

“Come to me, all you who labor
and are burdened, and I will give
you rest.
Take my yoke upon you and
learn from me,
for I am meek and humble of
heart;
and you will find rest for
yourselves.”
Matthew 11

Fifteenth Week in Ordinary Time: July 15-21, 2007

The Fifteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Sunday is the **Fifteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time**. In **Luke's gospel** we see Jesus challenged by a scholar who asks how to obtain eternal life. Jesus says "love your neighbor as yourself." When he is asked, "who is my neighbor?" Jesus tells the well-loved story of the Good Samaritan, who stopped to help a Levite who had been left for dead. Even though others had passed by the Levite, the Samaritan cares for him with tenderness. "Go and do likewise," Jesus tell us.

We begin three weeks of readings from the **Book of Exodus** continuing the story of God's faithful deliverance of the people from slavery in Egypt. This week we read of their plight in Egypt, Moses' birth and how he became a part of Pharaoh's inner circle, Moses' encounter with God in the burning bush, God's summons to Moses and the people, and the story of the Passover up to the time they left Egypt.

The **Psalm responses** this week are particularly wonderful entries to prayer:

*Our help is in the name of the Lord.
Turn to the Lord in your need, and you will
live.
The Lord is kind and merciful.
The Lord remembers his covenant for ever.
I will take the cup of salvation, and call on
the name of the Lord.
His mercy endures forever.*

We follow a powerful part of **Matthew's Gospel** all week, with some wonderful messages of Jesus, preparing us for parables about the Kingdom of God. Jesus does not come to bring simple peace, but to call us to find our lives by surrendering them

Daily Prayer This Week

This is a great week to grow in a sense of not being alone. It is so difficult to find intimacy with God in the midst of our everyday lives if we go through our lives, either trying to do it alone or simply not acknowledging the fact that God is always with us. We could make this the special gift we ask for each week: "Lord, let me know and experience that you are with me, every day, all the time." If we only came to realize that God is as faithful to us in our slavery as God was in the Exodus story, we'd feel so different each day. We'd express our gratitude more. We'd sing God's praise.

If we walk through each day this week with a little more confidence in God's presence, God's merciful love for us, God's protection and care for us, then the Gospel message of Jesus can find a way into our hearts much more freely. Imagine, if with this confidence, we could start asking Jesus:

"Lord, I don't want to keep seeking myself this week. I don't want to be so absorbed in my needs, in winning, in manipulating, in criticizing, in using my power to protect myself. I want to find myself, the life you offer me, by surrendering more, by letting go of what I cling to. Help me be freer this afternoon and when I get home from work."

We could make this prayer, have this conversation with Jesus, while walking from one place to another, while shopping, over a lunch break, while doing laundry, sitting at an airport or driving to a meeting. Sometimes it is easiest to make this request precisely when I catch myself failing in some way, being particularly selfish or demanding in some way. When the Word can confront us, this is the doorway to naming a new desire. This week, we can find concrete times in our week, in real encounters and responsibilities of our very busy lives to say these or similar words:

"Lord, help me to be more childlike today. Help me simply come to you when I'm burdened or just

to him and his mission. Then Jesus goes to teach and to preach, beginning with strong words for the towns in which he worked great cures and where the people have not repented. Rather than being discouraged, Jesus prays to his Father and we have the privilege of overhearing him say that, although these things are hidden from those who seemed educated and clever, “you have revealed them to the childlike.” Jesus invites us to come to him – when we are burdened – and he will give us rest. He doesn’t tell us we will have no burden. By taking up his burden, the mission he gives us will be light. When the Pharisees go after his disciples because in their hunger they picked grain on the Sabbath, Jesus challenges them to learn what God meant by these words from the prophet Hosea, “I desire mercy, not sacrifice.” From that point on, those who rejected him conspired to kill him.

The readings for the **Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time** tell us about service. In the **Genesis** story, Abraham generously cares for three strangers who then tell him that his wife, Sarah, will finally have a son. **Luke’s gospel** recounts the classic story of Martha and Mary: Martha ran around serving Jesus while Mary sat at his feet listening. “Mary has chosen the better part,” Jesus says.

tired, rather than all the other places I tend to go for relief. Let me be yoked to you as I carry out the promises of my life today. Free me from my impatience and tendency to judge others. Teach me how showing others the mercy you have showed me is more important than my hard driving sacrifice.”

One day this week, one of these prayers will be just right. Another day, a much more personal request will come to us. What is important is that we grow in the habit of connecting with Jesus throughout the day, in these brief moments in the background of our lives. We have these moments, and we can easily get better at finding them. Then we can quickly grow in recognizing how the desires in our hearts can get formed and deepened through letting the Word into our hearts. We can practice beginning each day with a moment of prayer, asking for a desire and then repeating and refining that desire throughout the day.

We will discover that this is very consoling and enjoyable. We will experience ourselves growing in gratitude as God is generously giving us what we ask for, and we are indeed finding intimacy with Jesus each day. And when we get ready for bed each night, we can develop a habit of simply giving thanks – telling Jesus we are so grateful that we were not alone this day and how much we are grateful for his presence, mercy and for the mission he’s sharing with us.

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