

PRAYER FOR LIVING

**“Not on bread alone but on
every word that comes from the
mouth of God.”**

FEBRUARY
YEAR A



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PRAYER FOR LIVING YEAR A

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Sunday, 1st February, Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time.

Zephaniah 2:3; 3:12-13, 1 Corinthians 1:26-31, Matthew 5:1-12

Seeing the crowds, he went onto the mountain. And when he was seated his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak. This is what he taught them: 'How blessed are the poor in spirit: the kingdom of Heaven is theirs. Blessed are the gentle: they shall have the earth as inheritance. Blessed are those who mourn: they shall be comforted. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for uprightness: they shall have their fill. Blessed are the merciful: they shall have mercy shown them. Blessed are the pure in heart: they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: they shall be recognised as children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted in the cause of uprightness: the kingdom of Heaven is theirs. Blessed are you when people abuse you and persecute you and speak all kinds of calumny against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven; this is how they persecuted the prophets before you.'

Walking the path of God

We often value power, success, popularity, and wealth, but today's readings remind us that God sees things differently. In the first reading, the prophet Zephaniah encourages us to be humble and rely on God rather than our own strength. We often think we need to prove ourselves through success and recognition. However, true strength comes from trusting in God, rather than relying on our own abilities. In the second reading, St. Paul emphasises that God chooses the foolish and weak by human standards to shame what the world considers as wise and strong. These powerful words from St. Paul remind us that God works through those whom the world views as unimportant and weak. Today, we are called to be humble and trust that He can use us in ways we may never expect.

In the Gospel, Jesus calls us to embrace the path of the Beatitudes, which emphasises qualities like humility, gentleness, mercy, purity of heart, and being peacemakers. Following this path may present challenges that test our faith, but we find comfort in the assurance that Jesus is always with us, guiding us through every situation. His presence is the source of our happiness.

Reflective question:

How do the readings today challenge my way of living in a society that promotes power, status, and self-promotion?

Monday, 2nd February, The Presentation of the Lord.**Malachi 3:1-4, Hebrews 2:14-18, Luke 2:22-32 (shorter version)**

When the day came for them to be purified as laid down by the Law of Moses, they took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord- observing what stands 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 said in the Law of the Lord, a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons. Now in Jerusalem there was a man named Simeon. He was an upright and devout man; he looked forward to Israel's comforting and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death until he had set eyes on the Christ of the Lord. Prompted by the Spirit he came to the Temple and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the Law required, he took him into his arms and blessed God; and he said: 'Now, Master, you can let your servant go in peace, just as you promised; because my eyes have seen the salvation which you have prepared for all the nations to see, a light to enlighten the pagans and the glory of your people Israel'. There was a prophetess, too, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was well on in years. Her days of girlhood over, she had been married for seven years before becoming a widow. She was now eighty-four years old and never left the Temple, serving God night and day with fasting and prayer. She came up just at that moment and began to praise God; and she spoke of the child to all who looked forward to the deliverance of Jerusalem. When they had done everything the Law of the Lord required, they went back to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. And as the child grew to maturity, he was filled with wisdom; and God's favour was with him.

Christ, the Light

In today's Gospel, the child Jesus is brought to the Temple by Mary and Joseph. Despite the simplicity of the scene, God reveals something extraordinary. Simeon, guided by the Holy Spirit, recognises the baby as the Light promised by God: *"a light for revelation to enlighten the pagans and the glory of your people Israel."* Jesus is light, but not in a blinding or overpowering way. He comes as a small child, dependent on others.

This reminds us that God's light often enters our lives quietly. It does not force itself upon us; it invites us to see differently, to trust, and to hope. This light reveals God's faithful love and shows the way to true happiness and life.

Simeon and Anna recognise this light because they are people of prayer, attentive to the Spirit. In contrast to the busy world around them, they notice God's presence in what others might overlook. Their witness reminds us that to see the light of Christ, we must cultivate silence, patience, and attentiveness to God. As we celebrate the Feast of the Presentation of Jesus, may we welcome Him as our light and share His light with others.

Reflective question:

Like Simeon and Anna, how attentive am I to God's presence in my daily life?

Tuesday, 3rd February, 4th Week in Ordinary Time.

2 Samuel 18:9-10, 14b, 24-25a, 30-19:3, Mark 5:21-43

When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a large crowd gathered round him and he stayed by the lakeside. Then one of the synagogue officials came up, Jairus by name, and seeing him, fell at his feet and pleaded with him earnestly, saying, 'My little daughter is desperately sick. Do come and lay your hands on her to make her better and save her life.' Jesus went with him and a large crowd followed him; they were pressing all round him. Now there was a woman who had suffered from a hemorrhage for twelve years; after long and painful treatment under various doctors, she spent all she had without being any the better for it, in fact, she was getting worse. She had heard about Jesus, and she came up behind him through the crowd and touched his cloak. 'If I can touch even his clothes,' she had told herself 'I shall be well again.' And the source of the bleeding dried up instantly, and she felt in herself that she was cured of her complaint. Immediately aware that power had gone out from him, Jesus turned round in the crowd and said, 'Who touched my clothes?' His disciples said to him, 'You see how the crowd is pressing round you and yet you say, "Who touched me?"' But he continued to look all round to see who had done it. Then the woman came forward, frightened and trembling because she knew what had happened to her, and she fell at his feet and told him the whole truth. 'My

daughter,' he said 'your faith has restored you to health; go in peace and be free from your complaint.' While he was still speaking some people arrived from the house of the synagogue official to say, 'Your daughter is dead: why put the Master to any further trouble?' But Jesus had overheard this remark of theirs and he said to the official, 'Do not be afraid; only have faith'. And he allowed no one to go with him except Peter and James and John the brother of James. So they came to the official's house and Jesus noticed all the commotion, with people weeping and wailing unrestrainedly. He went in and said to them, 'Why all this commotion and crying? The child is not dead, but asleep.' But they laughed at him. So he turned them all out and, taking with him the child's father and mother and his own companions, he went into the place where the child lay. And taking the child by the hand he said to her, 'Talitha, kum!' which means, 'Little girl, I tell you to get up'. The little girl got up at once and began to walk about, for she was twelve years old. At this they were overcome with astonishment, and he ordered them strictly not to let anyone know about it, and told them to give her something to eat.

Opportunities to stop and love

In today's Gospel, Jairus, a prominent member of the Jewish community, approaches Jesus and asks Him to heal his dying daughter. Jesus agrees to go with him, but their urgent journey is interrupted by a woman who is suffering from a long-term illness that has made her a public outcast. This woman discreetly approaches Jesus and touches the hem of his garment, hoping to be healed. Instead of ignoring her and continuing to Jairus' house, Jesus chooses to stop and engage with this interruption. He wants to know who has touched Him in faith, because He does not just want to be a vending machine that meets her needs, but wants to bring her into a relationship with Him, and restore her to both the community and society. This interruption does not affect what he sets out to do. He continues to Jairus' house and heals his daughter.

Often, we become so focused on completing tasks and sticking to our plans that we overlook the opportunities presented by interruptions. These moments can help us put love, patience, and compassion into practice as we respond to others' needs.

Reflective question:

How can I view interruptions in my life as opportunities for God's work?

Wednesday, 4th February, 4th Week in Ordinary Time.

2 Samuel 24:2,9-17, Mark 6:1-6

Jesus went to his hometown and his disciples accompanied him. With the coming of the Sabbath he began teaching in the synagogue and most of them were astonished when they heard him. They said, 'Where did the man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been granted him, and these miracles that are worked through him? This is the carpenter, surely, the son of Mary, the brother of James and Joset and Jude and Simon? His sisters, too, are they not here with us?' And they would not accept him. And Jesus said to them, 'A prophet is only despised in his own country, among his own relations and in his own house'; and he could work no miracle there, though he cured a few sick people by laying his hands on them. He was amazed at their lack of faith.

A renewed encounter with Jesus

The saying "familiarity breeds contempt" applies to the experience of Jesus when He returns to His hometown. The people there are impressed by His wisdom and the miracles He performed. However, they see Him as someone too familiar, questioning, "*This is the carpenter, surely, the son of Mary, the brother of James and Joset and Jude and Simon? His sisters, too, are they not here with us?*" Because of this mindset, they refuse to accept Him as a prophet.

In our spiritual lives, we may find ourselves like the people in Jesus' hometown. We can become so familiar with matters of faith, such as prayer, the Scripture and the Eucharist, that nothing excites us anymore, and following Jesus can seem meaningless. A living faith requires a living experience, a daily encounter with Jesus, who continually invites us to deepen our relationship with Him. Let Jesus guide us to a personal encounter with Him today. With Jesus in our lives, we will never feel bored or tired, for His presence brings a sense of newness to our journey in following Him.

Reflective question:

What is Jesus inviting me to at this point of my journey with Him?

Thursday, 5th February, St. Agatha.

1 Kings 2:1-4, 10-12, Mark 6:7-13

Jesus made a tour round the villages, teaching. Then he summoned the Twelve and began to send them out in pairs giving them authority over the unclean spirits. And he instructed them to take nothing for the journey except a staff - no bread, no haversack, no coppers for their purses. They were to wear sandals but, he added, 'Do not take a spare tunic'. And he said to them, 'If you enter a house anywhere, stay there until you leave the district. And if any place does not welcome you and people refuse to listen to you, as you walk away shake off the dust from under your feet as a sign to them.' So they set off to preach repentance; and they cast out many devils, and anointed many sick people with oil and cured them.

Trust, because you do not walk alone

In today's Gospel, Jesus sends out the Twelve and asks them to travel light, no extra food, no money, no security. This is not simply a lesson in hardship but an invitation to trust. By letting go of what usually makes them feel safe, the disciples learn to depend on God and the kindness of others.

In our own lives, we often carry many loads: worries, a need for control, fear of rejection, or a need for success. Jesus reminds us that these can weigh us down and distract us from our true mission. Living lightly helps us stay focused on what really matters in life: love, presence, and faithfulness. Today, we are called to trust God in simplicity, to serve with humility, and to walk forward even when the path is uncertain. When we dare to let go, we discover that God provides what we truly need along the way.

Reflective question:

What am I being asked to let go of in order to trust God more deeply and live my life and mission with greater freedom and simplicity?

Friday, 6th February, SS. Paul Miki & Companions.

Ecclesiasticus 47:2-13, Mark 6:14-29

King Herod had heard about Jesus, since by now his name was well-known. Some were saying, 'John the Baptist has risen from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him'. Others said, 'He

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

Courage leads to faithfulness

In today's Gospel, John the Baptist speaks the truth with courage, even when it places him in danger. He refuses to compromise his integrity, choosing to remain faithful to God rather than prioritise personal safety. His courage flows from a deep conviction that God's truth is greater than fear. In contrast, King Herod shows a lack of courage, trapped by his fear—fear of losing face, fear of others' opinions, fear of breaking his own promises. His weakness reminds us that courage is not about power or position, but about choosing what is right even when it is difficult.

In this time of prayer, let us reflect on our own lives. True courage does not always lead to success or recognition, but it always leads to

faithfulness. In a world that often prefers silence or compromise, we are called to stand firm, guided by conscience and trust in God.

Reflective question:

Where am I called to speak or live the truth with courage, despite facing opposition from others?

Saturday, 7th February, 4th Week in Ordinary Time.

1 Kings 3:4-13, Mark 6:30-34

The apostles rejoined Jesus and told him all they had done and taught. Then he said to them, 'You must come away to some lonely place all by yourselves and rest for a while'; for there were so many coming and going that the apostles had no time even to eat. So they went off in a boat to a lonely place where they could be by themselves. But people saw them going, and many could guess where; and from every town they all hurried to the place on foot and reached it before them. So as he 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.

To find rest in Jesus

In today's Gospel, the disciples of Jesus are exhausted after dedicating themselves to their mission work. Jesus notices their fatigue and tells them, "*You must come away to a lonely place all by yourselves and rest for a while.*" Like the disciples, we often find ourselves incredibly busy. We rush, run, and hurry so much that we sometimes forget how to be quiet and still. Today, let us accept Jesus' invitation to come to Him, spend time with Him, and find rest in His presence. With Jesus, we can be renewed with new strength, new hope, and new peace.

As Jesus and His disciples set off in a boat, a crowd sees them and hurriedly follows them. Jesus' heart is full of compassion for the crowd because He sees them like sheep without a shepherd. He sits down and teaches them, offering comfort and strength to the weary group, including His tired disciples who listen in. Today offers us a chance to dedicate time and space to be with Jesus and give Him our full attention. His presence brings us peace, and His words provide us strength.

Reflective question:

How can I prioritise time and space to be with Jesus despite my busy schedule?

Sunday, 8th February, Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time.**Isaiah 58:7-10, 1 Corinthians 2:1-15, Matthew 5:13-16**

Jesus said to his disciples, 'You are salt for the earth. But if salt loses its taste, what can make it salty again? It is good for nothing, and can only be thrown out to be trampled under people's feet. You are light for the world. A city built on a hilltop cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp to put it under a tub; they put it on the lamp-stand where it shines for everyone in the house. In the same way your light must shine in people's sight, so that, seeing your good works, they may give praise to your Father in heaven.'

Salt and light

"Share your bread with the hungry and shelter the homeless poor, clothe the man you see to be naked and turn not from your own kin. Then will your light shine like the dawn..." These words are taken from today's first reading, where God's call to action compels us to engage in practical acts of love and compassion towards others. By responding to these needs, we let our inner light shine brightly, revealing His presence to those around us. God values genuine love over outward, public religious displays. Today, let us serve those in need and become agents of justice and hope.

In the gospel, Jesus calls us to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Salt quietly preserves, gives flavour, and prevents decay, much like our faith should add meaning to life and help fight indifference and injustice. Light reveals hope in darkness, reminding us that our good works should lead others to glorify God. Being salt and light is not about extraordinary actions but being faithful in everyday moments by choosing kindness, justice, and compassion. Through these small acts, we make God's presence tangible in the world.

Reflective question:

What is one concrete step I can take to be salt and light for someone?

Monday, 9th February, 5th Week in Ordinary Time.

1 Kings 8:1-7,9-13, Mark 6:53-56

Having made the crossing, Jesus and his disciples came to land at Gennesaret and tied up. No sooner had they stepped out of the boat than people recognised him, and started hurrying all through the countryside and brought the sick on stretchers to wherever they heard he was. And wherever he went, to village, or town, or farm, they laid down the sick in the open spaces, begging him to let them touch even the fringe of his cloak. And all those who touched him were cured.

Jesus is here

In today's Gospel, crowds and crowds of people hurry to see Jesus and to be with Him. People from all walks of life gather around Him, each with their own intentions. Some are desperately seeking healing for their own sickness, while others bring along sick friends and family members, hoping that Jesus will touch and heal them. There are also some who are simply curious, driven by a desire to meet this man known as "Jesus". No matter their reasons for coming, Jesus welcomes each person without hesitation. His compassionate heart draws Him to stay with them.

As we enter this time of prayer, let us take a moment to draw near to Jesus and invite Him to touch our lives. Many of us may carry feelings of loneliness, worry, fear and anxiety in our hearts. In these moments, we can turn to Him, allowing His peace to flow into us and calming us. His love embraces us, offering the strength we need to journey through the challenges of life. Just as the crowds recognise Jesus and seek His presence, may we also open our eyes of faith and become aware of His unwavering presence of love surrounding us today.

Reflective question:

How can I deepen my faith in and relationship with Jesus?

Tuesday, 10th February, St. Scholastica.

1 Kings 8:22-23, 27-30, Mark 7:1-13

The Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered round Jesus, and they noticed that some of his disciples were eating with unclean hands, that is, without washing them. For the Pharisees, and the Jews in general, follow the tradition of the elders and never eat without washing their arms as far as the elbow; and on

returning from the marketplace, they never eat without first sprinkling themselves. There are also many other observances which have been handed down to them concerning the washing of cups and pots and bronze dishes. So these Pharisees and scribes asked him, 'Why do your disciples not respect the tradition of the elders but eat their food with unclean hands?' He answered, 'It was of you hypocrites that Isaiah so rightly prophesied in this passage of scripture: This people honour me only with lip-service, while their hearts are far from me. The worship they offer me is worthless, the doctrines they teach are only human regulations. You put aside the commandment of God to cling to human traditions.' And he said to them, 'How ingeniously you get round the commandment of God in order to preserve your own tradition! For Moses said: Do your duty to your father and your mother, and, Anyone who curses father or mother must be put to death. But you say, "If a man says to his father or mother: Anything I have that I might have used to help you is Corban (that is, dedicated to God), then he is forbidden from that moment to do anything for his father or mother". In this way you make God's word null and void for the sake of your tradition which you have handed down. And you do many other things like this.'

Consistent disciples of Jesus

In today's Gospel, Jesus uses strong language when addressing the Pharisees, labelling them as "*hypocrites*." This sharp rebuke stems from their glaring inconsistency between their words and their actual behaviour. Jesus tells them, "*This people honour me only with lip-service, while their hearts are far from me.*" As we reflect on these profound words, let us take a moment to conduct an honest self-examination of our own lives. In our daily interactions, do our actions align with our words? As we turn our gaze toward Jesus, we see in Him a person who exemplifies perfect integrity; His teachings and deeds are in harmony. There is nothing concealed about Him, and thus, He draws people towards Him because they witnessed a coherence in His life and teachings.

In a world yearning for authenticity, what it truly needs are Christians who embody this consistency, who genuinely walk the walk while confidently talking the talk. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, seeking to draw ever closer to Him, so that we may become true witnesses of our faith in action.

Reflective question:

When people look at me, do they see me as an honest and coherent person?

Wednesday, 11th February, 5th Week in Ordinary Time.

Isaiah 66:10-14, John 2:1-11 (Readings taken from the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes)

On the third day, there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee. The mother of Jesus was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited. And they ran out of wine, since the wine provided for the feast had all been used, and the mother of Jesus said to him, 'They have no wine.' Jesus said, 'Woman, what do you want from me? My hour has not come yet.' His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.' There were six stone water jars standing there, meant for the ablutions that are customary among the Jews: each could hold twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to the servants, 'Fill the jars with water,' and they filled them to the brim. Then he said to them, 'Draw some out now and take it to the president of the feast.' They did this; the president tasted the water, and it had turned into wine. Having no idea where it came from -- though the servants who had drawn the water knew -- the president of the feast called the bridegroom and said, 'Everyone serves good wine first and the worse wine when the guests are well wined; but you have kept the best wine till now.' This was the first of Jesus' signs: it was at Cana in Galilee. He revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him.

From water to wine

At the wedding feast in Cana, Mary notices a simple but real need and brings it to Jesus with simple trust: "*They have no wine.*" She does not tell Him what to do; she entrusts the situation to Him. Then she turns to the servants and speaks words that continue to guide us today: "*Do whatever he tells you.*" Jesus' response transforms ordinary water into abundant wine. This first sign reveals who He is as the One who brings new life, joy, and fullness where there is emptiness. Yet the miracle unfolds only through obedience: the servants fill the jars to the brim, even when it seems pointless.

This Gospel invites us to recognise our own moments of lack: when faith feels dry, hope is running low, or joy seems absent. Like Mary, we are called to bring these honestly to Jesus and to trust His timing and ways.

When we choose to listen and act on His word, Christ can transform our ordinary, fragile lives into signs of His grace and love.

Reflective Question:

Where in my life is the “wine” running out, and am I willing to trust Jesus enough to do whatever He tells me?

Thursday, 12th February, 5th Week in Ordinary Time.

1 Kings 11:4-13, Mark 7:24-30

Jesus left Gennesaret and set out for the territory of Tyre. There he went into a house and did not want anyone to know he was there, but he could not pass unrecognized. A woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit heard about him straightaway and came and fell at his feet. Now the woman was a pagan, by birth a Syrophoenician, and she begged him to cast the devil out of her daughter. And he said to her, ‘The children should be fed first, because it is not fair to take the children’s food and throw it to the house-dogs’. But she spoke up: ‘Ah yes, sir,’ she replied ‘but the house-dogs under the table can eat the children’s scraps’. And he said to her, ‘For saying this, you may go home happy: the devil has gone out of your daughter’. So she went off to her home and found the child lying on the bed and the devil gone.

A humble faith

In today’s Gospel, a mother, burdened by her troubles, seeks out Jesus out of deep love for her child. She persists in her plea and eventually receives what she longs for, despite Jesus’ initial response seeming harsh: “*The children should be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children’s food and throw it to the dogs.*” The term “dogs” refers to “little puppies,” symbolising beloved pets waiting for scraps. The woman understands this and engages positively, pointing out that, like the puppy, she, too, deserves the small portions of mercy and love that Jesus can offer.

We should consider Jesus’ intentions with His words. He, who knows all hearts, recognises that this woman has remarkable faith in God. He wants to teach His disciples an important lesson about faith through her. Ultimately, she returns home joyfully because her daughter is healed. Let us draw inspiration from the Syrophoenician woman and nurture our faith in Jesus, even when our challenges feel overwhelming.

Reflective question:

In what areas of my life do I need to put humble faith in God into practice?

Friday, 13th February, 5th Week in Ordinary Time.

1 Kings 11:29-32, Mark 7:31-37

Returning from the district of Tyre, Jesus went by way of Sidon towards the Sea of Galilee, right through the Decapolis region. And they brought him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they asked him to lay his hand on him. He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, put his fingers into the man's ears and touched his tongue with spittle. Then looking up to heaven he sighed; and he said to him, 'Ephphatha', that is, 'Be opened'. And his ears were opened, and the ligament of his tongue was loosened and he spoke clearly. And Jesus ordered them to tell no one about it, but the more he insisted, the more widely they published it. Their admiration was unbounded. 'He has done all things well,' they said 'he makes the deaf hear and the dumb speak.'

Be opened

Our greatest challenge is that we are simply too busy to hear Jesus. We find ourselves constantly occupied, as we juggle work, meet deadlines, care for children or elderly parents, and more. Amid all this hustle and bustle, we often lose sight of God and the immense love He has for us.

While we may not be physically deaf, many of us experience a kind of spiritual deafness. God reaches out to us, but we struggle to hear Him amid the noise that surrounds us and the chaos within. We are absorbed in our own world of worries, anxieties, and fatigue, making it hard to recognise His presence. Today, Jesus invites us with the words, "*Ephphatha. Be opened!*" Being open to Jesus is crucial if we genuinely want to deepen our prayer life. This openness makes us more aware of His presence, whether in the quiet of our prayers, the routines of daily life, or the faces of those we meet. Let us be open to Jesus and allow Him to renew our awareness of His presence.

Reflective question:

How can I become more aware of God's presence today?

Saturday, 14th February, SS. Cyril & Methodius.

1 Kings 12:26-32; 13:33-34, Mark 8:1-10

A great crowd had gathered, and they had nothing to eat. So Jesus called his disciples to him and said to them, 'I feel sorry for all these people; they have been with me for three days now and have nothing to eat. If I send them off home hungry they will collapse on the way; some have come a great distance.' His disciples replied, 'Where could anyone get bread to feed these people in a deserted place like this?' He asked them, 'How many loaves have you?' 'Seven' they said. Then he instructed the crowd to sit down on the ground, and he took the seven loaves, and after giving thanks he broke them and handed them to his disciples to distribute; and they distributed them among the crowd. They had a few small fish as well, and over these he said a blessing and ordered them to be distributed also. They ate as much as they wanted, and they collected seven basketfuls of the scraps left over. Now there had been about four thousand people. He sent them away and immediately, getting into the boat with his disciples, went to the region of Dalmanutha.

Looking with compassion

In today's Gospel, Jesus looks out at a crowd that has been with Him for three days and expresses compassion for their hunger. He cares about each person in that multitude and feels a strong urge to do something to lessen their hunger. Jesus encourages His disciples, and us, to see the crowd through His eyes. Every day, we come across many people who are not just hungry for food; they are longing for love, acceptance, hope, and peace. We have the opportunity to be His instruments by actively serving those around us, reflecting Christ's light in our lives.

Jesus takes the loaves and small fish the disciples have, gives thanks and blesses the food, and instructs them to distribute it to the crowd. Everyone has as much as they want to eat. This serves as a powerful reminder for each of us: we should trust that Jesus can work wonders with whatever little we may have. During this time of prayer, let us draw closer to Jesus and learn once again how to cultivate compassion for others while trusting that He is the one who multiplies the little we have to nourish those in need.

Reflective question:

When I look at the crowds of people around me, am I filled with compassion and love?

Sunday, 15th February, Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time.**Ecclesiasticus 15:16-20, 1 Corinthians 2:6-10, Matthew 5:17-37**

Jesus said to his disciples, 'Do not imagine that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to complete them. In truth I tell you, till heaven and earth disappear, not one dot, not one little stroke, is to disappear from the Law until all its purpose is achieved. Therefore, anyone who infringes even one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be considered the least in the kingdom of Heaven; but the person who keeps them and teaches them will be considered great in the kingdom of Heaven. For I tell you, if your uprightness does not surpass that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never get into the kingdom of Heaven. You have heard how it was said to our ancestors, You shall not kill; and if anyone does kill he must answer for it before the court. But I say this to you, anyone who is angry with a brother will answer for it before the court; anyone who calls a brother "Fool" will answer for it before the Sanhedrin; and anyone who calls him "Traitor" will answer for it in hell fire. So then, if you are bringing your offering to the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar, go and be reconciled with your brother first, and then come back and present your offering. Come to terms with your opponent in good time while you are still on the way to the court with him, or he may hand you over to the judge and the judge to the officer, and you will be thrown into prison. In truth I tell you, you will not get out till you have paid the last penny. You have heard how it was said, You shall not commit adultery. But I say this to you, if a man looks at a woman lustfully, he has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye should be your downfall, tear it out and throw it away; for it will do you less harm to lose one part of yourself than to have your whole body thrown into hell. And if your right hand should be your downfall, cut it off and throw it away; for it will do you less harm to lose one part of yourself than to have your whole body go to hell. It has also been said, Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a writ of dismissal. But I say this to you, everyone who divorces his wife, except for the case of an illicit marriage, makes her an adulteress; and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits

adultery. Again, you have heard how it was said to our ancestors, You must not break your oath, but must fulfil your oaths to the Lord. But I say this to you, do not swear at all, either by heaven, since that is God's throne; or by earth, since that is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, since that is the city of the great King. Do not swear by your own head either, since you cannot turn a single hair white or black. All you need say is "Yes" if you mean yes, "No" if you mean no; anything more than this comes from the Evil One.'

Choosing God's way

Today's first reading and Gospel place before us the dignity and seriousness of human freedom. In the first reading, it states, *"If you wish, you can keep the commandments; to behave faithfully is within your power. He has set fire and water before you; put out your hand to whichever you prefer..."*, which reminds us that God sets life and death, good and evil before us, and then respects our choice. God does not force obedience, but He invites a free and loving response. Our decisions shape who we become and the path we walk.

In the Gospel, Jesus deepens this understanding by revealing that God's law is not merely about external observance, but about the condition of our hearts. He does not abolish the law, but He fulfils it by calling us to pursue a deeper goodness that goes beyond minimum requirements. He shows that true faith is asking, *"How can my life reflect God's love more fully?"* The commandments are not burdens meant to restrict us, but guides that lead us to authentic freedom and love. Choosing God's way each day is choosing life.

Reflective Question:

In the daily choices I make, am I choosing the path that leads to life?

Monday, 16th February, 6th Week in Ordinary Time.

James 1:1-11, Mark 8:11-13

The Pharisees came up and started a discussion with Jesus; they demanded of him a sign from heaven, to test him. And with a sigh that came straight from the heart he said, 'Why does this generation demand a sign? I tell you solemnly, no sign shall be given to this generation.' And leaving them again and re-embarking he went away to the opposite shore.

Joy and suffering

In today's first reading from St. James, we are reminded that *"you will always have your trials, but when they come, treat them as a happy privilege."* Let us take a moment to ponder this idea of viewing suffering as a *"happy privilege."* It might seem unimaginable to find happiness amid the challenges we face. Yet, St. James encourages us to discover joy even within our struggles, indicating that we do not have to wait for our problems to be resolved to experience true happiness. We can embrace this joy, grounded in our trust in God, who loves us and supplies all that we need to endure our trials. At the end of today's reading, James reminds us that relying on worldly things, like money, is futile and urges us to recognise our deep need for God.

In the Gospel, the religious leaders demand that Jesus perform extraordinary signs, yet they overlook the most significant sign of all: Jesus Himself, the embodiment of God's love. The invitation for us is to cultivate the faith to recognise Jesus' presence in our daily lives. By staying close to Him, we find all we need to live with a deep and quiet joy.

Reflective question:

How can I live with joy when life is hard?

Tuesday, 17th February, Seven Holy Founders of the Servite Order. James 1:12-18, Matthew 8:14-21

The disciples had forgotten to take any food and they had only one loaf with them in the boat. Then Jesus gave them this warning, 'Keep your eyes open; be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and the yeast of Herod'. And they said to one another, 'It is because we have no bread'. And Jesus knew it, and he said to them, 'Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you not yet understand? Have you no perception? Are your minds closed? Have you eyes that do not see, ears that do not hear? Or do you not remember? When I broke the five loaves among the five thousand, how many baskets full of scraps did you collect?' They answered, 'Twelve'. And when I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many baskets full of scraps did you collect?' And they answered, 'Seven'. Then he said to them, 'Are you still without perception?'

Trust in Jesus

In today's Gospel, they worry about having only one loaf of bread among them, wondering whether it will be enough, despite witnessing Jesus' miraculous multiplication of loaves and fish twice. In response, Jesus warned them about the "*yeast of the Pharisees and Herod*," which symbolised corruption and unbelief. However, the disciples focus on their immediate concern about the bread, missing the deeper message in His warning. Jesus patiently urges them to trust Him and remember the miracles they have seen.

Much like the disciples, we often find ourselves anxious about not having enough for ourselves and those we care about. We focus on our "*one loaf of bread*" and let worry consume us. How blind and deaf we can be! Today, Jesus calls us to place our trust in Him and not to get so caught up in one concern after another that we overlook the countless miracles, big and small, that we have experienced in our lives.

Reflective question:

Reflecting on my life's journey, when did I feel Jesus' personal care and protection?

Wednesday, 18th February, Ash Wednesday.

Joel 2:12-18, 2 Corinthians 5:20-6:2, Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

Jesus said to disciples: 'Be careful not to parade your good deeds before men to attract their notice; by doing this you will lose all reward from your Father in heaven. So when you give alms, do not have it trumpeted before you; this is what the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets to win men's admiration. I tell you solemnly, they have had their reward. But when you give alms, your left hand must not know what your right is doing; your almsgiving must be secret, and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you. And when you pray, do not imitate the hypocrites: they love to say their prayers standing up in the synagogues and at the street corners for people to see them; I tell you solemnly, they have had their reward. But when you pray, go to your private room and, when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in that secret place, and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you. When you fast, do not put on a gloomy look as the hypocrites do: they pull long faces to let men know they are fasting. I tell you solemnly, they have had their reward. But when you fast, put oil

on your head and wash your face, so that no one will know you are fasting except your Father who sees all that is done in secret; and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you.'

Return to God with our hearts

Ash Wednesday invites us to return to God with our whole heart. Through the prophet Joel, the Lord calls us not to external displays, but to an interior conversion: *"Let your hearts be broken, not your garments torn."* It is a loving summons to come back to Him with humility, trusting in His mercy and compassion.

In the Gospel, Jesus deepens this call by reminding us that almsgiving, fasting, and prayer are not meant for show. True conversion happens in the hidden places of the heart, where God alone sees and transforms us. When our actions are sincere, they draw us closer to God rather than drawing attention to ourselves. The ashes we receive today are a quiet but powerful sign: we are fragile, in need of grace, and yet deeply loved. Lent begins not with fear or sadness, but with hope because God is always ready to forgive and renew us. As Pope Francis reminds us: *"Lent is a time of grace, a time of conversion. It is a time to change our hearts."* May this Ash Wednesday help us return to the Lord with trust, simplicity, and a renewed desire to walk in His ways.

Reflective question:

As I begin this Lenten journey, what is God inviting me to change in my heart quietly and sincerely, so that I may return to Him with deeper trust and love?

Thursday, 19th February, Thursday after Ash Wednesday.

Deuteronomy 30:15-20, Luke 9:22-25

Jesus said to his disciples: 'The Son of Man is destined to suffer grievously, to be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes and to be put to death, and to be raised up on the third day.' Then to all he said, 'If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross every day and follow me. For anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for my sake, that man will save it. What gain, then, is it for a man to have won the whole world and to have lost or ruined his very self?'

Following Jesus to the cross

As we begin this Lenten journey, we hear the words of Jesus: “*The Son of Man is destined to suffer grievously, to be rejected by the elders.*” This powerful statement invites us to reflect on the inevitability of suffering in our own lives as we strive to follow Him. Just as Jesus faced deep anguish and rejection, we too will encounter our own challenges.

Pope John Paul II reminds us that “*Jesus Christ has taken the lead on the way of the cross. He has suffered first. He does not drive us toward suffering but shares it with us, wanting us to have life and to have it in abundance.*” In this light, we come to realise that our struggles are not faced alone; Jesus walks beside us, offering His strength and compassion amid our trials. Let us remember that Jesus has not only taken the lead on the way of the cross, but has also shown us that, through suffering, comes growth, resilience, and ultimately renewal. With faith in our hearts, we step forward, boldly choosing to walk our path, knowing that our burdens are shared and understood by the One who loves us most deeply.

Reflective question:

What are some challenges in my life that I can surrender to Jesus as I strive to follow Him faithfully in the way of the cross?

Friday, 20th February, Friday after Ash Wednesday.

Isaiah 58:1-9, Matthew 9:14-15

John’s disciples came to him and said, ‘Why is it that we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not?’ Jesus replied, ‘Surely the bridegroom’s attendants would never think of mourning as long as the bridegroom is still with them? But the time will come for the bridegroom to be taken away from them, and then they will fast.’

Fasting with love

Today’s Gospel encourages us to reflect on the reasons we fast. Many people may fast for reasons that do not align with the true spirit of the practice. For some, it has become a mere obligation that lacks personal meaning. As we embark on this Lenten journey, we are reminded by Jesus that the essence of fasting extends far beyond abstaining from our favourite food. True fasting involves consciously stepping away from the behaviours and attitudes that prevent our capacity to love and connect

with others. This includes letting go of selfishness, greed, and indifference that can easily cloud our hearts and relationships.

We are called to approach fasting not simply as a ritual, but as an opportunity to deepen our love for others and for God. Let us embrace creativity in our fasting practices, finding ways to express compassion and generosity. By allowing Jesus to guide our intentions, we can transform our fast into a profound act of love that touches the lives of those around us.

Reflective question:

In what ways can my fasting today not only strengthen my faith but also directly benefit those around us?

Saturday, 21st February, Saturday after Ash Wednesday.

Isaiah 58:9-14, Luke 5:27-32

Jesus noticed a tax collector named Levi sitting at the tax office and said to him, 'Follow me.' And leaving everything, Levi got up and followed him. In his honour, Levi held a great reception in his house, and with them at the table was a large gathering of tax collectors and others. The Pharisees and their scribes complained to his disciples and said, 'Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?' Jesus said to them in reply, 'It is not those who are well who need the doctor, but the sick. I have come to call not the upright but sinners to repentance.'

Lent is about loving

The first reading states, *"If you do away with the yoke, the clenched fist, the wicked word, if you give bread to the hungry, and relief to the oppressed, your light will rise in the darkness..."* Through the prophet Isaiah, God reminds us that true faith is not shown through empty gestures but through attentiveness to others, removing oppression, speaking kindly, feeding the hungry, restoring broken relationships and caring for those around us. When our repentance leads us to compassion and concrete love, light breaks forth and healing begins.

In the Gospel, Jesus calls Levi from his tax booth and chooses to share a meal with those labelled as sinners. This simple yet radical act shows us God's mercy in action. Jesus does not wait for perfection; He meets people where they are and invites them into a new life. Like Levi, we are

called to let go of what binds us and to follow Jesus with greater faithfulness and love.

Reflective question:

Where is God inviting me this Lent to move from religious practice to a more merciful and loving way of living?

Sunday, 22nd February, First Sunday of Lent.

Genesis 2:7-9, 3:1-7, Romans 5:12-19, Matthew 4:1-11

Jesus was led by the Spirit out into the desert to be put to the test by the devil. He fasted for forty days and forty nights, after which he was hungry, and the tester came and said to him, 'If you are Son of God, tell these stones to turn into loaves.' But he replied, 'Scripture says: Human beings live not on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.' The devil then took him to the holy city and set him on the parapet of the Temple. 'If you are Son of God,' he said, 'throw yourself down; for scripture says: He has given his angels orders about you, and they will carry you in their arms in case you trip over a stone.' Jesus said to him, 'Scripture also says: Do not put the Lord your God to the test.' Next, taking him to a very high mountain, the devil showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour. And he said to him, 'I will give you all these, if you fall at my feet and do me homage.' Then Jesus replied, 'Away with you, Satan! For scripture says: The Lord your God is the one to whom you must do homage, him alone you must serve.' Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels appeared and looked after him.

Choose God in the Desert

Lent leads us into the desert with Jesus, a place of silence, struggle, and truth. In today's Gospel, Jesus is tempted at his weakest moment, after forty days of fasting. The temptations are familiar: to satisfy immediate needs, to seek security and control, and to gain power and recognition. Yet each time, Jesus refuses to take the easy way out. He chooses trust in the Father instead of self-reliance, obedience instead of compromise.

The Gospel reminds us that temptation itself is not sin; even Jesus was tempted. What matters is the choice we make. Lent gives us space to recognise the voices that pull us away from God, such as wanting comfort without sacrifice, having faith without trust, and seeking success without humility. Like Jesus, we are invited to respond not with our own

strength, but with God's Word and a heart anchored in prayer. As we journey through Lent, Jesus shows us that faithfulness in small, hidden struggles shapes who we become and prepares us for life with God and service to others.

Reflective question:

What temptation most distracts me from trusting God fully, and how is Lent inviting me to respond differently?

Monday, 23rd February, 1st Week of Lent.

Leviticus 19:1-2, 11-18, Matthew 25:31-46

Jesus said to his disciples: 'When the Son of Man comes in his glory, escorted by all the angels, then he will take his seat on his throne of glory. All the nations will be assembled before him and he will separate men one from another as the shepherd separates sheep from goats. He will place the sheep on his right hand and the goats on his left. Then the King will say to those on his right hand, "Come, you whom my Father has blessed, take for your heritage the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you made me welcome; naked and you clothed me, sick and you visited me, in prison and you came to see me." Then the virtuous will say to him in reply, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you; or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and make you welcome; naked and clothe you; sick or in prison and go to see you?" And the King will answer, "I tell you solemnly, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me". Next he will say to those on his left hand, "Go away from me, with your curse upon you, to the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you never gave me food; I was thirsty and you never gave me anything to drink; I was a stranger and you never made me welcome, naked and you never clothed me, sick and in prison and you never visited me." Then it will be their turn to ask, "Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty, a stranger or naked, sick or in prison, and did not come to your help?" Then he will answer, "I tell you solemnly, in so far as you neglected to do this to one of the least of these, you neglected to do it to me". And they will go away to eternal punishment, and the virtuous to eternal life.'

A life of love

In the first reading, God says, *“Be holy, for I, the Lord your God, am holy.”* To be holy means living a life full of love, honesty, justice, and respect, especially for the poor and vulnerable. Holiness is found in our everyday choices. In today's Gospel, Jesus shows that love is what matters most. Helping those in need, feeding the hungry, welcoming strangers, and caring for the sick are not optional acts of kindness but encounters with Christ Himself. What we do, or fail to do, for those who are less fortunate, we do for Him.

These readings remind us that faith is always relational. We are called to reflect God's mercy in our actions. Love of God and love of neighbour cannot be separated. Our everyday decisions are where love is revealed and where Christ is either recognised or ignored.

Reflective question:

Where is God inviting me to live holiness more concretely through acts of mercy and justice toward those around me today?

Tuesday, 24th February, 1st Week of Lent.

Isaiah 55:10-11, Matthew 6:7-15

Jesus said to his disciples: ‘In your prayers do not babble as the pagans do, for they think that by using many words they will make themselves heard. Do not be like them; your Father knows what you need before you ask him. So you should pray like this: ‘Our Father in heaven, may your name be held holy, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we have forgiven those who are in debt to us. And do not put us to the test, but save us from the evil one. Yes, if you forgive others their failings, your heavenly Father will forgive you yours; but if you do not forgive others, your Father will not forgive your failings either.’

God's word gives life

In today's first reading, God, through the prophet Isaiah, reminds us, *“the word that goes from my mouth does not return to me empty; without carrying out my will and succeeding in what it was sent to do”*. God's word is never empty, but always carries life and purpose. It may seem hidden at first, but it accomplishes what God desires in ways often beyond our seeing and understanding.

In today's Gospel, Jesus teaches us how to pray, not with many words or empty repetition, but with trust. The Lord's Prayer flows from a deep confidence that the Father already knows our needs. Prayer is not about persuading God, but about allowing God's word to shape our hearts, teaching us to seek daily bread, forgiveness, and the grace to forgive others. True prayer changes us, aligning our desires with God's will, so that His word may return fulfilled through the way we live.

Reflective question:

How am I allowing God's word to shape my daily attitudes, relationships, and choices?

Wednesday, 25th February, 1st Week of Lent.

Jonah 3:1-10, Luke 11:29-32

The crowds got even bigger and Jesus addressed them, 'This is a wicked 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 Ninevites, so will the Son of Man be to this generation. On Judgement day the Queen of the South will rise up with the men of this generation and condemn them, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and there is something greater than Solomon here. On Judgement day the men of Nineveh will stand up with this generation and condemn it, because when Jonah preached they repented; and there is something greater than Jonah here.'

The sign of Jonah

In today's Gospel, Jesus recognises that the crowds are drawn to Him not only by His teaching, but by their desire for clear and convincing signs to prove His identity as the One sent by God. Yet Jesus refuses to satisfy their demand for spectacle. Instead, He offers only one sign, the sign of Jonah, pointing beyond the present moment to the mystery of His own death and resurrection.

This sign reveals the very heart of God's powerful love. In Jesus' death and resurrection, we see that love ultimately triumphs, that truth cannot be silenced, and that life is stronger than the power of death. Though this sign may appear hidden or challenging, it calls for trust rather than proof, a trust that God's love is at work even when it is not immediately

visible. Confronted by this sign, we are invited not merely to believe, but to respond. Trusting in God's powerful love compels us to commit ourselves to this truth and to bear witness to it in our daily lives. Through our words, actions, and choices, we are called to embody the hope of the resurrection, allowing God's love to shine through us for others to see.

Reflective question:

In what ways am I called today to bear witness, through my words and actions, to the power of God's love that conquers death?

Thursday, 26th February, 1st Week of Lent.

Esther 4:17, Matthew 7:7-12

Jesus said to his disciples, 'Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you. For the one who asks always receives; the one who searches always finds; the one who knocks will always have the door opened to him. Is there a man among you who would hand his son a stone when he asked for bread? Or would hand him a snake when he asked for a fish? If you, then, who are evil, know how to give your children what is good, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him! 'So always treat others as you would like them to treat you; that is the meaning of the Law and the Prophets.'

Pray with faith

Today, Jesus invites us to pray by continually turning to God, seeking Him without ceasing, knocking with confidence, and asking sincerely for what we truly need. With trusting hearts, we believe that God, our loving Father, listens to our prayers and responds in His own time and according to His loving will. Like Esther in the first reading, we are called to approach God with deep trust and humility: *"My Lord, our King, the only one, come to my help, for I am alone and have no one but You."*

Today, Jesus calls us to engage in sincere, faith-filled prayer. Such a prayer believes that God can act, even while honestly asking for greater faith: *"Lord, I believe; help my unbelief."* Let us be confident that God, our Father, desires to give us all that is truly good. He has promised this. Our part is to trust, to persevere, and to pray with sincerity and faith from the heart.

Reflective question:

What does it mean for me to pray with persistent faith rather than with polite or routine words?

Friday, 27th February, 1st Week of Lent.

Ezekiel 18:21-28, Matthew 5:20-26

Jesus said to his disciples: 'If your virtue goes no deeper than that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never get into the kingdom of heaven. 'You have learnt how it was said to our ancestors: You must not kill; and if anyone does kill he must answer for it before the court. But I say this to you: anyone who is angry with his brother will answer for it before the court; if a man calls his brother "Fool" he will answer for it before the Sanhedrin; and if a man calls him "Renegade" he will answer for it in hell fire. So then, if you are bringing your offering to the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar, go and be reconciled with your brother first, and then come back and present your offering. Come to terms with your opponent in good time while you are still on the way to the court with him, or he may hand you over to the judge and the judge to the officer, and you will be thrown into prison. I tell you solemnly, you will not get out till you have paid the last penny.'

Transformation of the heart

As we journey deeper into Lent, let us listen to today's first reading, which calls us to take responsibility for our lives and to return to the Lord with sincerity of heart. Through the prophet Ezekiel, God reminds us that conversion is always possible and that He does not delight in punishment, but in the transformation of the heart. The good news is that repentance opens the door to life.

In the Gospel, Jesus deepens this call by moving beyond external observance to the inner attitudes that shape our actions. God wants us to live our Christian faith not merely by avoiding wrongdoing, but by addressing the anger, resentment, and broken relationships. True conversion leads us toward reconciliation, toward healing relationships. Thus, we are called to live Lent not superficially but sincerely. God offers us life again and again, but He asks for a heart willing to change, to forgive, and to seek peace. Let us start to choose life by walking the path of mercy, humility, and reconciliation.

Reflective question:

What attitudes, habits, or broken relationships is the Lord inviting me to confront and transform this Lent so that I may choose life more fully?

Saturday, 28th February, 1st Week of Lent.

Deuteronomy 26:16-19, Matthew 5:43-48

Jesus said to his disciples: 'You have learnt how it was said: You must love your neighbour and hate your enemy. But I say this to you: love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you; in this way you will be sons of your Father in heaven, for he causes his sun to rise on bad men as well as good, and his rain to fall on honest and dishonest men alike. For if you love those who love you, what right have you to claim any credit? Even the tax collectors do as much, do they not? And if you save your greetings for your brothers, are you doing anything exceptional? Even the pagans do as much, do they not? You must therefore be perfect just as your heavenly Father is perfect.'

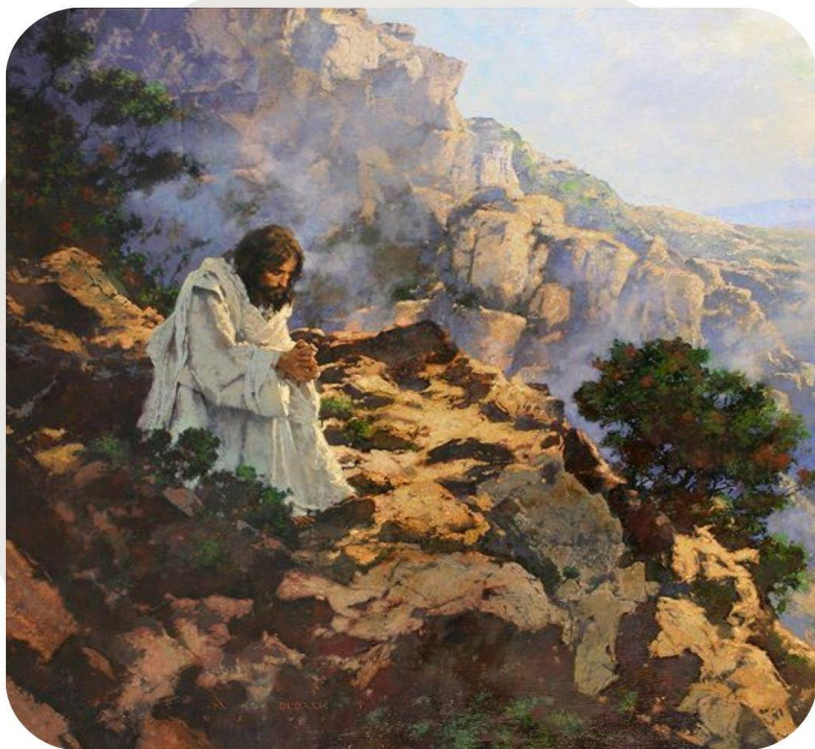
Call to love

In today's Gospel, Jesus speaks words that challenge both His disciples and us: "*Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.*" This call stretches our understanding of love and invites us to go beyond what feels safe or familiar. It asks us to step outside our comfort zones and into difficult spaces, where those we perceive as enemies may respond with resistance, hostility, or misunderstanding. Yet Jesus calls us not to reflect negativity, but to become instruments of peace, extending friendship where it seems least deserved.

With God our Father beside us, we are never asked to love on our own strength. He is the source of all love, continually offering us the grace and compassion we need to love again and to love more deeply. When peace is absent from our hearts, it may be because we have forgotten how to recognise God in one another. Today, let us ask our loving Father to purify our hearts of whatever prevents us from loving freely. With hearts renewed by prayer, we can learn to see others not as enemies, but as brothers and sisters, beloved children of the same Father.

Reflective question:

As a child of God, how am I called to love those around me, particularly those with whom I struggle to love today?



B: Michael Dudash