

"The Lord has risen!"



**Prayer for Living
Daily Reflections for
Liturgical Year A**

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Verbum Dei Missionaries

PRAYER FOR LIVING YEAR A

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Saturday, 1st 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?'

One individual matters

In today's gospel, Caiaphas, the high priest and the other religious leaders were afraid that the popularity of Jesus would rock the status quo. In order to avoid the negative consequences of the Romans destroying the Temple, land and people, the problem had to be eliminated. Caiaphas and the religious leaders were caught up in their fears and interests that they treated Jesus no longer as a person to be respected and cared for. For Jesus, each person is an individual who matters. In the gospel stories, He regarded people as beloved children of God, and thus treated them with love and respect.

Like Caiaphas and the Pharisees, we often disregard others, especially the elderly, the sick, the poor and migrant workers, and view them as obstacles and liabilities to be avoided. Today, let us look at each person we will encounter with eyes of love, recognise each not as something

but as someone, and relate to them with the same respect and care as Jesus.

Reflective question:

Do I show equal respect to people I meet?

Sunday, 2nd April, Palm Sunday.

Isaiah 50:4-7, Philippians 2:6-11, Matthew 26:14-27:66

... Then Jesus came with them to a plot of land called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, 'Stay here while I go over there to pray.' He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee with him. And he began to feel sadness and anguish. Then he said to them, 'My soul is sorrowful to the point of death. Wait here and stay awake with me.' And going on a little further he fell on his face and prayed. 'My Father,' he said, 'if it is possible, let this cup pass me by. Nevertheless, let it be as you, not I, would have it.' He came back to the disciples and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, 'So you had not the strength to stay awake with me for one hour? Stay awake, and pray not to be put to the test. The spirit is willing enough, but human nature is weak.' Again, a second time, he went away and prayed: 'My Father,' he said, 'if this cup cannot pass by, but I must drink it, your will be done!' And he came back again and found them sleeping, their eyes were so heavy. Leaving them there, he went away again and prayed for the third time, repeating the same words. Then he came back to the disciples and said to them, 'You can sleep on now and have your rest. Look, the hour has come when the Son of man is to be betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up! Let us go! Look, my betrayer is not far away.' And suddenly while he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, appeared, and with him a large number of men armed with ...

Stay awake with Me

On this Palm Sunday, we focus on the scene of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane. He felt sadness and anguish thinking of what was ahead of Him. His deepest sorrow was made even worse when He saw His friends sleeping and realised He could not count on their support in His greatest need but had to face His sufferings alone. We can identify with Jesus as we all have experienced despair and hopelessness: being rejected for a promotion, worried about a family situation, fearful of losing our health, etc. Moreover, just like Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane,

we carry our heavy burdens alone as we cannot rely on any support from the people we love.

"...He fell on his face and prayed. 'My Father...' Jesus turned to God the Father for comfort and continued to put His trust in Him. Today, let us stay with Jesus in the garden. He understands our personal agony and what it is like to be left alone by people we thought would support us in our crisis. Thus, we look at Jesus and put our trust in Him alone.

Reflective question:

Can I pause and stay with Jesus, even for a short moment?

Monday, 3rd 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 full of the scent of the ointment. Then Judas Iscariot - one of his disciples, the man who was to betray him - said, 'Why wasn't this ointment 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 contributions. So Jesus said, 'Leave her alone; she had to keep this scent 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.

True heart of a friend

In today's gospel, knowing that His end was near, Jesus surrounded Himself with His dearest friends, Martha, Mary and Lazarus. Each of the siblings expressed their love as best as they could. Martha busied herself with cooking the finest meal for Him. Lazarus was at the table with Jesus, talking to Him. Mary took a precious jar of expensive perfume

and anointed His feet. As we enter Holy Week, let us ponder and ask ourselves: What can we give to Jesus?

Judas saw Mary's extravagant action and condemned her for being wasteful. It was not that he cared for the poor. Instead, he was a thief who used to help himself to the money bag. His focus was on the money he could have taken if Mary had sold the jar of perfume and given it to Jesus. However, Mary's focus, as well as Martha's and Lazarus', was on Jesus. In this prayer time, Jesus, our Friend, comes to our house, our lives to be with us. Let us love and serve Him to show our love for Him.

Reflective question:

Today, how can I express my love and gratitude to Jesus?

Tuesday, 4th April, Tuesday of Holy Week.

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

Jesus was troubled in spirit and declared, 'I tell you most solemnly, one of you will betray me'. The disciples looked at one another, wondering which 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 on Jesus' breast he said, 'Who is it, Lord?' 'It is the one' replied Jesus 'to whom I give the piece of bread that I shall dip in the dish.' He dipped the piece of bread and 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 the reason 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. Night had fallen. 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. 'My little children, I shall not be with you much 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, 'Where I am going you cannot follow me now; you will follow me later'. Peter said to him, 'Why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.' 'Lay down your life for me?' answered Jesus. 'I tell you most solemnly, before the cock crows you will have disowned me three times.'

Jesus, the faithful friend

“As soon as Judas had taken the piece of bread he went out. Night had fallen”. Darkness of night revealed the internal gloominess that Judas had chosen to embrace as he walked away from Jesus, the true Light of the world. Yet, Jesus never stopped loving Judas and regarded him as a friend. At the garden of Gethsemane, when Judas led the soldiers to arrest Him, the first word Jesus addressed Judas was, *“My friend”* (Matthew 26:50). Peter boldly proclaimed that he would lay down his life for Jesus. However, Jesus knew the inner turmoils of fear and loyalty in Peter. He foresaw that Peter would deny Him. Yet, He continued to love Peter as he was.

Jesus, our Friend and Master, knows our strengths and weaknesses. He recognises that we sometimes waver in our following of Him. Yet, He never gives up on us. Today, let us draw close to Jesus and be sure of His faithful love for us that gives us the strength to follow Him, even to the point of laying our lives down for Him.

Reflective question:

What is Jesus saying to me today?

Wednesday, 5th 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 that moment he looked 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?' 'Go to so-and-so in the city' he replied '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 disciples. And while they were eating he said 'I tell you solemnly, one of you is about to betray me' They were greatly distressed and started asking him in turn, 'Not I, 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 I, Rabbi, surely?' 'They are your own words' answered Jesus.

The experience of betrayal

In today's gospel, the word that describes Judas' action is "betrayal". For thirty silver coins, Judas sold Jesus to His enemies. Today, as we read this passage, we recall the experiences of betrayals we had: being let down by a trusted friend, by a family member, by a community member in the parish, etc. Jesus experienced the pain of being betrayed by His friend. Thus, Jesus knows what it means to be let down and disappointed by others and understands our pain. He is our Friend who is never indifferent to our suffering. Therefore, we can go to Him and learn from Him how to have compassionate love rule our hearts instead of hatred and anger.

Let us also be aware of our fragility and ask Jesus to help us have a compassionate and forgiving heart for those who have hurt us in one way or another. In prayer, we find the gift of His perfect peace in the midst of our hardships and sufferings.

Reflective question:

Can I have a compassionate and forgiving heart like Jesus'?

Thursday, 6th April, Holy Thursday.

Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, John 13:1-15

It was before the festival of the Passover, and Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to pass from this world to the Father. He had always loved those who were his in the world, but now he showed how perfect his love was. 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 garment 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 nothing in common with me'. 'Then, Lord,' said Simon Peter 'not only my feet, but my hands and my head as well!' Jesus said, 'No one who has taken a bath needs washing, he is clean all over. You too are clean, though not all of you are.' He knew who was going to betray him, that was why he said, 'though not all of you are'. When he had washed their feet and put on his clothes 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 should wash each other's feet. I have given you an example so that you may copy what I have done to you.'

Perfect love

"He had always loved those who were his in the world, but now he showed how perfect his love was". Jesus loved each of His disciples completely and unconditionally, and He chose to do so by taking the role of a servant and washing their feet. Let us contemplate Jesus' action of love towards His disciples. He bent down, washed their dirty feet, despite knowing they would fail Him when He needed them the most. Jesus washed Peter's feet even though he would soon deny Him. Knowing he would betray Him, Jesus placed Himself at Judas' feet and washed them.

"...you may copy what I have done to you". Tonight, Jesus calls us to do the same as He did. As His disciples, we need to show unconditional love to those who are good to us and even those who hurt and betray us. It is a challenge sometimes to love in this way. That is why we need to pray daily and constantly. In prayer, Jesus washes us with His love and expands our hearts to love without reservation.

Reflective question:

Can I love each person to the end, completely and unconditionally, even those who have done wrong to me?

Friday, 7th April, Good Friday of the Passion of the Lord.

Isaiah 52:13-53:12, Hebrews 4:14-16, 5:7-9, John 18:1-19:42

... They then took charge of Jesus, and carrying his own cross he went out of the city to the place of the skull or, as it was called in Hebrew,

Golgotha, where they crucified him with two others, one on either side with Jesus 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 not far from 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 "This 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 shared out my clothing among them. They cast lots for my clothes. This is exactly 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 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 moment the disciple made a place for her in his home. After this, Jesus knew that everything had now been completed, and to fulfil the scripture perfectly he said: 'I am thirsty'. A jar-full of vinegar stood there, so putting a sponge soaked in the vinegar on a hyssop stick they held it up to his mouth. After Jesus had taken the vinegar he said, 'It is accomplished'; and bowing his head he gave up his spirit...

The crucified Christ today

"Ecce homo!", "Here is the man!" (John 19:5). Pilate proclaimed these words as he presented the tortured Jesus to the crowd. As we contemplate Jesus on the cross, we listen again as Pilate's words echo in the silence of our hearts, "Here is the man!". Jesus, God in human form, continues to be crucified today in men, women and children who are belittled, treated as objects and deprived of human dignity and rights. As we contemplate the crucified Jesus, it is not simply for us to feel emotional but has to open us to perceive Jesus in the realities of today, in the sufferings of our brothers and sisters. Good Friday places our feet on the ground and opens our eyes to see Jesus in those who need our love and care.

Today, let our love for the crucified Christ lead us to place ourselves in the loving service of those around us, especially those most suffering.

Reflective question:

How does Jesus want me to live this Good Friday?

Saturday, 8th April, Easter Vigil.

Genesis 1:1-2:2, Genesis 22:1-18, Exodus 14:15-15:1, Isaiah 54:5-14, Isaiah 55:1-11, Baruch 3:9-15, 32-4:4, Ezekiel 36:16-28, Romans 6:3-11, Matthew 28:1-10

After the Sabbath, and towards dawn on the first day of the week, Mary of Magdala and the other Mary went to visit the sepulchre. And suddenly there was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled away the stone and sat on it. His face was like lightning, his robe white as snow. The guards were so shaken by fear of him that they were like dead men. But the angel spoke; and he said to the women, 'There is no need for you to be afraid. I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said he would. Come and see the place where he lay, then go quickly and tell his disciples, "He has risen from the dead and now he is going ahead of you to Galilee; that is where you will see him." Look! I have told you.' Filled with awe and great joy the women came quickly away from the tomb and ran to tell his 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.'

Do not be afraid

"There is no need for you to be afraid. I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen...". Today, let us keep these words close to our hearts and embrace the gift of hope and joy that the risen Jesus is always alive at our side. There is no need to be afraid even when we experience falling sick, losing loved ones, broken relationships, failure, rejection, etc. Jesus invites us to step out of the tomb of our fears and encounter His living presence. He is the "God-with-us" and accompanies us through the events of our daily life.

“... go and tell my brothers that they must leave for Galilee; there they will see me”. Jesus told His disciples to go to Galilee, i.e. back to where they came from. There, in the familiar and the ordinary, they would find Him. Jesus invites us to go back to our Galilee- to the familiar grounds of the home, workplace, neighbourhood, parish, etc., and to see that Jesus is there.

Reflective question:

Do I allow Jesus to bring me out of my fears and experience the hope and joy of His resurrection?

Sunday, 9th April, Easter Sunday.

Acts 10: 34, 37-43, Colossians 3:1-4 or 1 Corinthians 5:6-8, 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.

The empty tomb

On this Easter Sunday, we stand before the empty tomb and contemplate with wonderment the Resurrection of Christ. “*Then the other disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in; he saw and he believed*”. Like Peter and Mary Magdalene, the beloved disciple was confused at the sight of the empty tomb. However, with eyes of faith, the empty tomb became, for him, a sign pointing to new life.

What does the empty tomb mean to me? Easter should not just be an external celebration of the church; it has to impact our lives today. The

empty tomb holds a message for us. Christ is risen and we are people of the resurrection. Pain, injustice, suffering and even death do not have the final word but life. God's love overcomes all. Therefore, through our words and actions, we can proclaim that Jesus is risen and is alive today!

Reflective questions:

Do I experience Christ alive today? In what way?

Monday, 10th 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 there, coming to meet them, was Jesus. 'Greetings' he said. And the women came up to him and, falling down before him, clasped his feet. Then Jesus said to them, 'Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers that they must leave for Galilee; they will see me there'. While they were on their way, some of the guard went off into the city to tell the chief priests all that had happened. These held a meeting with the elders and, after some discussion, handed a considerable sum of money to the soldiers with these instructions, 'This is what you must say, "His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep". And should the governor come to hear of this, we undertake to put things right with him ourselves and to see that you do not get into trouble.' The soldiers took the money and carried out their instructions, and to this day that is the story among the Jews.

Becoming messengers of hope

"Filled with awe and great joy..." This was how Mary Magdalene and the other Mary felt when they heard the good news that Jesus was alive. For many of us, Easter has become another liturgical feast of the church. We fail to allow Easter to fill us with awe and great joy. Today, let us contemplate the good news of Easter: Jesus has been raised. This shows us that God's faithful love is stronger than hatred, suffering and death. It also reminds us that we are not alone, but the risen Jesus walks alongside us. Let us be captivated by the good news of Easter and be filled with wonderment and delight.

The Jewish religious authorities paid the soldiers to propagate the lie about the disciples stealing Jesus' body from the sealed tomb. Yet, the good news of the Resurrection cannot be silenced. God continues to be

at work and calls people to bear witness to the risen Jesus. Today, let us commit ourselves to be disciples of the Resurrection.

Reflective question:

How can I be a credible witness to the Risen Christ with my words and actions?

Tuesday, 11th April, Tuesday within Easter Octave.

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

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

Called by our names

Mary of Magdala was overcome with deep grief and wept bitterly because she saw that Jesus' body was not in the tomb. When Jesus spoke to her, she did not recognise Him and thought He was a gardener. Only when Jesus called her, "Mary!" did she know that Jesus was talking to her. Recognising Jesus, she was filled with joy and became the bearer of good news to the other disciples.

Today, in the silence of our hearts, let us listen to the voice of Jesus calling us by our names. May we not become over-familiar with Jesus that we fail to recognise His voice. Like Mary, Jesus counts on us to bring others to experience His living presence.

Reflective question:

Do I recognise the presence of the risen Lord in my life today?

Wednesday, 12th April, Wednesday within Easter Octave.

Acts 3:1-10, Luke 24:13-35

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

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

Jesus walking alongside us

The two disciples of Jesus were disappointed and disillusioned when Jesus was crucified on the cross. With heavy hearts, they walked away from the rest of the disciples. Jesus, always the Good Shepherd, did not give up on them but drew close to the two disciples and entered into a dialogue with them. The more Jesus spoke to them, the more their hearts started to glow with profound hope and joy. Finally, when Jesus broke bread, their eyes were opened and they recognised Him.

Jesus walks with us and accompanies us along the way even though we do not recognise Him. He patiently talks to our hearts and makes our faith alive again. He takes opportunities to open our eyes to recognise Him. Recognising and encountering the Risen Lord, we walk again with hope and joy. Our road to Emmaus is not a one-off journey but a constant life-long process of not seeing and seeing again, not having hope and having hope again.

Reflective question:

What is the message that Jesus wants to tell me today?

Thursday, 13th April, Thursday within Easter Octave.

Acts 13:11-26, Luke 24:35-48

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

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

Peace be with you

The first words that Jesus told His disciples, who abandoned and denied Him, are "*Peace be with you*". Jesus could have scolded them for leaving Him alone on the cross during His Passion. Instead, all He offered to them was the gift of His peace. What does Jesus mean by peace? The peace that Jesus gives is not the absence of war or noise. His peace is His presence of love that stays with us and provides us with inner calmness in the midst of problems.

Today, Jesus calls us to open ourselves to receive the gift of His peace. The world fills us with noises and distractions that steal Christ's peace from us. Let us go back to Jesus in prayer and seek His peace. When we have His peace, we can turn to others in our lives, especially those who have hurt us, and tell them, "*Peace be with you*" and build a relationship of unity with them.

Reflective question:

In what areas of my life do I need greater peace?

Friday, 14th April, Friday within Easter Octave.

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

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

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

Jesus stands on the shore of our life

In today's gospel passage, Simon Peter said, "*I am going fishing*". Peter and the rest of the disciples decided to return to their old way of life because it seemed nothing had changed with Jesus' resurrection. Thus, it was back to work, routines and the old lifestyle. In our journey of faith, we experience moments without the light of faith and hope in us. Nothing seems to change with Easter. Problems in the family remain the same. Sadness tends to be stronger than joy and endless worries trouble us. We experience the internal darkness within us.

"It was light by now and there stood Jesus on the shore, though the disciples did not realise that it was Jesus." Jesus appeared to His disciples along the Lake of Tiberias. He also comes to us and stands by the shore of our daily life. His presence changes darkness into light, despair into hope and sadness into joy. Easter does make a difference in our life. We can live with new hope, trust and joy.

Reflective question:

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

**Saturday, 15th 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 Good News to all creation.'

Go out and proclaim that Jesus is alive

Mary Magdalene told the disciples that Jesus had risen. The two disciples said the same thing to the disciples after their experience along the road to Emmaus. Despite their testimonies, the disciples did not believe them. In their fear and sadness, they were not capable of welcoming the good news. Finally, Jesus went to them and reproached them for not believing. Despite their lack of faith, Jesus still entrusted the mission of proclaiming the good news of Easter.

As we prayerfully reflect on the gospel, let us rejoice that Jesus never gives up on us, even if we doubt or remain indifferent to Him. Today, we are invited to be His messengers of the good news to others. He calls us to tell others, with our lives and words, that He has risen and that His love is stronger than suffering, sin and death.

Reflective question:

Is there someone with whom I can share the good news of Easter?

Sunday, 16th April, Divine Mercy Sunday.

Acts 2:42-47, 1 Peter 1:3-9, John 20:19-31

In the evening of that same day, the first day of the week, the doors were closed in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews. Jesus came and stood among them. He said to them, 'Peace be with you', and showed them his hands and his side. The disciples were filled with joy when they saw the Lord, and he said to them again, 'Peace be with you.'

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

Jesus, my Lord and my God

"...the doors were closed in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews". The disciples locked themselves behind locked doors because they were afraid that the Jewish religious leaders would arrest them. Yet, Jesus stood among them and said, *"Peace be with you"*. His presence filled them with peace and joy. However, Thomas was not there with them. He refused to believe when others told him about their experience of Jesus in their midst. He wanted assurance. Jesus reappeared to all of them and invited Thomas to set aside his doubts and believe. Thus, Thomas got a personal experience of Jesus that made a difference in his life.

Today, let us take comfort that Jesus never gives up on any of us. We might lock ourselves behind the doors of fear and doubt but no locked doors can prevent Jesus from coming to us. Faith is a personal experience. Like Thomas, we are invited to keep searching to encounter Jesus and experience His presence daily. Like him, we too can say to Jesus with love and conviction, *"My Lord and my God"*.

Reflective question:

What is Jesus' message to me in the gospel passage?

Monday, 17th April, 2nd Week of Easter.**Acts 4:23-31, John 3:1-8**

There was one of the Pharisees called Nicodemus, a leading Jew, who came to Jesus by night and said, 'Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who comes from God; for no one could perform the signs that you do unless God were with him'. Jesus answered: 'I tell you most solemnly, unless a man is born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God'. Nicodemus said, 'How can a grown man be born? Can he go back into his mother's womb and be born again?' Jesus replied: 'I tell you most solemnly, unless a man is born through water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God: what is born of the flesh is flesh; what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be surprised when I say: You must be born from above. The wind blows wherever it pleases; you hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. That is how it is with all who are born of the Spirit.'

Born anew

In today's gospel, Jesus knew that Nicodemus was searching for something more in his faith. He was spiritually hungry for more of God and less of following norms and obligations. Jesus went straight to the matter and told him the need to be "*born from above*", i.e. born anew, new spiritual rebirth. Jesus invited Nicodemus to let go of depending on his own will and efforts to enter an intimate relationship with God and surrender himself to the Holy Spirit instead. Only the Holy Spirit could help him to have a radical change of heart and bring about newness in living his faith.

Do we hunger to have more of God in our lives? Jesus invites us to be open to the Holy Spirit and let Him work in us so that we will have a renewed life of faith. The Holy Spirit has the power to change our hearts and lead us to a deeper loving relationship with God. May we live a Spirit-filled life!

Reflective question:

Am I open to the Holy Spirit's working in me?

Tuesday, 18th 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 wherever it pleases; you hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. That is how it is with all who are born of the Spirit." 'How can that be possible?' asked Nicodemus. 'You, a teacher in Israel, and you do not know these things!' replied Jesus. 'I tell you most solemnly, we speak only about what we know and witness only to what we have seen and yet you people reject our evidence. If you do not believe me when I speak about things in this world, how are you going to believe me when I speak to you about heavenly things? No one has gone up to heaven except the one who came down from heaven, the Son of Man who is in heaven; and the Son of Man must be lifted up as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him."

The Spirit blows me to God

"The wind blows wherever it pleases; you hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. That is how it is with all who are born of the Spirit". The ancient Greek word for wind is *pneuma*, the same term used for the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, like the wind, cannot be controlled by us. It blows in accordance with where God wants. Thus, we need to trust the Spirit even when we do not know the way He is leading us.

"...the Son of Man must be lifted up". Jesus, the Son of Man, is lifted on the cross. There, we see the fullness of Jesus' love for all of us. Today, let us contemplate on the cross and experience being deeply grateful for Jesus' love for us.

Reflective question:

Where is the Spirit blowing me to today?

Wednesday, 19th 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.'

Light has come

"...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". There is an intimate connection between our faith in Jesus and our love for others. Our faith in Jesus must spur us to have practical love for those around us.

Our world tends to pull us towards owning more material things, even those we do not need. In the process, we become self-centred and blind to the needs of others, especially the poor. Today, may our life with Christ bring us to open our eyes to see the needs of others and do good deeds of love, compassion and justice. Through doing acts of love, we bring the light of Christ to shine in the world.

Reflective question:

Do my actions reflect the depth of my faith in Christ?

Thursday, 20th April, 2nd Week of Easter.

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

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

Speaking God's language

"He who comes from heaven bears witness to the things he has seen and heard, even if his testimony is not accepted; though all who do accept his testimony are attesting the truthfulness of God, since he whom God has sent speaks God's own words: God gives him the Spirit without reserve." Jesus comes from heaven to reveal the loving and merciful heart of God the Father. There is no pretence in Jesus as He speaks of what He Himself has seen and heard. What about us? If we have experienced God's love and mercy in our lives, how can we not witness it through our words and actions?

God wants to give us His Spirit without reserve so that we can go out and speak His own words of love, peace, joy, mercy and forgiveness. Let us open our hearts to receive His Spirit and live for God.

Reflective question:

How can I bear witness to God's love?

Friday, 21st April, St. Anselm.

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.

Looking at the crowds, Jesus had compassion

"Looking up, Jesus saw the crowds approaching and said to Philip, 'Where can we buy some bread for these people to eat?'". Jesus looked at the crowd, and all He could think was what He wanted to do for them. He never tired of giving Himself to others. Today, as we reflect on this gospel passage, Jesus invites us to be like Him by having a heart that looks at others with compassionate and self-giving love.

The small boy's five loaves and two fish helped feed the people. Each of us has our *"five loaves and two fish"* that we could offer to feed the crowd. We surrender to Jesus what we have and He is the one who makes much of what we give to Him. Today, let us ask Jesus to help us to love as He loves and to give all that we are and have for the good of others.

Reflective question:

What strikes me most as I read the gospel passage today?

Saturday, 22nd April, 2nd Week of Easter.

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

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

Do not be afraid

Storms are unpleasant experiences as they make us afraid, desperate and uncertain. In today's gospel passage, Jesus' disciples struggled against the storm and were frightened. Their boat seemed fragile against the storm. Their skills in navigating it seemed useless. Their fear grew when they saw Jesus walking on water towards them. Jesus quickly assured them, *"It is I. Do not be afraid"*.

We tend to be afraid like the disciples when we experience storms of adversity. We realise that we are vulnerable as we struggle against the strong winds and waves. The things we consider our securities, e.g., material possessions, intellect, etc., cannot give us inner peace and hope we desire. Listen to Jesus as He tells us today and always, "*It is I. Do not be afraid*". Jesus constantly calls us to trust in Him because He is with us and cares for us. Only He can give us what we truly need to weather through the storms in our lives.

Reflective question:

Do I go to Jesus and stay with Him when I am overwhelmed by difficulties?

Sunday, 23rd April, Third Sunday of Easter.

Acts 2:14, 22-33, 1 Peter 1:17-21, Luke 24:13-35

That very same day, two of Jesus' disciples were on their way to a village called Emmaus, seven miles from Jerusalem, and they were talking together about all that had happened. 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.

Jesus walks with us

Cleopas and his companion walked away from Jerusalem with sadness and despair in their hearts. Today, we might face an unexpected change, a sickness, a family crisis, etc. Like the two disciples, we walk through life with fear, confusion and hopelessness. In the gospel passage, the risen Jesus drew near the two disciples and walked with them. However, they could not recognise Him because of their grief and fear. Yet, Jesus did not give up on them but patiently listened and talked to them.

We seek comfort in this reality today. We are never alone in our time of confusion and fear. Jesus continues to be at our side. We, on our part, need to recognise His personal presence in the silence when we pray, in the Scripture that we read, in the Eucharist that we partake in, in the people we meet and in the events we live. May we open our hearts today to experience the risen Jesus as our daily companion. He has the message of love that transforms our sadness into joy and despair into hope.

Reflective question:

Do I recognise Jesus as my companion and friend on my journey?

Monday, 24th April, 3rd Week of Easter.

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

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

Work for food that endures

“I tell you most solemnly, you are not looking for me because you have seen the signs but because you had all the bread you wanted to eat. Do not work for food that cannot last, but work for food that endures to eternal life, the kind of food the Son of Man is offering you...” In today’s gospel, Jesus spoke of two kinds of food: “*food that cannot last*” and “*food that endures to eternal life*”. Jesus wanted the people who went to Him for free bread to get their priorities right. He wanted them to focus beyond their physical hunger and look at their spiritual hunger instead.

Today, Jesus invites us to be in touch with our spiritual hunger for faithful love, everlasting peace, true joy, and ultimately for God. Only Jesus is the giver of the food that endures forever and can nourish us spiritually. The path that we must take to have the food that Jesus gives is to believe in Him and enter into a relationship of love and trust with Him.

Reflective question:

Why am I seeking Jesus?

Tuesday, 25th April, St. Mark, Evangelist.

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

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

Go!

"The Church continues to preach this to everyone, all over the world. But she does not go forth alone: she goes forth with Jesus." (Pope Francis)
Jesus continues to call us to go and share the good news, through our words and actions, with people around us. What is the good news that we are called to share? The good news is Jesus' unconditional love and faithful companionship. In the same way that we cannot help ourselves but share with others about an exciting event, we cannot keep the gift of Jesus' love that we have received for ourselves. Instead, we must listen and respond with generosity as He tells us, "Go!"

In order for us to go, we first need to stay. We need to remain in Jesus by developing a daily habit of prayer where we spend time listening to Him, experiencing ourselves being loved by Him and receiving the nourishment of peace and strength from Him. His presence in our lives need to be good news for us before we can go and proclaim Him to others.

Reflective question:

Am I aware that I am being sent out to bring Jesus to others?

Wednesday, 26th April, 3rd Week of Easter.

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

Jesus said to the crowd: 'I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never be hungry; he who believes in me will never thirst. But, as I have

told you, you can see me and still you do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I shall not turn him away; because I have come from heaven, not to do my own will, but to do the will of the one who sent me. Now the will of him who sent me is that I should lose nothing of all that he has given to me, and that I should raise it up on the last day. Yes, it is my Father's will that whoever sees the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and that I shall raise him up on the last day.'

The will of God is to love

"...the will of him who sent me is that I should lose nothing of all that he has given to me...". Jesus will not lose anyone because each saint or sinner is precious to Him. This is the unconditional love of Jesus for humanity.

We often quickly 'lose' people and reject them over misunderstandings, arguments and disagreements. We think that one friend less, one family member less, one parishioner less, and one colleague less is acceptable. Is it? Today, Jesus calls us to have a heart that loves like Him. Each person matters. Each person is important. Let us ask Jesus to give us the grace to have His unconditional love and to value every person God has placed in our lives. May we enter into the depth of Jesus' heart that loves and imitate His same love in our lives.

Reflective question:

How can I open my heart to welcome and love each person in my life, even the ones I struggle to love?

Thursday, 27th April, 3rd Week of Easter.

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

Jesus said to the crowd: 'No one can come to me unless he is drawn by the Father who sent me, and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets: They will all be taught by God, and to hear the teaching of the Father, and learn from it, is to come to me. Not that anybody has seen the Father, except the one who comes from God: he has seen the Father. I tell you most solemnly, everybody who believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the desert and they are dead; but this is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that a man may eat it and not die. I am the living bread which has come down

from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live for ever; and the bread that I shall give is my flesh, for the life of the world.’ Then the Jews started arguing with one another: ‘How can this man give us his flesh to eat?’ they said. Jesus replied: I tell you most solemnly, if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you will not have life in you. Anyone who does eat my flesh and drink my blood has eternal life, and I shall raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink.’

Jesus, the bread of life

“I am the bread of life”. Jesus is the bread of life. Allow these words to sink deep into our hearts. Mother Teresa once said: *“When Jesus came into the world, He loved it so much that He gave His life for it. He wanted to satisfy our hunger for God. And what did He do? He made Himself the Bread of Life. He became small, fragile, and defenceless for us. Bits of bread can be so small that even a child can chew it. He became the Bread of Life to satisfy our hunger for God, our hunger for love”.* Do we take the gift of Jesus in the Eucharist for granted?

Today, let us be amazed again at the greatness of Jesus’ love for us. *“Anyone who does eat my flesh...”*. In the Eucharist, Jesus is truly present and real. He becomes food to nourish us with His love. In the gospel, the Jews who heard Jesus were scandalised by His words. Today, with eyes of faith, let us recognise Jesus present in the piece of bread and grow in our love for Him in the Eucharist.

Reflective question:

What does Jesus being alive and present in the Eucharist mean to me?

Friday, 28th April, St. Peter Chanel, St. Louis Grignion de Montfort. Acts 9:1-20, John 6:52-59

The Jews started arguing with one another: ‘How can this man give us his flesh to eat?’ they said. Jesus replied: I tell you most solemnly, if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you will not have life in you. Anyone who does eat my flesh and drink my blood has eternal life, and I shall raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I live in him. As I, who am sent by the living Father, myself draw life from the Father, so whoever eats me will draw life from

me. This is the bread come down from heaven; not like the bread our ancestors ate: they are dead, but anyone who eats this bread will live forever.’ He taught this doctrine at Capernaum, in the synagogue.

Jesus, food for the journey

In today’s gospel, Jesus’ words scandalised the Jews and divided His disciples. They were shocked at Jesus’ command about eating His flesh and drinking His blood. They simply could not understand His hard teaching. Today, Jesus continues to tell us, *“For my flesh is real flesh and my blood is real drink”*.

Jesus makes a gift of Himself. He becomes food in order to nourish us, especially when we experience difficulties and sadness in life. Do we take Jesus’ love expressed in the Eucharist for granted? Each time we receive Jesus in Holy Communion, we are not doing something for God, but rather, God is doing something for us. He is our source of nourishment. He gives us the peace, rest, courage and strength we need to walk on this journey of life.

Reflective question:

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

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

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

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

Do you want to go away too?

Jesus said to the Twelve, 'What about you, do you want to go away too?' In today's gospel, many of Jesus' disciples stopped following Him because they found His teaching too hard. Seeing them leaving Him, Jesus turned to the Twelve and asked them, "*Do you want to go away too?*" With this question, Jesus was giving them a choice to go away or to stay with Him. Peter answered, "*Lord, who shall we go to?...We will stay with you. We know and believe that you have the message of eternal life*".

Everyday, we need to renew our response to Jesus' call to follow Him. Our "Yes" to Him in the past does not guarantee that we will stay faithful to Him today. Thus, Jesus asks us the same question that He asked His disciples, "*What about you? Do you want to go away? Do you want to stop following my ways and values?*" Each of us needs to make a personal decision to choose Jesus and allow our choice to shape how we live each day.

Reflective question:

What will my response to Jesus today as He asks me, "*Do you want to stay with me, or do you want to go away from me?*"

Sunday, 30th April, Fourth Sunday of Easter, Good Shepherd Sunday.

Acts 2:36-41, 1 Peter 2:20-25, John 10:1-10

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

me will be safe: he will go freely in and out and be sure of finding pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full.'

Jesus, gate and shepherd

"I am the gate of the sheepfold". Jesus is never a closed gate but an open gate which allows His sheep to access abundant food in the green pastures and then back to the safety of the sheep pen. Let us find comfort as we stay with the image of Jesus as the open gate. He is the gate where we find security and nourishment. He is the gate that opens up and leads us to God, the source of life. Entering through Jesus, we enter into the life of God.

Jesus is the gate and He is also the Shepherd. As our Shepherd, He always goes ahead of us and calls us to follow Him. Too often, we allow the many conflicting noises of this world to creep into our thoughts and hearts and make us forget to listen and follow our Shepherd's voice. Today, let us stay close to our faithful Shepherd and allow Him to lead us always to God, the source of fullness of life.

Reflective question:

What helps me to listen attentively to the voice of Jesus, my Shepherd?



Artist: M. Torevell