

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

SEPTEMBER 7, 2008

**"If two of you agree on earth about anything for which they are to pray,
it shall be granted to them by my heavenly Father."**

—Matthew 18:19

GOD'S WATCHERS

In the ancient world watchmen were extremely important people. They kept communities safe, and were there to alert them to any impending danger or attack. Before locks, alarms, and security systems, watchmen were the protectors, the safety measure. So when the Lord charges Ezekiel as a watchman today, it is a weighty charge. So weighty, we learn, that if Ezekiel fails to sound the alarm for those around him and they perish in a state of wickedness, Ezekiel will be held responsible! This profound connection between God's will on earth and in heaven is repeated in today's Gospel, where Jesus instructs us that we are to be the security force, the watchers placed on alert that nowhere in the Body of Christ, the church, will there be any two members of the one Body who are not reconciled. Scripture tells us that Jesus reconciled all things in heaven and on earth through the blood of his cross. But we are given the mission to continue that reconciliation on earth as in heaven through our ceaseless efforts to be, as Paul would write, ambassadors of reconciliation. Let us not get too comfortable thinking that we are responsible only for keeping our own lives from the path of wickedness and disagreement. We are also held accountable for the lives of the members of Christ's body around us.

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HELP THE POOR AND NEEDY

Help the poor and needy by volunteering for Catholic Charities in Long Beach. Call Cecilia for a volunteer application at 562.480.2506 to bring food and a friendly smile to the homebound elderly once a month. Contact her by email at:

gatekeeperproject@hotmail.com.

WOMEN'S RETREAT—Oct. 3-5

"The Afterlife: Heaven is Not So Far Away!"

A team of 3 Carmelite priests will give talks at El Carmelo Retreat House in Redlands. Cost is \$105 for a double room, \$140 for a single plus 6 meals. Conference and more. For info call Margaret Lander at 562.429.2897.

TAKE TIME TO REFLECT ON GOD'S WORD

The readings for next Sunday, *Exaltation of the Holy Cross*, are listed below along with questions for your quiet reflection throughout the coming week.

FIRST READING: Numbers 21:4b-9

SECOND READING: Philippians 2:6-11

GOSPEL: John 3:13-17

Jesus has to undergo death on the cross to be able to rise on Easter Sunday. What sustains us when we encounter the big and small crosses of our lives?

MORE IMPROVEMENTS FOR ST. MATTHEW CHURCH!

On Monday and Tuesday of this week our parking lot will be resurfaced and relined in order that all parking spaces will be well defined. Please keep in mind that you will need to park on the street if you are attending Mass or a meeting either of these days. Thank you for your cooperation.

MARKETPLACE OF FAIR TRADE CRAFTS 2008

On Sunday, September 28, Concern America returns with the Marketplace of Fair Trade Crafts—just in time for birthdays, weddings, baptisms or any other special event you may celebrate. Please consider purchasing gifts that will warm the heart of the recipient and promote justice and fair trade for the families in Central America and Bangladesh who produce the crafts. Through your appreciation of their crafts and your generosity, many materially poor artisans will be able to earn a just wage, support their families, experience hope, and keep alive their cultural heritage.

Concern America is an international development and refugee aid organization based in Santa Ana, CA 714.953.8575. You may view of selection of their crafts on their website: www.concernamerica.org.

PROSTATE SCREENINGS

Because our parish nursing ministry is always looking out for our physical well-being, St. Mary Medical Center will be offering prostate screenings (which includes a digital exam and PSA testing) for men over 45 years of age for only \$10.00. The exams will take place here at St. Matthew's on Saturday, September 27 between 9am. to 12:00 noon. Appointments are available by calling 562.437.0791 option 3.

51ST VALYERMO FALL FESTIVAL September 27-28

This religious arts and crafts festival is well known in So. California. One of the special features of the Festival is the sale of the Abbey Ceramics with the designer, Fr. Maur, available to personally autograph his creations. There will be more than 85 artists exhibiting their work along with a large variety of restaurants and food concessions to suit every taste and budget. They will have live entertainment and a petting zoo for kids and lots more. Festival hours are 9a.m. to 6p.m. Directions and more info are available at www.valyermofallfestival.com. Phone number is 661.944.2178.