

## 2009 Liturgical Year B

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

**Catholic November 30, 2008**  
**First Sunday – Advent**

**First Reading: Isaiah 63:16b-17, 19b; 64:2-7**

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

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

Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved. O shepherd of Israel, hearken, from your throne upon the cherubim, shine forth. Rouse your power, and come to save us. Once again, O LORD of hosts, look down from heaven, and see; take care of this vine, and protect what your right hand has planted the son of man whom you yourself made strong. May your help be with the man of your right hand, with the son of man whom you yourself made strong. Then we will no more withdraw from you; give us new life, and we will call upon your name.

**Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:3-9**

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

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

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

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

**Reflections for Nov 30, 2008 - 1st Advent: Isa 63.16-64.7; ICor 1.3-9; MK 13.33-37**

YOU, LORD, ARE OUR FATHER, OUR REDEEMER YOU ARE NAMED FOREVER.  
OH, THAT YOU WOULD REND THE HEAVENS & COME DOWN! WOULD THAT  
YOU MIGHT MEET US DOING RIGHT, MINDFUL OF YOU IN OUR WAYS!

"You do not know when the lord of the house is coming.

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

**During the day:** Be ever mindful of God's ways: do what's right. Not necessarily what's right for you, but what's right in itself-- hopefully, right for the other guy. Whatever your action, If done with a right intention, God will use it for his purpose.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer is the training school in God's ways. Prayer studies God, oneself, & the world around us. Prayer focuses on harmonizing the three; the goal is to see them from God's perspective, rather than one's own. Prayer is the light that illuminates the difference

**Catholic December 7, 2008**  
**Second Sunday – Advent**

**First Reading: Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11**

Comfort, give comfort to my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her service is at an end, her guilt is expiated; indeed, she has received from the hand of the LORD double for all her sins. A voice cries out: In the desert prepare the way of the LORD! Make straight in the wasteland a highway for our God! Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill shall be made low; the rugged land shall be made a plain, the rough country, a broad valley. Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken. Go up on to a high mountain, Zion, herald of glad tidings; cry out at the top of your voice, Jerusalem, herald of good news! Fear not to cry out and say to the cities of Judah: Here is your God! Here comes with power the Lord GOD, who rules by his strong arm; here is his reward with him, his recompense before him. Like a shepherd he feeds his flock; in his arms he gathers the lambs, carrying them in his bosom, and leading the ewes with care.

**Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 85:9-14**

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

**Second Reading: 2 Peter 3:8-14**

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

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

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

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

**Reflections for DEC 7, 2008 - 2nd Advent: Isa 40.1-11; 2Peter 3.8-14; MK 1.1-8**

GIVE COMFORT TO MY PEOPLE, SAYS YOUR GOD. 'HERE COMES WITH  
POWER THE LORD GOD, HIS REWARD WITH HIM, HIS RECOMPENSE BEFORE HIM.'

John the Baptist appeared proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sin. 'One mightier than I is coming after me; I have baptized you with water; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.'

**During the day:** Let your demeanor immerse others in the spirit of truth & goodness. A clean heart & an honest mind go a long way towards purifying polluted cultures. The other may laugh or ridicule, but his soul carries the lesson home with him. Time's in its favor.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Purgative prayer acknowledges the reality of self-centeredness in the way things are; illuminative prayer responds gratefully to new insights into the way they should be; unitive prayer allows the power of God to work the wonders of his original design.

**Catholic December 14, 2008**  
**Third Sunday – Advent**

**First Reading: Isaiah 61:1-2a, 10-11**

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

**Responsorial Psalm: Luke 1:46-50, 53-54**

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

**Second Reading: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24**

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

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

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

**Prayerful thoughts from Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ, Director Manresa Jesuit Retreat House**  
**Reflections for DEC 14, 2008 - 3rd Advent: Isa 61.1-2,10-11; Thess 5.16-24; JN 1.6-8,19-28**

THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME. HE HAS SENT ME TO BRING  
GLAD TIDINGS TO THE POOR, TO HEAL THE BROKENHEARTED.

A man named John was sent from God, he came for testimony, to testify to  
the light. He was not the light, but came to testify to the light

**During the day:** Tend to the brokenhearted, be good to the poor. Testify to the light: turn it on! Share time & energy, enthusiasm & optimism where need obvious & hearts open to the work of God's grace. Be its channel.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer of both served & server ponder God's image in the other. As one, they sense the presence & power of God, & assimilate together the transformation wrought by Love. However insignificant the service, its eternity is that of God's gratitude.

**Catholic December 21, 2008**  
**Fourth Sunday – Advent**

**First Reading: 2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8b-12,14a-16**

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

The LORD also reveals to you that he will establish a house for you. And when your time comes and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your heir after you, sprung from your loins, and I will make his kingdom firm. I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me. Your house and your kingdom shall endure forever before me; your throne shall stand firm forever.”

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

**For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.** The promises of the LORD I will sing forever; through all generations my mouth shall proclaim your faithfulness. For you have said, “My kindness is established forever”; in heaven you have confirmed your faithfulness. “I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn to David my servant: Forever will I confirm your posterity and establish your throne for all generations.” “He shall say of me, ‘You are my father, my God, the Rock, my savior.’ Forever I will maintain my kindness toward him, and my covenant with him stands firm.”

**Second Reading: Romans 16:25-27**

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

**Gospel: Luke 1:26-38**

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

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

**Reflections for DEC 21, 2008 - 4th Advent: 2Sam 7.1-16; Rms 1.25-27; LK 1.26-38**

GO, TELL MY SERVANT DAVID, I WILL RAISE UP YOUR HEIR AFTER  
YOU & MAKE HIS KINGDOM FIRM. I WILL BE A FATHER TO HIM,  
& HE SHALL BE A SON TO ME.'

'Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive  
& bear a son & name him Jesus. The Holy Spirit will come upon you;  
the child to be born will be called holy. the Son of God.

**During the day:** Be fatherly. Better still, be also motherly. The vitality of your activities--thoughts, words & deeds--comes from God, & he identifies with them. Unless rejected, his the affection that your respect & concern communicate. Be generous.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer ponders our role as God's messengers. Our sense of being is a sense of sent; to whom? for what? Performance is embraced prayerfully by the will more than by the intellect; sometimes unaware of the message, we're always available for the service.

**Catholic December 28, 2008**  
**First Sunday After Christmas**

**First Reading: Genesis 15:1-6; 21:1-3**

The word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying: "Fear not, Abram! I am your shield; I will make your reward very great." But Abram said, "O Lord GOD, what good will your gifts be, if I keep on being childless and have as my heir the steward of my house, Eliezer?" Abram continued, "See, you have given me no offspring, and so one of my servants will be my heir." Then the word of the LORD came to him: "No, that one shall not be your heir; your own issue shall be your heir." **The Lord took Abram outside and said, "Look up at the sky and count the stars, if you can.** Just so," he added, "shall your descendants be." Abram put his faith in the LORD, who credited it to him as an act of righteousness.....The LORD took note of Sarah as he had said he would; he did for her as he had promised. Sarah became pregnant and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time that God had stated. Abraham gave the name Isaac to this son of his whom Sarah bore him

**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.

**Psalms 105:1-9**

**The Lord remembers his covenant for ever.** Give thanks to the LORD, invoke his name; make known among the nations his deeds. Sing to him, sing his praise, proclaim all his wondrous deeds. Glory in his holy name; rejoice, O hearts that seek the LORD! Look to the LORD in his strength; constantly seek his face. You descendants of Abraham, his servants, sons of Jacob, his chosen ones! He, the LORD, is our God; throughout the earth his judgments prevail. He remembers forever his covenant which he made binding for a thousand generations which he entered into with Abraham and by his oath to Isaac.

**Second Reading: Hebrews 11:11-12, 17-19**

Brothers and sisters: By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance; he went out, not knowing where he was to go. By faith he received power to generate, even though he was past the normal age (and Sarah herself was sterile for he thought that the one who had made the promise was trustworthy. So it was that there came forth from one man, himself as dead, descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sands on the seashore. By faith Abraham, when put to the test, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was ready to offer his only son, of whom it was said, "Through Isaac descendants shall bear your name." He reasoned that God was able to raise even from the dead, and he received Isaac back as a symbol.

**Gospel: Luke 2:22, 39-40**

When the days were completed for their purification according to the law of Moses, they took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. When they had fulfilled all the prescriptions of the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.

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

**Reflections for Dec 28, 2008 - Holy Family: Gen 15.1-6, 21.1-3; Heb 11.8-12,17-19; LK 2.22-40**

THE WORD OF THE LORD CAME TO ABRAM: 'FEAR NOT, ABRAM! I AM  
YOUR SHIELD I WILL MAKE YOUR REWARD VERY GREAT.'

Simeon said to Mary, his mother, "This child is destined for the fall & rise of many in  
Israel, a sign of contradiction. You yourself a sword will pierce,  
so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

**During the day:** Don't hide your thoughts; express them, but keep them honest. Don't fear the truth, nor let others. Its strength comes from God, whatever the consequences. He the shield, & eventual victory his promised reward.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer subdues fear. Fear--like all emotions—is blind. Prayer invokes truth, the Absolute Truth: God is Love. God made me, wants what's best for, & in prayer I entrust myself to his care. He cares for me, if & as I take care of others—even when a sword is piercing.

## Catholic January 4, 2009

### Epiphany of the Lord

#### First Reading: Isaiah 60:1-6

Rise up in splendor, Jerusalem! Your light has come, the glory of the Lord shines upon you. See, darkness covers the earth, and thick clouds cover the peoples; but upon you the LORD shines, and over you appears his glory. Nations shall walk by your light, and kings by your shining radiance. Raise your eyes and look about; they all gather and come to you: your sons come from afar, and your daughters in the arms of their nurses. Then you shall be radiant at what you see, your heart shall throb and overflow, for the riches of the sea shall be emptied out before you, the wealth of nations shall be brought to you. Caravans of **camels** shall fill you, **dromedaries** from Midian and Ephah; all from Sheba shall come bearing gold and frankincense, and proclaiming the praises of the LORD.

#### Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-13

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

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

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

#### Gospel: Matthew 2:1-12

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

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

#### Reflections for Jan 4, 2009 - Epiphany: Isa 60.1-6; Eph 3.2-6; MT 2.1-12

**THOUGH NIGHT STILL COVERS THE EARTH AND DARKNESS  
THE PEOPLES, THE GLORY OF THE LORD IS RISING ON YOU.**

**"Go, find out all about this child; when you have found him,  
let me know, that I may go & do him homage."**

**During the day:** Go, find out. If it seems to be important, check it out--if you don't, you'll never know where your curiosity may have led you. Trust your instincts, if you know from experience they're honest. If they aren't, change.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer is the human spirit's reaction to darkness, richest at nightfall & just before dawn--alternative to fear. Fear seeks to destroy whatever threatens; prayer seeks truth, faces the threat with confidence in God, who comes with childlike innocence to give strength to meet the challenge.

**Catholic January 11, 2009**  
**The Feast of the Baptism of the Lord**

**First Reading: 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.   **or**

**Responsorial Psalm: Isaiah 12:2-6**

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

**Second Reading: 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."

**Second Reading: 1 John 5:1-9**

Beloved: Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is begotten by God, and everyone who loves the Father loves also the one begotten by him. In this way we know that we love the children of God when we love God and obey his commandments. For the love of God is this, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome, for whoever is begotten by God conquers the world. And the victory that conquers the world is our faith. Who indeed is the victor over the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? This is the one who came through water and blood, Jesus Christ, not by water alone, but by water and blood. The Spirit is the one who testifies, and the Spirit is truth. So there are three that testify, the Spirit, the water, and the blood, and the three are of one accord. If we accept human testimony, the testimony of God is surely greater. Now the testimony of God is this, that he has testified on behalf of his Son.

**Gospel: Mark 1:7-11**

This is what John the Baptist proclaimed: "One mightier than I is coming after me. I am not worthy to stoop and loosen the thongs of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." It happened in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized in the Jordan by John. On coming up out of the water he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit, like a dove, descending upon him. And a voice came from the heavens, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

**Prayerful thoughts from Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ, Director Manresa Jesuit Retreat House  
Reflections for Jan 11, 2009 - Baptism of Jesus: Isa 42.1-7; Acts 10.34-38; MK 1.7-11**

**I, THE LORD, HAVED CALLED YOU FOR THE VICTORY OF JUSTICE; TO  
OPEN THE EYES OF THE BLIND, BRING PRISONERS FROM CONFINEMENT,  
& FROM THE DUNGEON, THOSE WHO LIVE IN DARKNESS.**

**John proclaimed, 'I have baptized you with water; he will baptize you with the  
Holy Spirit.' A voice came from the heavens: 'This is my beloved Son,  
with whom I am well pleased.'**

**During the day:** Be a liberator. Look around & identify the prisoners. Set them free. Help them see the truth about themselves & others; the Spirit of truth uses us whenever we let It. The real repression is from within: free the repressors, & the oppressed regain their dignity.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer is spiritual exercise. Godlike, mind & will are of the spirit, not the flesh. The One who leads our exercises is the Spirit of Christ; he did a good job with Jesus & is willing to do the same with us. Regular prayer, grateful & generous, gives It the opportunity.

**Catholic January 18, 2009**  
**Second Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**First Reading: 1 Samuel 3:3-10, 19**

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

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

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

**Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 6:13-15, 17-20**

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

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

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

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

**Reflections for Jan 18, 2009 - 2nd of yr: 1Sam 3.3-10,19; 1Cor 6.13-20; JN 1.35-42**

**ELI SAID TO SAMUEL, "GO BACK TO SLEEP, & IF YOU ARE CALLED,**

**REPLY: 'SPEAK, LORD, FOR YOUR SERVANT IS LISTENING.'**

**Jesus turned & said to them, 'What are you looking for?'**

**They replied, 'Rabbi, where are you staying?' 'Come & see.'**

**During the day:** Be friendly. With everybody. Let people get to know you. Show interest in others. God's in all of us, & has a lot to share. Be a discerning listener; & when you speak, let it be something worth hearing.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer is of the sub-conscious as well as the conscious mind; near the surface, it remains always alert to God's presence & action in every situation. God took on humanity in Jesus, the better to facilitate communication. We live & pray in this communion.

**Catholic January 25, 2009**  
**Third Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**First Reading: Jonah 3:1-5, 10**

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

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

**Teach me your ways, O Lord.** Your ways, O LORD, make known to me; teach me your paths, Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my savior. Remember that your compassion, O LORD, and your love are from of old. In your kindness remember me, because of your goodness, O LORD. Good and upright is the LORD; thus he shows sinners the way. He guides the humble to justice and teaches the humble his way.

**Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 7:29-31**

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

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

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

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

**Reflections for Jan 25, 2009 - 3rd of yr: Jonah 3.1-5,10; 1Cor 7.29-31; MK 1.14-20**

**THE WORD OF THE LORD CAME TO JONAH, 'SET OUT FOR NINEVEH & ANNOUNCE THE MESSAGE I WILL TELL YOU.' WHEN THE PEOPLE OF NINEVEH BELIEVED IN GOD, THEY PROCLAIMED A FAST & PUT ON SACKCLOTH.**

**After John had been arrested, Jesus came proclaiming the gospel:**

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

**During the day:** Sift through the news of the day & find something good, something you can believe in. Sift through your own behavior, be grateful for the good, regret the not-so-good. Add to the *good* News: improve!

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer gazes into the mirror of the soul, grace the light that helps see the spots & blemishes. No one to blame but yourself if you don't do something about them.

**Catholic February 1, 2009**  
**Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**First Reading: Deuteronomy 18:15-20**

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

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

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

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

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

**Gospel Mark 1:21-28**

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

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

**Reflections for Feb 1, 2009 - 4th of yr: Deut 18.15-20; 1Cor 7.32-35; MK 1. 21-28**

THE LORD SAID TO MOSES, 'I WILL RAISE UP FOR THEM A PROPHET  
LIKE YOU & PUT MY WORDS IN HIS MOUTH. HE SHALL TELL THEM  
ALL THAT I COMMANDED HIM.'

On the Sabbath Jesus entered the synagogue & taught. He rebuked an unclean spirit: "Quiet, come out of him." All were amazed & said, "What is this! A new teaching with authority! He even commands unclean spirits, & they obey him!"

**During the day:** Be keen to the authority of truth. Listen to all with confidence in your own integrity. With a mind made to seek & recognize truth, remain alert to deception. With judgments always relative to the data presented, make decisions accordingly; trust the inner peace that accompanies a right intention.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer is the sieve of human cognition; it positions the mind in submission to revealed truth, assured its meaning, though obscure, will be perceived. God is the author of all truth, competent to communicate it, measured to the need of the moment. Prayer expects, awaits, & recognizes confirmation.

**Catholic February 8, 2009**  
**Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**First Reading: Job 7:1-4, 6-7**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Reflections for Feb 8, 2009 - 5th of yr: Job 7.1-7; 1Cor 9.16-23; MK 1.29-39**

**THE NIGHT DRAGS ON. I AM FILLED WITH RESTLESSNESS UNTIL  
THE DAWN. MY DAYS COME TO AN END WITHOUT HOPE.**

**Rising early before dawn, Jesus left & went off to a deserted place, where he prayed.**

**During the day:** Restless nights? Get up & pray--that'll make you sleepy. Days end without hope? Pray *before* you go to bed. Your nights & days belong to God in the first place; why not let him do the worrying? Trust him; he's got everything under control.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** All authentic prayer, Christian & otherwise, is the prayer of Jesus. Assuming humanity, the Son of God becomes every person's link to the Father, however unaware each may be. Like Moses, he takes our needs to the Father; then returns with the Father's directives & graces. Always.

**Catholic February 15, 2009**  
**Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**First Reading: Leviticus 13:1-2, 44-46**

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

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

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

**Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1**

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

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

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

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

**Reflections for Feb 15, 2009 - 6th of yr: Lev 13.1-2,44-46;1Cor 10.31-11.1; MK 1.40-45**  
**AS LONG AS THE SORE IS ON HIM, HE SHALL DECLARE HIMSELF UNCLEAR.**  
**HE SHALL DWELL APART, MAKING HIS ABODE OUTSIDE THE CAMP.**

**A leper came to Jesus, knelt, & said, 'If you wish, you can make me clean.'**  
**Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand, touched him, & said, 'I do will it.**  
**Be made clean.' The leprosy left him immediately.**

**During the day:** *Do* will it, &, presuming it's God's will, too, it'll happen. God's will is always operative; trick is to keep our wills in tune with his. He made us intelligent & free, to make wise judgments & right choices. He decrees accordingly.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer is the effort to 'sense' what God is willing. Jesus sensed the Father wanted the leper cured, so he willed it, too. As long as one is sincere in desiring to be an instrument of God's will in all choices & decisions, no way it won't be; adjust to the situation accordingly.

**Catholic February 22, 2009**  
**Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**First Reading: Isaiah 43:18-19, 21-22, 24b-25**

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

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

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

**Second Reading: 2 Corinthians 1:18-22**

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

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

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

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

**Reflections for Feb 22, 2009 - 7th of yr: Isa 43.18-25; 2Cor 1.18-22; MK 2.1-12**

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

**IT IS I WHO WIPE OUT, FOR MY OWN SAKE, YOUR OFFENSES;**

**YOUR SINS I REMEMBER NO MORE.**

**They let down the mat on which he was lying. When Jesus saw their faith,**

**he said, 'Son, your sins are forgiven.'**

**During the day:** Don't burden others with your selfishness. Stop thinking of others as orbiting around you; try to think of yourself as orbiting around them, one at a time, beginning with the one in front of you. What can you give, rather than get?

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer orbits around God, taking each of the communities in which you orbit--family, school, business, friends, neighborhood--with you. Prayer assumes with Christ your own & the sins of others, immerses all in God's renewing sunshine.

**Catholic March 1, 2009**  
**First Sunday of Lent**

**First Reading: Genesis 9:8-15**

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

**Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 25:3-9**

**Your ways, O Lord, are love and truth to those who keep your covenant.** Your ways, O LORD, make known to me; teach me your paths, Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my savior. Remember that your compassion, O LORD, and your love are from of old. In your kindness remember me, because of your goodness, O LORD. Good and upright is the LORD, thus he shows sinners the way. He guides the humble to justice, and he teaches the humble his way.

**Second Reading: 1 Peter 3:18-22**

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

**Gospel: Mark 1:12-15**

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

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

**Reflections for March 1, 2009 - 1st Lent: Gen 9.8-15; 1Peter 3.18-22; MK 1.12-15**

GOD SAID TO NOAH, 'SEE, I AM ESTABLISHING MY COVENANT  
WITH YOU & YOUR DESCENDANTS & EVERY LIVING  
CREATURE THAT WAS WITH YOU.'

After John had been arrested, Jesus came proclaiming the gospel of God:

'This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand.

Repent, & believe in the gospel.'

**During the day:** Do the normal thing: recognize & regret mistakes. Not only mistakes of bad judgment, but especially mistakes of bad will--deliberate choices to do the wrong thing. Trust a forgiving God, apologize to the wronged, repair the damage. Practice the gospel.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Pray is to repent; repent is to pray. Every other living creature is praising God just by being--we're the only ones that can freely thumb our nose at God! & that brings chaos on all creation, living & non-living! Prayer is our effort to make amends & set things right.

**Catholic March 8, 2009**  
**Second Sunday in Lent**

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

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

**Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 116:10, 15-16**

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

**Second Reading: Romans 8:31b-34**

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

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

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

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

**Reflections for March 1, 2009 - 2nd Lent: Gen 22.1-2.9-18; Rom 8.31-34; MK 9.2-10**

ABRAHAM, ABRAHAM! IN YOUR DESCENDANTS ALL NATIONS SHALL  
FIND BLESSING-- ALL BECAUSE YOU OBEYED MY COMMAND.

Peter said, 'Rabbi, it is good for us to be here.' From the cloud came a voice,  
'This is my beloved Son. Listen to him.'

**During the day:** Be obedient to legitimate authority. Obedience is an act of the will, not the mind; a choice, not a judgment. The will chooses what's right, whether or not the mind clearly perceives it as such--humble integrity acknowledges others may have an equally authentic grasp of truth.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Whenever we carry out the morally acceptable directives of another, prayer guarantees it's the divine will we obey. Results may be minimal to the human eye, but not to God's.

**Catholic March 15, 2009**  
**Third Sunday in Lent**

First Reading: Exodus 20:1-17

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

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 19:8-11

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

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:22-25

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

Gospel: John 2:13-25

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

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

**Reflections for March 15, 2009 - 3rd Lent: Exodus 20.1-17; 1Cor 1/22-25; JN 2.13-25**  
**I THE LORD AM YOUR GOD. YOU SHALL NOT HAVE OTHER GODS BESIDES ME.**

For his part, Jesus did not trust himself to them because he knew them well--  
he was well aware of what was in man's heart.

**During the day:** Pay attention to your habits: identify the virtues, beware the vices. Virtues are habits of doing good. Vices are self-serving habits that ignore others--one's own satisfaction becomes the deity that rules. Powerless, once exhausted, it vanishes.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer measures the priorities of the heart. Tests for authentic values. Penetrates the hearts of others. Allows the Spirit to make connections. Recognizes the Christ that comes to life in both. In all.

**Catholic March 22, 2009**  
**Fourth Sunday in Lent**

First Reading: 2 Chronicles 36:14-16, 19-23

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

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 137:1-6

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

Second Reading: Ephesians 2:4-10

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

Gospel: John 3:14-21

Jesus said to Nicodemus: "Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life." For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him will not be condemned, but whoever does not believe has already been condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the verdict, that the light came into the world, but people preferred darkness to light, because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come toward the light, so that his works might not be exposed. But whoever lives the truth comes to the light, so that his works may be clearly seen as done in God.

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

**Reflections for March 22, 2009 - 4th Lent: 2Chr 36.14-23; Eph 2.4-10; Jn 3.14-21**

EARLY & OFTEN DID THE LORD SEND HIS MESSENGERS  
TO THEM. FOR HE HAD COMPASSION ON HIS PEOPLE.

Jesus said to Nicodemus, "The light came into the world, but people  
preferred darkness to light, because their works were evil. But  
whoever lives the truth comes to the light, so that his works can  
be clearly seen as done in God."

**During the day:** Thank God for sight & light! Thank God for sound & hearing! Sight & hearing go together, both vehicles of truth to the mind. What you choose to do with it when it gets there is up to your own willingness to embrace & live it.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer gives sight to the blind. Truth transcends material images & reality, it's perception conditioned by God's self-communication. Prayer presumes a willingness to be informed by Truth Itself--a fullness unfathomable.

**Catholic March 29, 2009**  
**Fifth Sunday in Lent**

**First Reading: Jeremiah 31:31-34**

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

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

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

**Second Reading: Hebrews 5:7-9**

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

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

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

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

**Reflections for March 29, 2009 - 5th Lent: Jer 31.31-34; Heb 5.7-9; JN 12.20-33**

I WILL PLACE MY LAW WITHIN THEM & WRITE IT UPON THEIR HEARTS.

ALL WILL KNOW ME, & I WILL REMEMBER THEIR SIN NO MORE.

Jesus said to them, 'Whoever loves his life loses it, & whoever hates his life in this world will preserve it for eternal life.'

**During the day:** Love life. Live it fully. But choose your criteria carefully. What, besides the good of the other, are you 'loving' more? Yourself? Success? Good fortune? To exhaust your capacity of learning to love, nothing in the world serves-- except to sacrifice it.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer looks beyond the gift of life to the Giver. The gift is less the object of gratitude than the love of the Giver. Required, it brings us home--out of our world, & into His.

**7 UPs Lesson April 5, 2009**  
**Sixth Sunday in Lent**

**First Reading: 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: Mark 14:1 – 15:47**

The Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were to take place in two days' time. So the chief priests and the scribes were seeking a way to arrest him by treachery and put him to death. They said, "Not during the festival, for fear that there may be a riot among the people." When he was in Bethany reclining at table in the house of Simon the leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of perfumed oil, costly genuine spikenard. She broke the alabaster jar and poured it on his head. There were some who were indignant. "Why has there been this waste of perfumed oil? It could have been sold for more than three hundred days' wages and the money given to the poor." They were infuriated with her. Jesus said, "Let her alone. Why do you make trouble for her? She has done a good thing for me. The poor you will always have with you, and whenever you wish you can do good to them, but you will not always have me. She has done what she could. She has anticipated anointing my body for burial. Amen, I say to you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed to the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her."

Then Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, went off to the chief priests to hand him over to them. When they heard him they were pleased and promised to pay him money. Then he looked for an opportunity to hand him over.

On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, when they sacrificed the Passover lamb, his disciples said to him, "Where do you want us to go and prepare for you to eat the Passover?" He sent two of his disciples and said to them, "Go into the city and a man will meet you, carrying a jar of water. Follow him. Wherever he enters, say to the master of the house, 'The Teacher says, "Where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?"'" Then he will show you a large upper room furnished

and ready. Make the preparations for us there." The disciples then went off, entered the city, and found it just as he had told them; and they prepared the Passover.

When it was evening, he came with the Twelve. And as they reclined at table and were eating, Jesus said, "Amen, I say to you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me." They began to be distressed and to say to him, one by one, "Surely it is not I?" He said to them, "One of the Twelve, the one who dips with me into the dish. For 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."

While they were eating, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, and said, "Take it; this is my body." Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, and they all drank from it. He said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed for many. Amen, I say to you, I shall not drink again the fruit of the vine until the day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God." Then, after singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Then Jesus said to them, "All of you will have your faith shaken, for it is written: *I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be dispersed.* But after I have been raised up, I shall go before you to Galilee." Peter said to him, "Even though all should have their faith shaken, mine will not be." Then Jesus said to him, "Amen, I say to you, this very night before the cock crows twice you will deny me three times." But he vehemently replied, "Even though I should have to die with you, I will not deny you." And they all spoke similarly.

Then they came to a place named Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." He took with him Peter, James, and John, and began to be troubled and distressed. Then he said to them, "My soul is sorrowful even to death. Remain here and keep watch." He advanced a little and fell to the ground and prayed that if it were possible the hour might pass by him; he said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible to you. Take this cup away from me, but not what I will but what you will." When he returned he found them asleep. He said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? Watch and pray that you may not undergo the test. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak." Withdrawing again, he prayed, saying the same thing. Then he returned once more and found them asleep, for they could not keep their eyes open and did not know what to answer him. He returned a third time and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It is enough. The hour has come. Behold, the Son of Man is to be handed over to sinners. Get up, let us go. See, my betrayer is at hand."

Then, while he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived, accompanied by a crowd with swords and clubs who had come from the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders. His betrayer had arranged a signal with them, saying, "The man I shall kiss is the one; arrest him and lead him away securely." He came and immediately went over to him and said, "Rabbi." And he kissed him. At this they laid hands on him and arrested him. One of the bystanders drew his sword, struck the high priest's servant, and cut off his ear. Jesus said to them in reply, "Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs, to seize me? Day after day I was with you teaching in the temple area, yet you did not arrest me; but that the Scriptures may be fulfilled."

And they all left him and fled. Now a young man followed him wearing nothing but a linen cloth about his body. They seized him, but he left the cloth behind and ran off naked.

They led Jesus away to the high priest, and all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes came together. Peter followed him at a distance into the high priest's courtyard and was seated with the guards, warming himself at the fire.

The chief priests and the entire Sanhedrin kept trying to obtain testimony against Jesus in order to put him to death, but they found none. Many gave false witness against him, but their testimony did not agree. Some took the stand and testified falsely against him, alleging, "We heard him say, 'I will destroy this temple made with hands and within three days I will build another not made with hands.'" Even so their testimony did not agree. The high priest rose before the assembly and questioned Jesus, saying, "Have you no answer? What are these men testifying against you?" But he was silent and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him and said to him, "Are you the Christ, the son of the Blessed One?" Then Jesus answered, "I am; and 'you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power and coming with the clouds of heaven.'" At that the high priest tore his garments and said, "What further need have we of witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?" They all condemned him as deserving to die. Some began to spit on him. They blindfolded him and struck him and said to him, "Prophecy!" And the guards greeted him with blows.

While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the high priest's maids came along. Seeing Peter warming himself, she looked intently at him and said, "You too were with the Nazarene, Jesus." But **he denied it** saying, "I neither know nor understand what you are talking about." So he went out into the outer court. Then the cock crowed. The maid saw him and began again to say to the bystanders, "This man is one of them." Once again **he denied it**. A little later the bystanders said to Peter once more, "Surely you are one of them; for you too are a Galilean." He began to curse and to swear, "**I do not know this man about whom you are talking.**" And immediately a cock crowed a second time. Then Peter remembered the word that Jesus had said to him, "Before the cock crows twice you will deny me three times." He broke down and wept.

As soon as morning came, the chief priests with the elders and the scribes, that is, the whole Sanhedrin held a council. They bound Jesus, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate. Pilate questioned him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" He said to him in reply, "You say so." The chief priests accused him of many things. Again Pilate questioned him, "Have you no answer? See how many things they accuse you of." Jesus gave him no further answer, so that Pilate was amazed.

Now on the occasion of the feast he used to release to them one prisoner whom they requested. A man called Barabbas was then in prison along with the rebels who had committed murder in a rebellion. The crowd came forward and began to ask him to do for them as he was accustomed. Pilate answered, "Do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews?" For he knew that it was out of envy that the chief priests had handed him over. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release Barabbas for them instead. Pilate again said to them in reply, "Then what do you want me to do with the man you call the king of the Jews?" They shouted again, "Crucify him." Pilate said to them, "Why? What evil has he done?" They only shouted the louder, "Crucify him." So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas to them and, after he had Jesus scourged, handed him over to be crucified.

The soldiers led him away inside the palace, that is, the praetorium, and assembled the whole cohort. They clothed him in purple and, weaving a crown of thorns, placed it on him. They began to salute him with, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and kept striking his head with a reed and spitting upon him. They knelt before him in homage. And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the purple cloak, dressed him in his own clothes, and led him out to crucify him.

They pressed into service a passer-by, Simon, a Cyrenian, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross. They brought him to the place of Golgotha — which is translated Place of the Skull — They gave him wine drugged with myrrh, but he did not take it.

Then they crucified him and divided his garments by casting lots for them to see what each should take.

It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. The inscription of the charge against him read, "The King of the Jews." With him they crucified two revolutionaries, one on his right and one on his left. Those passing by reviled him, shaking their heads and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself by coming down from the cross." Likewise the chief priests, with the scribes, mocked him among themselves and said, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe." Those who were crucified with him also kept abusing him.

At noon darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And at three o'clock Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "*Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?*" which is translated, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Some of the bystanders who heard it said, "Look, he is calling Elijah." One of them ran, soaked a sponge with wine, put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink saying, "Wait, let us see if Elijah comes to take him down." Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last. The veil of the sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom. When the centurion who stood facing him saw how he breathed his last he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!" There were also women looking on from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of the younger James and of Joses, and Salome. These women had followed him when he was in Galilee and ministered to him. There were also many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem.

When it was already evening, since it was the day of preparation, the day before the sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, a distinguished member of the council, who was himself awaiting the kingdom of God, came and courageously went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Pilate was amazed that he was already dead. He summoned the centurion and asked him if Jesus had already died. And when he learned of it from the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph. Having bought a linen cloth, he took him down, wrapped him in the linen cloth, and laid him in a tomb that had been hewn out of the rock. Then he rolled a stone against the entrance to the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses watched where he was laid.

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

**Reflections for APRIL 5, 2009 - Palm Sunday: Isa 50.4-7; Phil 2.5-11; MK 14.1-15.47**

THE LORD HAS GIVEN ME A WELL-TRAINED TONGUE, THAT I MIGHT SPEAK TO  
THE WEARY A WORD THAT WILL ROUSE THEM; MORNING AFTER MORNING  
HE OPENS MY EAR THAT I MAY HEAR.

'Simon, could you not watch for one hour? Pray, that you do not undergo the test.

The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.'

**During the day:** Morning after morning, be a good listener. Day after day, rouse the weary. Won't take a lot of effort, just a little training. The Lord's given you the gift: use it!

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer is not something you *have* to do, it's something *you want* to do, the better to hear the Word of the Lord that rouses. He knows exactly what you need, but he can't make you pay attention. That's your job.

**Catholic April 12, 2009**  
**Easter Sunday**

**First Reading: Acts 10:34a, 37-45**

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

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

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

**Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 5:6b-8**

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

**Gospel: Mark 16:1-7**

When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go and anoint him. Very early when the sun had risen, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb. They were saying to one another, "Who will roll back the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?" When they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back; it was very large. On entering the tomb they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a white robe, and they were utterly amazed. He said to them, "Do not be amazed! You seek Jesus of Nazareth, the crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Behold the place where they laid him. But go and tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him, as he told you.'"

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

**Reflections for APRIL 12, 2009 - Easter: Acts 10.34-43; Col 5.6-8; MK 16.1-7**

THEY PUT HIM TO DEATH BY HANGING HIM ON A TREE. GOD RAISED ON THE  
THIRD DAY THE ONE APPOINTED AS JUDGE OF THE LIVING & THE DEAD.

'You seek Jesus of Nazareth, the crucified. He has been raised; he is not here.'

**During the day:** Judge no one; leave that to God. Have opinions concerning another's actions, thoughts, intentions, etc; but always see the person as good, worthy of correction. Be a help, not a hindrance.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer is the gift of faith, sensing the presence of Jesus within. It matures into the sense of living in Christ, with others, as his humanity. Through prayer, the Jesus perceived within becomes the Christ sent on mission.

**Catholic April 19, 2009**  
**Second Sunday in Easter**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Reflections for APR 19, 2009 - 2nd Easter: Acts 4.32-35; 1John 5.1-6; JN 20.19-31**

THE COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS WAS OF ONE HEART & MIND, & NO ONE CLAIMED  
HIS POSSESSIONS AS HIS OWN, BUT THEY HAD EVERYTHING IN COMMON.

"Have you come to believe, Thomas, because you have seen?"

Blessed are those who have not seen, & have believed.

**During the day:** Practice seeing Christ in the other, supposing he or she really believes her opinion to coincide with His; where does that leave *you* with *yours*? Have you the same belief with *it*? If not, reconsider; if so, search for the common ground.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer searches for an inner sense of truth as one considers one's own & others' opinions, its criterion a peace that rests secure in the common ground of mutual trust. Prayer submits conviction to faith.

**Catholic April 26, 2009**  
**Third Sunday of Easter**

**First Reading: Act 3: 13-15,17-19**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Reflections for APRIL 26, 2009 - 3rd Easter: Acts 3. 13-19; 1John 2.1-5; LK 24.35-48**

GOD RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD & BROUGHT TO FULFILLMENT ALL HE ANNOUNCED  
THROUGH THE PROPHETS THAT CHRIST WOULD SUFFER; REPENT & BE CONVERTED, SO  
THAT YOUR SINS MAY BE WIPED AWAY!

'It is written that Christ would suffer & rise from the dead on the third day, & that repentance, for  
the forgiveness of sins, would be preached in his name to all generations.'

**During the day:** Regret, don't justify, mistakes--more so mistakes of bad will than bad judgment; the latter can be repaired, the former only if acknowledged. Choices that benefit self at the expense of others offend the just God of both. Unrepentant, you'll pay the price.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer expresses both shame & gratitude to the One whose suffering, for love, pays the price of one's redemption. Mistake acknowledged, prayer declares the willingness to change, & the hope of assistance. 'Today you will be with me in Paradise,' his response.

**Catholic May 3, 2009**  
**Fourth Sunday of Easter**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Prayerful thoughts from Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ, Director Manresa Jesuit Retreat House.**  
**Reflections for MAY 3, 2009 - 4th Easter: Acts 4.8-12; 1John 3.1-2; JN 10.11-18**  
IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST THE NAZOREAN, WHOM YOU CRUCIFIED & GOD  
RAISED FROM THE DEAD, IN THE POWER OF THAT NAME THIS MAN STANDS  
BEFORE YOU PERFECTLY SOUND.

'I lay down my life to take it up again. No one takes it from me--I lay it down freely.  
I have power to lay it down & the power to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.'

**During the day :** Use your God-given freedom to exercise the power of living fully & fruitfully! Use this power for the purpose for which it was given, to fulfill his command to enrich the lives of others. Lay it down cheerfully in his name when the time comes, that God may raise you, too, from the dead.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer tools the gift of freedom. Like all the other gifts that accompany life, it has a purpose. Prayer trains it to this purpose: the intellect at prayer considers the options from the Giver's perspective; the will at prayer humbly & gratefully submits to whatever service in his name appears most urgent. Inner peace is the reward.

**Catholic May 10, 2009**  
**Fifth Sunday of Easter**

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

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

**Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 22:26-28, 30-32**

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

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

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

**Gospel: John 15:1-8**

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

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

**Reflections for MAY 10, 2009 - 5th Easter: Acts 9.26-31; 1John 3.18-24; JN 15.1-8**

THROUGHOUT ALL JUDEA, GALILEE & SAMARIA THE CHURCH WAS AT PEACE,  
BEING BUILT UP & MAKING STEADY PROGRESS IN FEAR OF THE LORD. I  
T ENJOYED INCREASED CONSOLATION IN THE HOLY SPIRIT.

No more than a branch can bear fruit apart from the vine, can you bear fruit apart from me!  
He who lives in me & I in him will produce abundantly, for apart from me you can do nothing.

**During the day:** Look at the progress, not the lack of it; even if you don't see it, know it's there. All that's needed are good intentions, & the effort that accompanies them. The 'something' seen as progress will be 'nothing', if of purely human design; only intended availability to the Spirit of God consoles.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer plugs the human effort into the divine design. Prayer acknowledges the mystery in all human activity. Prayer accepts the reality of human life with two dimensions: the human only, & the human at the service of the divine will. Prayer seeks compliance, not understanding.

**Catholic May 17, 2009**  
**Sixth Sunday of Easter**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Reflections for MAY 17, 2009 - 6th Easter: Acts 10.25-26,34-35;45-48; 1John 4.7-10; JN 15.9-17**

GOD SHOWS NO PARTIALITY. THE MAN OF ANY NATION WHO  
FEARS GOD & ACTS UPRIGHTLY IS PLEASING TO HIM.'

'Remain in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love,  
just as I have kept my Father's commandments, & remain in his love.'

**During the day:** Show no partiality: friend or foe, will what's best for them. Your will, in tune with God's, achieves *his* purpose; he wants what's good for everyone, especially those who still resist his grace. He expects you to be his instrument of their salvation, in both prayer & action.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer is the expectation of God's empowering you to do the impossible: to love your enemies, & do good to those who harm you. Even with commandments, he can't force you; the choice is yours. Prayer is the enabler.

**Catholic May 24, 2009**  
**Seventh Sunday of Easter**

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

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

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

**The Lord has set his throne in heaven.** Bless the LORD, O my soul; and all my being, bless his holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so surpassing is his kindness toward those who fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far has he put our transgressions from us. The LORD has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all. Bless the LORD, all you his angels, you mighty in strength, who do his bidding.

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

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

Gospel: John 17: 11b-19

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

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

**Reflections for MAY 24, 2009 - Ascension: Acts 1.1-11; Eph 1.17-23; MK 16.15-20**

'MEN OF GALILEE, WHY ARE YOU LOOKING UP AT THE SKY? THIS  
JESUS WHO HAS BEEN TAKEN FROM YOU WILL RETURN IN THE SAME  
WAY YOU HAVE SEEN HIM GOING INTO HEAVEN!'

They went forth & preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them,  
& confirmed the word through accompanying signs.'

**During the day:** Preach everywhere; with words, when appropriate, but always with deeds! You work for another, & he can only confirm your words & deeds when upright. Takes courage; but he's always by your side, his the goals you strive for.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Regular prayer is a constant reminder they're his projects you're working on, not yours. Sure, you chose them; but, well intentioned, your aims coincide with his; the fruit produced is of his doing, not yours. Prayer provides the relish when you savor it—even the bitter sweetness of failure.

**Catholic May 31, 2009**  
**Pentecost Sunday**

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

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

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

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

**Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 12: 3-13**

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

**Reflections for MAY 31, 2009 - Pentecost: Acts 2.1-11; 1Cor12.3-13; JN 20.19-23**

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

'As the Father has sent me I send you. Receive the Holy Spirit.'

**During the day:** Speak the language of God: the truth. It's one thing for the other to understand what you're saying, quite another to sense your honesty & sincerity. You'll eventually get the thought across, but trust is what gives it meaning.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** It's God that has the 'to do' list, & prayer that finds what's on it. Not always what one would like, takes a sense of mission to embrace it with enthusiasm. Prayer reveals the confidence with which God makes the assignment, & prayer it is that sustains the effort. Even failure is successful.

**Catholic June 7, 2009**  
**Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity**

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

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

**Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 33:4-6, 9, 18-20, 22**

**Blessed the people the Lord has chosen to be his own.** Upright is the word of the LORD, and all his works are trustworthy. He loves justice and right; of the kindness of the Lord the earth is full. By the word of the LORD the heavens were made; by the breath of his mouth all their host. For he spoke, and it was made; he commanded, and it stood forth. See, the eyes of the LORD are upon those who fear him, upon those who hope for his kindness, To deliver them from death and preserve them in spite of famine. Our soul waits for the LORD, who is our help and our shield. May your kindness, O LORD, be upon us who have put our hope in you.

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

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

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

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

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

**Reflections for JUNE 7, 2009 - Holy Trinity: Deut 4.32-40; Rms 8.14-17; MT 28.16-20**

THIS YOU MUST NOW KNOW & FIX IN YOUR HEART: THE LORD IS GOD  
IN HEAVEN ABOVE & EARTH BELOW, & THERE IS NO OTHER!

'All power in heaven & on earth has been given to me. Go & make disciples  
of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son & Holy Spirit.

I am with you always, till the end of time.'

**During the day:** Recall, from time to time, you're in orbit around God, not his creatures around you. You're made to give, not receive. As with a candle, fulfillment comes with burning out. The more you give on earth, the more you get in heaven.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer measures the needs of others, ponders the urgency & calculates the expenditure, summons the courage & overcomes the fear--all this in an instant of discernment: prayer illumines mind & heart with the nodding smile of Christ.

## Catholic June 14, 2009

### The Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### Gospel: Mark 14:12-16, 22-26

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

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

#### Reflections for JUNE 14, 2009 - Body & Blood of Xst: Ex 24.3-8; Heb 9.11-15; MK 14.12-16,22-26

THE PEOPLE ANSWERED MOSES, 'ALL THE LORD HAS SAID, WE WILL HEED & DO.

' HE TOOK THE BLOOD, SPRINKLED IT ON THE PEOPLE: 'THIS IS THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT THE LORD HAS MADE WITH YOU.'

'This is the blood of the covenant, to be shed for many. I shall not drink again the fruit of the vine, until I drink it new in the kingdom of God.'

**During the day:** Wine is for sipping, not guzzling--savor it preciously! Like all nourishment, it sustains life. Blood absorbs these nutrients, delivers them where needed. The blood of the covenants, old & new, guarantees the Lord's commitment to our salvation.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer, too, serves God's purpose, transporting his graces where, when & to whom needed. Prayer is more receiver than transmitter, effective only when tuned to the Transmitter. This One uses his own life's blood to circulate the Good News!

**Catholic June 21, 2009**  
**Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Reflections for JUNE 21, 2009 - 12th of yr: Job 38 1,8-11; 2Cor 5.14-17; MK 4.35-41**

THE LORD ADDRESSED JOB OUT OF THE STORM, 'WHO SHUT THE DOORS OF  
THE SEA WHEN IT BURST FORTH FROM THE WOMB, & SAID: THUS FAR &  
NO FARTHER! HERE SHALL SHALL YOUR PROUD WAVES BE STILLED!'

He awoke, rebuked the wind, & said to the sea: 'Quiet! Be still!' The wind ceased & there  
was a great calm. Then he asked them, 'Why are you terrified? Do you not yet have faith?'

**During the day:** Don't be afraid of anything or anybody; fear paralyzes unless faced down with courage. Courage engrained in faith in a loving Father-Mother very much in charge of everything he lets happen to her children. Without exception.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Yes, voice fear in prayer; but let it be a controlled fear for others, not yourself--fear motivated by love will strengthen the courage prayer invokes with trust in a Creator-Redeemer who's paid the price for our security.

**Catholic June 28, 2009**

**Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Reflections for JUNE 28, 2009 - 13th of yr: Wisdom 1.13-15, 2. 23-24; 2Cor 8.7-15; MK5.21-43**

GOD DID NOT MAKE DEATH, NOR DOES HE REJOICE IN THE DESTRUCTION OF THE LIVING. GOD FORMED MAN TO BE IMPERISHABLE, IMAGE OF HIS OWN NATURE.

People arrived from the official's house & said, 'Your daughter has died.' Jesus said, 'Do not be afraid; just have faith.' He took the child's hand & said, 'Little girl, I say to you arise.' The girl arose immediately & walked around.

**During the day:** Factor in your own imperishability. Through faith, you're living the outside-of-time dimension of your communion with God, all the time; be as aware of it as he is. 'Twill keep you on the straight & narrow!

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer measures growth in the sense of being led-- inner harmony & peace have no other explanation. Prayer at times is exercised without this sense, & then it's a measure of one's faith: proffered trust in a God who wants it tested.

## Catholic July 5, 2009

### Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

#### **First Reading: Ezekiel 2:2-5**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

##### **Reflections for JULY 5, 2009 - 14th of yr: Ezek 2.2-5; 2Cor 12.7-10; MK 6.1-6**

A VOICE SPOKE TO ME: 'HARD OF FACE & OBSTINATE OF HEART ARE THEY TO WHOM I AM SENDING YOU. WHETHER THEY HEED OR RESIST, THEY SHALL KNOW THAT A PROPHET HAS BEEN AMONG THEM.

Jesus said to them, 'A prophet is not without honor except in his own native place, among his own kin & in his own house.' He was amazed at their lack of faith.

**During the day:** Look around for the prophet among you. Soften your gaze, lighten your heart, & you may find more than one. Whoever serves truth in word & deed is of God. Heed such generously; follow their lead.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer is aware of Christ aware of you, inter- independent parts of one humanity. He's stuck with you the way you are, & you with him. Prayer gets you used to each other.

## Catholic July 12, 2009

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

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

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

### Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 85:9-14

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

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

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

### Gospel: Mark 6:7-13

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

### Prayerful thoughts from Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ, Our El Paso Padre.

#### Reflections for JULY 12, 2009 - 15th of yr: Amos 7.7-15; Eph 1. 3-14; Mark 6.7-13

AMOS SAID, 'I WAS NO PROPHET, BUT A SHEPHERD. THE LORD TOOK ME FROM FOLLOWING MY FLOCK.' 'GO, PROPHECY TO MY PEOPLE ISRAEL,'

Jesus called the 12 & began sending them out, 2 by 2, giving them authority over unclean spirits. He instructed them to take nothing on the journey, only a walking stick--no food, no traveling bag, not even a coin in the purses at their belts.

**During the day:** When times are tough, expect them to get tougher. Rethink your priorities, & the securities they depend on. 'Martha, you're busy about many things; only one thing is important.' God.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Satan is God's adversary, not ours--we're just pawns he uses to win some battles. His power is angelic, ours only human--till we sense the authority of Christ working through us when we encounter the Liar. Serving truth, we're unbeatable.

## Catholic July 19, 2009

### Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

##### **Reflections for JULY 19, 2009 - 16th of yr: Jer 23.1-6; Eph 2.13-18; MK 6.30-34**

WOE TO SHEPHERDS WHO MISLEAD & SCATTER THE FLOCK. I MYSELF WILL GATHER THE REMNANT & BRING THEM BACK TO THE MEADOW. I WILL APPOINT SHEPHERDS THEY NO LONGER NEED TO FEAR & TREMBLE.

Upon disembarking Jesus saw a vast crowd. He pitied them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd. He began to teach them at great length.

**During the day:** Sometimes be a good shepherd, sometimes follow one, according to the circumstances. Responsibilities vary; assume your own, depending on what's called for. God cares for you, as you care for others; play the hand he deals you.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer channels God's guidance: It sometimes leads you to lead, sometimes to follow; withal, the inner peace of prayer discerns which. Don't be dismayed by the confusion of others; speak with gentleness & firmness the truth that's in your heart.

## Catholic July 26, 2009

### Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

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

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

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

**The hand of the Lord feeds us; he answers all our needs.** Let all your works give you thanks, O LORD, and let your faithful ones bless you. Let them discourse of the glory of your kingdom and speak of your might. The eyes of all look hopefully to you, and you give them their food in due season; you open your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing. The LORD is just in all his ways and holy in all his works. The LORD is near to all who call upon him, to all who call upon him in truth.

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

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

#### Gospel: John 6:1-15

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

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

##### Reflections for JULY 26, 2009 - 17th of yr: 2Kings 4.42-44; Eph 4.1-6; JN 6.1-15

A MAN FROM BAAL BROUGHT ELISHA 20 BARLEY LOAVES. 'GIVE IT TO THE PEOPLE TO EAT.' 'HOW CAN I SET THIS BEFORE A HUNDRED MEN?' ELISHA INSISTED; WHEN THEY HAD EATEN, THERE WAS SOME LEFT OVER.

Jesus told his disciples, 'Gather up the crusts, that nothing go to waste.'

They gathered up 12 baskets left over from the 5 barley loaves.

**During the day:** Don't be wasteful. Everything you have--food, time, energy, possessions--is gift. Shared, they express & extend the love of the Giver; hoarded, they waste away. Use what you have, wisely & frugally, for the purpose intended. Although your name is on it, remember it's meant for others.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** In prayer the common bond of humanity becomes the communion of saints--on this side of death, saints still sinners, assuming together the consequences of each other's sinfulness. On the other, being what they've become, having learned on this, to share all they have with the Christ who lives in every other human being. He overflows.

## Catholic August 2, 2009

### Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

#### **First Reading: Exodus 16:2-4, 12-15**

The whole Israelite community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The Israelites said to them, "Would that we had died at the LORD's hand in the land of Egypt, as we sat by our fleshpots and ate our fill of bread! But you had to lead us into this desert to make the whole community die of famine!" Then the LORD said to Moses, "I will now rain down bread from heaven for you. Each day the people are to go out and gather their daily portion; thus will I test them, to see whether they follow my instructions or not. "I have heard the grumbling of the Israelites. Tell them: In the evening twilight you shall eat flesh, and in the morning you shall have your fill of bread, so that you may know that I, the LORD, am your God." In the evening quail came up and covered the camp. In the morning a dew lay all about the camp, and when the dew evaporated, there on the surface of the desert were fine flakes like hoarfrost on the ground. On seeing it, the Israelites asked one another, "What is this?" for they did not know what it was. But Moses told them, "This is the bread that the LORD has given you to eat."

#### **Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 78:3-4, 23-25, 54**

**The Lord gave them bread from heaven.** What we have heard and know, and what our fathers have declared to us, We will declare to the generation to come the glorious deeds of the LORD and his strength and the wonders that he wrought. He commanded the skies above and opened the doors of heaven; he rained manna upon them for food and gave them heavenly bread. Man ate the bread of angels, food he sent them in abundance. And he brought them to his holy land, to the mountains his right hand had won.

#### **Second Reading: Ephesians 4:17, 20-24**

Brothers and sisters: I declare and testify in the Lord that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds; that is not how you learned Christ, assuming that you have heard of him and were taught in him, as truth is in Jesus, that you should put away the old self of your former way of life, corrupted through deceitful desires, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new self, created in God's way in righteousness and holiness of truth.

#### **Gospel: John 6:24-35**

When the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they themselves got into boats and came to Capernaum looking for Jesus. And when they found him across the sea they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you get here?" Jesus answered them and said, "Amen, amen, I say to you, you are looking for me not because you saw signs but because you ate the loaves and were filled. Do not work for food that perishes but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him the Father, God, has set his seal." So they said to him, "What can we do to accomplish the works of God?" Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in the one he sent." So they said to him, "What sign can you do, that we may see and believe in you? What can you do? Our ancestors ate manna in the desert, as it is written: *He gave them bread from heaven to eat.*" So Jesus said to them, "Amen, amen, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave the bread from heaven; my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." So they said to him, "Sir, give us this bread always." Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst."

#### **Prayerful thoughts from Rev. Jack Vessels, The Rio Grande El Paso Padre**

#### **Reflections for AUG 2, 18th of yr: Ex 16.2-4,12-15; Eph 4.17-24; JN 6.24-35**

THE COMMUNITY GRUMBLED AGAINST MOSES: 'BUT YOU HAD TO LEAD US INTO THIS DESERT TO MAKE THE WHOLE COMMUNITY DIE OF FAMINE!' THE LORD SAID TO MOSES, 'I WILL RAIN DOWN BREAD FROM HEAVEN FOR YOU.'

They said, 'Our ancestors had manna to eat in the desert.' Jesus replied, 'It is my Father that gives you the real bread that comes down from heaven & gives life to the world, I myself am the bread of life! No one who comes to me shall ever be hungry!'

**During the day:** Eat less. Feel hunger. From time to time, share this common condition of the majority of God's people. Learn what most have learned: nothing material can satisfy the spiritual hunger for true life. To be satiated materially is to miss the point.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer is at the service of the Word of God. Personal prayer assimilates it; group (community) prayer discerns it; liturgical prayer assumes it. 'Not by bread alone does man live, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.' (Mt 4.4) Get it?

## Catholic August 9, 2009

Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

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

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

### Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 34:2-9

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

### Second Reading: Ephesians 4:30-5:2

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

### Gospel: John 6:41-51

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

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

#### Reflections for AUG 9, 2009 - 19th of yr: 1Kings 19.4-8; Eph 4.30-5. 2; JN 6.41-51

ELIJAH SAID, 'THIS IS ENOUGH, LORD, TAKE MY LIFE!' HE FELL ASLEEP, BUT AN ANGEL TOUCHED HIM: 'GET UP & EAT.' HE SAW BY HIS SIDE A CAKE & JUG OF WATER. STRENGTHENED BY THAT FOOD, HE WALKED FORTY DAYS & FORTY NIGHTS.

The crowd murmured, 'Is this not Jesus? How can he claim to have come down from heaven?' Jesus told them, 'Stop your murmuring! I myself am the living bread come down from heaven. If anyone eats this bread he shall live forever. The bread I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world.'

**During the day:** Eat less, only what you really need. You'll feel better, & work harder. The God who made you knows how to measure the strength for the task at hand. Think his thoughts & work his will: he wants a better world, & you to produce it, in that little corner you call your own.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer nourishes with the two dimensions of the Bread of Life: Christ's word & Christ's life. With his words, the Head of the Body of which we are members directs the activities that accomplish his Father's purpose; with his flesh, the Heart communicates the love & life of the Father; his to share, humanly, with any takers. Be one.

## Catholic August 16, 2009

### Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### **Prayerful thoughts from Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ, The Rio Grande El Paso Padre**

#### **Reflections for AUG 16, 2009 - 20th of yr: Prov 9.1-6; Eph 5.15-20; JN 6.51-58**

WISDOM HAS BUILT HER HOUSE & CALLS OUT: 'LET WHOEVER IS SIMPLE TURN IN HERE. TO WHOEVER LACKS UNDERSTANDING, I SAY, COME, EAT OF MY FOOD, DRINK THE WINE; FORSAKE FOOLISHNESS, THAT YOU MAY LIVE.'

'How can he give us his flesh to eat?' Jesus told them, 'Just as the Father who has life sent me, so the person who feeds on me will have life because of me.'

**During the day:** Cultivate simplicity. Live your life a day at a time-- the problem you don't solve today will still be there tomorrow. Weed the unnecessary out of your priorities, limit the foolishness. The God who made you is co-responsible, so enjoy the moment. He does.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer is the most intimate expression of faith: the choice--for no other reason than that you've learned it pays off to do so--to trust a fellow human you know to be the One who creates & redeems you. Prayer robs death of its meaning--curiosity replaces fear.

## Catholic August 23, 2009

Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time

### First Reading: Joshua 24:1-2, 15-18b

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

### Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 34:2-3, 16-21

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

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

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

### Gospel: John 6:60-69

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

### Prayerful thoughts from Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ, The Rio Grande El Paso Padre

**Reflections for AUG 23, 2009 - 21st of yr: Josh 24.1-2,15-18; Eph 5.21-32; JN 6.60-69**

JOSHUA ADDRESSED THE PEOPLE: 'IF IT DOES NOT PLEASE YOU TO SERVE THE LORD, DECIDE TODAY WHOM YOU WILL SERVE.' THE PEOPLE ANSWERED, 'FAR BE IT FROM US TO FORSAKE THE LORD FOR THE SERVICE OF OTHER GODS.'

From this time on, many of his disciples did not remain with him. Jesus then said to the Twelve, 'Do you want to leave me, too?' Simon Peter answered, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.'

**During the day:** Take words seriously, use them seriously--they're forever. Words have meaning because thoughts & sentiments should be based on truth, & the lie corrupts. Decisions of the will presume correct data in the intellect; do we supply it to each other?

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer uses memory, intellect & will: the memory, to recall Christ's words & deeds & one's own life experiences, & stimulate the imagination; the intellect to ponder leisurely, & rest in discoveries; the will to embrace, to say 'Yes, Lord', when his truth beckons.

## Catholic August 30, 2009

Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time

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

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

### Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 15:2-5

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

### Second Reading: James 1:17-18, 21b-22, 27

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

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

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

**Prayerful thoughts from Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ, The Rio Grande El Paso Padre**  
**Reflections for AUG 30, 2009 - 22nd of yr: Dt 4.1-8; James 1.17-22,27; MK7. 1-8,14-15,21-23**  
MOSES TOLD THE PEOPLE, 'HEAR THE DECREES THAT  
I AM TEACHING YOU THAT YOU MAY LIVE.

Jesus summoned the crowd & said to them, 'Nothing that enters a man can make him impure. That which comes out of him makes him impure-- wicked designs, fornication, theft, murder, adulterous conduct, greed, maliciousness, deceit, envy, blasphemy, arrogance, an obtuse spirit; all these evils come from within & render a man impure.'

**During the day:** Half way through the year, check how you're doing. Rather, check how you're being; you *do* what you *are*, not vice versa. What you do is not as important as why & how you do it. Do it for others with respect, & you'll please God. That's living!

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer checks our 'to do' list with God's--lengthy in the Old Testament, simplified by Christ is the New. Jesus also gives us a clear list of 'don'ts'. If taken to prayer, they provide a good 'to be' list--unless we're too obtuse.

## Catholic September 6, 2009

Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time

### First Reading: Isaiah 35:4-7a

Thus says the LORD: Say to those whose hearts are frightened: Be strong, fear not! Here is your God, he comes with vindication; with divine recompense he comes to save you. Then will the eyes of the blind be opened, the ears of the deaf be cleared; then will the lame leap like a stag, then the tongue of the mute will sing. Streams will burst forth in the desert, and rivers in the steppe. The burning sands will become pools, and the thirsty ground, springs of water.

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

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

### Second Reading: James 2:1-5

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

### Gospel: Mark 7:31-37

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

### Prayerful thoughts from Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ, The Rio Grande El Paso Padre

**Reflections for SEPT 6, 2009 - 23rd of yr: Is 35.4-7; James 2.1-5; MK 7.31-37**

SAY TO THOSE WHOSE HEARTS ARE FRIGHTENED: BE STRONG, FEAR NOT! HERE IS YOUR GOD, HE COMES TO SAVE YOU. THEN WILL THE EYES OF THE BLIND BE OPENED, THE EARS OF THE DEAF BE CLEARED.

They brought to him a deaf man with a speech impediment. Jesus took him off by himself, put his fingers in his ears, & spitting, touched his tongue, looked up to heaven, groaned, & said to him, 'Be opened!' At once, his ears were opened & he was freed of the impediment.

**During the day:** Consider seriously your speech impediment. Although not physical, how clearly do you speak the truth? how carefully avoid offense? how often inflict on others uncouthness, trivialities, gossip? Indifference to the facts is far more difficult to cure than any physical impediment.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Personal prayer is one-on-one, off by yourself with Jesus. He wants your full attention, as he gives you his. He knows your needs better than you do; he knows what he expects of you, sometimes without explanation. Mutual trust is what makes prayer powerful.

## Catholic September 13, 2009

Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

### First Reading: Isaiah 50:5-9a

The Lord GOD 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. He is near who upholds my right; if anyone wishes to oppose me, let us appear together. Who disputes my right? Let that man confront me. See, the Lord GOD is my help; who will prove me wrong?

### Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 116:1-6, 8-9

**I will walk before the Lord, in the land of the living.** I love the LORD because he has heard my voice in supplication, Because he has inclined his ear to me the day I called. The cords of death encompassed me; the snares of the netherworld seized upon me; I fell into distress and sorrow, And I called upon the name of the LORD, "O LORD, save my life!" Gracious is the LORD and just; yes, our God is merciful. The LORD keeps the little ones; I was brought low, and he saved me. For he has freed my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling. I shall walk before the Lord in the land of the living.

### Second Reading: James 2:14-18

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and has no food for the day, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well," but you do not give them the necessities of the body, what good is it? So also faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead. Indeed someone might say, "You have faith and I have works." Demonstrate your faith to me without works, and I will demonstrate my faith to you from my works.

### Gospel: Mark 8:27-35

Jesus and his disciples set out for the villages of Caesarea Philippi. Along the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" They said in reply, "John the Baptist, others Elijah, still others one of the prophets." And he asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter said to him in reply, "You are the Christ." Then he warned them not to tell anyone about him. He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer greatly and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and rise after three days. He spoke this openly. Then Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. At this he turned around and, looking at his disciples, rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan. You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do." He summoned the crowd with his disciples and said to them, "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 and that of the gospel will save it."

**Prayerful thoughts from Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ, The Rio Grande El Paso Padre  
Reflections for Sept 13, 2009 - 24th of yr: Is 50.4-9; James 2.14-18; MK 8.27-35**

THE LORD GOD OPENS MY EAR THAT I MAY HEAR. I HAVE NOT REBELLED. I GAVE MY BACK TO THOSE WHO BEAT ME. THE LORD GOD IS MY HELP, I AM NOT DISGRACED. I HAVE SET MY FACE LIKE FLINT.

"If a man wishes to come after me, he must deny himself, take up his cross, & follow me. Whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake & the sake of the Gospel will save it.

**During the day:** Set your face like flint. When powerless to avoid, turn your back with disdain to those who would mistreat you, & with patience for the pain inflicted. Let your nobility shame them for the loss of it.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** The fruit of prayer is an increase in the capacity to love, even one's tormentors. But only if practiced; the greater the provocation, the more serious the challenge to forgive. Christ accepts no excuses.

## Catholic September 20, 2009

Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading: Wisdom 2:12, 17-20

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

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 54:3-8

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

Second Reading: James 3:16-4:3

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

Gospel: Mark 9:30-37

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

**Prayerful thoughts from Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ, The Rio Grande El Paso Padre**  
**Reflections for SEPT 20, 2009 - 25th of yr: Wis 2.12-20; James 3.16-4.3; MK 9.30-37**  
WITH REVILEMENT & TORTURE LET US PUT THE JUST ONE TO THE TEST,  
THAT WE MAY HAVE PROOF OF HIS GENTLENESS & HIS PATIENCE.

Jesus asked them, 'What were you arguing about?' They remained silent; they had been discussing who among them was the greatest. He said, 'If anyone wishes to be first, he shall be the last, & servant of all.'

**During the day:** Don't be surprised by the treachery of fellow humans; take it as a test of the usefulness (or futility) of virtue. Their own fears & cowardice make them insecure; let them draw courage & strength from your integrity.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer connects: Power flows, of a nature greater than the need. Prayer enlightens human comprehension with a conviction that reduces self to servitude, & others to the rank of divine filiation. Prayer enflames the urge.

## Catholic September 27, 2009

Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

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

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

### Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 19: 8, 10,12-14

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

### Second Reading: James 5:1-6

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

### Gospel: Mark 9:38-43, 43, 47-48

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

### Prayerful thoughts from Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ, The Rio Grande El Paso Padre Reflections for SEPT 27, 2009 - 26th of yr: Num 11.25-29; James 5.1-6; MK 9.38-48

TAKING THE SPIRIT THAT WAS ON MOSES THE LORD BESTOWED IT  
ON THE 70 ELDERS, & THEY PROPHESED. MOSES SAID, 'WOULD  
THAT ALL THE PEOPLE OF THE LORD WERE PROPHETS! THAT  
THE LORD WOULD BESTOW HIS SPIRIT ON THEM!'

'No man who performs a miracle in my name can speak ill of me. Anyone who is  
not against us is with us. Any one who gives you a cup of water because you  
belong to Christ will not go without his reward.'

**During the day:** Be a prophet! You were baptized into the prophetic function of Christ: exercise it! The prophet is one who announces, by word & example, the arrival of the Kingdom of God--a civilization of peace, love & justice. Likewise, the prophet denounces whatever opposes it. Courage!

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer acknowledges the infusion of the Spirit. Prayer resists resistance, gives expression to the revelation of God's plan without judging or condemning others in error. Prayer calls attention to the lies they build on, patiently practices the Truth that works its own vindication.

## Catholic October 4, 2009

Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

### First Reading: Genesis 2:18-24

The LORD God said: "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a suitable partner for him." So the LORD God formed out of the ground various wild animals and various birds of the air, and he brought them to the man to see what he would call them; whatever the man called each of them would be its name. The man gave names to all the cattle, all the birds of the air, and all wild animals; but none proved to be the suitable partner for the man. So the LORD God cast a deep sleep on the man, and while he was asleep, he took out one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. The LORD God then built up into a woman the rib that he had taken from the man. When he brought her to the man, the man said: "This one, at last, is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called 'woman,' for out of 'her man' this one has been taken." That is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one flesh.

### Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 128:1-6

**May the Lord bless us all the days of our lives.** 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. May you see your children's children. Peace be upon Israel!

### Second Reading: Hebrews 2:9-11

Brothers and sisters: He "for a little while" was made "lower than the angels," that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. For it was fitting that he, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory, should make the leader to their salvation perfect through suffering. He who consecrates and those who are being consecrated all have one origin. Therefore, he is not ashamed to call them "brothers."

### Gospel: Mark, 10:2-16

The Pharisees approached Jesus and asked, "Is it lawful for a husband to divorce his wife?" They were testing him. He said to them in reply, "What did Moses command you?" They replied, "Moses permitted a husband to write a bill of divorce and dismiss her." But Jesus told them, "Because of the hardness of your hearts he wrote you this commandment. But from the beginning of creation, *God made them male and female. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.* So they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, no human being must separate." In the house the disciples again questioned Jesus about this. He said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery." And people were bringing children to him that he might touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this he became indignant and said to them, "Let the children come to me; do not prevent them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Amen, I say to you, whoever does not accept the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it." Then he embraced them and blessed them, placing his hands on them.

### Prayerful thoughts from Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ, The Rio Grande El Paso Padre

#### Reflections for OCT 4, 2009 - 27th of yr: Gen 2.18-24; Heb 2.9-11; MK 10.2-16

THE LORD GOD SAID, 'IT IS NOT GOOD FOR MAN TO BE ALONE. I WILL MAKE A SUITABLE PARTNER FOR HIM.' THE MAN SAID, 'THIS, AT LAST, IS BONE OF MY BONE, FLESH OF MY FLESH. THIS ONE SHALL BE CALLED WOMAN.'

Jesus said, 'At the beginning, God made them male & female. For this reason, a man shall leave father & mother, & the two become as one; there are no longer two, but one flesh.'

**During the day:** Renew your commitments to God, including the one to your spouse--if so intended, they're inseparable. Human love alone is not enough for its survival & growth. Only God--as committed as both--is the source of its strength.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer ponders the authentic needs of the other, & places them above one's own. The uniqueness of the union insures the power of the blend, human & divine; but only when all three are in tune. Prayer is the synthesizer.

## Catholic October 11, 2009

Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading: Wisdom 7:7-11

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

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 90:12-17

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

Second Reading: Hebrews 4:12-13

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

Gospel: Mark 10:17-30

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

**Prayerful thoughts from Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ, The Rio Grande El Paso Padre**

**Reflections for OCT 11, 2009 - 28th of yr: Wisdom 7.7-11; Heb 4.12-13; MK 10.17-30**

I PRAYED, & PRUDENCE WAS GIVEN ME. I PLEADED, & THE SPIRIT OF WISDOM  
CAME TO ME. ALL GOOD THINGS TOGETHER CAME TO ME IN HER COMPANY.

Jesus said, 'I give you my word: There is no one who has given up house, property or family for my sake & the sake of the gospel who will not receive a hundred times more, & eternal life. Many that are first will be last, & the last first.'

**During the day:** Plead for wisdom! If you're not open for it, you won't get it. If you are, you'll be amazed how easily you say & do the right thing. You'll learn wisdom by being wise, & you don't even get the credit, just the good things that accompany it.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer liberates; it puts first things first (God). Free of self-centered love of family & property, a prayerful attitude recognizes the gift of God in all. Sharing generously what one has with others creates a comradeship of faith: material things lose importance, spiritual ones suffice. Christ's point is made.

## Catholic October 18, 2009

Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

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

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

### Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 33:4-5, 18-20, 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.

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

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

### Gospel: Mark 10:35-45

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

### Prayerful thoughts from Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ, The Rio Grande El Paso Padre

**Reflections for OCT 18, 2009 - 29th of yr: IS 53.10-11; Heb 4.14-16; MK 10.35-45**

IT PLEASED THE LORD TO CRUSH HIM IN INFIRMITY; IF HE GIVES HIS LIFE  
AS AN OFFERING FOR SIN, THROUGH HIS SUFFERING, MY SERVANT  
SHALL JUSTIFY MANY, & THEIR GUILT HE SHALL BEAR.

'Whoever wishes to be great among you will be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you will be the slave of all. For the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, & give his life as a ransom for many.'

**During the day:** Be sensible about unpleasant & painful situations: who suffers for love, doesn't suffer, he loves--don't lose the opportunities! Whatever the occasion or cause, suffering is not without value. When accepted without complaint, God makes it fruitful.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer learns to conform to the divine perspective. No matter how humanly ugly the situation, the will at prayer seeks both the faith & the courage to be one with Christ in the loving service of redemption. Prayer gives suffering its true character.

## October 25, 2009 - Thirtyth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading: Jeremiah 31:7-9

Thus says the LORD: Shout with joy for Jacob, exult at the head of the nations; proclaim your praise and say: The LORD has delivered his people, the remnant of Israel. Behold, I will bring them back from the land of the north; I will gather them from the ends of the world, with the blind and the lame in their midst, the mothers and those with child; they shall return as an immense throng. They departed in tears, but I will console them and guide them; I will lead them to brooks of water, on a level road, so that none shall stumble. For I am a father to Israel, Ephraim is my first-born.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 126:1-6

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

Second Reading: Hebrews 5:1-6

Brothers and sisters: Every high priest is taken from among men and made their representative before God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He is able to deal patiently with the ignorant and erring, for he himself is beset by weakness and so, for this reason, must make sin offerings for himself as well as for the people. No one takes this honor upon himself but only when called by God, just as Aaron was. In the same way, it was not Christ who glorified himself in becoming high priest, but rather the one who said to him: *You are my son: this day I have begotten you;* just as he says in another place: *You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.*

Gospel: Mark 10:46-52

As Jesus was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a sizable crowd, Bartimaeus, a blind man, the son of Timaeus, sat by the roadside begging. On hearing that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, son of David, have pity on me." And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he kept calling out all the more, "Son of David, have pity on me." Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." So they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take courage; get up, Jesus is calling you." He threw aside his cloak, sprang up, and came to Jesus. Jesus said to him in reply, "What do you want me to do for you?" The blind man replied to him, "Master, I want to see." Jesus told him, "Go your way; your faith has saved you." Immediately he received his sight and followed him on the way.

**Prayerful thoughts from Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ, The Rio Grande El Paso Padre**

**Reflection for OCT 25, 2009 - 30th of yr: Jer 31.7-9; Heb 5.1-6; MK 10. 46-52**

I WILL GATHER THEM FROM THE ENDS OF THE WORLD, WITH THE BLIND & THE LAME IN THEIR MIDST. THEY DEPARTED IN TEARS; BUT I WILL CONSOLE THEM!  
Jesus asked him, 'What do you want me to do?' The blind man said, 'I want to see!' 'Be on your way, your faith has healed you.' Immediately he received his sight, & followed him on the road.

**During the day :** Be open to God's consolation; he wants you happy, & if you stop & think about it, there's no reason not to be. Whatever's painful or troubling, he's aware of it, & in charge. He trusts you; you trust him!

**ABOUT PRAYER:** The prayer of petition (for oneself) & intercession (for others) should be blunt & to the point--for God's sake, not ours. So oriented, it's always heard & granted, in or outside of time; whichever, the way to go is obvious.

## November 1, 2009 - "Why Did Jesus Weep?"

### **First Reading: Revelation 7:2-4, 9-14**

I, John, saw another angel come up from the East, holding the seal of the living God. He cried out in a loud voice to the four angels who were given power to damage the land and the sea, "Do not damage the land or the sea or the trees until we put the seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God." I heard the number of those who had been marked with the seal, one hundred and forty-four thousand marked from every tribe of the children of Israel. After this I had a vision of a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation, race, people, and tongue. They stood before the throne and before the Lamb, wearing white robes and holding palm branches in their hands. They cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation comes from our God, who is seated on the throne, and from the Lamb." All the angels stood around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They prostrated themselves before the throne, worshiped God, and exclaimed: "Amen. Blessing and glory, wisdom and thanksgiving, honor, power, and might be to our God forever and ever. Amen." Then one of the elders spoke up and said to me, "Who are these wearing white robes, and where did they come from?" I said to him, "My lord, you are the one who knows." He said to me, "These are the ones who have survived the time of great distress; they have washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb."

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

**Lord, this is the people that longs to see your face.** 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 him, that seeks the face of the God of Jacob.

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

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

### **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 Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ, The Rio Grande El Paso Padre**

#### **Reflections for NOV 1, 2009 - All Saints: Rev 7.2-4,9-14; 1John 3.1-3; MT 5.1-12**

**THESE ARE THOSE WHO HAVE SURVIVED THE GREAT PERIOD OF TRIAL; THEY HAVE WASHED THEIR ROBES & MADE THEM WHITE IN THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB.**

'Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God.'

**During the day:** Survive the trial; circumstances don't defeat you, they only slow you down. There will be other opportunities; just keep your priorities clear, & make sure they're on the same page with the Lord. What he wants will get done, with or without you, so learn to hang on!

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer absorbs the tensions, rests, willy-nilly, in what the Lord lets happen. Prayer quietly discerns the next step, even if it's backwards. Prayer focuses on God's will, not one's own; or rather, it wrestles with both, to bring them into harmony. When sincere, no question who wins.

## **Catholic November 8, 2009**

### **First Reading: 1 Kings 17:10-16**

In those days, Elijah the prophet went to Zarephath. As he arrived at the entrance of the city, a widow was gathering sticks there; he called out to her, "Please bring me a small cupful of water to drink." She left to get it, and he called out after her, "Please bring along a bit of bread." She answered, "As the LORD, your God, lives, I have nothing baked; there is only a handful of flour in my jar and a little oil in my jug. Just now I was collecting a couple of sticks, to go in and prepare something for myself and my son; when we have eaten it, we shall die." Elijah said to her, "Do not be afraid. Go and do as you propose. But first make me a little cake and bring it to me. Then you can prepare something for yourself and your son. For the LORD, the God of Israel, says, 'The jar of flour shall not go empty, nor the jug of oil run dry, until the day when the LORD sends rain upon the earth.'" She left and did as Elijah had said. She was able to eat for a year, and he and her son as well; the jar of flour did not go empty, nor the jug of oil run dry, as the LORD had foretold through Elijah.

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

**Praise the Lord, my soul!** 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 he sustains, but the way of the wicked he thwarts. The LORD shall reign forever; your God, O Zion, through all generations. Alleluia.

### **Second Reading: Hebrews 9:24-28**

Christ did not enter into a sanctuary made by hands, a copy of the true one, but heaven itself, that he might now appear before God on our behalf. Not that he might offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters each year into the sanctuary with blood that is not his own; if that were so, he would have had to suffer repeatedly from the foundation of the world. But now once for all he has appeared at the end of the ages to take away sin by his sacrifice. Just as it is appointed that human beings die once, and after this the judgment, so also Christ, offered once to take away the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to take away sin but to bring salvation to those who eagerly await him.

### **Gospel: Mark 12:38-44**

In the course of his teaching Jesus said to the crowds, "Beware of the scribes, who like to go around in long robes and accept greetings in the marketplaces, seats of honor in synagogues, and places of honor at banquets. They devour the houses of widows and, as a pretext recite lengthy prayers. They will receive a very severe condemnation." Jesus sat down opposite the treasury and observed how the crowd put money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. A poor widow also came and put in two small coins worth a few cents. Calling his disciples to himself, he said to them, "Amen, I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the other contributors to the treasury. For they have all contributed from their surplus wealth, but she, from her poverty, has contributed all she had, her whole livelihood."

#### **Prayerful thoughts from Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ, The Rio Grande El Paso Padre**

**Reflections for NOV 8, 2009 - 32nd of yr: 1Kngs 17.10-16; Heb 9.24-28; MK 12.38-44**

ELIJAH TOLD THE WOMAN, 'THE JAR OF FLOUR SHALL NOT GO EMPTY NOR  
THE JUG OF OIL RUN DRY, TILL THE LORD SENDS RAIN UPON THE EARTH.'

Christ told his disciples, 'This poor widow contributed more than all the others.

They gave from their surplus. She gave from her want, all she had!'

**During the day:** Pay attention to the widow; God's favorite, may she be yours, too. Her children God's, so too his concern, his gratitude effusive to those who share it.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer satiates the hungry soul. The plate's always full, waiting to be served. Place it before the other first, & you'll be amazed how nourishing it is, even before the first bite!

**November 15, 2009 - "...but my words will not pass away."**

**First Reading: Daniel 12:1-3**

In those days, I Daniel, heard this word of the Lord: "At that time there shall arise Michael, the great prince, guardian of your people; it shall be a time unsurpassed in distress since nations began until that time. At that time your people shall escape, everyone who is found written in the book. "Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake; some shall live forever, others shall be an everlasting horror and disgrace. "But the wise shall shine brightly like the splendor of the firmament, and those who lead the many to justice shall be like the stars forever."

**Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 16:5, 8-11**

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

**Second Reading: Hebrews 10:11-14, 18**

Brothers and sisters: Every priest stands daily at his ministry, offering frequently those same sacrifices that can never take away sins. But this one offered one sacrifice for sins, and took his seat forever at the right hand of God; now he waits until his enemies are made his footstool. For by one offering he has made perfect forever those who are being consecrated. Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer offering for sin.

**Gospel: Mark 13:24-32**

Jesus said to his disciples: "In those days after that tribulation the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from the sky, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. "And then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in the clouds' with great power and glory, and then he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the end of the earth to the end of the sky. "Learn a lesson from the fig tree. When its branch becomes tender and sprouts leaves, you know that summer is near. In the same way, when you see these things happening, know that he is near, at the gates. Amen, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. "But of that day or hour, no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."

**Prayerful thoughts from Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ, The Rio Grande El Paso Padre**

**Reflections for NOV 15, 2009 - 33rd of yr: Dan 12,1-3; Heb 10.11-14,18; MK 13.24-32**

THE WISE SHALL SHINE BRIGHTLY, LIKE THE SPLendor OF THE FIRMAMENT.  
THOSE WHO LEAD THE MANY TO JUSTICE SHALL BE LIKE THE STARS FOREVER.

'Men shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds, with great power & glory.'

**During the day:** Shine brightly! Not to call attention to yourself, but to be the light God uses to guide others. Your ever-availability facilitates his efforts, exercises & increases your wisdom.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer penetrates the invisible, perceives with unexpected power the glory God chooses to reveal. Prayer assimilates, discerns, & assumes his directives, & the human will of Christ, through ours, works the Father's wonders--whether we're aware of them not.

## November 22, 2009 - "What is Truth?"

### First Reading: Daniel 7:13-14

As the visions during the night continued, I saw one like a Son of man coming, on the clouds of heaven; when he reached the Ancient One and was presented before him, the one like a Son of man received dominion, glory, and kingship; all peoples, nations, and languages serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not be taken away, his kingship shall not be destroyed.

### Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 93:1-2, 5

**The LORD is king; he is robed in majesty.** The LORD is king, in splendor robed; robed is the LORD and girt about with strength. And he has made the world firm, not to be moved. Your throne stands firm from of old; from everlasting you are, O LORD. Your decrees are worthy of trust indeed; holiness befits your house, O LORD, for length of days.

### Second Reading: Revelation 1:5-8

Jesus Christ is the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead and ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, who has made us into a kingdom, priests for his God and Father, to him be glory and power forever and ever. Amen. Behold, he is coming amid the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him. All the peoples of the earth will lament him. Yes. Amen. "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "the one who is and who was and who is to come, the almighty."

### Gospel: John 18:33b-37

Pilate said to Jesus, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus answered, "Do you say this on your own or have others told you about me?" Pilate answered, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests handed you over to me. What have you done?" Jesus answered, "My kingdom does not belong to this world. If my kingdom did belong to this world, my attendants would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not here." So Pilate said to him, "Then you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say I am a king. For this I was born and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice."

### Prayerful thoughts from Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ, The Rio Grande El Paso Padre

#### Reflections for NOV 22, 2009 - Christ the King: Dan 7.13-14; Rev 1.5-8; JN 18.33-37

I SAW ONE LIKE A SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN. HE REACHED THE ANCIENT ONE & RECEIVED DOMINION, GLORY & KINGSHIP. HIS DOMINION SHALL NOT BE TAKEN AWAY, HIS KINGSHIP NOT DESTROYED.

Jesus answered Pilate, 'My kingdom is not of this world. The reason I was born & came into the world is to testify to the truth. Anyone committed to the truth hears my voice.'

**During the day:** Be committed to the truth, the better to hear his voice. He knows better than you what *you* need to know; he's not hiding it, just waiting for you to pay attention. Don't blame him if you don't.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer cuts through the static of daily activities & tunes into the clear channel of Christ's directives. Assuming the assumers, he presumes we want to fulfill his will to fulfill the Father's. He succeeds proportionately.