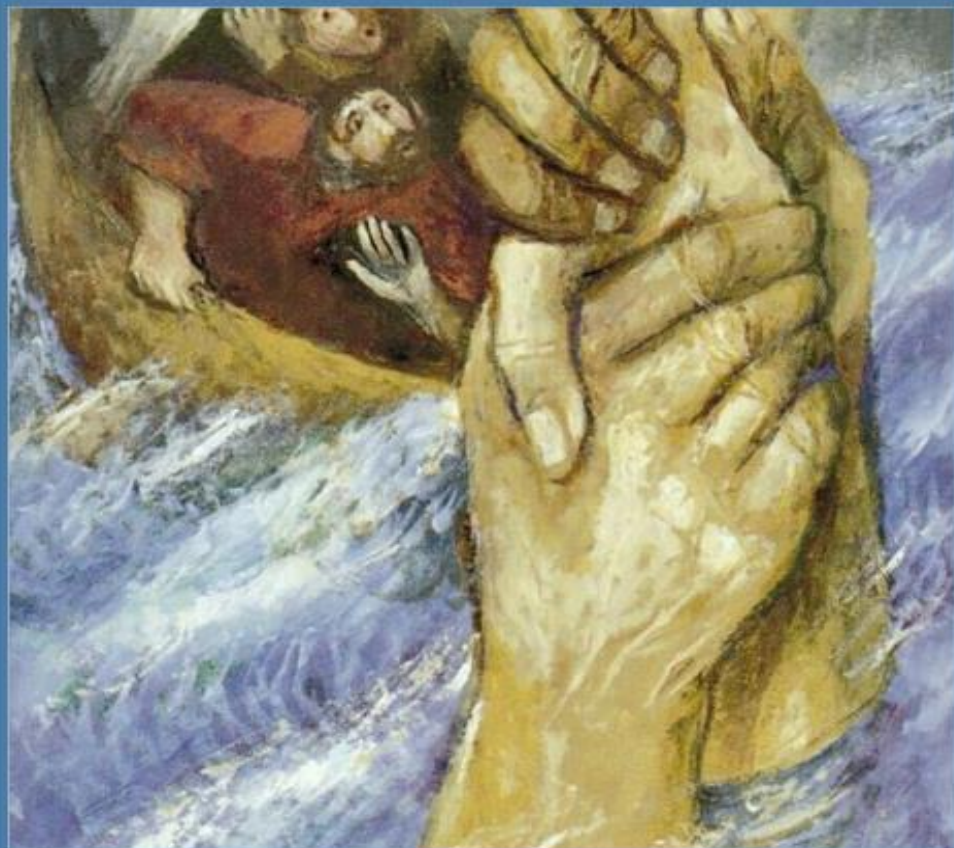


"It is I. Do not be afraid."



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

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Verbum Dei Missionaries

PRAYER FOR LIVING YEAR A

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Tuesday, 1st August, St. Alphonsus Liguori.
Exodus 33:7-11; 34:5-9, 28, Matthew 13:36-43

Leaving the crowds, he went to the house; and his disciples came to him and said, 'Explain to us the parable about the darnel in the field.' He said in reply, 'The sower of the good seed is the Son of man. The field is the world; the good seed is the subjects of the kingdom; the darnel, the subjects of the Evil One; the enemy who sowed it, the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; the reapers are the angels. Well then, just as the darnel is gathered up and burnt in the fire, so it will be at the end of time. The Son of man will send his angels and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of falling and all who do evil, and throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth. Then the upright will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Anyone who has ears should listen!'

A face-to-face dialogue with God

"The Lord would speak with Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend..." (1st Reading). "Face to face" should not be taken literally, as though Moses actually looked at God. Instead, it highlights the familiarity and closeness that Moses had with God and the intimate communication between the two. Moses spent time with God as His friend, listening to Him on what to do and how to guide the people of Israel. God wants to remind us that He is not abstract but a personal and relational God who wants to speak to us "face to face" and bring us into an intimate friendship with Him.

A dynamic relationship with God leads us to live as good seeds, as His children. Jesus sows us into the world, into the places where we are, i.e. our homes, workplaces, parish communities, etc., so that we can be His living and active presence, bringing love, goodness, peace and justice to others.

Reflective question:

How would I describe my relationship with God?

Wednesday, 2nd August, St Eusebius of Vercelli, St. Peter Julian Eymard.

Exodus 34:29-35, Matthew 13:44-46

Jesus said to the crowds: 'The kingdom of Heaven is like treasure hidden in a field which someone has found; he hides it again, goes off in his joy, sells everything he owns and buys the field. Again, the kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls; when he finds one of great value he goes and sells everything he owns and buys it.'

To gain Christ

"...whatever were gains to me, I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ" (Philippians 3:7-8). The words of St. Paul in his letter to the Philippians reflect his passion to have Jesus as His only treasure. Like the man who found the hidden treasure in the field and the merchant who discovered the pearl with great value, St. Paul experienced true joy in having Christ in his life. Everything else is nothing compared to knowing and loving Him.

Is Jesus our greatest treasure, our priceless pearl? Is He above the worldly treasures that the world offers us, i.e. power, wealth, status and honour? Today, let us ask for the grace to detach ourselves from all that hinders us from placing Jesus at the centre of our lives.

Reflective question:

What is the treasure that I am seeking?

Thursday, 3rd August, 17th Week in Ordinary Time.

Exodus 40:16-21, 34-38, Matthew 13:47-53

Jesus said to the crowds: 'The kingdom of Heaven is like a dragnet that is cast in the sea and brings in a haul of all kinds of fish. When it is full, the fishermen bring it ashore; then, sitting down, they collect the good ones in baskets and throw away those that are no use. This is how it will be at the end of time: the angels will appear and separate the wicked from the upright, to throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth. Have you understood all these?' They said, 'Yes.' And he said to them, 'Well then, every scribe who becomes

a disciple of the kingdom of Heaven is like a householder who brings out from his storeroom new things as well as old.' When Jesus had finished these parables he left the district.

God's mercy never ends

"The kingdom of Heaven is like a dragnet that is cast in the sea and brings in a haul of all kinds of fish". Today, Jesus wants us to rejoice that God, in His goodness and mercy, draws all people to Him, the good and the bad. What about us? We tend only to want to be with the loveable and perfect people and to leave those unloveable and undesirable out of our social circle. The image of the net bringing in all kinds of fish reminds us that we need to be merciful like God and grow in our love for one another.

It is not our task to separate and divide the good from the bad. God, who is merciful, commits Himself to each of us to work for our good and transform our selfishness, pride, jealousy, anger, etc., into His love, truth and goodness. Thus, we should not be quick to look at the bad in others but have the hope that God is at work in them as much as He is at work in us. Thus, all of us can change for the better.

Reflective question:

Do I look at others with mercy?

Friday, 4th August, St. John Vianney.

Leviticus 23:1, 4-11, 15-16, 27, 34-37, Matthew 13:54-58

Coming to his home town, Jesus 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.

To find Jesus in daily life

In today's gospel, the people of Nazareth failed to see God in the ordinary, in the familiar. Thus, even though they were impressed by His wisdom and power, they could not accept Jesus as a prophet of God, as someone sent by God, because they thought that they knew all about Him.

As the saying goes, "Familiarity breeds contempt". Sometimes we are so familiar with the Scriptures, celebrating the Eucharist, and spending time in prayer that we lose the ability to be surprised by Jesus and grow deaf to listen to His call and indifferent to His love. Today, let us humbly ask Jesus to open our eyes to see Him, our minds to know Him, our hearts to love Him and our feet to follow Him.

Reflective question:

Do I tend to take Jesus for granted?

Saturday, 5th August, Dedication of the Basilics of St. Mary Major. Leviticus 25:1, 8-17, Matthew 14:1-12

Herod the tetrarch heard about the reputation of Jesus and said to his court, 'This is John the Baptist himself; he has risen from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him.' Now it was Herod who had arrested John, chained him up and put him in prison because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife. For John had told him, 'It is against the Law for you to have her.' He had wanted to kill him but was afraid of the people, who regarded John as a prophet. Then, during the celebrations for Herod's birthday, the daughter of Herodias danced before the company and so delighted Herod that he promised on oath to give her anything she asked. Prompted by her mother she said, 'Give me John the Baptist's head, here, on a dish.' The king was distressed but, thinking of the oaths he had sworn and of his guests, he ordered it to be given her, and sent and had John beheaded in the prison. The head was brought in on a dish and given to the girl, who took it to her mother. John's disciples came and took the body and buried it; then they went off to tell Jesus.

John the Baptist: A spokesperson for God

"...for he will be great in the sight of the Lord." (Luke 1:15). These are the words of Angel Gabriel to Zechariah regarding John the Baptist. What does true greatness look like in God's sight? John the Baptist was great because of his selfless service to God and his humility in making room for God's will with no thought of himself. Today's gospel passage shows John the Baptist lost his life because he spoke truth to greed and power. He could have played it safe by keeping quiet, but he knew that God would want him to speak the truth in love. Thus, John the Baptist stood up for what was right and accepted the consequences of imprisonment and death.

Today, God calls us to strive to be great in His sight by choosing to live for Him, follow His ways, and witness His values. By doing so, we might become less popular with those around us. However, we continue to live for God and do His will no matter what.

Reflective question:

Do I tend to compromise truth and justice or live a life of integrity like John the Baptist?

Sunday, 6th August, Transfiguration of the Lord.

Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14, 2 Peter 1:16-19, Matthew 17:1-9

Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There in their presence he was transfigured: his face shone like the sun and his clothes became as dazzling as light. And suddenly Moses and Elijah appeared to them; they were talking with him. Then Peter spoke to Jesus. 'Lord,' he said, 'it is wonderful for us to be here; if you want me to, I will make three shelters here, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.' He was still speaking when suddenly a bright cloud covered them with shadow, and suddenly from the cloud there came a voice which said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved; he enjoys my favour. Listen to him.' When they heard this, the disciples fell on their faces, overcome with fear. But Jesus came up and touched them, saying, 'Stand up, do not be afraid.' And when they raised their eyes they saw no one but Jesus. As they came down from the mountain Jesus gave them this order, 'Tell no one about this vision until the Son of man has risen from the dead.'

Listen!

"...suddenly from the cloud there came a voice which said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved; he enjoys my favour. Listen to him.'" Peter, James and John were told one thing, "Listen". Today, God calls us also to listen. Do we listen? True listening is not with the ears but with the heart. It is to listen with attention and to let go of perfectionism, fear, judgements and resentments. It is to listen with openness and let Jesus be present and speak to us. As we celebrate the Feast of the Transfiguration, let us be determined to cultivate the art of listening to Jesus as He speaks to us through the Scripture, through events that unfold each day, through the people we meet and through the silence and solitude of prayer. Jesus is always present to us.

Listening is how Christ enters our lives and transforms our values, hobbies, priorities, and how we relate with others, etc. He draws near and leads us to live each day doing good and loving others. With Jesus, we will experience our own transfiguration and transformation in love.

Reflective question:

Do I listen to the voice of Jesus?

Monday, 7th August, St. Sixtus II, St. Cajetan.

Numbers 11:4-15, Matthew 14:13-21

When Jesus received this news he withdrew by boat to a lonely place where they could be by themselves. But the crowds heard of this and, leaving the towns, went after him on foot. So as he stepped ashore he saw a large crowd; and he took pity on them and healed their sick. When evening came, the disciples went to him and said, 'This is a lonely place, and time has slipped by; so send the people away, and they can go to the villages to buy themselves some food.' Jesus replied, 'There is no need for them to go: give them something to eat yourselves.' But they answered, 'All we have with us is five loaves and two fish.' So he said, 'Bring them here to me.' He gave orders that the people were to sit down on the grass; then he took the five loaves and the two fish, raised his eyes to heaven and said the blessing. And breaking the loaves he handed them to his disciples, who gave them to the crowds. They all ate as much as they wanted, and they collected the scraps left over, twelve

baskets full. Now about five thousand men had eaten, to say nothing of women and children.

Jesus cares for others, and we do too

Seeing a large crowd, Jesus saw their needs and spent time with them – healing their sickness, listening to their problems, touching their loneliness, and giving hope to their distress. Jesus was never indifferent to anyone who went to Him. He was never too busy to give Himself to the people. We often rush around and have no time to be present to those who need us. Let us stay with Jesus and learn how to be sensitive to the needs of others and have a heart of compassion for them.

When the disciples wanted to send the people away, Jesus said, "*Give them something to eat yourselves*". They felt helpless as they looked at their five loaves and two fish. Can the five loaves and two fish do any good? Jesus took and fed the huge crowd with all that the disciples had. Let us trust that Jesus can and will work miracles through the little we give Him.

Reflective question:

Am I willing to let Him use me as His instrument?

Tuesday, 8th August, St. Dominic.

Numbers 12:1-13, Matthew 14:22-36

Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side while he sent the crowds away. After sending the crowds away he went up into the hills by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, while the boat, by now some furlongs from land, was hard pressed by rough waves, for there was a head-wind. In the fourth watch of the night he came towards them, walking on the sea, and when the disciples saw him walking on the sea they were terrified. 'It is a ghost,' they said, and cried out in fear. But at once Jesus called out to them, saying, 'Courage! It's me! Don't be afraid.' It was Peter who answered. 'Lord,' he said, 'if it is you, tell me to come to you across the water.' Jesus said, 'Come.' Then Peter got out of the boat and started walking towards Jesus across the water, but then noticing the wind, he took fright and began to sink. 'Lord,' he cried, 'save me!' Jesus put out his hand at once and held him. 'You have so little faith,' he said, 'why did you doubt?' And

as they got into the boat the wind dropped. The men in the boat bowed down before him and said, 'Truly, you are the Son of God.' Having made the crossing, they came to land at Gennesaret. When the local people recognised him they spread the news through the whole neighbourhood and took all that were sick to him, begging him just to let them touch the fringe of his cloak. And all those who touched it were saved.

Fix our eyes on Jesus

In today's gospel, the disciples struggled at sea due to the rough waves and strong wind. Amid their anxiety, they could not recognise Jesus walking on the waters towards them and screamed with fear. At once, Jesus told them, "*Courage! It's me! Don't be afraid*" to assure them of His presence. Today, let us allow these words, "*Courage! It's me! Don't be afraid*" to sink deep into our hearts and allow His presence to give us the comforting peace we need.

Peter reacted to Jesus' walking on the water by telling Him, "*Lord, if it is you, tell me to come to you across the water*". Jesus told him, "Come!". Peter went and started walking on the water. However, He looked at the threatening wind and the waves and began to sink. Jesus was ready to pull him out of the water and bring him back to the safety of the boat. As we face our concrete struggles today, let us not move our gaze away from Jesus. He is with us and asks us to trust that He will care for us.

Reflective question:

In the struggles that I face, what is Jesus' message to me?

Wednesday, 9th August, St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross.

Numbers 13:1-2, 25-14:1, 26-29, 34-35, Matthew 15:21-28

Jesus left that place and withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And suddenly out came a Canaanite woman from that district and started shouting, 'Lord, Son of David, take pity on me. My daughter is tormented by a devil.' But he said not a word in answer to her. And his disciples went and pleaded with him, saying, 'Give her what she wants, because she keeps shouting after us.' He said in reply, 'I was sent only to the lost sheep of the House of Israel.' But the woman had come up and was bowing low before him. 'Lord,' she said, 'help me.' He replied, 'It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to little dogs.' She retorted,

'Ah yes, Lord; but even little dogs eat the scraps that fall from their masters' table.' Then Jesus answered her, *'Woman, you have great faith. Let your desire be granted.'* And from that moment her daughter was well again.

You have great faith!

The Canaanite woman went to Jesus and started shouting at the top of her voice. Her love for her child made her hold nothing back but keep pleading with Jesus because she trusted He could heal her daughter and make her well again. Jesus' response was not what she expected. However, she continued to look at Him with hope and persisted in presenting her request. Jesus, seeing her unwavering faith, praised her and healed her daughter.

As we pray with the gospel passage, we are invited to have an unwavering faith in Jesus. We know that we can turn to Him always with trust, and He will never disappoint us. Therefore, let us never be afraid to go to Jesus.

Reflective question:

Do I identify with the unwavering faith of the Canaanite woman?

Thursday, 10th August, St. Lawrence, Deacon and Martyr.

2 Corinthians 9:6-10, John 12:24-26

Jesus said to his disciples, "In all truth I tell you, unless a wheat grain falls into the earth and dies, it remains only a single grain; but if it dies it yields a rich harvest. Anyone who loves his life loses it; anyone who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me, must follow me, and my servant will be with me wherever I am. If anyone serves me, my Father will honour him.'

A grain of wheat dies and gives life

St. Lawrence was great, not because of his worldly achievements and wealth, but because he lived and died for Christ. He placed Jesus first above everything else. Thus, this humble saint became a grain of wheat who died in order to yield a rich harvest for God's kingdom.

Today, let us ask Jesus, "Lord, what do you want to do with my life today? How do you want me to live?". Like St. Lawrence, Jesus wants to use us as His instruments to touch the lives of many around us. But for this to happen, we need to follow the path of the grain of wheat by dying to ourselves to sow seeds of the gospel message of God's love in the places where we are and to the people we meet each day.

Reflective question:

What needs to die in me so that I live for Christ today?

Friday, 11th August, St. Clare.

Deuteronomy 4:32-40, Matthew 16:24-28

Jesus said to his disciples, 'If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me. Anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for my sake will find it. What, then, will anyone gain by winning the whole world and forfeiting his life? Or what can anyone offer in exchange for his life? For the Son of man is going to come in the glory of his Father with his angels, and then he will reward each one according to his behaviour. In truth I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of man coming with his kingdom.'

Deny self: The condition of discipleship

Discipleship is not about self-fulfilment but self-denial, not self-centredness but Christ-centredness. Thus, if we truly want to follow Jesus, we must be willing to die to ourselves everyday. Are you ready to say "No" to what you want and say "Yes" to what God wants for you? To be Jesus' disciples and follow Him closely is a daily choice.

Self-denial begins in small, seemingly insignificant practical things. As St. John Henry Newman said, "*The self-denial which is pleasing to Christ consists in little things. This is plain, for the opportunity for great self-denials does not come every day. Thus to take up the cross of Christ is no great action done once and for all. It consists in the continual practice of small duties which are distasteful to us*". For example, when we choose to say a kind word instead of an insult to someone or give up the right to spend money wastefully or to be honest in a business deal, etc.

Each small act of denying ourselves frees us to live life loving God and others and live our lives to the fullest.

Reflective question:

How can I deny myself today?

Saturday, 12th August, St Jane Frances de Chantal.

Deuteronomy 6:4-13, Matthew 17:14-20

A man came up to Jesus and went down on his knees before him. 'Lord,' he said, 'take pity on my son: he is demented and in a wretched state; he is always falling into fire and into water. I took him to your disciples and they were unable to cure him.' In reply, Jesus said, 'Faithless and perverse generation! How much longer must I be with you? How much longer must I put up with you? Bring him here to me.' And when Jesus rebuked it the devil came out of the boy, who was cured from that moment. Then the disciples came privately to Jesus. 'Why were we unable to drive it out?' they asked. He answered, 'Because you have so little faith. In truth I tell you, if your faith is the size of a mustard seed you will say to this mountain, "Move from here to there," and it will move; nothing will be impossible for you.'

Putting faith in God

In today's passage, the disciples wanted to know why they could not heal the sick child. Jesus told them, "*Because you have so little faith*". Jesus pointed out to them that their faith was little because they put their trust in themselves and their capabilities rather than God. The disciples needed true, trusting faith in God. Thus, even if their faith in God was small as a mustard seed, God could act and do great things in and through the disciples.

We often do not include God in our daily tasks, relationships with people, or mission work because we are so used to planning the day by ourselves, depending on our skills and talents to complete a project, using our resources to deal with a problem, etc. "*Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take*" (Proverbs 3:5-6). All we need is the smallest amount of trusting faith in God, and He can do big things in and through us.

Reflective question:

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

Sunday, 13th August, 19th Sunday in Ordinary Time.

1 Kings 19:9, 11-13, Romans 9:1-5, Matthew 14:22-33

Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side while he sent the crowds away. After sending the crowds away he went up into the hills by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, while the boat, by now some furlongs from land, was hard pressed by rough waves, for there was a head-wind. In the fourth watch of the night he came towards them, walking on the sea, and when the disciples saw him walking on the sea they were terrified. 'It is a ghost,' they said, and cried out in fear. But at once Jesus called out to them, saying, 'Courage! It's me! Don't be afraid.' It was Peter who answered. 'Lord,' he said, 'if it is you, tell me to come to you across the water.' Jesus said, 'Come.' Then Peter got out of the boat and started walking towards Jesus across the water, but then noticing the wind, he took fright and began to sink. 'Lord,' he cried, 'save me!' Jesus put out his hand at once and held him. 'You have so little faith,' he said, 'why did you doubt?' And as they got into the boat the wind dropped. The men in the boat bowed down before him and said, 'Truly, you are the Son of God.'

Do not be afraid. Be at peace

"Courage! It's me! Don't be afraid". Jesus wants these words to sink deep into our hearts and for us to believe in them. In times when we face rough waves and strong winds because of a sickness, a family crisis, a failure, etc., and everything seems to be falling apart, He draws close to us and says, *"Don't be afraid. I am here. I am your peace"*.

In the first reading, the prophet Elijah was afraid because Queen Jezebel wanted him dead at all costs. He was desperate and scared. Yet, God invited him to stand at the mountain to encounter Him personally. In a gentle breeze, God revealed Himself to Elijah and hushed all his voices of fear and desperation. There, the prophet was strengthened once again. No matter what happens in our lives, God wants to personally meet us and bring us the gift of His peace and courage. All we need to do is to trust Him and keep walking against the storms of our life.

Reflective questions:

What is my greatest fear at this point in my life? How can my trust in God help me to face my fear?

Monday, 14th August, St. Maximilian Kolbe.

Deuteronomy 10:12-22, Matthew 17:22-27

One day when they were together in Galilee, Jesus said to his disciples, 'The Son of man is going to be delivered into the power of men; they will put him to death, and on the third day he will be raised up again.' And a great sadness came over them. When they reached Capernaum, the collectors of the half-shekel came to Peter and said, 'Does your master not pay the half-shekel?' 'Yes,' he replied, and went into the house. But before he could speak, Jesus said, 'Simon, what is your opinion? From whom do earthly kings take toll or tribute? From their sons or from foreigners?' And when he replied, 'From foreigners,' Jesus said, 'Well then, the sons are exempt. However, so that we shall not be the downfall of others, go to the lake and cast a hook; take the first fish that rises, open its mouth and there you will find a shekel; take it and give it to them for me and for yourself.'

Sadness in the face of suffering

Upon hearing Jesus speaking of His impending death, the disciples were sad because this was not what they wanted to hear. Like the disciples, we want nothing to do with suffering and the cross. Yet, Jesus knew that His suffering was a result of His mission of revealing God's unconditional love to the people. Thus, He patiently accepted it and resolutely walked on towards it. When we say "Yes" to collaborate in the mission, we must understand that the cross forms part of the journey. With trust, we walk with Jesus and know that suffering will not have the last word but the joy of resurrection.

The gospel also tells us the story of Jesus and the temple tax. Every Jew was required to pay the temple tax. For Jesus, He was not obligated to pay since He was the Son of God. However, in order not to be a scandal for others, Jesus told Peter to go ahead and pay for it. What is Jesus' message for us? Humility. We need to learn from Jesus how to be humble and not to insist on our right to provoke unnecessary offence.

Reflective question:

What is Jesus' message to me today?

Tuesday, 15th August, The Assumption of Mary.

Revelation 11:19, 12:1-6, 10, 1 Corinthians 15:20-26, Luke 1:39-56

Mary set out at that time and went as quickly as she could to a town in the hill country of Judah. She went into Zechariah's house and greeted Elizabeth. Now 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? For 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 exults in God my saviour; because he has looked upon his lowly handmaid. Yes, from this day forward all generations will call me blessed, for the Almighty has done great things for me. Holy is his name, and his mercy reaches from age to age for those who fear him He has shown the power of his arm, he has routed the proud of heart. He has pulled down princes from their thrones and exalted the lowly. The hungry he has filled with good things, the rich sent empty away. He has come to the help of Israel his servant, mindful of his mercy -according to the promise he made to our ancestors- of his mercy to Abraham and to his descendants forever.' Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months and then went back home.

Making haste to love

"Luke's Gospel which we have just heard (cf. Lk 1:39-56) shows us this living Ark — which is Mary — on the move: after leaving her home in Nazareth, Mary set out for the hill country, making haste to reach a city of Judah and go to the home of Zechariah and Elizabeth. It seems to me important to emphasize the expression "with haste": God's things deserve haste, indeed, the only things in the world that deserve haste are precisely those of God, which are truly urgent for our life." (Pope Benedict XVI)

God's things are always about matters of love. In today's gospel, Mary made haste to be with her cousin, to share in her joy and help her out in

her time of need. We are called to be in a hurry to put love into action and always seek the good of those around us. As we celebrate the Feast of the Assumption of Mary, let us ask her to guide our feet always to hasten to reach out to others, our hands to bring comfort, our hearts to selflessly care for others and our minds to think for the good of others.

Reflective question:

Do I make haste to put love into action?

Wednesday, 16th August, St. Stephen of Hungary.

Deuteronomy 34:1-12, Matthew 16:15-20

Jesus said to his disciples: 'If your brother does something wrong, go and have it out with him alone, is between your two selves. If he listens to you, you have won back your brother. If he does not listen, take one or two others along with you: the evidence of two or three witnesses is required to sustain any charge. But if he refuses to listen to these, report it to the community; and if he refuses to listen to the community, treat him like a pagan or a tax collector. I tell you solemnly, whatever you bind on earth shall be considered bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth shall be considered loosed in heaven. I tell you solemnly once again, if two of you on earth agree to ask anything at all, it will be granted to you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three meet in my name, I shall be there with them.'

To love is to be responsible

Correcting others is difficult because we do not want to confront the other person and lose his/her friendship. Thus, we often shrug our shoulders and remain indifferent, or we might even feel that we are morally superior to the person. Yet, Jesus reminds us that we are responsible for one another. If we truly love a person as a friend, brother/sister, or community member, we need to correct him/her if he/she is in the wrong. We must not forget that correcting others must be done with love and care.

"For where two or three meet in my name, I shall be there with them". Jesus is present. His presence of love must be the foundation of our community, family, and friendship. Built on Jesus, our foundation, we work to love and help one another become faithful disciples to the end.

Reflective question:

Do I feel responsible for the faith of my fellow brothers and sisters?

Thursday, 17th August, 19th Week in Ordinary Time.**Joshua 3:7-11, 13-17, Matthew 18:21-19:1**

Peter went up to Jesus and said, 'Lord, how often must I forgive my brother if he wrongs me? As often as seven times?' Jesus answered, 'Not seven, I tell you, but seventy-seven times. 'And so the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who decided to settle his accounts with his servants. When the reckoning began, they brought him a man who owed ten thousand talents; but he had no means of paying, so his master gave orders that he should be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, to meet the debt. At this, the servant threw himself down at his master's feet. "Give me time" he said "and I will pay the whole sum." And the servant's master felt so sorry for him that he let him go and cancelled the debt. Now as this servant went out, he happened to meet a fellow servant who owed him one hundred denarii; and he seized him by the throat and began to throttle him. "Pay what you owe me" he said. His fellow servant fell at his feet and implored him, saying, "Give me time and I will pay you". But the other would not agree; on the contrary, he had him thrown into prison till he should pay the debt. His fellow servants were deeply distressed when they saw what had happened, and they went to their master and reported the whole affair to him. Then the master sent for him. "You wicked servant," he said "I cancelled all that debt of yours when you appealed to me. Were you not bound, then, to have pity on your fellow servant just as I had pity on you?" And in his anger the master handed him over to the torturers till he should pay all his debt. And that is how my heavenly Father will deal with you unless you each forgive your brother from your heart.' Jesus had now finished what he wanted to say, and he left Galilee and came into the part of Judaea which is on the far side of the Jordan.

To choose to walk the path of forgiveness

Forgiving someone is not easy or natural for us. However, faith calls us to forgive, even when it goes against our feelings. Today, Jesus tells us that forgiveness, like love, has no limits. He calls us to let go of anger and resentment that hold us back from living a life of peace and freedom. We need God's grace to forgive because, on our own, we cannot.

Today, in the silence of prayer, let us reflect on our relationships with others. Some people may have caused us a lot of hurt in one way or another, and we struggle to think of them with kindness. Let God love us and free our hearts from all the anger and bitterness that we might have towards them. He wants us to forgive so that we can experience the gift of true peace.

Reflective question:

Am I known for being forgiving and loving?

Friday, 18th August, 19th Week in Ordinary Time.

Joshua 24:1-13, Matthew 19:3-12

Some Pharisees approached Jesus, and to test him they said, 'Is it against the Law for a man to divorce his wife on any pretext whatever?' He answered, 'Have you not read that the creator from the beginning made them male and female and that he said: This is why a man must leave father and mother, and cling to his wife, and the two become one body? They are no longer two, therefore, but one body. So then, what God has united, man must not divide'. They said to him, 'Then why did Moses command that a writ of dismissal should be given in cases of divorce?' 'It was because you were so unteachable' he said 'that Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but it was not like this from the beginning. Now I say this to you: the man who divorces his wife -I am not speaking of fornication - and marries another, is guilty of adultery.' The disciples said to him, 'If that is how things are between husband and wife, it is not advisable to marry'. But he replied, 'It is not everyone who can accept what I have said, but only those to whom it is granted. There are eunuchs born that way from their mother's womb, there are eunuchs made so by men and there are eunuchs who have made themselves that way for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let anyone accept this who can.'

The call to faithful love

The Pharisees took on the view on marriage from the Book of Deuteronomy that a man could divorce his wife. Jesus, however, quoted the book of Genesis to remind them of God's original plan for marriage: "...no longer two, therefore, but one body". God's plan for men and

women is to love with faithfulness as a reflection of His faithful love for humanity. We have been created in the image and likeness of God, and so we have the capacity to love like God. We know that many marriages do not last, and we are not here to play the judge. Instead, Jesus calls us to examine our lives and see if we are loving as God wants us, not just in the area of marriage but in our relationships with family members, friends and community members.

Each one of us, young or old, married or single, has been entrusted by God to love the person- child, spouse, parent, friend- that He has placed at our side. Let us ask God to sustain us with His love and strength as we walk this challenging path of love we have been created for.

Reflective question:

How can I put faithful love into action today?

Saturday, 19th August, St. John Eudes.

Joshua 24:14-29, Matthew 19:13-15

People brought little children to him, for him to lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples scolded them, but Jesus said, 'Let the little children alone, and do not stop them from coming to me; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of Heaven belongs.' Then he laid his hands on them and went on his way.

Jesus' love never turns anyone away

"Let the little children alone, and do not stop them from coming to me". In today's gospel, some parents brought their children to Jesus. The disciples wanted to keep Jesus away from the children, whom they considered too unimportant and insignificant for their Master. However, Jesus rebuked His disciples and took delight in being with them.

Jesus never turns anyone away. His heart has enough room for everyone, including those we consider as nobodies. We are invited to examine the way we look at others. Are there people whom we regard with disdain and indifference? Jesus shows us that no one is unimportant to Him. Can we open our hearts to respect and show kindness to each person who comes by our way today? Let us also not be afraid to go to Jesus and bring our worries and problems to Him because He will not

turn us away. Instead, He receives us as we are so that He might strengthen us with His love and peace.

Reflective questions:

What stood out to me as I reflected on the gospel passage? Why?

Sunday, 20th August, 20th Sunday in Ordinary Time.

Isaiah 56:1, 6-7, Romans 11:13-15, 29-32, Matthew 15:21-28

Jesus left Gennesaret and withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. Then out came a Canaanite woman from that district and started shouting, 'Sir, Son of David, take pity on me. My daughter is tormented by a devil.' But he answered her not a word. And his disciples went and pleaded with him. 'Give her what she wants,' they said 'because she is shouting after us.' He said in reply, 'I was sent only to the lost sheep of the House of Israel'. But the woman had come up and was kneeling at his feet. 'Lord,' she said 'help me.' He replied, 'It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the house-dogs'. She retorted, 'Ah yes, sir; but even house-dogs can eat the scraps that fall from their master's table'. Then Jesus answered her, 'Woman, you have great faith. Let your wish be granted.' And from that moment her daughter was well again.

What matters is our faith in Jesus

In today's gospel, we have a Canaanite woman who was regarded as an outcast by the Jews. When she heard that Jesus was in the area, she went to Him and shouted, "*Sir, Son of David, take pity on me...*". She wanted Jesus to heal her daughter, who was incapacitated by a sickness. Jesus did not answer her but remained silent, and when He finally answered her, He gave her an unexpected answer by saying that He came for the House of Israel. This courageous woman did not give up and told Jesus that she believed He also came to all people, not just the Jews. Jesus told her, "*Woman, you have great faith. Let your wish be granted*".

Jesus' reply to the Canaanite woman is the crux of this passage. It does not matter if someone is a Jew or Gentile, rich or poor, young or old. The one thing that matters is our faith in Him. It is to have a trusting faith that knows that Jesus cares for us and does what is best for us. Today, let us entrust our life into His hands and tell Him, "*Jesus, help me!*"

Reflective question:

What does it mean for me to live with trusting faith?

Monday, 21st August, St. Pius X.

Judges 2:11-19, Matthew 19:16-22

There was a man came to Jesus and asked, 'Master, what good deed must I do to possess eternal life?' Jesus said to him, 'Why do you ask me about what is good? There is one alone who is good. But if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.' He said, 'Which ones?' Jesus replied, 'These: You shall not kill. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not give false witness. Honour your father and your mother. You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' The young man said to him, 'I have kept all these. What more do I need to do?' Jesus said, 'If you wish to be perfect, go and sell your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.' But when the young man heard these words he went away sad, for he was a man of great wealth.

From doing to loving

A man went to Jesus and posted a question to Him, “*Master, what good deed must I do to possess eternal life?*” For him, faith in God meant merely doing good deeds and fulfilling duties. Jesus brought the man back to the essence: Faith is not about doing but primarily about having a deeper relationship with God and others. Jesus asked him to take a radical step to give away his riches. Unfortunately, the man could not respond to Jesus’ invitation because he was too attached to his wealth, and thus, he went away sad.

Today, we are asked to reflect on our understanding of faith. Is faith in God simply a matter of doing something for Him to get something in return? Is faith just following commandments and rules and trying to be a morally good person? Today, Jesus invites us to go beyond doing activities and enter into a loving relationship with Him. From a relationship with Him, He opens our hearts to love others by giving ourselves freely to them for their good and growth.

Reflective question:

Is there anything holding me back from responding to the call of Jesus?

**Tuesday, 22nd August, The Queenship of Mary.
Isaiah 9:1-6, Luke 1:26-38**

The angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the House of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. He went in and said to her, 'Rejoice, you who enjoy God's favor! The Lord is with you.' She was deeply disturbed by these words and asked herself what this greeting could mean, but the angel said to her, 'Mary, do not be afraid; you have won God's favour. Look! You are to conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you must name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David; he will rule over the House of Jacob for ever and his reign will have no end.' Mary said to the angel, 'But how can this come about, since I have no knowledge of man?' The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow. And so the child will be holy and will be called Son of God. And I tell you this too: your cousin Elizabeth also, in her old age, has conceived a son, and she whom people called barren is now in her sixth month, for nothing is impossible to God.' Mary said, 'You see before you the Lord's servant, let it happen to me as you have said.' And the angel left her.

Mary's "Yes"

In today's gospel, the Angel Gabriel told Mary that she was chosen to be the mother of God's son. Mary could have resisted what God wanted from her. How would she explain to Joseph to whom she was betrothed to? How would her parents respond to this news? What would society say about her pregnancy? Despite her fears and uncertainties, Mary said, "...*let it happen to me as you have said*". In deep faith and trust, she accepted God's plans and ways.

Today, God calls us to live a purposeful life and gives us a mission to fulfil. Like Mary, let us allow ourselves to be an instrument of God's plan, whatever it is. We can be afraid and uncertain of where He is leading us, but may we trust that He cares for us and knows what is best for us. Therefore, we can say, "*Lord, here I am. I am ready to do your will*".

Reflective question:

Do I trust God enough to say "Yes" to seek and do His will today?

Wednesday, 23rd August, St. Rose of Lima.

Judges 9:6-15, Matthew 20:1-16

Jesus told this parable to his disciples: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner going out at daybreak to hire workers for his vineyard. He made an agreement with the workers for one denarius a day, and sent them to his vineyard. Going out at about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the market place and said to them, “You go to my vineyard too and I will give you a fair wage”. So, they went. At about the sixth hour and again at about the ninth hour, he went out and did the same. Then at about the eleventh hour he went out and found more men standing round, and he said to them, “Why have you been standing here idle all day?” “Because no one has hired us” they answered. He said to them, “You go into my vineyard too”. In the evening, the owner of the vineyard said to his bailiff, “Call the workers and pay them their wages, starting with the last arrivals and ending with the first”. So those who were hired at about the eleventh hour came forward and received one denarius each. When the first came, they expected to get more, but they too received one denarius each. They took it, but grumbled at the landowner. “The men who came last” they said, “have done only one hour, and you have treated them the same as us, though we have done a heavy day’s work in all the heat.” He answered one of them and said, “My friend, I am not being unjust to you; did we not agree on one denarius? Take your earnings and go. I choose to pay the last comer as much as I pay you. Have I no right to do what I like with my own? Why be envious because I am generous?” Thus the last will be first, and the first, last.’

God is generous

In today’s gospel, the landowner paid one denarius to each worker regardless of whether he worked at the start or the end of the day. When the ones working for a long time saw that they had the same amount, they started to grumble because they had worked more hours under the hot sun and were toiling relentlessly in the vineyard. We might also think that the landowner was unfair to the workers. Those who work more must be paid more. The ones who work less must be paid lesser. This is the law of justice in the world.

Jesus tells us this parable to show us that God's logic differs from the world. God is like this landowner whose generosity extends to every person. He gives one denarius of His love and mercy to all. He loves the saints and the sinners among us and wants to bring us always to a deeper encounter with Him from the stage where we are. Today, let us thank God for His love, which is so generous and rich in mercy.

Reflective question:

How can I be generous in my love and mercy to others like God is to me?

Thursday, 24th August, St. Bartholomew, Apostle.

Revelation 21: 9-14, John 1:45-51

Philip found Nathanael and said to him, 'We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, the one about whom the prophets wrote: he is Jesus son of Joseph, from Nazareth'. 'From Nazareth?' said Nathanael 'Can anything good come from that place?' 'Come and see' replied Philip. When Jesus saw Nathanael coming he said of him, 'There is an Israelite who deserves the name, incapable of deceit'. 'How do you know me?' said Nathanael 'Before Philip came to call you,' said Jesus 'I saw you under the fig tree.' Nathanael answered, 'Rabbi, you are the Son of God, you are the King of Israel'. Jesus replied, 'You believe that just because I said: I saw you under the fig tree. so You will see greater things than that.' And then he added 'I tell you most solemnly, you will see heaven laid open and, above the Son of Man, the angels of God ascending and descending'.

Come and see

It is traditionally understood that St. Bartholomew refers to Nathanael in today's gospel. In this passage, Philip went looking for his friend, Nathanael, and shared his experience with Jesus. He became an instrument to bring his friend to Jesus and Jesus to his friend. Because of Philip's "Come and see", Nathanael himself had a life-transforming encounter with Jesus and responded to the call to become His disciple. From that one encounter with Christ, Nathanael's whole life direction changed, and he lived totally with Jesus and for Jesus.

In the same way, Nathanael had Philip to lead him to Jesus, we too have family members, religious people, friends, mentors, etc., who have played a part in bringing us closer to Jesus. Today, we can give thanks with grateful hearts to God for these people for sowing and cultivating the seeds of faith in us. In the same way, we are called to play our part to bring people to Jesus: *“Come and see. Come and experience. Come and know.”* We will never know how our life, words and deeds can influence others towards having greater faith and love for Jesus.

Reflective question:

How can I help others to draw closer to Jesus?

Friday, 25th August, St. Louis, St. Joseph Calasanz.

Ruth 1:1, 3-6, 14-16, 22, Matthew 22:34-40

When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees they got together and, to disconcert him, one of them put a question, ‘Master, which is the greatest commandment of the Law?’ Jesus said, ‘You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second resembles it: You must love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments hang the whole Law and the Prophets also.’

The great commandment

“You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind...The second resembles it: You must love your neighbour as yourself”. The commandment to love God and love others are inseparable. As St. John wrote in 1 John 4:20: *“For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen”.* Thus, when we love God, we are loving our neighbours. When we love our neighbours, we are loving God. The word “neighbours” includes not simply our family members and people close to us, but also those who are different from us, who do not have the same values as us, who do not like us, etc.

Christian love is not passive and emotional. Instead, it is an active love that chooses to show mercy, compassion and kindness to each person, no matter if he/she is loveable or unloveable. No doubt, such love is not

easy. However, with Christ's help, we can love as God loves, even when we do not feel like it.

Reflective question:

What does loving God and neighbour mean today?

Saturday, 26th August, 20th Week in Ordinary Time.

Ruth 2:1-3, 8-11; 4:13-17, Matthew 23:1-12

Addressing the people and his disciples Jesus said, 'The scribes and the Pharisees occupy the chair of Moses. You must therefore do what they tell you and listen to what they say; but do not be guided by what they do: since they do not practise what they preach. They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men's shoulders, but will they lift a finger to move them? Not they! Everything they do is done to attract attention, like wearing broader phylacteries and longer tassels, like wanting to take the place of honour at banquets and the front seats in the synagogues, being greeted obsequiously in the market squares and having people call them Rabbi. 'You, however, must not allow yourselves to be called Rabbi, since you have only one master, and you are all brothers. You must call no one on earth your father, since you have only one Father, and he is in heaven. Nor must you allow yourselves to be called teachers, for you have only one Teacher, the Christ. The greatest among you must be your servant. Anyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and anyone who humbles himself will be exalted.'

To be great is to serve

In today's Gospel passage, Jesus rebuked the scribes and Pharisees for their pride, which sought to exalt themselves and put on a show for all to admire. Jesus wanted to draw them and all who were listening to Him to an authentic living relationship with God. Today, Jesus continues to desire the same for us. Often we live for appearances; we want to be in control of others, and we love to show off and be in the right.

Today, let us listen to what Jesus wants to tell us: "*The greatest among you must be your servant. Anyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and anyone who humbles himself will be exalted*". Jesus calls us to strive to serve others with humble love, not to get impressive titles and power. Today, may we follow in Jesus' footsteps and be contented to serve like Him.

Reflective question:

Is being seen as important and superior by others something central to me?

Sunday, 27th August, 21st Sunday in Ordinary Time.

Isaiah 22:19-23, Romans 11:33-36, Matthew 16:13-20

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi he put this question to his disciples, 'Who do people say the Son of man is?' And they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' 'But you,' he said, 'who do you say I am?' Then Simon Peter spoke up and said, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Jesus replied, 'Simon son of Jonah, you are a blessed man! Because it was no human agency that revealed this to you but my Father in heaven. So I now say to you: You are Peter and on this rock I will build my community. And the gates of the underworld can never overpower it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of Heaven: whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.' Then he gave the disciples strict orders not to say to anyone that he was the Christ.

Who do you say I am?

In today's gospel, Jesus asked His disciples, after they had witnessed the healings He did, heard the teachings He taught, "*Who do people say I am?*" They answered, "*John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.*" He then asked them another question, "*Who do you say I am?*". The "*you*" refers to each one of us today. Jesus is not looking for answers from saints, theologians or Popes. He wants us to be in touch with the God-moments we experience and respond to His question. Peter told Jesus, "*You are the Christ*" and these words reveal how he viewed Jesus- not just another admirable prophet or famous healer, but the Christ who knew and loved him, the Christ who forgave all his sins and changed his life for the better, the Christ who shared in his joy and pain.

Today, let us ponder this question: Lord, who are you to me? Let us not try to make Jesus into our image and likeness, but to have eyes of faith to recognise Him as who He truly is- our Lord and God, our Friend and

Companion, our source of love and peace. Through our words and deeds, we witness who He is so that others may also know and love Him.

Reflective question:

Who is Jesus for me?

Monday, 28th August, St. Augustine.

1 Thessalonians 1:1-5, 8-10, Matthew 23:13-22

Jesus said: 'Alas for you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut up the kingdom of Heaven in people's faces, neither going in yourselves nor allowing others to go who want to. Alas for you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over sea and land to make a single proselyte, and anyone who becomes one you make twice as fit for hell as you are. Alas for you, blind guides! You say, "If anyone swears by the Temple, it has no force; but anyone who swears by the gold of the Temple is bound." Fools and blind! For which is of greater value, the gold or the Temple that makes the gold sacred? Again, "If anyone swears by the altar it has no force; but anyone who swears by the offering on the altar, is bound." You blind men! For which is of greater worth, the offering or the altar that makes the offering sacred? Therefore, someone who swears by the altar is swearing by that and by everything on it. And someone who swears by the Temple is swearing by that and by the One who dwells in it. And someone who swears by heaven is swearing by the throne of God and by the One who is seated there. Alas for you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You pay your tithe of mint and dill and cummin and have neglected the weightier matters of the Law-justice, mercy, good faith! These you should have practised, those not neglected.'

Hypocrites and blind guides

In today's gospel, Jesus said harsh words to the scribes and Pharisees, the religious leaders at that time. They were leaders whose words and actions were not consistent. He called them hypocrites, focussing their teaching on external duties and regulations while not loving God and His people from the heart. They led people away from entering into a loving relationship with God and living a fulfilled life as God intended for them.

Today, we have responsibilities to bring people to God, not away from God. How sad if we are modern scribes and Pharisees! Let us look at how we live our life of faith: Do my actions and words match? Do I excessively pay attention to external details and rules but forget the commandment to love? Let Jesus speak to our hearts and free us from all that prevents us from living our faith authentically. May our words and actions be one so that we may light the path for others to encounter Him daily.

Reflective question:

How sincere am I in the way I live out my faith?

Tuesday, 29th August, The Passion of St. John the Baptist.

Jeremiah 1:17-19, Mark 6:17-29

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

Be God's witnesses

Today, we celebrate the Martyrdom of St. John the Baptist, who died because he dared to speak the truth and was not afraid of facing the consequences of his actions. John the Baptist knew he could trust that God would never leave him alone, even in the face of death. The passion of St. John the Baptist is an invitation for us to become courageous witnesses to the gospel values today.

Often, we are afraid to be a witness because of shyness, fear of being rejected, feeling inadequate to articulate our personal faith stories, etc. Witnessing cannot be separated from having a dynamic daily prayer life. It is from our relationship with Jesus that the mission of witnessing flows. We then become bold witnesses of God's truth, justice and love to our family, friends, faith community members and society. Let us not forget that God is with us; thus, we have nothing to fear.

Reflective question:

How can I bear witness to Christ in my family, friendships, workplace and society at large?

Wednesday, 30th August, 21st week in Ordinary Time.

1 Thessalonians 2:9-13, Matthew 23:27-32

Jesus said, 'Alas for you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You who are like whitewashed tombs that look handsome on the outside, but inside are full of dead men's bones and every kind of corruption. In the same way you appear to people from the outside like good honest men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. 'Alas for you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You who build the sepulchres of the prophets and decorate the tombs of holy men, saying, "We would never have joined in shedding the blood of the prophets, had we lived in our fathers' day". So! Your own evidence tells against you! You are the sons of those who murdered the prophets! Very well then, finish off the work that your fathers began.'

A life of integrity

"You are witnesses, and so is God, that our treatment of you, since you became believers, has been impeccably right and fair..." (1st reading). In today's first reading, St. Paul wrote to the Christian community in

Thessalonica to defend himself and those with him against the accusations of manipulating the community and seeking glory. He reminded them that they had witnessed the apostles' integrity. Moreover, God also witnessed how they sincerely lived their mission. Paul defended himself not because he was insecure about his identity and mission. Rather, he wanted to show that his motive was selfless, not selfish. He was among them to give them the treasure of faith, not to take something away from them.

In the gospel, Jesus pointed out that the scribes and Pharisees focused on external appearances but did not love the people they served. Unlike St. Paul, these people sought human glory instead of God's glory. Let us choose to imitate St. Paul and walk the path of selflessness and integrity as we serve the people around us.

Reflective question:

When people look at me, can they see that I do everything out of love for Jesus?

Thursday, 31st August, 21st Week in Ordinary Time.

1 Thessalonians 3:7-13, Matthew 24:42-51

Jesus said to his disciples: 'Stay awake, because you do not know the day when your master is coming. You may be quite sure of this that if the householder had known at what time of the night the burglar would come, he would have stayed awake and would not have allowed anyone to break through the wall of his house. Therefore, you too must stand ready because the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. 'What sort of servant, then, is faithful and wise enough for the master to place him over his household to give them their food at the proper time? Happy that servant if his master's arrival finds him at this employment. I tell you solemnly, he will place him over everything he owns. But as for the dishonest servant who says to himself, "My master is taking his time", and sets about beating his fellow servants and eating and drinking with drunkards, his master will come on a day he does not expect and at an hour he does not know. The master will cut him off and send him to the same fate as the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth.'

Faithful servant

In this Gospel passage, Jesus speaks of staying awake and ready to welcome Him whenever He enters our lives to encounter us. Readiness is expressed by our commitment to fulfilling the duty of love. We love by actively being patient and kind to those closest to us, showing compassion to the poor among us, and using words that affirm and encourage others. Jesus, our Master, is happy when we are “*faithful and wise*” servants living a life of integrity, truth, compassion, and mercy.

If we faithfully live a life of love in the here and now, we will have no fear when we one day see Jesus face-to-face and have to give an account of our life on earth. We are not afraid because we know that we have loved others as best as possible and have fulfilled the duty of love entrusted by Jesus.

Reflective question:

Am I ready to meet Jesus face-to-face if today is my last day?



By: Fr Sieger Koder