

*"Let it be done to me according
to your word."*



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

Sr. Sandra Seow
Verbum Dei Missionaries

PRAYER FOR LIVING YEAR A

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Sunday, 1st October, 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time.

Ezekiel 18:25-28, Philippians 2:1-11, Matthew 21:28-32

Jesus said to the chief priests and the elders of the people, 'What is your opinion? A man had two sons. He went and said to the first, "My boy, go and work in the vineyard today." He answered, "I will not go," but afterwards thought better of it and went. The man then went and said the same thing to the second who answered, "Certainly, sir," but did not go. Which of the two did the father's will?' They said, 'The first.' Jesus said to them, 'In truth I tell you, tax collectors and prostitutes are making their way into the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you, showing the way of uprightness, but you did not believe him, and yet the tax collectors and prostitutes did. Even after seeing that, you refused to think better of it and believe in him.'

Listening and doing God's will

The gospel presents the parable of two sons in which one son agrees to help his father but fails to follow through, while the other refuses but later changes his mind and does what is needed. Like the second son, we tend to pay lip service to God but not honour our words with our actions. As Pope Francis once said, *"It is not enough to say we are Christians. We must live the faith, not only with our words, but with our actions"*.

In the second reading, St. Paul highlights that God's will for us as a community is to love. He said, *"Be united in your convictions and in your love, ... There should be no competition among you, no conceit; but everybody is to be self-effacing. Always consider the other person to be better than yourself..."*. May we not only listen to God's call to love like Christ but also put it into action by reaching out and meeting the needs of others. It is sometimes as simple as giving a smile and sending someone a message of encouragement. Today, God wants us to be a blessing to others.

Reflective question:

How can I concretely put love into action today?

Monday, 2nd October, The Holy Guardian Angels.

Exodus 23:20-23, Matthew 18:1-5, 10

The disciples came to Jesus and said, 'Who is the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven?' So he called a little child to him whom he set

among them. Then he said, 'In truth I tell you, unless you change and become like little children you will never enter the kingdom of Heaven. And so, the one who makes himself as little as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven. Anyone who welcomes one little child like this in my name welcomes me. 'See that you never despise any of these little ones, for I tell you that their angels in heaven are continually in the presence of my Father in heaven.'

Trusting dependence on God

As we reflect on today's two readings, the message is: We are never alone because God's presence is always so close to us. He cares for us and will never stop guiding and protecting us. Therefore, we can trust God and turn to Him for our needs.

Too often, we tend to live with the preoccupation of being the greatest, the most powerful and important in the eyes of society. In the gospel, Jesus tells us that the attitude we need to have towards God is that of little children. Their greatness is expressed by their freedom to be vulnerable and their natural awareness of their dependence on others. Today, let us humbly ask for the light and wisdom to see how I can live with trustful dependence on God.

Reflective question:

How can I change and trust more in God and His care for me?

Tuesday, 3rd October, 26th Week in Ordinary Time.

Zechariah 8:20-23, Luke 9:51-56

As the time drew near for him to be taken up, Jesus resolutely turned his face towards Jerusalem and sent messengers ahead of him. These set out, and they went into a Samaritan village to make preparations for him, but the people would not receive him because he was making for Jerusalem. Seeing this, the disciples James and John said, 'Lord, do you want us to call down fire from heaven to burn them up?' But he turned and rebuked them, and they went on to another village.

To respond with love

The Samaritans heard that Jesus was making His way to Jerusalem, the place they hated, and they refused to welcome Him into their village and homes. Jesus' disciples saw what happened, became furious and

wanted to punish them for their rejection. However, Jesus simply went on to another village. Today, religious intolerance and racism are on the rise. May invisible walls of resentment and distrust separate people. In our personal lives, we also experience anger and resentment against others who reject us for one reason or another. Often, we seek vengeance and refuse to forgive those who reject and hurt us.

We look at Jesus' response to the rejections of others. He never allowed anger and fury to dictate His words and actions. Instead, He chose not to react but to respond with understanding and compassion. May we never react with self-righteous judgment but follow the loving way of Jesus in the face of rejection and intolerance.

Reflective question:

How can I handle rejection and hostility with compassion?

Wednesday, 4th October, St. Francis of Assisi.

Nehemiah 2:1-8, Luke 9:57-62

As Jesus and his disciples travelled along they met a man on the road who said to him, 'I will follow you wherever you go.' Jesus answered, 'Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head.' Another to whom he said, 'Follow me,' replied, 'Let me go and bury my father first.' But he answered, 'Leave the dead to bury their dead; your duty is to go and spread the news of the kingdom of God.' Another said, 'I will follow you, sir, but first let me go and say good -- bye to my people at home.' Jesus said to him, 'Once the hand is laid on the plough, no one who looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.'

Follow Jesus

Is following Jesus a priority for me? In today's gospel, Jesus told a man who wanted to follow Him that true following meant no worldly comforts and conveniences. To another man, Jesus emphasised the immediacy of following Him *now, today*, without the need to make excuses. Lastly, Jesus told the third man that he could not look back once he decided to follow Him. Jesus is not telling us to feel guilty about having worldly resources or being responsible for our families. The point of today's passage is that He wants to challenge our priorities. We tend to allow people or things to become obstacles to living as His authentic disciples.

Today, let us decide again to follow Him by placing Him as our top priority. Trust in God, who calls us by our name, is an essential attitude for us to have in order that we can commit ourselves to love and serve Him unconditionally.

Reflective question:

What must I do to make Jesus my top priority?

Thursday, 5th October, St. Mary Faustina Kowalska.

Nehemiah 8:1-12, Luke 10:1-12

The Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them out ahead of him in pairs, to all the towns and places he himself would be visiting. And he said to them, 'The harvest is rich but the labourers are few, so ask the Lord of the harvest to send labourers to do his harvesting. Start off now, but look, I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. Take no purse with you, no haversack, no sandals. Salute no one on the road. Whatever house you enter, let your first words be, "Peace to this house!" And if a man of peace lives there, your peace will go and rest on him; if not, it will come back to you. Stay in the same house, taking what food and drink they have to offer, for the labourer deserves his wages; do not move from house to house. Whenever you go into a town where they make you welcome, eat what is put before you. Cure those in it who are sick, and say, "The kingdom of God is very near to you." But whenever you enter a town and they do not make you welcome, go out into its streets and say, "We wipe off the very dust of your town that clings to our feet, and leave it with you. Yet be sure of this: the kingdom of God is very near." I tell you, on the great Day it will be more bearable for Sodom than for that town.'

God provides

"Take no purse with you, no haversack, no sandals". Jesus told His disciples that they needed to travel light and trust God to give them what they needed through people whom He would send along the way to help them. Today, we are also invited to work for God's kingdom and bring His presence of love to homes and societies where there are divisions, injustice and lack of love. Jesus counts on us to be His missionary and witness.

To do this mission, we also need to travel light by depending on and trusting in Jesus, rather than relying on our own resources and intellectual and strength. Let us find peace knowing we are not alone in the mission. God is with us and He sends people along our way to guide and help us in our needs. Thus, we trust that we can do all things through Him who strengthens us (c.f. Philippians 4:13).

Reflective question:

What does it mean for me to “*take no purse, no haversack, no sandals*”?

Friday, 6th October, St. Bruno.

Baruch 1:15-22, Luke 10:13-16

Jesus said to his disciples: 'Alas for you, Chorazin! Alas for you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. And still, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon at the Judgement than for you. And as for you, Capernaum, did you want to be raised high as heaven? You shall be flung down to hell. Anyone who listens to you listens to me; anyone who rejects you rejects me, and those who reject me reject the one who sent me.'

Listen

“...we have sinned in the sight of the Lord, have disobeyed him, and have not listened to the voice of the Lord our God...” (1st reading). The first reading is taken from the prayer of Baruch, known as the Prophet Jeremiah’s secretary. He lamented that His people now lived in exile. However, he did not blame God for all that they went through. He knew that it was the fault of the stubborn Israelites, who refused to listen and follow God’s ways that led them to be where they were. In today’s gospel, Jesus rebuked the surrounding towns for their narrow-mindedness. They appeared perfect in their external behaviours, but their hearts were closed to God.

Often, we think that God punishes us for our sins and takes delight when we suffer, but that is far from the truth. The reality is that God is love and never gets tired of speaking to our hearts and leading us to live a life that reflects His values of truth, justice and peace. Do we tend to silence the

voice of God and choose to follow the voices of our pride and selfishness?

Reflective question:

Do I silence God?

Saturday, 7th October, Our Lady of the Rosary.

Acts 1:12-14, 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, woman of prayer

Mary is a woman of prayer. Prayer accompanied Mary as she journeyed through the ups and downs of life. "...All these joined in continuous prayer, together with several women, including Mary, the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers" (1st reading). In the first reading, we see that amidst uncertainty and fear, the disciples gathered with Mary to pray and centred themselves on God again. In prayer, they found the hope to calm their restless hearts and the peace to be available to do God's will. In the gospel, Mary's "Yes" to God came from her prayer life and her close relationship with Him. Though she was afraid, she trusted God and opened herself to His will.

Today, Mother Mary calls us to become people of prayer. Like her, to pray by focusing on God, being open to His loving will and doing what He wants.

Reflective question:

Does my heart seek God's presence and His will?

Sunday, 8th October, 27th Week in Ordinary Time.

Isaiah 5:1-7, Philippians 4:6-9, Matthew 21:33-43

Jesus said to the chief priests and the elders of the people: 'Listen to another parable. There was a man, a landowner, who planted a vineyard; he fenced it round, dug a winepress in it and built a tower; then he leased it to tenants and went abroad. When vintage time drew near he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his produce. But the tenants seized his servants, thrashed one, killed another and stoned a third. Next he sent some more servants, this time a larger number, and they dealt with them in the same way. Finally he sent his son to them thinking, "They will respect my son." But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, "This is the heir. Come on, let us kill him and take over his inheritance." So they seized him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?' They answered, 'He will bring those wretches to a wretched end and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will deliver the produce to him at the proper time.' Jesus said to them, 'Have you never read in the scriptures: The stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this is the Lord's doing and we marvel at it? I tell you, then, that the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit.'

God's love for us, His vineyard

In today's first reading, Isaiah 5 highlights God's faithful love for His vineyard despite producing sour grapes. The frustration of God is expressed through the words of the owner and is one of the saddest sentences in the bible. We can feel the sorrow of God as He looks at the harvest and asks what he has failed to do: "*What could I have done for my vineyard that I have not done?...*". Today, as we reflect on this passage, let us reflect on our lives and examine the quality of the fruit we produce. Do our actions, words, and choices produce good fruits of love, honesty and peace?

In the gospel, Jesus used the same image of the vineyard. But the focus is now on the tenants entrusted to look after the vineyard and grow good fruit. However, they abused their responsibilities and the gifts entrusted to their care. We are called to be responsible stewards in God's vineyard. He entrusts us to love and serve the people around us and bring them to grow as people living with meaning and purpose.

Reflective question:

Do I produce good fruits or sour grapes?

Monday, 9th October, SS. Denis and Companions.

Jonah 1:1-2:1, 11, Luke 10:25-37

A lawyer stood up and, to test him, asked, 'Master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?' He said to him, 'What is written in the Law? What is your reading of it?' He replied, 'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbour as yourself.' Jesus said to him, 'You have answered right, do this and life is yours.' But the man was anxious to justify himself and said to Jesus, 'And who is my neighbour?' In answer Jesus said, 'A man was once on his way down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell into the hands of bandits; they stripped him, beat him and then made off, leaving him half dead. Now a priest happened to be travelling down the same road, but when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. In the same way a Levite who came to the place saw him, and passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan traveller who came on him was moved with compassion when he saw him. He went up to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them. He then lifted him onto his own mount and took him to an inn and looked after him. Next day, he took out two denarii and handed them to the innkeeper and said, "Look after him, and on my way back I will make good any extra expense you have." Which of these three, do you think, proved himself a neighbour to the man who fell into the bandits' hands?' He replied, 'The one who showed pity towards him.' Jesus said to him, 'Go, and do the same yourself.'

Who is my neighbour?

"Who is my neighbour?". Are our neighbours people living close to us? Or do our neighbours refer to people beyond physical proximity? Jesus

presents to us the answer in the parable of the Good Samaritan. A Jewish man lay wounded on the roadside. The priest and the Levite saw him but chose to pass him by on the other side. However, a Samaritan, the enemy of the Jews, did not go to the other side but stopped, drew close to the man and helped him. The Samaritan man responded positively to the wounded man because he regarded him not as an enemy but as his neighbour to help and love.

Do we walk the other side when we encounter people different from us? Jesus, in the parable, states that people, even though they are different from us by nationality, religion, language, behaviour, etc., are still our neighbours whom we must treat with love, dignity and respect. May we never walk the other side but open our hearts to love everyone as our neighbours.

Reflective question:

What makes me to be indifferent to some people who are in need?

Tuesday, 10th October, 27th Week in Ordinary Time.

Jonah 3:1-10, Luke 10:38-42

Jesus came to a village, and a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. She had a sister called Mary, who sat down at the Lord's feet and listened to him speaking. Now Martha, who was distracted with all the serving, came to him and said, 'Lord, do you not care that my sister is leaving me to do the serving all by myself? Please tell her to help me.' But the Lord answered, 'Martha, Martha,' he said, 'you worry and fret about so many things, and yet few are needed, indeed only one. It is Mary who has chosen the better part, and it is not to be taken from her.'

Christian life: Listening and doing

Martha welcomed Jesus and started to busy herself with serving Him. Her sister, Mary, sat at Jesus' feet and took on the position of a disciple by listening attentively to His teaching. Soon after, Martha became upset and started complaining to Jesus. Jesus told her, "*Martha, Martha,' he said, 'you worry and fret about so many things, and yet few are needed...'*". Jesus pointed out to Martha that her problem was not being busy with serving but that she allowed her worries to distract her and lose focus on what truly mattered. Filled with worries, she had no room to be with Jesus and found her worth in her doing rather than her being.

Jesus reminded her not to lose the “*only thing*” needed- to be present to Him, listen to Him and enjoy being His friend, His disciple.

Like Martha, our worries pulled us in many directions. Like her, we too might find our worth in what we do and accomplish. Let us listen to Jesus as He calls us again to be still and find our rest in Him. When we are with Jesus, we can serve others with joy and love.

Reflective question:

What is Jesus’ message to me today?

Wednesday, 11th October, St. John XXIII.

Ezekiel 34:11-16, John 21:15-17 (Readings from the Mass of St. John XXIII, Pope)

When 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.

Do you love me?

In today’s gospel passage, Jesus came seeking Peter out, not to chide him for denying Him three times, but to allow him to renew his friendship with Him. Three times, Peter denied Jesus. In the passage, Jesus affirmed Peter by asking him three times, “*Do you love me?*”. For Jesus, the past failure of Peter could not stop Jesus from loving him and keeping His faith in him. Each time Peter declared his love for Him, Jesus entrusted him with the mission of being the shepherd of His flock.

Today, Jesus asks us the same question, “*Do you love me?*” This question invites us to make Jesus the centre of our lives. Our messy and imperfect lives do not stop Jesus from calling us to help Him be part of His mission of feeding the people around us with God’s love and leading them to Him. Let us renew our love for Jesus because everything flows from our union with Him.

Reflective question:

What is my response to Jesus' question, "Do you love me?"?

Thursday, 12th October, 27th Week in Ordinary Time.

Malachi 3:13-20, Luke 11:5-13

Jesus said to his disciples, 'Suppose one of you has a friend and goes to him in the middle of the night to say, "My friend, lend me three loaves, because a friend of mine on his travels has just arrived at my house and I have nothing to offer him;" and the man answers from inside the house, "Do not bother me. The door is bolted now, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up to give it to you." I tell you, if the man does not get up and give it to him for friendship's sake, persistence will make him get up and give his friend all he wants. So I say to you: Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; everyone who searches finds; everyone who knocks will have the door opened. What father among you, if his son asked for a fish, would hand him a snake? Or if he asked for an egg, hand him a scorpion? If you then, evil as you are, know how to give your children what is good, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!'

Keep knocking

"So I say to you: Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you..." We may feel that we have been persistently asking, searching and knocking at the door of God for many years. We present our prayers to God for ourselves and even for our loved ones. When our prayers remain unanswered, we doubt His love for us. Today, Jesus wants to assure us that God, our loving Father, hears our prayers and does answer them, but perhaps not always as we might want.

"...how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" Jesus tells us that God wants to give us the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is the presence of the Holy Spirit in us that connects us to God in a personal loving relationship and enables us to love others as God loves us. Let us keep trusting that God cares and ask Him to pour His Spirit of love into our hearts.

Reflective question:

How am I encouraged or challenged by this gospel passage?

Friday, 13th October, 27th Week in Ordinary Time.

Joel 1:13-15; 2:1-2, Luke 11:15-26

When Jesus had cast out a devil, some of the people said, 'It is through Beelzebul, the prince of devils, that he drives devils out.' Others asked him, as a test, for a sign from heaven; but, knowing what they were thinking, he said to them, 'Any kingdom which is divided against itself is heading for ruin, and house collapses against house. So, too, with Satan: if he is divided against himself, how can his kingdom last? - since you claim that it is through Beelzebul that I drive devils out. Now if it is through Beelzebul that I drive devils out, through whom do your own sons drive them out? They shall be your judges, then. But if it is through the finger of God that I drive devils out, then the kingdom of God has indeed caught you unawares. So long as a strong man fully armed guards his own home, his goods are undisturbed; but when someone stronger than himself attacks and defeats him, the stronger man takes away all the weapons he relied on and shares out his spoil. 'Anyone who is not with me is against me; and anyone who does not gather in with me throws away. 'When an unclean spirit goes out of someone it wanders through waterless country looking for a place to rest, and not finding one it says, "I will go back to the home I came from." But on arrival, finding it swept and tidied, it then goes off and brings seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and set up house there, and so that person ends up worse off than before.'

To see God

In today's gospel, Jesus became an object of the people's judgement. They saw that Jesus had just healed a man from his sickness and concluded that the power of the evil, not God, made Him do powerful things in His mission. They were blinded to God's presence in the person of Jesus.

Today, we continue to misjudge people, and in one way or another, we suffer from blindness as we fail to see God's presence in others, events and even in ourselves. God continues to work through the kindness of a stranger, the smile of a child, the selfless service of a family member, etc. In ordinary events and simple ways, God is with us.

Reflective question:

How can I open my eyes and see God in everything today?

Saturday, 14th October, St. Callistus I.**Joel 4:12-21, Luke 11:27-28**

As Jesus was speaking, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said, 'Blessed the womb that bore you and the breasts that fed you!' But he replied, 'More blessed still are those who hear the word of God and keep it!'

Blessed are you

In today's gospel, a woman was so impressed with what she heard from Jesus and complimented His mother for having the privilege of carrying Him and nursing Him. Jesus told her, "*More blessed still are those who hear the word of God and keep it!*". Jesus was not putting His mother down. He pointed out that her true blessedness came not from being his physical mother but from her receiving God's word and putting it into practice. She was truly blessed because she had a personal relationship with God and found her deepest joy in hearing and obeying His word. Today, Jesus calls us to find our blessedness in listening and doing what God tells us.

Let us learn from Mother Mary what it means to hear, treasure and live according to God's word. In this way, we can be truly blessed and happy like her.

Reflective question:

How can I allow God's word to shape my life today?

Sunday, 15th October, 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time.**Isaiah 25:6-10, Philippians 4:12-14, 19-20, Matthew 22:1-14**

Jesus said to the chief priests and elders of the people, 'The kingdom of Heaven may be compared to a king who gave a feast for his son's wedding. He sent his servants to call those who had been invited, but they would not come. Next he sent some more servants with the words, "Tell those who have been invited: Look, my banquet is all prepared, my oxen and fattened cattle have been slaughtered, everything is ready. Come to the wedding." But they were not interested: one went off to his farm, another to his business, and the rest seized his servants, maltreated them and killed them. The king was furious. He despatched

his troops, destroyed those murderers and burnt their town. Then he said to his servants, "The wedding is ready; but as those who were invited proved to be unworthy, go to the main crossroads and invite everyone you can find to come to the wedding." So these servants went out onto the roads and collected together everyone they could find, bad and good alike; and the wedding hall was filled with guests. When the king came in to look at the guests he noticed one man who was not wearing a wedding garment, and said to him, "How did you get in here, my friend, without a wedding garment?" And the man was silent. Then the king said to the attendants, "Bind him hand and foot and throw him into the darkness outside, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth." For many are invited but not all are chosen.'

To put on Christ

Today's gospel presents a symbolic story that challenges us to reflect on our response to God. God, like the King, invites all of us to be with Jesus, His Son, and live in communion with Him as His friends. What will our response be? In the second reading, St. Paul responded "Yes" to being Jesus' faithful friend and found joy in Him even though he was in prison and did not know what would happen next. Thus, he wrote, "*There is nothing I cannot master with the help of the One who gives me strength*". For St. Paul, union with Jesus gave him all the strength he needed.

In the parable, a man was not wearing a wedding garment. What does "*wearing a wedding garment*" refer to? It means that when we respond to God's call to be in a relationship with Jesus, His Son, we need to dress accordingly, i.e. to live accordingly by clothing ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and patience (c.f. Colossians 3:12). Thus, we joyfully commit ourselves to love and serve others.

Reflective question:

How can I live with the awareness that I am in the wedding banquet with Jesus?

Monday, 16th October, St. Hedwig, St. Margaret Mary Alacoque. Romans 1:1-7, Luke 11:29-32

The crowds got even bigger and Jesus addressed them, 'This is an evil generation; it is asking for a sign. The only sign it will be given is the sign of Jonah. For just as Jonah became a sign to the people of Nineveh, so

will the Son of man be a sign to this generation. On Judgement Day the Queen of the South will stand up against the people of this generation and be their condemnation, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, look, there is something greater than Solomon here. On Judgement Day the men of Nineveh will appear against this generation and be its condemnation, because when Jonah preached they repented; and, look, there is something greater than Jonah here.'

There is something greater here...

"...there is something greater than Solomon here..., there is something greater than Jonah here". Jesus told His listeners and is telling us today that He is greater than King Solomon and Prophet Jonah than anyone we may admire. Jesus is God in human form. He is the one who has come to reveal the true face of God. He is the way that leads us to live our true identity as God's beloved children. Thus, we are called not to take Jesus, God with us, for granted. Today, He continues to give Himself to us in the Eucharist and the Scripture. Let us appreciate His presence!

The Queen of the South recognised the greatness of King Solomon and took what he said seriously. The people of Nineveh trusted in Jonah and changed their ways. Today, we are invited to choose to treasure Jesus by placing Him at the centre of our lives.

Reflective question:

Do I take Jesus for granted?

Tuesday, 17th October, St. Ignatius of Antioch.

Romans 1:16-25, Luke 11:37-41

Jesus had just finished speaking when a Pharisee invited him to dine at his house. He went in and sat down at table. The Pharisee saw this and was surprised that he had not first washed before the meal. But the Lord said to him, 'You Pharisees! You clean the outside of cup and plate, while inside yourselves you are filled with extortion and wickedness. Fools! Did not he who made the outside make the inside too? Instead, give alms from what you have and, look, everything will be clean for you.'

Happy are the pure in heart

In today's gospel, Jesus was invited by a Pharisee to dine at his house. The host was surprised that Jesus did not wash His hands before the meal. Jesus told him, "*You Pharisees! You clean the outside of cup and plate, while inside yourselves you are filled with extortion and wickedness. Fools!*". Jesus wanted to point to the Pharisees and His listeners that one must be concerned not just with external cleanliness but more so with internal, deeper cleanliness, i.e., the purity of the heart. In the end, Jesus said, "*...give alms from what you have and, look, everything will be clean for you*". A way to have a pure heart is to be generous with the people around us, especially with those in need.

God looks at our hearts. Let us today dare to examine our hearts and ask ourselves honestly, "*How is my heart?*". May we try to walk the path of love and generously give ourselves to serve those people around us.

Reflective question:

How is my heart?

Wednesday, 18th October, St. Luke the Evangelist.

2 Timothy 4:10-17, Luke 10:1-9

The Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them out ahead of him in pairs, to all the towns and places he himself would be visiting. And he said to them, 'The harvest is rich but the labourers are few, so ask the Lord of the harvest to send labourers to do his harvesting. Start off now, but look, I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. Take no purse with you, no haversack, no sandals. Salute no one on the road. Whatever house you enter, let your first words be, "Peace to this house!" And if a man of peace lives there, your peace will go and rest on him; if not, it will come back to you. Stay in the same house, taking what food and drink they have to offer, for the labourer deserves his wages; do not move from house to house. Whenever you go into a town where they make you welcome, eat what is put before you. Cure those in it who are sick, and say, "The kingdom of God is very near to you."

God stood by me...only Luke is with me

"...only Luke is with me... Everyone of them deserted me...But the Lord stood by me and gave me power, so that through me the whole message might be proclaimed for all the pagans to hear" (1st reading). Here St.

Paul was at the end of his mission and soon would face death. In his loneliness, he found strength and peace in the presence of God, who stood by him. St. Luke was with St. Paul as he faced this difficult part of his life. With eyes of faith, St. Paul recognised God in the person of Luke. When we face the darkness of loneliness, suffering and uncertainty, we know that God will not abandon us. He stands by us by sending people to be with us. They are companions in our journey, offering us strength through their friendships and support.

In the gospel, Jesus calls us, ordinary as we are, to be part of the seventy-two and continue proclaiming the Good News of God's merciful love through our words and actions today. Let us stay close to Jesus and listen to Him again, be loved by Him again so that we can be available to bring His presence to those we encounter.

Reflective question:

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

Thursday, 19th October, SS. John de Brebeuf and Issac Jogues and Companions, St. Paul of the Cross.

Romans 3:21-30, Luke 11:47-54

Jesus said: 'Alas for you because you build tombs for the prophets, the people your ancestors killed! In this way you both witness to what your ancestors did and approve it; they did the killing, you do the building. And that is why the Wisdom of God said, "I will send them prophets and apostles; some they will slaughter and persecute, so that this generation will have to answer for every prophet's blood that has been shed since the foundation of the world, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the Temple." Yes, I tell you, this generation will have to answer for it all. Alas for you lawyers who have taken away the key of knowledge! You have not gone in yourselves and have prevented others from going in who wanted to.' When he left there, the scribes and the Pharisees began a furious attack on him and tried to force answers from him on innumerable questions, lying in wait to catch him out in something he might say.'

Every Christian is called to witness

In today's gospel, Jesus accused the Pharisees of hypocrisy. The grand monuments they built to honour the prophets their ancestors killed were

external manifestations that meant nothing to them. Jesus saw their hearts and knew they were too stubborn to change and live according to the teachings of the prophets. By being hypocrites, they became poor witnesses to others. Instead of bringing people to God, they led them away from Him.

Jesus calls us to mission. Mission is born from our personal encounter with God and a constant experience of being loved by Him. When we truly have God, our words and actions naturally reflect His presence to others. Jesus needs us to be authentic witnesses whose lives attract people to God. Today, let us draw close to God and let ourselves be loved by Him.

Reflective question:

What is my greatest challenge to live in such a way that my life attracts others to Christ?

Friday, 20th October, 28th Week in Ordinary Time.

Romans 4:1-8, Luke 12:1-7

The people had gathered in their thousands so that they were treading on one another. And Jesus began to speak, first of all to his disciples. 'Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees-that is, their hypocrisy. Everything that is now covered will be uncovered, and everything now hidden will be made clear. For this reason, whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight, and what you have whispered in hidden places will be proclaimed on the housetops. To you my friends I say: Do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. I will tell you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has the power to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him. Can you not buy five sparrows for two pennies? And yet not one is forgotten in God's sight. Why, every hair on your head has been counted. There is no need to be afraid: you are worth more than hundreds of sparrows.'

Loved by God

In today's gospel, Jesus warns us about the "yeast of the Pharisees". What does it mean? The yeast of the Pharisees refers to their attitude of religious hypocrisy. They focused on external appearances and presented themselves as superior to the rest. Puffed up with self-

righteous pride, they judged others harshly when they failed to live to their standards.

“We are all sinners. But may the Lord not let us be hypocrites. Hypocrites don’t know the meaning of forgiveness, joy and the love of God” (Pope Francis). Today, let us acknowledge that we are sinners, but sinners loved dearly by God. This is our good news! Our weaknesses do not lessen the love that God has for us. Thus, let us be humble and present ourselves as who we are to Him. When we experience God’s merciful love, we will have the courage to be merciful to the weakness of others.

Reflective question:

How do I respond to what I just read?

Saturday, 21st October, 28th Week in Ordinary Time.

Romans 4:13,16-18, Luke 12:8-12

Jesus said to his disciples: ‘I tell you, if anyone openly declares himself for me in the presence of human beings, the Son of man will declare himself for him in the presence of God’s angels. But anyone who disowns me in the presence of human beings will be disowned in the presence of God’s angels. Everyone who says a word against the Son of man will be forgiven, but no one who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will be forgiven. When they take you before synagogues and magistrates and authorities, do not worry about how to defend yourselves or what to say, because when the time comes, the Holy Spirit will teach you what you should say.’

Faith in God alone

“Abraham is our father in the eyes of God, in whom he put his faith... Though it seemed Abraham’s hope could not be fulfilled, he hoped and he believed, and through doing so he did become the father of many nations exactly as he had been promised: Your descendants will be as many as the stars” (1st reading). Abraham is a man of faith. His trusting faith is fixed on God alone. In what way? When God told Abraham that he would have descendants as many as the stars in the sky, he faced the reality that he and his wife were too old to have a child. Despite the hopeless situation, he trusted in God. Let us desire to grow in trusting faith in God alone despite the challenging circumstances we are living in.

In the gospel, Jesus told the disciples of the coming hardships and persecutions. Yet He assured them that the Holy Spirit would be with them to guide and protect them. This continues to be true for us today. His presence in and with us will give us the strength to keep putting our trust in God.

Reflective question:

How is God inviting me to have trusting faith?

Sunday, 22nd October, 29th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Mission Sunday.

Isaiah 45:1, 4-6, 1 Thessalonians 1:1-5, Matthew 22:15-21

The Pharisees went away to work out between them how to trap Jesus in what he said. And they sent their disciples to him, together with some Herodians, to say, 'Master, we know that you are an honest man and teach the way of God in all honesty, and that you are not afraid of anyone, because human rank means nothing to you. Give us your opinion, then. Is it permissible to pay taxes to Caesar or not?' But Jesus was aware of their malice and replied, 'You hypocrites! Why are you putting me to the test? Show me the money you pay the tax with.' They handed him a denarius, and he said, 'Whose portrait is this? Whose title?' They replied, 'Caesar's.' Then he said to them, 'Very well, pay Caesar what belongs to Caesar -- and God what belongs to God.'

To make other hearts burn

"One cannot truly encounter the risen Jesus without being set on fire with enthusiasm to tell everyone about him. Therefore, the primary and principal resource of the mission are those persons who have come to know the risen Christ in the Scriptures and in the Eucharist, who carry his fire in their heart and his light in their gaze. They can bear witness to the life that never dies, even in the most difficult of situations and in the darkest of moments" (Message of Pope Francis for World Mission Sunday 2023).

As we celebrate World Mission Sunday, let us recognise that we, in virtue of our baptism, are responsible for participating in Christ's mission. Mission starts from us having a personal encounter with Jesus. When we truly experience Him, we carry His fire in our hearts and His light in

our gaze as we show people that He is the source of our love and that our faith in Him can empower us to live life with profound hope and joy, even in the midst of suffering. May our hearts be on fire and feet ready to set out to bear witness to a life that never dies, a love that never fails.

Reflective question:

Can Jesus count on me to be part of His mission?

Monday, 23rd October, St. John of Capestrano.

Romans 4:20-25, Luke 12:13-21

A man in the crowd said to Jesus, 'Master, tell my brother to give me a share of our inheritance.' He said to him, 'My friend, who appointed me your judge, or the arbitrator of your claims?' Then he said to them, 'Watch, and be on your guard against avarice of any kind, for life does not consist in possessions, even when someone has more than he needs.' Then he told them a parable, 'There was once a rich man who, having had a good harvest from his land, and thought to himself, "What am I to do? I have not enough room to store my crops." Then he said, "This is what I will do: I will pull down my barns and build bigger ones, and store all my grain and my goods in them, and I will say to my soul: My soul, you have plenty of good things laid by for many years to come; take things easy, eat, drink, have a good time." But God said to him, "Fool! This very night the demand will be made for your soul; and this hoard of yours, whose will it be then?" So it is when someone stores up treasure for himself instead of becoming rich in the sight of God.'

We come to this world with nothing and we leave with nothing

In today's gospel, Jesus told a parable about a rich man who, instead of being grateful to God for his good fortune and sharing with those who may not be as privileged as he was, spent his time and energy planning on building bigger barns to store his excess crops. He thought he could then enjoy life because of the plentiful good things he had accumulated.

Jesus calls us to strive to be rich in the eyes of God and not the world's, the world whose message for us is to hoard and amass riches for ourselves. Following Jesus' way demands that we recognise that all we have is a gift from God and that we are called to share our resources with those in need generously. We are not meant to be hoarders but givers.

Reflective question:

Do wealth and material things occupy the central place in my life?

Tuesday, 24th October, St. Anthony Claret.

Romans 5:12, 15, 17-21, Luke 12:35-38

Jesus said to his disciples: 'See that you are dressed for action and have your lamps lit. Be like men waiting for their master to return from the wedding feast, ready to open the door as soon as he comes and knocks. Happy those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes. I tell you solemnly, he will put on an apron, sit them down at table and wait on them. It may be in the second watch he comes, or in the third, but happy those servants if he finds them ready.'

We are God's faithful friends

Jesus' parable today speaks to us about faithfulness: The servants who faithfully do their duty, day in and day out, regardless of the circumstances. These faithful servants would be greatly rewarded by their Master for their diligence. He would seat them in the places of honour and wait personally on them.

Faithfulness is the basis of any meaningful and lasting relationship. In our relationship with God, God commits Himself to be faithful to us here, now and forever. The poverty of our response does not deter his unbreakable love for us. The daily call is for us to be faithful to God, and we do so by living a life of love. When we show kindness to a stranger, give our time to help a friend, use our talents to enrich our faith community, etc., we are faithful friends of God.

Reflective question:

In what ways can I show God my love for Him?

Wednesday, 25th October, 29th Week in Ordinary Time.

Romans 6:12-18, Luke 12:39-48

Jesus said to his disciples: 'You may be quite sure of this, that if the householder had known at what hour the burglar would come, he would not have let anyone break through the wall of his house. You too must stand ready, because the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.' Peter said, 'Lord, do you mean this parable for us, or for everyone?' The Lord replied, 'What sort of steward, then, is faithful and

wise enough for the master to place him over his household to give them their allowance of food at the proper time? Happy that servant if his master's arrival finds him at this employment. I tell you truly, he will place him over everything he owns. But as for the servant who says to himself, "My master is taking his time coming", and sets about beating the menservants and the maids, and eating and drinking and getting drunk, 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 unfaithful. The servant who knows what his master wants, but has not even started to carry out those wishes, will receive very many strokes of the lash. The one who did not know, but deserves to be beaten for what he has done, will receive fewer strokes. When a man has had a great deal given him, a great deal will be demanded of him; when a man has had a great deal given him on trust, even more will be expected of him.'

God is the God of surprises

Many of us do not like to be taken by surprise. We want to be sure of what is coming next and control events in life. In today's gospel, Jesus tells us that life is full of unexpected happenings beyond our control. He uses the examples of a burglar who breaks into the house at an hour nobody expects and the master who returns home when the servants least expect him.

As we prayerfully read the passage, we realise that Jesus comes to us when we do not expect. Every day, He comes through people who need our help, through difficult situations we struggle with, through opportunities that make us exercise love and compassion, etc. Jesus comes to be with us in the midst of daily life. Thus, we must be attentive to His presence.

Reflective question:

Am I open to welcome Jesus in the midst of daily life?

Thursday, 26th October, 29th Week in Ordinary Time.

Romans 6:19-23, Luke 12:49-53

Jesus said to his disciples: 'I have come to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were blazing already! There is a baptism I must still receive, and how great is my distress till it is over! 'Do you suppose that I am here

to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. For from now on a household of five will be divided: three against two and two against three; the father divided against the son, son against father, mother against daughter, daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law, daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.'

Fire of love blazing within

"I have come to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were blazing already!" The fire that Jesus brings is the fire of God's merciful and unconditional love. As Jesus' disciples, we are called to have this same fire blazing strongly in us. This fire of God's love burns away our hidden selfish intentions and judgements. This fire of God's love guides our motivations and energises us to live a life according to the ways of Jesus. Ablaze with God's love, we love, work for justice, forgive, show compassion and build bridges of reconciliation.

When we follow Jesus and His ways, we might be at odds with people, even those closest to us. They might disapprove and reject us for the values we uphold and the choices we make. Conflicts will happen, and we must not be scared or alarmed. What we have to do is remain united to Jesus and trust that He will always provide us with the strength to follow Him.

Reflective question:

How can I be faithful and courageous in my following of Jesus?

Friday, 27th October, 29th Week in Ordinary Time.

Romas 7:8-25, Luke 12:54-59

Jesus said again to the crowds, 'When you see a cloud looming up in the west you say at once that rain is coming, and so it does. And when the wind is from the south you say it will be hot, and it is. Hypocrites! You know how to interpret the face of the earth and the sky. How is it you do not know how to interpret these times? Why not judge for yourselves what is right? For example: when you go to court with your opponent, try to settle with him on the way, or he may drag you before the judge and the judge hand you over to the bailiff and the bailiff have you thrown into prison. I tell you, you will not get out till you have paid the very last penny'

Lord, I want to see you again!

In today's gospel, Jesus was frustrated with the people who claimed they could read and understand the signs of nature. Yet, these same people could not see the greatest sign before them, i.e. God is with and among them in the person of Jesus. Something huge was happening right before them, but they failed to see God's presence in the words and actions of Jesus.

We can be so aware of the signs of the weather but blinded to God's loving presence among us and in us. Do we see Him in the words of a friend, in the needs of those around us, in the inner thirst we have for quiet time of prayer? Do we open ourselves to Him and welcome Him in the people we meet, events we live, and challenges we encounter? Do we see Him in the Eucharist and His Word? May we have eyes to see and hearts to rejoice in the presence of God around us.

Reflective question:

What prevents me from perceiving God's presence around me today?

Saturday, 28th October, SS. Simon and Jude, Apostles.

Ephesians 2:19-22, Luke 6:12-19

Jesus went onto the mountain to pray; and he spent the whole night in prayer to God. When day came he summoned his disciples and picked out twelve of them; he called them 'apostles', Simon whom he called Peter, and his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon called the Zealot, Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot who became a traitor. He then came down with them and stopped at a piece of level ground where there was a large gathering of his disciples, with a great crowd of people from all parts of Judaea and Jerusalem and the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon who had come to hear him and to be cured of their diseases. People tormented by unclean spirits were also cured, and everyone in the crowd was trying to touch him because power came out of him that cured them all.

Jesus, our main cornerstone

"You are part of a building that has the apostles and prophets for its foundations, and Christ Jesus himself for its main cornerstone..." (1st reading). St. Paul's words to the Ephesians continue to echo to us today.

We are called to build our lives on Him alone. He is our cornerstone, the firmest foundation on whom we can have a lasting, stable and meaningful life.

In the gospel, St. Luke portrays Jesus as a person of prayer. He went to a quiet place to be in loving communion with God His Father. For Jesus, He chose to build His life on God, His firm foundation. After spending time in prayer, He chose the twelve among his disciples to be the core of the new community he was forming. As His disciples today, let us follow the footsteps of Jesus, our Master and allow ourselves to make time and space to be in loving communion with God.

Reflective question:

Is Jesus my firm foundation?

Sunday, 29th October, 30th Sunday in Ordinary Time.

Exodus 22:0-26, 1 Thessalonians 1:5-10, Mathew 22:4-40

When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees they got together and, to put him to the test, one of them put a further question, 'Master, which is the greatest commandment of the Law?' Jesus said to him, '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 too.'

Love God, love others

The Pharisees questioned Jesus, "*Which is the greatest commandment of the Law?*" Jesus answered their question by highlighting the commandment to love as the greatest: Love God and love others. Our love must first be directed to God. It is to Him that we need to love with our whole heart, mind and strength. Our love for God is shown in the way we love others. Love for others is more than just a feeling of friendship or affection. It is a love committed to action.

"... You must not be harsh with the widow, or with the orphan... If you lend money to any of my people, to any poor man among you, you must not play the usurer with him... If you take another's cloak as a pledge, you must give it back to him..." (1st reading). God wants all of us to put love

into action and not just to have the intention to love. Let us allow God to open our eyes to see the needs of others, especially the marginalised ones, and move our hearts to love them and do good for them.

Reflective question:

What actions have I done to show my love for God and others?

Monday, 30th October, 30th Week in Ordinary Time.

Romans 8:12-17, Luke 13:10-17

One Sabbath day Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues, and a woman was there who for eighteen years had been possessed by a spirit that left her enfeebled; she was bent double and quite unable to stand upright. When Jesus saw her he called her over and said, 'Woman, you are rid of your infirmity' and he laid his hands on her. And at once she straightened up, and she glorified God. But the synagogue official was indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, and he addressed the people present. There are six days' he said 'when work is to be done. Come and be healed on one of those days and not on the Sabbath.' But the Lord answered him. 'Hypocrites!' he said 'Is there one of you who does not untie his ox or his donkey from the manger on the Sabbath and take it out for watering? And this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan has held bound these eighteen years - was it not right to untie her bonds on the Sabbath day?' When he said this, all his adversaries were covered with confusion, and all the people were overjoyed at all the wonders he worked.

God is here

In today's gospel, Jesus saw a woman who was bent double and unable to stand upright at the synagogue. Jesus reached out to her and healed her. However, the religious leaders were unhappy with Jesus' healing on the Sabbath. For Jesus, God was so much bigger than obeying the Sabbath law and showing compassionate love was more important than fulfilling religious norms. He chose to give the woman the experience of liberation.

Love and compassion must always lead us to action. Today, many people around us are "*bent double*" because of one reason or another. They struggle to stand straight and live life with freedom and joy. Let us not procrastinate to love but open our hearts to recognise that each

person is a child of God who needs our words of affirmation, listening ear, smiles and helping hand. Through our compassionate love, we can show them God's life-giving and liberating presence among them.

Reflective question:

Who is that one person who needs my love, attention, care and time the most today?

Tuesday, 31st October, 30th Week in Ordinary Time.

Romans 8:18-25, Luke 13:18-21

Jesus said, 'What is the kingdom of God like? What shall I compare it with? It is like a mustard seed which a man took and threw into his garden: it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air sheltered in its branches. Another thing he said, 'What shall I compare the kingdom of God with? It is like the yeast a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour till it was leavened all through.'

Mustard seed and yeast

As we take this passage of the mustard seed and yeast, let us not be content simply to remain at a superficial level but go deeper and be open to allow Jesus to gently lead us to grasp the more profound meaning for us today. In the gospel, Jesus tells a parable of a man throwing a tiny mustard seed into his garden. It grew and became a tree. Jesus also speaks of a woman taking yeast, mixing it with flour and causing the yeast to react and expand, thus transforming the flour into bread.

Like the tiny seed and yeast, God works powerfully through our small, ordinary actions of kindness and service to make His kingdom of love present. People might overlook our small efforts to love, but God sees and makes our actions bear fruit beyond our imagination. Today, let us never get tired of sowing seeds of God's kingdom.

Reflective question:

Do I have eyes to see that God is at work through my daily efforts of loving?



By: Mike Moyers