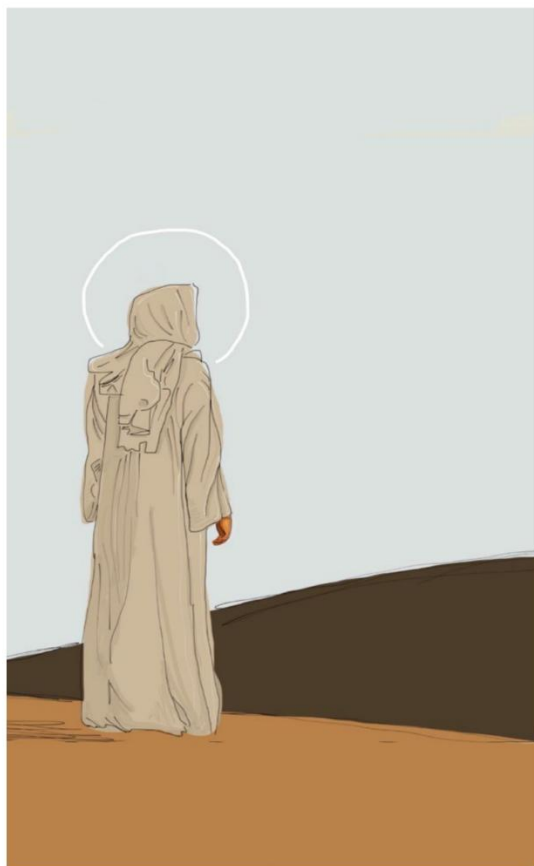


PRAYER FOR LIVING

***“THIS IS MY SON,
THE BELOVED”***

JANUARY
YEAR A



BY SR SANDRA SEOW
VERBUM DEI MISSIONARIES

PRAYER FOR LIVING YEAR A

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**Thursday, 1st January, Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God.
Numbers 6:22–27, Galatians 4:4–7, Luke 2:16–21**

The shepherds hurried away and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger When they saw the child they repeated what they had been told about him, and everyone who heard it was astonished at what the shepherds had to say. As for Mary, she treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart. And the shepherds went back glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen; it was exactly as they had been told. When the eighth day came and the child was to be circumcised, they gave him the name Jesus, the name the angel had given him before his conception.

A welcoming heart

We begin this new day of the new year with the Feast of Mary, the Mother of God. In today's Gospel, the shepherds, who often lived on the fringes of society, facing rejection and isolation, journeyed to witness the arrival of her newborn child. With open hearts, Mary and Joseph welcomed these humble visitors, embodying the spirit of compassion and inclusion in their joyful moment.

Today, as we begin this new year, let us adopt an attitude of welcoming others who come our way, particularly individuals often overlooked in our society. Instead of viewing others through the narrow lens of judgment and prejudice, let us strive to see them as fellow human beings, each possessing their own unique stories and inherent dignity. Let us ask Mother Mary to help us live this new year with hearts that love like she did.

Reflective question:

What attitude do I want to embrace in this new year?

**Friday, 2nd January, SS. Basil the Great and Gregory Nazaianzen.
1 John 2:22–28, John 1:19–28**

This is how John appeared as a witness. When the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, 'Who are you?' he not only declared, but he declared quite openly, 'I am not the Christ'. 'Well then,' they asked 'are you Elijah?' 'I am not' he said. 'Are you the Prophet?' He answered, 'No'. So they said to him, 'Who are you? We must take back an answer to those who sent us. What have you to say about yourself?'

So John said, 'I am, as Isaiah prophesied: a voice that cries in the wilderness: Make a straight way for the Lord'. Now these men had been sent by the Pharisees, and they put this further question to him, 'Why are you baptising if you are not the Christ, and not Elijah, and not the prophet?' John replied, 'I baptise with water; but there stands among you - unknown to you - the one who is coming after me; and I am not fit to undo his sandal-strap'. This happened at Bethany, on the far side of the Jordan, where John was baptising.

Witness to Christ

In today's Gospel, John the Baptist was asked by the priests and Levites from Jerusalem, "*Who are you?*" John the Baptist was secure in his identity. He knew that He was not Christ, Elijah or the Prophet. Instead, John identified himself as a witness to Christ, a voice pointing others to Jesus so that they, too, could encounter Him.

John the Baptist serves as a model for us to follow. By virtue of our baptism, we are called to lead others to Christ through our words, actions and choices we make. There are people around us who may be starting their day burdened by loneliness, fear and various problems. We can be the ones to bring them the good news that God is with us, He is at the centre of our lives, and is the source of our hope and joy.

Reflective question:

How can I bear witness to Christ through my faith?

Saturday, 3rd January, The Most Holy Name of Jesus.

Philippians 2:1-11, Luke 2: 21-24

When the eighth day came and the child was to be circumcised, they gave him the name Jesus, the name the angel had given him before his conception. And when the day came for them to be purified in keeping with the Law of Moses, they took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord- observing what is written in the Law of the Lord: Every first-born male must be consecrated to the Lord- and also to offer in sacrifice, in accordance with what is prescribed in the Law of the Lord, a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.

To be humble like Christ

In today's first reading, St. Paul states, *"There must be no competition among you, no conceit; but everyone is to be self-effacing. Always consider the other person to be better than yourself, so that nobody thinks of his own interests first but everyone thinks of other people's interests instead..."* Let these words of St. Paul echo in our hearts and minds. We are called to choose to look beyond ourselves and esteem others more highly than ourselves, and become caring people. Think about the impact of trying to do something nice for someone and focusing on serving others rather than seeking to impress them. This transformative journey begins with embracing a heart of humility. Let us humbly ask Jesus to help us teach us how to love.

In today's Gospel, we see God in baby Jesus, who chose to manifest Himself as a vulnerable infant, relying on Mary and Joseph's love and care. This humility allows Him to experience human fragility and connect with our struggles. We rejoice in a God who truly identifies with humanity, helping us live with trust and love, encouraging us to imitate Him in our lives.

Reflective question:

Where am I acting from selfish and prideful ambition rather than Christ's humility?

Sunday, 4th January, The Epiphany of the Lord.

Isaiah 60:1–6, Ephesians 3:2–3, 5–6 Matthew 2:1–12

After Jesus had been born at Bethlehem in Judaea during the reign of King Herod, some wise men came to Jerusalem from the east. 'Where is the infant king of the Jews?' they asked. 'We saw his star as it rose and have come to do him homage.' When King Herod heard this he was perturbed, and so was the whole of Jerusalem. He called together all the chief priests and the scribes of the people and enquired of them where the Christ was to be born. 'At Bethlehem in Judaea,' they told him 'for this is what the prophet wrote: And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah You are no means least among the leaders of Judah, For out of you will come a leader Who will shepherd my people Israel. Then Herod summoned the wise men to see him privately. He asked them the exact date on which the star had appeared and sent them on to Bethlehem. 'Go and find out all about the child,' he said; and when you have found

him, let me know, so that I too may go and do him homage.’ Having listened to what the king had to say, they set out. And there in front of them was the star they had seen rising; it went forward and halted over the place where the child was. The sight of the star filled them with delight and going into the house they saw the child with his mother Mary and falling to their knees they did him homage. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh. But they were warned in a dream not to go back to Herod and returned to their own country by a different way.

Manifestation of infinite love

Today, we celebrate the Feast of the Epiphany of the Lord. How is this feast relevant to us today? First, let us look at the meaning of the word “Epiphany”, which means manifestation or revelation. In fact, in Greek, the word literally means to draw back the veil. Thus, today we joyfully celebrate the immense love of God, who draws back the veil that hides His presence from our sight, allowing us to know Him more intimately and enter into a deeper, more personal relationship with Him. In the Gospel, the three wise men saw the child with His mother, and recognised that they were looking at God. Thus, they fell to their knees, worshipped Him and offered gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

As we celebrate this feast, let us remember that God has lifted the veil and revealed Himself to us as a present, caring, loving God who is always with us. Often, we take His presence for granted. Like the three wise men, let us never stop seeking Jesus and finding Him in the Scripture, in the Eucharist, in the silence of our hearts, in the routines and struggles we encounter, in the faces of the weak and the marginalised. The three wise men offered their best to Jesus. In their act of giving, they invite us to offer our whole selves to Jesus, by allowing Him to guide us and using us as His instruments to bring others to encounter Him.

Reflective question:

How does Jesus reveal Himself to me, and how can I show His love to others today?

Monday, 5th January, Monday after Epiphany.

1 John 3:22-4:6, Matthew 4:12-17, 23-25

Hearing that John had been arrested, Jesus went back to Galilee, and leaving Nazareth he went and settled in Capernaum, a lakeside town on the borders of Zebulun and Naphtali. In this way the prophecy of Isaiah was to be fulfilled: 'Land of Zebulun! Land of Naphtali! Way of the sea on the far side of Jordan, Galilee of the nations! The people that lived in darkness has seen a great light; on those who dwell in the land and shadow of death a light has dawned.' From that moment Jesus began his preaching with the message, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand'. He went round the whole of Galilee teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the Good News of the kingdom and curing all kinds of diseases and sickness among the people. His fame spread throughout Syria, and those who were suffering from diseases and painful complaints of one kind or another, the possessed, epileptics, the paralysed, were all brought to him, and he cured them. Large crowds followed him, coming from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judaea and Transjordania.

God is near

In the Gospel, Jesus began His public ministry in the Galilean regions, which were heavily oppressed by the Romans. It was a time of uncertainty and darkness for many. Yet, into this darkness, Jesus stepped forward as the light. He went not to the powerful places but to Galilee of the Gentiles, a place considered ordinary, even looked down upon. It was there that His voice echoed, "*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.*" Repentance here is not merely sorrow for sin, but a turning of one's whole life toward God, a new direction, a new beginning. Where there is darkness, Jesus brings healing; where there is brokenness, He restores. He teaches, proclaims good news, and heals every disease, showing that God's kingdom is not distant—it is present, compassionate, and active in the lives of ordinary people.

Today, we too come to Jesus with wounds, questions, and burdens. Jesus does not turn away. He meets us where we are, not where we think we should be. The good news is this: God comes into our everyday Galilee, into our imperfect and messy lives, and invites us into His light. The kingdom begins wherever we allow Jesus to enter, to heal and to transform.

Reflective question:

What might I need to “turn away from” and “turn toward” so I may respond to Jesus’ call to repent?

Tuesday, 6th January, Tuesday after Epiphany.**1 John 4:7–10, Mark 6:34–44**

As Jesus stepped ashore, he saw a large crowd; and he took pity on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd, and he set himself to teach them at some length. By now it was getting very late, and his disciples came up to him and said, ‘This is a lonely place and it is getting very late, so send them away, and they can go to the farms and villages round about, to buy themselves something to eat’. He replied, ‘Give them something to eat yourselves’. They answered, ‘Are we to go and spend two hundred denarii on bread for them to eat?’ How many loaves have you?’ he asked, ‘Go and see.’ And when they had found out they said, ‘Five loaves and two fish’. Then he ordered them to get all the people together in groups on the green grass, and they sat down on the ground in squares of hundreds and fifties. Then he took the five loaves and the two fish, raised his eyes to heaven and said the blessing; then he broke the loaves and handed them to his disciples to distribute among the people. He also shared out the two fish among them all. They all ate as much as they wanted. They collected twelve basketfuls of scraps of bread and pieces of fish. Those who had eaten the loaves numbered five thousand men.

Love comes from God

In today’s first reading, St. John the Evangelist states, “*My dear people, let us love one another, since love comes from God...*” The desire to love does not originate from within us; it comes from God. Often, we tend to misuse the word “love” in various contexts, from loving desserts to loving a sport. Today, let us remember that the love described by St. John is one that seeks the well-being of others. It is an unconditional and self-giving love. We can love others because God has first loved us, and His love is working in us and through us.

In the Gospel passage, Jesus exemplifies the true essence of love through His deep compassion for others. When He looked at the tired faces of the crowd, His heart was filled with compassion. He sat down and taught them. Later, He performed the miraculous act of multiplying

the loaves and fish to feed them. Through these selfless acts, Jesus showed that love is not merely a feeling but is expressed through actions that seek the well-being of others. Today, Jesus calls us not to admire Him, but to actively go and pass on His love with those we meet.

Reflective question:

How can I be more aware that I am meant to live this day with love?

Wednesday, 7th January, St. Raymond of Peñafort.

1 John 4:11–18, Mark 6:45–52

After the five thousand had eaten and were filled, Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to Bethsaida, while he himself sent the crowd away. After saying good-bye to them he went off into the hills to pray. When evening came, the boat was far out on the lake, and he was alone on the land. He could see they were worn out with rowing, for the wind was against them; and about the fourth watch of the night he came towards them, walking on the lake. He was going to pass them by, but when they saw him walking on the lake, they thought it was a ghost and cried out; for they had all seen him and were terrified. But he at once spoke to them, and said, 'Courage! It is I! Do not be afraid.' Then he got into the boat with them, and the wind dropped. They were utterly and completely dumbfounded, because they had not seen what the miracle of the loaves meant; their minds were closed.

Christ's presence brings peace

In today's Gospel, Jesus saw His disciples looking tired and scared as they faced strong winds and big waves. He walked towards them on the water to remind them, and us, that He is in control of every storm we face. In our own lives, we often find ourselves facing strong winds and frightening storms. These challenges can manifest as temptations that shake our faith, family issues that strain our relationships, feelings of rejection that linger painfully, illnesses that challenge our strength, or the profound grief that accompanies the loss of loved ones. Each of these storms can feel isolating, yet Jesus reassures us that He remains in control of our circumstances, eager to guide us through the rough moments we endure.

It is essential to understand that having Jesus in our lives does not guarantee a life free from difficulties or hardship. On the contrary, we will

still weather our own storms, and the winds may blow fiercely against us. However, the difference lies in the peace and calm that His presence brings. With Jesus by our side, we can find solace in the midst of chaos.

Reflective question:

How can I learn to trust that Jesus is with me during my toughest times, instead of just fighting against the storms of challenges?

Thursday, 8th January, Thursday after Epiphany.

1 John 4:19-5:4, Luke 4:14-22

Jesus, with the power of the Spirit in him, returned to Galilee; and his reputation spread throughout the countryside. He taught in their synagogues and everyone praised him. He came to Nazara, where he had been brought up, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day as he usually did. He stood up to read and they handed him the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. Unrolling the scroll, he found the place where it is written: The spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for he has anointed me. He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives and to the blind new sight, to set the downtrodden free, to proclaim the Lord's year of favour. He then rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the assistant and sat down. And all eyes in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to speak to them, 'This text is being fulfilled today even as you listen'. And he won the approval of all, and they were astonished by the gracious words that came from his lips.

Being God's instruments today

In today's Gospel, Jesus returned to Nazareth, the place where He grew up. He entered the synagogue, read from the scroll of Isaiah, and announced words filled with power and promise: "*The Spirit of the Lord has been given to me...*" In that moment, Jesus revealed His mission to bring good news to the poor, liberty to captives, sight to the blind, and freedom to the oppressed. He declared that this prophecy was fulfilled "*today*" in their hearing. God's loving presence is no longer distant or future—it is present, living, and embodied in Him.

God's loving presence is not just a promise but a present reality for those willing to receive it. We are invited to open our hearts to this "today" and to allow Jesus to free what is bound within us, to heal what is wounded, to restore what is broken. Today, we are also called to be instruments of

hope and compassion to the poor, the forgotten and the wounded around us.

Reflective Question:

What concrete action can I take today to bring “good news” to someone in need?

Friday, 9th January, Friday after Epiphany.

1 John 5:5–13, Luke 5:12–16

Jesus was in one of the towns when a man appeared, covered with leprosy. Seeing Jesus, he fell on his face and implored him. ‘Sir,’ he said, ‘if you want to, you can cure me.’ Jesus stretched out his hand, touched him and said, ‘Of course I want to! Be cured!’ And the leprosy left him at once. He ordered him to tell no one, ‘But go and show yourself to the priest and make the offering for your healing as Moses prescribed it, as evidence for them’. His reputation continued to grow, and large crowds would gather to hear him and to have their sickness cured, but he would always go off to some place where he could be alone and pray.

Jesus’ compassion

During the time of Jesus, lepers were ostracised and viewed with fear. They were unable to live with their families or stay in their villages, as their condition was seen as a punishment from God. Consequently, they were regarded as outcasts by society. In today’s Gospel, Jesus encountered a leper who approached Him. The disciples and the crowd following Jesus would likely have been horrified and repulsed by the sight of the leper nearby. However, Jesus recognised a person in need of healing and acceptance. The leper said to Him, “*Sir, if you want to, you can cure me.*” In response, Jesus reached out, touched him, and immediately the man was restored to health.

Today, we are surrounded by many “lepers” in our lives. There are individuals whom our friends, family members, colleagues, and even we consider to be outcasts. These people may have questionable pasts, quirky or irritating habits, or personalities that we find unacceptable. As a result, we often choose to avoid working with, living with, or being friends with them. If Jesus were here among us today, how would He view our “lepers”? He invites us to see people through compassionate hearts and to love them, regardless of their circumstances.

Reflective question:

How can I reflect Jesus' mission of love by reaching out to someone I find difficult to love and bring them hope, instead of excluding them?

Saturday, 10th January, Saturday after Epiphany.

1 John 5:14–21, John 3:22–30

Jesus went with his disciples into the Judaeen countryside and stayed with them there and baptised. At the same time John was baptising at Aenon near Salim, where there was plenty of water, and people were going there to be baptised. This was before John had been put in prison. Now some of John's disciples had opened a discussion with a Jew about purification, so they went to John and said, 'Rabbi, the man who was with you on the far side of the Jordan, the man to whom you bore witness, is baptising now; and everyone is going to him'. John replied: 'A man can lay claim only to what is given him from heaven. 'You yourselves can bear me out: I said: I myself am not the Christ; I am the one who has been sent in front of him. 'The bride is only for the bridegroom; and yet the bridegroom's friend, who stands there and listens, is glad when he hears the bridegroom's voice. This same joy I feel, and now it is complete. He must grow greater, I must grow smaller.'

Christ must increase, I must decrease

In the Gospel, John the Baptist was a humble witness to Christ. When others came to him, concerned that Jesus was now gaining more followers, John responded, "*I am not the Christ... He must increase; I must decrease.*" John knew who he was and who he was not. His joy was not in being the centre, but in pointing others to Jesus. Like the friend of the bridegroom who rejoices at the bridegroom's voice, John's heart was full when people encountered Jesus.

In a world that urges us to prove ourselves, to be noticed, to build our name and achievements, John's words challenge us to a different path—the way of humility. To decrease is not to become worthless or invisible; rather, it is to make room for Christ to shine through us. It means letting go of our ego, desires for recognition, control, or the need to be first. True joy is found when Jesus is first in our lives, and we become vessels of His light. The more He increases, the more fully we become who we are meant to be.

Reflective questions:

In what area of my life is God asking me to "decrease" so that Christ may increase? Is it my pride, my need for control, my desire for attention, my fears, or my self-centred habits?

Sunday, 11th January, The Baptism of the Lord.

Isaiah 42:1–4,6–7, Acts 10: 34–38, Matthew 3:13–17

Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptised by John. John tried to dissuade him. 'It is I who need baptism from you' he said 'and yet you come to me!' But Jesus replied, 'Leave it like this for the time being; it is fitting that we should, in this way, do all that righteousness demands.' At this, John gave in to him. As soon as Jesus was baptised, he came up from the water, and suddenly the heavens opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming down on him. And a voice spoke from heaven, 'This is my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on him.'

A child of God

When Jesus was baptised, a voice spoke, "*This is my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on him.*" Jesus listened intently, cherishing these words of God the Father in His heart. These words affirmed His identity as the Son of God, an identity that could not be diminished or taken away from Him. Following His baptism, Jesus began His mission to share the Good News of the Father's unconditional love with everyone He encountered. In doing so, He faced rejection from those who could not grasp the depth of His message, while others admired His works and words so much that they chose to follow Him. Yet, regardless of the responses He received, Jesus remained grounded in the Father's love.

In our baptism, we have become children of God. This is our identity now and forever. However, we often forget this fundamental truth in our busy world, where success, popularity and power can distract us. Today, let us listen to God, "*You are my child, my beloved, my favour rests on you. You are not defined by what the world makes you, nor by what you have, own or achieve. You are my child. You belong to me.*" Today, let us remember that we are God's children and root ourselves securely in this truth.

Reflective question:

How does the reality of being God's beloved child impact my life?

Monday, 12th January, 1st Week in Ordinary Time.**1 Samuel 1:1–8, Mark 1:14–20**

After John had been arrested, Jesus went into Galilee. There he proclaimed the Good News from God. 'The time has come' he said 'and the kingdom of God is close at hand. Repent, and believe the Good News.' As he was walking along by the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net in the lake - for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, 'Follow me and I will make you into fishers of men'. And at once they left their nets and followed him. Going on a little further, he saw James, son of Zebedee and his brother John; they too were in their boat, mending their nets. He called them at once and, leaving their father, Zebedee in the boat with the men he employed, they went after him.

Follow me

Simon, Andrew, James, and John were engaged in the daily tasks of fishing. Yet, in the midst of their ordinary and monotonous lives, Jesus came and called them, "*Follow me.*"

As we begin a new week today, Jesus calls us to follow Him, just as He called those fishermen centuries ago. He beckons us to embrace His values, to love authentically as He loved, and to live courageously in the truth. Jesus invites us to step out of our ordinary lives and into an extraordinary one. We can live His life in the present by reaching out to someone who feels marginalised, being patient with a spouse or child, forgiving others for their mistakes, or simply smiling and greeting a stranger we meet. Today, in our everyday lives, Jesus comes to us with the invitation to live in harmony with Him so that our lives can be filled with His love, joy, and peace.

Reflective question:

What does Jesus' call to 'Follow me' mean for my life right now?

Tuesday, 13th January, St. Hilary.

1 Samuel 1:9–20, Mark 1:21–28

Jesus and his disciples went as far as Capernaum, and as soon as the Sabbath came, he went to the synagogue and began to teach. And his teaching made a deep impression on them because, unlike the scribes, he taught them with authority. In their synagogue just then there was a man possessed by an unclean spirit, and it shouted, 'What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are: The Holy One of God.' But Jesus said sharply, 'Be quiet! Come out of him!' And the unclean spirit threw the man into convulsions and with a loud cry went out of him. The people were so astonished that they started asking each other what it all meant. 'Here is a teaching that is new' they said, 'and with authority behind it: he gives orders even to unclean spirits and they obey him.' And his reputation rapidly spread everywhere, through all the surrounding Galilean countryside.

A life of coherence

"The people were so astonished that they started asking each other what it all meant. 'Here is a teaching that is new,' they said, 'and with authority behind it.'" In today's Gospel, the people were amazed by Jesus because He taught them with authority, which came from His coherence between what He taught and how He lived. Looking at the life of Jesus, we see that He lived what He preached, and He preached what He lived. There was no division between His actions and words. This authenticity was what drew people to Him.

Today, we are called not just to admire Him, but to follow and imitate Him. Let us take an honest look at our actions and words. Are they consistent with each other? Sometimes, we know that we do not truly "walk the walk" or "talk the talk." In this time of prayer, let us humbly ask Jesus to give us the grace to live more coherently. Through our consistency, we can help others come to know and love God.

Reflective question:

Are my words consistent with my actions?

Wednesday, 14th January, 1st Week in Ordinary Time.

1 Samuel 3:1–10, 19-20, Mark 1:29–39

On leaving the synagogue, Jesus went with James and John straight to the house of Simon and Andrew. Now Simon's mother-in-law had gone to bed with fever, and they told him about her straightaway. He went to her, took her by the hand and helped her up. And the fever left her and she began to wait on them. That evening, after sunset, they brought to him all who were sick and those who were possessed by devils. The whole town came crowding round the door, and he cured many who were suffering from diseases of one kind or another; he also cast out many devils, but he would not allow them to speak, because they knew who he was. In the morning, long before dawn, he got up and left the house, and went off to a lonely place and prayed there. Simon and his companions set out in search of him, and when they found him, they said, 'Everyone is looking for you.' He answered, 'Let us go elsewhere, to the neighbouring country towns, so that I can preach there too, because that is why I came.' And he went all through Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out devils.

Active and contemplative

In today's Gospel, we witness a day in the life of Jesus: He healed Simon's mother-in-law, cured many who were sick, and brought comfort to the broken. His compassion was practical and personal: He took her by the hand and lifted her up. In the healing of Peter's mother-in-law, it was not distant or abstract, but it happened through presence, touch, and love. Immediately, she stood up to serve, showing that true healing draws us back into life, relationship, and mission.

Yet, in the midst of His busy ministry, Jesus rose early before dawn to pray in a solitary place. While people searched for Him with expectations and needs, Jesus returned first to the Father. His identity and mission were rooted in communion with God. From prayer flowed His work, not the other way around. Today, He reminds us that service is sustained by a relationship with the Father, not by activity alone. It is easy to get caught up in doing, serving, and meeting needs, yet without prayer, we run dry. Jesus teaches us the importance of balance: to serve generously, to love actively, and to withdraw to pray deeply. A disciple is not only one who works for God, but one who abides with Him.

Reflective question:

In my daily life, do I allow prayer to renew me, or am I often absorbed in doing without returning to God, the Source?

Thursday, 15th January, St. Paul the Hermit.

1 Samuel 4:1–11, Mark 1:40–45

A leper came to Jesus and pleaded on his knees: 'If you want to' he said 'you can cure me.' Feeling sorry for him, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him. 'Of course I want to!' he said. 'Be cured!' And the leprosy left him at once and he was cured. Jesus immediately sent him away and sternly ordered him, 'Mind you say nothing to anyone, but go and show yourself to the priest, and make the offering for your healing prescribed by Moses as evidence of your recovery.' The man went away, but then started talking about it freely and telling the story everywhere, so that Jesus could no longer go openly into any town, but had to stay outside in places where nobody lived. Even so, people from all around would come to him.

The trust of the leper

In the Gospel, a man with leprosy approached Jesus. In the eyes of the world, he was untouchable, isolated, and excluded from the community because of His illness. Yet, with remarkable courage and humility, he knelt before Jesus and said, *"If you want to, you can cure me."* His words revealed both deep trust that did not demand, but believed that Jesus had the power to heal.

Jesus met the leper not with fear, but with compassion, and said, *"Of course I want to. Be cured."* God's heart is not distant; He longs to restore, to bring us back into communion and life. The leper's encounter shows us the beauty of coming to Jesus as we are, with our brokenness, fears, and vulnerabilities. When we bring what is unclean in us to Christ, we do not find rejection but mercy.

Reflective Question:

Do I have the same trust and humility as the leper who approached Jesus?

Friday, 16th January, 1st Week in Ordinary Time.

1 Samuel 8:4–7, 10-22a, Mark 2:1–12

When Jesus returned to Capernaum, word went round that he was back; and so many people collected that there was no room left, even in front of the door. He was preaching the word to them when some people came bringing him a paralytic carried by four men, but as the crowd made it impossible to get the man to him, they stripped the roof over the place where Jesus was; and when they had made an opening, they lowered the stretcher on which the paralytic lay. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, 'My child, your sins are forgiven.' Now some scribes were sitting there, and they thought to themselves, 'How can this man talk like that? He is blaspheming. Who can forgive sins but God?' Jesus, inwardly aware that this was what they were thinking, said to them. 'Why do you have these thoughts in your hearts? Which of these is easier: to say to the paralytic, "Your sins are forgiven" or to say, "Get up, pick up your stretcher and walk?" But to prove to you that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins,' – he said to the paralytic- 'I order you: get up, pick up your stretcher, and go off home.' And the man got up, picked up his stretcher at once and walked out in front of everyone, so that they were all astounded and praised God saying, 'We have never seen anything like this.'

Stop judging but love instead

The religious leaders constantly criticised Jesus, believing that only God could forgive sins. Their pride blinded them to the presence of God in Jesus. They were so focused on judging others that they failed to reflect on their own hearts. Jesus challenged them, asking, "*Why do you have these thoughts in your hearts?*" This invites us to examine our own judgmental thoughts. We may not voice them, but our actions can be cold or condescending. Jesus calls us to stop judging and to open our hearts to see the good in others, loving them for who they are.

The love of the four friends for the paralysed man highlights an important aspect of the gospel. They were determined to bring him to Jesus. At times, we may feel like the paralytic, weak or hopeless, but God places people in our lives to lead us closer to Him. Thanks to their support, we experience Jesus' love. Now, it is our turn to help those who are struggling and carry them to Jesus.

Reflective question:

Do I give thanks to the people who have brought me closer to Jesus when I reflect on my life?

Saturday, 17th January, St. Anthony.

1 Samuel 9:1-4, 17-19; 10:1, Mark 2:13-17

Jesus went out to the shore of the lake; and all the people came to him, and he taught them. As he was walking on he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus, sitting by the customs house, and he said to him, 'Follow me.' And he got up and followed him. When Jesus was at dinner in his house, a number of tax collectors and sinners were also sitting at the table with Jesus and his disciples; for there were many of them among his followers. When the scribes of the Pharisee party saw him eating with sinners and tax collectors, they said to his disciples, 'Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?' When Jesus heard this he said to them, 'It is not the healthy who need the doctor but the sick. I did not come to call the virtuous, but sinners.'

"Follow Me"

In today's Gospel, Jesus saw Levi, a tax collector and regarded as a public sinner, sitting at the customs house. Unlike the rest of society, Jesus did not view Levi through a lens of judgment. Instead, He recognised a person yearning for something more in life. Jesus understood that Levi had the potential to become a faithful disciple, despite how others labelled him as an unacceptable sinner. Imagine the immense joy Levi felt when he heard Jesus say, *"Follow me."* Overwhelmed with happiness, he invited all his friends to a meal to celebrate the gift of his new life.

Like Levi, Jesus calls each of us to follow Him as we are. We may never fully grasp such unconditional love, which embraces our flaws, yet still gently beckons us, *"Follow me!"* When we have Jesus in our lives, we experience a joy that no one can take away. There may be "scribes" in our lives who hurl cynical and judgmental remarks at our desire to grow closer to Jesus. However, if we truly experience Jesus' love, we should not let their comments affect us deeply. Let us focus our attention on Jesus and allow Him to be the one we listen to and follow.

Reflective question:

What is stopping me from following Jesus today?

Sunday, 18th January, Second Sunday in Ordinary Time.

Isaiah 49:3, 5-6, 1 Corinthians 1:1-3, John 1:29-34

Seeing Jesus coming toward him, John said, 'Look, there is the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. This is the one I spoke of when I said: A man is coming after me who ranks before me because he existed before me. I did not know him myself, and yet it was to reveal him to Israel that I came baptising with water.' John also declared, 'I saw the Spirit coming down on him from heaven like a dove and resting on him. I did not know him myself, but he who sent me to baptise with water had said to me, "The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and rest is the one who is going to baptise with the Holy Spirit." Yes, I have seen and I am the witness that he is the Chosen One of God.'

There is the Lamb of God

In today's Gospel, we are drawn into the powerful moment when John the Baptist proclaimed, *"Look, there is the Lamb of God!"* With these words, he boldly identified Jesus as the Chosen One of God, the Messiah. This declaration captures the essence of John's mission: to be a steadfast voice crying out in the wilderness and a guiding finger pointing directly to Jesus. As we enter this sacred time of prayer, we are invited to reflect deeply on the example set by John the Baptist. We must ask ourselves, *"What about me? In my daily life, do I actively draw attention to Jesus?"*

We often seek attention because of our pride and ego. We yearn for the world's gaze to linger on us, seeking recognition and validation. This desire can sometimes lead us to scrutinise the flaws and shortcomings of others, allowing discontent to grow as we complain and engage in comparisons. In contrast, John the Baptist directed the crowd's attention toward Jesus, urging them to follow the true path laid out before them. Today, let us strive to redirect our focus firmly toward Jesus. Like John the Baptist, may our lives encourage others to follow Jesus and lead purposeful lives.

Reflective question:

How can the people in my life come to encounter Jesus more because of me?

Monday, 19th January, 2nd Week in Ordinary Time.**1 Samuel 15:16-23, Mark 2:18-22**

One day, when John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting, some people came and said to Jesus, 'Why is it that John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not?' Jesus replied, 'Surely the bridegroom's attendants would never think of fasting while the bridegroom is still with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they could not think of fasting. But the time will come for the bridegroom to be taken away from them, and then, on that day, they will fast. No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old cloak; if he does, the patch pulls away from it, the new from the old, and the tear gets worse. And nobody puts new wine into old wineskins; if he does, the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost and the skins too. No! New wine, fresh skins!'

Fresh wineskin

In today's Gospel, Jesus told a parable about using a new cloth to patch an old coat, noting that it would lead to a bigger tear as the new cloth shrank and pulled. He also compared this to putting new wine into old wineskins, which would be too brittle to contain the expanding wine, causing them to burst.

We may not fully appreciate examples like new cloth on old coats and new wine in old wineskins because they seem irrelevant to our modern context. However, Jesus' audience clearly understood the meaning behind these illustrations. The message is: Jesus is here! He brings newness to those who truly believe in Him, newness in His teachings about love and mercy, and newness in the ways we can follow Him. We are called to let go of old habits, mindsets, and ways of living our faith, and to open ourselves to the newness that Jesus brings into our lives. We must allow Jesus to transform our hearts and minds. He desires to give us new hearts and new minds, large enough to contain Him and the joy that comes from following Him.

Reflective question:

How can I become a "fresh wineskin" with a new heart and mind to embrace the abundant life Jesus offers, rather than clinging to familiar but restrictive old ways?

Tuesday, 20th January, St Fabian, St. Sebastian.

1 Samuel 16:1-13, Mark 2:23-28

One Sabbath day, Jesus happened to be taking a walk through the cornfields, and his disciples began to pick ears of corn as they went along. And the Pharisees said to him, 'Look, why are thy doing something on the Sabbath day that is forbidden?' And he replied, 'Did you never read what David did in his time of need when he and his followers were hungry- how he went into the house of God when Abiathar was high priest, and ate the loaves of offering which only the priests are allowed to eat, and how he also gave some to the men with him?' And he said to them, 'The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath, so the Son of Man is master even of the Sabbath.'

The Sabbath rest

"The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." These words from Jesus addressed the Pharisees when they complained about His disciples picking corn on the Sabbath. The Pharisees saw the disciples' actions as work and confronted Jesus about it. Their intention was not to uphold the true meaning of the Sabbath but to defend the man-made laws surrounding it. In response, Jesus reminded them of the original purpose of the Sabbath and why God created it.

The main purpose is rest. In Genesis 2:1-3, God rested on the seventh day after creating the world. This "rest" does not mean idleness or inactivity. When God rested on that first Sabbath, it was after creating the first man and woman, whom He made out of love in His image and likeness. His rest was not solitary; rather, it was a time of communion with humanity. He took joy in being with His creation and rejoiced over each work of His hands. Today, this gospel passage challenges us to go beyond rigid religious rules and to appreciate the true joy of the Sabbath: resting in God and being in communion with Him.

Reflective question:

How can I recognise Jesus as the Lord of the Sabbath and live the Sabbath not as an obligation but as an experience of deeper communion with Him?

Wednesday, 21st January, St. Agnes.

1 Samuel 17:32-33, 37, 40-51, Mark 3:1-6

Jesus went into a synagogue, and there was a man there who had a withered hand. And they were watching him to see if he would cure him on the Sabbath day, hoping for something to use against him. He said to the man with the withered hand, 'Stand up out in the middle!' Then he said to them, 'Is it against the law on the Sabbath day to do good or to do evil, to save life, or to kill?' But they said nothing. Then, grieved to find them so obstinate, he looked angrily round at them, and said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' He stretched it out and his hand was better. The Pharisee went out and at once began to plot with the Herodians against him, discussing how to destroy him.

To do good

The purpose of Jesus' life was fundamentally rooted in the act of doing good. With a profound understanding of His mission, He made the deliberate choice to heal the man with the withered hand, even on the Sabbath day. This act of compassion not only showed His commitment to kindness but also challenged the rigid interpretations of the law, emphasising that the needs of the suffering should always take precedence over strict adherence to rules.

Today, Jesus invites us to always choose to do good by prioritising the needs of others over the constraints of legalism. In doing so, we are called to embody compassion and understanding in our interactions, fostering a spirit of kindness that goes beyond mere adherence to rules and regulations. Let us ask Jesus for the grace to love as He loves.

Reflective question:

Is my purpose in life to do good?

Thursday, 22nd January, St. Vincent.

1 Samuel 18:6-9; 19:1-7, Mark 3:7-12

Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the lakeside, and great crowds from Galilee followed him. From Judaea, Jerusalem, Idumaea, Transjordan, and the region of Tyre and Sidon, great numbers who had heard of all he was doing came to him. And he asked his disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd, to keep him from being crushed. For he had cured so many that all who were afflicted in any way were crowding forward to touch him. And the unclean spirits, whenever they saw him, would fall down before him and shout, 'You are the Son of God!' But he warned them strongly not to make him known.

Loving the Giver more than the gift

In today's Gospel, Jesus withdrew to the lakeside, yet the crowds followed Him from every direction, people who were hungry for healing, hope, and liberation. Their needs drew them to Jesus, but not all came in faith; some came out of desperation, curiosity, or desire for miracles. Many went only to see what He could do for them, not who He truly was. Still, Jesus welcomed them. He healed, listened, and offered Himself freely, out of love.

How often do we come to Jesus seeking only solutions to our problems instead of seeking Jesus Himself? He invites us not just to receive His gifts, but to know Him, love Him, and follow Him. The crowds gathered around Him because they were needy. He drew near because He was compassionate. Thus, we are reminded that discipleship begins when we move from wanting what Jesus gives to wanting Jesus Himself. True healing happens in the heart that trusts and follows Him closely.

Reflective question:

How is Jesus inviting me to move from seeking His works to seeking His heart?

Friday, 23rd January, 2nd Week in Ordinary Time.

1 Samuel 24: 3-21, Mark 3:13-19

Jesus went up into the hills and summoned those he wanted. So they came to him and he appointed twelve; they were to be his companions and to be sent out to preach, with power to cast out devils. And so he appointed the Twelve: Simon to whom he gave the name Peter, James

the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James, to whom he gave the name Boanerges or 'Sons of Thunder'; then Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, the man who was to betray him.

Called and chosen

In today's Gospel, Jesus selected the Twelve to be His apostles and entrusted them with the mission of sharing His teachings and life with the world. Each person Jesus chose on that day was an ordinary individual, simple fishermen, tax collectors, and others who were not great or famous figures in Israel. Jesus called these everyday people to make a significant impact on the world, and they truly did! They travelled far and wide, preaching the Good News, and as a result, Christians can now be found everywhere. We are Christians—friends of Jesus—because of their witnessing, preaching, sacrifices, and unwavering faith.

Jesus calls each of us, no matter how ordinary we may feel. It is important to realise that we are not alone in this mission. In the passage, Jesus called the Twelve to be His companions before sending them out. Similarly, we cannot change the world unless we stay close to Jesus and enter into a loving communion with Him. Today, take a moment to reflect on the names of each of the apostles and consider including your own name among them. Together, we continue the legacy of faith.

Reflective question:

What does it mean for me to be called and chosen by Jesus?

Saturday, 24th January, St. Francis de Sales.

2 Samuel 1:14, 11-12, 19, 23-27, Mark 3:20-21

Jesus went home, and once more such a crowd collected that they could not even have a meal. When his relations heard of this, they set out to take charge of him; they said, "He is out of his mind."

Faithfulness to the end

In today's Gospel, Jesus returned home, surrounded by crowds, and unable even to eat, and His own relatives say, "*He is out of his mind.*" How painful it must have been for Jesus to hear the comment from the very people who knew Him since childhood, but now questioned His

sanity and mission. They could not comprehend the depth of His calling, the love and passion for God and His mission that drove Him. Despite their misunderstanding, Jesus remained faithful to the Father's will.

Many of us experience misunderstanding, especially when our choices, faith, or service are questioned by those close to us. Following God's call may seem unusual to the world. In Jesus, we find the courage to love, serve, and remain faithful without seeking recognition. God values the sincerity of our hearts over applause. In times of loneliness or misunderstanding, we can trust the Father who sees our true intentions. Walking with God often means facing a lack of approval, but we are supported by the One who understands our hearts and who Himself was also misunderstood.

Reflective question:

How might Jesus' example invite me to remain faithful and rooted in God's love?

Sunday, 25th January, Third Sunday in Ordinary Time.

Isaiah 8:23-9:3, 1 Corinthians 1:10-13,17, Matthew 4:12-23

Hearing that John had been arrested Jesus went back to Galilee, and leaving Nazareth he went and settled in Capernaum, a lakeside town on the borders of Zebulun and Naphtali. In this way the prophecy of Isaiah was to be fulfilled:

Land of Zebulun! Land of Naphtali!

Way of the sea on the far side of Jordan,

Galilee of the nations!

The people that lived in darkness has seen a great light;

On those who dwell in the land and shadow of death

A light has dawned.

From that moment Jesus began his preaching with the message, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.' As he was walking by the Sea of Galilee he saw two brothers, Simon, who was called Peter, and his brother, Andrew; they were making a cast in the lake with their net, for they were fishermen. And he said to them. 'Follow me and I will make you fishers of men.' And they left their nets at once and followed Jesus. Going on from there he saw another pair of brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John; they were in their boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. At once, leaving the boat and their father, they followed him. He went round the whole of

Galilee teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the Good News of the kingdom and curing all kinds of diseases and sickness among the people.

Be united

In the second reading, St. Paul urged the Corinthians to overcome divisions within their community: *"I appeal to you... to make up the differences between you, and instead of disagreeing among yourselves, to be united again in your belief and practice."* Paul reminded them that their identity was not rooted in personalities and preferences, but in Christ alone. When we allow differences to separate us, whether in opinion, character, or style, we forget Jesus, who has called us to be one body, united in love and mission. The Church is strongest when we stay united, centred on Christ rather than on ourselves.

The Gospel echoes this call in a different way. Jesus began His mission by proclaiming, *"Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is close at hand."* Repentance is more than turning away from sin; it is turning our hearts back toward God, realigning our priorities, thoughts, and relationships with His love. When Jesus called the first disciples, they left their nets immediately and followed Him. Unity begins here—when people respond to the same voice, walk behind the same Lord, and allow His call to reshape their lives. Discipleship draws us to communion and mission. Today, let us examine what divides and turn again to Jesus who unites us.

Reflective question:

How can I work for unity and follow Jesus more wholeheartedly this week?

Monday, 26th January, SS. Timothy and Titus.

2 Timothy 1:1-8 or Titus 1:1-5, 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."

Peace to this house

Today, we celebrate Saints Timothy and Titus, trusted companions and coworkers of St. Paul. Their lives remind us that the mission of spreading the Gospel does not rest on one person alone. It is a shared journey, rooted in faith and sustained through the grace of God. In the Gospel, Jesus sent out the seventy-two disciples two by two. They were to travel lightly, depending not on possessions but on God's providence and the hospitality of others. Their message was to say, "*Peace to this house... the Kingdom of God is very near to you.*" They are not sent to conquer but to bless; not to rely on their own strength, but on God who sends them. Like Timothy and Titus, they are missionaries of peace and instruments of God's presence in the world.

On this feast, we are invited to see ourselves as people chosen by God to do extraordinary things through faith. He calls us to go forth, to speak His Word, to love boldly, and to serve with joy. We are sent into our families, communities, and workplaces, not carrying gold or silver, but the peace of Christ.

Reflective question:

In what ways can I bring God's peace to the people I will meet today?

Tuesday, 27th January, St. Angela Merici.

2 Samuel 6:12-15, 17-19, Mark 3:31-35

The mother and brothers of Jesus arrived and, standing outside, sent in a message asking for him. A crowd was sitting around him at the time the message was passed to him, 'Your mother and brothers and sisters are outside asking for you.' He replied, 'Who are my mother and my brothers?' And looking round at those sitting in a circle about him, he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers. Anyone who does the will of God, that person is my brother and sister and mother.'

Being an active member of Jesus' household

In today's Gospel, Jesus was told that His mother and relatives were outside looking for Him. He replied, "*Who are my mother and my brothers?*" And looking at those seated around Him, He says, "*Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.*" This is not a rejection of Mary or His earthly family, but a revelation of something deeper—a new family formed not by blood, but by obedience to the will of God. Jesus invites us into a relationship that is intimate, personal, and life-giving. We are not just His admirers or distant followers; we are called to be part of His family.

However, belonging to Jesus' family is not passive. It is not merely a title we carry or a name we bear. Rather, it is lived through action, through doing the will of the Father. To be part of Jesus' household means listening to His Word, allowing it to shape our decisions, and responding with a generous heart. Today, when we pray, when we care for one another, when we open our homes and our hearts, we become the living extension of His family on earth.

Reflective question:

How am I being called to strengthen my belonging in God's family through action?

Wednesday, 28th January, St. Thomas Aquinas.

2 Samuel 7:4-17, Mark 4:1-20

Jesus began to teach by the lakeside, but such a huge crowd gathered round him that he got into a boat on the lake and sat there. The people were all along the shore, at the water's edge. He taught them many things in parables, and in the course of his teaching he said to them, 'Listen! Imagine a sower going out to sow. Now it happened that, as he sowed, some of the seed fell on the edge of the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some seed fell on rocky ground where it found little soil and sprang up straight away, because there was no depth of earth; and when the sun came up it was scorched and, not having any roots, it withered away. Some seed fell into thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it and it produced no crop. And some seeds fell into rich soil and, growing tall and strong, produced crop; and yielded thirty, sixty, and even a hundredfold.' And he said, 'Listen, anyone who has ears to hear!' When he was alone, the Twelve, together with the others who formed his

company, asked what the parables meant. He told them, 'The secret of the kingdom of God is given to you, but to those who are outside everything comes in parables, so that they may see and see again, but not perceive; may hear and hear again, but not understand; otherwise they might be converted and be forgiven.' He said to them, 'Do you not understand this parable? Then how will you understand any of the parables? What the sower is sowing is the word. Those on the edge of the path where the word is sown are people who have no sooner heard it than Satan comes and carries away the word that was sown in them. Similarly, those who receive the seed on patches of rock are people who, when first they hear the word, welcome it at once with joy. But they have no root in them, they do not last; should some trial come, or some persecution on account of the word, they fall away at once. Then there are others who receive in thorns. These have heard the word, but the worries of this world, the lure of riches and all the other passions come in and choke the word, and so it produces nothing. And there are those who received the seed in rich soil: they hear the word and accept it and yield a harvest, thirty and sixty and a hundredfold.'

The four soils

In today's Gospel, Jesus shared the parable of the four types of soil. At different moments in our lives, we can see ourselves reflected in each of these soils. Sometimes, we are like the edge of a path, hearing the Word of God without letting it influence our lives. Other times, we relate to rocky soil, receiving the Word with joy but lacking the perseverance to let it take root in our hearts. We may also resemble thorny soil, where the worries and desires of the world overshadow God's message. Yet, there are moments when we are like good soil, accepting the Word with humble hearts and allowing it to guide our lives. In these instances, we experience the joy of bearing fruit, such as love, peace, reconciliation, and freedom.

This parable illustrates the inconsistency of human nature and our potential for growth. Jesus understands our struggles in keeping His Word within our hearts and continues to sow the seeds of God's love in us. Even if we do not feel like good soil right now, we should not be discouraged because Jesus remains steadfast and hopeful for us.

Reflective question:

How can I cultivate a heart that welcomes and receives the Word of God?

Thursday, 29th January, 3rd Week in Ordinary Time.

2 Samuel 7:18-19, 24-29, Mark 4:21-25

Jesus said to the crowd, 'Would you bring in a lamp to put it under a tub or under the bed? Surely you will put it on the lamp-stand? For there is nothing hidden but it must be disclosed, nothing kept secret except to be brought to light. If anyone has ears to hear, let him listen to this.' He also said to them, 'Take notice of what you are hearing. The amount you measure out is the amount you will be given - and more besides; for the man who has will be given more; from the man who has not, even what he has will be taken away.'

We are meant to shine for Christ

In today's Gospel, Jesus said, "*Would you bring in a lamp to put it under a tub or under the bed? Surely you will put it on the lamp-stand?*" A lamp is meant to shine. It has a purpose: to give light, to reveal what is hidden, to guide and make the way clear. Using this image, Jesus invites us to be bearers of His light and to embrace the gift of faith. Rather than keeping it hidden, we should allow it to illuminate our lives and the lives of those around us through acts of kindness, honesty, compassion, and courage.

Jesus also says, "*The amount you measure out is the amount you will be given...*" If we give little of ourselves to God, our hearts remain small; but when we give generously, our time, love, forgiveness, and service, our hearts expand, and we allow God's presence to shine through us, drawing others toward Him.

Reflective question:

How can I let Christ's light shine more brightly in my actions, words, and relationships?

Friday, 30th January, 3rd Week in Ordinary Time.

2 Samuel 11:1-10, 13-17, Mark 4:26-34

Jesus said to the crowd, 'This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man throws seed on the land. Night and day, while he sleeps, when he is awake, the seed is sprouting and growing; how, he does not know. Of its

own accord the land produces first the shoot, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. And when the crop is ready, he loses no time: he starts to reap because the harvest has come.' He also said, 'What can we say the kingdom of God is like? What parable can we find for it? It is like a mustard seed which at the time of its sowing in the soil is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet once it is sown it grows into the biggest shrub of them all and puts out big branches so that the birds of the air can shelter in its shade.' Using many parables like these, he spoke the word to them, so far as they were capable of understanding it. He would not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything to his disciples when they were alone.

Collaborators of the Kingdom

Today's Gospel passage presents a beautiful image of what mission entails. When we work to build God's kingdom of love among us, we resemble the man who scatters the seeds in his field. The seeds grow in silence, often without the man even realising it. Likewise, we are instruments of God's love. Whether it is reaching out to a friend in need with a listening ear, generously sharing our time and energy to support a friend facing challenges, we are sowing seeds of love and compassion in every act. We may think that the ordinary and small actions we take each day do not have the power to change the world, but we are mistaken. Every small act of love we perform, every kind word of encouragement we offer, and every hug of reconciliation we share contribute to transforming our world and bringing God's Kingdom to life.

God uses our seemingly small and insignificant actions and words to manifest His presence and love. He trusts that we will assist Him in this mission. Let us respond to His trust by making our lives a testament to love.

Reflective question:

What is Jesus inviting me to concretely put into practice today?

Saturday, 31st January, St. John Bosco.

2 Samuel 12:1-7a, 10-17, Mark 4:35-41

With the coming of evening that same day, he said to them, 'Let us cross over to the other side'. And leaving the crowd behind they took him, just as he was, in the boat; and there were other boats with him. Then it

began to blow a gale and the waves were breaking into the boat so that it was almost swamped. But he was in the stern, his head on the cushion, asleep. They woke him and said to him, 'Master, do you not care? We are going down!' And he woke up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, 'Quiet now! Be calm!' And the wind dropped, and all was calm again. Then he said to them, 'Why are you so frightened? How is it that you have no faith?' They were filled with awe and said to one another, 'Who can this be? Even the wind and the sea obey him.'

Faith in the Midst of the Storm

In today's Gospel, Jesus invited His disciples to cross to the other side. They boarded the boat, and a violent storm quickly arose, leaving them in panic as waves crashed against the boat and water filled it. While they feared for their lives, Jesus slept peacefully, seemingly unaware of the situation. They cried out, *"Master, do you not care? We are going down!"* This scene resonates with us as we face our own storms of illness, grief, and uncertainty, often feeling overwhelmed and abandoned, wondering if God is asleep.

At their cry, Jesus stood up and rebuked the wind, and spoke to the sea, *"Quiet now! Be calm!"* And there was a deep calm. Then He turned to His disciples: *"Why are you afraid? How is it that you have no faith?"* Jesus was not scolding them for waking Him, but inviting them to discover a deeper trust. His presence with them in the boat was always enough, even when He seemed silent. Faith is not the absence of storms, but confidence that Jesus is with us. When facing problems and challenges, let us remember that Jesus is in the boat. His presence brings us peace. We do not sail alone.

Reflective questions:

What storms am I facing now? How is Jesus inviting me to trust Him more deeply in this situation?

