

When the disciples saw him walking on the sea they were terrified. ... they cried out in fear.

Jesus spoke to them, "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid."

Matthew 14

Eighteenth Week of Ordinary Time: August 2-8, 2009

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Eighteenth Week of Ordinary Time

On the **18th Sunday in Ordinary Time**, we are in the second of three Sunday gospels from the 6th chapter of **John's gospel** and the Bread of Life readings. Jesus tells the crowd, "Do not work for food that perishes but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you."

Tuesday is the **Memorial of Saint John Mary Vianney, priest**. Thursday is the **Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord** with its own special readings, as Jesus is revealed to Peter, James and John for who he really is in order to prepare them for the scandal of the cross. Saturday is the **Memorial of Saint Dominic, priest**.

We continue the story of Moses leading the Israelites out of Egypt. This week our readings are from the **Book of Numbers** for the first several days and from the **Book of Deuteronomy** on Friday and Saturday.

In **Matthew's Gospel** this week we hear some marvelous words about faith and discipleship. The "feeding of the 5,000" comes after the disciples ask Jesus to send the crowd away because they didn't know how to feed them. Jesus tells them to "give them some food yourselves" and blesses the loaves and fishes. Jesus comes to his disciples across the water in a storm, and invites Peter to come to him,

Daily Prayer This Week

This week we can ask, in the variety of ways, in the situations of our daily lives, that our eyes might be opened to see Jesus as he really is - glorified, with the Father, and ready to renew our faith and trust in him.

As we begin our day, and at brief times throughout our day, we can pull our consciousness together by letting the themes of this week's reading guide us.

One day, we might ask to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus as we go through a day full of strong wind and waves. We can ask again and again, as things get tougher and more challenging. Another day, we might focus on what comes out of our mouths. Is there cynicism, judgments, distortions of the truth, divisive and self-serving manipulation, yelling and hurtful put-downs? How do I practice using my voice to give praise to God by affirming others, forgiving them, by telling the truth, by defending the poor and the voiceless, by giving God thanks?

Another day, I might be conscious of those I regard as "dogs," those I disdain or think of as "the enemy." I might ask for the grace to open my heart to whatever faith in God they have, however different from mine. I might ask for a sense of solidarity with them, not because it is my desire or inclination, but because it is God's desire for me. How can I heal and

across the water; when Peter comes, he takes his eyes off Jesus and goes down. A persistent Canaanite woman begs Jesus for help for her daughter. When he refuses, she persists and he replies, "O woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish." Jesus asks his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" and Peter replies, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." But when Peter tries to stop Jesus from talking about the hardships that are ahead, Jesus tells him, "Get behind me, Satan!" The disciples wonder why they could not drive out a demon from a boy, Jesus answers, "Because of your little faith." Faith "the size of a mustard seed" is enough.

For this **Nineteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time** we finish our third Sunday with the Bread of Life readings from the 6th chapter of **John's Gospel**, meditating on the words of Jesus who reveals that he is the bread of life. Some of his hearers grumble about these shocking words. Jesus says, "I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world."

reconcile, at least in my heart, what needs healing: racism, sexism, anti-Semitism, anti-Muslimism, anti-foreignerism, hostility against the poor, judgmentalism about sinners,

Later in the week, we can get in touch with the call of Jesus to deny ourselves. This is not self-denial for its own sake. This is the dying to self that comes from loving in the self-sacrificing way that Jesus did. Who in my family, friends, relative, co-workers, members of my parish or congregation needs my self-denying love? How have I focused on "gaining the world" and lost some of my true self in the process? Is there some way this week that I can taste discovering my true self in giving some time, some compassion, some love, some special care to someone who needs this from me?

And throughout the week, perhaps at a special time of powerlessness or some time when I feel that I don't have the energy or gifts to do the "more," to move a mountain, I can ask for faith the size of a mustard seed. And, each night I can give thanks to God for being generous to me all week, for this simple focus on our relationship every day.

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