

Saturday, 1st September

1 Corinthians 1:26-31, Matthew 25:14-30

Jesus told his disciples this parable: 'A man on his way abroad summoned his servants and entrusted his property to them. To one he gave five talents, to another two, to a third is one; each in proportion to his ability. Then he set out. The man who had received the five talents promptly went and traded with them and made five more. The man who had received two made two more in the same way. But the man who had received one went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. Now a long time after, the master of those servants came back and went through his accounts with them. The man who had received the five talents came forward bringing five more. "Sir," he said "you entrusted me with five talents; here are five more that I have made." His master said to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you have shown you can be faithful in small things, I will trust you with greater; come and join in your master's happiness". Next the man with the two talents came forward. "Sir," he said "you entrusted me with two talents; here are two more that I have made." His master said to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you have shown you can be faithful in small things, I will trust you with greater; come and join in your master's happiness". Last came forward the man who had the one talent. "Sir," said he "I had heard you were a hard man, reaping where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered; so I was afraid, and I went off and hid your talent in the ground. Here it is; it was yours, you have it back." But his master answered him, "You wicked and lazy servant! So you knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered? Well then, you should have deposited my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have recovered my capital with interest. So now, take the talent from him and give it to the man who has the five talents. For to everyone who has will be given more, and he will have more than enough; but from the man who has not, even what he has will be taken away. As for this good-for-nothing servant, throw him out into the dark, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth."

Gifts and talents

The master entrusted five talents, two talents and one talent respectively to three of his servants. What is important to note is that the servants were not owners of the talents, but they were stewards entrusted with what they had. Thus, the talents were not theirs to use them as they wanted.

Likewise, we too have talents which are the gifts God has generously given to us. Every day, we hold in our hands gifts that have been entrusted to us for a purpose. We hold these gifts, not for ourselves, but in order to use them for the service of others and for the glory of God.

What are some gifts we might be holding in our hands today?

Gifts of laughter, counting, writing, cooking, counselling, courage, loving others selflessly, joy, time, etc. are some examples of the treasures we have within.

"Your talent is God's gift to you. What you do with it is your gift back to God."
(Leo Buscaglia)

Let us step out of our comfort zones and never doubt the potentials we have inside of ourselves. Like the two servants in today's parable, may we too hear the words of God our Master saying to us, *"Well done, my good and faithful servant and friend. Come in and enjoy my happiness."*

Question for reflection:

1) How can I use the gifts that I have in order to use them for the service of others and for the glory of God?

Sunday, 2nd September, Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time
Deuteronomy 4:1-2,6-8, James 1:17-18,21-22,27, Mark 7:1-8,14-15,21-23

The Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered round Jesus, and they noticed that some of his disciples were eating with unclean hands, that is, without washing them. For the Pharisees, and the Jews in general, follow the tradition of the elders and never eat without washing their arms as far as the elbow; and on returning from the market place they never eat without first sprinkling themselves. There are also many other observances which have been handed down to them concerning the washing of cups and pots and bronze dishes. So these Pharisees and scribes asked him, 'Why do your disciples not respect the tradition of the elders but eat their food with unclean hands?' He answered, 'It was of you hypocrites that Isaiah so rightly prophesied in this passage of scripture: This people honours me only with lip-service, while their hearts are far from me. The worship they offer me is worthless, the doctrines they teach are only human regulations. You put aside the commandment of God to cling to human

traditions.’ He called the people to him again and said, ‘Listen to me, all of you, and understand. Nothing that goes into a man from outside can make him unclean; it is the things that come out of a man that make him unclean. For it is from within, from men’s hearts, that evil intentions emerge: fornication, theft, murder, adultery, avarice, malice, deceit, indecency, envy, slander, pride, folly. All these evil things come from within and make a man unclean.’

A Clean Heart

The Pharisees and the scribes were scandalized by the actions of Jesus’ disciples who did not wash their hands before eating, without observing the purity laws. Jesus did not bother to enter into a moral debate with them. Instead, He went straight to what was more important for God, i.e. to possess a clean heart.

Jesus challenged the Pharisees and scribes to be concerned more with the inside rather than the outside. The “impurity” that comes from the inside defiles a person internally, and which is expressed externally in his/her actions and words. Thus, for Jesus, it was more important to live with clean hearts, rather than to be externally unblemished.

Today, Jesus reminds us again what truly matters most to God. God yearns from us to possess good and clean hearts that desire to love and please Him alone. When we have God in our hearts, we will be motivated to do good to others.

Let us examine our motives behind our actions today. May we let our words and actions flow from our clean hearts. May our lives be authentic!

Questions for reflection:

- 1) How is my heart today?
- 2) In what ways can I live with a clean heart?

Monday, 3rd September, St. Gregory the Great
1 Corinthians 2:1-5, Luke 4:16-30

Jesus came to Nazara, where he had been brought up, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day as he usually did. He stood up to read and they handed him the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. Unrolling the scroll he found the place where it is written: The spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for

he has anointed me. He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives and to the blind new sight, to set the downtrodden free, to proclaim the Lord's year of favour. He then rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the assistant and sat down. And all eyes in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to speak to them, 'This text is being fulfilled today even as you listen'. And he won the approval of all, and they were astonished by the gracious words that came from his lips They said, 'This is Joseph's son, surely?' But he replied, 'No doubt you will quote me the saying, "Physician, heal yourself" and tell me, "We have heard all that happened in Capernaum, do the same here in your own countryside"'. And he went on, 'I tell you solemnly, no prophet is ever accepted in his own country. 'There were many widows in Israel, I can assure you, in Elijah's day, when heaven remained shut for three years and six months and a great famine raged throughout the land, but Elijah was not sent to any one of these: he was sent to a widow at Zarephath, a Sidonian town. And in the prophet Elisha's time there were many lepers in Israel, but none of these was cured, except the Syrian, Naaman.' When they heard this everyone in the synagogue was enraged. They sprang to their feet and hustled him out of the town; and they took him up to the brow of the hill their town was built on, intending to throw him down the cliff, but he slipped through the crowd and walked away.

Sent to do God's Mission

Jesus, filled with the Holy Spirit, began His ministry with these words from Prophet Isaiah: *"The spirit of the Lord has been given to me... He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives and to the blind new sight, to set the downtrodden free, to proclaim the Lord's year of favour."* This was Jesus' mission, from the start to the end, to promote God's reign as a project of justice and compassion for all the outcast and rejected ones in society. The Good News of God's love is for all people.

Today, we too have the same mission to share the Good News with all people, especially with the poor and outcasts in our society. The elderly people struggling to make ends meet, those struggling with depression, the young children today outcast because of their poor grades, the poor crying to be heard, etc. They more than anyone else need to hear the Good News that God loves them and He watches over them.

"We must restore hope to young people, help the old, be open to the future, spread love. Be poor

among the poor. We need to include the excluded and preach peace.” (Pope Francis)

Today, Jesus calls us to bring the Good News to the poor, lonely, depressed, sick and hungry. Let us, through our loving words and actions, bring God’s love to them!

Questions for reflection:

- 1) Who am I called to welcome into my life?
- 2) What might I need to change in my heart first before I can respond to the call to bring the Good News to those who are most in need of God?

Tuesday, 4th September

1 Corinthians 2:10-16, Luke 4:31-37

Jesus went down to Capernaum, a town in Galilee, and taught them on the sabbath. And his teaching made a deep impression on them because he spoke with authority. In the synagogue there was a man who was possessed by the spirit of an unclean devil, and it shouted at the top of its voice, ‘Ha! What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are: the Holy One of God.’ But Jesus said sharply, ‘Be quiet! Come out of him!’ And the devil, throwing the man down in front of everyone, went out of him without hurting him at all. Astonishment seized them and they were all saying to one another, ‘What teaching! He gives orders to unclean spirits with authority and power and they come out.’ And reports of him went all through the surrounding countryside.

The word of life

Jesus spoke. His teaching made a deep impression on the people because He spoke with authority. This was because His words were not empty but had the power to change, transform, heal and liberate.

In confronting the man possessed by the unclean spirit, Jesus ordered it to be quiet and come out of him. The spirit obeyed and left the man without hurting him.

When speaking, we use many words every single day. Do we speak with authority? Do our words have the power to change, transform, heal and liberate others from the ‘unclean spirit’ of pride, lust, resentment, unforgiveness and envy? Do our words bring people closer to God or drive

them away from God?

As parents, friends, siblings, we have the responsibility, not to diminish, but to empower and help others to grow in their relationships with God.

“The Gospel is the word of life: It does not oppress people, (but), on the contrary, it frees those who are enslaved by so many evil spirits in this world: vanity, the attachment to money, pride, sensuality... the Gospel changes the heart! It changes life; it transforms the inclination to evil to resolutions of good.” (Pope Francis)

Today, let us not speak empty words but words that carry authority and power to change, transform, heal and liberate. May we listen attentively today to Jesus as He speaks to us the word of life. May we ourselves be constantly free from many enslavements that prevent us from living a life of love.

Lord, change my heart so that I can speak with Your authority!

Wednesday, 5th September

1 Corinthians 3:1-9, Luke 4:38-44

Leaving the synagogue Jesus went to Simon’s house. Now Simon’s mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever and they asked him to do something for her. Leaning over her he rebuked the fever and it left her. And she immediately got up and began to wait on them. At sunset all those who had friends suffering from diseases of one kind or another brought them to him, and laying his hands on each he cured them. Devils too came out of many people, howling, ‘You are the Son of God’. But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak because they knew that he was the Christ. When daylight came he left the house and made his way to a lonely place. The crowds went to look for him, and when they had caught up with him they wanted to prevent him leaving them, but he answered, ‘I must proclaim the Good News of the kingdom of God to the other towns too, because that is what I was sent to do’. And he continued his preaching in the synagogues of Judaea.

The touch of love

Jesus never stopped giving Himself, i.e. His time, attention, to any person

who came to Him. He was never in a hurry to move off. He was never too proud to exalt Himself and distance Himself from anyone.

In today's gospel passage, Jesus went into Simon's house. They asked Him to help Simon's mother-in-law who was sick with fever. Without any delay, Jesus immediately leaned over and touched her. With just a touch, He turned her life around.

This is the reality of our lives too. Jesus, daily and constantly, reaches out to each of us. In moments when we too are burning with the fever of anger, disappointment, hurt and loneliness, Jesus never distanced Himself from us. He comes to us, reaches out to touch and lay His hands on us. His touch of love dispels any darkness we have within us and leads us to live with new strength and hope.

When we have troubles burdening us, who do we go to?

Jesus' power of touch heals and restores us to wholeness so that we can stand on our feet and serve others actively. Once Simon's mother-in-law got her health restored, she did not remain in her comfort zone. She was healed so that she could continue serving her family and community. Likewise, we too are called to use the gift of our health to be at the service of others. May we give of ourselves generously to those we meet today.

Questions for reflection:

- 1) Have I experienced Jesus' touch of love in my life's story?
- 2) How can I give myself generously to others today?

Thursday, 6th September

1 Corinthians 3:18-23, Luke 5:1-11

Jesus was standing one day by the Lake of Gennesaret, with the crowd pressing round him listening to the word of God, when he caught sight of two boats close to the bank. The fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets.-He got into one of the boats-it was Simon's-and asked him to put out a little from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. When he had finished speaking he said to Simon, 'Put out into deep water and pay out your nets for a catch'. 'Master,' Simon replied 'we worked hard all night long and caught nothing, but if you say so, I will pay out the nets.' And when they had done this they netted such a huge

number of fish that their nets began to tear, so they signalled to their companions in the other boat to come and help them; when these came, they filled the two boats to sinking point. When Simon Peter saw this he fell at the knees of Jesus saying, 'Leave me, Lord; I am a sinful man'. For he and all his companions were completely overcome by the catch they had made; so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were Simon's partners. But Jesus said to Simon, 'Do not be afraid; from now on it is men you will catch'. Then, bringing their boats back to land, they left everything and followed him.

Facing Jesus and myself

Jesus got into Simon's boat, asked Him to go to deeper water and put his net for a catch. Simon had worked hard all night long and caught nothing. He, however, trusted Jesus and did as Jesus told him. Simon was amazed when he saw the large number of fish in his net. Instead of jumping with joy and giving thanks to Jesus for helping him with such a catch, he fell on his knees and said, "*Leave me, Lord; I am a sinful man.*"

Before this miraculous event, Simon had witnessed Jesus healing his mother-in-law of her fever. However, at this particular moment, Simon experienced a deeper encounter with Jesus that opened his heart to recognise himself as a sinner in front of the Presence of Love. As he knelt, Simon knew that Jesus had the power, not just to put fish into his empty nets, but to put fullness of life and love into his empty heart. From that moment onwards, Simon knew that his life will never be the same again.

"Leave me, Lord; I am a sinful person."

May we have the humility to utter these words of Simon. We are sinners on whom Jesus looks at with love and calls us always to draw close to Him. We are sinners but we trust in Jesus' mercy and compassion. We know that each encounter with Jesus is a life changing moment towards fullness of life and love.

Question for reflection:

1) What is Jesus inviting me to do in this time of prayer?

Friday, 7th September

1 Corinthians 4:1-5, Luke 5:33-39

The Pharisees and scribes said to Jesus, 'John's disciples are always fasting and saying prayers, and the disciples of the Pharisees too, but yours go on

eating and drinking'. Jesus replied, 'Surely you cannot make the bridegroom's attendants fast while the bridegroom is still with them? But the time will come, the time for the bridegroom to be taken away from them; that will be the time when they will fast.' He also told them this parable, *'No one tears a piece from a new cloak to put it on an old cloak; if he does, not only will he have torn the new one, but the piece taken from the new will not match the old. 'And nobody puts new wine into old skins; if he does, the new wine will burst the skins and then run out, and the skins will be lost. No; new wine must be put into fresh skins. And nobody who has been drinking old wine wants new. "The old is good" he says.'*

Opening to the old and new

A well-loved musical, 'Fiddler on the roof', is about Tevye, a simple and poor dairyman, who struggled to maintain tradition in times of change and turbulence in his small village of Anatevka. Tevye, in the opening number states, *"Without tradition, our lives would be as shaky as a fiddler on the roof."*

In today's gospel passage, the Pharisees and scribes went to Jesus and asked him, *"Why do you do things in a different way? Why are you going against the status quo? Why don't you and your disciples fast like John's disciples and our disciples?"* They were holding onto the changelessness of their tradition as their top priority, as their highest value. They were afraid of the new ways of Jesus and how He seemed to be shaking their comfort zones.

Jesus then used the symbol of a wedding feast to answer their question regarding fasting. He likened Himself to the bridegroom. As long as He the bridegroom was present, the wedding feast carried on, and the guests, i.e. His disciples, were meant to celebrate.

He then used two parables to further clarify His point. It would be senseless to tear from a piece of brand new cloak and put it onto an old torn cloak. Likewise, it would be meaningless to put new wine into old skins. Due to the fermentation process, the new wine would produce gas that would only cause the old wine skins to stretch to bursting point.

Jesus' point to the Pharisees and scribes is that they had to open themselves to the newness that He was bringing to their lives. In order to do so, they could not hold onto their desire for changelessness. By doing so, they would

experience the true joy of their faith. What message does today's gospel passage have for us?

In our own faith journey, there is always place for the old and the new, for fasting and feasting. We must not be rigidly holding onto the changelessness of tradition, and close ourselves to the newness that Jesus wants to bring to our lives. Rather, Jesus invites us always to be adaptable. Thus, let us learn from the old and also welcome the new. Let us be ready to fast and also be eager to feast. Let us not miss the joy of our faith! Jesus is here. As our Bridegroom, He desires to bring new joy and love into our hearts each day.

Questions for reflection:

- 1) Does my faith in Jesus bring joy and love to my life?
- 2) How can I be more flexible to the new things that Jesus is offering me?

**Saturday, 8th September, The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Micah 5:1-4 or Romans 8:28-30, Matthew 1:1-16,18-23**

This is how Jesus Christ came to be born. His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph; but before they came to live together she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph; being a man of honour and wanting to spare her publicity, decided to divorce her informally. He had made up his mind to do this when the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said,

'Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because she has conceived what is in her by the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son and you must name him Jesus, because he is the one who is to save his people from their sins.' Now all this took place to fulfil the words spoken by the Lord through the prophet: *'The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and they will call him Emmanuel, a name which means 'God-is-with-us'.*

In God, I trust

Today, as we celebrate the Feast of the Nativity of Mary, let us look at her life and ask: How did Mary live her life?

Mary lived her whole life trusting God. She trusted that God would not fail to stay close in both good and bad times. She trusted God even in her darkest moment as she watched her beloved Son hang on the cross. For Mary, whatever happened, she knew with firm faith that God would never fail her.

What is 'trust'?

We are so used to this word. We apply it in our relationships with our friends, spouses, family members, colleagues, etc. From life's experiences, we give our trust to certain people but not to all who come our way. Trust is not a passive state of our mind. Trust is the firm confidence in a person to whom we are willing to give ourselves in total reliance for guidance and support. We trust people whom we know and love.

Today, as we celebrate Mary's life, let us ask ourselves: Like Mary, do we trust God? How far are we willing to put our trust in Him?

Trust is faith. It is easy to trust God when we experience His goodness in our lives. Yet, when life becomes hard and sadness creeps into our hearts, we start to doubt and wonder if God is with us.

Trusting God does not mean that we are protected in a cocoon, untouched and untroubled by the events of life. Rather, like Mary, we know that whatever happens, we trust that God will never fail us because He is Emmanuel, God-is-with-us.

In our trials and anxieties, God is with us. In our insecurities, God is with us. In our sufferings and pain, God is with us.

Let us be convinced that we have God always with us because He loves us. With Him in us, we can have the strength to face problems as well as to celebrate the joys in life.

Lord, give me the courage to trust in you. My life is in Your hands!

Questions for reflection:

- 1) Looking at my life now, what are the worries and anxieties that I have?
- 2) How can I learn to trust more in God, who is with me?

Sunday, 9th September, Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time
Isaiah 35:4-7, James 2:1-5, Mark 7:31-37

Returning from the district of Tyre, Jesus went by way of Sidon towards the Sea of Galilee, right through the Decapolis region. And they brought him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they asked him to lay

his hand on him. He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, put his fingers into the man's ears and touched his tongue with spittle. Then looking up to heaven he sighed; and he said to him, 'Ephphatha', that is, 'Be opened'. And his ears were opened, and the ligament of his tongue was loosened and he spoke clearly. And Jesus ordered them to tell no one about it, but the more he insisted, the more widely they published it. Their admiration was unbounded. 'He has done all things well,' they said 'he makes the deaf hear and the dumb speak.'

An open heart

A heart that is closed up makes it impossible to experience happiness, growth, forgiveness, change and most importantly, love.

In today's gospel passage, some people brought a deaf-dumb man to Jesus. Jesus took him aside, and uttered the words, *"Be opened"*

Today, these words are also meant for us. Our ears might not be clogged. We might not have any problem in speaking. We might not even have problem with our sight. Yet, many of us go through life with a closed heart because we are afraid to be vulnerable to others and to God. We do not want to be hurt (again) or to have our faults pointed out and be criticised. Desiring to be seen as strong, we put up walls and close our hearts, instead of letting Love in and starting to live life with freedom and joy.

Someone once said, *"I would rather have eyes that cannot see, ears that cannot hear, lips that cannot speak, than a heart that cannot love."*

Jesus tells us again, *"Be opened"* He calls us to take down the walls we have built and start living, start loving! To dare to be vulnerable is to live life with courage and start choosing to love again. When we open our hearts to love, we might end up getting hurt or disappointed. However, it is a small price to pay for possessing a heart that is free, without walls, without hiding, without fear.

"To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything, and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one, not even to an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket- safe, dark, motionless, airless--it will change. It will not be broken; it will become

unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable.” (C.S Lewis)

Jesus, touch my heart today. Help me to open my heart to others, to you. In my relationship with others, even if I do end up getting hurt again, I know that it is a small price to pay for living life without hiding, without walls, without pretending. Lord, you know me through and through, and knowing me, you love me with your unconditional love. Help me to open my heart to your love so that I can learn to open my heart to others.

Question for reflection:

1) Is my heart open to love and to be loved?

Monday, 10th September

1 Corinthians 5:1-8, Luke 6:6-11

On the sabbath Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach, and a man was there whose right hand was withered. The scribes and the Pharisees were watching him to see if he would cure a man on the sabbath, hoping to find something to use against him. But he knew their thoughts; and he said to the man with the withered hand, ‘Stand up! Come out into the middle.’ And he came out and stood there. Then Jesus said to them, ‘I put it to you: is it against the law on the sabbath to do good, or to do evil; to save life, or to destroy it?’ Then he looked round at them all and said to the man, ‘Stretch out your hand’. He did so, and his hand was better. But they were furious, and began to discuss the best way of dealing with Jesus.

Keep on loving

What is the essence of Christianity?

The essence of Christianity is based on the commandment of love. Jesus, after washing the feet of His disciples, told them, “*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbour as yourself.*” (John 13: 34)

In today’s gospel passage, the Pharisees were furious with Jesus because He put love above the laws of the Sabbath. Jesus saw the man with the withered hand and He was moved by love to heal him. Yet, He was judged and condemned for His act of goodness. What did Jesus do? Did He give up because He was not understood by others? Did He stop doing good because He was unfairly judged?

Jesus continued to love without getting tired.

As Christians, love should move our thoughts, words and deeds. It is a constant challenge to love and keep loving, especially when we meet with oppositions and misunderstandings. Today, let us stay close to Jesus and allow Him to love us so much so that His love becomes our strength and motivation.

“Spread love everywhere you go. Let no one ever come to you without leaving happier.”

(Mother Teresa)

Questions for reflection:

- 1) Have I ever experienced misunderstanding and opposition when I tried to love? How did I respond to the reactions of others?
- 2) How can I spread love to the people I will encounter today?

Tuesday, 11th September

1 Corinthians 6:1-11, Luke 6:12-19

Jesus went out into the hills to pray; and he spent the whole night in prayer to God. When day came he summoned his disciples and picked out twelve of them; he called them ‘apostles’: Simon whom he called Peter, and his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon called the Zealot, Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot who became a traitor. He then came down with them and stopped at a piece of level ground where there was a large gathering of his disciples, with a great crowd of people from all parts of Judaea and Jerusalem and the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon who had come to hear him and to be cured of their diseases. People tormented by unclean spirits were also cured, and everyone in the crowd was trying to touch him because power came out of him that cured them all.

Called by Jesus

Jesus went out into the hills to pray before He made an important decision. What about us? Do we spend days and nights praying before we make important decisions in our lives?

Jesus, after praying, summoned those whom He wanted. They were Simon Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Tomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot.

Each of them was chosen and called by Jesus to be His apostles. Each of them was ordinary common people. They had neither special social standing, nor wealth, nor extraordinary talents. Jesus could have chosen the politically powerful, the rich and the popular ones. But, He did not. Rather, He empowered these ordinary people for the extraordinary task of proclaiming His message of Good News to the world.

Jesus knew each one of those He chose and called. He knew their faults and failings. He appreciated their talents and potentials. Why did Jesus call Judas if He knew that this individual would one day betray Him?

Jesus did not make a mistake in calling Judas Iscariot. Jesus loved Judas and gave him every opportunity to know and follow Him. Judas, however, had to make the choice to follow Jesus or follow his personal desires and ambitions.

Today, Jesus calls us, ordinary as we are, to make our life as an offering to God and allow Him to use us for His extraordinary mission. Let us not think that we have nothing to offer, but to trust that He is the one directing and opening us to bigger horizons.

Questions for reflection:

- 1) Do I set time and space to pray before I make important decisions?
- 2) How can I allow Jesus to use me for His purpose?

**Wednesday, 12th September, The Most Holy Name of Mary
1 Corinthians 7:25-31, Luke 6:20-26**

Fixing his eyes on his disciples Jesus said: How happy are you who are poor: the kingdom of God is yours. How happy are you who are hungry now: you shall be satisfied. How happy are you who weep now: you shall laugh Happy are you when people hate you, drive you out, abuse you, denounce your name as criminal, on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice when that day comes and dance for joy, look!- your reward will be great in heaven. This was the way their ancestors treated the prophets But alas for you who are rich: you are having your consolation now. Alas for you who have plenty to eat now: you shall go hungry. Alas for you who are laughing now: you shall

mourn and weep. Alas for you when everyone speaks well of you! This was the way their ancestors treated the false prophets.'

Jesus' way to happiness

We all desire happiness. However, do we want happiness according to the world's way or Jesus' way? Jesus' way of happiness calls for a conversion of our heart and mind, and to turn from the worldly ways and values.

In today's gospel passage, Jesus contrasted the poor with the rich. Given a choice, many of us would desire to be wealthy and live comfortable lives. In our pursuit for finding happiness in money, we tend to worship our material possessions instead of God.

"Money has to serve, not rule." (Pope Francis)

According to Jesus, if we really want true happiness, we need to learn to be spiritually poor and let money serve us, instead of ruling us. Thus, we need to learn to turn to God and let Him be our greatest treasure.

Do we know what hunger really means? Have we hungered for something more than physical food? The world promises us to eat and be filled with good food and drinks. Jesus offers us something even more fulfilling than physical food. He gives His very self to be our food that will satisfy us here, now and forever. Jesus wants to give us the food that truly gives us the joy of being filled, never empty.

Next is the contrast between weeping and laughing. Here, Jesus is not against the gift of laughing. He is, however, against the people who laugh their empty laughter but do not have the eyes to see and hearts to care about the sufferings in the world. Jesus' way of happiness is to have the heart to share the sorrows and injustices taking place in families, societies and with friendships. They will one day enter and enjoy God's Kingdom where there will be great laughter and rejoicing.

Lastly, Jesus touched upon our deep desire to be loved and accepted by others as well as to be constantly praised and affirmed. We do not want to be rejected or excluded. Jesus asks us to seek and do God's will, even if it entails us to face rejections and oppositions. Look at Jesus, He always seeks to be faithful to His Father, and not to be popular with the crowds who

followed Him. He continued to go on doing good and living a life of love, even if there were some people who did not accept Him.

Today, Jesus invites us to choose to walk His way of happiness which starts from having an inward change of our heart and mind.

Questions for reflection:

1) Am I challenged to live out the Beatitudes in my life? How?

Thursday, 13th September, St. John Chrysostom

1 Corinthians 8:1-7, 11-13, Luke 6:27-38

Jesus said to his disciples: 'But I say this to you who are listening: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who treat you badly. To the man who slaps you on one cheek, present the other cheek too; to the man who takes your cloak from you, do not refuse your tunic. Give to everyone who asks you, and do not ask for your property back from the man who robs you. Treat others as you would like them to treat you. If you love those who love you, what thanks can you expect? Even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what thanks can you expect?

For even sinners do that much. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what thanks can you expect? Even sinners lend to sinners to get back the same amount. Instead, love your enemies and do good, and lend without any hope of return. You will have a great reward, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he himself is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be compassionate as your Father is compassionate. Do not judge, and you will not be judged yourselves; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned yourselves; grant pardon, and you will be pardoned. Give, and there will be gifts for you: a full measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, will be poured into your lap; because the amount you measure out is the amount you will be given back.'

The Power of Love

"Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around." (Leo Buscaglia)

The people we encounter each day are there in our life for a reason. God

puts them in our way so that we can love, not hate; show compassion, not judgement.

As God's beloved children, we can love our friends and enemies because He has given us the capacity to love with His compassionate love. The greatest tragedy in life is when we start building barriers against others because of our prejudices, fears and insecurities. Today, let us go back to the gentle voice within us that calls us again and again, *"You are my Beloved child. I love you, and my favour rests on you."*

This is the truth of who we are. It is this truth that will lead us to break down the walls we have built and learn to love others with God's love.

Be compassionate as God our Father is compassionate. Be loving as God our Father is loving. Be forgiving as God our Father is forgiving. Be merciful as God our Father is merciful.

Today, let us not underestimate the power of love - a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, the smallest act of caring - to the people around us, especially to those whom we find it hard to love. Let us pray and listen to the voice of God as He affirms us and strengthens us to choose love today!

Friday, 14th September, The Exaltation of the Holy Cross
Numbers 21:4-9, Philippians 2:6-11, John 3:13-17

Jesus said to Nicodemus: 'No one has gone up to heaven except the one who came down from heaven, the Son of Man who is in heaven; and the Son of Man must be lifted up as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him. Yes, God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not be lost but may have eternal life. For God sent his Son into the world not to condemn the world, but so that through him the world might be saved.'

The Cross of Jesus

The cross is the expression of God's unconditional and faithful love for humanity. Jesus, on the cross, gave His life for love. To the world, the cross is foolishness and abject humiliation. For us, the cross is the instrument of our salvation. Let us draw close to the cross of Jesus and contemplate on the mystery of the cross, the mystery of love.

"It is to the Cross that the Christian is challenged to follow his Master: no path of redemption can make a detour around it." (Hans Urs von Balthasar)

The cross speaks to us about pure love, of limitless self-giving. We are challenged to follow Jesus our Master as He leads us to the path of the cross where we have to also die to our pride, self-sufficiency, arrogance, prejudices, indifferences, etc. It is in dying that we give God's life to others.

In this time of prayer, let us fix our eyes on Jesus, and let ourselves once more be loved by Him. From the cross, let us listen to Jesus as He calls us to walk the path of love.

Questions for reflection:

- 1) What does the cross mean for me?
- 2) Out of love for Jesus, how can I take on the challenge to walk His same path of the cross?

Saturday, 15th September, Our Lady of Sorrows

1 Corinthians 10:14-22, John 19:25-27 or Luke 2:33-35

Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala. Seeing his mother and the disciple he loved standing near her, Jesus said to his mother, 'Woman, this is your son.' Then to the disciple he said, 'This is your mother'. And from that moment the disciple made a place for her in his home.

Standing by the Cross

At the foot of Jesus' cross, Mary stood with steadfast love and trust. She held onto her trust in God as she watched the tragedy of love unfolding on the cross. She knew with certain hope that death would not have the last word, but life and love.

Mary, the Mother of Sorrows, continues to stand firmly by our sides as we face our own personal crosses. She stays close to us and lends us her strength and trust in God. As our Mother, she encourages us to carry on and not give up because God's faithful love will overcome all suffering, sickness and even death. Mary gently leads us to trust more in God whose love will never fail us.

In this journey of life, let us count on the help of our Mother. She is here with

us to guide us to walk the path of the cross with unwavering trust and hope in God.

“What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all- how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?... Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?... No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither the height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8: 31-39)

Questions for reflection:

- 1) In our spiritual life, who is Mother Mary for us?
- 2) What can we learn from Mother Mary in her life with God?

**Sunday, 16th September, Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Isaiah 50:5-9, James 2:14-18, Mark 8:27-35**

Jesus and his disciples left for the villages round Caesarea Philippi. On the way he put this question to his disciples, ‘Who do people say I am?’ And they told him. ‘John the Baptist,’ they said ‘others Elijah; others again, one of the prophets.’ ‘But you,’ he asked ‘who do you say I am?’ Peter spoke up and said to him, ‘You are the Christ’. And he gave them strict orders not to tell anyone about him. And he began to teach them that the Son of Man was destined to suffer grievously, to be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and to be put to death, and after three days to rise again; and he said all this quite openly. Then, taking him aside, Peter started to remonstrate with him. But, turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said to him, ‘Get behind me, Satan! Because the way you think is not God’s way but man’s.’ He called the people and his disciples to him and said, ‘If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me. For anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it.

I Am...

“Who do you say I am?”

Jesus poses this question to each of us today. He is not asking for generic titles like “Saviour of the World”, “Prince of Peace”, “Almighty God”. Today, Jesus asks us, *“Who do you say I am? You who have spent much time with me, what do you say about me? You who have experienced my faithful love, who am I to you?”*

Is Jesus our constant companion? Our source of truth? Our friend? Our mentor? Our personal answer to the question is precious and unique for it springs from our intimate relationship with Him.

Having Jesus as our personal Lord and God does not remove the reality of suffering from our life. We will still have to carry the crosses of an illness, a problematic child, a depressive nature, etc. However, the strength we have to carry our crosses comes from Jesus. In carrying our crosses with peace and joy, people may come to see Jesus as someone real and alive in our lives.

In this time of prayer, let us recognise once again Jesus’ presence in our own hearts, so that we can remain in His love throughout this day.

Questions for reflection:

- 1) Who is Jesus in my life today?
- 2) Do I carry my cross with Jesus, or alone?

Monday, 17th September, St. Robert Bellarmine and St. Hildegard of Bingen

1 Corinthians 11:17-26,33, Luke 7:1-10

When Jesus had come to the end of all he wanted the people to hear, he went into Capernaum. A centurion there had a servant, a favourite of his, who was sick and near death. Having heard about Jesus he sent some Jewish elders to him to ask him to come and heal his servant. When they came to Jesus they pleaded earnestly with him. ‘He deserves this of you’ they said ‘because he is friendly towards our people; in fact, he is the one who built the synagogue.’ So Jesus went with them, and was not very far from the house when the centurion sent word to him by some friends: ‘Sir,’ he said ‘do not put yourself to trouble; because I am not worthy to have you under my roof; and for this same reason I did not presume to come to you myself; but give the word and let my servant be cured. For I am under authority myself, and have soldiers

under me; and I say to one man: Go, and he goes; to another: Come here, and he comes; to my servant: Do this, and he does it.’ When Jesus heard these words he was astonished at him and, turning round, said to the crowd following him, ‘I tell you, not even in Israel have I found faith like this’. And when the messengers got back to the house they found the servant in perfect health.

Extraordinary faith of a centurion

The centurion was a gentile who asked Jesus to heal his favourite servant. He sent some Jewish elders to speak on his behalf to Jesus. Jesus went with the elders but before He reached the centurion’s house, he was stopped by the centurion’s friends from going to his house because the centurion was confident that Jesus’ one word had the power to heal the servant from a distant. As a man of authority, this centurion understood Jesus’ authority.

When Jesus heard these words, He was astonished. Why was He surprised? He was surprised by the strong faith that the centurion had in Him. This centurion, who was a gentile as well as an enemy of Israel, could have such trust in Jesus.

“He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. He was amazed at their lack of faith. Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village.” (Mark 6:5-6)

On another occasion, Jesus could not work many miracles because of the lack of faith in His own hometown, with His own people.

That day, the centurion became a model of extraordinary faith for the people of Israel. Perhaps, there are people, whom we regard as a ‘gentile’, an ‘enemy’, who can also teach us about true faith in Jesus. May we always be open to learn and perceive faith, even in the least unlikely person!

Question for reflection:

1) What strikes me as I pray with this passage today?

Tuesday, 18th September

1 Corinthians 12:12-14,27-31, Luke 7:11-17

Jesus went to a town called Nain, accompanied by his disciples and a great number of people. When he was near the gate of the town it happened that a

dead man was being carried out for burial, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And a considerable number of the townspeople were with her. When the Lord saw her he felt sorry for her. 'Do not cry' he said. Then he went up and put his hand on the bier and the bearers stood still, and he said, 'Young man, I tell you to get up'. And the dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him to his mother. Everyone was filled with awe and praised God saying, 'A great prophet has appeared among us; God has visited his people'. And this opinion of him spread throughout Judaea and all over the countryside.

Compassion in action

Jesus walked into a town and He noticed a funeral procession taking place. Seeing the mother grieving for her dead son, Jesus was moved with compassion. What is compassion? A sense of pity? A sentimental feeling? Compassion means to 'suffer with' and to make the suffering of the other as one's own.

"Compassion is not just feeling with someone, but seeking to change the situation. Frequently people think compassion and love are merely sentimental. No! They are very demanding. If you are going to be compassionate, be prepared for action!"
(Desmond Tutu)

Jesus' compassion moved him first to stop for a moment. His compassion then moved Him to action. He went to the widow and said, *"Do not cry."* He then went near the bier and said, *"Young man, I tell you to get up."* To the great joy of the widow, her son got up and began to talk. He was alive once again!

Our busy lives and hectic schedules can often get in the way of stopping, observing, being compassionate and simply being moved to action. If we want to imitate Jesus, then we should not be afraid to stop and offer tenderness and compassion to those who are suffering. As Jesus' disciples, we must always allow compassion to reside in our hearts so that we can spread joy to those around us.

Jesus is with us today. In our own troubles and sufferings, He comes and tells us, *"I tell you to get up!"* With Jesus, we have the strength to get up and live with renewed hope and joy.

Questions for reflection:

- 1) Does the sadness and suffering of others move me to have compassion for them?
- 2) How can I imitate Jesus' active compassion?

Wednesday, 19th September, St. Januarius
1 Corinthians 12:31-13:13, Luke 7:31-35

Jesus said to the people, 'What description, then, can I find for the men of this generation? What are they like? They are like children shouting to one another while they sit in the market place: "We played the pipes for you, and you wouldn't dance; we sang dirges, and you wouldn't cry". 'For John the Baptist comes, not eating bread, not drinking wine, and you say, "He is possessed". The Son of Man comes, eating and drinking, and you say, "Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners". Yet Wisdom has been proved right by all her children.'

Belonging to Wisdom

John the Baptist, living an austere life in the desert, was seen by the people as 'possessed'.

Jesus, on the other hand, came eating and drinking, and was labelled as 'glutton, drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.'

For those who refused to accept the message of the Good News, nothing and nobody could move their hearts to believe and rejoice. They looked at Jesus and John the Baptist with contempt and disapproval.

"Yet, Wisdom has been proved right by all her children."

What does Jesus mean by this saying? Who are Wisdom's children?

The children of Wisdom are not the intellectuals who pride themselves of knowing everything. Instead those whose hearts are filled with simplicity and humility belong to Wisdom. This is because Wisdom herself is humble and simple, and looks constantly towards God for His light of Truth and Love.

"There is no room for God in him who is full of himself" (Martin Buber)

Let us ask Jesus to send His Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Wisdom, to guide us this day so that we may empty ourselves from all pride and self-sufficiency and

let God into our hearts.

Questions for reflection:

- 1) Do I desire to be humble in the way I approach God, life and others?
- 2) How can I be a child of Wisdom today?

Thursday, 20th September, Ss. Andrew Kim Taegon, Paul Chong Hasang & Companions

1 Corinthians 15:1-11, Luke 7:36-50

One of the Pharisees invited Jesus to a meal. When he arrived at the Pharisee's house and took his place at table, a woman came in, who had a bad name in the town. She had heard he was dining with the Pharisee and had brought with her an alabaster jar of ointment. She waited behind him at his feet, weeping, and her tears fell on his feet, and she wiped them away with her hair; then she covered his feet with kisses and anointed them with the ointment. When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, 'If this man were a prophet, he would know who this woman is that is touching him and what a bad name she has'.

Then Jesus took him up and said, 'Simon, I have something to say to you'. 'Speak, Master' was the reply. 'There was once a creditor who had two men in his debt; one owed him five hundred denarii, the other fifty. They were unable to pay, so he pardoned them both. Which of them will love him more?' 'The one who was pardoned more, I suppose' answered Simon. Jesus said, 'You are right'. Then he turned to the woman. 'Simon,' he said 'you see this woman? I came into your house, and you poured no water over my feet, but she has poured out her tears over my feet and wiped them away with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but she has been covering my feet with kisses ever since I came in. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. For this reason I tell you that her sins, her many sins, must have been forgiven her, or she would not have shown such great love. It is the man who is forgiven little who shows little love.' Then he said to her, 'Your sins are forgiven'. Those who were with him at table began to say to themselves, 'Who is this man, that he even forgives sins?' But he said to the woman, 'Your faith has saved you; go in peace'.

Great Love

"God and only God knows us in our essence, loves us well, forgives us fully, and remembers us for who we truly are." (Henri Nouwen)

In today's gospel passage, Simon the Pharisee was scandalized that Jesus allowed allowing the woman with a '*bad name in town*' to touch, kiss and anoint His feet. Simon the Pharisee judged the woman for her actions and Jesus for His acceptance of her. Isn't there a '*Simon the Pharisee*' in every one of us? We judge those around us and find it hard to believe that people can change.

Today, Jesus invites us to break our mould as to how we see certain people and to let love open our hearts to welcome and accept them. Jesus loves with mercy and compassion. He comes to seek out sinners in order to bring them back to God the Father. Let us join Jesus in His mission of bringing all people to God and God to them.

**Friday, 21st September, St. Matthew
Ephesians 4:1-7,11-13, Matthew 9:9-13**

As Jesus was walking on from there he saw a man named Matthew sitting by the customs house, and he said to him, 'Follow me'. And he got up and followed him. While he was at dinner in the house it happened that a number of tax collectors and sinners came to sit at the table with Jesus and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, 'Why does your master eat with tax collectors and sinners?' When he heard this he replied, 'It is not the healthy who need the doctor, but the sick. Go and learn the meaning of the words: What I want is mercy, not sacrifice. And indeed I did not come to call the virtuous, but sinners.'

The Object of God's Unconditional Love

Today, we celebrate the feast of St Matthew who was a tax collector before he became Jesus' disciple. Tax collectors during Jesus' time were hated by the Jews. This was because they were well-known for fraud and extortion so that they could be rich themselves.

In today's gospel passage, Jesus was walking and saw Matthew sitting by the custom house. He said to him, "*Follow me*" For any other Jewish rabbi, Matthew would never be a suitable candidate to be a disciple.

Yet, Jesus broke all norms and called Matthew to be His disciple. He even went to Matthew's house and had a meal with other tax collectors and social outcasts. Why?

This was because Jesus regards each person as a beloved child of God. He did not see the people as 'sinners' or 'tax collectors' but as the object of God's unconditional love. He broke down the walls of prejudices and hatred in order to bring God's love to them.

Matthew found his true identity rooted in this unconditional and faithful love, and thus, he was able to follow Jesus and even gave his life for the sake of the gospel.

Many times, we tend to put up walls to block off 'public sinners'. Today, let us learn from Jesus to break down the walls we have built, choose to see them as God's beloveds and accompany them also in their journey towards embracing the truth of their identity. Let us also root ourselves in God's love so that we can, like St. Matthew, follow Jesus faithfully to the end.

Saturday, 22nd September

1 Corinthians 15:35-37,42-49, Luke 8:4-15

With a large crowd gathering and people from every town finding their way to him, Jesus used this parable: 'A sower went out to sow his seed. As he sowed, some fell on the edge of the path and was trampled on; and the birds of the air ate it up. Some seed fell on rock, and when it came up it withered away, having no moisture. Some seed fell amongst thorns and the thorns grew with it and choked it. And some seed fell into rich soil and grew and produced its crop a hundredfold.' Saying this he cried, 'Listen, anyone who has ears to hear!' His disciples asked him what this parable might mean, and he said, 'The mysteries of the kingdom of God are revealed to you; for the rest there are only parables, so that they may see but not perceive, listen but not understand. This, then, is what the parable means: the seed is the word of God. Those on the edge of the path are people who have heard it, and then the devil comes and carries away the word from their hearts in case they should believe and be saved. Those on the rock are people who, when they first hear it, welcome the word with joy. But these have no root; they believe for a while, and in time of trial they give up. As for the part that fell into thorns, this is people who have heard, but as they go on their way they are choked by the worries and riches and pleasures of life and do not reach maturity. As for the part in the rich soil, this is people with a noble and generous heart who have heard the word and take it to themselves and yield a harvest through their perseverance.'

Committed disciples

Today, let us allow Jesus to speak to us as we meditate on this parable and its message for us personally. Too often we take for granted a passage just because we already know it. Let us be open and let Jesus sow His seed of God's word in our heart once again.

In today's parable, there was a large crowd gathering and people from every town made their way to Him. What did Jesus see as He looked at the huge number of people? Jesus saw their hearts and perceived that there were people coming to Him with all kinds of attitudes and intentions. Thus, He started the parable of the Sower and the soil in order to challenge them to listen and live out what they understood in their own lives. Jesus did not want 'fans' but committed disciples who lived their lives, bearing good fruit of His life and love.

Today, Jesus challenges us to listen attentively to Him and apply His message to our lives. He wants us to be good soil, not hardened, rocky or thorny soil. He wants us to become committed disciples.

May Jesus, our patient Sower, plant His words deep into the soil of our hearts. May He be pleased with the fruit that comes as a consequence of our listening and living His words out in our daily life.

Question for reflection:

1) What kind of soil am I?

Sunday, 23rd September, Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Wisdom 2:12,17-20, James 3:16-4:3, Mark 9:30-37

After leaving the mountain Jesus and his disciples made their way through Galilee; and he did not want anyone to know, because he was instructing his disciples; he was telling them, 'The Son of Man will be delivered into the hands of men; they will put him to death; and three days after he has been put to death he will rise again'. But they did not understand what he said and were afraid to ask him. They came to Capernaum, and when he was in the house he asked them, 'What were you arguing about on the road?' They said nothing because they had been arguing which of them was the greatest. So he sat down, called the Twelve to him and said, 'If anyone wants to be first, he must make himself last of all and servant of all'. He then took a little child, set him in front of them, put his arms round him, and said to them, 'Anyone

who welcomes one of these little children in my name, welcomes me; and anyone who welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me'.

Greatness in God's Sight

"Everybody can be great...because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and verb to agree to serve. You only need a heart full of grace, a soul generated by love." (Martin Luther King, Jr.)

The world tells us to be somebody by being great, admirable and powerful. Jesus, on the other hand, gives us a different message of what greatness truly means.

Greatness is not to be somebody but it is trying to help and serve somebody. As Christians, we are all called to serve with '*a heart full of grace*' and '*a soul generated by love*'. It is to serve by releasing our ego, and not bothering how the world sees us. It is to serve with a smile on our face because we are serving God in our brothers and sisters.

'If anyone wants to be first, he must make himself last of all and servant of all'

Let us desire to make ourselves last of all by thinking of ourselves less. Like Jesus, we are here to serve and not to be served.

Question for reflection:

1) What is Jesus' invitation to me in this time of prayer?

Monday, 24th September

Proverbs 3:27-34, Luke 8:16-18

Jesus said to his disciples: 'No one lights a lamp to cover it with a bowl or to put it under a bed. No, he puts it on a lamp-stand so that people may see the light when they come in. For nothing is hidden but it will be made clear, nothing secret but it will be known and brought to light. So take care how you hear; for anyone who has will be given more; from anyone who has not, even what he thinks he has will be taken away.'

Let your light shine

“Imagine that you are in a huge cave 250 feet below the surface of the earth. You’re down there with about 40 other souls. The cave is artificially lit, as no daylight ever reaches its interior. Suddenly the lights go out. The darkness closes in and encases you like a velvet glove. You can’t see your hand in front of your face. No one makes a sound. Total darkness. Total silence. Total stillness. You’re in the heart of Mother Earth. Then your guide strikes a tiny match. The thick darkness disappears like magic and your eyes take in a marvellous scene.

The light from that one match illuminates the whole cave quite clearly. You can see everyone there. Amazing! All it takes to dispel the darkness of that huge, dark cave is just one person’s tiny light. And the old saying “let your light shine” takes on a deeper meaning. You don’t have to overwhelm those you meet with your knowledge, wisdom, accomplishments, or connections. Why use a floodlight when an ordinary lantern (or even a candle) will do? By all means let your light shine, but please: Make it inviting, not blinding!”
(Unknown)

We are called to be little lights shining brightly and showing others that life is beautiful, regardless of the circumstances. We are called to be little lights radiating Christ so that others can perceive God in their lives. Through our lifestyle as well as through what we say, we communicate the Gospel message as a way to greater happiness.

Today, there are many people on whom we can shine and bring Jesus, the Light of the world to - people we meet in our family, in our workplaces, at church, our neighbourhoods, etc.

Our objective should never be to bring acknowledgment and praises for ourselves, but to let others come to know and love God. We are called to be lights, and not to put on a show to capture others’ attention.

‘So take care how you hear...’ We hear in order to understand, believe and put into practice. What we hear and live must be passed on. The more we pass on our faith, the more we let our lights shine!

Question for reflection:

1) How can I shine, and not hide, the light of Christ in me?

Tuesday, 25th September

Proverbs 21:1-6,10-13, Luke 8:19-21

The mother and the brothers of Jesus came looking for him, but they could not get to him because of the crowd. He was told, 'Your mother and brothers are standing outside and want to see you' But he said in answer, 'My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and put it into practice'.

Listen and do

In our baptism, we belong to the family of God as His sons and daughters. Being a child of God, we are also a brother or sister to one another. This is who we are! We, as members of God's family, hear the word of God daily and put it into practice.

In today's gospel passage, Jesus must have shocked His listeners when He said, *"My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and put it into practice."*

In a Jewish society, the family is deeply valued. What Jesus said would not have been welcomed by those who heard Him. Jesus, however, wanted to challenge His listeners to have a total commitment to hearing and doing God's Word. He wanted them to enter into a new and deeper reality that went beyond blood ties.

Today, Jesus calls us to be committed members of God's family. We can truly say that we are God's children only when we hear His Word and faithfully put it into practice. Every day, we need to set time and space for God where we listen attentively to His Word. God speaks to us through life's events and circumstances. He speaks to us through people. He speaks to us best through Scripture. We must listen first before we do what He tells us.

"Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like." (James 1:22)

From listening, we must move to doing. We must translate our attentive listening to the voice of God into dynamic doing, active serving, unconditional loving.

In the same way that life is impossible without air, water and food, we

cannot live our faith without God. Today, let us start again to listen attentively to God and put what we hear from Him into practice.

Lord, what do you want from me today?

**Wednesday, 26th September, Ss. Cosmas and Damian
Proverbs 30:5-9, Luke 9:1-6**

Jesus called the Twelve together and gave them power and authority over all devils and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal. He said to them, 'Take nothing for the journey: neither staff, nor haversack, nor bread, nor money; and let none of you take a spare tunic. Whatever house you enter, stay there; and when you leave, let it be from there. As for those who do not welcome you, when you leave their town shake the dust from your feet as a sign to them.' So they set out and went from village to village proclaiming the Good News and healing everywhere.

Take Nothing... Trust

Jesus' whole life exuded His trust and surrender to God His Father. Everything He did was done out of genuine trust in God. In today's gospel, Jesus set the Twelve together and sent them out to preach about the Kingdom of God. Interestingly, He did not instruct them on what they should take with them in this mission, but He told them what not to take. *"Take nothing for the journey: neither staff, nor haversack, nor bread, nor money, and let none of you take a spare tunic."*

A staff was usually carried by travellers to defend themselves against thieves and wild animals. They were to carry no haversack which was used as begging for alms and provisions. No spare tunic to protect them from the cold if they had to sleep outdoors. No bread or money as extra securities. Jesus sent His disciples without anything, except with complete trust in God.

Today, Jesus sends us on a mission too. We are sent by Jesus to bring God's love, peace and joy to those who come our way. We go with a heart full of trust in God that He will provide us with the strength, the joy and enough enthusiasm for the mission.

*"God asks everything of us, yet at the same time he offers everything to us."
(Pope Francis,
Evangelii Gaudium No. 12)*

God is living at our side every day to love us. Today, we trust in God and go out with joy to help Him share the Good News of His love to those in our lives.

Questions for reflection:

- 1) Today, with whom can I share the Good News of God's love?
- 2) What is holding me back from living the joy of mission?

Thursday, 27th September, St. Vincent de Paul

Ecclesiastes 1:2-11, Luke 9:7-9

Herod the tetrarch had heard about all that was being done by Jesus; and he was puzzled, because some people were saying that John had risen from the dead, others that Elijah had reappeared, still others that one of the ancient prophets had come back to life. But Herod said, 'John? I beheaded him. So who is this I hear such reports about?' And he was anxious to see him.

A series of daily encounter

Herod the tetrarch asked, *"Who is this?"* as He heard all the things that Jesus did. He was moved with intense desire to see Jesus, out of curiosity and fear. He had brutally beheaded John the Baptist, and now his conscience was troubling him. He wondered if John had risen from the dead.

What about us? Why do we go to Jesus? Do we yearn to get something out of Him? Or do we simply desire to be with Him?

Today, let us ask Jesus to reveal Himself to us. We desire to know Jesus more so that we can love Him and enter into a deeper intimate relationship with Him.

"The most important thing that can happen to a person is to encounter Jesus, who loves us, who has saved us, who gave his life for us." (Pope Francis)

Many times, we tend to forget the presence of Jesus in our daily life. Yet, Jesus patiently comes to us in the ordinary moments of our day in order to re-encounter us and love us. It is the daily encounter with Jesus that brings us to transform our lives and follow Him with greater enthusiasm and joy.

Today, let us in a very simple moment of prayer have the desire to see Jesus

again in prayer, in the Scripture, in the Eucharist, in silence, in our service to others, etc. Let us never get tired of wanting to meet Jesus and be transformed by His love. A constant encounter with Jesus is our joy!

Questions for reflection:

- 1) Do I have the eagerness to see Jesus in prayer and in each moment of the day?
- 2) How can I, in my little ways, bring others to a transformative encounter with Jesus today?

Friday, 28th September, St. Wenceslaus and St. Lawrence Ruiz and Companions

Ecclesiastes 3:1-11, Luke 9:18-22

Now one day when Jesus was praying alone in the presence of his disciples he put this question to them, 'Who do the crowds say I am?' And they answered, 'John the Baptist; others Elijah; and others say one of the ancient prophets come back to life'. 'But you,' he said 'who do you say I am?' It was Peter who spoke up. 'The Christ of God' he said. But he gave them strict orders not to tell anyone anything about this. 'The Son of Man' he said 'is destined to suffer grievously, to be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes and to be put to death, and to be raised up on the third day.'

Jesus, you are mine

The core of today's passage is in the question Jesus asked His disciples, "Who do you say I am?" Jesus is asking each one of us the same question today.

We can search for the answer in endless books and articles as well as by attending seminars and discussions. However, Jesus desires a sincere and honest answer from our heart.

Peter, through eyes of faith, perceived who Jesus truly was. Through Peter's various experiences of Jesus, he recognised Jesus as the Christ of God.

What will our answer be?

Our answer of who Jesus is will depend on our personal experiences in our faith journey. This will give us the joy to follow Jesus faithfully even to the path of the cross.

Questions for reflection:

- 1) Who is Jesus for me?
- 2) What is the cross that I have to take up at this point in my life? How can I carry this cross with Jesus, and not alone?

**Saturday, 29th September, Archangels Michael, Gabriel and Raphael
Daniel 7:9-10,13-14 or Revelations 12:7-12, John 1:47-51**

When Jesus saw Nathanael coming he said of him, 'There is an Israelite who deserves the name, incapable of deceit'. 'How do you know me?' said Nathanael 'Before Philip came to call you,' said Jesus 'I saw you under the fig tree.' Nathanael answered, 'Rabbi, you are the Son of God, you are the King of Israel'. Jesus replied, 'You believe that just because I said: I saw you under the fig tree. So you will see greater things than that.' And then he added 'I tell you most solemnly, you will see heaven laid open and, above the Son of Man, the angels of God ascending and descending'.

God Who Reveals Himself

Jesus knows each of us through and through. He knows every movement of our heart, each thought that crosses our mind, the innermost desires within. The experience of being deeply known personally through and through is a reality that each of us has to realize. Jesus desires to be intimate with us to such a degree that He seeks to reveal Himself completely to us.

In today's gospel passage, Jesus saw Nathanael as a man searching for something more in his life. Nathanael was a good Jew who followed the Law of the Torah and knew the Scripture by heart. Yet, he was searching for more of God. Jesus promised him that he would see '*greater things*'. Jesus used the image of Jacob's ladder in Genesis 28: 12-13,15-17 to show that the angels descending represent God's desire to reveal Himself to those who respond to His invitation, and the angels ascending to heaven represent His desire that they would also open themselves and reveal themselves to Him.

God desires to reveal Himself to us but often we are not receptive. We do not listen, not just with our ears but with our hearts. Therefore, Jesus invites us to be open and let us experience ourselves being loved. From a heart that is fully known and loved, we will then be ready to perceive with our heart the '*greater things*' that God wants to reveal to us.

Questions for reflection:

- 1) Am I afraid to be known and loved by Jesus?

2) How can I open my heart today so as to perceive all that Jesus has in store for me?

Sunday, 30th September, Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Numbers 11:25-29, James 5:1-6, Mark 9:38-43,45,47-48

John said to Jesus, 'Master, we saw a man who is not one of us casting out devils in your name; and because he was not one of us we tried to stop him'. But Jesus said, 'You must not stop him: no one who works a miracle in my name is likely to speak evil of me. Anyone who is not against us is for us. If anyone gives you a cup of water to drink just because you belong to Christ, then I tell you solemnly, he will most certainly not lose his reward. But anyone who is an obstacle to bring down one of these little ones who have faith, would be better thrown into the sea with a great millstone round his neck. And if your hand should cause you to sin, cut it off; it is better for you to enter into life crippled, than to have two hands and go to hell, into the fire that cannot be put out. And if your foot should cause you to sin, cut it off; it is better for you to enter into life lame, than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. And if your eye should cause you to sin, tear it out; it is better for you to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell where their worm does not die nor their fire go out.'

Bigger hearts, Bigger visions

A story goes like this: *Two long-time neighbours were rivals. When one has a new car, the other will buy two new cars. When one has a new laptop, the other will buy two new laptops. They were constantly fighting to see who is better, greater and richer. One day, one neighbour stumbled upon a lamp, and a genie appeared and said, "You can ask for anything you like and you will get it. But your rival will get two of whatever you ask." He thought long and hard, and finally he said, "I will settle for a blind eye!"*

We are constantly in rivalry with each other. Even in doing God's work, we get upset when others appear in our 'turf' and do what we do.

In today's gospel passage, John told Jesus that an outsider was driving demons in His name. The disciples were jealous of this man and wanted Jesus to do something about him. However, Jesus invited His insecure disciples to have bigger hearts and rejoice to see the goodness in others. The path of open-mindedness and tolerance starts from within. Let us ask for bigger hearts to rejoice in the good done by others. We have our own talents

and gift, just as others have theirs, and let us all put what we have to work for God!

Questions for reflection:

- 1) Is there someone whom I am envious of?
- 2) What is Jesus' call for me today?