

Come, Holy Spirit!



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

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PRAYER FOR LIVING YEAR A

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Monday, 1st May, St. Joseph the Worker.

Genesis 1:26-2:3 or Colossians 3:14-15, 17:23-24, Matthew 13:54-58

Jesus came to his home town, he taught the people in their synagogue in such a way that they were astonished and said, 'Where did the man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers? This is the carpenter's son, surely? Is not his mother the woman called Mary, and his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Jude? His sisters, too, are they not all here with us? So where did the man get it all?' And they would not accept him. But Jesus said to them, 'A prophet is despised only in his own country and in his own house,' and he did not work many miracles there because of their lack of faith.

Jesus, the carpenter's son

The people in Jesus' hometown refused to accept Jesus and His teaching because they were sure that they knew all about Him and His family. They looked at Him as one of their own, as someone familiar. Thus, despite His wisdom and actions, they regarded Jesus as "*the carpenter's son*".

We might be shocked by the refusal of the people to accept Jesus. However, let us ask ourselves if we also take His presence for granted. We may shut ourselves from His presence and close our ears to listen to His voice. We may go to Jesus occasionally instead of setting aside time to nurture an intimate relationship with Him through daily prayer. Let us draw close to Jesus, be captivated again by His words and actions and recognise the relevance of His presence in our lives.

Reflective question:

Am I open to being surprised by Jesus and letting Him reveal Himself to me today?

Tuesday, 2nd May, St. Athanasius.

Acts 11:19-26, John 10:22-30

It was the time of the feast of Dedication in Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was in the Temple walking up and down in the Portico of Solomon. The Jews gathered round him and said, 'How much longer are you going to keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us openly.' Jesus replied: I have told you, but you do not believe. The works I do in my Father's name are my witness; but you do not believe, because you are

no sheep of mine. The sheep that belong to me listen to my voice; I know them and they follow me. I give them eternal life; they will never be lost and no one will ever steal them from my hand. The Father, for what he has given me, is greater than anyone, and no one can steal anything from the Father's hand. The Father and I are one."

Call to listen to the Sheherd's voice

In today's gospel, the people around Jesus wanted Him to tell them plainly who He was. However, Jesus had been openly speaking to them. The problem was that they were unwilling to listen to what He had to say. They wanted a powerful political Messiah to save them from being ruled by the Romans. Jesus came not for that reason. Instead, He came to show them the way to God the Father by living a life of unconditional and merciful love. They did not like what they heard.

"The sheep that belong to me listen to my voice; I know them and they follow me". We often ask Jesus for clarity about where to go, what to do, etc. Jesus speaks to us plainly and clearly. The question is whether we are open to the Shepherd's voice. Today, let us ask for the grace to listen to Jesus' voice and follow Him to where He leads us, even if we might find His way and message challenging.

Reflective question:

Do I listen and obey the Shepherd's voice?

Wednesday, 3rd May, SS. Philip and James Apostles.

1 Corinthians 15:1-8, John 14:6-14

Jesus said to Thomas: I am the Way; I am Truth and Life. No one can come to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father too. From this moment you know him and have seen him. Philip said, 'Lord, show us the Father and then we shall be satisfied.' Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? 'Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father, so how can you say, "Show us the Father"? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? What I say to you I do not speak of my own accord: it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his works. You must believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe it on the evidence of these works. In all truth I tell you, whoever believes in me will perform the same works as I do myself,

and will perform even greater works, because I am going to the Father. Whatever you ask in my name I will do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it."

With God, I lack nothing

"Lord, show us the Father and then we shall be satisfied". Philip's words echo our deepest desire to be in the presence of God and be satisfied. The world tells us that satisfaction comes from having material possessions, gaining peoples' approval, accumulating wealth, etc. However, true satisfaction comes from a relationship with God because His presence in us makes our lives complete. As St. Teresa of Avila said, *"Whoever has God lacks nothing, God alone suffices".*

God alone is enough. We can surrender to Him because we know in faith, not feelings, that He sustains and cares for us. When we hold onto God, we start to recognise that the good things we have and the people around us are gifts we receive from Him. Our greatest challenge is to believe in the truth that we are loved and cherished by God, especially when we face problems in life. The truth is that God alone is enough, and His love is the foundation where we stand firm.

Reflective question:

Do I find my joy in God alone?

Thursday, 4th May, 4th Week of Easter.

Acts 13:13-25, John 13:16-20

After he had washed the feet of his disciples, Jesus said to them, 'In all truth I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, no messenger is greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know this, blessed are you if you behave accordingly. I am not speaking about all of you: I know the ones I have chosen; but what scripture says must be fulfilled: 'He who shares my table takes advantage of me. I tell you this now, before it happens, so that when it does happen you may believe that I am He. In all truth I tell you, whoever welcomes the one I send, welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me, welcomes the one who sent me.'

Following the Master

"No servant is greater than his master...". Jesus had just finished washing the disciples' feet. This unthinkable action of Jesus washing

their feet was the way for Him to demonstrate the true meaning of greatness to His disciples.

Today, we are called to imitate Jesus' action of humble and loving service. Like the disciples, we tend to seek to be great by having the appreciation of others for the work we do and gaining status and position for the services we render. Listen to Jesus as He sends us to serve without seeking personal glory and rewards. Instead, we serve because we want to follow Jesus, our Master.

Reflective question:

Is there any obstacle in me that prevents me from serving like Jesus?

Friday, 5th May, 4th Week of Easter.

Acts 13:26-33, John 14:1-6

Jesus said to his disciples, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You trust in God, trust also in me. In my Father's house there are many places to live in; otherwise I would have told you. I am going now to prepare a place for you, and after I have gone and prepared you a place, I shall return to take you to myself, so that you may be with me where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going. Thomas said, 'Lord, we do not know where you are going, so how can we know the way?' Jesus said: I am the Way; I am Truth and Life. No one can come to the Father except through me.'

Jesus brings peace

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. You trust in God, trust also in me". Am I troubled today? Am I worried about a family issue, a health crisis, the opinions of others, etc.? In life, we face uncertainties and difficulties. We all have them because they are part of being human. In this time of prayer, let us listen attentively to Jesus as He tells us again to put our trust in God, who loves us. The fruit of trusting in Him is peace. We will face ups and downs in life, but we know that Jesus is with us no matter what, and His presence will give us the inner strength to stand firm. Knowing this truth is what gives us peace and calmness.

Jesus calls us to trust Him because He is the way, truth and life. Let us fix our gaze on Him and follow Him as He guides us into loving communion with the Father. There, we find our peace.

Reflective question:

What is God's message for me today?

Saturday, 6th May, 4th Week of Easter.**Acts 13:44-52, John 14:7-14**

Jesus said to his disciples, 'If you know me, you will know my Father too. From this moment you know him and have seen him. Philip said, 'Lord, show us the Father and then we shall be satisfied.' Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? 'Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father, so how can you say, "Show us the Father"? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? What I say to you I do not speak of my own accord: it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his works. You must believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe it on the evidence of these works. In all truth I tell you, whoever believes in me will perform the same works as I do myself, and will perform even greater works, because I am going to the Father. Whatever you ask in my name I will do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.'

The God revealed in Jesus

"Lord, show us the Father...". Philip wanted to see God face-to-face. By his request, Philip also expressed our innate desire to know who God is and enter into a personal relationship with Him. Jesus replied, *"Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father"*. Jesus' reply to Philip is also for us today too. God can be seen, known and loved because He is visible in Jesus. Indeed, Jesus is the human face of God.

Today, let us look at Jesus in the gospel stories and see how He behaved, the priorities He had and the love He showed. Jesus constantly reached out to the vulnerable and the marginalised people of His time because they occupied a special place in His heart. In Jesus, we see how God behaves, loves, forgives, heals, suffers, etc. As we stay with this reality that Jesus is God in human form, let us reveal Jesus through how we live and love. May people around us look at us and see God's presence in us.

Reflective question:

What does it mean for me that Jesus makes God visible?

Sunday, 7th May, Fifth Sunday of Easter
Acts 6:1-7, 1 Peter 2:4-9, John 14:1-12

Jesus said to his disciples: 'Do not let your hearts be troubled. You trust in God, trust also in me. In my Father's house there are many places to live in; otherwise I would have told you. I am going now to prepare a place for you, and after I have gone and prepared you a place, I shall return to take you to myself, so that you may be with me where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going. Thomas said, 'Lord, we do not know where you are going, so how can we know the way?' Jesus said: I am the Way; I am Truth and Life. No one can come to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father too. From this moment you know him and have seen him. Philip said, 'Lord, show us the Father and then we shall be satisfied.' Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? 'Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father, so how can you say, "Show us the Father"? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? What I say to you I do not speak of my own accord: it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his works. You must believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe it on the evidence of these works. In all truth I tell you, whoever believes in me will perform the same works as I do myself, and will perform even greater works, because I am going to the Father.'

Christ at the centre

Today's first reading shows a critical moment in the life of the early Church. The Hellenists, i.e. the Greek-speaking Jews, complained that the Hebrew-speaking Jews were neglecting their widows in food distribution. The arguments between these two groups of people reflect the reality that there is always the possibility of misunderstandings and friction happening when people from different cultures, personalities, backgrounds, etc., gather. The early Christians found the solution to the crisis because they were rooted in Christ and guided by His Spirit. At the end of the passage, it states that despite the conflicts between the two groups, God continued working in and through the community to bring more people to faith.

In today's gospel, Jesus presents Himself as "*the Way, the Truth and Life*". Therefore, he has to be the central focus of our life. His presence in us helps us show love to others and work for communion with those

around us, even those who are different from us. Today, let us ask Jesus for the grace to deepen our relationship with Him so that He can guide how we live and love.

Reflective question:

Conflicts with others are inevitable. How can I respond to conflicts in faith?

Monday, 8th May, 5th Week of Easter.

Acts 14:5-18, John 14:21-26

Jesus said to his disciples: 'Whoever holds to my commandments and keeps them is the one who loves me; and whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I shall love him and reveal myself to him.' Judas -- not Judas Iscariot -- said to him, 'Lord, what has happened, that you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?' Jesus replied: 'Anyone who loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we shall come to him and make a home in him. Anyone who does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not my own: it is the word of the Father who sent me. I have said these things to you while still with you; but the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all I have said to you.'

Holy Spirit in us

In the first reading, we read the account of the attempted stoning of Paul and Barnabas in Iconium, and how they sought safety in the towns in Lycaonia. Instead of feeling disappointed and dejected at the reaction of the people of Iconium, they continued to preach the Good News. They did not give up but faithfully went on to dedicate their time and energy to the mission because they centred their hearts on Jesus alone.

In today's gospel, Jesus speaks to us about the Holy Spirit, who teaches and reminds us of the Good News of God's unconditional love for us and His call to witness His love to others. The Holy Spirit, our constant companion, gives us the strength to face the challenges of life with hearts fixed on Jesus.

Reflective question:

Do I live life's challenges with the Holy Spirit, i.e. each rejection, problem, loss, etc.?

Tuesday, 9th May, 5th Week of Easter.**Acts 14:19-28, John 14:27-31**

Jesus said to his disciples: 'Peace I bequeath to you, my own peace I give you, a peace which the world cannot give, this is my gift to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid. You heard me say: I am going away and shall return. If you loved me you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. I have told you this now, before it happens, so that when it does happen you may believe. I shall not talk to you much longer, because the prince of this world is on his way. He has no power over me, but the world must recognise that I love the Father and that I act just as the Father commanded. Come now, let us go.'

Peace I give to you

"Peace I bequeath to you, my own peace I give you, a peace which the world cannot give, this is my gift to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid". Listen and allow these words of Jesus to sink deeply into our hearts. The peace that Jesus gives to us is not a peace that is free from problems. Instead, Jesus' peace comes from the experience of being rooted in God and whose presence enables us to overcome life's trials, including loss, illness, pain and even death, without falling into hopelessness and despair.

In the first reading, Paul was stoned by some Jews from Antioch and Iconium. However, he did not allow this persecution to stop him from his mission of preaching the Good News. Instead, he encouraged the Christians to persevere in their faith as they would all have to experience hardships along the way. Paul's peace rooted in God's presence empowered him to keep going. Today, let us open ourselves to receive the peace Jesus wants to give us.

Reflective question:

Am I open to receiving the peace that Jesus wants to give me?

Wednesday, 10th May, St. John De Avila, St. Damien of Molokai.

Acts 15:1-6, John 15:1-8

Jesus said to his disciples: 'I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that bears no fruit he cuts away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes to make it bear even more. You are clean already, by means of the word that I have spoken to you. Remain in me, as I in you. As a branch cannot bear fruit all by itself, unless it remains part of the vine, neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me, with me in him, bears fruit in plenty; for cut off from me you can do nothing. Anyone who does not remain in me is thrown away like a branch -- and withers; these branches are collected and thrown on the fire and are burnt. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for whatever you please and you will get it. It is to the glory of my Father that you should bear much fruit and be my disciples.'

Remain

"Remain in me, as I in you". Christianity is more than just following rules and norms. To be a Christian is to remain in Jesus, i.e. to have an intimate relationship with Him. When we are in connection with Jesus, He gives us the strength to bear abundant fruit of love in our ordinary lives, the joy to be His witness to others and bring them to experience God's faithful love for them and the peace to face the trials and difficulties of life.

"Whoever remains in me, with me in him, bears fruit in plenty; for cut off from me you can do nothing". Let these words resound in our hearts and give us the courage to enter into this deep union of remaining in Jesus, the source of life and love. May we stay with Jesus and live in His loving presence today.

Reflective question:

Am I united to Jesus, the source of my life and love?

Thursday, 11th May, 5th Week of Easter.

Acts 15:7-21, John 15:9-11

Jesus said to his disciples: "I have loved you just as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. If you keep my commandments you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain

in his love. I have told you this so that my own joy may be in you and your joy be complete.”

The great joy of being loved by Jesus

“I have loved you just as the Father has loved me”. The response of being loved by Jesus is joy, which is the mark of a true Christian, a faithful friend of Jesus! Nothing and nobody can take away this profound joy from us. We rejoice that we are loved; thus, we can face each difficulty with certainty that God will not disappoint us because He is with us.

Jesus' love for us is the foundation of our lives. With His love in us, we learn how to love others. Today, we are called to go out and share His love with those around us by putting patience, kindness, compassion, etc., into action. It does not matter if others do not respond to our love. We continue to do good. Today, let us allow Jesus' words to constantly resound in our hearts, *“I have loved you just as the Father has loved me”*. From remaining in His love, we show love to others.

Reflective question:

How can I abide in Jesus' love today?

Friday, 12th May, SS. Nereus & Achilleus, St. Pancras.

Acts 15:22-31, John 15:12-17

Jesus said to his disciples: ‘This is my commandment: love one another, as I have loved you. No one can have greater love than to lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends, if you do what I command you. I shall no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know the master's business; I call you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have learnt from my Father. You did not choose me, no, I chose you; and I commissioned you to go out and to bear fruit, fruit that will last; so that the Father will give you anything you ask him in my name. My command to you is to love one another.’

As I have loved you

“This is my commandment: love one another, as I have loved you”. To love is not an option. Instead, loving another person is our response regardless of how we feel toward that person. Often, we think that to love is to have an affectionate feeling toward a person; thus, we struggle to exercise loving someone, especially those we cannot get along with. However, when Jesus commands us to love, He calls us first to remain

in His love - “...as I have loved you”. When we are in a relationship with Jesus, love flows from us to others.

“I call you friends”. Let us listen once again as Jesus calls us: friends, beloveds. The more we are aware that we are indefinitely loved by Jesus, the more we will be open to giving ourselves up for the good of others, even those we find it hard to love. For example, we give ourselves up for others when we give our time to help someone in need. Today, let ourselves be loved by Jesus so that His love will flow from us to others.

Reflective question:

How can I love someone I am not drawn to?

Saturday, 13th May, Our Lady of Fatima.

Acts 16:1-10, John 15:18-21

Jesus said to his disciples: ‘If the world hates you, you must realise that it hated me before it hated you. If you belonged to the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you do not belong to the world, because my choice of you has drawn you out of the world, that is why the world hates you. Remember the words I said to you: A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you too; if they kept my word, they will keep yours as well. But it will be on my account that they will do all this to you, because they do not know the one who sent me.’

Living the Kingdom values

We all want to be liked and accepted by family members and peers. Yet, Jesus today tells us that we will sometimes find ourselves in situations where people are hostile towards us. Others hate us because we choose to live in the gospel values of mercy, truth, forgiveness, compassion and faithfulness; and refuse to take part in the worldly values of competition, discrimination, injustice, selfishness and greed.

Even though others might take offence to goodness and love, we do our best each day to continue being faithful to our identity as Jesus’ beloved friends, as His committed disciples. The comforting truth is that Jesus is always with us and gives us the courage to follow Him to the end.

Reflective question:

How ready am I to live as Jesus lived in the concrete environments I am in?

Sunday, 14th May, Sixth Sunday of Easter.**Acts 8:5-8, 14-17, 1 Peter 3:15-18, John 14:15-21**

Jesus said to his disciples: 'If you love me you will keep my commandments. I shall ask the Father, and he will give you another Paraclete to be with you for ever, the Spirit of truth whom the world can never accept since it neither sees nor knows him; but you know him, because he is with you, he is in you. I shall not leave you orphans; I shall come to you. In a short time the world will no longer see me; but you will see that I live and you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father and you in me and I in you. Whoever holds to my commandments and keeps them is the one who loves me; and whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I shall love him and reveal myself to him.'

The Spirit of love within me

In today's gospel, Jesus tells us that loving Him means keeping His commandment. "What commandment?", we might ask. The commandment that Jesus gives is: "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13.34-35). Jesus assures us that He will ask God the Father to give us the Holy Spirit as our companion and helper. He, who is God's abiding love, is the one empowering us to carry out the task of loving.

The Holy Spirit is with us and is in us to guide us to live the Gospel values with joy, to sustain us to walk on with faith despite life's challenges, and to transform our hearts to be receptive to God's love and truth. Thus, we are neither alone nor do not depend on our strength and resources to live out the commandment to love as Jesus loves. Instead, we can confidently count on the abiding presence of the Spirit in us. Come, Holy Spirit, fill our hearts with your love so that we can live as God wants us to.

Reflective question:

Am I aware that I am accompanied by Holy Spirit?

Monday, 15th May, 6th Week of Easter.

Acts 16:11-15, John 15:26-16:4

Jesus said to his disciples: 'When the Paraclete comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who issues from the Father, he will be my witness. And you too will be witnesses, because you have been with me from the beginning. I have told you all this so that you may not fall away. They will expel you from the synagogues, and indeed the time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is doing a holy service to God. They will do these things because they have never known either the Father or me. But I have told you all this, so that when the time for it comes you may remember that I told you.'

You too will be witnesses

In today's gospel, Jesus told the disciples that they would face persecution from the Jewish religious leaders, which would cause them to feel hopeless and have their faith shaken. However, Jesus did not tell the disciples to fight violence with violence. Instead, He said to them that the Holy Spirit would be with them and empower them to continue witnessing to Him.

Today, as we pray with the gospel passage, we can reflect on our past and present experiences of being "*persecuted*" for trying to testify to Jesus and living His values of truth, justice and love in the family, parish, workplace and society. May we never resist suffering for Christ but have the courage to testify Jesus' presence in our lives through our daily words, actions and choices. Let us ask the Holy Spirit to come to us and give us the strength to point others to Jesus.

Reflective question:

How open am I, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to witness to Jesus through my words, actions and choices?

Tuesday, 16th May, 6th Week of Easter.

Acts 16:22-34, John 16:5-11

Jesus said to his disciples: 'Now I am going to the one who sent me. Not one of you asks, 'Where are you going?' Yet you are sad at heart because I have told you this. Still, I am telling you the truth: it is for your

own good that I am going, because unless I go, the Paraclete will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will show the world how wrong it was, about sin, and about who was in the right, and about judgement: about sin: in that they refuse to believe in me; about who was in the right: in that I am going to the Father and you will see me no more; about judgement: in that the prince of this world is already condemned.'

Joy, even in trails

"...threw them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. Late that night Paul and Silas were praying and singing God's praises, ..." (1st reading). Paul and Silas were stripped, flogged and thrown into prison. Yet, they remained faithful to Jesus and joyfully lived their faith amid hardship. Their joy reflected their conviction that the Holy Spirit was with them. We would find it hard to be joyful in such circumstances. We need to be in touch with the Holy Spirit and trust that He can and will bring new hope and life out of suffering.

"I will send him to you". In the gospel, Jesus knew that the disciples would struggle to live their faith to the end when He would no longer be with them. Thus, Jesus promised He would remain with them in a new way, i.e. through His Spirit. Today, Jesus continues to stay with us through His Spirit. We are not alone. The Holy Spirit accompanies us and makes us walk the path of joyfully living our faith to the end.

Reflective question:

How can I depend more on the Holy Spirit?

Wednesday, 17th May, 6th Week of Easter.

Acts 17:15, 22-18:1, John 16:12-15

Jesus said to his disciples: 'I still have many things to say to you but they would be too much for you to bear now. However, when the Spirit of truth comes he will lead you to the complete truth, since he will not be speaking of his own accord, but will say only what he has been told; and he will reveal to you the things to come. He will glorify me, since all he reveals to you will be taken from what is mine. Everything the Father has is mine; that is why I said: all he reveals to you will be taken from what is mine.'

Holy Spirit roots me in the truth that I am God's beloved child

"...when the Spirit of truth comes he will lead you to the complete truth...". The Holy Spirit comes to us to become one in us. This is the amazing reality that we often take for granted. God loves us so much that He wants to unite Himself with us in this way. We have the Holy Spirit in us all the time. With Him in us, we are empowered to believe and live in the truth that we are God's children.

Often, life's problems make us live life as fearful people. Our hearts are filled with pessimism and despair when we encounter an uncertain future, an illness, a loss, a failure and, most of all, death. Fear takes away the joy of being God's beloved children. Today, let the Holy Spirit lead us to the complete truth of God's faithful love for us and remind us of our belonging to Him. Rooted in this reality, we live with peace.

Reflective question:

What does it mean for me that the Holy Spirit lead me to the complete truth of who God is for me and who I am for God?

Thursday, 18th May, Ascension of the Lord.

Acts 1:1-11, Ephesians 1:17-23, Matthew 28:16-20

The eleven disciples set out for Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had arranged to meet them. When they saw him they fell down before him, though some hesitated. Jesus came up and spoke to them. He said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations; baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you. And look, I am with you always; yes, to the end of time.'

Go...I am with you always

What does the Feast of the Ascension mean for us? "*The Ascension doesn't indicate Jesus' absence, but rather it tells us that He is living among us in a new way. He is no longer in a particular place in the world as He was before the Ascension. Now He is in the Lordship of God, present in every space and time, close to each of us*" (Pope Francis, April 2013). Jesus is neither a God who is distant from us nor indifferent to our daily life. On the contrary, through His Spirit, He is in us personally and intimately. He is among us when we gather and partake in the

Eucharistic meal. He is with us when we love, especially the poor and the most vulnerable.

In the gospel, Jesus entrusts to the disciples the task of bringing people to encounter God's unconditional and universal love. These people, ordinary as they were, were chosen and sent by Jesus. Today, Jesus calls and sends us to be heralds of the Good News through our words and actions so that people know He is alive and active in the world.

Reflective question:

What is Jesus' invitation to me?

Friday, 19th May, 6th Week of Easter.

Acts 18:9-18, John 16:20-23

Jesus said to his disciples: 'In all truth I tell you, you will be weeping and wailing while the world will rejoice; you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn to joy. A woman in childbirth suffers, because her time has come; but when she has given birth to the child she forgets the suffering in her joy that a human being has been born into the world. So it is with you: you are sad now, but I shall see you again, and your hearts will be full of joy, and that joy no one shall take from you. When that day comes, you will not ask me any questions. In all truth I tell you, anything you ask from the Father he will grant in my name.'

Sadness and joy

Do our experiences of suffering mean that God is not with us? Do we feel abandoned by God when problems come our way? Listen to Jesus as He tells us, "... *you are sad now, but I shall see you again, and your hearts will be full of joy, and that joy no one shall take from you*". Our sadness will turn to the fullness of joy when we recognise Jesus' abiding presence with us. The conviction that Jesus will never leave us gives us the joy that nothing and nobody can take away from us.

In this time of prayer, let us reflect on the difficulties we have in life. The key is to keep journeying with trust, never stop seeking to deepen our relationship with Jesus and continue perceiving His presence in our suffering. May we always experience God's joy in our hearts.

Reflective question:

Do I sense that God is with me amid life's challenges?

Saturday, 20th May, St. Bernardine of Siena.

Acts 18:23-28, John 16:23-28

Jesus said to his disciples: 'When that day comes, you will not ask me any questions. In all truth I tell you, anything you ask from the Father he will grant in my name. Until now you have not asked anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and so your joy will be complete. I have been telling you these things in veiled language. The hour is coming when I shall no longer speak to you in veiled language but tell you about the Father in plain words. When that day comes you will ask in my name; and I do not say that I shall pray to the Father for you, because the Father himself loves you for loving me, and believing that I came from God. I came from the Father and have come into the world and now I am leaving the world to go to the Father.'

The Father loves you

"Ask and you will receive, and so your joy will be complete". We have experienced going to God and asking for something, but we did not get our prayer answered. We ended up frustrated and disappointed. We might even doubt if God truly loved us. Listen to Jesus' words: *"...because the Father himself loves you for loving me"*. Jesus reminds us today that God loves us. Allow these words to sink into our hearts and find comfort in them.

Rooted in being deeply loved by God, we go to Him with our prayers and petitions with trust. We tell Him what we need, but we do not dictate what to do and how we want our prayers answered. On our part, it is an exercise of loving trust to tell God and leave our concerns in His hands. Today, let us find peace in the reality that God loves us; thus, all will be well.

Reflective question:

How can I grow to love and trust God more?

Sunday, 21st May, Seventh Sunday of Easter.

Acts 1: 12-14, 1 Peter 4: 13-16, John 17: 1-11

Jesus raised his eyes to heaven and said: 'Father, the hour has come: glorify your Son so that your Son may glorify you; so that, just as you have given him power over all humanity, he may give eternal life to all those you have entrusted to him. And eternal life is this: to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I have glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. Now, Father, glorify me with that glory I had with you before ever the world existed. I have revealed your name to those whom you took from the world to give me. They were yours and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now at last they have recognised that all you have given me comes from you for I have given them the teaching you gave to me, and they have indeed accepted it and know for certain that I came from you, and have believed that it was you who sent me. It is for them that I pray. I am not praying for the world but for those you have given me, because they belong to you. All I have is yours and all you have is mine, and in them I am glorified. I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep those you have given me true to your name, so that they may be one like us.'

Eternal life

'And eternal life is this: to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent'. Often, we associate “eternal life” as living forever with God when our physical life here on earth ends. Listen to Jesus as He tells us, “*Eternal life is to know God*”. To know God is more than just having intellectual knowledge. When Jesus speaks about eternal life, it refers to a relationship with God that starts here, now, and forever. Are we aware we have been created to have a loving and intimate relationship with God?

The gift of eternal life must make a difference in how we live our daily lives. Our relationship with God must be contagious and impact people for the better as well as enable us to face difficulties joyfully. In the first reading, we see the disciples, with Mother Mary, gathering together in prayer. As individuals and as a community, they were rooted in a living relationship with Jesus. Therefore, the early Christians found the strength to face challenges and become courageous witnesses. Let us live eternal life today.

Reflective question:

How has my relationship with God been the guiding force behind what I say and do each day?

Monday, 22nd May, St. Rita of Cascia.**Acts 19:1-8, John 16:29-33**

The disciples said to Jesus, 'Now you are speaking plainly and not using veiled language. Now we see that you know everything and need not wait for questions to be put into words; because of this we believe that you came from God.' Jesus answered them: Do you believe at last? Listen; the time will come -- indeed it has come already -- when you are going to be scattered, each going his own way and leaving me alone. And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me. I have told you all this so that you may find peace in me. In the world you will have hardship, but be courageous: I have conquered the world.'

Be courageous, I am with you

Jesus knew His disciples would leave Him alone when He was at His lowest moment, even though they professed their unwavering commitment to follow Him to the end. Yet, Jesus knew He would not be alone because God the Father was always with Him. Jesus invited His disciples to find peace in Him as they faced challenges living their discipleship.

Today, as we pray with the gospel passage, we listen to Jesus as He calls us to find our peace in Him and says, "*In the world you will have hardship, but be courageous: I have conquered the world*". Let these words take root in our hearts when we feel overwhelmed by the sad news of people we love, when we feel hopeless and scared by the changes we cannot control, when we feel small in moments of humiliation, etc. Today, Jesus reassures us that He is with us. Thus, we can draw peace and courage from our relationship with Him.

Reflective question:

In what areas in my life, do I need Jesus' peace and courage?

Tuesday, 23rd May, 7th Week of Easter.

Acts 20:17-27, John 17:1-11

Jesus raised his eyes to heaven and said: 'Father, the hour has come: glorify your Son so that your Son may glorify you; so that, just as you have given him power over all humanity, he may give eternal life to all those you have entrusted to him. And eternal life is this: to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I have glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. Now, Father, glorify me with that glory I had with you before ever the world existed. I have revealed your name to those whom you took from the world to give me. They were yours and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now at last they have recognised that all you have given me comes from you for I have given them the teaching you gave to me, and they have indeed accepted it and know for certain that I came from you, and have believed that it was you who sent me. It is for them that I pray. I am not praying for the world but for those you have given me, because they belong to you. All I have is yours and all you have is mine, and in them I am glorified. I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep those you have given me true to your name, so that they may be one like us.'

I am Jesus' disciple living in the world

"I am on my way to Jerusalem but have no idea what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit, in town after town, has made it clear enough that imprisonment and persecution await me. But life to me is not a thing to waste words on, provided that when I finish my race I have carried out the mission the Lord Jesus gave me- and that was to bear witness to the Good News of God's grace..." (1st reading). Paul's words to the elders of the church of Ephesus drew an image of himself as Jesus' faithful missionary. Despite the trials, Paul simply wanted to love and serve Jesus by bearing witness to Him to the end.

"I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world". As Jesus has stated in the gospel, we are in the world today. The central question is: How are we living in the world? As His disciples, we must live out the gospel values of truth, justice and love and bear witness to Christ faithfully each day.

Reflective question:

How does Jesus want me to live my discipleship in the world?

Wednesday, 24th May, 7th Week of Easter.**Acts 20:28-38, John 17:11-19**

Jesus raised his eyes to heaven and said: 'Holy Father, keep those you have given me true to your name, so that they may be one like us. While I was with them, I kept those you had given me true to your name. I have watched over them and not one is lost except one who was destined to be lost, and this was to fulfil the scriptures. But now I am coming to you and I say these things in the world to share my joy with them to the full. I passed your word on to them, and the world hated them, because they belong to the world no more than I belong to the world. I am not asking you to remove them from the world, but to protect them from the Evil One. They do not belong to the world any more than I belong to the world. Consecrate them in the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world, and for their sake I consecrate myself so that they too may be consecrated in truth.'

Protect them, Father!

In today's gospel, Jesus prays for us. We like to ask people to pray for us because we trust their prayers can help us. Today, let us take a moment to grasp that Jesus is praying for us and take comfort in this reality. Jesus prays for us because He loves us and cares for us.

Jesus prays not for us to have status, wealth or material things but to be faithful disciples living in today's world. He knows we struggle to live the gospel values in our materialistic and individualistic society. Therefore, He asks the Father to protect us as we try our best to live our mission in the places where we are. Today, let us go and live Jesus' mission with the security that we are in God's loving protection and care.

Reflective question:

What small step can I make to live out my identity as Jesus' faithful disciple by sharing the good news of God's love with those around me today?

Thursday, 25th May, St Bede the Venerable, St. Gregory VII, St. Mary Magdalene de Pazzi.

Acts 22:30;23:6-11, John 17:20-26

Jesus raised his eyes to heaven and said, 'I pray not only for these but also for those who through their teaching will come to believe in me. May they all be one, just as, Father, you are in me and I am in you, so that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe it was you who sent me. I have given them the glory you gave to me, that they may be one as we are one. With me in them and you in me, may they be so perfected in unity that the world will recognise that it was you who sent me and that you have loved them as you have loved me. Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, so that they may always see my glory which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. Father, Upright One, the world has not known you, but I have known you, and these have known that you have sent me. I have made your name known to them and will continue to make it known, so that the love with which you loved me may be in them, and so that I may be in them.'

May they be one

"May they all be one, just as, Father, you are in me and I am in you, so that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe it was you who sent me." Unity with others is the fruit of being in union with Jesus. Yet, we are aware of the reality that the church is divided. We divide and build walls with others different from us by gossiping, creating cliques, putting others down, etc. Let us remember that we have the same Lord, the same baptism and are part of the same body of Christ. Thus, we need to continue playing our part to work to build bridges and heal divisions.

Our oneness testifies to the world the loving presence of God. In this time of prayer, let us ask Jesus to pray that we may truly be one and that through our love for one another, many more may come to know and love God.

Reflective question:

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

Friday, 26th May, St. Philip Neri.

Acts 25:13-21, John 21:15-19

Jesus showed himself to his disciples, and after they had eaten, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you love me more than these others do?' He answered, 'Yes, Lord, you know I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my lambs.' A second time he said to him, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' He replied, 'Yes, Lord, you know I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Look after my sheep.' Then he said to him a third time, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' Peter was hurt that he asked him a third time, 'Do you love me?' and said, 'Lord, you know everything; you know I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my sheep. In all truth I tell you, when you were young you put on your own belt and walked where you liked; but when you grow old you will stretch out your hands, and somebody else will put a belt round you and take you where you would rather not go.' In these words he indicated the kind of death by which Peter would give glory to God. After this he said, 'Follow me.'

Yes, Lord, I love you

Today's gospel passage speaks to us about Jesus' unfailing love for us and His love always gives us second chances. In the passage, Jesus appeared to His disciples who had failed in their discipleship. Peter denied Jesus and the rest ran away from Him. Yet, Jesus did not approach them to condemn them for failure. Instead, He went to them to love them. Jesus asked Peter, "Do you love me?". By asking Peter this question, Jesus wanted to focus on Peter's potential to love, not his past mistakes and failure. Because of Jesus' love for Peter, Peter was given the responsibility to be a shepherd of His flock.

Today, Jesus asks us the same question, "Do you love me?" What will our answer be? Jesus wants us to show our love for Him by committing ourselves to be shepherds to those He places in our lives. Let us rejoice in being loved so faithfully by Jesus and be grateful for the mission He has entrusted to us.

Reflective question:

How can I express my love for Jesus today?

Saturday, 27th May, St. Augustine of Canterbury.

Acts 28:16-20, John 21:20-25

Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them -- the one who had leant back close to his chest at the supper and had said to him, 'Lord, who is it that will betray you?' Seeing him, Peter said to Jesus, 'What about him, Lord?' Jesus answered, 'If I want him to stay behind till I come, what does it matter to you? You are to follow me.' The rumour then went out among the brothers that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus had not said to Peter, 'He will not die,' but, 'If I want him to stay behind till I come.' This disciple is the one who vouches for these things and has written them down, and we know that his testimony is true. There was much else that Jesus did; if it were written down in detail, I do not suppose the world itself would hold all the books that would be written.

You are to follow Me

“*Seeing him, Peter said to Jesus, 'What about him, Lord?'*”. Peter wanted to find out what specific role Jesus would give to the beloved disciple, the one who leant back close to Jesus’ chest at the Last Supper. However, Jesus told Peter, “...*what does it matter to you? You are to follow me*”. The main thing that Peter had to do was to faithfully follow Jesus and not be concerned about others’ role in the mission.

Like Peter, we often are easily distracted from our following of Jesus. We either tend to compare ourselves to others or wonder if others are following Jesus as they should or not. Today, Jesus tells us, “*You follow Me*”. Jesus calls and gives each of us a mission to do. We need to concentrate on following Jesus faithfully, fulfilling the mission He entrusts to us, and not being distracted by people and things around us. Today, let us keep our eyes on Jesus alone. When we are centered on Him, we can help others journey towards more faith in God and more love for Him.

Reflective question:

What makes me to turn away from following Jesus?

Sunday, 28th May, Pentecost Sunday.

Acts 2:1-11, 1 Corinthians 12:3-7, 12-13, John 20:19-23

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.'

Holy Spirit, come!

Today, we celebrate the Feast of the Pentecost. What does the Feast of Pentecost mean to us today? "*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*". Jesus breathed the Holy Spirit into the disciples. By doing so, the Holy Spirit re-created them from being fearful to joyful disciples and empowered them to be God's presence of forgiving and reconciling love in the world.

As we celebrate the Feast of Pentecost, let us open our hearts to welcome the presence of the Holy Spirit. Jesus gives us the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit fills our hearts with God's peace. From having hearts full of peace, we can go and bring reconciliation and harmony.

Reflective question:

Do I make space for the Holy Spirit's presence and all that He wants to give me?

Monday, 29th May, Our Lady, Mother of the Church.

Genesis 3:9-15, John 19:25-34

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.

Mary, Mother to the Church and Mother to me

Today, we celebrate the memorial of Mary, Mother of the Church, which was instituted by Pope Francis in 2018. Mother Mary is indeed the mother of each one of us. We can look to her and count on her motherly care as we journey through the ups and downs of life.

In the gospel, Jesus said to the beloved disciple, '*This is your mother*'. The beloved disciple represents all of us, who are His beloved disciples. Mother Mary is Jesus' gift to us. Let us not take her presence for granted but appreciates that she is our mother who accompanies and supports us on our life's journey. We can count on her loving presence with us. Today, let us walk with her as she leads us to Jesus, her Son.

Reflective question:

Do I perceive Mother Mary as the Mother of the Church and Mother to me personally?

Tuesday, 30th May, 8th Week in Ordinary Time.

Ecclesiasticus 35:1-15, Mark 10:28-31

At that time Peter began to tell Jesus. 'What about us? We have left everything and followed you.' Jesus said, 'In truth I tell you, there is no one who has left house, brothers, sisters, mother, father, children or land for my sake and for the sake of the gospel who will not receive a hundred times as much, houses, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and land -- and persecutions too -- now in this present time and, in the world to come, eternal life. Many who are first will be last, and the last, first.'

God provides

In the gospel today, Peter wanted to know what he would get for leaving everything and following Jesus. Jesus assured Peter of God's generosity. By giving up his house, family, land, etc., for the sake of the Kingdom, he would receive a hundredfold in this life and in the life to come. However, Jesus also included "persecutions" as part of what Peter would get because the consequence of following Jesus would involve carrying the cross of rejection and suffering.

We can never outdo God in generosity. We need to trust that God will not abandon us but provide us with all we need. God gives us a hundredfold of His presence of love that accompanies us daily. Even when we face the cross due to following Jesus and serving His kingdom, we can walk on faithfully because He walks with us.

Reflective questions:

What have I given up for Jesus? What have I received from Him?

Wednesday, 31st May, The Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Zephaniah 3:14-18 or Romans 12:9-16, Luke 1:39-56

Mary set out at that time and went as quickly as she could into the hill country to a town in Judah. She went into Zechariah's house and greeted Elizabeth. Now it happened that as soon as Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leapt in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. She gave a loud cry and said, 'Of all women you are the most blessed, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. Why should I be honoured with a visit from the mother of my Lord? Look, the moment your greeting reached my ears, the child in my womb leapt for joy. Yes, blessed is she who believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled.' And Mary said: My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour; because he has looked upon the humiliation of his servant. Yes, from now onwards all generations will call me blessed, for the Almighty has done great things for me. Holy is his name, and his faithful love extends age after age to those who fear him. He has used the power of his arm, he has routed the arrogant of heart. He has pulled down princes from their thrones and raised high the lowly. He has filled the starving with good things, sent the rich away empty. He has come to the help of Israel his servant, mindful of his faithful love -according to the promise he made to our ancestors -

- of his mercy to Abraham and to his descendants for ever. Mary stayed with her some three months and then went home.

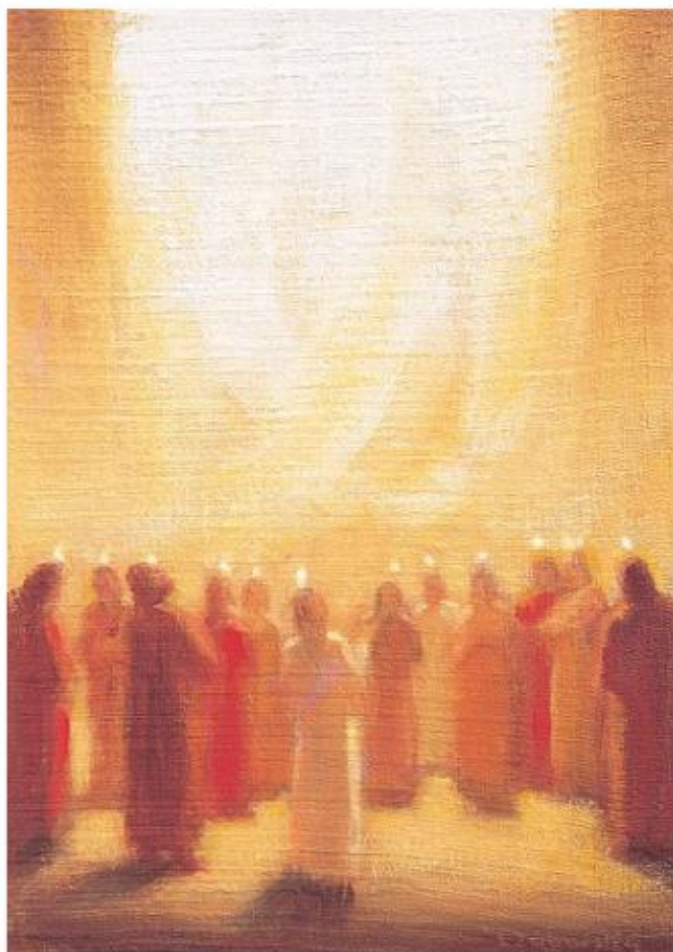
Love in action and service

“Do not let your love be a pretence, but sincerely prefer good to evil. Love each other as much as brothers should, and have a profound respect for each other...” (Romans 12:9-16). St Paul speaks of true Christian love as being practical and dynamic. It requires action and service. Unfortunately, showing love through action and service today can be challenging because we live disconnected lives from others due to modern gadgets and technologies.

“Mary set out at that time and went as quickly as she could... stayed with Elizabeth some three months...”. Mary set out to be with her pregnant cousin, Elizabeth, to be with her and help her in her time of need. As we celebrate the Feast of the Visitation, let us allow Mother Mary to show us that true Christian love requires us to involve ourselves in the lives of others. How? We can do so by being bodily present to them, spending time with them and serving them for their good. Like Mary, may we make our love for others genuine.

Reflective question:

How can I love others by my actions today?



Artist: Ladislav Záborský

