

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

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

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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 UNCLEAN.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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. Requested, it brings us home--out of our world, & into His.

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.

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 the sense of living in Christ, with others, as his humanity. Through prayer, the Jesus perceived within becomes the Christ sent on mission.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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!

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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?

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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!

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.

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.