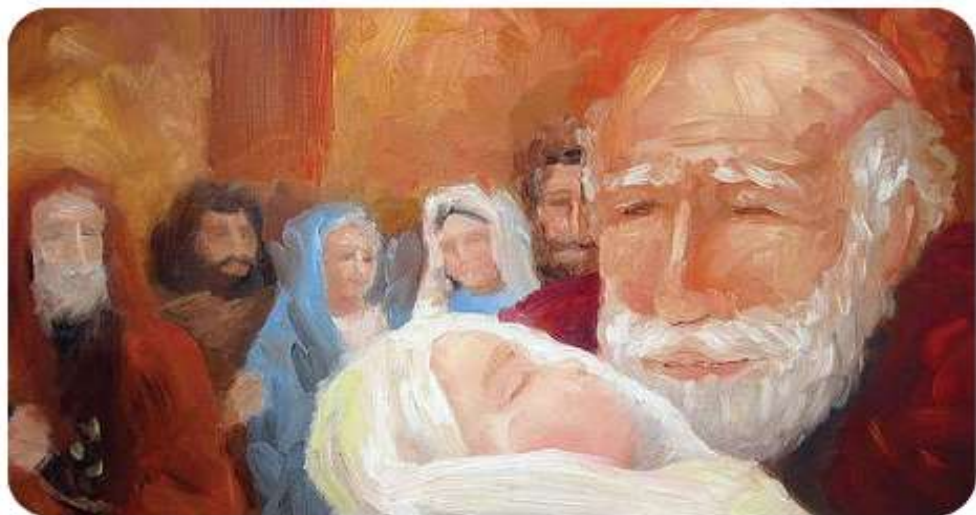


*"My eyes have seen
the salvation."*



PRAYER FOR LIVING

*DAILY REFLECTIONS FOR
LITURGICAL YEAR C~
FEBRUARY 2022*

Sr. Sandra Seow



verbum dei
Singapore

Prayer for Living Year C

Copyright © 2022 Sr. Sandra Seow
All rights reserved. This book or any portion thereof may not be reproduced or used in any manner whatsoever without the express written permission of the author.

Tuesday, 1st February, 4th Week in Ordinary Time.
2 Samuel 18:9-10, 14, 24-25, 30-19:3, Mark 5:21-43

When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a large crowd gathered round him and he stayed by the lake. Then the president of the synagogue came up, named Jairus, and seeing him, fell at his feet and begged him earnestly, saying, 'My little daughter is desperately sick. Do come and lay your hands on her that she may be saved and may live.' Jesus went with him and a large crowd followed him; they were pressing all round him. Now there was a woman who had suffered from a haemorrhage for twelve years; after long and painful treatment under various doctors, she had spent all she had without being any the better for it; in fact, she was getting worse. She had heard about Jesus, and she came up through the crowd and touched his cloak from behind, thinking, 'If I can just touch his clothes, I shall be saved.' And at once the source of the bleeding dried up, and she felt in herself that she was cured of her complaint. And at once aware of the power that had gone out from him, Jesus turned round in the crowd and said, 'Who touched my clothes?' His disciples said to him, 'You see how the crowd is pressing round you; how can you ask, "Who touched me?" ' But he continued to look all round to see who had done it. Then the woman came forward, frightened and trembling because she knew what had happened to her, and she fell at his feet and told him the whole truth. 'My daughter,' he said, 'your faith has restored you to health; go in peace and be free of your complaint.' While he was still speaking some people arrived from the house of the president of the synagogue to say, 'Your daughter is dead; why put the Master to any further trouble?' But Jesus overheard what they said and he said to the president of the synagogue, 'Do not be afraid; only have faith.' And he allowed no one to go with him except Peter and James and John the brother of James. So they came to the house of the president of the synagogue, and Jesus noticed all the commotion, with people weeping and wailing unrestrainedly. He went in and said to them, 'Why all this commotion and crying? The child is not dead, but asleep.' But they ridiculed him. So he turned them all out and, taking with him the child's father and mother and his own companions, he went into the place where the child lay. And taking the child by the hand he said to her, 'Talitha kum!' which means, 'Little girl, I tell you to get up.' The little girl got up at once and began to walk about, for she was twelve years old. At once they were overcome with astonishment,

and he gave them strict orders not to let anyone know about it, and told them to give her something to eat.

Only have faith

"My little daughter is desperately sick", "A woman who had suffered from a haemorrhage for twelve years", "she was getting worse", "Your daughter is dead". These words convey a sense of human hopelessness. The woman who suffered for twelve years from an incurable sickness and the desperation of a man whose young child was sick are overwhelming situations that continue to speak to us. We face hopeless situations like the never-ending pandemic, sickness, loss of a loved one, depression, family problems, etc. In the face of these circumstances where we feel lost and helpless, faith reminds us to turn to Jesus and let His presence bring us from fear to peace, from sadness to joy.

'Do not be afraid; only have faith'. These words of Jesus to Jairus are meant for us too. We need to remember that Jesus is with us, no matter how dire the situation. The haemorrhaging woman and Jairus were not paralysed by their circumstance but chose to have faith in Jesus. Today, let us focus on Jesus and trust in His love that He has for us.

Question for reflection:

What does it mean for me to live a life of faith?

Wednesday, 2nd February, The Presentation of the Lord.

Malachi 3:1-4, Hebrews 2:14-18, Luke 2:22-40

When the day came for them to be purified in keeping with the Law of Moses, the parents of Jesus 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. Now in Jerusalem there was a man named Simeon. He was an upright and devout man; he looked forward to the restoration of Israel and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death until he had set eyes on the Christ of the Lord. Prompted by the Spirit he came to the Temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the Law required, he took him into his arms and blessed God;

and he said: Now, Master, you are letting your servant go in peace as you promised; for my eyes have seen the salvation which you have made ready in the sight of the nations; a light of revelation for the gentiles and glory for your people Israel. As the child's father and mother were wondering at the things that were being said about him, Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, 'Look, he is destined for the fall and for the rise of many in Israel, destined to be a sign that is opposed- and a sword will pierce your soul too -- so that the secret thoughts of many may be laid bare.' There was a prophetess, too, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was well on in years. Her days of girlhood over, she had been married for seven years before becoming a widow. She was now eighty-four years old and never left the Temple, serving God night and day with fasting and prayer. She came up just at that moment and began to praise God; and she spoke of the child to all who looked forward to the deliverance of Jerusalem. When they had done everything the Law of the Lord required, they went back to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. And as the child grew to maturity, he was filled with wisdom; and God's favour was with him.

The mission is for all

In today's gospel, we see two elderly people, Simeon and Ana, whose faith in God led them to recognise the true identity of Jesus, and they joyfully shared what they understood with those around them. Today, let us appreciate the older people, the Simeons and the Annas, in our midst. We remember with gratefulness all those people, especially our parents and grandparents, who have manifested Jesus through their words and actions. Today, we also celebrate World Day for Consecrated Life. We also give thanks to women and men in consecrated life and pray for their faithfulness to witness Christ to the world today.

The call to be like Simeon and Anna is for everyone. No matter our age and the state of life we are living, we must continue to present Jesus to those around us and bring them to encounter Him, who is the light that never fails to enlighten them.

Question for reflection:

Do my words and actions reveal Jesus to those around me?

**Thursday, 3rd February, St. Blaise, St. Ansgar.
1 Kings 2:1-4, 10-12, Mark 6:7-13**

Jesus made a tour of the villages, teaching. Then he summoned the Twelve and began to send them out in pairs, giving them authority over unclean spirits. And he instructed them to take nothing for the journey except a staff -- no bread, no haversack, no coppers for their purses. They were to wear sandals but, he added, 'Don't take a spare tunic.' And he said to them, 'If you enter a house anywhere, stay there until you leave the district. And if any place does not welcome you and people refuse to listen to you, as you walk away shake off the dust under your feet as evidence to them.' So they set off to proclaim repentance; and they cast out many devils, and anointed many sick people with oil and cured them.

Living mission

In the gospel, as He made a tour of the villages, He sent out His disciples to be part of His mission and help Him reach out to those in need to hear the Good News. Today, Jesus continues to need our help to be His hands, feet, ears and voice. Jesus' life was mission, so our lives too must be mission.

*"My mission of being in the heart of the people is not just a part of my life or a badge I can take off; it is not an "extra" or just another moment in life. Instead, it is something I cannot uproot from my being without destroying my very self. I am a mission on this earth; that is the reason why I am here in this world" (Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*). Today, by serving our family members with joy, reaching out to the poor among us, living with our aches and sickness with peace, speaking a word of hope to someone struggling with sadness, etc., we bring Jesus' presence of love to them. We are living mission!*

Question for reflection:

What is Jesus asking from me today?

**Friday, 4th February, 4th Week in Ordinary Time.
Ecclesiasticus 47: 2-13, Mark 6:14-29**

King Herod had heard about Jesus, since by now his name was well known. Some were saying, 'John the Baptist has risen from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him.' Others said, 'He

is Elijah,' others again, 'He is a prophet, like the prophets we used to have.' But when Herod heard this he said, 'It is John whose head I cut off; he has risen from the dead.' Now it was this same Herod who had sent to have John arrested, and had had him chained up in prison because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife whom he had married. For John had told Herod, 'It is against the law for you to have your brother's wife.' As for Herodias, she was furious with him and wanted to kill him, but she was not able to do so, because Herod was in awe of John, knowing him to be a good and upright man, and gave him his protection. When he had heard him speak he was greatly perplexed, and yet he liked to listen to him. An opportunity came on Herod's birthday when he gave a banquet for the nobles of his court, for his army officers and for the leading figures in Galilee. When the daughter of this same Herodias came in and danced, she delighted Herod and his guests; so the king said to the girl, 'Ask me anything you like and I will give it you.' And he swore her an oath, 'I will give you anything you ask, even half my kingdom.' She went out and said to her mother, 'What shall I ask for?' She replied, 'The head of John the Baptist.' The girl at once rushed back to the king and made her request, 'I want you to give me John the Baptist's head, immediately, on a dish.' The king was deeply distressed but, thinking of the oaths he had sworn and of his guests, he was reluctant to break his word to her. At once the king sent one of the bodyguard with orders to bring John's head. The man went off and beheaded him in the prison; then he brought the head on a dish and gave it to the girl, and the girl gave it to her mother. When John's disciples heard about this, they came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.

Lover of God's truth

John the Baptist was God's prophet. He spoke the truth to all, even powerful people, like Herod and Herodias. He openly denounced Herod for taking his brother's wife and marrying her. Because of this, John the Baptist was imprisoned by Herod and beheaded at the whims of Herodias. He spoke the truth and paid the price. In the same way, Jesus spoke God's truth, and rocked the boat of the religious leaders. In the end, He was crucified.

Today, this gospel passage is a call for us to have the courage to live out the values of the gospel and dare to speak the truth out of love, in

the same way Jesus and John the Baptist did. It is easy to say, "*I better keep quiet and mind my own business*" or "*I do not have the power to influence anyone*", etc. Sometimes, fear of what others think of us can make us silence the truth. Instead, let us have the courage to stand for the truth, no matter the consequences.

Question for reflection:

How do I respond in the face of lies, dishonesty and injustice?

Saturday, 5th February, St. Agatha.

1 Kings 3:4-13, Mark 6:30-34

The apostles rejoined Jesus and told him all they had done and taught. And he said to them, 'Come away to some lonely place all by yourselves and rest for a while'; for there were so many coming and going that there was no time for them even to eat. So they went off in the boat to a lonely place where they could be by themselves. But people saw them going, and many recognised them; and from every town they all hurried to the place on foot and reached it before them. So as he 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.

To respond with compassion

In the gospel, Jesus had plans to bring His disciples to a lonely place to be by themselves to rest after working hard in the mission field. In the same way, Jesus invites us to dare to rest because there is more to life than work. Rest is a time for us to take a step back to perceive and appreciate God's action in our lives and the lives around us and be grateful for all the blessings we have received.

When Jesus and His disciples reached the place, a large crowd greeted them. His plan was interrupted. He could have sent the people away or even tried to escape from them. Instead, however, Jesus had compassion on them, and he began to nourish their spiritual hunger. Often, we experience our schedules not coming as we would like them to be because of the interruptions from people as they bring their needs to us. Do we react with annoyance or compassion? Today, let us allow Jesus to show us the way to love by looking at others with the eyes of a shepherd.

Question for reflection:

What is the message for me as I pray with this gospel passage?

Sunday, 6th February, Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time.

Isaiah 6:1-8, 1 Corinthians 15:1-11, Luke 5:1-11

Jesus was standing one day by the Lake of Gennesaret, with the crowd pressing round him listening to the word of God, when he caught sight of two boats at the water's edge. The fishermen had got out of them and were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats -- it was Simon's - - and asked him to put out a little from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. When he had finished speaking he said to Simon, 'Put out into deep water and pay out your nets for a catch.' Simon replied, 'Master, we worked hard all night long and caught nothing, but if you say so, I will pay out the nets.' And when they had done this they netted such a huge number of fish that their nets began to tear, so they signalled to their companions in the other boat to come and help them; when these came, they filled both boats to sinking point. When Simon Peter saw this he fell at the knees of Jesus saying, 'Leave me, Lord; I am a sinful man.' For he and all his companions were completely awestruck at the catch they had made; so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were Simon's partners. But Jesus said to Simon, 'Do not be afraid; from now on it is people you will be catching.' Then, bringing their boats back to land they left everything and followed him.

If you say so...

In today's gospel, we are presented with Jesus' encounter with Simon Peter. At this point of the story, Peter was disappointed by a rather unsuccessful night catching fish. When Jesus told Peter to push his boat to deeper water and let his nets once more for a catch, Peter as an experienced fisherman, knew that it would be a futile task. He expressed his frustration to Jesus, "*Master, we worked hard all night long and caught nothing...*" but he also added, "*...if you say so, I will pay out the nets*". These four essential words: "*If you say so*" led Peter to take a step of faith that changed his life completely.

Failures and disappointments are experiences that we all encounter as we journey through life. Yet, the Good News is that Jesus is in our boats,

our lives. Out of love, He draws out new life from our disheartening moments. All He needs from us is our trust and to repeat those words of Peter, "*Lord, if you say so, I trust.*"

Questions for reflection:

Do I find it difficult at this stage of my life to say, "*Lord, if you say so...*"? Why?

Monday, 7th February, 5th Week in Ordinary Time.

1 Kings 8:1-7, 9-13, Mark 6:53-56

Having made the crossing, Jesus and his disciples came to land at Gennesaret and moored there. When they disembarked people at once recognised him, and started hurrying all through the countryside and brought the sick on stretchers to wherever they heard he was. And wherever he went, to village or town or farm, they laid down the sick in the open spaces, begging him to let them touch even the fringe of his cloak. And all those who touched him were saved.

Recognising Jesus, they hurried to Him

Crowds of people "*at once*" recognised Jesus and hurried to Him through the countryside. The phrase "*at once*" highlighted that there was no hesitation for the people at Gennesaret. They saw Jesus with eyes of faith and knew that He could help them heal their loved ones who were sick. Unfortunately, we sometimes fail to recognise Jesus in our midst. We think He is not with us or our loved ones as we struggle with sickness, loss, failures, depression, etc. If only we open our eyes of faith to perceive His presence and recognise that He is at work in our daily lives.

The people brought their sick on stretchers to wherever they heard He was. This is a beautiful image to ponder in this time of prayer: The sick could not go to where Jesus was, and so, they were brought to Him by those who could. Today, we are also invited lead our friends and family members who are sick, vulnerable and weak to Jesus. We can do so by praying for them and sharing God's life-giving words with them.

Question for reflection:

What prevents me from recognising Jesus' presence in my daily life?

**Tuesday, 8th February, St. Jerome Emiliani, St. Josephine Bakhita.
1 Kings 8:22-23, 27-30, Mark 7:1-13**

The Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered round Jesus, and they noticed that some of his disciples were eating with unclean hands, that is, without washing them. For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, keep the tradition of the elders and never eat without washing their arms as far as the elbow; and on returning from the market place they never eat without first sprinkling themselves. There are also many other observances which have been handed down to them to keep, concerning the washing of cups and pots and bronze dishes. So the Pharisees and scribes asked him, 'Why do your disciples not respect the tradition of the elders but eat their food with unclean hands?' He answered, 'How rightly Isaiah prophesied about you hypocrites in the passage of scripture: This people honours me only with lip-service, while their hearts are far from me. Their reverence of me is worthless; the lessons they teach are nothing but human commandments. You put aside the commandment of God to observe human traditions.' And he said to them, 'How ingeniously you get round the commandment of God in order to preserve your own tradition! For Moses said: Honour your father and your mother, and, Anyone who curses father or mother must be put to death. But you say, "If a man says to his father or mother: Anything I have that I might have used to help you is Korban (that is, dedicated to God)," then he is forbidden from that moment to do anything for his father or mother. In this way you make God's word ineffective for the sake of your tradition which you have handed down. And you do many other things like this.'

To re-centre on the essential: Love God and others

The Pharisees and the scribes looked at Jesus with critical eyes because His disciples did not respect the traditions passed down by the elders. These religious leaders were so caught up with observing rules that they forgot the most essential, i.e. to follow the commandment of God. Today, it is easy for us to judge the Pharisees and the scribes for their narrow-mindedness. However, this gospel passage invites us to look at ourselves and see if we, too, tend to become like them.

Today, Jesus calls us to focus on what is truly essential. We cannot forget that He has given us the commandment to love. This implies putting God at the centre of our lives and following His values of truth,

justice and peace. It also indicates that we should love our fellow brothers and sisters by getting rid of hatred and anger, and work for unity and forgiveness. Love is what matters! Let us not just honour God with lip service but commit ourselves to live out His commandment to love.

Question for reflection:

Do I tend to judge others and forget to put loving others into practice?

Wednesday, 9th February, 5th Week in Ordinary Time.

1 Kings 10:1-10, Mark 7:14-23

Jesus called the people to him again and said, 'Listen to me, all of you, and understand. Nothing that goes into someone from outside can make that person unclean; it is the things that come out of someone that make that person unclean. Anyone who has ears for listening should listen!' When he had gone into the house, away from the crowd, his disciples questioned him about the parable. He said to them, 'Even you -- don't you understand? Can't you see that nothing that goes into someone from outside can make that person unclean, because it goes not into the heart but into the stomach and passes into the sewer? And he went on, 'It is what comes out of someone that makes that person unclean. For it is from within, from the heart, that evil intentions emerge: fornication, theft, murder, adultery, avarice, malice, deceit, indecency, envy, slander, pride, folly. All these evil things come from within and make a person unclean.'

Blessed the pure in heart

Today's gospel is a continuation of the one from yesterday. The Pharisees and the scribes were concerned with external rituals. For Jesus, the state of the heart is more important because it determines how we relate to God and others. What matters is not the ritual washings or the type of food we eat but whether our heart is clean or dirty. Thus, it is pointless if we scrupulously abstain from meat on Fridays and fast on other days, but we harbour hatred and speak badly of others. Food goes to the stomach and exits from our bodies. It cannot affect our relationship with God and others. Therefore, in the gospel passage, Jesus declared, "*For it is from within, from the heart, that evil intentions emerge*".

Our judgemental thoughts, ugly words, discriminatory attitudes, and uncaring actions come from a tainted, defiled heart. In this time of prayer, let us look deep into our hearts and see if we have jealousy, envy, pride, anger, etc., embedded within. We humbly turn to God and ask Him to purify our hearts to be more loving, compassionate, and forgiving.

Question for reflection:

What emerges from my heart?

Thursday, 10th February, St. Scholastica.

1 Kings 11:4-13, Mark 7:24-30

Jesus left that place and set out for the territory of Tyre. There he went into a house and did not want anyone to know he was there; but he could not pass unrecognised. At once a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit heard about him and came and fell at his feet. Now this woman was a gentile, by birth a Syro-Phoenician, and she begged him to drive the devil out of her daughter. And he said to her, 'The children should be fed first, because it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to little dogs.' But she spoke up, 'Ah yes, sir,' she replied, 'but little dogs under the table eat the scraps from the children.' And he said to her, 'For saying this you may go home happy; the devil has gone out of your daughter.' So she went off home and found the child lying on the bed and the devil gone.

The Syro-Phoenician woman as a model of faith

A non-Jewish woman ran up to Jesus and begged Him to heal her sick daughter. She did not give up when Jesus initially refused her request. His reply to her seemed harsh when He said that the children of Israel should be fed first and then to the “*little dogs*”, i.e. to the gentiles. However, the woman was not discouraged by His reply. She persisted by giving a witty retort that even the little dogs deserved the scraps from the table. Jesus recognised the depth of the woman’s faith and gave her what she wanted.

Today’s gospel invites us to look at the woman’s faith as an example for us. Her faith led her to be persistent in presenting her needs to Jesus. Let us, like the Syro-Phoenician woman, always pray with perseverance. Even if God does not seem to answer our prayer the way we want, we can trust that He knows what He is doing better than we do.

Question for reflection:

How does the story of the Syro-Phoenician woman speak to me today?

Friday, 11th February, Our Lady of Lourdes.

Isaiah 66:10-14, John 2:1-11 (Readings from Optional Memorial of Our Lady of Lourdes)

On the third day 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.

When the wine of life runs out

"The mother of Jesus was there". Isn't it comforting to know that Mary is ever-present in our lives in the same way she was there at the wedding at Cana? Mary noticed that the couples had run out of wine to serve the guests at the wedding. Likewise, Mother Mary is always attentive when we run out of wine. The wine runs out when we find ourselves tired and unmotivated in doing our daily tasks. The wine gives out when we miss living in the present and find ourselves stuck trying to change the past or control the future. Mary notices what we lack, goes to Jesus and tells Him, *"He/she has run out of wine"*.

As our Mother, she wants us to live life to the full. Thus, she tells us, *"Do whatever He tells you"*. It is not our work to change emptiness into fullness, sadness into joyfulness, lack of enthusiasm into passionate

energy. Instead, our task is to turn to Jesus, listen to Him, do what He tells us and discover that He is at work in our lives.

Question for reflection:

What is the wine that has run out in my life today?

Saturday, 12th February, 5th Week in Ordinary Time.

1Kings 12:26-32, 13:33-34, Mark 8:1-10

A great crowd had gathered, and they had nothing to eat. So Jesus called his disciples to him and said to them, 'I feel sorry for all these people; they have been with me for three days now and have nothing to eat. If I send them off home hungry they will collapse on the way; some have come a great distance.' His disciples replied, 'Where could anyone get these people enough bread to eat in a deserted place?' He asked them, 'How many loaves have you?' And they said to him, 'Seven.' Then he instructed the crowd to sit down on the ground, and he took the seven loaves, and after giving thanks he broke them and began handing them to his disciples to distribute; and they distributed them among the crowd. They had a few small fishes as well, and over these he said a blessing and ordered them to be distributed too. They ate as much as they wanted, and they collected seven basketfuls of the scraps left over. Now there had been about four thousand people. He sent them away and at once, getting into the boat with his disciples, went to the region of Dalmanutha.

Endless compassion

A large crowd gathered, and they had nothing to eat. Jesus looked at them with compassion and saw their need to be helped and fed. What about us? Do we look at the people around us with eyes of compassion? Are we aware that there are people who struggle with fear, disappointment and sadness? Or do we look away and do not bother to notice? The disciples asked Jesus, "*Where could anyone get these people enough bread to eat in a deserted place?*", which shows their reluctance to get involved with the problem. Jesus did not reprimand them, but He asked them, "*How many loaves have you?*". When they gave Him all they had, Jesus multiplied the loaves and fed the people.

Today, Jesus invites us to help Him to show care and compassion to His people. Our limited resources can work wonders when we offer them to

Jesus and allow Him to work through us for the good of others. May we offer our small “loaves” to Jesus and trust that they are enough to nourish the lives of many.

Question for reflection:

What is Jesus’ invitation for me as I pray with today’s gospel?

Sunday, 13th February, Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time.

Jeremiah 17:5-8, 1 Corinthians 15:12, 16-20, Luke 6:17, 20-26

Jesus 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 be cured of their diseases. Then fixing his eyes on his disciples he said: “How blessed are you who are poor: the kingdom of God is yours. Blessed are you who are hungry now: you shall have your fill. Blessed are you who are weeping now: you shall laugh. Blessed are you when people hate you, drive you out, abuse you, denounce your name as criminal, on account of the Son of man. Rejoice when that day comes and dance for joy, look!- your reward will be great in heaven. This was the way their ancestors treated the prophets. But alas for you who are rich: you are having your consolation now. Alas for you who have plenty to eat now: you shall go hungry. Alas for you who are laughing now: you shall mourn and weep. Alas for you when everyone speaks well of you! This was the way their ancestors treated the false prophets.”

Happy are you...

Jesus pronounces that the poor, the hungry, the ones suffering and the persecuted are blessed, happy.

“*Blessed are you who are poor...*”: The poor does not just refer to those who are monetarily poor, but also those who are marginalised due to race, age, physical condition, etc. They are happy because God is close to them. “*Blessed are you who are hungry now...*”: The hungry, besides those who suffer from the lack of food, also includes the ones who are hungry for friendship and care. Happiness is theirs because God will satisfy them with His consoling presence. “*Blessed are you who are weeping now...*”: Those who weep are the ones who suffer from grief and those who share God’s compassion for people oppressed by social

injustice and discrimination. God will share His joy with them. “*Blessed are you when people hate you...*”: Those who live the gospel values are often rejected by those who follow the world's ways. God is the one standing by their side. Today, let us strive to walk the same path of Jesus, which is the path of Beatitudes.

Question for reflection:

Do I strive to walk Jesus' way that leads to true happiness?

Monday, 14th February, SS. Cyril and Methodius.

James 1:1-11, Mark 8:11-13

The Pharisees came up and started a discussion with Jesus; they demanded of him a sign from heaven, to put him to the test. And with a profound sigh he said, 'Why does this generation demand a sign? In truth I tell you, no sign shall be given to this generation.' And, leaving them again, he re-embarked and went away to the other side.

Loving the “Pharisees” in our lives

In today's gospel passage, the Pharisees came to look for Jesus to discuss and argue with Him. “*And with a profound sigh...*” which expresses His deep exasperation at the stubbornness of the religious leaders. He then said, “*Why does this generation demand a sign?...*’ He knew that He could never do anything to convince them because they had rejected Him and His message. After saying this, He left them by going to the other side of the lake.

We have encountered many “Pharisees” or people who want to make life difficult with their arguments, needs, and their finding faults with what we do. Each time they approach us, our energy seems to drain away. Although our task is never to stop loving them, we also need to recognise that it is alright sometimes to disengage and walk away for a little while. Then, we go back to Jesus in prayer and allow ourselves to be renewed by Him so that we can have the inner strength to reach out to them again.

Question for reflection:

With the help of Jesus, how can I deal with difficult people in my life?

Tuesday, 15th February, 6th Week in Ordinary Time.

James 1:12-18, Mark 8:14-21

The disciples had forgotten to take any bread and they had only one loaf with them in the boat. Then Jesus gave them this warning, 'Keep your eyes open; look out for the yeast of the Pharisees and the yeast of Herod.' And they said to one another, 'It is because we have no bread.' And Jesus knew it, and he said to them, 'Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not understand, still not realise? Are your minds closed? Have you eyes and do not see, ears and do not hear? Or do you not remember? When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of scraps did you collect?' They answered, 'Twelve.' 'And when I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many baskets full of scraps did you collect?' And they answered, 'Seven.' Then he said to them, 'Do you still not realise?'

Moving our gaze from our “one loaf” to Jesus

In today's gospel, the disciples started to worry about not having enough bread for their journey. They were distracted at what they lacked to the point that they forgot to look at WHO they had with them in the boat.

We can identify ourselves with these disciples. In life, we often look at our “one loaf” to the extent that we become excessively worried and anxious. The “one loaf” moments are when we find that we do not have enough resources to deal with a problem, do not know the next step to take, do not have enough patience with a difficult person, etc. Jesus, ever so patient, reminds us to turn our gaze from that “one loaf” back to Him. He, who multiplied loaves to feed thousands of people, will continue to help us in our needs. He knows what we truly need and will give us what is good for us. May we never lose sight of Jesus, who is always in our boats, in our lives.

Question for reflection:

Do I fully trust Jesus to give me what I truly need?

Wednesday, 16th February, 6th Week in Ordinary Time.

James 1:19-27, Mark 8:22-26

Jesus and his disciples came to Bethsaida, and some people brought to him a blind man whom they begged him to touch. He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. Then, putting spittle on his

eyes and laying his hands on him, he asked, 'Can you see anything?' The man, who was beginning to see, replied, 'I can see people; they look like trees as they walk around.' Then he laid his hands on the man's eyes again and he saw clearly; he was cured, and he could see everything plainly and distinctly. And Jesus sent him home, saying, 'Do not even go into the village.'

Patient love

"He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village". This tender act of Jesus reveals His desire to be alone with the blind man. Let us recognise that Jesus wants to lead us away from the busyness of our lives and the noises of our gadgets to be alone with us. When we are with Jesus in solitude, it is there where we find ourselves renewed and loved by Him.

Alone with the blind man, Jesus healed him gradually. Why? Notice that the blind man did not seek healing on his own, but his friends were the ones who brought him to Jesus. This reveals that he did not have much faith in Jesus. By gradually opening his eyes to see, Jesus led the man to experience the love of God and to grow in faith and trust in Him. It is a comforting message for us. Jesus does not demand from us great faith to draw us to Himself. Instead, he meets us where we are, tends to our needs and leads us always to grow deeper in our faith in God.

Question for reflection:

Am I willing to be led by Jesus to a place of solitude with Him?

Thursday, 17th February, Seven Holy Founders of the Servite Order. James 2: 1-9, Mark 8:27-33

Jesus and his disciples left for the villages round Caesarea Philippi. On the way he put this question to his disciples, 'Who do people say I am?' And they told him, 'John the Baptist, others Elijah, others again, one of the prophets.' 'But you,' he asked them, 'who do you say I am?' Peter spoke up and said to him, 'You are the Christ.' And he gave them strict orders not to tell anyone about him. Then he began to teach them that the Son of man was destined to suffer grievously, and to be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and to be put to death, and after three days to rise again; and he said all this quite openly. Then, taking him aside, Peter tried to rebuke him. But, turning and seeing his

disciples, he rebuked Peter and said to him, 'Get behind me, Satan! You are thinking not as God thinks, but as human beings do.'

You are the Christ and I follow you

Jesus asked His disciples, "*Who do you say I am?*". It was Peter who replied correctly to Jesus' question when he said, "*You are the Christ*". Yet, Peter's understanding of who Jesus was as the Christ was limited and immature. He looked at Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah who would one day lead Israel to victory over the Romans. Thus, when Jesus started speaking about a suffering Messiah, Peter could not accept it and took Him aside to rebuke Him.

We tend towards walking the path of victory, comfort, success and honour. Yet, Jesus has in mind a different way, one that does not reject unavoidable suffering. Today, let us listen to Jesus as He asks us, "*Who do you say I am?*". The answer to His question reveals the depth of our determination to follow after Him.

Question for reflection:

What is my answer to Jesus' question, "*Who do you say I am?*"

Friday, 18th February, 6th Week in Ordinary Time.

James 2:14-24, Mark 8:34-9:1

Jesus called the people and his disciples to him and said, 'If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me. Anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. What gain, then, is it for anyone to win the whole world and forfeit his life? And indeed what can anyone offer in exchange for his life? For if anyone in this sinful and adulterous generation is ashamed of me and of my words, the Son of man will also be ashamed of him when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.' And he said to them, 'In truth I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power.'

Self-denial, cross and following

"*If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me*". To be Jesus' disciple implies: to renounce ourselves, pick up our cross and lastly, follow Him. We are

constantly searching to define ourselves with success, honour, achievement, wealth, pleasure, etc. Yet, Jesus calls us to deny ourselves and put Him at the centre of our lives and allow Him to form our values, shape our character, mould our dreams and influence our decisions. When we say “Yes” to renounce ourselves, Jesus calls us to take the next step is to walk with Him in the path of the cross. We all have different crosses to carry. The important thing is to carry them, not with a self-pity attitude, but with joy and courage.

The reason for denying ourselves and carrying our cross is to follow Jesus, i.e. being another Christ. The call to discipleship is a call to a radical commitment to Jesus. Are we ready to live this call?

Question for reflection:

What does it mean to be Jesus’ disciple?

Saturday, 19th February, 6th Week in Ordinary Time.

James 3:1-10, Mark 9:2-13

Jesus took with him Peter and James and John and led them up a high mountain on their own by themselves. There in their presence he was transfigured: his clothes became brilliantly white, whiter than any earthly bleacher could make them. Elijah appeared to them with Moses; and they were talking to Jesus. Then Peter spoke to Jesus, 'Rabbi,' he said, 'it is wonderful for us to be here; so let us make three shelters, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.' He did not know what to say; they were so frightened. And a cloud came, covering them in shadow; and from the cloud there came a voice, 'This is my Son, the Beloved. Listen to him.' Then suddenly, when they looked round, they saw no one with them any more but only Jesus. As they were coming down from the mountain he warned them to tell no one what they had seen, until after the Son of man had risen from the dead. They observed the warning faithfully, though among themselves they discussed what 'rising from the dead' could mean. And they put this question to him, 'Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?' He said to them, 'Elijah is indeed first coming to set everything right again; yet how is it that the scriptures say about the Son of man that he must suffer grievously and be treated with contempt? But I tell you that Elijah has come and they have treated him as they pleased, just as the scriptures say about him.'

Going up the mountain with Jesus

In today's gospel, Jesus led His disciples, Peter, James and John, up to a high mountain. Each day, Jesus wants to lead us up the mountain of prayer to experience His presence. This is what prayer is all about. There at the mountain, Jesus allowed the three disciples to witness the transfiguration moment. Why? Jesus knew that the disciples were afraid of the future, especially as He had told them that He would soon be condemned to die on the cross. Jesus was transfigured to show them that He was the Light beyond their darkness of fear. When we stay with Jesus on the mountain of prayer, we encounter Him as our Light that shines in our darkness. We need this assuring Light to guide us as we journey through the ups and downs of life.

The voice of God the Father continues to echo to us today, "*This is my Son, the Beloved. Listen to Him*". Let us listen to Jesus, our Friend and Companion, with trust. His word gives us hope and life.

Question for reflection:

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

Sunday, 20th February, Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time.

1 Samuel 26:7-9, 12-13, 22-23, 1 Corinthians 15:45-49, Luke 6:27-38

Jesus said to his disciples, 'I say this to you who are listening: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who treat you badly. To anyone who slaps you on one cheek, present the other cheek as well; to anyone who takes your cloak from you, do not refuse your tunic. Give to everyone who asks you, and do not ask for your property back from someone who takes it. Treat others as you would like people to treat you. If you love those who love you, what credit can you expect? Even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit can you expect? For even sinners do that much. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to get money back, what credit can you expect? Even sinners lend to sinners to get back the same amount. Instead, love your enemies and do good to them, and lend without any hope of return. You will have a great reward, and you will be children of the Most High, for he himself is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be compassionate just as your Father is compassionate. Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and

you will be forgiven. Give, and there will be gifts for you: a full measure, pressed down, shaken together, and overflowing, will be poured into your lap; because the standard you use will be the standard used for you.'

Created to unleash love

"I say this to you who are listening: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you...". Jesus calls us to love those who treat us unkindly. The call to love our enemies and pray for them goes against our natural instinct. Is it possible for us to love so radically? *"Creating the human race in His own image and continually keeping it in being, God inscribed in the humanity of man and woman the vocation, and thus the capacity and responsibility, of love and communion. Love is, therefore, the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being"* (Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio* 11). The good news is that we, who have been created in God's image, have the inner capacity to love like Him.

"Be compassionate just as your Father is compassionate". God's love is unconditional and merciful. As God's beloved children, let us exercise our capacity to love like Him, especially the difficult people in our lives. In this time of prayer, may we experience being loved by God so that we can rise to the call to love.

Question for reflection:

How can I respond to Jesus' call to love?

Monday, 21st February, St. Peter Damian.

James 3:13-18, Mark 9:14-29

When Jesus, with Peter, James and John came down from the mountain and rejoined the disciples they saw a large crowd round them and some scribes arguing with them. At once, when they saw him, the whole crowd were struck with amazement and ran to greet him. And he asked them, 'What are you arguing about with them?' A man answered him from the crowd, 'Master, I have brought my son to you; there is a spirit of dumbness in him, and when it takes hold of him it throws him to the ground, and he foams at the mouth and grinds his teeth and goes rigid. And I asked your disciples to drive it out and they were unable to.' In reply he said to them, 'Faithless generation, how much longer must I be among you? How much longer must I put up with you? Bring him to me.'

They brought the boy to him, and at once the spirit of dumbness threw the boy into convulsions, and he fell to the ground and lay writhing there, foaming at the mouth. Jesus asked the father, 'How long has this been happening to him?' 'From childhood,' he said, 'and it has often thrown him into fire and into water, in order to destroy him. But if you can do anything, have pity on us and help us.' 'If you can?' retorted Jesus. 'Everything is possible for one who has faith.' At once the father of the boy cried out, 'I have faith. Help my lack of faith!' And when Jesus saw that a crowd was gathering, he rebuked the unclean spirit. 'Deaf and dumb spirit,' he said, 'I command you: come out of him and never enter him again.' Then it threw the boy into violent convulsions and came out shouting, and the boy lay there so like a corpse that most of them said, 'He is dead.' But Jesus took him by the hand and helped him up, and he was able to stand. When he had gone indoors, his disciples asked him when they were by themselves, 'Why were we unable to drive it out?' He answered, 'This is the kind that can be driven out only by prayer.'

Help my lack of faith!

“...And I asked your disciples to drive it out and they were unable to”. A man went up to the disciples and asked them to heal his sick son. The disciples tried but could not. We could identify with the disciples and the father, too, as we encounter overwhelming situations that are more than we could handle, for example, a marital problem, children living in upsetting situations, a loved one suffering from depression, etc.

“*I have faith. Help my lack of faith!*”. The father affirmed that he had faith but admitted that his faith was not as strong as it should be. He asked Jesus to help him increase his faith, to help him trust more and depend on God more. With the little faith of this man, Jesus healed his son. Let us learn from the father in the gospel. Instead of blaming God for what happens in our lives, let us recognise that we need Him. With our little faith, it is enough for Jesus to meet us in our needs.

Question for reflection:

Have I struggled to believe in the loving goodness of God?

Tuesday, 22nd February, Chair of St. Peter, the Apostle.

1 Peter 5:1-4, Matthew 16:13-19

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi he put this question to his disciples, 'Who do people say the Son of man is?' And they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' 'But you,' he said, 'who do you say I am?' Then Simon Peter spoke up and said, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Jesus replied, 'Simon son of Jonah, you are a blessed man! Because it was no human agency that revealed this to you but my Father in heaven. So I now say to you: You are Peter and on this rock I will build my community. And the gates of the underworld can never overpower it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of Heaven: whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.'

You are the rock

When Jesus asked His disciples, “*Who do you say I am?*”, it was Peter who responded by saying, “*You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God*”. This question of Jesus is one that we need to answer personally and honestly. It challenges us to grasp the depth of our faith. In this moment of prayer, let us ask ourselves: Who is Jesus for me at this stage of my life? Have I experienced Him real in my life?

“*You are Peter and on this rock I will build my community*”. With these words, Simon became Peter and most importantly, he was given the task to be the rock on which Jesus would build His community, His church. We are also called to be strong foundations upon which the faith of our family, friends and faith communities is built. We can be sturdy rocks for others when we ourselves have Jesus as our Rock, our Firm Foundation. May we experience Jesus’ sustaining presence today!

Question for reflection:

What is my honest response to Jesus’ question, “*Who do you say I am?*”?

Wednesday, 23rd February, St. Polycarp.

James 4:13-17, Mark 9:38-40

John said to Jesus, 'Master, we saw someone who is not one of us driving out devils in your name, and because he was not one of us we

tried to stop him.' But Jesus said, 'You must not stop him; no one who works a miracle in my name could soon afterwards speak evil of me. Anyone who is not against us is for us.'

A heart of love, not jealousy

"... we saw someone who is not one of us driving out devils in your name, and because he was not one of us we tried to stop him". These words of John revealed the disciples' inner jealousy towards the success of the "outsider" who was working for the good of others. Instead of rejoicing that this man was doing good, they were jealous of him. Jealousy continues to cause pain and separation in our parishes, faith communities, families, etc. We might have experienced being put down by others because others felt threatened by our ideas and initiatives. We might also have been the ones who compare ourselves with others and feel overly possessive about our areas of responsibility.

Today, let us recognise if jealousy is lurking in our hearts. Jealousy and envy lead us to compare ourselves with others. We must always work for communion, never division. May we ask for the grace to have a heart that is empty of jealousy but filled with love that can rejoice with others and appreciate the gifts of others.

Question for reflection:

Do I have the heart of love to recognise the goodness of my brothers and sisters?

Thursday, 24th February, 7th Week in Ordinary Time.

James 5:1-6, Mark 9:41-50

Jesus said to his disciples: 'If anyone gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ, then in truth I tell you, he will most certainly not lose his reward. But anyone who is the downfall of one of these little ones who have faith, would be better thrown into the sea with a great millstone hung round his neck. And if your hand should be your downfall, cut it off; it is better for you to enter into life crippled, than to have two hands and go to hell, into the fire that can never be put out. And if your foot should be your downfall, cut it off; it is better for you enter into life lame, than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. And if your eye should be your downfall, tear it out; it is better for you to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than to have two eyes and be thrown

into hell where their worm will never die nor their fire be put out. For everyone will be salted with fire. Salt is a good thing, but if salt has become insipid, how can you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves and be at peace with one another.'

The task to lead people to God

"But anyone who is the downfall of one of these little ones who have faith, would be better thrown into the sea with a great millstone hung round his neck. And if your hand should be your downfall, cut it off...". Jesus is not encouraging us to cut off our hands, feet, eye physically. Instead, by using these vivid images, He wants to shake us up so that we can come to our senses and not take our discipleship so lightly. Thus, we need to allow Jesus to work in us and lead us to constant conversion, not to be a scandal that causes others to lose faith.

This implies cutting off jealousy, envy, pride, selfishness, prejudices, etc., that can cause us to become stumbling blocks for others to grow in their knowledge and love for God. May our words and actions be stepping stones for others to Jesus, and not be stumbling blocks that cause them to lose their way to Him.

Question for reflection:

How can I become the disciple that Jesus has called me to be?

Friday, 25th February, 7th Week in Ordinary Time.

James 5:9-12, Mark 10:1-12

Jesus came into the territory of Judaea and Transjordan. And again crowds gathered round him, and again he taught them, as his custom was. Some Pharisees approached him 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.'

God's desire for us is to love

In today's gospel passage, some Pharisees asked Jesus about the question of divorce in the context of marriage. Today, let us look at the passage by going beyond commitment in marriages and reflecting on our different commitments in our lives.

In marriage, two people make a lifelong commitment of faithful love. However, it is not just in marriage but also in family life where parents commit themselves to accept and to care for their children so that they are free to be who they are meant to be. Children also commit themselves to love and respect their parents and not despise them in their old age. Good friends commit to being there for each other in the ups and downs of life. According to Jesus, Moses allowed divorce because of the people's hardness of hearts. However, it was not the original plan of God. God always desires unity, i.e. unity in marriage, family life and friendships.

Question for reflection:

Do I struggle to commit myself to love with God's love in my marriage, family life, and friendship?

Saturday, 26th February, 7th Week in Ordinary Time.

James 5:13-20, Mark 10:13-16

People were bringing little children to Jesus, 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.

Let the children come to Me

In today's gospel, many people brought their children to Jesus. However, His disciples stopped them because perhaps they felt that Jesus had more important things to attend than to be with the little children. However, Jesus was upset with His disciples. For Him, He welcomed the

little children and all whom the world may see as insignificant. He said, *“Let the children come to me; do not stop them...”*. The message for us is clear. In the same way that Jesus welcomed children, we should do the same. As parents, grandparents, godparents, aunts/uncles, teachers, etc., we should be aware of our responsibility to lead them to Jesus.

“...to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs”. Jesus is also calling us to be like little children, i.e., be more child-like in our trust in Him. We often become more cynical, judgemental, and self-sufficient as we grow older. We end up keeping Jesus at a distance. Today, let us be like little children and go to Him with loving trust.

Question for reflection:

How can I grow to become more child-like in my trust in God?

Sunday, 27th February, 8th Sunday in Ordinary Time.

Ecclesiasticus 27:4-7, 1 Corinthians 15:54-58, Luke 6:39-45

Jesus told his disciples a parable, 'Can one blind person guide another? Surely both will fall into a pit? Disciple is not superior to teacher; but fully trained disciple will be like teacher. Why do you observe the splinter in your brother's eye and never notice the great log in your own? How can you say to your brother, "Brother, let me take out that splinter in your eye," when you cannot see the great log in your own? Hypocrite! Take the log out of your own eye first, and then you will see clearly enough to take out the splinter in your brother's eyes. 'There is no sound tree that produces rotten fruit, nor again a rotten tree that produces sound fruit. Every tree can be told by its own fruit: people do not pick figs from thorns, nor gather grapes from brambles. Good people draw what is good from the store of goodness in their hearts; bad people draw what is bad from the store of badness. For the words of the mouth flow out of what fills the heart.'

No to judging, yes to kindness

Let us take time to examine ourselves as we ponder upon these words of Jesus, *“Why do you observe the splinter in your brother's eye and never notice the great log in your own?”*. Jesus is not telling us to be blind towards others' faults, but instead, He stresses the importance of us needing to take note of our own failings first. When we know the many

logs of inadequacies we have, we will become less judgemental and more gentle in our dealings with people. The problem is that we tend to focus on others' weaknesses and judge them by putting them down, gossiping about them, etc. Thus, as our Master and Teacher, Jesus wants us to be more kind towards others.

“Good people draw what is good from the store of goodness in their hearts...”. As Jesus' disciples, we must strive for coherence in the sense that who we are inside and what we do outside must be the same. It is not just about doing good deeds but having an honest and pure heart like Jesus.

Question for reflection:

Am I ready to follow Jesus in the way He loves?

Monday, 28th February, 8th Week in Ordinary Time.

1 Peter 1:3-9, Mark 10:17-27

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.'

God is our treasure

In today's gospel, the man asked the right question but did not dare to follow through when presented with the answer. He asked Jesus, "*Good master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?*" Jesus answered him with a set of commandments that this man had religiously obeyed since he was young. He wanted more. Imagine his shock when Jesus challenged him to give away his wealth to attain the true treasure, i.e. God. The man went away sad because he had placed all his security in his wealth and possessions.

Is Jesus against money and having worldly possessions? Jesus is not against wealth, but he cautions us not to allow the things we have to possess our hearts, direct our will and influence our way of life and love. In this time of silent prayer, let us allow ourselves to be loved by God and have the courage to follow Jesus. With God in our lives, we do not need to have wealth and the things we own to give us the hope and security we need.

Question for reflection:

What prevents me from following Jesus wholeheartedly?



Painting by Mike Moyers