

## 2010 Liturgical Year C

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

**November 29, 2009 - "your redemption is at hand"**

**First Reading: Jeremiah 33:14-16**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Reflections for NOV 29, 2009 - 1st Advent: Jer 33.14-16; 1Thess 3.12-4.2; LK 21.21-28,34-36**

I WILL FULFILL MY PROMISE & RAISE UP A JUST SHOOT FOR DAVID.

HE WILL DO WHAT IS RIGHT & JUST IN THE LAND.

'Be vigilant at all times, & pray that you have the strength to escape  
the tribulations that are imminent & stand before the Son of God.

**During the day:** To be strong, be weak. Weakness is the human condition that, acknowledged, requires the divine partner's power. The harmony of wills in a common purpose is invincible.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer, when just & right, encourages the soul in tribulation. Obstacles to grace removed, perseverance in prayer enlivens the will with greater trust in the Son of God. So disposed, the common humanity of both achieves the Father's purpose.

## December 6, 2009 - “...and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.”

### First Reading: Baruch 5:1-9

Jerusalem, take off your robe of mourning and misery; put on the splendor of glory from God forever: wrapped in the cloak of justice from God, bear on your head the mitre that displays the glory of the eternal name. For God will show all the earth your splendor: you will be named by God forever the peace of justice, the glory of God's worship. Up, Jerusalem! stand upon the heights; look to the east and see your children gathered from the east and the west at the word of the Holy One, rejoicing that they are remembered by God. Led away on foot by their enemies they left you: but God will bring them back to you borne aloft in glory as on royal thrones. For God has commanded that every lofty mountain be made low, and that the age-old depths and gorges be filled to level ground, that Israel may advance secure in the glory of God. The forests and every fragrant kind of tree have overshadowed Israel at God's command; for God is leading Israel in joy by the light of his glory, with his mercy and justice for company.

### Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 126:1-6

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

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

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

### Gospel: Luke 3:1-6

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

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

#### Reflections for DEC 6, 2009 - 2nd Advent Baruch 5.1-9; Phil 1.4-11; LK 3.1-6

JERUSALEM, TAKE OFF YOUR ROBE OF MOURNING & MISERY;

PUT ON THE SPLENDOR OF GLORY FROM GOD FOREVER.

The word of God came to John, son of Zechariah; he went throughout the region proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sin.

**During the day:** Put off mourning & misery, & discover the splendor of forgiving. Holding grudges makes no one miserable but yourself. You feel like you're owed an apology; so does God. Learn from him the freedom that comes from permanent pardon, even unsought.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer is remaining immersed in the waters of baptism. Cool & refreshing, prayer rests in the knowledge that God's glory is in life renewed endlessly, whenever & wherever he finds sincere repentance. True sorrow is true life.

**December 13, 2009 – Third Advent - “He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”**

**First Reading: Zephaniah 3:14-18a**

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

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

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

**Second Reading: Philippians 4:4-7**

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

**Gospel: Luke 3:10-18**

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

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

**DEC 13, 2009 - 3rd Advent: Zeph 3.14-18; Phil 4.4-7; LK 3.10-18**

THE LORD YOUR GOD IS IN YOUR MIDST, A MIGHTY SAVIOR. HE WILL REJOICE OVER YOU WITH GLADNESS, & RENEW YOU IN HIS LOVE.

John answered them all, 'I am baptizing you with water. But one mightier than I is coming: he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit & fire.'

**During the day:** Practice renewal: The 'Good News' is always good & always new; ponder it daily. Through faith, human life is plugged into the divine--a constantly renewing combination. Exploit it.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayerfully is the only way to receive good news; in fact, all news received prayerfully is good. Reality has two dimensions, the spiritual & the material; perceived spiritually, the material, too, is of God. At his service.

**December 20, 2009 – Fourth Advent “the infant leaped...”**

**First Reading: Micah 5:2-4a**

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

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

**Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved.**

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

**Second Reading: Hebrews 10:5-10**

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

**Gospel: Luke 1:39-45**

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

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

**Reflections for DEC 20, 4th Advent: Micah 5.1-4; Heb 10.5-10; LK 1.39-45**

BETHLEHEM, FROM YOU SHALL COME FORTH FOR ME ONE  
WHO IS TO RULE IN ISRAEL. HE SHALL STAND FIRM & SHEPHERD  
HIS FLOCK BY THE STRENGTH OF THE LORD.

'Blessed are you among women, blessed the fruit of your womb. Blessed are you  
who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled.'

**During the day:** Entertain your doubts with a willingness to be enlightened; Truth is approachable, even when too vast to be grasped, Affirmation is sometimes of the will--living truth has its own authority, capable of communicating certainty. You'll recognize it.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer is communion with the always communicable divine; shadows lift at Its behest, not ours. Prayer's freedom permits acknowledgment of a dimension that transcends the merely human, satisfied we're made for more than that.

DEC 27, 2009 Holy Family: 1Sam 1.20-28; 1John 3.1-2,21-14 LK 2.41-52

## "Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **Gospel: Luke 2:41-52**

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

### **Prayerful thoughts from Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ, The Rio Grande El Paso Padre Reflections for DEC 27, Holy Family: 1Sam 1.20-28; 1John 3.1-2,21-14 LK 2.41-52**

HANNAH TOLD ELI, 'I PRAYED FOR THIS CHILD, & THE LORD GRANTED  
MY REQUEST. NOW I IN TURN GIVE HIM TO THE LORD.'  
HANNAH LEFT SAMUEL THERE.

After 3 days they found him in the temple. His mother said to him, 'Why have you done this to us?' He replied, 'Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?'

**During the day:** Be grateful for everything. It's all gift, with strings attached--use it to do good, the good of others. God's grace is interpersonal, active for both server & served, gratitude, not credit, the common sentiment of both.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer asks questions, but gets few answers-- explanations are not part of God's revelation. Faith supposes both doubt & trust, in that order--blind trust.

**January 3, 2010 - The Epiphany of the Lord**  
**“it came and stopped over the place where the child was”**

**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 3:2-6**

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, The Rio Grande El Paso Padre**

**Reflections for JAN 3, Epiphany: Isa 60.1-6; Eph 3.1-6; MT 2.1-12**

RISE UP IN SPLENDOR, JERUSALEM! YOUR LIGHT HAS COME. NATIONS  
SHALL WALK BY YOUR LIGHT, & KINGS BY YOUR SHINING RADIANCE.

'Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We observed his star at its  
rising, & have come to pay him homage.'

During the day: Pay homage to your maker. Ponder the reasons he had for making you. What of himself did he put in you? Consider your fidelity to his purpose: what need the newborn son correct?

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is the intelligent creature's attention to its maker. Prayer fathoms the mystery of one's own existence, seeks its source, rests in its discovery. Prayer responds harmoniously to the re-creative character of the encounter.

## January 10, 2010 - 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

(11b) **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.

### 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."

### Gospel: Luke 3:15-16, 21-22

The people were filled with expectation, and all were asking in their hearts whether John might be the Christ. John answered them all, saying, "I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming. I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." After all the people had been baptized and Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

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

**Reflections for JAN 10, Jesus' Baptism: Isa 40.1-11; Tit 2.11-14,3.4-7; LK 3.15-22**

HERE COMES WITH POWER THE LORD GOD. HERE IS HIS REWARD WITH HIM, HIS RECOMPENSE BEFORE HIM. LIKE A SHEPHERD HE FEEDS HIS FLOCK, IN HIS ARMS HE GATHERS HIS LAMBS.

John said, 'I am baptizing you with water. The one to come is mightier than I. He will baptize you in the Holy Spirit & in fire.'

**During the day:** Allow God to shepherd you, to carry you in his arms. His almighty power is at your disposal; count on it, but remember it's for the good of others. Your reward is your recompense.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer is re-immersion in the Spirit. The values & attitudes of Jesus planted at baptism require attentive cultivation; prayer is the individual's conscious submission to the Spirit's purifying fire. Inflaming the will to seek greater good, it burns away at the selfishness.

## January 17, 2010 - Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

### **First Reading: Isaiah 62:1-5**

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

### **Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 96:1-3, 7-10**

**Proclaim his marvelous deeds to all the nations.** Sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all you lands. Sing to the LORD; bless his name. Announce his salvation, day after day. Tell his glory among the nations; among all peoples, his wondrous deeds. Give to the LORD, you families of nations, give to the LORD glory and praise; give to the LORD the glory due his name! Worship the LORD in holy attire. Tremble before him, all the earth; Say among the nations: The LORD is king. He governs the peoples with equity.

### **Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:4-11**

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

### **Gospel: John 2:1-11**

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

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

#### **Reflections for JAN 17, 2nd of yr: Isa 62.1-5; 1Cor 12.4-11; JN 2.1-12**

**YOU SHALL BE CALLED BY A NEW NAME PRONOUNCED BY THE MOUTH OF THE LORD, FOR THE LORD DELIGHTS IN YOU. AS A BRIDEGROOM REJOICES IN HIS BRIDE, SO SHALL YOUR GOD REJOICE IN YOU.**

Jesus performed this first of his signs at Cana in Galilee. Thus did he reveal his glory, & his disciples believed in him.

**During the day:** Rejoice, the Lord delights in you! He loves you just the way you are. Sure, he wants you to improve, & he'll be glad to help; but it has to be *your* choice. Love is never forced.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** I'm aware of you, Jesus, & aware you're aware of me as *part of you!* Prayer is learning to be you: to think your thoughts, to will your will. You use me, & I'm available. Take over!

## January 24, 2010 - Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

### First Reading: Nehemiah 8:2-6, 8-10

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

### Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 19:8-10, 15

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

### Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:12-30

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

### Gospel: Luke 1:1-4; 4:14-21

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

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

#### Reflections for JAN 24, 3rd of yr: Neh 8.2-10; 1COR 12.12-30; LK 1.1-4, 4.14-21

ALL THE PEOPLE LISTENED ATTENTIVELY TO THE BOOK OF THE LAW. THEN NEHEMIAH SAID, ‘DO NOT BE SAD! REJOICING IN THE LORD MUST BE YOUR STRENGTH.’

Jesus was handed the book of Isaiah & read: ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me.

He has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor.' Then he said to them,  
'Today this passage is fulfilled in your hearing.'

**During the day:** Shrug off sadness; it robs your strength. Truth is, God's on your side, no matter who (or what) is on the other. That is, if you're on His! Could be that's the reason you're sad: he's letting you know you're not. Think it through, & act accordingly.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** You exist, Lord, & I am yours. You love me, & I trust you. You use me, & I'm available. Prayer removes my doubts, renews my strength. Your grace is always there, & it's always enough. Much obliged!

## January 31, 2010 - Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

### First Reading: Jeremiah 1:4-5,17-19

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

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

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

### Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:31-13:13

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

### Gospel: Luke 4:21-30

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

### Prayerful thoughts from Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ, The Rio Grande El Paso Padre Reflections for JAN 31, 4th of yr: Jer 1.4-5,17-19; 1Cor 12.31-13.13; LK 4.21-30

'BEFORE I FORMED YOU IN THE WOMB, I KNEW YOU.  
BEFORE YOU WERE BORN, I DEDICATED YOU.  
I AM WITH YOU TO DELIVER YOU,' SAYS THE LORD.

At these words they led him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, intending to hurl him over the edge. He went straight through their midst & walked away.

**During the day:** When you're well-intentioned, walk straight through the difficulties. One way or the other, what God wants gets done. Learn to evaluate results through his perspective; get used to building on divine success in human failure.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer dives beneath the turbulence of surface problems, swims with strength through the conditions & circumstances of God's allowance. His will is prayer's compass, & both his power & his wisdom are its security. Refreshed, back on the surface, one finds things are calmer.

## February 7, 2010 - Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

### **First Reading: Isaiah 6:1-8**

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

### **Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 138:1-5, 7-8**

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

### **Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:1-11**

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

### **Gospel: Luke 5:1-11**

#### [Lk 5:1-11](#)

While the crowd was pressing in on Jesus and listening to the word of God, he was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret. He saw two boats there alongside the lake; the fishermen had disembarked and were washing their nets. Getting into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, he asked him to put out a short distance from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. After he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch." Simon said in reply, "Master, we have worked hard all night and have caught nothing, but at your command I will lower the nets." When they had done this, they caught a great number of fish and their nets were tearing. They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come to help them. They came and filled both boats so that the boats were in danger of sinking. When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at the knees of Jesus and said, "Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man." For astonishment at the catch of fish they had made seized him and all those with him, and likewise James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were

partners of Simon. Jesus said to Simon, “Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.” When they brought their boats to the shore, they left everything and followed him.

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

**Reflections for FEB 7, 5th of yr: Isa.6.1-8; 1Cor 15.1-11; LK 5.1-11**

SAW THE LORD ON A LOFTY THRONE, SERAPHHIM STATIONED ABOVE. I HEARD THE LORD SAY, 'WHOM SHALL I SEND? WHO WILL GO FOR US?' I SAID, 'HERE I AM; SEND ME.' Peter said, 'Leave me, Lord. I am a sinful man.' Jesus said, 'Do not be afraid. From now on you will be catching men.'

**During the day:** Face down fears. They're blind. The mind isn't; it's designed to consider threats, & find a solution. Faith presumes the threat is divinely permitted, & it's God's responsibility to provide needed light & courage. Be available.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Here I am, Lord, send me. You know my strengths & weaknesses, & I've long since learned you can use both to further your Father's business. All I need is to be available; mutual trust does the rest.

## February 14, 2010 - Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

### **First Reading: Jeremiah 17:5-8**

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

### **Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 1:1-4, 6**

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

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

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

### **Gospel: Luke 6:17, 20-26**

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

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

#### **Reflections for FEB 14, 6th of yr: Jer 17.5-8; 1Cor 15.12-20; LK 6.17,20-26**

CURSED THE MAN WHO TRUSTS IN HUMAN BEINGS, WHO SEEKS HIS STRENGTH IN FLESH, WHOSE HEART TURNS AWAY FROM THE LORD. HE IS LIKE A BARREN BUSH IN THE DESERT. 'Woe to you rich, for your consolation is now. Woe to you who are full; you shall go hungry. You who laugh now shall weep in your grief.'

**During the day:** Seek God in everything & everybody; otherwise, you'll get only what you're looking for. It's all his, yours to use as authorized, always for the good of others. Don't lose sight of reality.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer measures our needs & attachments, from God's perspective. Prayer fathoms God's purposes, calibrates our use of time, talents & possessions accordingly. Divine integrity defines fulfillment.

## February 21, 2010 - First Sunday of Lent

### **First Reading: Deuteronomy 26:4-10**

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

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

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

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

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

### **Gospel: Luke 4:1-13**

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

**Prayerful thoughts from Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ, The Rio Grande El Paso Padre**  
**Reflections for FEB 21, 1st Lent: Dt. 26.1-10; Rm 10.8-13; LK 4.1-13**

MOSES TOLD THE PEOPLE, 'WE CRIED TO THE GOD OF OUR FATHERS,  
& HE HEARD OUR CRY & SAW OUR AFFLICTION. YOU SHALL  
DECLARE BEFORE THE LORD: 'I HAVE NOW BROUGHT YOU  
THE FIRST FRUITS OF THE SOIL YOU HAVE GIVEN ME.'

The devil said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command this stone  
to turn into bread.' Jesus said, 'Not on bread alone shall man live.'

**During the day:** Let the Lord know when you need help; express gratitude before you get it knowing you will, though you may not recognize it when you do. He knows your *real* needs, & tough love may be his answer. Hang loose.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** In time of affliction, prayer is not necessarily for release, but rather for the strength to accept it & perceive God's purpose. The inner peace that accompanies mature prayer discovers & follows the Spirit at work.

## February 28, 2010 - Second Sunday of Lent

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

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

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

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

### Second Reading: Philippians 3:17-4:1

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

### Gospel: Luke 9:28-36

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

After the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. They fell silent and did not at that time tell anyone what they had seen.

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

#### Reflections for FEB 28, 2nd Lent: Gn 15. 5-12,17-18; Phil 3.17-4.1; LK 9.28-36

GOD SAID TO ABRAM, 'LOOK UP AT THE SKY & COUNT THE STARS. JUST SO SHALL YOUR DESCENDANTS BE. I AM THE LORD WHO BROUGHT YOU FROM UR TO GIVE YOU THIS LAND AS A POSSESSION.

Two men were talking with him, Moses & Elijah. From the cloud came a voice saying, 'This is my Son, the Chosen One. Listen to Him.'

During the day: Learn to listen. Not just to the other, but to God in the other, Who directs rather than informs, enriching our ponderings with his own divine insights. The other communicates self to the attentive listener, their mutual service God's handiwork.

ABOUT PRAYER: A prayerful person remains alert to God's communications, whatever the words or intentions of the other. Indeed, the other is perceived prayerfully (i.e. from God's perspective), & the inspired service discerned & assumed.

## March 7, 2010 - Third Sunday of Lent

### First Reading: Exodus 17:3-7

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

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

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

### Second Reading: Romans 5:1-2, 5-8

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

### Gospel: Luke 13:1-9

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

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

#### Reflections for MAR 7, 3rd Lent: Ex 3.1-8,13-15; 1Cor 10.1-6,10-12; LK 13.1-9

AN ANGEL OF THE LORD APPEARED TO MOSES IN FIRE FLAMING OUT OF A BUSH. THE BUSH,  
THOUGH ON FIRE, WAS NOT CONSUMED

The vinedresser said, 'Leave it another year while I hoe around it & manure it;  
then perhaps it will bear fruit. If not, it shall be cut down.'

**During the day:** Be a burning bush, unconsumed. Let your energy & enthusiasm communicate to others the Lord who lives in you. Be the light & warmth that rekindles the hope that survives setbacks, turns them into challenges.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer never quits, never gives up. After failures, keeps us ready for the next one; after success, always sharing.

## March 14, 2010 - Third Sunday of Lent

### **First Reading: Joshua 5:9-12**

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

### **Responsorial Psalm: Psalm**

**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: 2 Corinthians 5:17-21**

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

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

Tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to listen to Jesus, but the Pharisees and scribes began to complain, saying, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." So to them Jesus addressed this parable: "A man had two sons, and the younger son said to his father, 'Father give me the share of your estate that should come to me.' So the father divided the property between them. After a few days, the younger son collected all his belongings and set off to a distant country where he squandered his inheritance on a life of dissipation. When he had freely spent everything, a severe famine struck that country, and he found himself in dire need. So he hired himself out to one of the local citizens who sent him to his farm to tend the swine. And he longed to eat his fill of the pods on which the swine fed, but nobody gave him any. Coming to his senses he thought, 'How many of my father's hired workers have more than enough food to eat, but here am I, dying from hunger. I shall get up and go to my father and I shall say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son; treat me as you would treat one of your hired workers.'" So he got up and went back to his father. While he was still a long way off, his father caught sight of him, and was filled with compassion. He ran to his son, embraced him and kissed him. His son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son.' But his father ordered his servants, 'Quickly bring the finest robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Take the fattened calf and slaughter it. Then let us celebrate with a feast, because this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost, and has been found.' Then the celebration began. Now the older son had been out in the field and, on his way back, as he neared the house, he heard the sound of music and dancing. He called one of the servants and asked what this might mean. The servant said to him, 'Your brother has returned and your father has slaughtered the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.' He became angry, and when he refused to enter the house, his father came out and pleaded with

him. He said to his father in reply, 'Look, all these years I served you and not once did I disobey your orders; yet you never gave me even a young goat to feast on with my friends. But when your son returns who swallowed up your property with prostitutes, for him you slaughter the fattened calf.' He said to him, 'My son, you are here with me always; everything I have is yours. But now we must celebrate and rejoice, because your brother was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.'"

**Prayerful thoughts from Rev. Jack Vessels, SJ, The Rio Grande El Paso Padre**  
**Reflections for MAR 14th, 4th Lent: Josh 5.9-12; 2Cor 5.17-21; LK 15.1-3,11-32**

THEY ATE THE PRODUCE OF THE LAND: UNLEAVENED CAKES &  
PARCHED GRAIN. AFTER THE DAY ON WHICH THEY ATE THE  
PRODUCE OF THE LAND, THE MANNA CEASED.

'Father, I have sinned against God & against you. I no long deserve to be called your son.  
Treat me like one of your hired hands.'

**During the day:** Don't regret the loss of special favors. Trim your needs, be satisfied with what you've got. A new sense of freedom will more than compensate.

**ABOUT PRAYER:** Prayer dives deep & finds the hidden truths at the bottom of the barrel. Freely, the humble sinner entrusts his needs to a loving, forgiving Father.