FOR HIM TO BE HELD BY IT.**

"Oh, how foolish you are! Was it not necessary that the  
Christ should suffer these things & enter into his glory?"

**During the day:** Live as though you're going to be dead ten minutes from now: do well what you're doing--best way to enter into your glory! Why be afraid of death, greatest of all moments? Sure, the throes of dying might turn out pretty awful, but pay the price with gusto for what comes next!

**ABOUT PRAYER:** In prayer, we wrestle with God on one side of the ring, with Satan on the other. Formidable opponents, both, the former, patient & resourceful, the latter, cunning & deadly. With Satan, it's do or die; with God, do & live-- prayer anticipates the victory sound of the final bell.

**APRIL 13, 2008 4th Easter: Acts 2.14, 36-41; 1Peter 2.20-25; JN 10.1-10**

**First Reading Acts 2:14a, 36-41**

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

**Responsorial Psalms 23:1-6**

**The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.**

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. In verdant pastures he gives me repose; beside restful waters he leads me; he refreshes my soul. He guides me in right paths for his name's sake. Even though I walk in the dark valley I fear no evil; for you are at my side. With your rod and your staff that give me courage. You spread the table before me in the sight of my foes; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Only goodness and kindness follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD for years to come.

**Second Reading 1 Peter 2: 20b-25**

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

**Gospel John 10:1-10**

Jesus said: "Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever does not enter a sheepfold through the gate but climbs over elsewhere is a thief and a robber. But whoever enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens it for him, and the sheep hear his voice, as the shepherd calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has driven out all his own, he walks ahead of them, and the sheep follow him, because they recognize his voice. But they will not follow a stranger; they will run away from him, because they do not recognize the voice of strangers." Although Jesus used this figure of speech, the Pharisees did not realize what he was trying to tell them. So Jesus said again, "Amen, amen, I say to you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. A thief comes only to steal and slaughter and destroy; I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly."

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

**APRIL 13, 2008 4th Easter: Acts 2.14, 36-41; 1Peter 2.20-25; JN 10.1-10**

**KNOW FOR CERTAIN THAT GOD HAS MADE LORD & CHRIST  
THIS JESUS WHOM YOU CRUCIFIED.**

"The Shepherd calls his own; the sheep hear his voice & he leads them out.  
A thief comes only to steal; I come that they might have life, & have it more abundantly.

**During the day:** Listen. Be ever more alert to the truth. Learn to discern it; don't be deceived by your own prejudices & preconceptions. The God who made you illuminates your intellect, if you keep it honest--he's paid quite a price to do so.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer is the spiritual lung that keeps us truly alive; its regular breathing assures us, individually & corporately, of the flow of Christ's own human & divine vital energy flowing through us to each other. Breathe deeply & hold it, as often as you can.

**APRIL 20, 2008 5th Easter: Acts 6.1-7; 1Peter 2.4-9; JN 14.1-12**

**First Reading: Acts 6:1-7**

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

**Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 33:1, 2, 4, 5, 18, 19**

**Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.** Exult, you just, in the LORD; praise from the upright is fitting. Give thanks to the LORD on the harp; with the ten-stringed lyre chant his praises. Upright is the word of the LORD, and all his works are trustworthy. He loves justice and right; of the kindness of the LORD the earth is full. See, the eyes of the LORD are upon those who fear him, upon those who hope for his kindness, To deliver them from death and preserve them in spite of famine.

**Second Reading: 1 Peter 2:4-9**

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

**Gospel: John 14:1-12**

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

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

**APRIL 20, 2008 5th Easter: Acts 6.1-7; 1Peter 2.4-9; JN 14.1-12**

THE WORD OF GOD CONTINUED TO SPREAD; THE NUMBER OF DISCIPLES IN  
JERUSALEM INCREASED GREATLY, OBEDIENT TO THE FAITH.

"I go to prepare a place for you. I will come back & take you to myself,  
that where I am you may also be."

**During the day:** Spread the good word; don't impose it, just practice it with integrity. Its impact will be internal, perhaps take time to develop; faith is a gift, & until the Giver is recognized, honest resistance is part of the process.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer expresses the virtue of hope, projects us into the presence of promise fulfilled. Prayer brings us back to the reality of here-&-now, with a sense of deja vu inner peace. Prayer is the key into the heart of Christ.

**APRIL 27, 2008 6th Easter: Acts 8.5-8,14-17; 1Peter 3.15-18; JN 14.15-21**

**First Reading: Acts 8:5-8, 14-17**

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

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

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

**Second Reading: 1 Peter 3:15-18**

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

**Gospel: John 14:15-21**

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

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

**APRIL 27, 2008 6th Easter: Acts 8.5-8,14-17; 1Peter 3.15-18; JN 14.15-21**

WHEN SAMARIA HAD ACCEPTED THE WORD OF GOD, PETER & JOHN WENT DOWN & PRAYED FOR THEM, THAT THEY MIGHT RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT.

"I will ask the Father & he will give you another Advocate, the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot accept because it neither sees nor knows him. I will not leave you orphans.

**During the day:** The mind was made for truth; seek it! The will was made to live by it; choose it. Truth, even if beyond our ken, can be revealed; will to see & know it when it is. Truth has its own divine authority: if it's truth you want, it's truth you'll get, & know it when you do.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer supposes honesty & humility. In prayer one wills to be enlightened; prayer rests in darkness, then lights the candle--Christ--& gazes at the flame, absorbed by its beauty. Slowly, the Light draws the gaze away into the darkness, & reveals whatever needs knowing--the Spirit of the Word Incarnate is at work.

**MAY 4, 2008 The Ascension: Acts 1.1-11; Eph 1.17-23; MT 28.16-20**

**First Reading: Acts 1:12-14**

After Jesus had been taken up to heaven the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day's journey away. When they entered the city they went to the upper room where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. All these devoted themselves with one accord to prayer, together with some women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.

**Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 27:1, 4, 7-8**

**I believe that I shall see the good things of the Lord in the land of the living.** The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom should I fear? The LORD is my life's refuge; of whom should I be afraid? One thing I ask of the LORD; this I seek: To dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, That I may gaze on the loveliness of the LORD and contemplate his temple. Hear, O Lord, the sound of my call; have pity on me, and answer me. Of you my heart speaks; you my glance seeks.

**Second Reading: 1 Peter 4:13-16**

Beloved: Rejoice to the extent that you share in the sufferings of Christ, so that when his glory is revealed you may also rejoice exultantly. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. But let no one among you be made to suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as an intriguer. But whoever is made to suffer as a Christian should not be ashamed but glorify God because of the name.

**Gospel: John 17:1-11a**

Jesus raised his eyes to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come. Give glory to your son, so that your son may glorify you, just as you gave him authority over all people, so that your son may give eternal life to all you gave him. Now this is eternal life, that they should know you, the only true God, and the one whom you sent, Jesus Christ. I glorified you on earth by accomplishing the work that you gave me to do. Now glorify me, Father, with you, with the glory that I had with you before the world began. "I revealed your name to those whom you gave me out of the world. They belonged to you, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything you gave me is from you, because the words you gave to me I have given to them, and they accepted them and truly understood that I came from you, and they have believed that you sent me. I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for the ones you have given me, because they are yours, and everything of mine is yours and everything of yours is mine, and I have been glorified in them. And now I will no longer be in the world, but they are in the world, while I am coming to you.

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

**MAY 4, 2008 The Ascension: Acts 1.1-11; Eph 1.17-23; MT 28.16-20**

**MEN OF GALILEE, WHY ARE YOU STANDING THERE LOOKING AT THE SKY?**

**THIS JESUS WHO HAS BEEN TAKEN UP FROM YOU WILL RETURN.**

The eleven went to the mountain which Jesus had ordered them.

When they saw him, they worshiped; but they doubted.

**During the day:** Don't just stand there, get busy! There's work to be done. It's one thing to take a break, something else to waste time. True, time's value is measured, not so much by what you're doing, as why & how you're doing it, Keep your motives noble, & your methods respectful.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer entertains doubts; in fact, faith can't grow without them. The intellect weighs the data

honestly, makes judgments accordingly. Prayer submits these to the will for a choice, then waits for grace to kick-in & illuminate. No hurry; it does, eventually.

**MAY 11, 2008 Pentecost: Acts 2.1-11; 1Cor 12.3-7,12-13; JN 20.19-23**

**First Reading: Acts 2:1-11**

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

**Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 104:1. 24. 29-31, 34**

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

**Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:3b-7, 12-13**

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

**Gospel: John 20:19-23**

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

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

**MAY 11, 2008 Pentecost: Acts 2.1-11; 1Cor 12.3-7,12-13; JN 20.19-23**

**WE HEAR THEM SPEAKING IN OUR OWN TONGUES  
OF THE MIGHTY ACTS OF GOD.**

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

**During the day:** Speak clearly, forcefully & truthfully. Your demeanor will communicate your sincerity. More than the meaning of your words, your intentions will speak for themselves. The quiet firmness of conviction coupled with genuine respect for their opinions gains the confidence of others.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer is the inner sensor that scans circumstances to find the mind & will of God, confident the Spirit that communicates it also confirms its recognition. Detached from personal opinions & preconceptions, prayer's humility facilitates the mighty acts of God.

**MAY 18, 2008 Holy Trinity: Ex 34.4-9; 2Cor 13.11-13; JN 3.16-18**

**First Reading: Exodus 34:4b-6, 8-9**

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

**Responsorial Psalm: Daniel 3:52-56** (Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego singing to God)

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

**Second Reading: 2 Corinthians 13:11-13**

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

**Gospel: John 3:16-18**

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

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

**MAY 18, 2008 Holy Trinity: Ex 34.4-9; 2Cor 13.11-13; JN 3.16-18**

THE LORD STOOD WITH MOSES & PROCLAIMED HIS NAME.

"THE LORD, THE LORD, A MERCIFUL & GRACIOUS GOD,  
SLOW TO ANGER & RICH IN KINDNESS & FIDELITY."

God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world  
but that the world might be saved by him.

**During the day:** Be firm but gentle in judging your little corner of the world. Love it as does the Lord who creates it, Do your bit helping bring good out of evil. It's easy enough to condemn, then go your way; but equally unproductive. The seemingly hopeless gesture to correct a situation may be the one that helps it turn the corner.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Intercessory prayer goes up the mountain with Moses to bring to God the needs & problems, complaints & doubts, fears & despair of his people, especially those in our own little corner of the world. Like Moses, we come down the mountain bringing from prayer God's kind & merciful answers, requiring in his name the fidelity on which they depend. Prayer's a two way trail.

**MAY 25, 2008 Body & Blood of Christ: Deut 8.2-3,14-16; 1Cor 10.16-17**

**First Reading: Hosea 6:3-6**

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

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

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

**Second Reading: Romans 4:18-25**

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

**Gospel: Matthew 9:9-13**

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

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

**MAY 25, 2008 Body & Blood of Christ: Deut 8.2-3,14-16; 1Cor 10.16-17**

**MOSES SAID, 'REMEMBER HOW FOR FORTY YEARS THE LORD HAS DIRECTED YOUR JOURNEYING. HE ALLOWED YOU TO BE AFFLICTED WITH HUNGER TO SHOW YOU NOT BY BREAD ALONE DOES MAN LIVE BUT BY EVERY WORD THAT COMES FROM GOD.'**

"Just as the living Father sent me & I have life because of the Father, so also the one who feeds on me will have life because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven."

**During the day:** Learn from afflictions. Welcome them, even seek them. Impose a little hunger on yourself--it'll do you good. You'll learn there are unexplored depths to the spiritual dimension. Want to be authentically healthy? Go for it!

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer feeds on the humanity of Christ. We chew & savor his words, visualize his actions. He's the living word that nourishes our humanity with his own, circulating the life of the Father through us all: The love of God for mankind is consummated.

**June 1, 2008 9th of yr: Deut 11.18,26-28; Rom 3.21-28; MT 7.21-27**

**First Reading: Deuteronomy**

Moses told the people, "Take these words of mine into your heart and soul. Bind them at your wrist as a sign, and let them be a pendant on your forehead." I set before you here, this day, a blessing and a curse: a blessing for obeying the commandments of the LORD, your God, which I enjoin on you today; a curse if you do not obey the commandments of the LORD, your God, but turn aside from the way I ordain for you today, to follow other gods, whom you have not known."

**Responsorial Psalms: Psalms 31:2-4, 17, 25**

Lord, be my rock of safety. In you, O LORD, I take refuge; let me never be put to shame. In your justice rescue me, incline your ear to me, make haste to deliver me! Be my rock of refuge, a stronghold to give me safety. You are my rock and my fortress; for your name's sake you will lead and guide me. Let your face shine upon your servant; save me in your kindness. Take courage and be stouthearted, all you who hope in the LORD.

**Second Reading: Romans 3:21-25, 28**

Brothers and sisters, Now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, though testified to by the law and the prophets, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction; all have sinned and are deprived of the glory of God. They are justified freely by his grace through the redemption in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as an expiation, through faith, by his blood. For we consider that a person is justified by faith apart from works of the law.

**Gospel: Matthew 7:21-27**

Jesus said to his disciples: "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name? Did we not drive out demons in your name? Did we not do mighty deeds in your name?' Then I will declare to them solemnly, 'I never knew you. Depart from me, you evildoers.'" "Everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and buffeted the house. But it did not collapse; it had been set solidly on rock. And everyone who listens to these words of mine but does not act on them will be like a fool who built his house on sand. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and buffeted the house. And it collapsed and was completely ruined."

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

**June 1, 2008 9th of yr: Deut 11.18,26-28; Rom 3.21-28; MT 7.21-27**

MOSES TOLD THE PEOPLE, 'I SET BEFORE YOU HERE THIS DAY A BLESSING & A CURSE: A BLESSING FOR OBEYING THE COMMANDMENTS OF THE LORD, A CURSE IF YOU TURN ASIDE.'  
"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father"

**During the day:** Enter the kingdom of heaven: let truth, goodness, & beauty be both the criteria & measure of your choices. God wills (commands) what's good for us; we need but will it ourselves for it to happen

**ABOUT PRAYER:** In prayer, the intellect scans the senses, ponders the data, formulates judgments. Then in prayer the will makes a choice, not always in accord with the judgment on the data available-- prayer remains open to the inspired truth of divine revelation. In prayer we discern God's will in God's word--the people & situations of every moment are but its reflection.

**JUNE 8, 2008 10th of yr: Hosea 6.3-6; Rms 4.18-25; MT 9.9-13**

**First Reading: Hosea 6:3-6**

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

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

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

**Second Reading: Romans 4:18-25**

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

**Gospel: Matthew 9:9-13**

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

**JUNE 8, 2008 10th of yr: Hosea 6.3-6; Rms 4.18-25; MT 9.9-13**

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

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

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

**During the day:** Be a slow learner. God takes *his* time; take yours. Knowledge comes with experience, & experience with practice: loving sacrifice isn't sacrifice, it's love.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer is becoming a master learning from a master. What the disciples got from personal experience, we get from prayer. The Good News is always good & it's always new, the Living Word fitting my situation at the very moment I need it. Practice does make perfect.

**JUNE 15, 2008 11th of yr: Exodus 19.2-6; Rms 5.6-11; MT 9.36-10.8**

**First Reading: Exodus 19:2-6a**

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

**Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 100:1-3, 5**

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

**Second Reading: Romans 5:6-11**

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

**Gospel: Matthew 9:36-10:8**

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

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

**JUNE 15, 2008 11th of yr: Exodus 19.2-6; Rms 5.6-11; MT 9.36-10.8**

**IF YOU HEARKEN TO MY VOICE & KEEP MY COVENANT, YOU SHALL  
BE MY SPECIAL POSSESSION, A KINGDOM OF PRIESTS, A HOLY NATION.**

"As you go, make this proclamation: 'The Kingdom of God is at hand!'

Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, drive out demons.

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

**During the day:** Drive out demons. Your own & others'. 'Demons' are a creation of the old Greeks & Romans; Satan is an angel who made God his enemy. He's still mad & still at it. But when he's trying to get you or someone else to do the wrong thing, just say 'shut up & get out!' He won't go without a fight, but will eventually.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer expresses absolute confidence in the power of God. Whatever the situation & circumstances, prayer is accompanied by inner peace nothing but your own lack of faith can rid you of. Generous concern for others & the common good will give it strength.

**JUNE 22, 2008 12th of yr: Jer 20.10-13; Rms 5.12-15; MT 10.26-33**

**First Reading: Jeremiah 20:10-13**

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

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

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

**Second Reading: Romans 5:12-15**

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

**Gospel: Matthew 10:26-33**

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

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

**JUNE 22, 2008 12th of yr: Jer 20.10-13; Rms 5.12-15; MT 10.26-33**

**BUT THE LORD IS WITH ME LIKE A MIGHTY CHAMPION:  
MY PERSECUTORS WILL STUMBLE, THEY WILL NOT TRIUMPH.**

"Fear no one. Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul--all the hairs on your head are counted! Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will acknowledge before my heavenly Father.

**During the day:** Fear no one nor any thing--face fear with courage. Fear is blind, as are the dangers that threaten, even when evil intent is the source. Courage is inspired by hope for goodness, not security. Goodness is absolute; security is relative. Don't trade the former for the latter.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer is a taste of eternity; in prayer we're already there: GOD *'is who is'* & we are too! Eternal life--outside of time--is divine, & ours by communication. Christ shares our humanity, & by so doing shares his divinity. Prayer takes advantage of it.

**JUNE 29, Peter & Paul: Acts 12.1-11; 2Tim 4.6-8,17-18; MT 16.13-19.**

**First Reading: Acts 12:1-11**

In those days, King Herod laid hands upon some members of the Church to harm them. He had James, the brother of John, killed by the sword, and when he saw that this was pleasing to the Jews he proceeded to arrest Peter also. –It was the feast of Unleavened Bread.– He had him taken into custody and put in prison under the guard of four squads of four soldiers each. He intended to bring him before the people after Passover. Peter thus was being kept in prison, but prayer by the Church was fervently being made to God on his behalf. On the very night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter, secured by double chains, was sleeping between two soldiers, while outside the door guards kept watch on the prison. Suddenly the angel of the Lord stood by him and a light shone in the cell. He tapped Peter on the side and awakened him, saying, “Get up quickly.” The chains fell from his wrists. The angel said to him, “Put on your belt and your sandals.” He did so. Then he said to him, “Put on your cloak and follow me.” So he followed him out, not realizing that what was happening through the angel was real; he thought he was seeing a vision. They passed the first guard, then the second, and came to the iron gate leading out to the city, which opened for them by itself. They emerged and made their way down an alley, and suddenly the angel left him. Then Peter recovered his senses and said, “Now I know for certain that the Lord sent his angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people had been expecting.”

**Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 34:2-9**

**The angel of the Lord will rescue those who fear him.** 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. The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them. Taste and see how good the LORD is; blessed the man who takes refuge in him.

**Second Reading: 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 17-18**

I, Paul, 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. 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: Matthew 16:13-19**

When Jesus went into the region of Caesarea Philippi he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” They replied, “Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter said in reply, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus said to him in reply, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father. And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys to the Kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

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

**JUNE 29, Peter & Paul: Acts 12.1-11; 2Tim 4.6-8,17-18; MT 16.13-19.**

THE ANGEL OF THE LORD AWAKENED PETER & SAID TO HIM,  
'GET UP QUICKLY.' THE CHAINS FELL FROM HIS WRISTS.

Jesus said, 'Who do you say that I am?' Peter replied, 'You are the Christ,  
Son of the Living God!' 'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah.  
Flesh & blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father.'

**During the day:** Drop the chains, get up & go! Quit sitting around feeling sorry for yourself! Nothing holding you back but your own lethargy, lack of self-confidence & fear of failure. Stop worrying! You belong to God, let him do the worrying. Get busy; if you fail, he'll pick up the pieces.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer's power is knowledge. Sharing God's. He knows who he is, & so do we. Eyes closed, prayer opens them, & we look right at him! We don't feel, we sense his presence; a real presence, communicating life. Prayer affirms it & let's it flow. In our humanity, it's Christ.

**JULY 6, 14th of yr: Zech 9.9-10; Rms 8.9-13; MT 11.25-30**

**First Reading Zechariah 9:9-10**

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

**Responsorial Psalms: Psalms 145:1-2, 8-11, 13-14**

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

**Second Reading : Romans 8:9, 11-13**

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

**Gospel: Matthew 11:25-30**

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

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

**JULY 6, 14th of yr: Zech 9.9-10; Rms 8.9-13; MT 11.25-30**

SEE, YOUR KING SHALL COME TO YOU; A JUST SAVIOR IS HE,  
MEEK & RIDING ON A COLT, FOAL OF A DONKEY.

"I give you praise, Father. Lord of heaven & earth; you've hidden these thing from the wise & learned, & revealed them to little ones! Come to me all you who labor & are burdened & I will give you rest-- for I am meek & humble of heart."

**During the day:** Look around you & see the strength of the meek & humble of heart. Less ambitious, perhaps, but straightforward & honest in fulfilling their responsibilities. Reassess your own goals & values. When you achieve them, how eternal your satisfaction?

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer knocks on the door of the heart of Christ, or listens to attend when he knocks on one's own. Whichever, the encounter is intimate, & mutually rewarding; it serves his mission as savior, & ours as servants for the tasks at hand. His become ours, & ours his.

**JULY 13, 2008 15th of yr: Isa 55.10-11; Rms 8.18-23; MT 13.1-23**

**First Reading: Isaiah 55:10-11**

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

**Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 65:10-14**

**(Lk 8:8) The seed that falls on good ground will yield a fruitful harvest.** You have visited the land and watered it; greatly have you enriched it. God's watercourses are filled; you have prepared the grain. Thus have you prepared the land: drenching its furrows, breaking up its clods, Softening it with showers, blessing its yield. You have crowned the year with your bounty, and your paths overflow with a rich harvest; The untilled meadows overflow with it, and rejoicing clothes the hills. The fields are garmented with flocks and the valleys blanketed with grain. They shout and sing for joy.

**Second Reading: Romans 8:18-23**

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

**Gospel: Matthew 13:1-23**

On that day, Jesus went out of the house and sat down by the sea. Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat down, and the whole crowd stood along the shore. And he spoke to them at length in parables, saying: "A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky ground, where it had little soil. It sprang up at once because the soil was not deep, and when the sun rose it was scorched, and it withered for lack of roots. Some seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it. But some seed fell on rich soil, and produced fruit, a hundred or sixty or thirtyfold. Whoever has ears ought to hear."

The disciples approached him and said, "Why do you speak to them in parables?" He said to them in reply, "Because knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven has been granted to you, but to them it has not been granted. To anyone who has, more will be given and he will grow rich; from anyone who has not, even what he has will be taken away. This is why I speak to them in parables, because *they look but do not see and hear but do not listen or understand.* Isaiah's prophecy is fulfilled in them, which says: *You shall indeed hear but not understand, you shall indeed look but never see. Gross is the heart of this people, they will hardly hear with their ears, they have closed their eyes, lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their hearts and be converted, and I heal them.*

"But blessed are your eyes, because they see, and your ears, because they hear. Amen, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it. "Hear then the parable of the sower. The seed sown on the path is the one who hears the word of the kingdom without understanding it, and the evil one comes and steals away what was sown in his heart. The seed sown on rocky ground is the one who hears the word and receives it at once with joy. But he has no root and lasts only for a time. When some tribulation or persecution comes because of the word, he immediately falls away. The seed sown among thorns is the one who hears the word, but then worldly anxiety and the lure of riches choke the word and it bears no fruit. But the seed sown on rich soil is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields a hundred or sixty or thirtyfold."

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

**JULY 13, 2008 15th of yr: Isa 55.10-11; Rms 8.18-23; MT 13.1-23**

JUST AS FROM HEAVEN THE RAIN COMES DOWN & DOES NOT RETURN  
TILL IT WATERS THE EARTH & MAKES IT FRUITFUL, SO SHALL MY WORD  
GO FORTH FROM MY MOUTH & NOT RETURN VOID BUT DO MY WILL,  
ACHIEVING THE END FOR WHICH I SENT IT.

"The seed sown on rich soil is the one who hears the word & understands it,  
who indeed bears fruit & yields a hundredfold."

**During the day:** Hear the word & try to understand it; you won't bear fruit without it. The Word of God is about God, not about you. Like rain penetrating the earth, it has its own dynamic, & communicates the life of God. Know him, & you'll know yourself. Choose to live accordingly.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** The Word presents the mind with concepts, the will with a challenge: "Accept me as true". Prayer is our choice to accept, not with the conviction of the mind but with the intuition of faith--God's gift to the will. With ours in harmony with his, he goes to work. Mission accomplished.

**JULY 20, 16th of yr: Wisdom 12.13-19; Rms 8.26-27; MT 13. 24-43**

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

**JULY 20, 2008 16th of yr: Wisdom 12.13-19; Rms 8.26-27; MT 13. 24-43**

THOUGH YOU ARE MASTER OF MIGHT, YOU JUDGE WITH CLEMENCY, & WITH MUCH  
LENIENCY GOVERN US. BY THESE DEEDS YOU TAUGHT YOUR PEOPLE THAT THOSE  
WHO ARE JUST MUST BE KIND.

"No, if you pull up the weeds, you might uproot the wheat along with them. Let them grow together until the harvest. Then collect the weeds for burning; but gather the wheat into my barn."

**During the day:** Be just but gentle, kind but firm; tensions need not boil over into conflict. The common good requires generous sacrifice from some, humble gratitude from others, mutual respect from all. Leadership leaves none behind.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer shares the Lord's responsibilities: He seeks the best in each, with patience awaits its discovery. Prayer enables us to perceive the 'why' of others' obstinacy, with wisdom assuage it & with truth enlighten it. God's might is in his mercy.

**JULY 27, 17th of yr: 1Kings 3.5-12; Rom 8.28-30; MT 13.44-52**

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

**JULY 27, 2008 17th of yr: 1Kings 3.5-12; Rom 8.28-30; MT 13.44-52**

BECAUSE YOU HAVE ASKED, SOLOMON, NOT FOR LONG LIFE OR RICHES  
OR THE LIFE OF YOUR ENEMIES, BUT FOR UNDERSTANDING SO THAT  
YOU MAY KNOW WHAT IS RIGHT, I DO AS YOU REQUESTED.

"Every scribe instructed in the kingdom of God is like the head of a household  
who brings from his storeroom both the old & the new."

**During the day:** Ask for understanding of what is right. Appetites & emotions have a way of bringing the mind to rationalize in their favor. Don't be deceived. Integrity doesn't settle for half-truths. Awaiting an inner sense of what's right, goodness grows.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer sorts through the mind's criteria to find the one that rings true, then weighs the witness of experience & rests in the sense of divine rather than human success. Ever old, but sometimes new, wisdom prevails.

**AUG 3, 18th of yr: Isa 55.1-3; Rom 8.35-39; MT 14.13-21**

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

**AUG 3, 18th of yr: Isa 55.1-3; Rom 8.35-39; MT 14.13-21**

ALL YOU WHO ARE THIRSTY, COME TO THE WATER! YOU WHO HAVE NO MONEY, COME,  
RECEIVE GRAIN & EAT! COME TO ME HEEDFULLY, & YOU WILL HAVE LIFE.

"There is no need for them to disperse; give them something to eat yourselves."

All those present ate their fill.

**During the day:** Eat heedfully, i.e., share what you've got--there are people around you who have little. What's shared materially, multiples; what's hoarded, neither satisfies nor nourishes. Life is more than an appetite.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** All prayer is the prayer of Christ. Prayer makes his will one's own. He came to feed, heal, free, forgive, console everyone! Let your prayer flow into action.

**AUG 10, 2008 19th of yr: 1Kgs 19.9-13; Rom 9.1-5; MT 14.22-33**

**Prayerful thoughts from Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ, Director Manresa Jesuit Retreat House**

**AUG 10, 2008 19th of yr: 1Kgs 19.9-13; Rom 9.1-5; MT 14.22-33**

THE LORD SAID TO ELIJAH, 'GO OUTSIDE, THE LORD WILL BE PASSING BY.'

. . . AFTER THE FIRE, THERE WAS A TINY WHISPERING SOUND. WHEN  
HE HEARD THIS, ELIJAH HID HIS FACE IN HIS CLOAK.

When the disciples saw him wading on the water they were terrified. 'Do not be afraid. It is I.'

**During the day:** Don't be afraid, ever. Be it in the gentle breeze or walking on water, the Lord is always around you, present & protective. Get used to the idea, & exploit the truth that belies the facts.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer reaches out from fear & grabs hold of God. The mind clears, & calm returns; the threat comes into focus, God in its shadow. Come what may, he's still in charge.

**AUG 17, 2008 20th of yr: Is 56.1,6-7; Rom 11.13-15,29-32; MT 15.21-28**

**First Reading: Isaiah 56:1, 6-7**

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

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

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

**Second Reading: Romans 11:13-15, 29-32**

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

**Gospel: Matthew 15:21-28**

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

**Prayerful thoughts from Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ, Director Manresa Jesuit Retreat House**

**AUG 17, 2008 20th of yr: Is 56.1,6-7; Rom 11.13-15,29-32; MT 15.21-28**

THUS SAYS THE LORD, OBSERVE WHAT IS RIGHT, DO WHAT IS JUST. FOR MY SALVATION IS ABOUT TO COME. MY HOUSE SHALL BE A HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL PEOPLE.

"Lord, Son of David, have pity on me!" "My mission is only to the lost sheep of Israel; it is not right to take the food of the children & throw it to the dogs." "Lord, even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the masters' table." "Woman, great is your faith!. Your wish is granted."

**During the day:** Be satisfied with crumbs. Everything is gratuitous, & humble gratitude acknowledges the love of the giver rather than the value of the gift. It's faith's measure.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer diminishes our differences as it expresses our utter dependence on one & the same Father-Mother. No one better or worse than anyone else, we share equally in a common heritage. Prayer is the language of love, authentic only when free & forgiving.

**AUG 24, 2008 21st of yr: Isa 22.19-23; Rom 11.33-36; MT 16.13-20**

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

**AUG 24, 2008 21st of yr: Isa 22.19-23; Rom 11.33-36; MT 16.13-20**

I WILL PLACE THE KEY OF THE HOUSE OF DAVID ON HIS SHOULDER, WHEN HE  
OPENS, NO ONE SHALL SHUT; WHEN HE SHUTS, NO ONE SHALL OPEN.

"But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter said in reply, "You are the Messiah,  
the Son of the Living God!" "Blessed are you, Simon, son of Jonah. For flesh  
& blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven."

**During the day:** If the door's open, enter; if it's shut, knock. When it opens, enter; if it doesn't, check your conscience, make an act of contrition, & knock again. If your sorrow is sincere, it'll open. Otherwise, you'd better do something about your pride & indifference to the things of God.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** In prayer, Christians gaze at Christ, others at his shadow. Faith is God's gift to his children, never the same for any two of them; how he reveals himself to each, only he determines. The response is freely given (or not), & enriches accordingly. The Christ in question shares his Spirit.

**AUG 31, 2008 22nd of yr: Jeremiah 20 7-9; Romans 12.1-2; Matthew 16.21-27**

**First Reading: Jeremiah 20:7-9**

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

**Responsorial Psalms: Psalms 63:2-6, 8-9**

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

**Second Reading: Roman 12:1-2**

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

**Gospel: Matthew 16:21-27**

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

**Prayerful thoughts from Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ, Director Manresa Jesuit Retreat House**

**AUG 31, 2008 22nd of yr: Jeremiah 20 7-9; Romans 12.1-2; Matthew 16.21-27**

THE WORD OF THE LORD HAS BROUGHT ME DERISION & REPROACH. I WILL SPEAK IN HIS NAME NO MORE! BUT THEN IT BECOMES LIKE FIRE BURNING IN MY HEART.  
I GROW WEARY HOLDING IT IN-- I CANNOT ENDURE IT!

"Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, & follow me.

Whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."

**During the day:** Hang tough. There are good reasons for needless suffering, & bad. What honesty, truth & the good of others require, don't shirk; such loyalty forges integrity in persons God then uses to build his Kingdom. Be one.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer's the gear of human experience that shifts to the divine. So empowered, the will at prayer commits itself to the course discerned, though of a dimension that transcends perception. Prayer stays the course till home, no matter the obstacles.

**SEPT 7, 2008 23 of yr: Ez 33.7-9; Rm 13.8-10; MT 18.15-20**

**First Reading: Ezekiel 33:7-9**

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

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

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

**Second Reading: Romans 13:8-10**

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

**Gospel: Matthew 18:15-20**

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

**Prayerful thoughts from Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ, Director Manresa Jesuit Retreat House**

**SEPT 7, 2008 23 of yr: Ez 33.7-9; Rm 13.8-10; MT 18.15-20**

**IF YOU WARN THE WICKED TO TURN FROM HIS WAYS & HE REFUSES TO TURN,  
HE SHALL DIE FOR HIS GUILT. BUT YOU SHALL SAVE YOURSELF.**

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

If he listens to you, you have won over your brother."

**During the day:** Don't judge the person, judge his actions & intentions. More important than their consequences are his recognition of unjust behavior & will to correct it. Your greater concern for him than for yourself will bring out the best in him; that's what matters.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** We take people into our prayer, the better to see Christ in each. From within, he wants what's best for them; from without, we try to complement his efforts. Our communion with each other in Christ--even with those who are unaware of his presence--is the key to true peace.

**Missing Sept 10, 2008**

SEPT 21, 25th of yr: Is 55.6-9; Phil 1.20-27; MT 20.1-16

**First Reading: Isaiah 55:6-9**

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

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

**The Lord is near to all who call upon him.** Every day will I bless you, and I will praise your name forever and ever. Great is the LORD and highly to be praised; his greatness is unsearchable. The LORD is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness. The LORD is good to all and compassionate toward all his works. The LORD is just in all his ways and holy in all his works. The LORD is near to all who call upon him, to all who call upon him in truth.

**Second Reading Philippians 1:20c-24, 27a**

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

**Gospel Matthew 20:1-16a**

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

**Prayerful thoughts from Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ, Director Manresa Jesuit Retreat House**

**SEPT 21, 25th of yr: Is 55.6-9; Phil 1.20-27; MT 20.1-16**

SEEK THE LORD WHILE HE MAY BE FOUND. CALL HIM WHILE HE IS NEAR.

TURN TO OUR GOD, GENEROUS IN FORGIVING.

"Are you envious because I am generous? Take what is yours & go."

The last will be first, & the first will be last.

**During the day:** Be last, back with the laggards who need help. Being first gets you glory; being thus last gets you credit.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer purifies our ambitions, keeps them trimmed to the Lord's. Prayer doesn't ask questions, it tries to answer his.

Sept. 28, 2008 26th of yr: Ez 18.25-28; Phil 2.1-11; MT 21.28-32

**First Reading: Ezra 18:25-28**

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

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

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

**Second Reading: Philippians 2:1-11**

Brothers and sisters: If there is any encouragement in Christ, any solace in love, any participation in the Spirit, any compassion and mercy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, with the same love, united in heart, thinking one thing. Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vainglory; rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourselves, each looking out not for his own interests, but also for those of others. Have in you the same attitude that is also in Christ Jesus, Who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

**Gospel: Matthew 21:28-32**

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

**Prayerful thoughts from Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ, Director Manresa Jesuit Retreat House**

**Sept. 28, 2008 26th of yr: Ez 18.25-28; Phil 2.1-11; MT 21.28-32**

WHEN THE VIRTUOUS TURNS FROM VIRTUE & COMMITS INIQUITY, HE DIES.

BUT IF HE TURN FROM THIS WICKEDNESS, HE SHALL SURELY LIVE.

"A man told his son, 'go work in the vineyard.' 'No,' he said, then changed his mind & went. The man gave his other son the same order; 'Yes, sir,' he said, but didn't go. Which obeyed?"

**DURING THE DAY:** Make judgments with the mind, make decisions with the will. Be alert to self-serving choices, sensible enough to regret them, & change course. You'll live longer--indeed, forever!

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer has a way of keeping us at peace when tough decisions are right, agitates if not; smart prayer turns us around.

OCT 5, 2008 27th of yr: Is 5.1-7; Phil 4.6-9; MT 21.33-43

**First Reading: Isaiah 5:1-7**

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

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

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

**Second Reading: Philippians 4:6-9**

Brothers and sisters: Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing what you have learned and received and heard and seen in me. Then the God of peace will be with you.

**Gospel: Matthew 21:33-43**

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

**Prayerful thoughts from Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ, Director Manresa Jesuit Retreat House**

OCT 5, 2008 27th of yr: Is 5.1-7; Phil 4.6-9; MT 21.33-43

WHAT MORE WAS THERE TO DO FOR MY  
VINEYARD THAT I HAD NOT DONE?

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

**During the day:** Produce fruit. Collectively as well as individually, organically as well as organizationally. The human family lives, works, & dies together under one Maker, one Father. Make him proud.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer keeps us sensitive to grace. Prayer perceives-- senses--grace's organic character, the circulation of the vitality of the Redeemer through the members of his body. It's head & heart, Christ wills what's best for it, each & every member!

OCT 12, 2008 28th of yr: Is 25.6-10; Phil 4.12-14,19-20; Mt. 22.1-14

**First Reading: Isaiah 25:6-10a**

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

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

**I shall live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.** The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. In verdant pastures he gives me repose; beside restful waters he leads me; he refreshes my soul. He guides me in right paths for his name's sake. Even though I walk in the dark valley I fear no evil; for you are at my side with your rod and your staff that give me courage. You spread the table before me in the sight of my foes; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Only goodness and kindness follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD for years to come.

**Second Reading: Philippians 4:12-14, 19-20**

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

**Gospel: Matthew 22:1-14**

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

**Prayerful thoughts from Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ, Director Manresa Jesuit Retreat House**

**OCT 12, 2008 28th of yr: Is 25.6-10; Phil 4.12-14,19-20; Mt. 22.1-14**

THE LORD WILL PROVIDE FOR ALL PEOPLES A FEAST, DESTROY THE VEIL THAT  
VEILS ALL PEOPLE, DESTROY DEATH, WIPE THE TEARS FROM EVERY FACE.

"The feast is ready. Those invited were not worthy. So go out, invite whomever you find."

Many are invited, few are chosen.

**During the day:** Destroy the veil that hides you from others. Hold their hands; dry their tears; invite yourself to their feast of sorrow; be the one chosen to console. Let them know the real you.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer discerns both the choices & for what chosen. Prayer pursues the courage to oblige. Thoughtful prayer judges generously; willful prayer flows into fruitful action, then rests at peace in the results, whatever.

**OCT 19, 2008 29th of yr: Is 45.1,4-6; 1Thes 1.1-5; MT 22.15-21**

First Reading: Isaiah 45:1, 4-6

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

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 96:1, 3-5, 7-10

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

Second Reading: 1 Thessalonians 1:1-5b

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

Gospel: Matthew 22:15-21

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

**Prayerful thoughts from Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ, Director Manresa Jesuit Retreat House**

**OCT 19, 2008 29th of yr: Is 45.1,4-6; 1Thes 1.1-5; MT 22.15-21**

I HAVE CALLED YOU BY NAME, GIVING YOU A TITLE, THOUGH YOU  
KNEW ME NOT. I AM THE LORD, & THERE IS NO OTHER.

"Teacher, we know that you are a truthful man, not concerned with  
anyone's opinion, & do not regard a person's status."

**During the day:** Be truthful, coherent in judgments, & transparent in loyalty to the them. If humble enough to learn from others & grow in truth, you'll be free, a friend sought by all.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer keeps us tuned to truth, the Unknown God. Being of the will rather than the intellect, prayer grasps the ungraspable. Prayer chooses to believe & serve, trusting love rather than evidence; or rather, on the evidence of being loved, life a gift of the Lover unseen.

OCT 26, 2008 30th of yr: Ex 22.20-26; Thes 1.5-10; MT 22.34-40

**First Reading: Exodus 22:20-26**

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

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

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

**Second Reading: 1 Thessalonians 1:5c-10**

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

**Gospel: Matthew 22:34-40**

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

**Prayerful thoughts from Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ, Director Manresa Jesuit Retreat House**

**OCT 26, 2008 30th of yr: Ex 22.20-26; Thes 1.5-10; MT 22.34-40**

IF YOU TAKE YOUR NEIGHBOR'S CLOAK AS A PLEDGE, RETURN IT BEFORE  
SUNSET-- WHAT ELSE HAS HE TO SLEEP IN? IF HE CRIES OUT TO ME  
I WILL HEAR HIM; FOR I AM COMPASSIONATE.

You shall love your neighbor as yourself. The whole law &  
the prophets depend on these two commandments.

**During the day:** Don't loan, give to the poor. Call it a loan, for dignity's sake, but accept it back for that reason only. What you have is God's, his gift to you; share it with those who received the gift of poverty. You'll be the one to gain.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer muses. Ponders laws. Analyzes prophecies (i.e. truths foreseen). Prayer is the mind awaiting enlightenment, open to grace. What comes into focus isn't always rational, at times quite the opposite. No matter. Prayer flows into action, the other's needs are served. God is pleased. Faith grows.

**NOV 2, 2008 Faithful Departed: Wisdom 3.1-9; Rms 5.5-11; JN 6.37-40**

**First Reading: Wisdom 3:1-9**

The souls of the just are in the hand of God, and no torment shall touch them. They seemed, in the view of the foolish, to be dead; and their passing away was thought an affliction and their going forth from us, utter destruction. But they are in peace. For if before men, indeed, they be punished, yet is their hope full of immortality; chastised a little, they shall be greatly blessed, because God tried them and found them worthy of himself. As gold in the furnace, he proved them, and as sacrificial offerings he took them to himself. In the time of their visitation they shall shine, and shall dart about as sparks through stubble; they shall judge nations and rule over peoples, and the LORD shall be their King forever. Those who trust in him shall understand truth, and the faithful shall abide with him in love: because grace and mercy are with his holy ones, and his care is with his elect.

**Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 23**

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

**Second Reading: Romans 5:5-11**

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

**Gospel: John 6:37-40**

Jesus said to the crowds: "Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and I will not reject anyone who comes to me, because I came down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of the one who sent me. And this is the will of the one who sent me, that I should not lose anything of what he gave me, but that I should raise it on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him may have eternal life, and I shall raise him on the last day."

**Prayerful thoughts from Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ, Director Manresa Jesuit Retreat House**

**NOV 2, 2008 Faithful Departed: Wisdom 3.1-9; Rms 5.5-11; JN 6.37-40**

THE SOULS OF THE JUST ARE IN THE HAND OF GOD, & NO TORMENT  
SHALL TOUCH THEM. GOD TRIED THEM, &  
FOUND THEM WORTHY OF HIMSELF.

This is the will of the One who sent me, that everyone who sees  
the Son & believes in him may have eternal life.

**During the day:** Look around at love. Believe in it. Practice it. Love & life are inseparable: to love is to live, to live is to love. God *is* love--Lover & Beloved. Whoever recognizes with gratitude the Giver in the gift of love lives the life of the Giver forever.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer eternalizes our daily thoughts, words & deeds. Magnetic response to the power of God's creative & redemptive love, prayer fulfills the will to be possessed by possessing. Eternally.

NOV 9, 2008 Lateran Basilica: Ezek 47.1-2,8-12; 1Cor 3.9-11,16-17; JN 2.13-22

**First Reading: Ezekiel 47:1-2, 8-9, 12**

The angel brought me back to the entrance of the temple, and I saw water flowing out from beneath the threshold of the temple toward the east, for the façade of the temple was toward the east; the water flowed down from the southern side of the temple, south of the altar. He led me outside by the north gate, and around to the outer gate facing the east, where I saw water trickling from the southern side. He said to me, "This water flows into the eastern district down upon the Arabah, and empties into the sea, the salt waters, which it makes fresh. Wherever the river flows, every sort of living creature that can multiply shall live, and there shall be abundant fish, for wherever this water comes the sea shall be made fresh. Along both banks of the river, fruit trees of every kind shall grow; their leaves shall not fade, nor their fruit fail. Every month they shall bear fresh fruit, for they shall be watered by the flow from the sanctuary. Their fruit shall serve for food, and their leaves for medicine."

**Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 46:2-3, 5-6, 8-9**

**The waters of the river gladden the city of God, the holy dwelling of the Most High!** God is our refuge and our strength, an ever-present help in distress. Therefore, we fear not, though the earth be shaken and mountains plunge into the depths of the sea. There is a stream whose runlets gladden the city of God, the holy dwelling of the Most High. God is in its midst; it shall not be disturbed; God will help it at the break of dawn. The LORD of hosts is with us; our stronghold is the God of Jacob. Come! behold the deeds of the LORD, the astounding things he has wrought on earth.

**Second Reading: I Corinthians 3:9c-11, 16-17**

Brothers and sisters: You are God's building. According to the grace of God given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building upon it. But each one must be careful how he builds upon it, for no one can lay a foundation other than the one that is there, namely, Jesus Christ. Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person; for the temple of God, which you are, is holy.

**Gospel: John 2:13-22**

Since the Passover of the Jews was near, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. He found in the temple area those who sold oxen, sheep, and doves, as well as the money-changers seated there. He made a whip out of cords and drove them all out of the temple area, with the sheep and oxen, and spilled the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables, and to those who sold doves he said, "Take these out of here, and stop making my Father's house a marketplace." His disciples recalled the words of Scripture, *Zeal for your house will consume me*. At this the Jews answered and said to him, "What sign can you show us for doing this?" Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and you will raise it up in three days?" But he was speaking about the temple of his Body. Therefore, when he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they came to believe the Scripture and the word Jesus had spoken.

**Prayerful thoughts from Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ, Director Manresa Jesuit Retreat House**

**NOV 9, 2008 Lateran Basilica: Ezek 47.1-2,8-12; 1Cor 3.9-11,16-17; JN 2.13-22**

THE ANGEL BROUGHT ME TO THE TEMPLE. I SAW WATER FLOWING  
FROM BENEATH. 'WHEREVER THE RIVER FLOWS EVERY LIVING  
CREATURE THAT CAN MULTIPLY SHALL LIVE.'

"Destroy this temple & in 3 days I will raise it up." He was speaking about the temple of his body.

**During the day:** Multiply. Be a living creature that communicates life, not death. The intelligent, free choice is the ultimate of vital activity. Choose truth, goodness, beauty always, & God's life flows unending.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer survives the death of sin. Sinfulness repented is sinfulness reversed; prayer cultivates the virtues that replace vices uprooted. Prayer rebuilds God's temple deep within the human heart.

Nov 16, 2008 33rd of yr: Proverbs 31.10-13, 19-20,30-31; 1Thes 5.1-6; MT 15.14-15,19-21

**First Reading: Proverbs 31:10-13, 19-20, 30-31**

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

**Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 128:1-5**

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

**Second Reading: I Thessalonians 5:1-6**

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

**Gospel: Matthew 25:14-30**

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

**Prayerful thoughts from Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ, Director Manresa Jesuit Retreat House**  
Nov 16, 2008 33rd of yr: Proverbs 31.10-13, 19-20,30-31; 1Thes 5.1-6; MT 15.14-15,19-21  
WHEN ONE FINDS A WORTHY WIFE, HER VALUE IS FAR BEYOND PEARLS.

"Well done, good & faithful servant! Since you were faithful in small matters,  
I will give you great responsibilities. Come, share your master's joy."

**During the day:** Share the joy of those you serve. Give of yourself generously to your responsibilities. Be worthy of gratitude & praise, but give God the credit. Your honest humility assures yet greater & more important service.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer is the intimacy of communion with the One whose responsibilities you share. It's the will of Another you fulfill, his the wisdom of the plan you execute, the strength with which you do so. Prayer is the connector between Source & servant.

**NOV 23, 2008 Christ the King: Ezek 34.11-17; 1Cor 15.20-28; MT 25.31-46**

**First Reading: Ezra 34:11-12, 15-17**

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

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

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

**Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 28**

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

**Gospel: Matthew 25:31-46**

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

**Prayerful thoughts from Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ, Director Manresa Jesuit Retreat House**

**NOV 23, 2008 Christ the King: Ezek 34.11-17; 1Cor 15.20-28; MT 25.31-46**

I MYSELF WILL PASTURE MY SHEEP, SAYS THE LORD GOD. THE LOST I WILL SEEK, THE STRAYED BRING BACK, THE INJURED BIND UP, THE SICK HEAL.

"Come, you blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. I was hungry & you gave me food..."

**During the day:** Don't be distracted: feed the hungry! Nourish others; spiritually, culturally, physically, however. Give of yourself; serve generously--not *needs*, the *needy*! You're made in God's image: *Be* Godlike!

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer is spiritual awareness, memory recalling the hidden truths we've chosen to believe about ourselves & God. Prayer ponders, judges--then the will kicks in again & chooses to be available for whatever God disposes. No second thoughts.