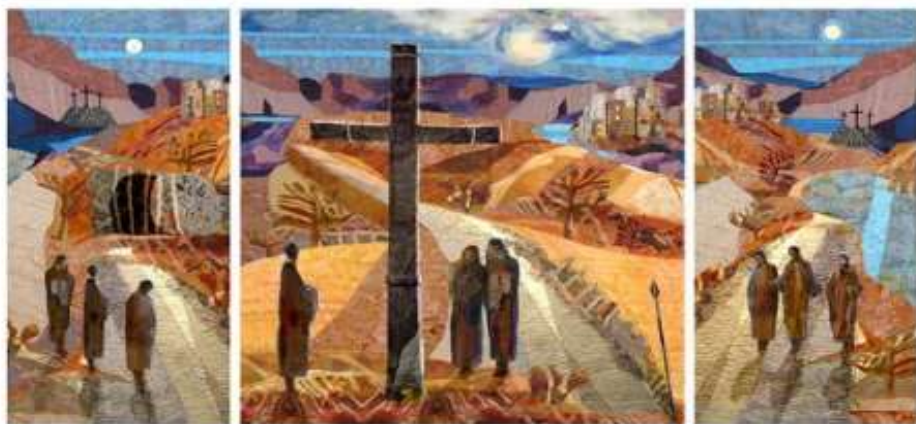


*God's love is stronger
than death*



PRAYER FOR LIVING

*DAILY REFLECTIONS FOR
LITURGICAL YEAR C~
APRIL 2022*

Sr. Sandra Seow

PRAYER FOR LIVING YEAR C

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Friday, 1st April, 4th Week of Lent.

Wisdom 2:1, 12-22, John 7:1-2, 10, 25-30

Jesus travelled round Galilee; he could not travel round Judaea, because the Jews were seeking to kill him. As the Jewish feast of Shelters drew near, after his brothers had left for the festival, he went up as well, not publicly but secretly. Meanwhile some of the people of Jerusalem were saying, 'Isn't this the man they want to kill? And here he is, speaking openly, and they have nothing to say to him! Can it be true the authorities have recognised that he is the Christ? Yet we all know where he comes from, but when the Christ appears no one will know where he comes from.' Then, as Jesus was teaching in the Temple, he cried out: You know me and you know where I came from. Yet I have not come of my own accord: but he who sent me is true; You do not know him, but I know him because I have my being from him and it was he who sent me. They wanted to arrest him then, but because his hour had not yet come no one laid a hand on him.

Nothing could stop Jesus

In today's gospel, the Jewish religious leaders wanted to get rid of Jesus because they were against His teaching and activities that were not in line with the religious system of rites and sacrifices. They disapproved of Jesus' teaching about God's forgiving and merciful love towards all. They were scandalous by Jesus' kindness towards those they deemed to be sinners. Jesus, knowing that His life was in danger, neither softened His message nor changed the way He lived His life.

"...I know him because I have my being from him and it was he who sent me". Jesus was clear that He had come from God and that God was the one who sent him. This certainty gave Him the trust to carry on loving the sinners and the excluded, no matter if others were offended by His words and actions. Today, we are invited to imitate Jesus by staying faithful to our God-given mission, even when it is hard to live out our Christian faith in the places where we are.

Question for reflection:

How would I respond when people reject and criticise me for my Catholic faith and for trying to live the gospel values?

Saturday, 2nd April, 4th Week of Lent.

Jeremiah 11:18-20, John 7:40-52

Some of the crowd who had been listening to Jesus said, 'He is indeed the prophet,' and some said, 'He is the Christ,' but others said, 'Would the Christ come from Galilee? Does not scripture say that the Christ must be descended from David and come from Bethlehem, the village where David was?' So the people could not agree about him. Some wanted to arrest him, but no one actually laid a hand on him. The guards went back to the chief priests and Pharisees who said to them, 'Why haven't you brought him?' The guards replied, 'No one has ever spoken like this man.' 'So,' the Pharisees answered, 'you, too, have been led astray? Have any of the authorities come to believe in him? Any of the Pharisees? This rabble knows nothing about the Law -- they are damned.' One of them, Nicodemus -- the same man who had come to Jesus earlier -- said to them, 'But surely our Law does not allow us to pass judgement on anyone without first giving him a hearing and discovering what he is doing?' To this they answered, 'Are you a Galilean too? Go into the matter, and see for yourself: prophets do not arise in Galilee.'

To be the lone voice for Jesus' sake

In today's gospel, the religious authorities were determined to arrest Jesus because they considered Him as a threat. Yet, despite being surrounded by his peers, one person was courageous enough to stand up for Jesus and challenge their prejudices against Him. His name was Nicodemus. He insisted that Jesus deserved to have a just hearing before being condemned. For expressing His opinion, Nicodemus found himself criticised by the rest.

We often go along with the crowd's consensus, even if it goes against our values and beliefs. We do so because we want to avoid conflicts, appear 'cool', be accepted, etc. However, to be a Christian implies to be the Nicodemus of today. We need to risk being criticised by our peers and have the courage to witness for Christ and speak up for justice and truth. Today, let us ask Jesus for the gift of courage.

Question for reflection:

Am I able to speak up for what I believe?

Sunday, 3rd April, Fifth Sunday of Lent.

Isaiah 43:16-21, Philippians 3:8-14, John 8:1-11

Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. At daybreak he appeared in the Temple again; and as all the people came to him, he sat down and began to teach them. The scribes and Pharisees brought a woman along who had been caught committing adultery; and making her stand there in the middle they said to Jesus, 'Master, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery, and in the Law Moses has ordered us to stone women of this kind. What have you got to say?' They asked him this as a test, looking for an accusation to use against him. But Jesus bent down and started writing on the ground with his finger. As they persisted with their question, he straightened up and said, 'Let the one among you who is guiltless be the first to throw a stone at her.' Then he bent down and continued writing on the ground. When they heard this they went away one by one, beginning with the eldest, until the last one had gone and Jesus was left alone with the woman, who remained in the middle. Jesus again straightened up and said, 'Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?' 'No one, sir,' she replied. 'Neither do I condemn you,' said Jesus. 'Go away, and from this moment sin no more.'

No sinner is beyond the love of God

In today's gospel, the Pharisees brought an adulterous woman to Jesus. They wanted to stone her to death. Jesus acknowledged that the woman had sinned, but He recognised that she was a person loved by God. He looked at her potential to change and live again. The Pharisees wanted to throw stones of condemnation, but Jesus threw love by forgiving her and offering her another chance to live differently.

No matter the sins we committed, God is always ready to draw close to us, not condemn us, but forgive us. In His love, He always calls us to go beyond where we are and choose to be the persons He has created us to be. Today, let us listen to Jesus as He tells us, "*I do not condemn you. Go but do not sin again*". Let us not be like the Pharisees and set ourselves as morally superior to others. Instead, let us take the path of forgiveness, not condemnation, so that we can love as Jesus loved.

Question for reflection:

Do I tend to throw condemnation or forgiveness?

Monday, 4th April, 5th Week of Lent.

Daniel 13:1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33-62, John 8:12-20

When Jesus spoke to the people again, he said: "I am the light of the world; anyone who follows me will not be walking in the dark, but will have the light of life." At this the Pharisees said to him, 'You are testifying on your own behalf; your testimony is not true.' Jesus replied: Even though I am testifying on my own behalf, my testimony is still true, because I know where I have come from and where I am going; but you do not know where I come from or where I am going. You judge by human standards; I judge no one, but if I judge, my judgement will be true, because I am not alone: the one who sent me is with me; and in your Law it is written that the testimony of two witnesses is true. I testify on my own behalf, but the Father who sent me testifies on my behalf, too. They asked him, 'Where is your Father then?' Jesus answered: You do not know me, nor do you know my Father; if you did know me, you would know my Father as well. He spoke these words in the Treasury, while teaching in the Temple. No one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come.

Love the Light, walk in the Light

As we draw closer to the final week of Lent, St. John the evangelist presents to us the controversies regarding the question of Jesus' identity. Who is Jesus? Today, let us listen to Jesus as He tells us personally, "*I am the light of the world; anyone who follows me will not be walking in the dark, but will have the light of life*". Jesus is the light of the world and our lives. As light, He illuminates the meaning of our human existence and how we should live our lives. As we walk in His light, we align our lives with Jesus' values of love, compassion and truth, and nothing we do and say is in conflict with Jesus and what He stands for.

In today's gospel, the people who heard Jesus declaring Himself to be the light could not accept His message. What about us? "*The Lord shall be your light forever*" (Isaiah 60:19). Jesus wants to be our light forever. Let us choose to love the light and walk in the light.

Question for reflection:

What does it mean for me to have Jesus as the light of the world?

Tuesday, 5th April, 5th Week of Lent.

Numbers 21:4-9, John 8: 21-30

Jesus said to the Pharisees: 'I am going away; you will look for me and you will die in your sin. Where I am going, you cannot come.' So the Jews said to one another, 'Is he going to kill himself, that he says, "Where I am going, you cannot come?" ' Jesus went on: 'You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. I have told you already: You will die in your sins. Yes, if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.' So they said to him, 'Who are you?' Jesus answered: 'What I have told you from the outset. About you I have much to say and much to judge; but the one who sent me is true, and what I declare to the world I have learnt from him.' They did not recognise that he was talking to them about the Father. So Jesus said: 'When you have lifted up the Son of man, then you will know that I am He and that I do nothing of my own accord. What I say is what the Father has taught me; he who sent me is with me, and has not left me to myself, for I always do what pleases him.' As he was saying this, many came to believe in him.

When you lifted up the Son of man...

In today's gospel, it is the continuation of Jesus' discourse with the Jews regarding His identity. They heard Jesus, and still could not grasp what He was saying, and so they asked Him, "*Who are you?*".

Jesus is the one who reveals God. "*When you have lifted up the Son of man, then you will know that I am He*". When He is lifted on the cross and at the point of being the most vulnerable and weakest, He is expressing the fullness of God's love. On the cross, God in Jesus suffers and dies to be in communion with all who suffer. On the cross, Jesus, God in human form, shows that God is not found in power, riches, and glory, but in helplessness, vulnerability, suffering and death. Today, in our own crosses of pain, loss, failure, death, let us recognise that we are not alone because Jesus, God's love incarnated, continues to suffer with us and is close to us.

Question for reflection:

Do I know who Jesus truly is?

Wednesday, 6th April, 5th Week of Lent.

Daniel 3:14-20, John 8:31-42

To the Jews who believed in him Jesus said: 'If you make my word your home you will indeed be my disciples; you will come to know the truth, and the truth will set you free.' They answered, 'We are descended from Abraham and we have never been the slaves of anyone; what do you mean, "You will be set free?"' Jesus replied: 'In all truth I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave. Now a slave has no permanent standing in the household, but a son belongs to it for ever. So if the Son sets you free, you will indeed be free. I know that you are descended from Abraham; but you want to kill me because my word finds no place in you. What I speak of is what I have seen at my Father's side, and you too put into action the lessons you have learnt from your father.' They repeated, 'Our father is Abraham.' Jesus said to them: 'If you are Abraham's children, do as Abraham did. As it is, you want to kill me, a man who has told you the truth as I have learnt it from God; that is not what Abraham did. You are doing your father's work.' They replied, 'We were not born illegitimate, the only father we have is God.' Jesus answered: 'If God were your father, you would love me, since I have my origin in God and have come from him; I did not come of my own accord, but he sent me.'

True freedom is the freedom to love

"So if the Son sets you free, you will indeed be free". What is freedom for you? Freedom means different things to different people. Today, Jesus presents us His freedom, which is the true freedom to love as He loves. In the gospels, Jesus lived as a free person by loving others and giving Himself for the good of others. This is the freedom that Jesus wants us to possess so that we can become truly loving people.

On our own, we cannot make ourselves have Jesus' freedom. It is Jesus who can set us free from all that prevents us from loving like Him. Often, we are enslaved to our pride, hatred, indifference, anger, greed,

jealousy, etc. Jesus wants to liberate us from sins and empower us so that we love as He loves.

Question for reflection:

What prevents me from being free to love like Jesus?

Thursday, 7th April, 5th Week of Lent.

Genesis 17:3-9, John 8:51-59

Jesus said to the Jews: 'In all truth I tell you, whoever keeps my word will never see death. The Jews said, 'Now we know that you are possessed. Abraham is dead, and the prophets are dead, and yet you say, "Whoever keeps my word will never know the taste of death." Are you greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? The prophets are dead too. Who are you claiming to be?' Jesus answered: 'If I were to seek my own glory my glory would be worth nothing; in fact, my glory is conferred by the Father, by the one of whom you say, 'He is our God,' although you do not know him. But I know him, and if I were to say, 'I do not know him,' I should be a liar, as you yourselves are. But I do know him, and I keep his word. Your father Abraham rejoiced to think that he would see my Day; he saw it and was glad.' The Jews then said, 'You are not fifty yet, and you have seen Abraham!' Jesus replied: In all truth I tell you, before Abraham ever was, I am.' At this they picked up stones to throw at him; but Jesus hid himself and left the Temple.

"I AM"

In today's gospel, the Jews asked Jesus, "Are you greater than our father Abraham?". Abraham was regarded as the greatest man ever lived in the Jewish tradition. Thus, when Jesus declared, "*In all truth I tell you, before Abraham ever was, I am*", they were scandalised by His words to the point that they wanted to stone Him to death. Yet, Jesus told them the truth of His identity. He was God, the "I AM" who existed before Abraham and, in fact, before the creation of the whole world. We are reminded of the prologue where John the evangelist wrote, "*In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*" (John 1:1). Jesus, the Word made flesh, is the source of life and is the very presence of God Himself.

Jesus was telling the people, "*I am God*", instead they closed their hearts to this incredible Good News. Today, as we draw close to Holy Week, let us allow Jesus to be God, the "*I AM*", the God who is with us.

Question for reflection:

How can my life, words and actions reveal the presence of Jesus to others?

Friday, 8th April, 5th Week of Lent.

Jeremiah 20:10-13, John 10:31-42

The Jews fetched stones to stone him, so Jesus said to them, 'I have shown you many good works from my Father; for which of these are you stoning me?' The Jews answered him, 'We are stoning you, not for doing a good work, but for blasphemy; though you are only a man, you claim to be God.' Jesus answered: 'Is it not written in your Law: I said, you are gods? So it uses the word 'gods' of those people to whom the word of God was addressed -- and scripture cannot be set aside. Yet to someone whom the Father has consecrated and sent into the world you say, 'You are blaspheming' because I said, 'I am Son of God.' If I am not doing my Father's work, there is no need to believe me; but if I am doing it, then even if you refuse to believe in me, at least believe in the work I do; then you will know for certain that the Father is in me and I am in the Father.' They again wanted to arrest him then, but he eluded their clutches. He went back again to the far side of the Jordan to the district where John had been baptising at first and he stayed there. Many people who came to him said, 'John gave no signs, but all he said about this man was true'; and many of them believed in him.

Participating in the Father's works of love

'I have shown you many good works from my Father; for which of these are you stoning me?' The works of Jesus are actions of love. From the start of His mission to the end, Jesus went around doing good. In all that Jesus did, He helped people to live life to the fullness and revealed to them that God was with them and had not abandoned them. Yet, some religious leaders wanted to stone Him despite the acts of goodness He was doing.

Today, Jesus calls us to continue the good works of love to concrete people we meet each day. Love is not simply shown by words but also by actions. There will always be challenges when we do good, and people might even "stone" us with their criticism and rejection. Jesus did not allow negative reactions from others to stop Him from loving because He knew that He was doing His Father's work. We too should never stop doing what is good, loving and right!

Question for reflection:

How can I strive to do works of love today?

Saturday, 9th April, 5th Week of Lent.

Ezekiel 37:21-28, John 11:45-56

Many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him, but some of them went to the Pharisees to tell them what Jesus had done. Then the chief priests and Pharisees called a meeting. 'Here is this man working all these signs,' they said, 'and what action are we taking? If we let him go on in this way everybody will believe in him, and the Romans will come and suppress the Holy Place and our nation.' One of them, Caiaphas, the high priest that year, said, 'You do not seem to have grasped the situation at all; you fail to see that it is to your advantage that one man should die for the people, rather than that the whole nation should perish.' He did not speak in his own person, but as high priest of that year he was prophesying that Jesus was to die for the nation- and not for the nation only, but also to gather together into one the scattered children of God. From that day onwards they were determined to kill him. So Jesus no longer went about openly among the Jews, but left the district for a town called Ephraim, in the country bordering on the desert, and stayed there with his disciples. The Jewish Passover was drawing near, and many of the country people who had gone up to Jerusalem before the Passover to purify themselves were looking out for Jesus, saying to one another as they stood about in the Temple, 'What do you think? Will he come to the festival or not?'

It is better for one man to die...

In today's gospel, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered to discuss the actions they had to take against Jesus. Unfortunately, their distorted thinking blinded them from appreciating Jesus, His teachings and works.

Today, let us humbly ask God to help us welcome each person without biases but rather acknowledge that there is goodness in each person.

Caiaphas, the high priest said, "...it is to your advantage that one man should die for the people...". For Caiaphas, it was better to get rid of one individual for the sake of the majority. Today, many people also have such a mentality: one person is nothing, expendable, and replaceable. However, for Jesus, one individual is important and is irreplaceable. We recall the parables where He speaks of a shepherd looking for one lost sheep and a woman looking for a lost coin. We remember Jesus Himself noticed one poor widow who dropped two coins in the treasury, called Matthew by name, etc. One person is everything, not nothing. Today, each person around us is precious to Jesus, so they are also precious to us.

Question for reflection:

How is Jesus inviting me to live this day?

Sunday, 10th April, Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord.

Isaiah 50:4-7, Philipians 2:6-11, Luke 22:14-23:56

When the time came he took his place at table, and the apostles with him. And he said to them, 'I have ardently longed to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; because, I tell you, I shall not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.' Then, taking a cup, he gave thanks and said, 'Take this and share it among you, because from now on, I tell you, I shall never again drink wine until the kingdom of God comes.' Then he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.' He did the same with the cup after supper, and said, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood poured out for you.' But look, here with me on the table is the hand of the man who is betraying me. The Son of man is indeed on the path which was decreed, but alas for that man by whom he is betrayed!' And they began to ask one another which of them it could be who was to do this. An argument also began between them about who should be reckoned the greatest; but he said to them, 'Among the gentiles it is the kings who lord it over them, and those who have authority over them are given the title Benefactor. With you this must not happen. No; the greatest among you must behave as if he were the

youngest, the leader as if he were the one who serves. For who is the greater: the one at table or the one who serves? The one at table, surely? Yet here am I among you as one who serves! You are the men who have stood by me faithfully in my trials; and now I confer a kingdom on you, just as my Father conferred one on me: you will eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and you will sit on thrones to judge the twelve tribes of Israel...

Loving service to the end

Right at the start of the Passion narrative, Luke begins with the farewell meal of Jesus with His disciples where He broke bread and gave it to His friends, saying to each one of them, "*This is my body given for you*". This is Jesus, God incarnated, whose life on earth was a total self-giving service to each of His disciples and all, especially the most vulnerable. Jesus invited His disciples to a shared life of service. Yet, they failed to understand but started arguing about which of them was the greatest. Jesus, ever compassionate and patient, reminded them to follow His way of loving service. He remained committed to being a servant of all, even as He journeyed to the cross.

Jesus healed the man whose ear was cut off by Peter (Lk 22: 51), forgave Peter with His gaze of love when Peter denied Him three times (Lk 22: 61), forgave those who put Him to death as a criminal (Lk 23:34), opened the door of paradise to one of the criminals (Lk 23:43). Jesus never stopped giving His life in love and service. Today, let us commit ourselves to following Jesus faithfully in the path of self-giving service.

Question for reflection:

In this coming Holy Week, how can I follow the footsteps of Jesus?

Monday, 11th April, Monday of Holy Week.

Isaiah 42:1-7, John 12:1-11

Six days before the Passover, Jesus went to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom he had raised from the dead. They gave a dinner for him there; Martha waited on them and Lazarus was among those at table. Mary brought in a pound of very costly ointment, pure nard, and with it anointed the feet of Jesus, wiping them with her hair; the house was filled with the scent of the ointment. Then Judas Iscariot -- one of his disciples,

the man who was to betray him-said, 'Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?' He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he was in charge of the common fund and used to help himself to the contents. So Jesus said, 'Leave her alone; let her keep it for the day of my burial. You have the poor with you always, you will not always have me.' Meanwhile a large number of Jews heard that he was there and came not only on account of Jesus but also to see Lazarus whom he had raised from the dead. Then the chief priests decided to kill Lazarus as well, since it was on his account that many of the Jews were leaving them and believing in Jesus.

To be with Jesus, our Friend

We start the Holy Week with Jesus surrounding Himself with His friends, Martha, Mary and Lazarus. Each of them did their best to express their loving affection for Jesus. Martha expressed her love for Jesus by cooking a meal. Lazarus sat at the table in companionship with Jesus. Mary showed her love for Jesus by anointing His feet with expensive ointment. When Judas criticised Mary, Jesus defended her. He recognised that her gesture of tenderness was a sign of support and strength for the difficult path ahead. In fact, each of these siblings, in their own ways, was a source of comfort and refuge for Jesus in His darkest moment.

Many people around us are living in the darkness of uncertainty and fear. In this Holy Week, we are invited to be a source of comfort and refuge by offering our friendship, talents, time, etc. No gesture is too small when done with love. When we give of ourselves to them, it is Jesus that we are loving.

Question for reflection:

What are the concrete ways can I show my love to Jesus today?

Tuesday, 12th April, Tuesday of Holy Week.

Isaiah 49:1-6, John 13:21-33, 36-38

While at supper with His disciples, Jesus was deeply disturbed and declared, 'In all truth I tell you, one of you is going to betray me.' The

disciples looked at each other, wondering whom he meant. The disciple Jesus loved was reclining next to Jesus; Simon Peter signed to him and said, 'Ask who it is he means,' so leaning back close to Jesus' chest he said, 'Who is it, Lord?' Jesus answered, 'It is the one to whom I give the piece of bread that I dip in the dish.' And when he had dipped the piece of bread he gave it to Judas son of Simon Iscariot. At that instant, after Judas had taken the bread, Satan entered him. Jesus then said, 'What you are going to do, do quickly.' None of the others at table understood why he said this. Since Judas had charge of the common fund, some of them thought Jesus was telling him, 'Buy what we need for the festival,' or telling him to give something to the poor. As soon as Judas had taken the piece of bread he went out. It was night. When he had gone, Jesus said: Now has the Son of man been glorified, and in him God has been glorified. If God has been glorified in him, God will in turn glorify him in himself, and will glorify him very soon. Little children, I shall be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and, as I told the Jews, where I am going, you cannot come. Simon Peter said, 'Lord, where are you going?' Jesus replied, 'Now you cannot follow me where I am going, but later you shall follow me.' Peter said to him, 'Why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.' 'Lay down your life for me?' answered Jesus. 'In all truth I tell you, before the cock crows you will have disowned me three times.'

To respond to Jesus' love

"In all truth I tell you, one of you is going to betray me". Jesus loved each of His disciples to the end and had just expressed His love by washing their feet. Yet, Judas chose to turn his back to Jesus, walked into the night and sold His Master for thirty silver coins. Jesus never stops loving us and calling us His friends. However, we need to respond to His love personally. Nobody can do it for us.

Like Judas, when we choose to separate ourselves from Jesus, we will find that we tend to betray Him in many ways throughout the day. We do so when we fail to love Jesus in others by excluding those we do not like, refusing to help those in need, etc. We always have the choice to be the "*disciple Jesus loved*", the one who reclined close to Jesus at supper, the only male disciple who stood at the foot of the cross. This Holy Week,

let us stay close to Jesus and enter into a loving relationship with Him and others around us.

Question for reflection:

Who do I identify myself with, Judas or the “disciple Jesus loved”?

Wednesday, 13th April, Wednesday of Holy Week.

Isaiah 50:4-9, Matthew 26:14-25

One of the Twelve, the man called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, 'What are you prepared to give me if I hand him over to you?' They paid him thirty silver pieces, and from then onwards he began to look for an opportunity to betray him. Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus to say, 'Where do you want us to make the preparations for you to eat the Passover?' He said, 'Go to a certain man in the city and say to him, "The Master says: My time is near. It is at your house that I am keeping Passover with my disciples."' The disciples did what Jesus told them and prepared the Passover. When evening came he was at table with the Twelve. And while they were eating he said, 'In truth I tell you, one of you is about to betray me.' They were greatly distressed and started asking him in turn, 'Not me, Lord, surely?' He answered, 'Someone who has dipped his hand into the dish with me will betray me. The Son of man is going to his fate, as the scriptures say he will, but alas for that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! Better for that man if he had never been born!' Judas, who was to betray him, asked in his turn, 'Not me, Rabbi, surely?' Jesus answered, 'It is you who say it.'

Betrayal and love

Have you ever experienced being betrayed by a parent, a friend, a spouse, even by the Church? When our trust is shattered by those we love and look up to, we experience disappointment and deep hurt. In today's gospel, Jesus experienced the deep sorrow of betrayal. Judas went to the chief priests and agreed to take part in the downfall of Jesus in exchange for thirty silver coins. What did Jesus do? He continued to love Judas and even called him “friend” (Matthew 26:50).

Today, let us ask God for the grace to be able to love those who have hurt us in one way or another. To love is to forgive. Forgiving is a journey

that we need to walk if we truly seek to have God's peace as well as healing from the wounds we have. Let us choose to love as Jesus loved.

Question for reflection:

Is there someone in my life who have hurt me deeply and whom I am called to forgive?

Thursday, 14th April, Holy Thursday.

Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, John 13:1-15 (Mass of the Lord's Supper)

Before the festival of the Passover, Jesus, knowing that his hour had come to pass from this world to the Father, having loved those who were his in the world, loved them to the end. They were at supper, and the devil had already put it into the mind of Judas Iscariot son of Simon, to betray him. Jesus knew that the Father had put everything into his hands, and that he had come from God and was returning to God, and he got up from table, removed his outer garments and, taking a towel, wrapped it round his waist; he then poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel he was wearing. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, 'Lord, are you going to wash my feet?' Jesus answered, 'At the moment you do not know what I am doing, but later you will understand.' 'Never!' said Peter. 'You shall never wash my feet.' Jesus replied, 'If I do not wash you, you can have no share with me.' Simon Peter said, 'Well then, Lord, not only my feet, but my hands and my head as well!' Jesus said, 'No one who has had a bath needs washing, such a person is clean all over. You too are clean, though not all of you are.' He knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said, 'though not all of you are'. When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments again he went back to the table. 'Do you understand', he said, 'what I have done to you? You call me Master and Lord, and rightly; so I am. If I, then, the Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you must wash each other's feet. I have given you an example so that you may copy what I have done to you.'

Gift

Holy Thursday can be summarized with one word: Gift. In the 2nd reading of St. Paul's letter to the Corinthians, we contemplate the gift of Jesus' presence in the Eucharist. Each time we celebrate the Eucharist, the

same Jesus comes to us and tells us, "*This is my body which is for you*". Unfortunately, we tend to take for granted this gift of Jesus to us. Thus, today is a good opportunity for us to renew our appreciation of this great gift of Jesus, who gives Himself in the form of bread and wine to be our food, our nourishment for our journey of life.

In the gospel, Jesus gave His disciples the gift of Himself in loving service by washing their feet. In Jesus' culture, it was the task of the lowly servant. Peter objected to having his feet washed by Jesus. Nevertheless, Jesus insisted to do so because He wanted His disciples to know the meaning of discipleship, i.e. not to dominate but to serve. Today, Jesus calls on us to follow Him by kneeling at the feet of others and serving them with love.

Question for reflection:

What is Jesus telling me from my time of prayer with Him?

**Friday, 15th April, Good Friday of the Passion of the Lord.
Isaiah 52:12-53:12, Hebrews 4:14-16, 5:7-9, John 18:1-19:42**

... Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified. They then took charge of Jesus, and carrying his own cross he went out to the Place of the Skull or, as it is called in Hebrew, Golgotha, where they crucified him with two others, one on either side, Jesus being in the middle. Pilate wrote out a notice and had it fixed to the cross; it ran: 'Jesus the Nazarene, King of the Jews'. This notice was read by many of the Jews, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the writing was in Hebrew, Latin and Greek. So the Jewish chief priests said to Pilate, 'You should not write "King of the Jews", but that the man said, "I am King of the Jews". 'Pilate answered, 'What I have written, I have written.' When the soldiers had finished crucifying Jesus they took his clothing and divided it into four shares, one for each soldier. His undergarment was seamless, woven in one piece from neck to hem; so they said to one another, 'Instead of tearing it, let's throw dice to decide who is to have it.' In this way the words of scripture were fulfilled: They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothes. That is what the soldiers did. Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala. Seeing his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing near her, Jesus said to his

mother, 'Woman, this is your son.' Then to the disciple he said, 'This is your mother.' And from that hour the disciple took her into his home. After this, Jesus knew that everything had now been completed and, so that the scripture should be completely fulfilled, he said: I am thirsty. A jar full of sour wine stood there; so, putting a sponge soaked in the wine on a hyssop stick, they held it up to his mouth. After Jesus had taken the wine he said, 'It is fulfilled'; and bowing his head he gave up his spirit. It was the Day of Preparation, and to avoid the bodies' remaining on the cross during the Sabbath -- since that Sabbath was a day of special solemnity -- the Jews asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken away. Consequently the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with him and then of the other. When they came to Jesus, they saw he was already dead, and so instead of breaking his legs, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a lance; and immediately there came out blood and water.

The good news of Good Friday

As we celebrate Good Friday, we come face to face with the cruelty of Jesus' crucifixion by the Roman soldiers. He, a man who dedicated His life by loving, was brutally killed. Yet, we are not meant to mourn for Jesus' death. Instead, Good Friday is a day to celebrate Love that illumined the darkness of hatred, injustice and death. At the last Supper, Jesus told His disciples, "*Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends*" (John 15:13). As the loving Friend, Jesus gave His life so that He can lead us to God and one another.

Today, we stand together with Jesus' mother, his mother's sister, Mary, the wife of Cleopas, Mary Magdala and the beloved disciple whom He loved. With them and united with Jesus on the cross, we commit ourselves to bring His life-giving love to places where peace, hope, forgiveness and goodness are absent. We choose to exercise our capacity to do good so that we can play our part to overcome the darkness of evil with the light of God's love.

Question for reflection:

How can I shine God's love in the places where love is lacking?

Saturday, 16th April, Easter Vigil.

Exodus 14:15-15:1, Romans 6:3-11, Luke 24:1-12

On the first day of the week, at the first sign of dawn, the women went to the tomb with the spices they had prepared. They found that the stone had been rolled away from the tomb, but on entering they could not find the body of the Lord Jesus. As they stood there puzzled about this, two men in brilliant clothes suddenly appeared at their side. Terrified, the women bowed their heads to the ground. But the two said to them, 'Why look among the dead for someone who is alive? He is not here; he has risen. Remember what he told you when he was still in Galilee that the Son of man was destined to be handed over into the power of sinful men and be crucified, and rise again on the third day.' And they remembered his words. And they returned from the tomb and told all this to the Eleven and to all the others. The women were Mary of Magdala, Joanna, and Mary the mother of James. And the other women with them also told the apostles, but this story of theirs seemed pure nonsense, and they did not believe them. Peter, however, went off to the tomb, running. He bent down and looked in and saw the linen cloths but nothing else; he then went back home, amazed at what had happened.

God's enduring love today

Today, we contemplate the core reality of our Christian faith: Jesus is alive. Without believing in Jesus' resurrection, our faith is meaningless, and He would just be a good person who died a tragic death. As we enter into the season of Easter, let us ask the Holy Spirit to enlighten us to embrace and appreciate the meaning of the resurrection of Christ for us today.

The resurrection of Jesus reveals God's love. It was God's love that raised Him from death to new life. The darkness of evil and death in Calvary was not the last word, but God's faithful and enduring love. We do not celebrate Easter as a historical past event but a present reality that continues to bring us to experience new life out of the tomb of our hopelessness, pain and sadness because God is at work in our lives and our world today. Like Peter in today's gospel who went to the tomb and was amazed at what He saw, we too are invited to be amazed at God's love is stronger than death, and nothing can separate us from His love.

Question for reflection:

What does Easter mean for me today?

Sunday, 17th April, Easter Sunday.

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

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

To look with the eyes of the beloved disciple

In today's gospel, the sight of the stone rolled away provoked various reactions from the disciples. Mary of Magdala was shaken by her discovery and immediately thought that someone had stolen Jesus' body. Peter saw the same scene but could not understand what it all meant. The disciple whom Jesus loved "*saw and believed*" and his heart was filled with renewed hope.

What is the message for us today? Today, we are invited to look at all our life experiences, the good and the bad, with eyes of faith, not with eyes of despair or fear. Like the beloved disciple who "*saw and believed*", we too need to see the empty tombs of our lives as places where God is present and that He wants to bring new hope out of despair, new joy out of sadness, new life out of death.

Question for reflection:

Am I open to seeing the reality of my life with faith that is born from the conviction that God's love is stronger than death?

Monday, 18th April, Monday within Easter Octave.

Acts 2: 14, 22-33, Matthew 28:8-15

Filled with awe and great joy the women came quickly away from the tomb and ran to tell the disciples. And suddenly, coming to meet them, was Jesus. 'Greetings,' he said. And the women came up to him and, clasping his feet, they did him homage. Then Jesus said to them, 'Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers that they must leave for Galilee; there they will see me.' Now while they were on their way, some of the guards went off into the city to tell the chief priests all that had happened. These held a meeting with the elders and, after some discussion, handed a considerable sum of money to the soldiers with these instructions, 'This is what you must say, "His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep." And should the governor come to hear of this, we undertake to put things right with him ourselves and to see that you do not get into trouble.' So they took the money and carried out their instructions, and to this day that is the story among the Jews.

I am waiting for you in Galilee

In today's gospel, the women who went to Jesus' tomb to anoint His body was greeted by an angel who told them, "*He is not here, for he is risen...*" (Matthew 28:6). With hearts full of joy, the women run to tell the rest of the disciples about what they had seen and heard. For us today, our hearts too should be filled with joy that comes from the certainty that Jesus is risen and continues to be with us. Jesus told the women to tell the disciples that He was not in the tomb but would be in Galilee to meet them. Galilee was the place where the disciples lived and worked. There, in the ordinary routines of everyday life, Jesus would re-encounter them. Today, Jesus wants to meet us in our "Galilee" moments, in the everyday routines of life, to bring His joy to us.

The Risen Jesus is waiting for us. When we meet Him in our everyday living, He will fill our hearts with joy, the joy that the world cannot give to us.

Question for reflection:

Do I desire to meet Jesus in my daily routines today?

Tuesday, 19th April, Tuesday within Easter Octave.

Acts 2:36-41, John 20:11-18

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

Why are you weeping?

"Mary was standing outside near the tomb, weeping". Mary of Magdala, a solitary figure, wrapped up in her grief and sadness because Jesus was dead and now His body was missing. We can identify with Mary and her sense of loss. We too have wept tears of grief and regret and have cried for someone we loved. *"As she said this she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, though she did not realise that it was Jesus".* Jesus was there with her in her grief. In the same way, He is also with us in the moments of our sadness and pain. Like Mary, we might not recognise His presence. Jesus comes to us every day and relates with us in a personal way. We need to be attentive to His voice calling our names and the faith to see His presence with us.

In the end, Mary of Magdala told the disciples, *"I have seen the Lord"*. May we personally experience the presence of Jesus with us so that we can be empowered to be messengers of the good news.

Question for reflection:

What prevents me from recognising the living presence of Christ today?

**Wednesday, 20th April, Wednesday within Easter Octave.
Acts 3:1-10, Luke 24:13-35**

Two of the disciples were on their way to a village called Emmaus, seven miles from Jerusalem, and they were talking together about all that had happened. And it happened that as they were talking together and discussing it, Jesus himself came up and walked by their side, but their eyes were prevented from recognising him. He said to them, 'What are all these things that you are discussing as you walk along?' They stopped, their faces downcast. Then one of them, called Cleopas, answered him, 'You must be the only person staying in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have been happening there these last few days.' He asked, 'What things?' They answered, 'All about Jesus of Nazareth, who showed himself a prophet powerful in action and speech before God and the whole people; and how our chief priests and our leaders handed him over to be sentenced to death, and had him crucified. Our own hope had been that he would be the one to set Israel free. And this is not all: two whole days have now gone by since it all happened; and some women from our group have astounded us: they went to the tomb in the early morning, and when they could not find the body, they came back to tell us they had seen a vision of angels who declared he was alive. Some of our friends went to the tomb and found everything exactly as the women had reported, but of him they saw nothing.' Then he said to them, 'You foolish men! So slow to believe all that the prophets have said! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer before entering into his glory?' Then, starting with Moses and going through all the prophets, he explained to them the passages throughout the scriptures that were about himself. When they drew near to the village to which they were going, he made as if to go on; but they pressed him to stay with them saying, 'It is nearly evening, and the day is almost over.' So he went in to stay with them. Now while he was with them at table, he took the bread and said the blessing; then he broke it and handed it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognised him; but he had vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other, 'Did not our hearts burn within us as he talked to us on the road and explained the scriptures to us?' They set out that instant and returned to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven assembled together with their companions, who said to them, 'The Lord has indeed risen and has

appeared to Simon.' Then they told their story of what had happened on the road and how they had recognised him at the breaking of bread.

Heart burning with renewed hope

Today, the gospel speaks of two disciples making their journey to Emmaus and walking with heavy hearts full of disillusionment and disappointment. They had the great expectation that Jesus would be the Messiah who would free them from the Romans. Their hopes were dashed when Jesus ended up being killed. In the journey, Jesus took the initiative and walked alongside them. As Jesus spoke to them, their hearts burned once more, and they started to hope again. As they neared the village, they took the initiative to ask Him to stay with them. At the meal, they recognised that it was Jesus who had been walking alongside them.

In our own moments of loss, grief, disappointment, it is the presence of Jesus who can restore our hope and hold us up with His peace. Today, as we pray, let us take the initiative to call on Jesus with these words, "*Stay with us, Lord*".

Question for reflection:

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

Thursday, 21st April, Thursday within Easter Octave.

Acts 3:11-26, Luke 24:35-48

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

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

My peace I give you

In today's gospel, Jesus' first words to His disciples were not words of reproach for failing Him at His moment of suffering but words of forgiveness. He said, "*Peace be with you*". Standing among them, Jesus gave them God's peace. He wanted the disciples to know that they were forgiven, and that their hearts should only be filled with peace, not regret or guilt. "*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid*" (John 14:27).

The Lord of life wants to give us the gift of peace. When we feel afraid of the uncertain future, distressed with worries, saddened by conflicts, let Jesus say these words to us, "*Peace be with you*", and experience His presence of love close to us. This gift of peace that we receive from the Risen Jesus is not just for us, but for us to go out and be His instruments of peace in the places where we are.

Question for reflection:

Today, to whom can I offer the Easter peace?

Friday, 22nd April, Friday within Easter Octave.

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

Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples. It was by the Sea of Tiberias, and it happened like this: Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee and two more of his disciples were together. Simon Peter said, 'I'm going fishing.' They replied, 'We'll come with you.' They went out and got into the boat but caught nothing that night. When it was already light, there stood Jesus on the shore, though the disciples did not realise that it was Jesus. Jesus called out, 'Haven't you caught anything, friends?' And when they answered, 'No,' he said, 'Throw the net out to starboard and you'll find

something.' So they threw the net out and could not haul it in because of the quantity of fish. The disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, 'It is the Lord.' At these words, 'It is the Lord,' Simon Peter tied his outer garment round him (for he had nothing on) and jumped into the water. The other disciples came on in the boat, towing the net with the fish; they were only about a hundred yards from land. As soon as they came ashore they saw that there was some bread there and a charcoal fire with fish cooking on it. Jesus said, 'Bring some of the fish you have just caught.' Simon Peter went aboard and dragged the net ashore, full of big fish, one hundred and fifty-three of them; and in spite of there being so many the net was not broken. Jesus said to them, 'Come and have breakfast.' None of the disciples was bold enough to ask, 'Who are you?'. They knew quite well it was the Lord. Jesus then stepped forward, took the bread and gave it to them, and the same with the fish. This was the third time that Jesus revealed himself to the disciples after rising from the dead.

Jesus stands at the shore...

In today's gospel, Peter and the disciples decided to go back to their original work of fishing. However, it was a night of futile fishing. Easter is here but we might not have the Easter joy and peace in our lives. Instead, we feel lost as we look at the uncertainty ahead; we are disillusioned with what we are doing; we struggle with problems at home and at work. "*When it was already light, there stood Jesus on the shore...*". Yet, Jesus comes to us and brings the light that we need to see life with renewed faith and hope.

"*The disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, 'It is the Lord.'"*. It was the beloved disciple who recognised Jesus. Likewise, we often fail to see the presence of the Risen Jesus in our daily life. We need others in our faith journey to open our eyes and recognise that Jesus is not absent but present. Today, let us open our hearts to listen to Jesus as He reveals Himself that He is the Risen Lord who is with us.

Question for reflection:

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

**Saturday, 23rd April, Saturday within Easter Octave.
Acts 4:13-21, Mark 16:9-15**

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

Jesus never stop trusting in us

Jesus appeared to Mary Magdala and the two disciples of Emmaus. They went back to tell the other disciples, but they did not believe them. Finally, Jesus appeared to the disciples themselves. Though He pointed out their "*incredulity and obstinacy*", Jesus continued to put His faith in them and sent them out to proclaim the good news of Easter. Because Jesus did not give up on them, the disciples eventually went out fearlessly to preach the good news. In the first reading, the Jewish leaders warned Peter and John not to speak of Jesus anymore, but they firmly declared, "*We cannot promise to stop proclaiming what we have seen and heard*". The risen Christ transformed their stubbornness to courageous faith.

Jesus never gives up on us. He continues to wait for us to recognise His loving presence with us. Doubtful as we are, weak as we are, indifferent as we are, Jesus entrusts us to share His mission of proclaiming the Easter message to those around us.

Question for reflection:

Today, how can I share the good news that Jesus is alive?

Sunday, 24th April, Divine Mercy Sunday.

Acts 5:12-16, Revelation 1:9-13, 17-19, John 20:19-31

In the evening of that same day, the first day of the week, the doors were closed in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews. Jesus came and stood among them. He said to them, 'Peace be with you,' and, after saying this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples were filled with joy at seeing the Lord, and he said to them again, 'Peace be with you. 'As the Father sent me, so am I sending you.' After saying this he breathed on them and said: Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven; if you retain anyone's sins, they are retained. Thomas, called the Twin, who was one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples said to him, 'We have seen the Lord,' but he answered, 'Unless I can see the holes that the nails made in his hands and can put my finger into the holes they made, and unless I can put my hand into his side, I refuse to believe.' Eight days later the disciples were in the house again and Thomas was with them. The doors were closed, but Jesus came in and stood among them. 'Peace be with you,' he said. Then he spoke to Thomas, 'Put your finger here; look, here are my hands. Give me your hand; put it into my side. Do not be unbelieving any more but believe.' Thomas replied, 'My Lord and my God!' Jesus said to him: You believe because you can see me. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe. There were many other signs that Jesus worked in the sight of the disciples, but they are not recorded in this book. These are recorded so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing this you may have life through his name.

My Lord and my God!

In the gospel, the disciples locked themselves in a room because they feared that the people who crucified Jesus would also do the same to them. What is your greatest fear? Like the disciples, we sometimes lock ourselves in with our fears. However, the closed doors did not prevent Jesus from being with His disciples. Instead, He stood among them and said, "*Peace be with you*". Easter shows us that the risen Jesus does not want to be locked out. He has risen from death and wants to come through our locked doors to give us His peace.

Thomas was not present when Jesus first appeared. He refused to believe and even laid down conditions for believing. Eight days later, Jesus Himself came to Thomas, met him where he was, allowed him to touch his wounds and invited Him, "*Do not be unbelieving anymore but believe*". It is alright to have doubts, but we need to allow Jesus to encounter us where we are and bring us to experience His loving presence.

Question for reflection:

Do I make space to encounter Jesus and experience His peace and love?

Monday, 25th April, St. Mark the evangelist.

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

Jesus said to the Eleven, '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.' And so the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven; there at the right hand of God he took his place, while they, going out, preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word by the signs that accompanied it.

Go and proclaim

As we celebrate the Feast of St. Mark the evangelist, we listen to Jesus as He told His disciples, "*Go out to the whole world, proclaim the gospel to all creation*". The disciples were not given an instruction manual on carrying out the mission. Jesus simply told them to "Go" and they went. The gospel ends this consoling affirmation: "*while they, going out, preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word by the signs that accompanied it*". As the disciples carried out the work of preaching the good news, they were not alone. Jesus was working with them.

Today, Jesus entrusts all of us with the work of proclaiming the good news of God's love. We proclaim, not only by our words, but also our actions of love. By virtue of our baptism, all of us have the duty to proclaim the good news. Jesus stays close to us and works with us as we strive to bring Jesus to others.

Question for reflection:

Am I aware that Jesus has given me the mission to share the good news of His love to those around me?

Tuesday, 26th April, 2nd Week of Easter.

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

Jesus said to Nicodemus: 'Do not be surprised when I say: You must be born from above. The wind blows where it pleases; you can hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.' 'How is that possible?' asked Nicodemus. Jesus replied, 'You are the Teacher of Israel, and you do not know these things! In all truth I tell you, we speak only about what we know and witness only to what we have seen and yet you people reject our evidence. If you do not believe me when I speak to you about earthly things, how will you believe me when I speak to you about heavenly things? No one has gone up to heaven except the one who came down from heaven, the Son of man; as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so must the Son of man be lifted up so that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.'

The Holy Spirit in me

"*The wind blows where it pleases; you can hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit*". We know that we do not have the power to control the wind. Indeed, the wind blows where it pleases. The Holy Spirit is like the wind. We can neither control the Spirit nor know his coming and going. The only thing that we are called to do is to enter into a relationship with the Spirit and allow Him to guide us to how best we can live a life of love and mould us to become the persons God wants us to be.

Let us remember that the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. He is the Spirit of God's life-giving love. Thus, He is not here to harm us but to fill us with the fullness of God's love so that we can truly be channels of love to others.

Question for reflection:

Can others see the presence of the Holy Spirit in me and that He is working through me?

Wednesday, 27th April, 2nd Week of Easter.

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

Jesus said to Nicodemus: 'For this is how God loved the world: he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. For God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but so that through him the world might be saved. No one who believes in him will be judged; but whoever does not believe is judged already, because that person does not believe in the Name of God's only Son. And the judgement is this: though the light has come into the world people have preferred darkness to the light because their deeds were evil. And indeed, everybody who does wrong hates the light and avoids it, to prevent his actions from being shown up; but whoever does the truth comes out into the light, so that what he is doing may plainly appear as done in God.'

Being drawn into love

"For this is how God loved the world: he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. For God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but so that through him the world might be saved". Let us allow these words to touch our hearts and rejoice that God loves us so much that He is with us, not to condemn, but to give us eternal life. Eternal life is a life of communion with God, here and now, and one that endures beyond physical death.

Do we love God back? How can we love God? We need to respond to God's love by choosing each day to remain in Jesus and allow Him to be the light that exposes the dark areas of pride, selfishness, hatred, etc. Staying in His light, Jesus draws us out to live in the truth of God's love,

justice and mercy, and to guide us to put love into practice by loving others in the same way as He has loved us.

Question for reflection:

Am I convinced of the fundamental truth that God loves me?

Thursday, 28th April, St. Peter Chanel, St. Louis M. Grignion de Montfort.

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

John the Baptist said to his disciples: 'He who comes from above is above all others; he who is of the earth is earthly himself and speaks in an earthly way. He who comes from heaven bears witness to the things he has seen and heard, but his testimony is not accepted by anybody; though anyone who does accept his testimony is attesting that God is true, since he whom God has sent speaks God's own words, for God gives him the Spirit without reserve. The Father loves the Son and has entrusted everything to his hands. Anyone who believes in the Son has eternal life, but anyone who refuses to believe in the Son will never see life: God's retribution hangs over him.'

Jesus, be my centre, be my life

Today, let us listen to John the Baptist as He reveals who Jesus is: Jesus is "He who comes from above", He "bears witness to the things He has seen and heard", He is the one "whom God has sent", He "speaks God's own words" and He has received "the Spirit without reserve", He is "the Son" who is loved by the Father and God has "entrusted everything to His hands". Who is Jesus? Jesus is the Incarnated God, God in human form. He is with us and constantly yearns to have a deeper relationship of love with each one of us.

As Christians, we are called to make Jesus our Friend and Companion. He is here to help us become the persons God has purposefully created us to be. When Jesus is the centre of our lives, He will lead us to be one with God and others. Today, let us renew our faith in Jesus and commit ourselves once more to make Him the centre of our lives.

Question for reflection:

Who is Jesus for me?

Friday, 29th April, St. Catherine of Siena.

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

Jesus crossed the Sea of Galilee -- or of Tiberias- and a large crowd followed him, impressed by the signs he had done in curing the sick. Jesus climbed the hillside and sat down there with his disciples. The time of the Jewish Passover was near. Looking up, Jesus saw the crowds approaching and said to Philip, 'Where can we buy some bread for these people to eat?' He said this only to put Philip to the test; he himself knew exactly what he was going to do. Philip answered, 'Two hundred denarii would not buy enough to give them a little piece each.' One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said, 'Here is a small boy with five barley loaves and two fish; but what is that among so many?' Jesus said to them, 'Make the people sit down.' There was plenty of grass there, and as many as five thousand men sat down. Then Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed them to those who were sitting there; he then did the same with the fish, distributing as much as they wanted. When they had eaten enough he said to the disciples, 'Pick up the pieces left over, so that nothing is wasted.' So they picked them up and filled twelve large baskets with scraps left over from the meal of five barley loaves. Seeing the sign that he had done, the people said, 'This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world.' Jesus, as he realised they were about to come and take him by force and make him king, fled back to the hills alone.

Not mine, but yours, Lord!

Five loaves and two fishes vs a crowd of hungry people. "*Here is a small boy with five barley loaves and two fish; but what is that among so many?*" Like Andrew, we too can practically deduce that the limited available resources are not enough to satisfy the people's hunger. Yet, Jesus did not dismiss the five loaves and two fish but used them to feed the crowd. As we pray with today's gospel passage, what is the message that Jesus wants to convey to us?

Small acts of love, simple words of blessings, ordinary gestures of peace can be the start of great miracles because Jesus is the one who uses the little we give to Him for the good of many. Today, let us listen to Jesus as He asks us to entrust our lives and our resources to Him. He

can and want to work through the little and much that we give to Him to feed the hungry people of today.

Question for reflection:

Do I give all that I am and have to Jesus so that He can use my life to feed those hungry for love, peace, justice and hope?

Saturday, 30th April, St. Pius.

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

In the evening the disciples went down to the shore of the sea and got into a boat to make for Capernaum on the other side of the sea. It was getting dark by now and Jesus had still not rejoined them. The wind was strong, and the sea was getting rough. They had rowed three or four miles when they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming towards the boat. They were afraid, but he said, 'It's me. Don't be afraid.' They were ready to take him into the boat, and immediately it reached the shore at the place they were making for.

I have Jesus, and so I am not afraid

In today's gospel, the disciples were making their way to the other side of the Sea of Galilee in a boat. Unfortunately, they encountered a fierce storm. As they were struggling, they saw Jesus walking on water towards them, and He said, "*It's me. Don't be afraid*". Today, these words of Jesus: "*It's me. Don't be afraid*" can be our source of comfort and strength. Jesus never stops speaking these comforting words to each of us, "*It's me, the risen Jesus. It's me, your Friend and Companion. It's me, the one who loves you. Don't be afraid.*" Let us put our trust in Jesus, knowing that He always comes to us. We are not alone to face the difficult storms in our lives.

When the disciples reached out to take Jesus into the boat, they somehow found that they had arrived at where they wanted to go. Likewise, when we have Jesus in our boats, our lives, He will guide us to where we are meant to be, i.e., to a space of mature love for others and greater faith in God.

Question for reflection:

Do I take Jesus into my boat?



Artwork by Mike Torevell