

Sat 3 July

Jn 20: 24-29

...Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and look at my hands; then reach out your hand and put it in my side. Stop your doubting and believe!" Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Do you believe because you see me? How happy are those who believe without seeing me!"

Doubting Thomas. We often hear of this expression to describe a person who's sceptical and perhaps even lacks faith. Often in our minds, Thomas is that disciple who refuses to believe his fellow disciples' unanimous announcement of Jesus' resurrection and demanded a direct sign from Jesus before he does. He is perceived as suspicious and distrusting. Someone we may not want to emulate at first glance. But if we were to look deeper into our lives, we will recognise that there is a doubting Thomas lurking in all of us. We all doubt. It is only the degree that differs. But doubting is not necessarily a bad thing. It is possible to doubt with faith. To have a **healthy scepticism** that is not complacent but while questioning, seeks also for an answer. Thomas shows a great capacity for whole heartedness, for abandoning his initial lack of faith and embracing without reservation the truth. His response is a triumphant return and joyful declaration of who Jesus is - "My Lord and my God!" Do we sometimes feel disappointed with ourselves when we doubt God's real presence in our lives during those dark, dry days which visit all of us. Let us not lose hope. Let us raise our heads to the sunshine and hear Jesus saying to each of us today, "Peace be with you", "**Stop your doubting and believe!**"

Lord I want to believe. Help my unbelief.

Sun: 4 July

Lk 10:1-12, 17-20

After this the Lord chose another seventy-two men and sent them out...He said to them, "...Pray to the owner of the harvest that he will send out workers to gather in his harvest. Go! I am sending you like lambs among wolves. Don't take a purse or a beggar's bag or shoes; don't stop to greet anyone on the road. Whenever you go into a house, first say, 'Peace be with this house,' ...Whenever you go into a town and are made welcome, eat what is set before you, heal the sick in that town and say to the people there, 'The Kingdom of God has come near you.'

In today's gospel reading, we hear Jesus preparing his seventy-two disciples for a preaching mission. What is interesting to note is that what they are to **say** is reduced to two sentences; "first say, 'Peace be with this house,' and

then "say to the people there, 'The Kingdom of God has come near you.'" However, what they are to **do** is spelt out in clear details. They are instructed to pray, to carry the barest of necessities, to avoid the clutter of material things and creature comforts and be fully focussed on their mission to "heal the sick in that town." Jesus in other words, is reminding his disciples and us that "**Actions speak louder than words.**" There are times when words can be a balm to the hurting but more often than not, we will find that our loving actions, our acts of service and consideration are more cherished signs of our Christian love towards others. Counsellors will attest to the fact that families that successfully nurture happy children with the God's values are families where the parents set the example through their daily practice of Christ-like behaviour before the children. Words and clinical application of acclaimed child-management techniques gleaned from self-made gurus seldom bear good fruits on a long term basis. We have been told that "It is by our love that they will know we are Christians." It is indeed by the way we lead our lives that we best preach the message "**The Kingdom of God has come near you.**" to our beloved family and non-Christian friends alike.

Jesus, help me to remember to preach less with words and more through my actions today.

Mon: 5 July

Mt 9: 18-26

A Jewish official came to him, knelt down before [Jesus] and said, "My daughter has just died; but come and place your hands on her and she will live."...A woman who had suffered from severe bleeding for twelve years came up behind Jesus and touched the edge of his cloak. She said to herself, "If only I touch his cloak, I will get well." Jesus turned around and saw her, and said, "Courage, my daughter! Your faith has made you well." At that very moment the woman became well. Then Jesus went into the official's house...went into the girl's room and took hold of her hand and she got up.

We all know of someone who needs physically healing. It is not unusual to receive requests for our prayers to "storm heaven" for a child diagnosed with an incurable illness or an elderly living out his agonising last days eaten away with cancer. In today's passage, we meet the haemorrhaging woman who believed that by touching Jesus' cloak alone will lead to her healing. Jesus cures her and praises her for her simple faith, "**Your faith has made you well.**" Her faith is seen as the collaborating factor needed for Jesus to work his miracle. Does this then mean that when we genuinely pray for a healing and it doesn't materialise- it is our lack of faith in question? Certainly not. While Jesus is concerned about

our physical well-being, he is even more concerned over our spiritual growth. After all, the human body is meant to die while the soul is eternal. The latter then logically, must and should deserve more attention and attentive prayer than the former. Oftentimes, we believe, with our limited human perception that what we see and understand as good is what should be granted by God. But we know for a fact that God's ways are not man's ways and His thoughts are beyond our understanding and grasp. Can we "**believe without seeing**" that even in situations where our sincere and earnest prayers are not answered directly, God is working his healing in unseen and unexpected ways. The fruits of all petitions can often be the transformed lives of the "prayer warriors" as much as the one prayed for.

Jesus, I believe that true and lasting healing always takes place whenever I sincerely reach out to touch you in prayer.

Tues 6 July

Mt 9: 32-38

Jesus went around visiting all the towns and villages. He taught in the synagogues, preached the Good News about the Kingdom and healed people with every kind of disease and sickness. As he saw the crowds, his heart was filled with pity for them because they were worried and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. So he said to his disciples, "The harvest is large but there are few workers to gather it in. Pray to the owner of the harvest that he will send out workers to gather in his harvest.

These days, in the wake of the effects of Global Warming, the world has been witnessing devastating tsunamis, earthquakes and disasters at a disturbingly frequency. Some insurance policies even term these as "acts of God." Far from being the God who sits back and cast dreadful disasters and diseases onto mankind, only drudging acting after multitudes had prostrated themselves and pleaded ceaselessly, today's gospel reading confronts us with the truth. We come face to face with the undeniable compassion of Jesus. The truth that God, here represented in the person of Jesus, his son, is a God of love rather than a God of disasters. He is a lover whose heart is "**filled with pity**" for us, his "worried and helpless people." Jesus "healed people with every kind of disease and sickness" and he tirelessly calls us to his side to teach us his ways and attitudes so as to bring inner and true peace to the hearts of men. In the face of a hungry and thirsty world, Jesus tells his disciples to pray for more willing hands and hearts to gather and comfort the suffering. We are now the living hands and feet of God with the God-given potential to join in the preaching of the Good News through the witness of our authentic lives. Will we say 'Yes' finally. Or are we too busy again.

Jesus, I know that through my loving actions, others may come to see and believe that you God are a God of love.

Wed:7 July

Mt 10:1-7

Jesus called his twelve disciples together and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and every sickness. These twelve men were sent out by Jesus with the following instructions: "Do not go to any Gentile territory or any Samaritan towns. Instead, you are to go to the lost sheep of the people of Israel. Go and preach, 'The Kingdom of heaven is near!'

The authority that the twelve disciples operated on is the authority of Jesus himself. We know that with this living and powerful love of Jesus alone, the disciples were able to heal all diseases and drive out demons. Today, Jesus calls us to come near him; to be filled with his love and in turn, touch the wounds and brokenness of those he has given us – our spouses, in-laws, friends and neighbours who are physically, emotionally, mentally or financially ill. Without Jesus as our point of reference, we would not be able to love them the way they hungered to be loved. Without Jesus, we would be depending on our human strength, limited wisdom and imagination rather than the inexhaustible love of God. If we know Jesus personally through a disciplined daily dialogue, we will recognise his gentle promptings and he himself will give us the words to speak, the inspiration to act - we become a conduit through which the love of Jesus passes through to heal the sick. We are not the healer. Sometimes we may be confronted with the terrible suffering of another. We may feel the urge to say something consoling or do something just to take away the feeling of helplessness. But if we can find the courage to acknowledge our own helplessness and just be present to share in each others brokenness, then we can touch a moment of true revelation; that we are all parts of the each other -broken pieces of puzzles that together form the beautiful mystical body of Christ.

Jesus, teach me to call on you and to wait trustingly for your guidance whenever I need to help another.

Thurs: 8 July

Mt 10:7-15

Heal the sick, bring the dead back to life, heal those who suffer from dreaded skin diseases and drive out demons. You have received without paying, so give without being paid.

Who are these dead? Jesus teaches us that anyone whose life and security is anchored on the world's false and transient values of fame, beauty, money and power, etc is spiritually dead. A person who is spiritually lost needs to be brought back to God, fed on God's values and eternal truths.

He needs to born-again since he was dead before to the life-giving values of God. This re-birth is the deep conversion of the heart which in turn leads to a transformation of the person into someone new. It entails the dying to one's selfish natural self and rising to a new selfless love that is other-centred. The power or impetus to initiate this transformation is readily available in the unconditional and unwarranted love of God, freely given in the person of Jesus. And this transformation is only possible if we desire it and welcome it whole-heartedly. The death and re-birth of a Christian can be likened to the metamorphosis of the caterpillar into a beautiful butterfly. The lowly, crawling caterpillar has the innate potential to become a butterfly. But it must first "die" in the pupa stage where it neither feeds nor moves in its coffin-like cocoon. Are we also willing to die to our self-centred plans, our human sufficiency and find, paradoxically, the wonderful freedom of God's liberating values and love. Can we be courageous enough to let go and let God and find the wings to fly and soar towards true and pure security, the knowledge of our true nature – the sons and daughters of a loving Father God.

Jesus, give me the faith not to be afraid of dying to my human nature in order to experience true union with you.



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Fri 2 July

Mt 9: 9-13

Jesus left that place and as he walked along, he saw a tax collector, named Matthew, sitting in his office. He said to him, "Follow me.".....Some Pharisees saw this and asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with such people?" Jesus heard them and answered, "People who are well do not need a doctor, but only those who are sick. Go and find out what is meant by the scripture that says: 'It is kindness that I want, not animal sacrifices.' I have not come to call respectable people, but outcasts."

Author Keith A. Fournier wrote in his book **Wounds That Heal** of an editorial in the London Times which focused on the topic, **'What's wrong with the world?'** There were hundreds of intellectual responses and opinions. Amongst these was the letter of G.K. Chesterton, a well-respected Christian thinker. His answer was 'the shortest, the simplest. He wrote **"I am."** And how right he was!! Do we sometimes behave like the Pharisees in this passage and see ourselves as good and righteous while others are unworthy of God's love. Perhaps we have forgotten that God has no enemies but only beloved children. That He loves us simply for who we are and not what we've done. His love is unconditional and no sin, no matter how grave on anyone's part, can reduce or diminish this love. So what do we "see" as we ourselves walk along in life? Are we often too preoccupied with our daily tasks ahead, the immediate needs and obligations of family and social lives? Is **"busyness"** our perennial excuse? How much longer are we going to blind ourselves to what is truly important in this brief life - people, others, the lonely, the broken and not targets, achievements and the security of a big bank account. Jesus says, "Follow me." – follow him in the way he looks at life, at every being's dignity. Being a Christian is not about belonging to an exclusive club. Jesus' calling is to community, it is an inclusive world where everyone is welcomed equally. *Jesus, help me to be courageous enough to see my own sickness and to return to your values.*