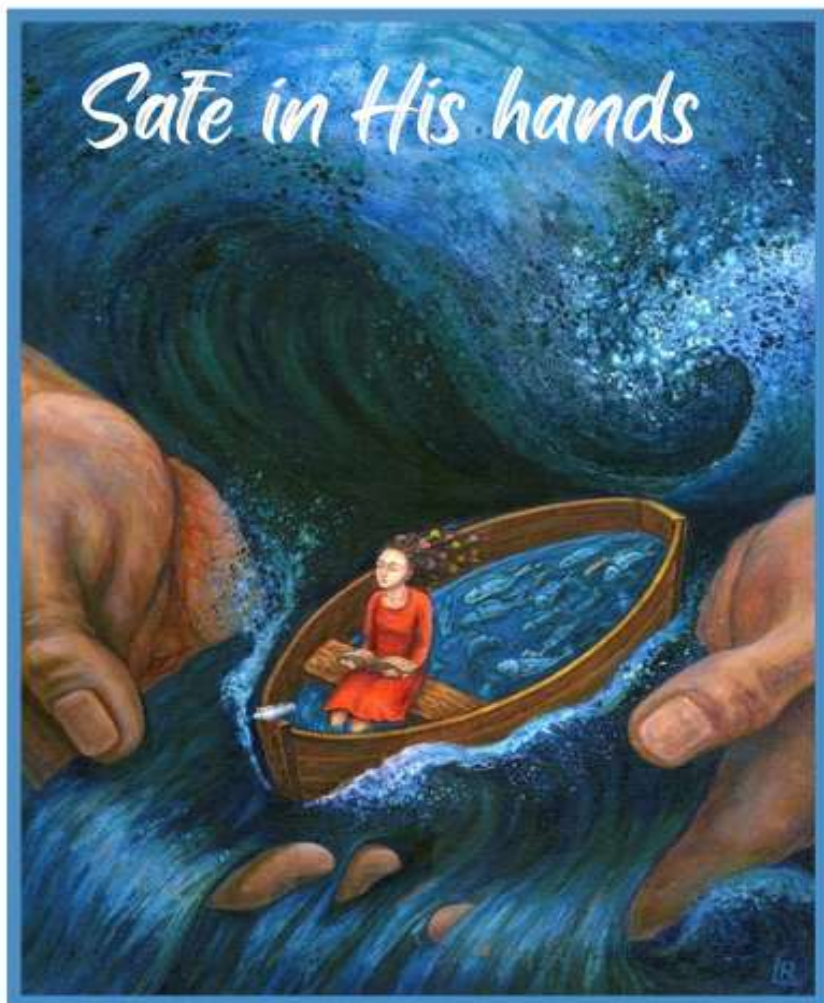


Safe in His hands



PRAYER FOR LIVING

DAILY REFLECTIONS FOR
LITURGICAL YEAR C~
JANUARY 2022

Sr. Sandra Seow

Prayer for Living Year C

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**Saturday, 1st January, Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God.
Numbers 6: 22-27, Galatians 4:4-7, Luke 2:16-21**

The shepherds hurried away and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. When they saw the child they repeated what they had been told about him, and everyone who heard it was astonished at what the shepherds said to them. As for Mary, she treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart. And the shepherds went back glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as they had been told. When the eighth day came and the child was to be circumcised, they gave him the name Jesus, the name the angel had given him before his conception.

Mary treasured and pondered these words in her heart

Today, we welcome the new year with the feast of the Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God. The gospel states that Mary “*treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart*”. What were these things that she treasured and pondered? Mary listened to the shepherds as they proclaimed with joy what the angel told them, “Do not be afraid. *Look, I bring you news of great joy, a joy to be shared by the whole people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord...*” (Luke 2:10-11). By treasuring and pondering over these words of God, she allowed them to fill her mind and heart with peace and strength.

At the start of this New Year, we are invited to enter into the process of contemplating and pondering. Often, we allow ourselves to be laden with anxious thoughts about the future, sad memories of the past, etc. Like Mary, let us fill our minds and hearts with God’s life-giving words and allow them to light our paths as we journey through this year.

Question for reflection:

Do I fill my mind and heart with the word of God or with negative thoughts and feelings?

**Sunday, 2nd January, Epiphany of the Lord.
Isaiah 60:1-6, Ephesians 3:2-3, 5-6, Matthew 2:1-12**

After Jesus had been born at Bethlehem in Judaea during the reign of King Herod, some wise men came to Jerusalem from the east asking, 'Where is the infant king of the Jews? We saw his star as it rose and

have come to do him homage.' When King Herod heard this he was perturbed, and so was the whole of Jerusalem. He called together all the chief priests and the scribes of the people, and enquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They told him, 'At Bethlehem in Judaea, for this is what the prophet wrote: And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, you are by no means the least among the leaders of Judah, for from you will come a leader who will shepherd my people Israel.' Then Herod summoned the wise men to see him privately. He asked them the exact date on which the star had appeared and sent them on to Bethlehem with the words, 'Go and find out all about the child, and when you have found him, let me know, so that I too may go and do him homage.' Having listened to what the king had to say, they set out. And suddenly the star they had seen rising went forward and halted over the place where the child was. The sight of the star filled them with delight, and going into the house they saw the child with his mother Mary, and falling to their knees they did him homage. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh. But they were given a warning in a dream not to go back to Herod, and returned to their own country by a different way.

The wise men's journey to Christ

The wise men in today's gospel were non-Jewish astrologers who studied the movements of the skies. When they saw the bright star shining in the dark sky, they felt drawn to move out of their comfort zones and make the journey to discover its meaning. These men, following the star, arrived in Bethlehem, where they encountered God in the child Jesus. The story of these wise men invites us to be open and recognise the star, the light of God's presence, even in the dark areas of our lives. God, out of love, continues to draw us to Himself through His Word, through the Eucharist, through friendships and faith community, through nature, etc. He wants to guide us to a deeper relationship of love with Him.

After encountering Christ, the wise men went on a different way. Each encounter with Jesus leads us to go a different way, i.e., one that no longer conforms to the worldly ways but Christ's. May we follow the star that guides us always to Christ. With Him as our Companion in our life, let us then live a life following His life-giving way.

Question for reflection:

In this New Year, what star am I called to follow?

Monday, 3rd January, The Most Holy Name of Jesus.**Philippians 2:1-11, Luke 2:21-24**

When the eighth day came and the child was to be circumcised, they gave him the name Jesus, the name the angel had given him before his conception. And when the day came for them to be purified in keeping with the Law of Moses, they took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord- observing what is written in the Law of the Lord: Every first-born male must be consecrated to the Lord- and also to offer in sacrifice, in accordance with what is prescribed in the Law of the Lord, a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.

Jesus, "God saves"

Today, we celebrate the memorial of the Most Holy Name of Jesus. The name, Jesus, means "God saves". What does it mean that "God saves"? We often associate being saved, or salvation, as being saved from our sins. However, we must not forget that the purpose of salvation is to remain in communion with God, who has created us to be in a loving relationship with Him. The person of Jesus, whose incarnation, life, death, and resurrection, leads us to communion with God. He is the bridge that links God to us and us to God.

When we call upon the name of Jesus, it means that we believe that He is our Saviour who enables us to participate in this relationship of love and communion with God. Our faith in His name is also a call for action. It is not a mere form of passive devotion. Instead, we must conform ourselves more closely to Him by imitating His actions, motivations and character. May our love for Jesus steadily grow each day.

Question for reflection:

How can I make the name and the person of Jesus the cornerstone of my life?

Tuesday, 4th January, Tuesday after Epiphany.**1 John 4:7-10, Mark 6: 34-44**

As Jesus stepped ashore he saw a large crowd; and he took pity on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd, and he set himself to

teach them at some length. By now it was getting very late, and his disciples came up to him and said, 'This is a lonely place and it is getting very late, so send them away, and they can go to the farms and villages round about, to buy themselves something to eat.' He replied, 'Give them something to eat yourselves.' They answered, 'Are we to go and spend two hundred denarii on bread for them to eat?' He asked, 'How many loaves have you? Go and see.' And when they had found out they said, 'Five, and two fish.' Then he ordered them to get all the people to sit down in groups on the green grass, and they sat down on the ground in squares of hundreds and fifties. Then he took the five loaves and the two fish, raised his eyes to heaven and said the blessing; then he broke the loaves and began handing them to his disciples to distribute among the people. He also shared out the two fish among them all. They all ate as much as they wanted. They collected twelve basketfuls of scraps of bread and pieces of fish. Those who had eaten the loaves numbered five thousand men.

God is love

In today's first reading, St. John proclaims the truth of who God is: "God is love". God sent His Son, Jesus, into the world to reveal the depth of His love to humanity. In the gospel, when Jesus saw the hunger of the people, He was not indifferent to their needs. Instead, He was filled with compassion and expressed His love in two ways: teaching them at some length and feeding them with bread and fish. Today, Jesus is present with us to nourish the deepest hunger of our hearts. We might not be physically hungry for food, but perhaps we might be hungering for unconditional love, hungering for the warmth of a home, hungering for being accepted. Let us not be afraid to go close to Jesus, our Good Shepherd, and allow Him to feed us with His love.

"Give them something to eat yourselves". Many people around us are like sheep without a shepherd. Today, Jesus also wants us to be His presence of love and compassion. Through us, He wants to feed the hunger of others so that they too can experience God's life-giving love.

Question for reflection:

Do I share God's love for others?

Wednesday, 5th January, Wednesday after Epiphany.

1 John 4:11-18, Mark 6:45-52

After the five thousand had eaten and were filled, Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side near Bethsaida, while he himself sent the crowd away. After saying goodbye to them he went off into the hills to pray. When evening came, the boat was far out on the sea, and he was alone on the land. He could see that they were hard pressed in their rowing, for the wind was against them; and about the fourth watch of the night he came towards them, walking on the sea. He was going to pass them by, but when they saw him walking on the sea they thought it was a ghost and cried out; for they had all seen him and were terrified. But at once he spoke to them and said, 'Courage! It's me! Don't be afraid.' Then he got into the boat with them and the wind dropped. They were utterly and completely dumbfounded, because they had not seen what the miracle of the loaves meant; their minds were closed.

In love, there is no fear

In today's first reading, St. John declares: "*In love there can be no fear, but fear is driven out by perfect love*". We want to be free from fear, but sometimes it seems like a silent shadow accompanying us in our lives. We struggle with various fears, like fear of living a meaningless life, losing loved ones, failures, and the greatest of all fears is death. Jesus is the perfect love that God gives to us. With Him in our lives, He frees us from our fears and empowers us to live life fully.

Let us listen to the voice of Jesus as He tells us, "*Courage! It's me! Don't be afraid!*" Jesus is with us, and He gives us the courage we need to face our fears. Like the disciples, we might find ourselves battling against the storm that seems to be going against us, especially in these Covid times. Let us find assurance in His presence and allow His perfect love to guide us to walk on with peace.

Question for reflection:

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

Thursday, 6th January, Thursday after Epiphany.

1 John 4:19-5:4, Luke 4:14-22

Jesus, with the power of the Spirit in him, returned to Galilee; and his reputation spread throughout the countryside. He taught in their synagogues and everyone glorified him. He came to Nazara, where he had been brought up, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day as he usually did. He stood up to read, and they handed him the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. Unrolling the scroll he found the place where it is written: The spirit of the Lord is on me, for he has anointed me to bring the good news to the afflicted. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives, sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim a year of favour from the Lord. He then rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the assistant and sat down. And all eyes in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to speak to them, 'This text is being fulfilled today even while you are listening.' And he won the approval of all, and they were astonished by the gracious words that came from his lips. They said, 'This is Joseph's son, surely?'

God is with those who suffer

At the start of Jesus' mission, He declared that He came to proclaim the Good News that God of love and mercy is here. Jesus went around healing the sick and giving hope to all those suffering, not to show that He was a miracle worker, but to reveal the nearness of God. He wanted to awaken the people's faith and lead them to encounter God's presence of love, who is always on the side of those suffering.

Today, Jesus entrusts us with this same mission to us, i.e. to alleviate the suffering of those broken and burdened by fears, work for peace in relationships torn apart by stubborn pride, and welcome those excluded from community life. We are called to be signs of God's love and mercy to those around us, starting from our families. Jesus came to reveal that God is on the side of the weak and the poor. We, as His messengers, must be with God is.

Question for reflection:

Do people see the presence of God in me?

Friday, 7th January, St. Raymond of Penyafort.

1 John 5:5-13, Luke 5:12-16

Jesus was in one of the towns when suddenly a man appeared, covered with a skin-disease. Seeing Jesus he fell on his face and implored him saying, 'Sir, if you are willing you can cleanse me.' He stretched out his hand, and touched him saying, 'I am willing. Be cleansed.' At once the skin-disease left him. He ordered him to tell no one, 'But go and show yourself to the priest and make the offering for your cleansing just as Moses prescribed, as evidence to them.' But the news of him kept spreading, and large crowds would gather to hear him and to have their illnesses cured, but he would go off to some deserted place and pray.

Reaching out to show love

In Jesus' time, leprosy was considered a terrible, incurable illness and lepers were excluded from society. In the gospel today, a leper ignored the distance he had to maintain from the rest of the people, rushed out to Jesus and desperately begged Him, "Sir, if you are willing, you can cleanse me". Jesus did not move away, but He looked at the man with concern, not fear, with love, not rejection. He then did a radical thing by reaching out to touch the leper's disfigured face and his rotting flesh. His touch revealed His compassionate love for this suffering man.

There are times when we feel like the leper. We can be overlooked and rejected by others. In these moments, like the leper, we need to go to Jesus and find comfort in the love that He has for us. Filled with Jesus' love, He invites us to reach out and touch the "lepers" of today's society, i.e. those people who are often unloved and unwelcomed, by showing them love. Jesus does not remain indifferent to the needs of others. Neither should we.

Question for reflection:

Do I find it challenging to love the ones I find hard to love?

Saturday, 8th January, Saturday after the Epiphany.

1 John 5:14-21, John 3:22-30

Jesus went with his disciples into the Judaeen countryside and stayed with them there and baptised. John also was baptising at Aenon near Salim, where there was plenty of water, and people were going there and were being baptised. For John had not yet been put in prison. Now

a discussion arose between some of John's disciples and a Jew about purification, so they went to John and said, 'Rabbi, the man who was with you on the far side of the Jordan, the man to whom you bore witness, is baptising now, and everyone is going to him.' John replied: 'No one can have anything except what is given him from heaven. 'You yourselves can bear me out. I said, "I am not the Christ; I am the one who has been sent to go in front of him." 'It is the bridegroom who has the bride; and yet the bridegroom's friend, who stands there and listens to him, is filled with joy at the bridegroom's voice. This is the joy I feel, and it is complete. He must grow greater, I must grow less.'

Less of me, more of Jesus

Let the words of John the Baptist resound in our hearts, “*He must grow greater, I must grow less*”. Indeed, Christ must steadily grow and become more important in our lives. Often, we seek to increase our power, status, recognition, praises, etc., in the work and service we do to our faith community, the parish, and our vocation. We claim that we are here to serve Christ, but when we encounter harsh criticism or feel that others have overlooked us, etc., we tend to complain and even walk away from the community.

In the gospel today, John the Baptist’s disciples were upset that many people were going to Jesus. However, for John, he knew that he was not “*the Christ*”, but he was just “*the friend of the bridegroom*”. All his actions were centred on Jesus, and his joy was completed when Jesus, the Christ, the Bridegroom, was present. May we examine our hearts and see if we have any self-centered motivations that prevent Christ to increase and us to decrease.

Question for reflection:

“*He must grow greater, I must grow less*”. What do these words of John the Baptist mean to me?

Sunday, 9th January, The Baptism of the Lord.

Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11, Titus 2:11-14, 3:4-7, Luke 3:15-16, 21-22

A feeling of expectancy had grown among the people, who were beginning to wonder whether John might be the Christ, so John declared before them all, 'I baptise you with water, but someone is coming, who is more powerful than me, and I am not fit to undo the strap of his

sandals; he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire. Now it happened that when all the people had been baptised and while Jesus after his own baptism was at prayer, heaven opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in a physical form, like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son; today have I fathered you.'

I am God's beloved child.

As we celebrate the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, let us reflect on the meaning of our own baptism. The words of God the Father to Jesus are meant for us too. At our baptism and each day of our lives, God sees us and tells us, "*You are my child, my beloved*". This is who we truly are, i.e. God's beloved sons and daughters. God our Father loves us with His unconditional and faithful love. He loves us beyond what we can imagine. Therefore, we need to trust in Him and root ourselves in His eternal love.

Being baptised implies that we need to live as God's beloved children while being immersed in the demands and joys of our work, family life, friendship, etc. Wherever we are, we spread God's love, especially those most in need of our company, care and help. May we never take for granted this reality of being God's beloved children and learn to love each other as brothers and sisters.

Question for reflection:

What hinders me from living my life as God's beloved child?

Monday, 10th January, 1st Week in Ordinary Time.

1 Samuel 1:1-8, Mark 1:14-20

After John had been arrested, Jesus went into Galilee. There he proclaimed the gospel from God saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is close at hand. Repent, and believe the gospel.' As he was walking along by the Lake of Galilee he saw Simon and Simon's brother Andrew casting a net in the lake -- for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, 'Come after me and I will make you into fishers of people.' And at once they left their nets and followed him. Going on a little further, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John; they too were in their boat, mending the nets. At once he called them and, leaving their father Zebedee in the boat with the men he employed, they went after him.

God is here. Believe and share the Good News

Jesus started His public ministry by proclaiming, “*The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is close at hand. Repent, and believe the gospel*”. Today, Jesus offers the same Good News to us. The kingdom of God is near, i.e. the presence of God is here. We are called to respond by entering into God’s presence, allowing His love to transform our lives and living by His values of peace, mercy and justice.

In the gospel, we also read about Jesus calling Simon, Andrew, James and John to leave their work as fishermen and share in His mission of bringing people to the kingdom of God. Jesus continues to call us. However, he might not call us to do something drastically different from what we are doing. Instead, He calls us to continue doing what we are doing in the workplaces, parish, homes, and faith communities, but with more love. Our words and actions can lead others to experience the closeness of God and His immense love for them. Today, let us first enter into God’s presence and hear once again the call to mission.

Question for reflection:

What is the message that Jesus has for me today?

Tuesday, 11th January, 1st Week in Ordinary Time.

1 Samuel 1:9-20, Mark 1: 21-28

Jesus and his disciples went as far as Capernaum, and at once on the Sabbath he went into the synagogue and began to teach. And his teaching made a deep impression on them because, unlike the scribes, he taught them with authority. And at once in their synagogue there was a man with an unclean spirit, and he shouted, 'What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are: the Holy One of God.' But Jesus rebuked it saying, 'Be quiet! Come out of him!' And the unclean spirit threw the man into convulsions and with a loud cry went out of him. The people were so astonished that they started asking one another what it all meant, saying, 'Here is a teaching that is new, and with authority behind it: he gives orders even to unclean spirits and they obey him.' And his reputation at once spread everywhere, through all the surrounding Galilean countryside.

The authority that springs from a loving relationship with Jesus

“Here is a teaching that is new, and with authority behind it...”. Those people, listening to Jesus’ teaching and witnessing the man’s healing, recognised that there was authority behind His words and actions. Jesus’ authority was life-giving, and all that He did and said was to enrich the lives of others. This was because His authority came from His intimate relationship with God His Father.

Today, Jesus invites us to enter into an intimate relationship with Him and to anchor our faith firmly in Him. In this way, our words and actions will have the authority, the power to enhance the lives of those around us. Unfortunately, our words and actions towards others can sometimes be aggressive and careless, and in the process, we bring harm to them rather than God’s life and love. Therefore, let us always have Jesus as the center of our lives so that our words and deeds can always be life-giving.

Question for reflection:

How can I exercise my authority to give life?

Wednesday, 12th January, 1st Week in Ordinary Time.

1 Samuel 3:1-10, 19-20, Mark 1: 29-39

After leaving the synagogue, Jesus went with James and John straight to the house of Simon and Andrew. Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed and feverish, and at once they told him about her. He went in to her, took her by the hand and helped her up. And the fever left her and she began to serve them. That evening, after sunset, they brought to him all who were sick and those who were possessed by devils. The whole town came crowding round the door, and he cured many who were sick with diseases of one kind or another; he also drove out many devils, but he would not allow them to speak, because they knew who he was. In the morning, long before dawn, he got up and left the house and went off to a lonely place and prayed there. Simon and his companions set out in search of him, and when they found him they said, 'Everybody is looking for you.' He answered, 'Let us go elsewhere, to the neighbouring country towns, so that I can proclaim the message there too, because that is why I came.' And he went all through Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out devils.

The necessity of prayer

Jesus was a busy person. He healed Simon Peter's mother-in-law, and later, many others brought to Him all who were sick for healing. Yet, He found time to go off to a lonely place to pray and re-centred Himself in the Father's love. However, in the gospel passage, Peter and the rest of the disciples did not seem to appreciate Jesus' action of going off to pray. Peter told Jesus, "*Everybody is looking for you*". With these words, Peter seemed to express his desire for Jesus to get busy meeting the needs of the people. Yet, the need to be in solitude with God the Father took the central place in the life of Jesus.

In our busyness, do we feel the need to pray? Today, let us once again recognise the importance of spending time with Jesus and opening ourselves to receive His presence of love and peace. It is from prayer that we find the inner energy to put ourselves to be at the service of others.

Question for reflection:

Do I make time and space for prayer?

Thursday, 13th January, St. Hilary.

1 Samuel 4:1-11, Mark 1:40-45

A leper came to Jesus and pleaded on his knees saying, 'If you are willing, you can cleanse me.' Feeling sorry for him, Jesus stretched out his hand, touched him and said to him, 'I am willing. Be cleansed.' And at once the skin-disease left him and he was cleansed. And at once Jesus sternly sent him away and said to him, 'Mind you tell no one anything, but go and show yourself to the priest, and make the offering for your cleansing prescribed by Moses as evidence to them.' The man went away, but then started freely proclaiming and telling the story everywhere, so that Jesus could no longer go openly into any town, but stayed outside in deserted places. Even so, people from all around kept coming to him.

An inclusive love for all

In Jesus' time, having leprosy means living in isolation and being separated from the rest of the community due to the fear of passing the disease to others. In today's gospel, a leper somehow sensed that Jesus would not pull away from him, and thus, he took the courage to go

to Him and asked for healing. Jesus, did not pull away from the leper, but He actually stretched out His hand, touched and healed him. The touch of Jesus was the touch of God, i.e. a touch of love that connected with the leper's pain and suffering. As a result, the leper was healed and was no longer excluded from the community.

Today's passage speaks to us of a God who never excludes but always includes. What about us? We might have people in our lives whom we consider as "lepers", and ostracise them for one reason or another. Jesus calls us today to bring down the walls that separate us from others and be instruments of inclusive love that reaches out to connect and build bridges.

Question for reflection:

Am I open to love like Jesus?

Friday, 14th January, 1st Week in Ordinary Time.

1 Samuel 8:4-7, 10-22, Mark 2:1-12

When Jesus returned to Capernaum, some time later word went round that he was in the house; and so many people collected that there was no room left, even in front of the door. He was preaching the word to them when some people came bringing him a paralytic carried by four men, but as they could not get the man to him through the crowd, they stripped the roof over the place where Jesus was; and when they had made an opening, they lowered the stretcher on which the paralytic lay. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, 'My child, your sins are forgiven.' Now some scribes were sitting there, and they thought to themselves, 'How can this man talk like that? He is being blasphemous. Who but God can forgive sins?' And at once, Jesus, inwardly aware that this is what they were thinking, said to them, 'Why do you have these thoughts in your hearts? Which of these is easier: to say to the paralytic, "Your sins are forgiven" or to say, "Get up, pick up your stretcher and walk"? But to prove to you that the Son of man has authority to forgive sins on earth' -- he said to the paralytic-'I order you: get up, pick up your stretcher, and go off home.' And the man got up, and at once picked up his stretcher and walked out in front of everyone, so that they were all astonished and praised God saying, 'We have never seen anything like this.'

To carry others to Jesus

In today's gospel, the four friends were determined to bring their paralysed friend to Jesus. They had the faith that Jesus would be the one who could heal their sick friend. Thus, even when they were met with obstacles, they refused to give up. When they could not enter the house due to the crowd, they carried their friend up the roof, removed the roof tiles and let him down to where Jesus was. Jesus, seeing the unwavering faith of these four friends, healed the paralysed man, not just physically but spiritually as well.

As we pray with this passage, Jesus invites us to be like these four friends. Many people around us live their lives paralysed by fears, broken by failures, burdened by disillusionment and misfortunes. We can carry them to Jesus by speaking words of hope, praying with them and for them, helping them in their needs, etc. Today, let us be people of faith and bring our friends and family members, especially those in need, to Jesus.

Question for reflection:

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

Saturday, 15th January, St. Paul the Hermit.

1 Samuel 9:1-4, 17-19, 10:1, Mark 2:13-17

Jesus went out to the shore of the lake; and all the people came to him, and he taught them. As he was walking along he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax office, and he said to him, 'Follow me.' And he got up and followed him. When Jesus was at dinner in his house, a number of tax collectors and sinners were also sitting at table with Jesus and his disciples; for there were many of them among his followers. When the scribes of the Pharisee party saw him eating with sinners and tax collectors, they said to his disciples, 'Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?' When Jesus heard this he said to them, 'It is not the healthy who need the doctor, but the sick. I came to call not the upright, but sinners.'

Being loved by God

In the gospel, tax-collectors were social outcasts for the Jews because they collected taxes for the Romans and exploited the people for their own good. In today's gospel, Jesus called Levi, a tax-collector, to follow

Him and be His disciple. He also went to Levi's house and shared a meal with other tax-collectors and public sinners. The religious leaders were scandalous by His actions. They asked His disciples, "*Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?*". This is a key question that we need to ask to understand the God whom Jesus has come to reveal to us.

The words and actions of Jesus are the words and actions of God. God is a God who loves each person, despite his/her failures, wrong choices and weaknesses. The calling of Levi and the eating with tax collectors and sinners show us that God desires to be with us in our frailty and imperfections. Like the experience of Levi, it is being unconditionally loved by God that transforms us to be the person God wants us to be and live a life according to His purpose.

Question for reflection:

How have I experienced God's love?

Sunday, 16th January, Second Sunday in Ordinary Time.

Isaiah 62:1-5, 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, John 2:1-11

There was a wedding at Cana in Galilee. The mother of Jesus was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited. And they ran out of wine, since the wine provided for the feast had all been used, and the mother of Jesus said to him, 'They have no wine.' Jesus said, 'Woman, what do you want from me? My hour has not come yet.' His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.' There were six stone water jars standing there, meant for the ablutions that are customary among the Jews: each could hold twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to the servants, 'Fill the jars with water,' and they filled them to the brim. Then he said to them, 'Draw some out now and take it to the president of the feast.' They did this; the president tasted the water, and it had turned into wine. Having no idea where it came from -- though the servants who had drawn the water knew -- the president of the feast called the bridegroom and said, 'Everyone serves good wine first and the worse wine when the guests are well wined; but you have kept the best wine till now.' This was the first of Jesus' signs: it was at Cana in Galilee. He revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him.

“They have no wine”

“...and the mother of Jesus said to him, ‘They have no wine’”. Mary’s words to Jesus express the reality of our human experiences in life. We have experienced the day in which our wine ran out in one way or another. We have no more wine due to various life’s circumstances. For some, it is the day when a dear one passes away. For others, it is to live through the disappointment of failing and while others struggle with depression and sickness. Therefore, these words of Mary becomes our personal cry to Jesus, “*I have no wine*”.

The first thing that Mary did was to go to Jesus. Jesus transformed the water into the best wine of all. When we go to Jesus, we are invited to trust that He is the only one who can change our sadness into joy, our disillusionment into hope, fear into courage, our emptiness into fullness. Jesus wants to transform our lives so that we can live life with an abundance of joy and the fullness of life.

Question for reflection:

Do I present my empty jar to Jesus and trust that He will fill it with the best wine of His love?

Monday, 17th January, St. Anthony, Abbot.

1 Samuel 15:16-23, Mark 2:18-22

One day when John’s disciples and the Pharisees were keeping a fast, when some people came and said to Jesus, ‘Why is it that John’s disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not?’ Jesus replied, ‘Surely the bridegroom’s attendants cannot fast while the bridegroom is still with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the time will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then, on that day, they will fast. No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old cloak; otherwise, the patch pulls away from it, the new from the old, and the tear gets worse. And nobody puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost and the skins too. No! New wine into fresh skins!’

Jesus, the source of new wine

In today’s gospel, Jesus speaks of His presence, message and ministry as new wine. He comes to proclaim the good news that God’s love has

no boundaries and that He deeply desires to enter into communion with His people. He is not a God of legalism but a Father who cares. But, unfortunately, the religious leaders in Jesus' time could neither understand nor accept Jesus and His good news due to their closed mindset and their love for rigorism. Thus, like inflexible, old wineskins, they could not receive the freshness of new wine.

"New wine into fresh skins!". The new wine of Jesus' good news demands that we do not hold unbendingly to the past, to the old ways, and to be resistant to the newness that Jesus wants to bring to our lives. As we pray, let us ask the Holy Spirit to come and renew our hearts and minds so that we can welcome the new wine of Jesus' presence and the good news that He brings to us.

Question for reflection:

Am I open to being surprised by Jesus, His ways and plans for me?

Tuesday, 18th January, 2nd Week in Ordinary Time.

1 Samuel 16:1-13, Mark 2: 23-28

One Sabbath day Jesus was taking a walk through the cornfields, and his disciples began to make a path by plucking ears of corn. And the Pharisees said to him, 'Look, why are they doing something on the Sabbath day that is forbidden?' And he replied, 'Have you never read what David did in his time of need when he and his followers were hungry- how he went into the house of God when Abiathar was high priest, and ate the loaves of the offering which only the priests are allowed to eat, and how he also gave some to the men with him?' And he said to them, 'The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath; so the Son of man is master even of the Sabbath.'

The law of love

Jesus loves by always seeking what is good for people. In today's gospel, the Pharisees noticed that Jesus' disciples, due to their hunger, were plucking ears of corn on a Sabbath day. According to their interpretation of the Sabbath law, this action of reaping was a form of work forbidden on the Sabbath. For Jesus, the Sabbath law was not a burden placed by God on the people or to tie them with a list of rules and regulations. Thus, Jesus defended His disciples by recalling the actions of David and his followers who ate the loaves offered to the priests in

order to satisfy their hunger. By saying this, Jesus placed the need to satisfy one's hunger as an essential priority than observing the interpretation of the Sabbath law.

"The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath". Today, as Christians, Jesus invites us to follow the law of love by placing the person and his/her needs as the top priority. Therefore, we need to follow Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath, and be at the service of people's basic needs and promote the flourishing of human lives. Let us let go of our legalistic ways and learn to love, like Jesus.

Question for reflection:

Do I love others by working for their good?

Wednesday, 19th January, 2nd Week in Ordinary Time.

1 Samuel 17:32-33, 37, 40-51, Mark 3: 1-6

Jesus went into the synagogue, and there was a man present whose hand was withered. And they were watching him to see if he would cure him on the Sabbath day, hoping for something to charge him with. He said to the man with the withered hand, 'Get up and stand in the middle!' Then he said to them, 'Is it permitted on the Sabbath day to do good, or to do evil; to save life, or to kill?' But they said nothing. Then he looked angrily round at them, grieved to find them so obstinate, and said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' He stretched it out and his hand was restored. The Pharisees went out and began at once to plot with the Herodians against him, discussing how to destroy him.

Never stop doing good

In today's gospel, Jesus healed the man with a withered hand on a Sabbath. He did something good and loving, but His action was met with criticism, and in the end, the religious leaders began to plot together to get rid of Him. Did Jesus stop loving in the face of oppositions and rejections? No, He did not. Jesus continued to do good, especially for the weak and those who needed help. This was because He knew that God's will is always about compassion and justice for all.

This gospel passage challenges us never to stop doing what is good and loving for others because this is what God wants of us. Despite the

negative reactions that others might have of us and the good we do, we fix our eyes on Jesus and keep on loving.

Question for reflection:

What is God's will for me today, i.e. to bring love or harm to others?

Thursday, 20th January, St. Fabian or St Sebastian.

1 Samuel 18:6-9, 19, 1-7, Mark 3:7-12

Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the lakeside, and great crowds from Galilee followed him. From Judaea, and from Jerusalem, and from Idumaea and Transjordan and the region of Tyre and Sidon, great numbers who had heard of all he was doing came to him. And he asked his disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd, to keep him from being crushed. For he had cured so many that all who were afflicted in any way were crowding forward to touch him. And the unclean spirits, whenever they saw him, would fall down before him and shout, 'You are the Son of God!' But he warned them strongly not to make him known.

Reaching out to Jesus

In today's gospel, Jesus and His disciples withdrew to the lakeside but great crowds went to Him. The people who went to Him were the ones who were suffering. They somehow sensed that Jesus was a man of God who could and would alleviate their pain and heal their brokenness. "For he had cured so many that all who were afflicted in any way were crowding forward to touch him". They wanted to touch Jesus because they were aware of their own vulnerability and need for His help.

What about us? Do we see ourselves belonging to that crowd of people surging forward to touch Jesus? In life, we often experience moments of distress, be it mentally, physically or emotionally. Like the crowd, let us make our way to Jesus and allow Him to be the strength in our fragility, the comfort in our sorrow and the light in our darkness.

Question for reflection:

Do I recognise that moments of crisis can be the opportunities where I encounter the loving presence of Jesus?

Friday, 21st January, St. Agnes.

1 Samuel 24:3-21, Mark 3:13-19

Jesus went up onto the mountain and summoned those he wanted. So they came to him and he appointed twelve; they were to be his companions and to be sent out to proclaim the message, with power to drive out devils. And so he appointed the Twelve, Simon to whom he gave the name Peter, James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James, to whom he gave the name Boanerges or 'Sons of Thunder'; Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, the man who was to betray him.

Imperfect disciples

Jesus chose the Twelve, a diverse group of people, to be His close disciples. We have Simon was a zealot who was full of passion for the independence of his people from Roman rule. Surely, he would have some tensions with Matthew, the tax collector, who worked for the Romans. James and John wanted to be in the important places in the group. Peter denied Jesus publicly, and Judas betrayed Him for thirty silver coins. They were an imperfect lot in the eyes of the world. Yet, Jesus chose them, not because of their talents and merits, but for what they could become under His guidance.

“Yet we who have this spiritual treasure are like common clay pots, in order to show that the supreme power belongs to God, not to us” (2 Corinthians 4:7). We are like ordinary clay pots, weak and imperfect, yet we hold the greatest treasure of Jesus’ presence within us. He can work wonders through us. The invitation each day from Jesus is to be with Him and allow Him to be the Companion in our lives.

Question for reflection:

Am I aware that Jesus has chosen me to be with Him and sent me to do His mission?

Saturday, 22nd January, St. Vincent, Deacon & Martyr.

2 Samuel 1:1-4, 11-12, 17,19, 23-27, Mark 3:20-21

Jesus went home again, and once more such a crowd collected that they could not even have a meal. When his relations heard of this, they set out to take charge of him; they said, 'He is out of his mind.'

The courage to live like Jesus

Today's short gospel passage reflects the sad reality that many people could not understand Jesus and accept His choice of living His life as an itinerant preacher instead of staying in His family carpentry trade. "*When his relations heard of this, they set out to take charge of him; they said, 'He is out of his mind'.*" Looking at Jesus, they thought that He was mad. Yet, despite the rejections and misunderstandings, Jesus remained faithful in doing God's work.

There are times when we choose to walk the path of Jesus, i.e. to love more, work for a just environment, speak the truth to someone, etc., we might be misunderstood and even rejected by others. In such situations, we need to turn to Jesus and ask for courage and determination to choose to live by the gospel values.

Question for reflection:

Am I free from the expectations and opinions of others so that I may live and act like Jesus?

Sunday, 23rd January, Sunday of the Word of God

Nehemiah 8:2-4, 5-6, 8-10, 1 Corinthians 12:12-30, Luke 1: 1-4, 4:14-21

Seeing that many others have undertaken to draw up accounts of the events that have reached their fulfilment among us, as these were handed down to us by those who from the outset were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, I in my turn, after carefully going over the whole story from the beginning, have decided to write an ordered account for you, Theophilus, so that your Excellency may learn how well founded the teaching is that you have received. Jesus, with the power of the Spirit in him, returned to Galilee; and his reputation spread throughout the countryside. He taught in their synagogues and everyone glorified him. He came to Nazara, where he had been brought up, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day as he usually did. He stood up to read,

and they handed him the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. Unrolling the scroll he found the place where it is written: The spirit of the Lord is on me, for he has anointed me to bring the good news to the afflicted. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives, sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim a year of favour from the Lord. He then rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the assistant and sat down. And all eyes in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to speak to them, 'This text is being fulfilled today even while you are listening.'

The Good News: God is here

Jesus, with the power of the Holy Spirit in Him, did not teach about doctrines for His listeners to religiously follow or new moral rules for people to obey. Instead, Jesus was interested in speaking about an event, the Good News: God is here. In Jesus, God is here, not to judge those who failed to follow His commandments, not to impose more observances, not to count the tithes collected, etc. Instead, God comes to proclaim liberty to the captives, give sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free. As we read the gospel passage, we hear the message behind the words of Jesus that God cared about the people.

Today, God is here. God cares. Jesus invites us to bring this Good News to those around us, especially those who need to encounter the nearness of God. *"This text is being fulfilled today even while you are listening"*. Indeed, the Good News is fulfilled here and now because it is our turn to go and announce it to all.

Question for reflection:

How can I proclaim the Good News of God's love today?

Monday, 24th January, St. Francis de Sales.

2 Samuel 5:1-7, 10, Mark 3:22-30

The scribes who had come down from Jerusalem were saying, 'Beelzebul is in him,' and, 'It is through the prince of devils that he drives devils out.' So Jesus called them to him and spoke to them in parables, 'How can Satan drive out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot last. And if a household is divided against itself, that household can never last. Now if Satan has rebelled against himself and is divided, he cannot last either -- it is the end of him. But no one can make his way into a strong man's house and plunder his property unless

he has first tied up the strong man. Only then can he plunder his house. 'In truth I tell you, all human sins will be forgiven, and all the blasphemies ever uttered; but anyone who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven, but is guilty of an eternal sin.' This was because they were saying, *'There is an unclean spirit in him.'*

Blindness of the heart

In today's gospel, the scribes accused Jesus of being possessed and thus, they claimed that He had the power to do all He did. By doing so, they devalued His good works and publicly denounced Jesus as an evil man. Why did they fail to acknowledge the goodness that Jesus radiated from His words and deeds? The scribes were not aware of the evil, i.e. most likely their envious feelings against Jesus, that they had in themselves. Trapped in their blindness, they could not see the truth but lived in their lies.

Today's gospel challenges us to look at ourselves so that we would not be trapped in our own blindness that prevents us from seeing others with love, respect and compassion. Our daily intimate relationship with God leads us to know ourselves better and be aware of the obstacles in us that block us from receiving His mercy and stop us from loving others with mercy. Today, Jesus invites us to allow the Word of God to conform our way of thinking and loving to His own.

Question for reflection:

How is the state of my heart?

Tuesday, 25th January, The Conversion of St. Paul the Apostle.

Acts 22: 3-16, Mark 16:15-18

Jesus showed himself to the Eleven and said to them, 'Go out to the whole world; proclaim the gospel to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptised will be saved; whoever 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.'

Loved and forgiven

Today, we celebrate the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul, the apostle to the gentiles. As we read in the first reading, his conversion happened after encountering the Resurrected Jesus on the road to Damascus. He was heading towards the city, intending to persecute the early Christians. Instead, that personal encounter with Jesus' merciful love moved Paul to allow the Risen Lord to live in him and work through him. What does the conversion of Paul have to do with us?

"We are all sinners. But God heals us with an abundance of grace, mercy and tenderness" (Pope Francis, 2013). None of us is perfect. If Jesus could touch Paul's life and lead him to the path of conversion, we too, though sinners, are invited to walk this same path of transformation and experience ourselves loved and forgiven by God. Let us strive to renew our relationship with God and allow Him to live in us and work through us.

Question for reflection:

What is the significance of St. Paul's conversion for me?

Wednesday, 26th January, SS. Timothy & Titus.

2 Timothy 1:1-8, Like 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."

Following the footsteps of Timothy and Titus

Today, we celebrate the Feast of SS. Timothy and Titus, the two co-workers of St. Paul. Though St. Paul was passionate in his work as a

missionary of the Good News, he did not work alone but always worked with others. Two people that St. Paul fully trusted were Timothy and Titus, who would dedicate their lives to be his partners to bring the Good News to all people.

In today's gospel, Jesus appointed seventy-two to be his partners, his helpers in mission. Today, Jesus looks at us and needs us to proclaim by our words and actions to those around us the Good News that *"the kingdom of God is very near you"*, i.e., *"God is near, God loves, God cares, and thus, He is our peace and hope"*. SS. Timothy and Titus chose to be St. Paul's faithful partners to the end. What about us? Are we willing to be Jesus' partners to carry on His work today?

Question for reflection:

How can I help Jesus bring the Good News to those around me today?

Thursday, 27th January, 3rd Week in Ordinary Time.

2 Samuel 7: 18-19, 24-30, Mark 4: 21-25

Jesus said to the crowd, 'Is a lamp brought in to be put under a tub or under the bed? Surely to be put on the lamp-stand? For there is nothing hidden, but it must be disclosed, nothing kept secret except to be brought to light. Anyone who has ears for listening should listen!' He also said to them, 'Take notice of what you are hearing. The standard you use will be used for you -- and you will receive more besides; anyone who has, will be given more; anyone who has not, will be deprived even of what he has.'

Let your light shine

In today's gospel, Jesus used the image of a lamp on a lampstand to tell us that the light of our faith in God cannot be hidden but need to shine for all to see. In Matthew 5:16, Jesus also said, *"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven"*. As Christians, we must shine God's goodness and love to those around us through our words, actions, and thoughts.

In the gospel, Jesus reminds us: *"Anyone who has ears for listening should listen!"* and *"Take notice of what you are hearing"* because in order to shine our light of faith for all to see, we first need to cultivate the habit of listening to God's life-giving word. The more we listen to Him,

the more we will be enriched by the richness His word brings. The more then we will be empowered from within to live a life of love and witness to the light of faith.

Question for reflection:

How can I be a light shining God's presence?

Friday, 28th January, St. Thomas Aquinas.

2 Samuel 11:1-4, 5-10, 13-17, Mark 4:26-34

Jesus said to the crowd, 'This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the land. Night and day, while he sleeps, when he is awake, the seed is sprouting and growing; how, he does not know. Of its own accord the land produces first the shoot, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. And when the crop is ready, at once he starts to reap because the harvest has come.' He also said, 'What can we say that the kingdom is like? What parable can we find for it? It is like a mustard seed which, at the time of its sowing, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth. Yet once it is sown it grows into the biggest shrub of them all and puts out big branches so that the birds of the air can shelter in its shade.' Using many parables like these, he spoke the word to them, so far as they were capable of understanding it. He would not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything to his disciples when they were by themselves.

Sowing the seeds of God's kingdom

What is the kingdom of God like? In today's gospel, Jesus likened it to a simple and ordinary action of a farmer scattering seeds in the ground. The seeds in the soil germinated and grew by a mysterious force that the farmer had no control of. Somehow, everything worked together to bring on a rich harvest. Likewise, simple, ordinary and seemingly insignificant things that we do can affect and influence many, even without us knowing it. We have the choice to sow the seed of love or seed of hatred, the seed of unity or seed of division. When we choose faithfully to plant the seed of love by our small acts of mercy and words of hope, we open the way for God to act and work in people's lives. Although we have a role to play, the coming of God's kingdom of love and peace is, first and foremost, God's work.

Today, let us be content with the little seeds of God's kingdom that we can sow. One smile of welcome, one word of forgiveness, one act of kindness can make God's kingdom a reality.

Question for reflection:

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

Saturday, 29th January, 3rd Week in Ordinary Time.

2 Samuel 12:1-7, 10-17, Mark 4:35-41

With the coming of evening that same day, Jesus said to his disciples, 'Let us cross over to the other side.' And leaving the crowd behind they took him, just as he was, in the boat; and there were other boats with him. Then it began to blow a great gale and the waves were breaking into the boat so that it was almost swamped. But he was in the stern, his head on the cushion, asleep. They woke him and said to him, 'Master, do you not care? We are lost!' And he woke up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, 'Quiet now! Be calm!' And the wind dropped, and there followed a great calm. Then he said to them, 'Why are you so frightened? Have you still no faith?' They were overcome with awe and said to one another, 'Who can this be? Even the wind and the sea obey him.'

Jesus is in my boat, and so I am not afraid

In life, we face many uncertainties, losses and fears. We wonder, "Where is Jesus? Why am I in this trouble? Does He not care?" Let us read this beautiful gospel passage slowly and allow the Word of God to renew once more the light of our faith. "... *they took him, just as he was, in the boat*". In the same way that Jesus was in the boat with the disciples when they faced the fierce storm, He too is with us in our storms. Frightened by the gale and the waves, they woke Jesus and said to Him, "*Master, do you not care? We are lost!*". We, too, sometimes, wonder if God cares for us. The Good News is that He cares, and we are safe in His hands. We need to trust that He is stronger than the storms we encounter in life and that His presence will bring light out of the darkness.

Today, let us be aware that Jesus is in our boat and learn to put our trust in Him again.

Question for reflection:

Do I trust that Jesus is with me in the difficult moments of life?

Sunday, 30th January, 4th Sunday in Ordinary Time.

Jeremiah 1: 4-5, 17-19, 1 Corinthians 12:31-13:13, Luke 4:21-30

Jesus began to speak to the synagogue, 'This text is being fulfilled today even while you are listening.' And he won the approval of all, and they were astonished by the gracious words that came from his lips. They said, 'This is Joseph's son, surely?' But he replied, 'No doubt you will quote me the saying, "Physician, heal yourself," and tell me, "We have heard all that happened in Capernaum, do the same here in your own country." And he went on, 'In truth I tell you, no prophet is ever accepted in his own country. 'There were many widows in Israel, I can assure you, in Elijah's day, when heaven remained shut for three years and six months and a great famine raged throughout the land, but Elijah was not sent to any one of these: he was sent to a widow at Zarephath, a town in Sidonia. And in the prophet Elisha's time there were many suffering from virulent skin-diseases in Israel, but none of these was cured -- only Naaman the Syrian.' When they heard this everyone in the synagogue was enraged. They sprang to their feet and hustled him out of the town; and they took him up to the brow of the hill their town was built on, intending to throw him off the cliff, but he passed straight through the crowd and walked away.

Making room for others to be in the kingdom of God

In today's gospel, Jesus was in His hometown. His listeners were impressed "*by the gracious words that came from his lips*". However, the townspeople's reaction radically shifted from wonderment to anger when they heard the second part of Jesus' proclamation. "*We have heard all that happened in Capernaum, do the same here in your own country*". They assumed that they would receive special favour since He was from Nazareth. However, Jesus responded to them that God has no favourites. His offer of salvation, i.e. His offer of His friendship, reached out even to those outside the Jewish faith. These words of Jesus about God welcoming and loving the foreigners angered them so much that they wanted to throw Him off the cliff.

Jesus challenges us to make room for everyone to be part of our parish and faith communities, especially those we deem "unsuitable" or "unfit".

God has no favourites, so we too must learn to accept and welcome all into our lives.

Question for reflection:

Am I willing to recognise and rejoice that God's love is universal?

Monday, 31st January, St. John Bosco.

2 Samuel 15:13-14, 30; 16, 5-13, Mark 5:1-20

Jesus and his disciples reached the territory of the Gerasenes on the other side of the lake, and when he disembarked, a man with an unclean spirit at once came out from the tombs towards him. The man lived in the tombs and no one could secure him any more, even with a chain, because he had often been secured with fetters and chains but had snapped the chains and broken the fetters, and no one had the strength to control him. All night and all day, among the tombs and in the mountains, he would howl and gash himself with stones. Catching sight of Jesus from a distance, he ran up and fell at his feet and shouted at the top of his voice, 'What do you want with me, Jesus, son of the Most High God? In God's name do not torture me!' For Jesus had been saying to him, 'Come out of the man, unclean spirit.' Then he asked, 'What is your name?' He answered, 'My name is Legion, for there are many of us.' And he begged him earnestly not to send them out of the district. Now on the mountainside there was a great herd of pigs feeding, and the unclean spirits begged him, 'Send us to the pigs, let us go into them.' So he gave them leave. With that, the unclean spirits came out and went into the pigs, and the herd of about two thousand pigs charged down the cliff into the lake, and there they were drowned. The men looking after them ran off and told their story in the city and in the country round about; and the people came to see what had really happened. They came to Jesus and saw the demoniac sitting there -- the man who had had the legion in him -- properly dressed and in his full senses, and they were afraid. And those who had witnessed it reported what had happened to the demoniac and what had become of the pigs. Then they began to implore Jesus to leave their neighbourhood. As he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed begged to be allowed to stay with him. Jesus would not let him but said to him, 'Go home to your people and tell them all that the Lord in his mercy has done for you.' So the man went off and proceeded to proclaim in the Decapolis all that Jesus had done for him. And everyone was amazed.

Restoring people to Life

In today's gospel, Jesus encountered a distraught man who was causing trouble to the people around him that they ostracised him, chained him up and abandoned him in the graveyard. When the man saw Jesus, he went immediately to him. Jesus did not reject him but treated him as a person in need of His help and healing. Jesus always worked for the good of the person. What about us?

Today, Jesus calls us to follow in His footsteps by working for the good of others, especially by freeing those people who have been dehumanised by injustice, discrimination and poverty. As Christians, we need to actively work to help people live life with meaning and fullness of joy. Jesus counts on us today to continue His mission.

Question for reflection:

Do I sense Jesus' call to take part in this work of bringing God's fullness of life to others?

