

Church Begins at Home

January 28-February 3
The Fourth Sunday after Epiphany B

A Verse for the Week

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding.

(Psalm 111:10)



Daily Readings

SUNDAY'S GOSPEL Mark 1:21-28

Mark's story of Jesus has barely begun and already the battle with the forces of evil and death is joined. Jesus, teaching in the synagogue, heals a man possessed with an unclean spirit. The crowds are amazed at this stranger who teaches and commands the unclean spirits with authority. Jesus sides with humanity against every force that would bring death and disease. These forces recognize Jesus and know what his power means for them.

MONDAY Numbers 22:1-21

The story of Balaam is a strange one. When reading it, one must understand that the ancient world believed in the power of the spoken word. Blessings and curses were serious business. As Moses and the people of Israel journey to the Promised Land, Balak, king of Moab, fears them because of their great numbers. He hires a seer from Mesopotamia, Balaam, to put a curse on Israel.

TUESDAY Numbers 22:22-38

Like one of Aesop's fables, this story has a donkey that talks! To keep Balaam from cursing Israel, God sends an angel to kill Balaam, but Balaam is saved by his donkey. When Balaam realizes that Israel is God's chosen people, he double-crosses Balak and blesses the Israelites rather than curse them. You might wish to read chapter 23 as well to see how flustered Balak gets when he realizes that Balaam double-crossed him.

WEDNESDAY Mark 5:1-20

This is another account of Jesus casting out unclean spirits. The unclean spirit identifies himself as "Legion". A legion consisted of four to six thousand soldiers in the Roman army. Giving this name to demons might suggest negative views of the Roman empire or that the man was possessed by many demons.

THURSDAY Jeremiah 29:1-14

This is part of a letter Jeremiah wrote to the exiles in Babylon (about 585 B.C.) Jeremiah counsels them to live in Babylon as normally as possible and to be good citizens. He cautions them about being deceived by false prophets who promise an early return, for they will be in Babylon for 70 years.

FRIDAY Deuteronomy 18:15-20

Moses tells the Israelites that God will one day raise up another prophet like himself who would speak with God's authority. He cautions the people to be discerning of false prophets.

SATURDAY Mark 1:29-39 (Tomorrow's Gospel)

Jesus' ministry of healing continues when he visits the home of Simon Peter.

Catechism Corner

(from Martin Luther's *Small Catechism*)

The Fourth Petition

Give us today our daily bread.

What is this?

In fact, God gives daily bread without our prayer, even to all evil people, but we ask in this prayer that God cause us to recognize what our daily bread is and to receive it with thanksgiving.

What does "daily bread" mean?

Everything our bodies need such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, home, fields, livestock, money, property, and upright spouse, upright children, upright workers, upright and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, decency, honor, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like.