

Sunday, 1st April, Easter Sunday

Acts 10:34,37-43, Colossians 3:1-4, John 20:1-9

It was very early on the first day of the week and still dark, when Mary of Magdala came to the tomb. She saw that the stone had been moved away from the tomb and came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved. 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb' she said 'and we don't know where they have put him.' So Peter set out with the other disciple to go to the tomb. They ran together, but the other disciple, running faster than Peter, reached the tomb first; he bent down and saw the linen cloths lying on the ground, but did not go in. Simon Peter who was following now came up, went right into the tomb, saw the linen cloths on the ground, and also the cloth that had been over his head; this was not with the linen cloths but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in; he saw and he believed. Till this moment they had failed to understand the teaching of scripture that he must rise from the dead.

He saw and he believed!

'...he saw and he believed.'

The beloved disciple saw and believed that Jesus had been raised from the dead. His faith made Him leave the empty tomb with renewed hope. What about us? Do we see the presence of the resurrected Christ in our midst today? Do we see and believe? Or are we still trapped in the darkness of our pessimistic thoughts, selfish desires that produce death in us and others?

'The message which Christians bring to the world is this: Jesus, Love incarnate, died on the cross for our sins, but God the Father raised him and made him the Lord of life and death. In Jesus, love has triumphed over hatred, mercy over sinfulness, goodness over evil, truth over falsehood, life over death.' (Pope Francis)

This is what we see and believe! Jesus, Love incarnate, is alive in all areas of our lives: in our families, workplaces, society, parishes, etc. With Him in us, we are transformed and live with a new heart to love, new eyes to view others, new ears to hear with, new feet to walk, new hands to act with, new mind to understand things. We continue to make love triumph over hatred, mercy over sinfulness, goodness over evil, truth over falsehood, life over

death. With the resurrected Christ living and acting in us, we truly have the joy of living a renewed life!

May the Risen Jesus stay with us today!

Monday, 2nd April, Monday within the Octave of Easter
Acts 2:14,22-33, Matthew 28:8-15

Filled with awe and great joy the women came quickly away from the tomb and ran to tell the disciples. And there, coming to meet them, was Jesus. 'Greetings' he said. And the women came up to him and, falling down before him, clasped his feet.

Then Jesus said to them, 'Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers that they must leave for Galilee; they will see me there'. While they were on their way, some of the guard went off into the city to tell the chief priests all that had happened. These held a meeting with the elders and, after some discussion, handed a considerable sum of money to the soldiers with these instructions, 'This is what you must say, "His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep". And should the governor come to hear of this, we undertake to put things right with him ourselves and to see that you do not get into trouble.' The soldiers took the money and carried out their instructions, and to this day that is the story among the Jews.

Return to Galilee

'Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers that they must leave for Galilee; they will see me there.'

'Galilee' is the place where everything began. It is the place where the fishermen left everything to follow Jesus' call, 'Come, follow me'. Today, Jesus called his disciples to return to Galilee where they will be reminded of their first encounter with Love incarnate, and to receive renewed strength to recognise His Risen presence once more in their lives so as to walk on in their faith journey.

We too have our own 'Galilee' moments where we have moments of encounters with Jesus. These 'Galilee' moments can be a retreat that opened our eyes to recognise God, a mission trip that gave meaning to our lives, an advice from a friend, a light received while praying, etc. Each of us has our own 'Galilee' moments when we encounter and come to know and love

Jesus more.

'The Gospel of Easter is very clear: we need to go back there, to see Jesus risen, and to become witnesses of his resurrection. This is not to go back in time; it is not a kind of nostalgia. It is returning to our first love, in order to receive the fire which Jesus has kindled in the world and to bring that fire to all people, to the very ends of the earth.' (Pope Francis)

There are many moments along the journey when we might wander away from our Galilee moments and start to wander away from Christ.

Let us return to our Galilee moments and rediscover again the joy of our Christian faith; let us once more find renewed strength to carry on with our journey and to have the joy to share this Good News with those around us.

Tuesday, 3rd April, Tuesday within the Octave of Easter
Acts 2:36-41, John 20:11-18

Meanwhile Mary stayed outside near the tomb, weeping. Then, still weeping, she stooped to look inside, and saw two angels in white sitting where the body of Jesus had been, one at the head, the other at the feet. They said, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' 'They have taken my Lord away' she replied 'and I don't know where they have put him.' As she said this she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, though she did not recognise him. Jesus said, 'Woman, why are you weeping? Who are you looking for?' Supposing him to be the gardener, she said, 'Sir, if you have taken him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will go and remove him'. Jesus said, 'Mary!' She knew him then and said to him in Hebrew, 'Rabbuni!' - which means Master. Jesus said to her, 'Do not cling to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go and find the brothers, and tell them: I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.' So Mary of Magdala went and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord and that he had said these things to her.

Where is my Lord?

Mary of Magdala was overcome with deep grief and wept bitterly at the missing body of her beloved Master. She was totally consumed by her grief that she missed recognising Jesus, alive and no longer dead.

What about us?

Many times, our focus is on our work, money, latest gadgets, in pleasures, greed, selfishness, pride, etc. that we do not bother to concentrate on Jesus. We live our lives chasing dreams that do not make us fully happy. Amidst all our busyness and distractions, we fail to recognise Jesus our Risen Saviour calling us by our name, inviting us to take the step to follow Him again.

Where is my Lord? Mary's question expressed her heart's desire. She simply wanted Jesus, and nothing else.

We, on the other hand, are more concerned perhaps with: Where is my money? Where is my job leading me? Where are the affirmations and praises from people? Do we focus on where our journey of faith is going? Do we focus on the presence of our Risen Lord and walk with Him each day?

Jesus calls us today by our names because He wants to increase and renew our faith in Him. Let us fix our eyes on Him and walk with Him.

Wednesday, 4th April, Wednesday within the Octave of Easter
Acts 31-10, Luke 24:13-35

Two of Jesus' disciples were on their way to a village called Emmaus, seven miles from Jerusalem, and they were talking together about all that had happened. Now as they talked this over, Jesus himself came up and walked by their side; but something prevented them from recognising him. He said to them, 'What matters are you discussing as you walk along?' They stopped short, their faces downcast. Then one of them, called Cleopas, answered him, 'You must be the only person staying in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have been happening there these last few days'. 'What things?' he asked. 'All about Jesus of Nazareth' they answered 'who proved he was a great prophet by the things he said and did in the sight of God and of the whole people; and how our chief priests and our leaders handed him over to be sentenced to death, and had him crucified. Our own hope had been that he would be the one to set Israel free. And this is not all: two whole days have gone by since it all happened; and some women from our group have astounded us: they went to the tomb in the early morning, and when they did not find the body, they came back to tell us they had seen a vision of angels who declared he was alive. Some of our friends went to the tomb and found everything exactly as the women had reported, but of him they saw nothing.' Then he said to them, 'You foolish men! So slow to believe the full message of the prophets! Was it not ordained that the Christ should suffer and so enter

into his glory?' Then, starting with Moses and going through all the prophets, he explained to them the passages throughout the scriptures that were about himself. When they drew near to the village to which they were going, he made as if to go on; but they pressed him to stay with them. 'It is nearly evening' they said 'and the day is almost over.'

So he went in to stay with them. Now while he was with them at table, he took the bread and said the blessing; then he broke it and handed it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognised him; but he had vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other, 'Did not our hearts burn within us as he talked to us on the road and explained the scriptures to us?' They set out that instant and returned to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven assembled together with their companions, who said to them, 'Yes, it is true. The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.' Then they told their story of what had happened on the road and how they had recognised him at the breaking of bread.

Along the road to Emmaus

After the event that had taken place, the two disciples of Jesus were disappointed and disillusioned. With heavy hearts, they walked away from the rest of the disciples. The more they talked to each other, the more doubtful they became.

Jesus, always the Good Shepherd, drew close to these lost sheep of His, and listened attentively to their concerns and doubts. He patiently opened their minds to what the scriptures meant and how to interpret all the events that had happened from the moment of the Resurrection. The more Jesus spoke to them, the more their hearts started to glow with deep hope and joy.

This is what prayer does to us. When we are troubled and worried about something, Jesus comes and opens our minds so that we can see things from the viewpoint of renewed hope and joy. The words of our Lord always bring this deep burning flame that change our doubts into faith, our sadness into joy, our disappointments into peaceful acceptance, our loss into gain.

'Without prayer we have neither light nor strength to advance in the way which leads to God.' (St Alphonsus Maria de Liguori)

Jesus, walk with me each day. Speak to me so that my heart will burn with your light of hope and joy.

Questions for reflection:

- 1) Have I experienced the power of prayer? How?
- 2) What keeps me from recognising Jesus during prayer as well as in the ordinary moments of life?

**Thursday, 5th April, Thursday within the Octave of Easter
Acts 3:11-26, Luke 24:35-48**

The disciples told their story of what had happened on the road and how they had recognised Jesus at the breaking of bread. They were still talking about all this when he himself stood among them and said to them, 'Peace be with you!' In a state of alarm and fright, they thought they were seeing a ghost. But he said, 'Why are you so agitated, and why are these doubts rising in your hearts? Look at my hands and feet; yes, it is I indeed. Touch me and see for yourselves; a ghost has no flesh and bones as you can see I have.' And as he said this he showed them his hands and feet. Their joy was so great that they still could not believe it, and they stood there dumbfounded; so he said to them, 'Have you anything here to eat?' And they offered him a piece of grilled fish, which he took and ate before their eyes. Then he told them, 'This is what I meant when I said, while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses, in the Prophets and in the Psalms has to be fulfilled'. He then opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, 'So you see how it is written that the Christ would suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that, in his name, repentance for the forgiveness of sins would be preached to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses to this.'

Peace I leave with you

The disciples found it difficult to swallow the reality of Jesus' resurrection. After hearing the accounts of those who witnessed the resurrection, they were still alarmed and frightened when Jesus appeared and said, '*Peace be with you!*' Perhaps, today we cannot imagine the fear of the disciples. For many of us, Jesus' resurrection does not really make any difference in our lives. We fail to be amazed during this time of celebration because Easter is just a season we go through each year. Believe! Understand and enjoy that Jesus' resurrection is real! Jesus is alive! His resurrection has meaning for our reality today!

Jesus says to each of us today '*Peace be with you. Peace in your troubles.*

Peace in your fears about the future, Peace in your regrets of the past. Peace be with you.'

This is the meaning of Easter for each one of us today. The risen Lord comes to give us His peace which gives us the assurance that God is with us and that He is always here to take care of us. Nobody and nothing can ever take His peace away from us.

Thank you, Jesus, for the gift of Easter. I desire to have the peace that you bring to my life today so that I can share this same peace with those around me.

Friday, 6th April, Friday within the Octave of Easter

Acts 4:1-12, John 21:1-14

Jesus showed himself again to the disciples. It was by the Sea of Tiberias, and it happened like this: Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee and two more of his disciples were together. Simon Peter said, 'I'm going fishing'. They replied, 'We'll come with you'. They went out and got into the boat but caught nothing that night. It was light by now and there stood Jesus on the shore, though the disciples did not realise that it was Jesus. Jesus called out, 'Have you caught anything, friends?' And when they answered, 'No', he said, 'Throw the net out to starboard and you'll find something'. So they dropped the net, and there were so many fish that they could not haul it in. The disciple Jesus loved said to Peter, 'It is the Lord'. At these words 'It is the Lord', Simon Peter, who had practically nothing on, wrapped his cloak round him and jumped into the water. The other disciples came on in the boat, towing the net and the fish; they were only about a hundred yards from land. As soon as they came ashore they saw that there was some bread there, and a charcoal fire with fish cooking on it. Jesus said, 'Bring some of the fish you have just caught'. Simon Peter went aboard and dragged the net to the shore, full of big fish, one hundred and fifty-three of them; and in spite of there being so many the net was not broken. Jesus said to them, 'Come and have breakfast'. None of the disciples was bold enough to ask, 'Who are you?'; they knew quite well it was the Lord. Jesus then stepped forward, took the bread and gave it to them, and the same with the fish. This was the third time that Jesus showed himself to the disciples after rising from the dead.

Light of Christ, shine on me!

In this passage, Simon Peter said, *'I am going fishing.'* Peter and the rest of the disciples decided to return to their old way of life because it seemed as though nothing had changed with Jesus' resurrection. Thus, it was back to work, back to routines, back to the old lifestyle. The disciples got into the boat and it was soon night. 'Night' also referred to their inner state of being without the light of faith and hope. In their troubled states, they caught nothing.

When morning came, Jesus stood on the shore and told them to cast their net out to starboard. They obeyed and caught so much fish that they could not haul the net in. Jesus brought new light into the darkness of the disciples.

Easter makes a difference in our life. We no longer live in the darkness of our ignorance and sadness. With His resurrection, Jesus opens our eyes to look at ourselves, others and situations with more faith. His light makes us live with new hope, trust and joy.

Let us bring Jesus along with us wherever we go today so that we can also share His resurrected light with others around us.

Jesus, shine your Light so that I will not live in darkness today!

Question for reflection:

1) What is Jesus' message for me in this time of prayer?

**Saturday, 7th April, Saturday within the Octave of Easter
Acts 4:13-21, Mark 16:9-15**

Having risen in the morning on the first day of the week, Jesus appeared first to Mary of Magdala from whom he had cast out seven devils. She then went to those who had been his companions, and who were mourning and in tears, and told them. But they did not believe her when they heard her say that he was alive and that she had seen him. After this, he showed himself under another form to two of them as they were on their way into the country. These went back and told the others, who did not believe them either. Lastly, he showed himself to the Eleven themselves while they were at table. He reproached them for their incredulity and obstinacy, because they had refused to believe those who had seen him after he had risen. And he said to them, 'Go out to the whole world; proclaim the Good News to all creation.'

An irreplaceable encounter with the Living Lord

Twice we read that the disciples did not believe the accounts of Jesus' resurrection. We might be shaking our heads and wagging our fingers at the disciples' lack of faith.

Jesus was never disappointed with His disciples. With patience, He appeared to them to personally rekindle their faith. With trust, Jesus placed His mission in the hands of His disciples. Upon their encounter with the Risen Lord, the disciples' faith was renewed and strengthened.

'Faith is not a matter of ideology, existential security, but of an irreplaceable encounter with a living person, Jesus of Nazareth.' (Pope Francis)

Today, Jesus encounters us to renew and strengthen our faith. He needs us to go out and share the Good News with all the people we meet.

Our little faith is not an excuse for us to have a laid back attitude in our mission. The more we go and share, the more we find ourselves growing in our own conviction of Jesus.

In this time of prayer, Jesus shows Himself to us again and tells us, *'Go out. Go out of your comfort zone. Go out of your small world. Proclaim the Good News. Share with others the greatness of God.'*

Questions for reflection:

- 1) Who can I share the Good News with today?
- 2) How can I share my faith with this particular person?

Sunday, 8th April, Second Sunday of Easter (Divine Mercy Sunday)

Acts 4:32-35, 1 John 5:1-6, John 20:19-31

In the evening of that same day, the first day of the week, the doors were closed in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews. Jesus came and stood among them. He said to them, 'Peace be with you', and showed them his hands and his side. The disciples were filled with joy when they saw the Lord, and he said to them again, 'Peace be with you. 'As the Father sent me, so am I sending you.' After saying this he breathed on them and said: 'Receive the Holy Spirit. For those whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven; for those whose sins you retain, they are retained.' Thomas, called the Twin,

who was one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. When the disciples said, 'We have seen the Lord', he answered, 'Unless I see the holes that the nails made in his hands and can put my finger into the holes they made, and unless I can put my hand into his side, I refuse to believe'. Eight days later the disciples were in the house again and Thomas was with them. The doors were closed, but Jesus came in and stood among them. 'Peace be with you' he said. Then he spoke to Thomas, 'Put your finger here; look, here are my hands. Give me your hand; put it into my side. Doubt no longer but believe.' Thomas replied, 'My Lord and my God!' Jesus said to him: 'You believe because you can see me. Happy are those who have not seen and yet believe.' There were many other signs that Jesus worked and the disciples saw, but they are not recorded in this book. These are recorded so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing this you may have life through his name.

Peace!

'Peace be with you'- this is the greeting of Jesus to each of us today. What is the peace that Jesus wants to share with us? It is not a cemetery peace of external quietness and inactivity. The peace that Jesus brings is the inner peace of the heart that knows for certain that nothing and nobody, not even death, can take away Jesus' love from us.

In today's gospel, the encounter with the Living Lord changed the disciples' fears into joy; Thomas' doubt into everlasting faith.

Today, Jesus comes to us and offers us again His peace. His peace that gives us the security of being God's Beloveds. His peace that calms our anxieties about our unknown future. His peace that soothes our hurts and wounds of our regretful pasts. His peace that makes us strong to face our today.

We must quieten the 'doubting Thomas' in us and let us take a leap of faith to believe in the One who believes in us, to love the One who is in love with us.

Monday, 9th April, Annunciation of the Lord
Isaiah 7:10-14,8:10, Hebrews 10:4-10, Luke 1:26-38

The angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the House of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. He went in and said to her, 'Rejoice, so highly

favoured! The Lord is with you.’ She was deeply disturbed by these words and asked herself what this greeting could mean, but the angel said to her, ‘Mary, do not be afraid; you have won God’s favour. Listen! You are to conceive and bear a son, and you must name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David; he will rule over the House of Jacob for ever and his reign will have no end.’ Mary said to the angel, ‘But how can this come about, since I am a virgin?’ ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you’ the angel answered ‘and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow. And so the child will be holy and will be called Son of God. Know this too: your kinswoman Elizabeth has, in her old age, herself conceived a son, and she whom people called barren is now in her sixth month, for nothing is impossible to God’ ‘I am the handmaid of the Lord,’ said Mary ‘let what you have said be done to me.’ And the angel left her.

YES

‘The Virgin Mary, being obedient to His word, received from an angel the glad tidings that she would bear God.’ (St. Irenaeus)

Mary was troubled when she heard God’s request that she will become the Mother of God, but she allowed the angel to allay her fears. From Mary’s response, we can see her deep desire to listen to God and obey His Word. She was so in love with God that she gave her ‘Yes’ to Him, without fully understanding the full consequences of it. She trusted in the plan of God for her.

God continues to have great plans for each one of us. He needs us to continue to bring goodness and love to the world. We might not fully understand God’s ways. We might not see the fruitfulness in the way He is leading us. Yet, let us hold the hand of Mary our Mother, and let her teach us always to love and trust God more.

Mother, your faith enabled God to carry out his plan through your life, and I am so grateful for your consent. Your faith still continues to bring life to the world today. Mother, you understand my needs and my perspective. Please teach me to trust and love God as you did.

Tuesday, 10th April

Acts 4:32-37, John 3:7-15

Jesus said to Nicodemus: 'Do not be surprised when I say: You must be born from above. The wind blows wherever it pleases; you hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. That is how it is with all who are born of the Spirit.' 'How can that be possible?' asked Nicodemus. 'You, a teacher in Israel, and you do not know these things!' replied Jesus. 'I tell you most solemnly, we speak only about what we know and witness only to what we have seen and yet you people reject our evidence. If you do not believe me when I speak about things in this world, how are you going to believe me when I speak to you about heavenly things? 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.'

Let go!

'The wind blows wherever it pleases; you hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. That is how it is with all who are born of the Spirit.'

No one can control the Spirit of God. He does what He wants, not what we want. God is free! We cannot organise or manage Him.

In today's gospel, we have the continuation of Nicodemus' dialogue with Jesus. Who is Nicodemus? He was one of the leading and respectable figures in the Pharisaic circle. Yet, Nicodemus listened to Jesus, observed Him and was intrigued by His words and life. He wanted to talk personally to Jesus, but he went to Jesus in the night and not in broad daylight because he was afraid to be seen with Jesus. In the night, Nicodemus felt safe and in control over this meeting with Jesus. However, Jesus challenged him to step out of his safety net of being in control and let the Spirit raise him from his fears to a new life, new faith in Jesus.

We, who are people born of the Spirit, must learn to let go and let God take control of all that we do and desire. No longer do we need to hide in the night, but we can step out into the light of Jesus and be led by His Spirit towards a deeper faith, a radical trust and profound love relationship with God.

Holy Spirit, blow where You please with my life.

Questions for reflection:

- 1) Do I, like Nicodemus, try to be in control in my life of faith? Why?
- 2) How can I receive new life, new faith from the Holy Spirit?

Wednesday, 11th April, St. Stanislaus

Acts 5:17-26, John 3:16-21

Jesus said to Nicodemus: '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. No one who believes in him will be condemned; but whoever refuses to believe is condemned already, because he has refused to believe in the name of God's only Son. On these grounds is sentence pronounced: that though the light has come into the world men have shown they prefer darkness to the light because their deeds were evil. And indeed, everybody who does wrong hates the light and avoids it, for fear his actions should be exposed; but the man who lives by the truth comes out into the light, so that it may be plainly seen that what he does is done in God.'

Fix our eyes on Jesus

The person who lives by the truth comes out into the light, so that it may be plainly seen that what he/she does is done in God.

Like Pilate in John 19, we can also ask '*What is the truth?*'

Jesus who is The Truth comes to show us that God loves us with the heart of a father and mother. Jesus comes to reveal to us our true identity as being God's beloved sons and daughters. We are so loved by God that He gave us Jesus! Being loved by God is the source of our supreme joy!

Yet, there are many other voices that speak to us of lies that pull us away from God and away from the joy of being God's beloveds. These voices tell us: '*You are good for nothing. How can God love you if you are suffering? You are what you achieve and so make career your god!*'

The solution is to fix our eyes on Jesus and never let our gaze fall away from Him. Jesus who is the Voice of Truth will lead us always to be in the Light of God's love.

Questions for reflection:

- 1) To what extent am I fixing my eyes on Jesus? Is He the centre of my attention in all that I do and say?
- 2) How can I share God's greatest gift, Jesus with those I meet today?

Thursday, 12th April

Acts 5:27-33, John 3:31-36

John the Baptist said to his disciples: 'He who comes from above is above all others; he who is born of the earth is earthly himself and speaks in an earthly way. He who comes from heaven bears witness to the things he has seen and heard, even if his testimony is not accepted; though all who do accept his testimony are attesting the truthfulness of God, since he whom God has sent speaks God's own words: God gives him the Spirit without reserve. The Father loves the Son and has entrusted everything to him. Anyone who believes in the Son has eternal life, but anyone who refuses to believe in the Son will never see life: the anger of God stays on him.'

Living fully the person I am called to be

'Anyone who refuses to believe in the Son will never see life: the anger of God stays on him.'

We wonder as we reflect on the final words of today's gospel: *'The anger of God stays on him'*, what does this mean?

It is either choosing to live a true life of love, integrity, peace, mercy or being concerned with chasing earthly things and values that contradict those of Christ.

When we are committed to Christ, we desire that our whole life becomes Christ-centred. We will strive to live each day by pleasing and loving the One who loves us first. Following and imitating Jesus, we become fully the person we were created to be.

'The anger of God stays on him' does not mean a God with lightning rods ready to strike and punish. Rather, when we choose to live a lifestyle that is

contrary to us becoming more Christlike, we ourselves encounter sadness, frustrations and pain within. It feels as though life is angry and fuming at us. The voice of Love continues to call us back to our true selves. He desires only what is good and life-giving in our lives. He does not want us to experience the pain of choosing to live outside of love.

God today wants to give us His Spirit without any reservation. Let us open our hearts to receive His Spirit so that we can choose to live for God and with God.

Questions for reflection:

- 1) Are my actions and words Christ-centred? Why?
- 2) How can I make the effort today to make choices that lead me towards God?

Friday, 13th April

Acts 5:34-42, John 6:1-15

Jesus went off to the other side of the Sea of Galilee - or of Tiberias - and a large crowd followed him, impressed by the signs he gave by curing the sick. Jesus climbed the hillside, and sat down there with his disciples. It was shortly before the Jewish feast of Passover. Looking up, Jesus saw the crowds approaching and said to Philip, 'Where can we buy some bread for these people to eat?' He only said this to test Philip; he himself knew exactly what he was going to do. Philip answered, 'Two hundred denarii would only buy enough to give them a small piece each'. One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said, 'There is a small boy here with five barley loaves and two fish; but what is that between so many?' Jesus said to them, 'Make the people sit down'. There was plenty of grass there, and as many as five thousand men sat down. Then Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks, and gave them out to all who were sitting ready; he then did the same with the fish, giving out as much as was wanted. When they had eaten enough he said to the disciples, 'Pick up the pieces left over, so that nothing gets wasted'. So they picked them up, and filled twelve hampers with scraps left over from the meal of five barley loaves. The people, seeing this sign that he had given, said, 'This really is the prophet who is to come into the world'. Jesus, who could see they were about to come and take him by force and make him king, escaped back to the hills by himself.

I can do something!

'There is a small boy here with five barley loaves and two fish...'

The small boy's generous surrender of his five barley loaves and two fish made it possible for Jesus to feed and nourish the hungry crowd. This small boy made a difference simply by offering the little that he had.

'I am only one, but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something; and because I cannot do everything, I will not refuse to do something that I can do.' (Helen Keller)

Today, Jesus is asking us for the little that we have in order to make a difference in the lives of others. He does not ask for great things or huge achievements from us, but all he wants is for us to make ourselves gifts for others.

Let us choose to make a difference today!

Questions for reflection:

- 1) In what way can I be a gift for others?
- 2) What are the challenges I face in surrendering my *'five barley loaves and two fish'*?

Saturday, 14th April

Acts 6:1-7, John 6:16-21

In the evening the disciples went down to the shore of the lake and got into a boat to make for Capernaum on the other side of the lake. It was getting dark by now and Jesus had still not rejoined them. The wind was strong, and the sea was getting rough. They had rowed three or four miles when they saw Jesus walking on the lake and coming towards the boat. This frightened them, but he said, 'It is I. Do not be afraid.' They were for taking him into the boat, but in no time it reached the shore at the place they were making for.

Do not be afraid

Aren't there moments when we felt that God seemed to be so far away from our life? Somehow, the scene of the disciples rowing alone in the boat without Jesus seems so familiar, doesn't it?

In the gospel of St. John, darkness signifies more than just the time of the day. For the evangelist, darkness also represents the state of spiritual

darkness when we do not 'feel' or 'hear' God anymore. In facing these dark nights of our faith, we experience that the winds of doubts, anguish and sadness are too strong for us and that the sea of life is getting overwhelmingly tough. We cry out in distress: *'Where are you, Lord?'*

Jesus, who seems far from us, is, nevertheless, constantly present. He stays close to us even though we, in the darkness of our faith, do not recognise him.

There is a well-known anecdote, 'Footprints in the sand' that reminds us that we have no need of fear if we keep trusting in Him.

'One night, a man had a dream. He dreamed he was walking along the beach with the Lord. Scenes from his life flashed across the sky and he noticed two sets of footprints in the sand, one belonging to him and the other to the Lord. When the last scene of his life had flashed before him, he recalled that at the lowest and saddest times of his life there was only one set of footprints. Dismayed, he asked, 'Lord, you said that once I decided to follow you, you'd walk with me all the way. I don't understand why, when I needed you most, you would leave me.' The Lord replied, *'My Friend, I love you and I would never leave you. During your times of trial and suffering when you saw only one set of footprints, that was when I carried you.'*

Question for reflection:

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

Sunday, 15th April, Third Sunday of Easter

Acts 3:13-15,17-19, 1 John 2:1-5, Luke 24:35-48

The disciples told their story of what had happened on the road and how they had recognised Jesus at the breaking of bread. They were still talking about all this when he himself stood among them and said to them, 'Peace be with you!' In a state of alarm and fright, they thought they were seeing a ghost. But he said, 'Why are you so agitated, and why are these doubts rising in your hearts? Look at my hands and feet; yes, it is I indeed. Touch me and see for yourselves; a ghost has no flesh and bones as you can see I have.' And as he said this he showed them his hands and feet. Their joy was so great that they still could not believe it, and they stood there dumbfounded; so he said to them, 'Have you anything here to eat?' And they offered him a piece of grilled fish, which he took and ate before their eyes. Then he told them, 'This is what I meant when I said, while I was still with you, that everything written

about me in the Law of Moses, in the Prophets and in the Psalms has to be fulfilled'. He then opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, 'So you see how it is written that the Christ would suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that, in his name, repentance for the forgiveness of sins would be preached to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses to this.'

To reveal God to all people

There was an incredible change that took place in the disciples. Immediately after the crucifixion, the disciples were afraid and went into hiding. After seeing the Risen Lord in their midst, their fears changed to overwhelming joy that was so great that no opposition could stop them from being witnesses to Jesus' resurrection.

'You are witnesses to this'- Yes! Today, we continue to witness the Good News of Jesus' Resurrection. In our own life, we have experienced Jesus' untiring forgiveness, his unconditional love, his faithful presence. We are witnesses to this Good News of the Easter message. We have a voice. We have hands. We have feet. Are we witnessing to others? If we are not, what are we waiting for?

'It is really so: the purpose of our lives is to reveal God to men. And only where God is seen does life truly begin. Only when we meet the living God in Christ do we know what life is. We are not some casual and meaningless product of evolution. Each of us is the result of a thought of God. Each of us is willed, each of us is loved, each of us is necessary. There is nothing more beautiful than to be surprised by the Gospel, by the encounter with Christ. There is nothing more beautiful than to know Him and to speak to others of our friendship with Him. The task of the shepherd, the task of the fisher of men, can often seem wearisome. But it is beautiful and wonderful, because it is truly a service to joy, to God's joy which longs to break into the world.'
(Pope Benedict XVI)

Questions for reflection:

- 1) How can I continue to witness the Good News of love to others?
- 2) *'...it is truly a service to joy'* Is being a witness for Christ a joy? Why?

Monday, 16th April

Acts 6:8-15, John 6:22-29

Next day, the crowd that had stayed on the other side saw that only one boat had been there, and that Jesus had not got into the boat with his disciples, but that the disciples had set off by themselves. Other boats, however, had put in from Tiberias, near the place where the bread had been eaten. When the people saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into those boats and crossed to Capernaum to look for Jesus. When they found him on the other side, they said to him, 'Rabbi, when did you come here?' Jesus answered: 'I tell you most solemnly, you are not looking for me because you have seen the signs but because you had all the bread you wanted to eat. Do not work for food that cannot last, but work for food that endures to eternal life, the kind of food the Son of Man is offering you, for on him the Father, God himself, has set his seal.' Then they said to him, 'What must we do if we are to do the works that God wants?' Jesus gave them this answer, 'This is working for God: you must believe in the one he has sent'.

Jesus, the eternal treasure

'Do not work for food that cannot last, but work for food that endures to eternal life...' What is Jesus' message to us today?

Jesus reminds us that while we need to work, pay the bills, put food on the table and take care of our families, we should never forget to work even harder for food that endures till eternal life. This spiritual food refers to the gift of faith in Jesus, which will never rot or spoil but last for eternity. Our faith in Jesus is the treasure that makes us truly rich.

Do we set time and space for personal prayer? Do we encourage our family members to pray together? Do we teach the gospel values to our children? Do we encourage our loved ones to follow Jesus faithfully?

Many times, we give God whatever 'extra' that is left of our energy, creativity and time. We put Him as the least priority in our list because we spend our every waking moment busy working for money, good grades, high position, etc. We work hard in order to give the very best to ourselves and to our loved ones. We fail to see that the only true gift of lasting riches we can ever give to ourselves and our loved ones is a firm and mature faith in Jesus.

Today, let us ask the grace to focus less on material things and to daily focus more on putting Christ first in all our choices.

Questions for reflection:

- 1) What is my treasure?
- 2) How can I concretely work for food that endures forever?

Tuesday, 17th April

Acts 7:51-8:1, John 6:30-35

The people said to Jesus, 'What sign will you give to show us that we should believe in you? What work will you do? Our fathers had manna to eat in the desert; as scripture says: He gave them bread from heaven to eat'. Jesus answered: 'I tell you most solemnly, it was not Moses who gave you bread from heaven, it is my Father who gives you the bread from heaven, the true bread; for the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world'. 'Sir,' they said 'give us that bread always.' Jesus answered: 'I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never be hungry; he who believes in me will never thirst.'

I hunger for you!

Give us this bread always.' The request of the people revealed the deep hunger in them. What about us? What do we hunger for in our lives?

When we taste His unfailing love in the Eucharist and come to realise that nothing else can satisfy our hunger and thirst for happiness and love, we will yearn for His presence of love.

'Give me this bread always. Give me this love always. Give me this peace and joy always.'

Many of us always desire to be loved well and cherished deeply by others. A lot of our insecurities come when we fear that a spouse, a child, a friend will simply one day stop loving us.

The greatest challenge is for us to believe that only Jesus can fully nourish us. He is the Living Bread that can nourish our hunger. The money in the bank, the number of cars, the exotic vacations - all these cannot give us the real fulfilment within. Jesus does not want us to go to other substitutes that

cannot give us what we long for. Only Jesus, the true bread from heaven, can fill and nourish our hunger.

'Come to me, I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never be hungry, and He who believes in me will never thirst.'

Let us recognise Jesus in the Eucharist and believe that He truly can satisfy our deep hunger.

'I hunger for the bread of God, the flesh of Jesus Christ ...; I long to drink of his blood, the gift of unending love.' (St. Ignatius of Antioch)

Questions for reflection:

- 1) Do I hunger for Jesus and His unfailing love in the Eucharist? Do I take His presence in the Eucharist for granted?
- 2) What can I do to increase my love for the Eucharist?

Wednesday, 18th April

Acts 8:1-8, John 6:35-40

Jesus said to the crowd: 'I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never be hungry; he who believes in me will never thirst. But, as I have told you, you can see me and still you do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I shall not turn him away; because I have come from heaven, not to do my own will, but to do the will of the one who sent me. Now the will of him who sent me is that I should lose nothing of all that he has given to me, and that I should raise it up on the last day. Yes, it is my Father's will that whoever sees the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and that I shall raise him up on the last day.'

Grow in love with Jesus in the Eucharist

All that Jesus does is in order for Him to express His faithful love for us. Out of love, He becomes Eucharist so as to make Himself our source of nourishment. Out of love, He comes to us under the appearance of bread in order to preserve, increase and renew our life of faith.

The presence of faithful love is fully manifested in the Blessed Sacrament. In the Eucharist, we recognise the unshakable fidelity of God to us.

'How many of you say: I should like to see His face, His garments, His shoes.'

You do see Him, you touch Him, you eat Him. He gives Himself to you, not only that you may see Him, but also to be your food and nourishment.' (St. John Chrysostom)

During this time of prayer, let us reflect on the words of Jesus in this passage. Let us dialogue with Jesus and enter more and more into the great mystery of His love for us.

'Jesus has made Himself the Bread of Life to give us life. Night and day, He is there. If you really want to grow in love, come back to the Eucharist, come back to that Adoration.' (Mother Teresa)

Let us journey towards growing in love with Jesus in the Eucharist.

Question for reflection:

1) How can I express my love for Jesus in the Eucharist?

Thursday, 19th April

Acts 8:26-40, John 6:44-51

Jesus said to the crowd: 'No one can come to me unless he is drawn by the Father who sent me, and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets: They will all be taught by God, and to hear the teaching of the Father, and learn from it, is to come to me. Not that anybody has seen the Father, except the one who comes from God: he has seen the Father. I tell you most solemnly, everybody who believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the desert and they are dead; but this is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that a man may eat it and not die. I am the living bread which has come down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live for ever; and the bread that I shall give is my flesh, for the life of the world.' Then the Jews started arguing with one another: 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?' they said. Jesus replied: *I tell you most solemnly, if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you will not have life in you. Anyone who does eat my flesh and drink my blood has eternal life, and I shall raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink.'*

God always and in everything

'No one can come to me unless he is drawn by the Father who sent me...'

This is the Good News of how much God loves us! He constantly draws us out of our self-centredness and attracts us to Himself in order that we might live in constant union with Him and so come to enjoy eternal life, here and now.

We have been created to live forever, and not merely to be here on this earth for a little while. That is why material things can never satisfy us completely. We are made by God and for God.

'Not the goods of the world, but God. Not riches, but God. Not honours, but God. Not distinction, but God. Not dignities, but God. Not advancement, but God. God always and in everything.' (St. Vincent Pallotti)

When we eat the Bread of Life, we enter into a deep communion with Jesus. In this time of prayer, let us recognise that true joy comes when we allow ourselves to be drawn into a close union with God. May we never be drawn towards the goods of the world or riches or honours, but God. He alone should suffice!

Question for reflection:

1) How can I think less of myself, and more of God today?

Friday, 20th April

Acts 9:1-20, John 6:52-59

The Jews started arguing with one another: 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?' they said. Jesus replied: I tell you most solemnly, if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you will not have life in you. Anyone who does eat my flesh and drink my blood has eternal life, and I shall raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I live in him. As I, who am sent by the living Father, myself draw life from the Father, so whoever eats me will draw life from me. This is the bread come down from heaven; not like the bread our ancestors ate: they are dead, but anyone who eats this bread will live forever.' He taught this doctrine at Capernaum, in the synagogue.

Take and eat

In today's gospel, Jesus' words scandalized the Jews and divided His disciples.

They were shocked at Jesus' command about eating His flesh and drinking His blood. They simply could not understand Jesus' hard teaching.

Today, Jesus continues to tell us, *'For my flesh is real flesh and my blood is real drink.'*

Jesus makes a gift of Himself. He becomes food in order to nourish us, especially when we experience difficulties and sadness in life. Do we take Jesus' love expressed in the Eucharist for granted? Do we allow His Eucharistic love to transform our sadness, loneliness, frustrations into fullness of peace and joy?

Each time we receive Jesus in Holy Communion, we are not doing something for God, but rather, God is doing something for us. He is our source of nourishment. He gives us the peace, the rest, the courage and the strength we need to carry on walking in this journey of life.

Jesus invites us *'Take and eat.'* He never tires of drawing near to us. He is the real food who can truly make us fully alive!

Let us receive the Bread of Life with all our love!

Question for reflection:

1) How can I let Jesus transform the darkness in me into light and life?

Saturday, 21st April

Acts 9:31-42, John 6:60-69

After hearing his doctrine, many of the followers of Jesus said, 'This is intolerable language. How could anyone accept it?' Jesus was aware that his followers were complaining about it and said, 'Does this upset you? What if you should see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before? 'It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh has nothing to offer. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. 'But there are some of you who do not believe.' For Jesus knew from the outset those who did not believe, and who it was that would betray him. He went on, 'This is why I told you that no one could come to me unless the Father allows him'. After this, many of his disciples left him and stopped going with him. Then Jesus said to the Twelve, 'What about you, do you want to go away too?' Simon Peter answered, 'Lord, who shall

we go to? You have the message of eternal life, and we believe; we know that you are the Holy One of God.'

To stay or to go?

Following Jesus is not easy because there are many things which we do not understand. In today's gospel, many of Jesus' followers walked away from Him simply because they could not accept and understand His teaching.

Jesus, seeing that many left Him, turned to His Twelve disciples and asked them, *"What about you, do you want to go away too?"*

Peter answered, *"Lord who shall we go to? You have the message of eternal life, and we believe; we know that you are the Holy One of God."*

Peter's reply shows us what discipleship and faith are all about. True faith is believing in Jesus which will lead a disciple of Jesus to commit his/her life to follow Jesus at all cost.

Today, Jesus asks us again, *"What about you, do you want to go away too? Do you want to go away because following me is hard, because the ways of the world seem more appealing, because others are not supporting you in your following, because..."*

Lord, whom shall I go to? You have the words of eternal life. You are the source of eternal love. Where else can I go? I am here today because I want to follow you closely and so help me to stay faithful.

Questions for reflection:

- 1) Has following Jesus been an easy or difficult path for me? Why?
- 2) Do I dare to commit my life to follow Jesus today?

Sunday, 22nd April, Fourth Sunday of Easter

Acts 4:8-12, 1 John 3:1-2, John 10:11-18

Jesus said: 'I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd is one who lays down his life for his sheep. The hired man, since he is not the shepherd and the sheep do not belong to him, abandons the sheep and runs away as soon as he sees a wolf coming, and then the wolf attacks and scatters the sheep; this is because he is only a hired man and has no concern for the sheep. I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for my sheep. And

there are other sheep I have that are not of this fold, and these I have to lead as well. They too will listen to my voice, and there will be only one flock, and one shepherd. The Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me; I lay it down of my own free will, and as it is in my power to lay it down, so it is in my power to take it up again; and this is the command I have been given by my Father.'

Knowing and loving the Shepherd

"Two men were called on, in a large classroom, to recite Psalm 23. One was a published orator trained in speech technique and drama. He repeated the psalm in a powerful way. When he finished, the audience cheered and even asked for an encore that they might hear his wonderful voice again.

Then the other man, who was much older, repeated the same words --'The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want...' But when he finished, no sound came from the large class. Instead, people sat in a deep mood of devotion and prayer. Then the first man, the orator, stood to his feet. 'I have a confession to make,' he said. 'The difference between what you have just heard from my old friend, and what you heard from me is this: I know the Psalm, my friend knows the Shepherd.'"

Do I know the Shepherd? Have I encountered the Shepherd's love?

Today, Jesus our Good Shepherd gently calls us by our name and is always leading us towards fullness of life. Yet, we are constantly bombarded by so many 'thieves' in our life that seduce or threaten us in this journey of our faith. Jesus, however, never abandons us, no matter how far we wander from Him. He asks us, *'Do you know and love me? Are you ready to trust me to lead you?'*

The Shepherd's love waits for our response, never forcing or invading our life. Let us, in this day, learn to know the Shepherd and follow His voice of Love.

Questions for reflection:

- 1) What makes me deaf to the Shepherd's voice?
- 2) How can I know and love Jesus my Good Shepherd more profoundly?

Monday, 23rd April

Acts 11:1-18, John 10:1-10

Jesus said: 'I tell you most solemnly, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold through the gate, but gets in some other way is a thief and a brigand. The one who enters through the gate is the shepherd of the flock; the gatekeeper lets him in, the sheep hear his voice, one by one he calls his own sheep and leads them out. When he has brought out his flock, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow because they know his voice. They never follow a stranger but run away from him: they do not recognise the voice of strangers.' Jesus told them this parable but they failed to understand what he meant by telling it to them. So Jesus spoke to them again: *'I tell you most solemnly, I am the gate of the sheepfold. All others who have come are thieves and brigands; but the sheep took no notice of them. I am the gate. Anyone who enters through me will be safe: he will go freely in and out and be sure of finding pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full.'*

The courage to enter through this gate

Jesus is the gate. What does this mean for us today?

The sheep pen is an enclosure that has no roof or door, but just an opening. Its walls, made from stones are open to the elements of the weather. The main purpose of the pen is to provide safety and protection to the sheep. At night, after the sheep have entered, the shepherd would lay down at the doorway. The shepherd becomes the gate, the guardian. He puts his life at risk in order to protect his sheep from thieves who might try to come and steal them.

How beautiful it is to know and experience Jesus, our gate! We are invited to remain in His sheep pen, protected and secure.

'Anyone who enters through me will be safe: he will go freely in and out and be sure of finding pasture.'

Jesus is the gate. When we go freely in and out of this gate, we will find salvation. This is because Jesus always leads us to God the Father, who is the real source of life. Jesus our gate is always open for each of us to enter. His love is always inclusive, never exclusive.

'Don't be afraid: He's waiting for you. Be lively, have the courage to enter through His gate. All are invited to pass through this gate, to pass through the gate of faith, to enter into His life, and to allow Him to enter into our life,

because He transforms it, renews it, the gifts of full and lasting joy.’ (Pope Francis)

Question for reflection:

1) Jesus is the gate. Which is the gate that I want to enter? The broad and attractive gate that leads me to worldly values and securities or the narrow and simple gate that leads me to the real source of life?

Tuesday, 24th April

Acts 11:19-26, John 10:22-30

It was the time when the feast of Dedication was being celebrated in Jerusalem.

It was winter, and Jesus was in the Temple walking up and down in the Portico of Solomon. The Jews gathered round him and said, ‘How much longer are you going to keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.’ Jesus replied: ‘I have told you, but you do not believe. The works I do in my Father’s name are my witness; but you do not believe, because you are no sheep of mine. The sheep that belong to me listen to my voice; I know them and they follow me. I give them eternal life; they will never be lost and no one will ever steal them from me. The Father who gave them to me is greater than anyone, and no one can steal from the Father. The Father and I are one.’

Listening to the voice of love

We belong to Jesus. This is the security in which we live our daily life. Yet, many times, there are other voices which speak louder than the gentle whisper of our Shepherd. These voices speak to us of happiness in gaining peoples’ approvals, security in rooting ourselves in excessive wealth, comfort in soaking in unimaginable luxury.

Jesus our Good Shepherd continues to call out to us daily. Do we listen to His voice? Jesus wants to enter more and more into our lives, so that we can stop listening to all the other voices that cannot give meaning to us. Jesus speaks to us of simplicity, trust, peace and goodness.

Let us not be afraid of listening to the voice of our Shepherd and following His path that might seem to be dull, boring, unattractive and even full of difficulties. The Shepherd always guides us to fullness of life that endures and gives us peace that the world and all its offers can never provide us.

Jesus, I desire to listen to your voice today. Transform my stubborn heart. Remove all obstacles within me that make me deaf to your voice of love. I belong to you alone. With you in my life, I have nothing to fear!

Questions for reflection:

- 1) Am I open to listen attentively to the voice of my Shepherd? Why?
- 2) In what way, can I also help others to listen to the voice of the Shepherd?

Wednesday, 25th April, St. Mark

1 Peter 5:5-14, Mark 16:15-20

Jesus said to the Eleven, 'Go out to the whole world; proclaim the Good News to all creation. He who believes and is baptised will be saved; he who does not believe will be condemned. These are the signs that will be associated with believers: in my name they will cast out devils; they will have the gift of tongues; they will pick up snakes in their hands, and be unharmed should they drink deadly poison; they will lay their hands on the sick, who will recover.' And so the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven: there at the right hand of God he took his place, while they, going out, preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word by the signs that accompanied it.

Mission possible!

"A true missionary who never ceases to be a disciple, knows Jesus walks with him, speaks to him, breathes with him, works with him." (Pope Francis)

Today, we celebrate the Feast Day of St Mark the evangelist. Mark was once a travelling companion of St Paul, who preached faith to the people they met. Later, Mark became a close friend of St. Peter, who called Mark his son. Though he was not one of the 12 disciples of Jesus and he might not even have known of Jesus personally, he never ceased to allow the Spirit of Jesus to walk with him, speak to him, breathe with him and work through him. Therefore, Mark was entrusted to write the Gospel which continues to allow people to encounter Jesus.

What does this feast day mean for each one of us?

We too have been given the task of becoming missionaries for Christ through our words and deeds. This mission demands great generosity on our part, and yet at the same time, we need to remember that we have to depend on

Jesus.

Jesus is the one who inspires, guides, leads and accompanies us along the path of sharing the Good News with those around us.

“God asks everything of us, yet at the same time he offers everything to us.”
(Pope Francis)

Let Jesus walk with us, speak to us, breathe with us, work through us so that we, like St Mark, can bring the Good News to those around us.

Questions for reflection:

- 1) What is the Good News that I want to share with others?
- 2) What prevents me from being a missionary for Christ?

Thursday, 26th April

Acts 13:13-25, John 13:16-20

After he had washed the feet of his disciples, Jesus said to them: ‘I tell you most solemnly, no servant is greater than his master, no messenger is greater than the man who sent him. Now that you know this, happiness will be yours if you behave accordingly. I am not speaking about all of you: I know the ones I have chosen; but what scripture says must be fulfilled: Someone who shares my table rebels against me. I tell you this now, before it happens, so that when it does happen you may believe that I am He. I tell you most solemnly, whoever welcomes the one I send welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me.’

Do you want to be happy?

Jesus, the Master, bent down to wash the feet of each of His disciples. After He washed their feet, He said “...*happiness will be yours if you behave accordingly.*”

Jesus was inviting His disciples to be servants to one another and to others. This is the root of their happiness. Jesus, however, knew that His disciples did not want to be servants, but masters. Yet, He trusted that in time, they would understand and serve others to the point of giving their lives.

Today, Jesus calls us to do the same so that happiness will be ours. Happiness does not derive from having status or popularity or achievements.

Happiness comes from service, from putting love into action. Happiness comes when we humble ourselves and become servants to our brothers and sisters.

“The world tells us to seek success, power and money; God tells us to seek humility, service and love.” (Pope Francis)

Today, it is a challenge for many of us to put into practice Jesus’ words. Yet, it is time for us to listen to Him as He calls us to seek humility, service and love. This is the path towards real *happiness that the world can never give to us*.

Question for reflection:

1) What is Jesus’ personal message for me in this time of silence as I listen to His Word?

Friday, 27th April

Acts 13:26-33, John 14:1-6

Jesus said to his disciples: ‘Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God still, and trust in me. There are many rooms in my Father’s house; if there were not, I should have told you. I am going now to prepare a place for you, and after I have gone and prepared you a place, I shall return to take you with me; so that where I am you may be too. You know the way to the place where I am going.’ Thomas said, ‘Lord, we do not know where you are going, so how can we know the way?’ Jesus said: ‘I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one can come to the Father except through me.’

The need to trust

Along this journey of life, we will get to the point where we feel that we cannot go on anymore because of all the fears and anxieties that paralyze us. Take courage and listen carefully to the voice of Love, saying: *“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God still, and trust in me.”*

When we observe the way little children relate to their parents, we see a lot of unconditional trust in little children. They know that their parents love and care for them, and will always be there to provide for their needs.

We were all once little children, and we too have experienced such

unconditional trust. However, when we first experience being hurt by someone, and we somehow feel vulnerable and find it hard to trust again, we become wary of whom to trust and how much we can trust.

If we find it hard to trust people whom we can see, how much more difficult is it to trust God whom we cannot see? How can we possibly trust God when we have experiences of God seemingly letting us down time and time again? How can we trust that what God wants is the best for us?

Trust is rooted in knowing and loving Jesus personally as our Friend, as our Companion. We cannot live trusting Jesus if we do not encounter Him in moments of our weakness, moments of needing forgiveness and moments of joys.

We need to let go of our desire to control and have the trust that Jesus is the one in charge. We can then rest in Him. We can surrender ourselves to Jesus' hands because we know with certainty that He will never let us down.

Trust is two-sided. Before we place our trust in God, God puts His trust in us. He shares with us all that He is and has, because He sees the potential in us and desires to make us live fully according to the role we were created for.

Today, let us come to encounter Jesus and be loved by Him so that we can renew our trust in Him.

Questions for reflection:

- 1) How do I feel when I listen to Jesus' words: 'Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God still and trust in me.'?
- 2) Do I sense that Jesus is calling me to have more trust in Him?

Saturday, 28th April

Acts 13:44-52, John 14:7-14

Jesus said to his disciples, 'If you know me, you know my Father too. From this moment you know him and have seen him.' Philip said, 'Lord, let us see the Father and then we shall be satisfied'. 'Have I been with you all this time, Philip,' said Jesus to him 'and you still do not know me? 'To have seen me is to have seen the Father, so how can you say, "Let us see the Father"? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak as from myself: it is the Father, living in me, who is doing

this work. You must believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; believe it on the evidence of this work, if for no other reason. I tell you most solemnly, whoever believes in me will perform the same works as I do myself, he will perform even greater works, because I am going to the Father. Whatever you ask for in my name I will do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask for anything in my name, I will do it.'

Let me see the Father

We can imagine Philip listening to Jesus' and eagerly waiting to make the request that had been stirring in his heart. When he finally got the chance, he asked, *"Lord, let us see the Father, and then we shall be satisfied."*

Is this our desire too? Will we be satisfied when we see the Father? Or are our hearts complicated with many other desires?

Listen to Jesus' answer to Philip - *"Have I been with you all this time, Philip and you still do not know me? To have seen me is to have seen the Father..."* How comforting to know that when we look at Jesus, we are looking at God the Father. Through His words and deeds, Jesus has revealed the heart of the Father to us. Look at Jesus! Fix our eyes on Him! This is because to see Jesus is to have seen God Himself!

Jesus invites us once again to know Him by encountering Him personally in our lives. He reveals to us the Father's love so that we can continue the good works of love He had started. That is why Jesus said, *"I tell you most solemnly, whoever believes in me will perform the same works as I do myself, he will perform even greater works, because I am going to the Father."*

We will perform even greater works, not because we are great and powerful, but because we have Jesus working in us and through us.

Questions for reflection:

- 1) Do I desire to see God?
- 2) How willing am I to allow Jesus to continue His good works of love, peace and forgiveness through me?

Sunday, 29th April, Fifth Sunday of Easter
Acts 9:26-31, 1 John 3:18-24, John 15:1-8

Jesus said to his disciples: 'I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that bears no fruit he cuts away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes to make it bear even more. You are pruned already, by means of the word that I have spoken to you. Make your home in me, as I make mine in you. As a branch cannot bear fruit all by itself, but must remain part of the vine, neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me, with me in him, bears fruit in plenty; for cut off from me you can do nothing. Anyone who does not remain in me is like a branch that has been thrown away – he withers; these branches are collected and thrown on the fire, and they are burnt. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask what you will and you shall get it. It is to the glory of my Father that you should bear much fruit, and then you will be my disciples.'

Stay connected! Be fruitful!

In the society where we live, productivity drives us to be efficient and competent in all that we do. Those who are productive get rewards while the non-productive ones become 'losers' and 'failures' in the eyes of the world.

As we reflect on today's gospel, we might have this concept that God sees us as productive branches bearing fruit or non-productive branches bearing no fruit. He rewards those who bear fruit while the non-productive branches are punished. Let the Holy Spirit open our eyes of faith to read, reflect and grasp the profound meaning of Jesus' words.

Jesus is not talking about productivity but He is talking about connectivity. When we live connected to God, we naturally produce fruits of love, peace, joy, patience, etc. Lack of fruit reveals the state of our interior life with Jesus. Thus, Jesus keeps on urging us to remain in Him because we are meant to live a fruitful life, here and now. He calls us to always have more intimacy, more union and more connectivity.

Today, let us allow Jesus to draw us close to Him and be one with Him.

Questions for reflection:

- 1) Am I striving for productivity or fruitfulness?
- 2) How is the state of my interior life with Jesus?

Monday, 30th April, St. Pius V

Acts 14:5-18, John 14:21-26

Jesus said to his disciples: 'Anybody who receives my commandments and keeps them will be one who loves me; and anybody who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I shall love him and show myself to him.' Judas - this was not Judas Iscariot - said to him, 'Lord, what is all this about? Do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?' Jesus replied: 'If anyone loves me he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we shall come to him and make our home with him. Those who do not love me do not keep my words. And my word is not my own: it is the word of the one who sent me. I have said these things to you while still with you; but the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all I have said to you.'

The Holy Spirit, always and forever, in my life

We need the Holy Spirit in a very special way in these times of consumerism and intense pursuit of worldly pleasures. We have no more room to listen to God's voice and our conscience becomes blunt and dull.

Today, Jesus reminds us that He gives us His Holy Spirit to be our Advocate who will teach and remind us of all what is essential for us to become authentic Christians living our faith in the midst of our society.

Are we humble enough to allow the same Spirit who led Jesus to lead us now in our journey through life?

"Do not be a 'part-time' Christian, at certain moments, in certain circumstances, in certain choices, be Christian at all times! The truth of Christ, that the Holy Spirit teaches us and gives us, always and forever involves our daily lives. Let us invoke him more often, to guide us on the path of Christ's disciples." (Pope Francis)

As we start this new week, let us allow the Holy Spirit to lead us to a deeper and profound encounter with our Lord. The Holy Spirit is always and forever involved in our daily life, and thus, we can depend on Him to help us to become faithful Christians living according to Jesus' values and teachings.

Holy Spirit, may my heart be open to you so that I can be open to live my life for Jesus!

Questions for reflection:

- 1) Do I know and love the Holy Spirit?
- 2) Is He involved in my daily life?