

# **PRAYER FOR LIVING**

**DAILY REFLECTIONS FOR  
LITURGICAL YEAR B~OCTOBER**

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# Prayer for Living Year B

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**Friday, 1<sup>st</sup> October, St. Therese of the Child Jesus**  
**Isaiah 66:10-14, Matthew 18:1-5**

*The disciples came to Jesus and said, 'Who is the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven?' So he called a little child to him whom he set among them. Then he said, 'In truth I tell you, unless you change and become like little children you will never enter the kingdom of Heaven. And so, the one who makes himself as little as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven. 'Anyone who welcomes one little child like this in my name welcomes me.'*

My vocation is love

Today, as we celebrate the Feast of St. Therese of the Child Jesus, we remember her words: *"Charity gave me the key to my vocation. My vocation is love! I will be love.... I remember that the smallest act of love is more...than every other work put together.... The only way I can prove my love is by scattering flowers and these flowers are every little sacrifice, every glance and word, and the doing of the least of actions for love."* (From the "Story of a Soul" – the Autobiography of the Little Flower). St. Therese is an example of what Jesus meant when He told His disciples that they needed to become like little children. She, recognising herself as a child of God, desired solely to please God the Father by doing small and simple acts but with great love.

Today, we are called to walk the same path of St. Therese. Let us put aside our self-centred ways, place God at the centre of our lives, and do everything embellished in love.

**Question for reflection:**

How can I do simple acts of love to those around me?

**Saturday, 2<sup>nd</sup> October, The Holy Guardian Angels.**  
**Exodus 23:20-23, Matthew 18:1-5, 10**

*The disciples came to Jesus and said, 'Who is the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven?' So he called a little child to him whom he set among them. Then he said, 'In truth I tell you, unless you change and become like little children you will never enter the kingdom of Heaven. And so, the one who makes himself as little as this little child is the*

*greatest in the kingdom of Heaven. Anyone who welcomes one little child like this in my name welcomes me. See that you never despise any of these little ones, for I tell you that their angels in heaven are continually in the presence of my Father in heaven.'*

### God walks with us and guards us

In today's first reading from the book of Exodus, God told the people, "*I myself will send an angel before you to guard you as you go...*". This reveals the tenderness of God's love for His people and for all of us. He never lets us walk alone in the ups and downs of life because His presence goes with us. Therefore, we need to place our confidence in God and allow Him to be our daily companion.

In the gospel, the disciples wanted to know who was the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, and this question revealed their inner desire to be powerful and important. Jesus called a child to Him and told His disciples that they needed to be like that child to enter the kingdom of heaven. For Jesus, true greatness is to live depending on God and trusting in His loving providence. Let us not allow pride to lead us to regard ourselves as self-sufficiency but to have this daily child-like simplicity and constantly ask God for help and guidance.

### **Question for question:**

Am I attentive to God's presence in me and around me?

### **Sunday, 3<sup>rd</sup> October, 27<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time.**

#### **Genesis 2:18-24, Hebrews 2:9-11, Mark 10:2-16**

*Some Pharisees approached Jesus and asked, 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?' They were putting him to the test. He answered them, 'What did Moses command you?' They replied, 'Moses allowed us to draw up a writ of dismissal in cases of divorce.' Then Jesus said to them, 'It was because you were so hard hearted that he wrote this commandment for you. But from the beginning of creation he made them male and female. This is why a man leaves his father and mother, and the two become one flesh. They are no longer two, therefore, but one flesh. So then, what God has united, human beings must not divide.' Back in the house the disciples questioned him again about this, and he said to them, 'Whoever divorces his wife and marries another is guilty of*

*adultery against her. And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another she is guilty of adultery too.' People were bringing little children to him, for him to touch them. The disciples scolded them, but when Jesus saw this he was indignant and said to them, 'Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. In truth I tell you, anyone who does not welcome the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.' Then he embraced them, laid his hands on them and gave them his blessing.*

### Everyone has a place in Jesus' heart

*"What God joined together, let no human separate".* Jesus said these words because He disagreed with the way men in the Jewish patriarchal society treated women. In His time, men were entitled to divorce their wives for any reason. Thus, Jesus wanted to protect women's rights because many of these divorced women suffered from destitution. They were regarded as nobodies, like the little children in the second part of the gospel.

Jesus' disciples sent the children away from Him because they were not significant in their eyes. Yet, Jesus welcomed the little ones because they deserved His attention and love. What is the message for us today? In Jesus' heart, there is always a space for the broken, the vulnerable, the rejected, the ones at risk. He invites us not to reject anybody because each person is eternally loved by God. Let us build a welcoming community where each person is accepted, especially the weak and marginalised.

### **Question for reflection:**

Am I open to see people through the eyes of Jesus?

### **Monday, 4<sup>th</sup> October, St. Francis of Assisi.**

#### **Jonah 1:1-2, 1, 11, Luke 10:25-37**

*There was a lawyer stood up and, to test him, asked, 'Master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?' He said to him, 'What is written in the Law? What is your reading of it?' He replied, 'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbour as yourself.' Jesus said to him, 'You have answered right, do this and life is yours.' But the man was anxious to*

*justify himself and said to Jesus, 'And who is my neighbour?' In answer Jesus said, 'A man was once on his way down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell into the hands of bandits; they stripped him, beat him and then made off, leaving him half dead. Now a priest happened to be travelling down the same road, but when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. In the same way a Levite who came to the place saw him, and passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan traveller who came on him was moved with compassion when he saw him. He went up to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them. He then lifted him onto his own mount and took him to an inn and looked after him. Next day, he took out two denarii and handed them to the innkeeper and said, "Look after him, and on my way back I will make good any extra expense you have." Which of these three, do you think, proved himself a neighbour to the man who fell into the bandits' hands?' He replied, 'The one who showed pity towards him.' Jesus said to him, 'Go, and do the same yourself.'*

### Go, love and make a difference

*"...they stripped him, beat him and then made off, leaving him half-dead."* The phrase "half-dead" signifies being extremely weak and tired. There are moments in life that we too, like the man in today's gospel who was beaten and left by the roadside, feel half-dead, tired and with little energy. Many of us feel overwhelmed with the Covid-19 pandemic as we witness people getting infected, new regulations being implemented, etc. It seems that as soon as we take one step forward, we then take two steps back. As we pray with the gospel passage, we ask Jesus for the faith to recognise His presence, who draws close to us in our tiredness and brokenness and takes care of us. He is our Good Samaritan who never walks away from us but comes to give us life.

*"Go, and do the same yourself"*- This is Jesus' invitation to us. Experiencing His loving presence in our lives, we are called to go and do something good for others by giving our time, speaking words of encouragement, sending a message of hope, sharing our material resources, etc., to those in need. There is always an opportunity to be a Good Samaritan to someone, especially in this time of the pandemic.

### **Question for reflection:**

What is Jesus' message for me today?

**Tuesday, 5<sup>th</sup> October, 27<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time.**

**Jonah 3:1-10, Luke 10:38-42**

*Jesus came to a village, and a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. She had a sister called Mary, who sat down at the Lord's feet and listened to him speaking. Now Martha, who was distracted with all the serving, came to him and said, 'Lord, do you not care that my sister is leaving me to do the serving all by myself? Please tell her to help me.' But the Lord answered, 'Martha, Martha,' he said, 'you worry and fret about so many things, and yet few are needed, indeed only one. It is Mary who has chosen the better part, and it is not to be taken from her.'*

Martha-Mary: Active and contemplative dimension of our Christian faith

In the gospel today, Martha invited Jesus to her house, and she started to work hard to make Him feel at home. She started doing so many things that she felt tired and overwhelmed. Then, casting her glance to her sister, Mary, she felt angry that she was left alone to do everything by herself while Mary was sitting at Jesus' feet and listening to Him. It seemed unfair to Martha and all that she did when Jesus mentioned that Mary had chosen the better part. What is the message of Jesus to Martha and us today?

The work that we do for Jesus must be grounded in our friendship with Jesus. Unfortunately, we tend to busy ourselves with doing things to the extent that we miss the essential, i.e., being with Jesus. Thus, we need to find a balance between active service and silent contemplation. May we not lose sight of what is important in life.

**Question for reflection:**

Have I been so busy working for God that I forget to be with Him?

**Wednesday, 6<sup>th</sup> October, St. Bruno.**

**Jonah 4:1-11, Luke 11:1-4**

*Once Jesus was in a certain place praying, and when he had finished, one of his disciples said, 'Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.' He said to them, 'When you pray, this is what to say: Father, may your name be held holy, your kingdom come; give us each day our*

*daily bread, and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive each one who is in debt to us. And do not put us to the test.'*

### Father, I pray with trust

In today's gospel, Jesus' disciples asked Him to teach them how to pray. The first thing that Jesus taught the disciples was to call God, "Father", "Abba" because this was the tender manner that He addressed God. By doing so, Jesus wanted His disciples to experience themselves as God's children and to pray with loving trust in the beloved Father.

When we pray the "Our Father" prayer, we need to be aware that we call God "Father", the word that opens our hearts to trust Him with our desires and needs. We pray with trust as we ask God for our daily bread to physically nourish ourselves and our loved ones and our daily bread of inner strength and peace to journey through the challenges of each day. We confidently ask God to forgive us and also recognise the need to have a forgiving heart that forgives others when they disappoint us. Lastly, we humbly ask Him to guide us to walk in the path of truth and love.

### **Question for reflection:**

What does the "Our Father" prayer mean to me?

### **Thursday, 7<sup>th</sup> October, Our Lady of the Rosary.**

#### **Acts 1:12-14, 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, you who enjoy God's favor! 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. Look! You are to conceive in your womb 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 have no knowledge of man?' The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, 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. And I tell you this too: your cousin Elizabeth also, in her old age, has conceived a son, and she whom people called barren is now in her sixth month, for nothing is impossible to God.' Mary said, 'You see before you the Lord's servant, let it happen to me as you have said.' And the angel left her.*

You are favoured. God is with you.

In the today's passage, Angel Gabriel's first words to Mary was "...*you who enjoyed God's favour! The Lord is with you*". As we contemplate Mary's life, we see a woman who suffered greatly. She endured the judgemental stares of those around her with her pregnancy outside of marriage. Later, she went with Joseph and had to give birth to her baby in the stable. Together with Joseph and baby Jesus, she fled to Egypt as political refugees to escape the threats of Herod. In the end, she looked at her innocent son as He died a criminal's death. Was she truly "favoured", blessed by God?

Being loved and favoured by God does not mean that we will have a life without sickness, problems, failures, etc. Let Mother Mary guide us to see beyond our external changing circumstances of life, even beyond hardships, and go deeper within ourselves and perceive God's constant presence with us. Thus, like Mary, we enjoy God's favour because He is with us. His presence gives us the inner strength to live with peace and hope

**Question for reflection:**

What is my response to the reality that I am favoured, blessed and loved by God?

**Friday, 8<sup>th</sup> October, 27<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time.**

**Joel 1:13-15, 2:1-2, Luke 11:15-26**

*When Jesus had cast out a devil, some of the people said, 'It is through Beelzebul, the prince of devils, that he drives devils out.' Others asked him, as a test, for a sign from heaven; but, knowing what they were thinking, he said to them, 'Any kingdom which is divided against itself is heading for ruin, and house collapses against house. So, too, with Satan: if he is divided against himself, how can his kingdom last? - since you claim that it is through Beelzebul that I drive devils out. Now if it is through*

*Beelzebul that I drive devils out, through whom do your own sons drive them out? They shall be your judges, then. But if it is through the finger of God that I drive devils out, then the kingdom of God has indeed caught you unawares. So long as a strong man fully armed guards his own home, his goods are undisturbed; but when someone stronger than himself attacks and defeats him, the stronger man takes away all the weapons he relied on and shares out his spoil. Anyone who is not with me is against me; and anyone who does not gather in with me throws away. When an unclean spirit goes out of someone it wanders through waterless country looking for a place to rest, and not finding one it says, "I will go back to the home I came from." But on arrival, finding it swept and tidied, it then goes off and brings seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and set up house there, and so that person ends up worse off than before.'*

### The finger of God

*"Jesus went through Galilee...proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the peoples"* (Matthew 4:23). Jesus, through His words and actions, revealed a God who suffered with those who were in pain and desired to bring healing and liberation to them. Yet, some people asked for a sign from Jesus to prove that God was working in and through Him. They could not see the good that Jesus was doing because of their hardness of heart. Jesus defended Himself by pointing out that it was by the "*finger of God*" that He did what He did. The "*finger of God*" symbolises God's power that works to liberate people from the evil of suffering and injustice.

Today's gospel reminds us that we must not be blind to the good in people. The "*finger of God*" continues to be at work when we choose to be His instruments to do good, to alleviate the suffering of others and work for a more liberated life for our brothers and sisters. May we rejoice in God's presence in and among us and give thanks for the good that He is doing.

### **Question for reflection:**

How can I be an instrument of God today?

**Saturday, 9<sup>th</sup> October, SS. Denis and Companions, St. John Leonardi.**

**Joel 4:12-21, Luke 11:27-28**

*As Jesus was speaking, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said, 'Blessed the womb that bore you and the breasts that fed you!' But he replied, 'More blessed still are those who hear the word of God and keep it!'*

### True blessing

A nameless woman in the crowd was so taken up by Jesus that she, most likely a mother herself, recognised that Jesus' mother was a blessed woman to have such a son. Jesus immediately said to her, "*More blessed still are those who hear the word of God and keep it!*". Jesus pronounced a greater blessing on His disciples, on all of us who "*hear the word of God and keep it*". We are blessed, happy when we listen and obey what God tells us. This is true discipleship.

By saying this, Jesus emphasised the source of Mary's blessedness. She was blessed not because she was the physical mother of Jesus, but because she heard God's word, kept it in her heart and lived it out in her life. We are all called to open the ears of our hearts to hear God's word and live our lives according to it. May Mother Mary, the model disciple of Jesus, help us in this time of prayer so that we can be disciples of the Word.

### **Question for reflection:**

What does Jesus' reply to the woman say to me?

**Sunday, 10<sup>th</sup> October, 28<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time.**

**Wisdom 7:7-11, Hebrews 4:12-13, Mark 10:17-30**

*Jesus was setting out on a journey when a man ran up, knelt before him and put this question to him, 'Good master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?' Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: You shall not kill; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not give false witness; You shall not defraud; Honour your father and mother.' And he said to him, 'Master, I have kept all these since my earliest days.' Jesus looked steadily at him and he was filled with love for him, and he*

*said, 'You need to do one thing more. Go and sell what you own and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.' But his face fell at these words and he went away sad, for he was a man of great wealth. Jesus looked round and said to his disciples, 'How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!' The disciples were astounded by these words, but Jesus insisted, 'My children,' he said to them, 'how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for someone rich to enter the kingdom of God.' They were more astonished than ever, saying to one another, 'In that case, who can be saved?' Jesus gazed at them and said, 'By human resources it is impossible, but not for God: because for God everything is possible.' Peter took this up. 'Look,' he said to him, 'we have left everything and followed you.' Jesus said, 'In truth I tell you, there is no one who has left house, brothers, sisters, mother, father, children or land for my sake and for the sake of the gospel who will not receive a hundred times as much, houses, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and land -- and persecutions too -- now in this present time and, in the world to come, eternal life.'*

### What must I do to inherit eternal life?

Today's gospel challenges us to look deep within ourselves and reveal what is important for us. The man, who went up to Jesus, wanted to know what He had to do to get eternal life, to have the life that only God could give. Jesus first presented this man with the basic requirement, i.e. the Ten commandments, but he wanted more. Jesus then went another step beyond and told him to sell everything and give his money to the poor. This was the one thing that the man could not do, i.e. to let go of his attachment to his earthly treasure to gain a greater treasure.

What must you do to have fullness of life? We need to be aware that our material possessions and wealth can sometimes pull us back from living an authentic Christian life. He invites us to be free from possessing more to loving more. It is by helping the poor, giving our time to be with a lonely neighbour, sharing a story with a child, etc. that we enter into eternal life.

### **Question for reflection:**

What is holding me back from a deeper relationship with God?

**Monday, 11<sup>th</sup> October, St. John XXIII.**

**Romans 1:1-7, Luke 11:29-32**

*The crowds got even bigger and Jesus addressed them, 'This is an evil generation; it is asking for a sign. The only sign it will be given is the sign of Jonah. For just as Jonah became a sign to the people of Nineveh, so will the Son of man be a sign to this generation. On Judgement Day the Queen of the South will stand up against the people of this generation and be their condemnation, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, look, there is something greater than Solomon here. On Judgement Day the men of Nineveh will appear against this generation and be its condemnation, because when Jonah preached they repented; and, look, there is something greater than Jonah here.'*

Jesus, the sign of all signs

*'...there is something greater than Solomon here... there is something greater than Jonah here.'* In the gospel, Jesus pointed out that He was greater than King Solomon and the Prophet Jonah. He is indeed greater than any person in the Old and New Testament because Jesus is the Incarnated Word of God, the Son of God. God has become flesh in Him. When we meet the person of Jesus, we see God in His words, His actions, in His whole life.

The people in today's passage asked for a sign because they failed to recognise the greatest sign in their midst, Jesus Himself. Therefore, as we prayerfully read the passage, let us allow Jesus to open the eyes of our faith to see Him present in us, in the Scripture, in the Eucharist, in others. Let us listen to His call to encounter Him, who is the greatest sign of God's love for us.

**Question for reflection:**

Do I perceive Jesus' presence in my daily life?

**Tuesday, 12<sup>th</sup> October, 28<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time.**

**Romans 1:16-25, Luke 11:37-41**

*Jesus had just finished speaking when a Pharisee invited him to dine at his house. He went in and sat down at table. The Pharisee saw this and was surprised that he had not first washed before the meal. But the Lord*

*said to him, 'You Pharisees! You clean the outside of cup and plate, while inside yourselves you are filled with extortion and wickedness. Fools! Did not he who made the outside make the inside too? Instead, give alms from what you have and, look, everything will be clean for you.'*

### To focus on what really matters

A Pharisee invited Jesus to have a meal at his house. Jesus noticed the reaction of the Pharisee regarding Him not following the external ritual cleanliness before the meal and reproached His host for being preoccupied with the outward observances rather than what was within the hearts of people.

Today, Jesus reminds us once again that what truly matters is the inner life of each person. Often, there is a Pharisee who lives in each one of us who focuses on the non-essentials. Thus, Jesus points us back to what is essential, i.e., having a clean heart and living a life pleasing to God. One thing that pleases God is to give alms, as mentioned by Jesus in today's gospel. Giving alms is more than providing financial help. It is the giving of ourselves, i.e. our time, our talents, etc., to serve those in need. This is the one thing that we must never neglect if we sincerely want to live an authentic Christian life.

### **Question for reflection:**

How am I living my faith?

### **Wednesday, 13<sup>th</sup> October, 28<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time.**

#### **Romans 2:1-11, Luke 11:42-46**

*The Lord said to the Pharisees: 'Alas for you Pharisees, because you pay your tithe of mint and rue and all sorts of garden herbs and neglect justice and the love of God! These you should have practised, without neglecting the others. Alas for you Pharisees, because you like to take the seats of honour in the synagogues and to be greeted respectfully in the market squares! Alas for you, because you are like the unmarked tombs that people walk on without knowing it!' A lawyer then spoke up. 'Master,' he said, 'when you speak like this you insult us too.' But he said, 'Alas for you lawyers as well, because you load on people burdens that are unendurable, burdens that you yourselves do not touch with your fingertips.'*

### To glorify God in all that we do and say

In today's gospel, Jesus criticised the Pharisees for taking the seats of honour and desire to be respected by others. They desired to be regarded as great in the sight of those around them. We too might want people to honour us. Today, Jesus desires to bring us to the deeper truth that our lives are meant to bring honour, not to ourselves, but God. We bring honour to God when we invest our time, talents and energy to do good to others.

At the end of the passage, Jesus was also critical to the lawyers who were the experts in Jewish laws. He accused them of placing heavy burdens on the people by their rigid way of interpreting the Law. Jesus revealed God as a Father of all who desires all people to have the fullness of life. May we, through our words and actions, show compassion by easing the burdens of others.

### **Questions for reflection:**

In my words and actions, do I bring honour to God? Do I place heavy burdens on others in the family, at work, in the parish?

### **Thursday, 14<sup>th</sup> October, St. Callistus I.**

#### **Romans 3:21-30, Luke 11:47-54**

*Jesus said: 'Alas for you because you build tombs for the prophets, the people your ancestors killed! In this way you both witness to what your ancestors did and approve it; they did the killing, you do the building. 'And that is why the Wisdom of God said, "I will send them prophets and apostles; some they will slaughter and persecute, so that this generation will have to answer for every prophet's blood that has been shed since the foundation of the world, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the Temple." Yes, I tell you, this generation will have to answer for it all. Alas for you lawyers who have taken away the key of knowledge! You have not gone in yourselves and have prevented others from going in who wanted to.' When he left there, the scribes and the Pharisees began a furious attack on him and tried to force answers from him on innumerable questions, lying in wait to catch him out in something he might say.*

### Call to be faith influencer

In today's gospel, Jesus was angry with the religious leaders of His time because their legalism and hypocrisy prevented others from entering the Kingdom of God. Thus, Jesus said to them, "*You have not gone in yourselves and have prevented others from going in who wanted to*". These religious leaders were not interested in going to God themselves, and thus, they became obstacles because they were not leading people to know and encounter God.

What is the key message that we could take for our own lives? Jesus calls us to seek God sincerely and to grow in our relationship with Him so that we allow Him to shape our values, our options, our actions. This is essential because the way we live our Christian faith can influence our family members, friends, relatives, colleagues, etc. to come to know and love God more. We can lead people to God or direct them to go away from Him.

### **Question for reflection:**

Would my family members, friends, and those I work with look at how I live my Christian faith and be attracted to God?

### **Friday, 15<sup>th</sup> October, St. Teresa of Jesus.**

#### **Romans 4:1-8, Luke 12:1-7**

*Meanwhile the people had gathered in their thousands so that they were treading on one another. And Jesus began to speak, first of all to his disciples. 'Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees -- their hypocrisy. Everything now covered up will be uncovered, and everything now hidden will be made clear. For this reason, whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight, and what you have whispered in hidden places will be proclaimed from the housetops. To you my friends I say: Do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. I will tell you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has the power to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, he is the one to fear. Can you not buy five sparrows for two pennies? And yet not one is forgotten in God's sight. Why, every hair on your head has been counted. There is no need to be afraid: you are worth more than many sparrows.'*

## God cares

Jesus reveals God as one who cares. God cares for all His creation, even the seemingly insignificant sparrows. Thus, we must not forget that God cares for us too. *“Every hair on your head has been counted”*- God pays loving attention to every detail about our lives. He is our Father who is not indifferent to us but is involved in our lives, even in our suffering and pain.

*“Yes, I tell you, he is the one to fear.”* Jesus tells us today that we have to fear God. However, this does not mean that we need to be afraid of Him. Pope Francis once said, *“Fear of the Lord...is the gift of the Holy Spirit through whom we are reminded of how small we are before God and of his love and that our good lies in humble, respectful and trusting self-abandonment into his hands. This is fear of the Lord: abandonment in the goodness of our Father who loves us so much”* (Pope Francis, 11 June 2014). As His children, let us entrust ourselves to God our Father, who cares for us.

### **Question for reflection:**

Have I experienced God’s personal love and care for me?

### **Saturday, 16<sup>th</sup> October, St. Hedwig, St. Margaret Mary Alacoque.**

#### **Romans 4:13,16-18, Luke 12:8-12**

*Jesus said to his disciples: 'I tell you, if anyone openly declares himself for me in the presence of human beings, the Son of man will declare himself for him in the presence of God's angels. But anyone who disowns me in the presence of human beings will be disowned in the presence of God's angels. Everyone who says a word against the Son of man will be forgiven, but no one who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will be forgiven. When they take you before synagogues and magistrates and authorities, do not worry about how to defend yourselves or what to say, because when the time comes, the Holy Spirit will teach you what you should say.'*

### Faith is not just a personal matter

Are we witnessing publicly to Jesus in public? Yes, our faith is between God and I. However, although our faith is personal, it is never private. Jesus said in today’s gospel, *“...if anyone openly declares himself for*

*me in the presence of human beings...”, and this shows that we, as Christians, are called not to live our faith behind closed doors. Our personal relationship with Jesus must lead us to bear witness to Him in front of others. We let our light of faith shine when we live a life of love by speaking the truth to others, being honest in our dealings with others, being in solidarity with those suffering injustice, extending a helping hand to the elderly and the weak, etc. It is not easy because to bear witness to Christ implies going against the currents of the world, and we might even face hostility for being Christians.*

At the end of the gospel, Jesus assured the disciples and us, “*because when the time comes, the Holy Spirit will teach you what you should say*”. Jesus gives us the Holy Spirit to guide us in what we should say and do. When we witness to Christ, we are never alone because the Holy Spirit will work in us and through us.

**Question for reflection:**

Do I allow my relationship with Jesus to affect how I think, act, work, speak?

**Sunday, 17<sup>th</sup> October, 29<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Mission Sunday.**

**Isaiah 53:10-11, Hebrews 4:14-16, Mark 10:35-45**

*James and John, the sons of Zebedee, approached Jesus. 'Master,' they said to him, 'We want you to do us a favour.' He said to them, 'What is it you want me to do for you?' They said to him, 'Allow us to sit one at your right hand and the other at your left in your glory.' But Jesus said to them, 'You do not know what you are asking. Can you drink the cup that I shall drink, or be baptised with the baptism with which I shall be baptised?' They replied, 'We can.' Jesus said to them, 'The cup that I shall drink you shall drink, and with the baptism with which I shall be baptised you shall be baptised, but as for seats at my right hand or my left, these are not mine to grant; they belong to those to whom they have been allotted.' When the other ten heard this they began to feel indignant with James and John, so Jesus called them to him and said to them, 'You know that among the gentiles those they call their rulers lord it over them, and their great men make their authority felt. Among you this is not to happen. No; anyone who wants to become great among you must be your servant,*

*and anyone who wants to be first among you must be slave to all. For the Son of man himself came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.'*

### To be in a state of mission

*"Today too Jesus needs hearts capable of experiencing vocation as a true love story that urges them to go forth to the peripheries of our world as messengers and agents of compassion. He addresses this call to everyone, and in different ways... To be on mission is to be willing to think as Christ does..."* (Message for World Mission Sunday 2021, Pope Francis). By virtue of our baptism, all of us have a part to play in the mission of Christ. He calls us today to the mission of being servants to others.

The call to be a servant to all implies dying to our prideful desire to be first and great. In the gospel passage, James and John wanted to secure honour for themselves. We too tend to harbour the desire to be admired, honoured and thus, we pursue privileged positions, even in Church communities and ministries. Yet, Jesus sends us on a mission to serve selflessly in the same way He did. On this mission Sunday, let us commit ourselves to the mission that Jesus entrusts to us.

### **Questions for reflection:**

As I read the gospel passage, which aspect challenges me in a particular way? Why?

### **Monday, 18<sup>th</sup> October, St. Luke, Evangelist.**

#### **2 Timothy 4:10-17, Luke 10:1-9**

*The Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them out ahead of him in pairs, to all the towns and places he himself would be visiting. And he said to them, 'The harvest is rich but the labourers are few, so ask the Lord of the harvest to send labourers to do his harvesting. Start off now, but look, I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. Take no purse with you, no haversack, no sandals. Salute no one on the road. Whatever house you enter, let your first words be, "Peace to this house!" And if a man of peace lives there, your peace will go and rest on him; if not, it will come back to you. Stay in the same house, taking what food and drink they have to offer, for the labourer deserves his wages; do not*

*move from house to house. Whenever you go into a town where they make you welcome, eat what is put before you. Cure those in it who are sick, and say, "The kingdom of God is very near to you."*

### To be an ambassador of peace

Jesus calls and sends each one of us out to preach His message of love and peace. Through our words and actions, we are called to tell others that the Kingdom of God is near, i.e. God is neither far away from us nor indifferent to what we are living. In this pandemic, people need to hear this message of hope and experience the closeness of God in these moments of uncertainty.

*"Whatever house you enter, let your first words be, "Peace to this house!".* Jesus instructed His disciples to bring a blessing of peace to each house. In the same way, He continues to call us to offer peace to each place we go and each person we encounter. When Jesus says to us, "Go!", we might think we are sent to faraway places to do mission work. However, let us not forget that mission begins at home, with those closest to us, i.e. our family, friends, neighbours, and parish communities. Jesus sends us to them. It is to them that we bring the message of peace.

### **Question for reflection:**

Do I live my life as a person on mission?

**Tuesday, 19<sup>th</sup> October, SS John de Brébeuf and Issac Jogues, St. Paul of the Cross.**

### **Romans 5: 12, 15, 17-21, Luke 12: 35-38**

*Jesus said to his disciples, 'See that you have your belts done up and your lamps lit. Be like people waiting for their master to return from the wedding feast, ready to open the door as soon as he comes and knocks. Blessed those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes. In truth I tell you, he will do up his belt, sit them down at table and wait on them. It may be in the second watch that he comes, or in the third, but blessed are those servants if he finds them ready.'*

*"Be like people waiting for their master to return from the wedding feast, ready to open the door as soon as he comes and knocks".* Who is this

master? The master is Jesus Himself. We know that our life here on earth will end one day, and we will then meet Him face-to-face. We do not know when that day will be, but we need to live in a state of readiness by living a life of love and service. Thus, let us reflect and ask ourselves honestly: Is my belt done up for the journey to meet Jesus, my Master, and my lamp lit to welcome and receive Him when He comes at the hour of my death?

We know that Jesus does not come to us at the end of our lives, but He comes to us every single day. Jesus, our Master, is God who is with us. Each day as we place ourselves at the service of others, Jesus is with us to serve us by nourishing us with the daily bread of His peace and strength. Let us not be complacent or half-hearted in living our Christian life.

**Question for reflection:**

Am I aware of Jesus' presence and ready to welcome Him into my life?

**Wednesday, 20<sup>th</sup> October, 29<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time.**

**Romans 6:12-18, Luke 12:39-48**

*Jesus said to his disciples: "You may be quite sure of this, that if the householder had known at what time the burglar would come, he would not have let anyone break through the wall of his house. You too must stand ready, because the Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect." Peter said, 'Lord, do you mean this parable for us, or for everyone?' The Lord replied, 'Who, then, is the wise and trustworthy steward whom the master will place over his household to give them at the proper time their allowance of food? Blessed that servant if his master's arrival finds him doing exactly that. I tell you truly, he will put him in charge of everything that he owns. But if the servant says to himself, "My master is taking his time coming," and sets about beating the menservants and the servant-girls, and eating and drinking and getting drunk, his master will come on a day he does not expect and at an hour he does not know. The master will cut him off and send him to the same fate as the unfaithful. The servant who knows what his master wants, but has got nothing ready and done nothing in accord with those wishes, will be given a great many strokes of the lash. The one who did not know, but has acted in such a way that he deserves a beating, will*

*be given fewer strokes. When someone is given a great deal, a great deal will be demanded of that person; when someone is entrusted with a great deal, of that person even more will be expected.”*

### Jesus comes

“...*the Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect*”. Many of us tend to associate this statement made by Jesus to the hour of our death, that unexpected moment when we take our final breath. He also comes to us in our life too. In our daily life, Jesus comes to us through events and people when we least expect Him. For example, we sense His gentle push to reach out to someone in need, or we perceive His presence through the words of a friend, etc. We need to be open to Jesus' presence.

*“When someone is given a great deal, a great deal will be demanded of that person...”* God has indeed given us “*a great deal*”. The greatest gift is faith in Him. We need to responsibly nurture our faith and use it to enrich the lives of others. Thus, when Jesus comes to us at the end of our lives, we can, like Paul, be able to say, “*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith*” (2 Timothy 4:7).

### **Question for reflection:**

Do I live my life in such a way that I am not afraid of Jesus' coming at the end of my life?

### **Thursday, 21<sup>st</sup> October, 29<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time.**

#### **Romans 6:19-23, Luke 12:49-53**

*Jesus said to his disciples: 'I have come to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were blazing already! There is a baptism I must still receive, and what constraint I am under until it is completed! Do you suppose that I am here to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. For from now on, a household of five will be divided: three against two and two against three; father opposed to son, son to father, mother to daughter, daughter to mother, mother-in-law to daughter-in-law, daughter-in-law to mother-in-law.'*

## Fire and division

The fire that Jesus spoke about in today's gospel is the fire of God's love that brings warmth and comfort as well as burns away all that is not leading us to live an honest and loving life. The fire of God's love is also the fuel that will move and propel us towards others and work for their good, especially for the poor and suffering. With the blazing fire of God's love within, Jesus lived His life and mission with a passion to the point that He died on the cross because some people felt threatened by Him.

Jesus calls us to follow Him by allowing the blazing fire of God's love to always burn within us. Some will be attracted to it, and others will resist it. When we choose to live a life of love, justice and solidarity, we might face anger, disagreement and even rejection by our family members and friends. Are we ready to face the divisions caused by our following of Jesus? May we experience the fire of God's love in our hearts today.

### **Question for reflection:**

Do I allow the fire of God's love within me to guide me in living a life of love?

### **Friday, 22<sup>nd</sup> October, 29<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time.**

#### **Romans 7: 18-25, Luke 12:54-59**

*Jesus said to the crowds, 'When you see a cloud looming up in the west you say at once that rain is coming, and so it does. And when the wind is from the south you say it's going to be hot, and it is. Hypocrites! You know how to interpret the face of the earth and the sky. How is it you do not know how to interpret these times? Why not judge for yourselves what is upright? For example: when you are going to court with your opponent, make an effort to settle with him on the way, or he may drag you before the judge and the judge hand you over to the officer and the officer have you thrown into prison. I tell you, you will not get out till you have paid the very last penny.'*

### Seeing God in everthing

In today's gospel, Jesus recognised that His listeners knew how to watch the sky and interpret the weather that they would face. However, He lamented that they failed to perceive and acknowledge the greatest sign

of God's presence in their midst. Due to their stubborn hearts, they could not recognise that God was acting in and through the person of Jesus.

Today, like the contemporaries of Jesus, we can look at the sky and predict whether it will be rainy or sunny. However, there are moments in life when we struggle to interpret the signs of times. In this Covid 19 pandemic, we look at what is happening around us, and we question: What is going on? When will it end? Where is God in all this? As people rooted in faith, we are called to be sure of one thing, i.e. God is with us and in us. He continues to be present in the Scripture, nature, people, events, etc. and thus, we are never alone. May we never lose sight of His presence in our midst and find the strength and hope that we need in Him.

**Question for reflection:**

Do I recognise the signs of God's presence today?

**Saturday, 23<sup>rd</sup> October, St. John of Capestrano.**

**Romans 8:1-11, Luke 13:1-9**

*Some people arrived and told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with that of their sacrifices. At this he said to them, 'Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than any others, that this should have happened to them? They were not, I tell you. No; but unless you repent you will all perish as they did. Or those eighteen on whom the tower at Siloam fell, killing them all? Do you suppose that they were more guilty than all the other people living in Jerusalem? They were not, I tell you. No; but unless you repent you will all perish as they did.' He told this parable, 'A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came looking for fruit on it but found none. He said to his vinedresser, "For three years now I have been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and finding none. Cut it down: why should it be taking up the ground?" "Sir," the man replied, "leave it one more year and give me time to dig round it and manure it: it may bear fruit next year; if not, then you can cut it down." '*

**God does not punish...He calls us to repent**

When people experience unexpected tragedy, many tend to regard them as punishments from God for sins. In today's gospel, some people told

Jesus that Pilate killed some Galilean worshippers. Jesus later brought up another unfortunate event of a tower that fell and killed eighteen people. Jesus knew that the people regarded those victims of tragedies as great sinners who were being punished by God. Jesus rejected such a simplistic notion.

The tragic events in life reveal that life is short and fragile. Jesus invites all of us to make use of the time we have to seek God and enter into deeper communion with Him. Repentance is nothing more than to take determined steps towards God and experience His loving presence once again. Jesus also spoke of the unfruitful fig tree. Instead of cutting it down as requested by the owner, the vinedresser said, "...leave it for one more year". God is like this vinedresser who never gives up on us but is always patient with us as we struggle with our faults and failings.

### **Question for reflection:**

Can I hear God's invitation to enter into a relationship of love?

### **Sunday, 24<sup>th</sup> October, 30<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time.**

#### **Jeremiah 31:7-9, Hebrews 5:1-6, Mark 10:46-52**

*As Jesus left Jericho with his disciples and a great crowd, Bartimaeus - that is, the son of Timaeus -- a blind beggar, was sitting at the side of the road. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout and cry out, 'Son of David, Jesus, have pity on me.' And many of them scolded him and told him to keep quiet, but he only shouted all the louder, 'Son of David, have pity on me.' Jesus stopped and said, 'Call him here.' So they called the blind man over. 'Courage,' they said, 'get up; he is calling you.' So throwing off his cloak, he jumped up and went to Jesus. Then Jesus spoke, 'What do you want me to do for you?' The blind man said to him, 'Rabbuni, let me see again.' Jesus said to him, 'Go; your faith has saved you.' And at once his sight returned and he followed him along the road.*

#### A beggar's unwavering faith

When Bartimaeus, the blind beggar, heard that Jesus was passing his way, he started to shout, "Son of David, Jesus, have pity on me". The people around him told him to be silent, but he shouted even louder. What made Bartimaeus persevere in calling out to Jesus? At the end of

the gospel, Jesus said to Bartimaeus, “Go; your faith has saved you”. His faith convinced him that Jesus could and would help him in his need. Jesus wants us to have an unwavering faith that keeps believing and trusting, even when life does not make sense, and we do not see what the future holds.

“Jesus stopped”. Jesus always stops because He is never indifferent to us in our need. Today, we listen to Jesus address us personally as He spoke to Bartimaeus, “What do you want me to do for you?”. In this time of prayer, let us express to Jesus what we truly need. Bartimaeus, after receiving his heart’s greatest desire, followed Jesus along the road as a disciple. Whenever we encounter Jesus and allow Him to touch our lives, He renews us to be with Him in the way of discipleship.

**Question for reflection:**

Do I have the faith of Bartimaeus?

**Monday, 25<sup>th</sup> October, 30<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time.**

**Romans 8:12-17, Luke 13:10-17**

*One Sabbath day Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues, and there before him was a woman who for eighteen years had been possessed by a spirit that crippled her; she was bent double and quite unable to stand upright. When Jesus saw her he called her over and said, 'Woman, you are freed from your disability,' and he laid his hands on her. And at once she straightened up, and she glorified God. But the president of the synagogue was indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, and he addressed all those present saying, 'There are six days when work is to be done. Come and be healed on one of those days and not on the Sabbath.' But the Lord answered him and said, 'Hypocrites! Is there one of you who does not untie his ox or his donkey from the manger on the Sabbath and take it out for watering? And this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan has held bound these eighteen years -- was it not right to untie this bond on the Sabbath day?' When he said this, all his adversaries were covered with confusion, and all the people were overjoyed at all the wonders he worked.*

The healing of the woman with a bent back

In today's gospel, Jesus saw a woman who was bent over for eighteen years. Without hesitation, He healed her by laying His hands on her. She immediately praised God. We might not be physically bent, but we often find ourselves bend over with burdens of responsibilities, worries, fears, remorse, sadness, etc. Thus, we find it hard to live life with joy and meaning. Jesus wants to liberate us from our burdens so that we can stand upright and face each day with new strength. He does it sometimes through a healing word from someone. Other times, He touches our lives with His presence in the Sacraments or the silence of prayer.

Instead of praising God, the synagogue president was upset with Jesus because He healed the woman on the Sabbath. Due to his self-righteousness, he failed to see God's work and life-giving presence in the synagogue that day. Today, let us be open to recognise that God's love goes beyond time and space, and that we can have the same compassionate heart as Jesus.

**Question for reflection:**

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

**Tuesday, 26<sup>th</sup> October, 30<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time.**

**Romans 8:18-25, Luke 13:18-21**

*Jesus said, 'What is the kingdom of God like? What shall I compare it with? It is like a mustard seed which a man took and threw into his garden: it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air sheltered in its branches.' Again he said, 'What shall I compare the kingdom of God with? It is like the yeast a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour till it was leavened all through.'*

The kingdom of God comes through the simple gestures of love

The mustard thrown into the ground, and the yeast mixed into the flour. These are seemingly insignificant acts, yet they produce significant outcomes. The mustard seed grew to become a tree where birds took shelter from its branches. The yeast made the dough rise that led it to become bread to satisfy the hunger of people. God's kingdom, is thus, compared to the mustard seed and the yeast. In the kingdom of God, a

small gesture of love can become something significant and life-giving because God works powerfully through them.

Our small and simple acts of kindness and service to someone can bear fruit beyond imagining. Each day, we have opportunities to make God's kingdom present here and now by our little acts of love.

**Question for reflection:**

Do I recognise that my simple and small acts of love are openings for God's kingdom to be present in the world today?

**Wednesday, 27<sup>th</sup> October, 30<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time.**

**Romans 8:26-30, Luke 13:22-30**

*Through towns and villages Jesus went teaching, making his way to Jerusalem. Someone said to him, 'Sir, will there be only a few saved?' He said to them, 'Try your hardest to enter by the narrow door, because, I tell you, many will try to enter and will not succeed. 'Once the master of the house has got up and locked the door, you may find yourself standing outside knocking on the door, saying, "Lord, open to us," but he will answer, "I do not know where you come from." Then you will start saying, "We once ate and drank in your company; you taught in our streets," but he will reply, "I do not know where you come from; away from me, all evil doers!" Then there will be weeping and grinding of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrown out. And people from east and west, from north and south, will come and sit down at the feast in the kingdom of God. Look, there are those now last who will be first, and those now first who will be last.'*

Through the narrow door

In today's gospel, someone asked Jesus, "Sir, will there be only a few saved?". Interestingly, Jesus did not answer his question because He was not concerned with numbers. Instead, He spoke about what really matters, i.e. to enter by the narrow door. What is the meaning of the narrow door? The narrow door is the door of love for God and our brothers and sisters, especially the vulnerable ones in society. To love God leads us to love others. Pope Francis said, "At the end of our life, we will be judged on love, that is, on our concrete commitment to love

*and to serve Jesus in our smallest and most needy brothers” (Angelus, November 2017).*

Are we then ready to enter into the narrow door of love and service? Are we committed to living the life of Jesus, which is a life for others? Today, Jesus calls us to follow Him and enter through the narrow door, where we will find joy and peace of being in union with God, here, now and forever.

**Question for reflection:**

What prevents me from entering through the narrow door?

**Thursday, 28<sup>th</sup> October, SS. Simon and Jude, Apostles.**

**Ephesians 2:19-22, Luke 6:12-19**

*Jesus went onto the mountain 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.*

The centrality of prayer

*“Jesus went onto the mountain to pray; and he spent the whole night in prayer to God”. Jesus’ relationship with God was central in His life. From this prayerful union with God, Jesus lived His mission. In today’s gospel, the time that Jesus spent on the mountain in prayer moved and led Him to choose the Twelve as well as to teach and heal great multitudes of people.*

Prayer has to take the center place in our lives. *“We are not made to run all the time, we have an inner life that cannot always be neglected” (Pope*

Francis). Often we are so caught up with our busy schedule that we forget to spend time with Jesus in prayer. Let us be determined to find space and time each day to seek solitude with Jesus. As we celebrate the feasts of SS Simon and Jude, let us ask St. Simon the zealot to give us a zealous heart to seek God above all and St. Jude the patron of hopeless cases to provide us with the determination to make time and space to be with Jesus.

**Question for reflection:**

Is prayer central and crucial in my life?

**Friday, 29<sup>th</sup> October, 30<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time.**

**Romans 9:1-5, Luke 14:1-6**

*Now on a Sabbath day Jesus had gone to share a meal in the house of one of the leading Pharisees; and they watched him closely. Now there in front of him was a man with dropsy, and Jesus addressed the lawyers and Pharisees with the words, 'Is it against the law to cure someone on the Sabbath, or not?' But they remained silent, so he took the man and cured him and sent him away. Then he said to them, 'Which of you here, if his son falls into a well, or his ox, will not pull him out on a Sabbath day without any hesitation?' And to this they could find no answer.*

The call to be other-centred

Jesus was the guest of one of the leading Pharisees in today's gospel. However, it was not a friendly meal because they were watching Him closely. A man with dropsy was there at the meal. Most likely, the Pharisees placed him there, not as a guest, but a bait to trap Jesus. What did Jesus do? Did He protect Himself by ignoring the sick man? Jesus was not indifferent but healed him. His main concern was always others, never Himself.

Today, Jesus invites us to be other-centred even if our acts of love and care for others incur opposition and rejection. This is the path of love that He calls us, His disciples, to walk. In this Covid-19 pandemic, let us continue to be other-centred by responding to those whose need is greater than ours.

**Question for reflection:**

What is Jesus' message for me today?

**Saturday, 30<sup>th</sup> October, 30<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time.****Romans 11:1-2, 11-12, 25-29, Luke 14:1, 7-11**

*Now on a Sabbath day Jesus had gone to share a meal in the house of one of the leading Pharisees; and they watched him closely. He then told the guests a parable, because he had noticed how they picked the places of honour. He said this, 'When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take your seat in the place of honour. A more distinguished person than you may have been invited, and the person who invited you both may come and say, "Give up your place to this man." And then, to your embarrassment, you will have to go and take the lowest place. No; when you are a guest, make your way to the lowest place and sit there, so that, when your host comes, he may say, "My friend, move up higher." Then, everyone with you at the table will see you honoured. For everyone who raises himself up will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be raised up.'*

**To follow Jesus' path of loving service**

In today's gospel, Jesus noticed that His fellow guests at the meal was concerned with being in the places of honour that expressed their inner desire to be recognised and honoured. He was disturbed by their self-centeredness and told them a parable which He ended by saying, "*For everyone who raises himself up will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be raised up*".

The world that we live in looks favourably on positions of importance and being popular. However, this is never the way of Jesus. His priority was never to seek honour and glory for Himself. Instead, He came to be a servant of all and took the path of humble service. Because of this, God was the one who exalted Him. Today, we are called to follow the path of Jesus by placing ourselves in the loving service of others.

**Question for reflection:**

What is Jesus calling me to?

**Sunday, 31<sup>st</sup> October, 31<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time.  
Deuteronomy 6:2-6, Hebrews 7:23-28, Mark 12:28-34**

*One of the scribes came up to Jesus and put a question to him, 'Which is the first of all the commandments?' Jesus replied, 'This is the first: Listen, Israel, the Lord our God is the one, only Lord, and you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: You must love your neighbour as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these.' The scribe said to him, 'Well spoken, Master; what you have said is true, that he is one and there is no other. To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and strength, and to love your neighbour as yourself, this is far more important than any burnt offering or sacrifice.' Jesus, seeing how wisely he had spoken, said, 'You are not far from the kingdom of God.' And after that no one dared to question him anymore.*

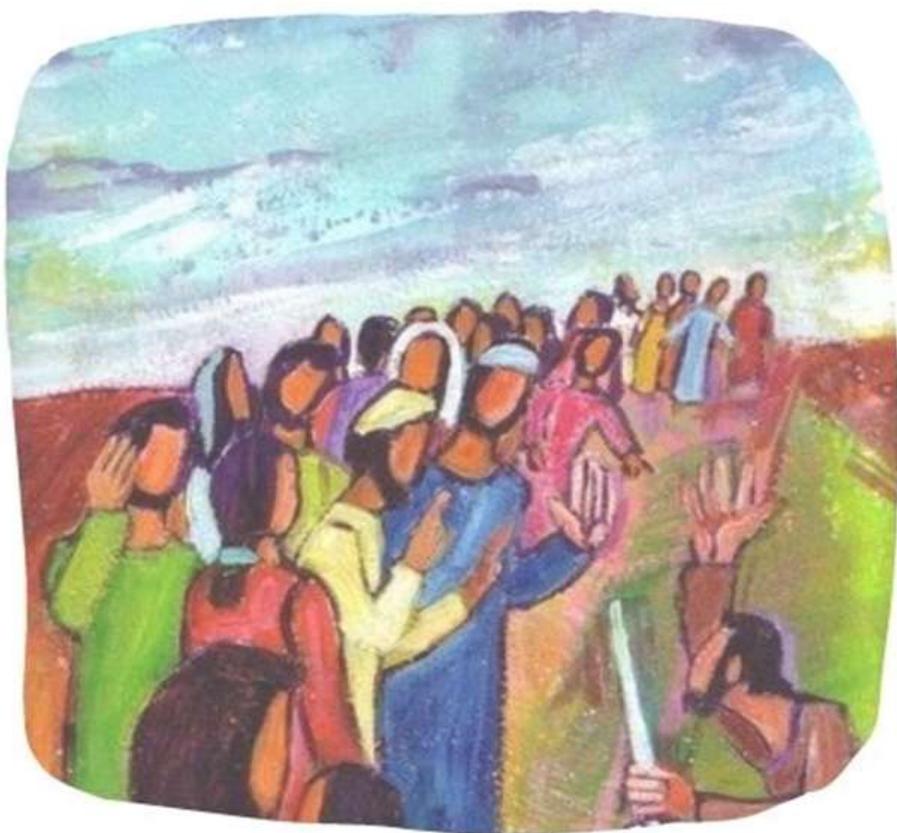
To love God, to love others

The scribe went up to Jesus and asked for the most important commandment. Jesus, however, replied by giving him two most important commandments. God's first commandment is to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. This means that God has to be the center of our lives and the object of our love. The second commandment is intimately linked to the first, i.e. we are called to love others as ourselves. We cannot love God without loving our neighbour. From this intense love relationship with God, we begin to love others with God's own faithful and unconditional love. We begin to commit ourselves to work for the good of others and place their well-being above our own.

The most important thing in life is to have a large heart that embraces God and others. In fact, love is what gives meaning and purpose to our lives. Therefore, let us ask the Holy Spirit to help us understand what it means to put love as the priority and to practice it in our daily life.

**Questions for reflection:**

Is the commandment to love God and others a priority for me? Why?



verbum dei