

PRAYER FOR LIVING

“Give me a drink.”

MARCH
YEAR A



BY SR SANDRA SEOW
VERBUM DEI MISSIONARIES

PRAYER FOR LIVING YEAR A

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Sunday, 1st March, Second Sunday of Lent.

Genesis 12:1-4, 2 Timothy 1:8-10, Matthew 17:1-9

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

Facing the unknown future with trust in God

In the first reading from the book of Genesis, God calls Abraham to leave everything familiar behind for an unknown place. "*Leave your country, your family, and your father's house, for the land I will show you...* So Abram went as the Lord commanded him." Abraham illustrates the essence of faith. It is not merely about stating it in words; it is about placing our trust in God and demonstrating that faith through our actions, even when the future seems uncertain. Sometimes, God calls us to take steps that are not easy, for example, letting go of old habits that prevent us from living a life of love or taking steps to foster peace in our families, or being more involved in a faith community. We may not always see where God is leading us, but we are called to trust in Him to take that journey alongside us.

In today's gospel, God speaks from a cloud, saying, "*This is my Son, the Beloved, he enjoys my favour. Listen to him*". As we enter into the second week of Lent, let us turn our hearts toward Jesus and place our trust in Him. Though the road ahead may be challenging, we can take comfort that He is with us. Jesus is our unwavering hope who will never let us down.

Reflective question:

Am I willing to take a step into the unknown future with God?

Monday, 2nd March, 2nd Week of Lent.**Daniel 9: 4-10, Luke 6:36-38**

Jesus said to his disciples: 'Be compassionate as your Father is compassionate. Do not judge, and you will not be judged yourselves; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned yourselves; grant pardon, and you will be pardoned. Give, and there will be gifts for you: a full measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, will be poured into your lap; because the amount you measure out is the amount you will be given back.'

Compassionate love

In our lives, we often find ourselves in the position to judge or condemn others, using harsh words or actions without fully recognising the implications. Yet, if we expect to receive forgiveness and understanding for our own shortcomings, we must first strive to embody the same compassion that our Father exemplifies. Without embracing compassion, our ability to love becomes limited, clouded by judgment and misunderstanding.

At the heart of Jesus' compassionate nature is His deep openness to receiving the Father's love. This profound connection allows Him to extend love to everyone He encounters. Today, we are invited to cultivate that same dependence on God our Father as our ultimate source of love. God is always eager to fill our hearts with the strength we need to be truly loving and compassionate. From having His love in us, we are then empowered to extend that same compassion to others. This creates a ripple effect, spreading kindness and understanding in a world that desperately needs it.

Reflective question:

How can I reflect Christ's heart to the people around me today?

Tuesday, 3rd March, 2nd Week of Lent.**Isaiah 1:10, 16-20, Matthew 23:1-12**

Addressing the people and his disciples Jesus said, 'The scribes and the Pharisees occupy the chair of Moses. You must therefore do what they

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

Humility

In today's gospel, Jesus says, "*The greatest among you must be your servant. Anyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and anyone who humbles himself will be exalted*", highlighting the virtue of humility. Embracing humility allows us to come to the truth of our identity in relation to God and to recognise who He truly is for us. The essence of our being is rooted in the fact that we are all beloved children of God, loved unconditionally by Him.

Humility allows us to be our true selves, freeing us from the pressure to wear masks of superiority or succumb to feelings of inferiority. It empowers us to view ourselves and others through the lens of love. When we lack humility, we can easily become caught up in a never-ending pursuit of being the best, accumulating the most, or striving for perfection. Success, popularity, and power can trap us in a cycle of seeking greatness and promoting ourselves. Let us carry humility in our hearts as we go about our day.

Reflective question:

How can I humble myself today to serve someone without seeking recognition?

Wednesday, 4th March, 2nd Week of Lent.

Jeremiah 18:18-20, Matthew 20:17-28

Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, and on the way he took the Twelve to one side and said to them, 'Now we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man is about to be handed over to the chief priests and scribes. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the pagans to be mocked and scourged and crucified; and on the third day he will rise again.' Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came with her sons to make a request of him, and bowed low; and he said to her, 'What is it you want?' She said to him, 'Promise that these two sons of mine may sit one at your right hand and the other at your left in your kingdom'. 'You do not know what you are asking' Jesus answered. 'Can you drink the cup that I am going to drink?' They replied, 'We can'. 'Very well,' he said 'you shall drink my cup, but as for seats at my right hand and my left, these are not mine to grant; they belong to those to whom they have been allotted by my Father.' When the other ten heard this they were indignant with the two brothers. But Jesus called them to him and said, 'You know that among the pagans the rulers lord it over them, and their great men make their authority felt. This is not to happen among you. No; anyone who wants to be great among you must be your servant, and anyone who wants to be first among you must be your slave, just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.'

Loving service

Jesus' disciples struggle to understand that their Master's path is not about seeking power or admiration, but rather about embodying humility, self-giving, and dedicated service. They overlook the profound truth that His ambition is not to attain titles or status, but to be a servant to everyone around Him.

Today, Jesus calls us to live out our faith through tangible acts of humble loving service. Each day offers us many opportunities to practice being a servant after the heart of our Master. One concrete way is being present to others. In our fast-paced lives, taking the time to be fully present with the people we care about can be one of the greatest gifts, by putting away distractions and actively listening to their thoughts and feelings. As we embark on this journey of service out of love for Jesus, let us prioritise service over self-interest, and we discover not only the

heart of Jesus but also the profound joy that comes from truly loving others.

Reflective question:

How can I humbly serve my family and friends today?

Thursday, 5th March, 2nd Week of Lent.

Jeremiah 17: 5-10, Luke 16:19-31

Jesus said to the Pharisees: 'There was a rich man who used to dress in purple and fine linen and feast magnificently every day. And at his gate there lay a poor man called Lazarus, covered with sores, who longed to fill himself with the scraps that fell from the rich man's table. Dogs even came and licked his sores. Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to the bosom of Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. 'In his torment in Hades he looked up and saw Abraham a long way off with Lazarus in his bosom. So he cried out, "Father Abraham, pity me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in agony in these flames". "My son," Abraham replied "remember that during your life good things came your way, just as bad things came the way of Lazarus. Now he is being comforted here while you are in agony. But that is not all: between us and you a great gulf has been fixed, to stop anyone, if he wanted to, crossing from our side to yours, and to stop any crossing from your side to ours. "'The rich man replied, "Father, I beg you then to send Lazarus to my father's house, since I have five brothers, to give them warning so that they do not come to this place of torment too". "They have Moses and the prophets," said Abraham "let them listen to them.". "Ah no, father Abraham," said the rich man "but if someone comes to them from the dead, they will repent." Then Abraham said to him, "If they will not listen either to Moses or to the prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone should rise from the dead".

Integrity

In the first reading from the prophet Jeremiah, God says, *"The heart is more devious than any other thing... I, the Lord, search the heart."* This reminds us that integrity begins within. We can appear generous, responsible, or even religious outwardly, yet still be driven by pride, fear, selfishness, or indifference. Only God truly sees the intentions beneath our actions. To live with integrity, therefore, is to allow God to purify our

hearts, to align our inner motives with our outward behaviour. It is to choose honesty, compassion and justice when no one is watching. Integrity is to be transparent before God.

In the Gospel, Jesus tells the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. The rich man's sin was not that he had wealth, but that he lacked love. He saw Lazarus every day, yet his heart remained closed. His failure was not ignorance, but indifference. Love demands more than avoidance of wrongdoing; it calls us to notice, to respond, and to care. Integrity before God must flow outward into love for neighbour.

Reflective Question:

If God were to search my heart today, what would He find?

Friday, 6th March, 2nd Week of Lent.

Genesis 37:3-4,12-13,17-28, Matthew 21:33-43,45-46

Jesus said to the chief priests and the elders of the people: *'Listen to another parable. There was a man, a landowner, who planted a vineyard; he fenced it round, dug a winepress in it and built a tower; then he leased it to tenants and went abroad. When vintage time drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his produce. But the tenants seized his servants, thrashed one, killed another and stoned a third. Next, he sent some more servants, this time a larger number, and they dealt with them in the same way. Finally, he sent his son to them. "They will respect my son" he said. But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, "This is the heir. Come on, let us kill him and take over his inheritance." So, they seized him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?' They answered, 'He will bring those wretches to a wretched end and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will deliver the produce to him when the season arrives'. Jesus said to them, 'Have you never read in the scriptures: It was the stone rejected by the builders that became the keystone. This was the Lord's doing and it is wonderful to see? I tell you, then, that the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit.'* When they heard his parables, the chief priests and the scribes realised he was speaking about them, but though they would have liked to arrest him they were afraid of the crowds, who looked on him as a prophet.

A transformation of heart

In today's gospel, Jesus tells the parable of the tenants who refuse to give the landowner the fruits of his vineyard. The religious leaders realise that He is speaking about them, yet instead of repenting, they harden their hearts and look for a way to arrest Him.

Lent reminds us that we are not owners but tenants of the vineyard. God gives us our lives, gifts, time, and resources. The key question is this: are we bearing the fruits of justice, mercy, and love? Or do we act like everything is ours? This Lenten season is a chance to open our hearts. When God communicates through Scripture, our conscience, or our circumstances, do we listen to Him, or do we make excuses? True change starts when we stop justifying our actions and begin to trust.

Reflective question:

What fruits is God asking of me this Lent, and am I willing to offer them?

Saturday, 7th March, 2nd Week of Lent.

Micah 7:14-15,18-20, Luke 15:1-3,11-32

The tax collectors and the sinners were all seeking the company of Jesus to hear what he had to say, and the Pharisees and the scribes complained. 'This man,' they said, 'welcomes sinners and eats with them.' So he spoke this parable to them: 'A man had two sons. The younger said to his father, "Father, let me have the share of the estate that would come to me". So the father divided the property between them. A few days later, the younger son got together everything he had and left for a distant country where he squandered his money on a life of debauchery. 'When he had spent it all, that country experienced a severe famine, and now he began to feel the pinch, so he hired himself out to one of the local inhabitants who put him on his farm to feed the pigs. And he would willingly have filled his belly with the husks the pigs were eating but no one offered him anything. Then he came to his senses and said, "How many of my father's paid servants have more food than they want, and here am I dying of hunger! I will leave this place and go to my father and say: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son; treat me as one of your paid servants." So he left the place and went back to his father. 'While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with pity. He ran to the boy, clasped him in his arms and kissed him tenderly. Then his

son said, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son." But the father said to his servants, "Quick! Bring out the best robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the calf we have been fattening, and kill it; we are going to have a feast, a celebration, because this son of mine was dead and has come back to life; he was lost and is found." And they began to celebrate. 'Now the elder son was out in the fields, and on his way back, as he drew near the house, he could hear music and dancing. Calling one of the servants he asked what it was all about. "Your brother has come" replied the servant "and your father has killed the calf we had fattened because he has got him back safe and sound." He was angry then and refused to go in, and his father came out to plead with him; but he answered his father, "Look, all these years I have slaved for you and never once disobeyed your orders, yet you never offered me so much as a kid for me to celebrate with my friends. But, for this son of yours, when he comes back after swallowing up your property - he and his women - you kill the calf we had been fattening." The father said, "My son, you are with me always and all I have is yours. But it was only right we should celebrate and rejoice, because your brother here was dead and has come to life; he was lost and is found.'"

Home where God is

In today's gospel, Jesus tells a parable of a father who shows compassion for his two sons. The younger son squanders his inheritance on reckless living but returns home after hitting rock bottom, only to be embraced by his loving father. Meanwhile, the elder son, who stays behind and works hard, becomes angry upon seeing the celebration for his brother's return. The father steps outside to invite him back, showing that both sons are valued in his eyes.

Today, let us take a moment to reflect on the nature of God's love, which mirrors that of the father in the parable. Just as the father patiently loves his two sons, God is always ready to embrace us with compassion and mercy, no matter how far we may have strayed. It is never too late to return, to seek forgiveness, and to experience His unconditional love. In times of struggle and doubt, we can find comfort in knowing that God is always there, patiently waiting for us to come back home.

Reflective question:

Do I relate more to the younger son, returning to the Father in humility, or to the older son, struggling to celebrate grace shown to those I believe do not deserve it?

Sunday, 8th March, Third Sunday of Lent.**Exodus 17:3-7, Romans 5:1-2, 5-8, John 4:5-42**

Jesus came to the Samaritan town called Sychar near the land that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there and Jesus, tired by the journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth hour. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, 'Give me something to drink.' His disciples had gone into the town to buy food. The Samaritan woman said to him, 'You are a Jew. How is it that you ask me, a Samaritan, for something to drink?' -- Jews, of course, do not associate with Samaritans. Jesus replied to her: If you only knew what God is offering and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me something to drink,' you would have been the one to ask, and he would have given you living water. 'You have no bucket, sir,' she answered, 'and the well is deep: how do you get this living water? Are you a greater man than our father Jacob, who gave us this well and drank from it himself with his sons and his cattle?' Jesus replied: Whoever drinks this water will be thirsty again; but no one who drinks the water that I shall give will ever be thirsty again: the water that I shall give will become a spring of water within, welling up for eternal life. 'Sir,' said the woman, 'give me some of that water, so that I may never be thirsty or come here again to draw water.' 'Go and call your husband,' said Jesus to her, 'and come back here.' The woman answered, 'I have no husband.' Jesus said to her, 'You are right to say, "I have no husband"; for although you have had five, the one you now have is not your husband. You spoke the truth there.' 'I see you are a prophet, sir,' said the woman. 'Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, though you say that Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.' Jesus said: Believe me, woman, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know; for salvation comes from the Jews. But the hour is coming -- indeed is already here -- when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth: that is the kind of worshipper the Father seeks. God is spirit, and those who worship must worship in spirit and truth. The woman said to him, 'I know that Messiah -- that is, Christ -- is coming; and when he

comes he will explain everything.' Jesus said, 'That is who I am, I who speak to you.' At this point his disciples returned and were surprised to find him speaking to a woman, though none of them asked, 'What do you want from her?' or, 'What are you talking to her about?' The woman put down her water jar and hurried back to the town to tell the people, 'Come and see a man who has told me everything I have done; could this be the Christ?' This brought people out of the town and they made their way towards him. Meanwhile, the disciples were urging him, 'Rabbi, do have something to eat'; but he said, 'I have food to eat that you do not know about.' So the disciples said to one another, 'Has someone brought him food?' But Jesus said: My food is to do the will of the one who sent me, and to complete his work. Do you not have a saying: Four months and then the harvest? Well, I tell you, look around you, look at the fields; already they are white, ready for harvest! Already the reaper is being paid his wages, already he is bringing in the grain for eternal life, so that sower and reaper can rejoice together. For here the proverb holds true: one sows, another reaps; I sent you to reap a harvest you have not laboured for. Others have laboured for it; and you have come into the rewards of their labour. Many Samaritans of that town believed in him on the strength of the woman's words of testimony, 'He told me everything I have done.' So, when the Samaritans came up to him, they begged him to stay with them. He stayed for two days, and many more came to believe on the strength of the words he spoke to them; and they said to the woman, 'Now we believe no longer because of what you told us; we have heard him ourselves and we know that he is indeed the Saviour of the world.'

Thirsty for God

In the first reading from Exodus, the Israelites are thirsty in the desert and begin to complain: "*Is the Lord with us, or not?*" Their physical thirst reveals a deeper spiritual thirst, a struggle to trust God in moments of hardship. Even after witnessing His mighty works, fear makes them doubt His presence.

In today's gospel, Jesus meets the Samaritan woman at the well and speaks of a different kind of thirst, a thirst of the heart. She comes for water, but she is really longing for acceptance, truth, and love. Jesus offers her "*living water,*" a relationship that satisfies the deepest desires of every human person. As we enter into this Third Sunday of Lent, let

us ask, what am I truly thirsty for? Like the Israelites, we may grumble in our deserts. Like the Samaritan woman, we may search for fulfilment in many wells. Yet Christ patiently meets us and says, “*Give me a drink,*” inviting us into honest encounter. He is not absent in our dryness because He is the Rock who gives living water and the Saviour who quenches our restless hearts.

Reflective Question:

Am I willing to let Jesus satisfy the deeper thirst within me?

Monday, 9th March, 3rd Week of Lent.

2 Kings 5:1-15, Luke 4:24-30

Jesus came to Nazara and spoke to the people in the synagogue: 'In truth I tell you, no prophet is ever accepted in his own country. 'There were many widows in Israel, I can assure you, in Elijah's day, when heaven remained shut for three years and six months and a great famine raged throughout the land, but Elijah was not sent to any one of these: he was sent to a widow at Zarephath, a town in Sidonia. And in the prophet Elisha's time there were many suffering from virulent skin-diseases in Israel, but none of these was cured -- only Naaman the Syrian.' When they heard this everyone in the synagogue was enraged. They sprang to their feet and hustled him out of the town; and they took him up to the brow of the hill their town was built on, intending to throw him off the cliff, but he passed straight through the crowd and walked away.

God's love is for all

In today's gospel, Jesus returns to His hometown of Nazareth. Initially, the people are pleased to see Him. However, when He points out that God's grace reaches outsiders like the widow of Zarephath and Naaman the Syrian, their admiration turns into anger. They become angry, drive Him out of town, and attempt to throw Him off a cliff. Their reaction comes from the belief that God's love is exclusive to them as His chosen people. Jesus, however, shows that God's mercy cannot be confined by familiarity, culture, or privilege. His love transcends all boundaries.

This passage asks us to look closely at our hearts. Sometimes, we feel comfortable with Jesus as long as He meets our expectations. But when His teachings challenge us or ask us to love more, do we push back?

Do we ignore the uncomfortable truths? Lent is a time to move from just knowing about Jesus to truly accepting Him. It is about letting Him disturb and transform us. The people of Nazareth shut their hearts because they thought they already understood Him. May we be humble and let Jesus guide us.

Reflective Question:

When Jesus challenges my comfort, pride, or assumptions, do I welcome His truth or move away from Him?

Tuesday, 10th March, 3rd Week of Lent.

Daniel 3:25,34-43, Matthew 18:21-35

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

Forgiveness

Today, the gospel passage speaks to us about forgiveness. Forgiveness is often perceived as a simple act, but for those who have faced betrayal or hurt, it can be a challenge. We need to understand that forgiveness is not about being blind to others' wrongs or downplaying the hurt they may have caused. Rather, forgiveness is an intentional choice to release the hold that these negative experiences have on our hearts and minds. When we decide to forgive, we take a step towards true peace in our lives. This journey towards forgiveness invites us to reflect on our own experiences of being forgiven by God, allowing us to extend that love to others.

In this time of Lent, we are called to consciously choose to let go of the burdens of anger and hurt, so we can move forward with a lighter heart. In moments of struggle, let us turn to Jesus, seeking His strength and guidance to help us to walk this complex path of forgiveness. May peace dwell in our hearts.

Reflective question:

How is my unwillingness to forgive preventing me from having peace in my heart and mind?

Wednesday, 11th March, 3rd Week of Lent.

Deuteronomy 4:1,5-9, Matthew 5:17-19

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. I tell you solemnly, till heaven and earth disappear, not one dot, not one little stroke, shall disappear from the Law until its purpose is achieved. Therefore, the man 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 man who keeps them and teaches them will be considered great in the kingdom of heaven.'

The Law of Love

In today's gospel, Jesus says He has not come to abolish the Law or the Prophets, but to fulfil them. He completes the Law not by adding more rules, but by revealing its heart, that is, the Law of Love. The

commandments were always meant to lead to love of God and neighbour, and Jesus shows this through His own self-giving life.

Loving with a self-giving love can be challenging because it stretches us in unexpected ways. This type of love breaks down barriers and requires humility. It calls for forgiveness, inclusion, and service, even when it feels uncomfortable. Loving like Jesus goes against our natural instincts to protect ourselves, favour those who are similar to us, or seek recognition. To say “Yes” to following Jesus means saying “Yes” to this Law of Love. It means daring to love patiently when we are irritated, forgiving when we are hurt, and giving when it costs us. We cannot do this alone. We need the grace and courage that only Christ can give.

Reflective questions:

What is stopping me from practising this Law of Love? Is it pride, fear, or resentment?

Thursday, 12th March, 3rd Week of Lent.

Jeremiah 7:23-28, Luke 11:14-23

Jesus was casting out a devil and it was dumb; but when the devil had gone out the dumb man spoke, and the people were amazed. But some of them said, ‘It is through Beelzebul, the prince of devils, that he casts out devils’. Others asked him, as a test, for a sign from heaven; but, knowing what they were thinking, he said to them, ‘Every kingdom divided against itself is heading for ruin, and a household divided against itself collapses. So too with Satan: if he is divided against himself, how can his kingdom stand? - Since you assert that it is through Beelzebul that I cast out devils. Now if it is through Beelzebul that I cast out devils, through whom do your own experts cast them out? Let them be your judges then. But if it is through the finger of God that I cast out devils, then know that the kingdom of God has overtaken you. So long as a strong man fully armed guards his own palace, his goods are undisturbed; but when someone stronger than he is attacks and defeats him, the stronger man takes away all the weapons he relied on and shares out his spoil. He who is not with me is against me; and he who does not gather with me scatters.’

To stand with Jesus

In the first reading, the prophet Jeremiah shares God's sad message to His people: *"Listen to my voice... I will be your God, and you shall be my people."* However, instead of listening, the people *"followed the dictates of their own stubborn hearts."* God wants obedience that comes from a relationship, not just empty rituals, but the people choose their own way.

In the gospel, Jesus casts out a demon. Instead of seeing God's power at work, some people accuse Him of using evil authority. Their hearts are so closed that even good actions are seen in a negative light. Jesus makes it clear: *"He who is not with me is against me."* There is no middle ground. We either let God rule our hearts, or we push Him away. A divided heart cannot find freedom. When we ignore God's voice, we become broken. However, when we choose to follow Jesus, even in small daily decisions, He brings us unity and peace. Lent is a time to move from stubbornness to trust, and from division to truly belonging to Jesus.

Reflective Question:

What concrete step can I take this Lent to stand more firmly with Jesus?

Friday, 13th March, 3rd Week of Lent.

Hosea 14:2-10, Mark 12:28-34

One of the scribes came up to Jesus and put a question to him, 'Which is the first of all the commandments?' Jesus replied, 'This is the first: Listen, Israel, the Lord our God is the one Lord, and you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: You must love your neighbour as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these.' The scribe said to him, 'Well spoken, Master; what you have said is true: that he is one and there is no other. To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and strength, and to love your neighbour as yourself, this is far more important than any holocaust or sacrifice.' Jesus, seeing how wisely he had spoken, said, 'You are not far from the kingdom of God'. And after that, no one dared to question him anymore.

Loving God and Others

As we enter this sacred season of Lent, we are encouraged to pause and reflect on the profound calling to love God and others, a principle

that lies at the heart of our faith. To love God means to seek a deeper connection with Him through prayer, to recognise His presence in our lives and to respond to Him with love. It is also important to love our neighbours. This love should go beyond mere words; it demands action. It challenges us to look beyond our immediate circles and to encompass everyone we encounter, especially those who are marginalised or in need.

To truly embrace the essence of Lent, we must find a balance between loving God and loving others. Our love for God fuels our capacity to love others, and in serving others, we express that love. Each complements the other, which enriches our lives and those around us.

Reflective questions:

How can I deepen my love for God during this Lenten season, and what steps can I take to ensure that my love for others grows alongside it?

Saturday, 14th March, 3rd Week of Lent.

Hosea 5: 15-6:6, Luke 18:9-14

Jesus spoke the following parable to some people who prided themselves on being virtuous and despised everyone else, 'Two men went up to the Temple to pray, one a Pharisee, the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood there and said this prayer to himself, "I thank you, God, that I am not grasping, unjust, adulterous like the rest of mankind, and particularly that I am not like this tax collector here. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes on all I get." The tax collector stood some distance away, not daring even to raise his eyes to heaven; but he beat his breast and said, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner". This man, I tell you, went home again at rights with God; the other did not. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the man who humbles himself will be exalted.'

The Pharisee and the tax-collector

In the gospel, Jesus tells the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector who go to the Temple to pray. The Pharisee looks good on the outside. He follows religious rules, is disciplined and morally upright. Yet his prayer is not truly directed to God; it is an act of self-praise. He compares himself to others and sees himself as better than them. The tax collector, on the other hand, stands at a distance. He does not dare to raise his

eyes. He simply prays, “*God, be merciful to me, a sinner.*” He brings nothing but his need. According to Jesus, it is the tax collector who goes home justified.

This parable reminds us that pride can even hide in religious devotion. We can fast, serve, pray and yet secretly look down on others or depend on our own goodness. Pride closes the heart because it leaves no room for God to act. Humility, however, opens the door for God’s mercy to enter. Let us ask for the grace to embrace humility, recognising our poverty before God, so that we may grow in our compassion for others.

Reflective Question:

Do I identify more with the Pharisee or the tax collector in today’s parable? Why?

Sunday, 15th March, Fourth Sunday of Lent (Laetare Sunday).

1 Samuel 16:1, 6-7, 10-13, Ephesians 5:8-14, John 9:1-41

As Jesus went along, he saw a man who had been blind from birth. Having said this, he spat on the ground, made a paste with the spittle, put this over the eyes of the blind man and said to him, ‘Go and wash in the Pool of Siloam (a name that means ‘sent’). So the blind man went off and washed himself, and came away with his sight restored. His neighbours and people who earlier had seen him begging said, ‘Isn’t this the man who used to sit and beg?’ Some said, ‘Yes, it is the same one’. Others said, ‘No, he only looks like him’. The man himself said, ‘I am the man’. They brought the man who had been blind to the Pharisees. It had been a Sabbath day when Jesus made the paste and opened the man’s eyes, so when the Pharisees asked him how he had come to see, he said, ‘He put a paste on my eyes, and I washed, and I can see’. Then some of the Pharisees said, ‘This man cannot be from God: he does not keep the Sabbath’. Others said, ‘How could a sinner produce signs like this?’ And there was disagreement among them. So they spoke to the blind man again, ‘What have you to say about him yourself, now that he has opened your eyes?’ ‘He is a prophet’ replied the man. ‘Are you trying to teach us,’ they replied ‘and you a sinner through and through, since you were born!’ And they drove him away. Jesus heard they had driven him away, and when he found him he said to him, ‘Do you believe in the Son of Man?’ ‘Sir,’ the man replied ‘tell me who he is so that I may believe

in him.’ Jesus said, ‘You are looking at him; he is speaking to you’. The man said, ‘Lord, I believe’, and worshipped him.

Joy of encountering Christ

Today, we celebrate Laetare Sunday, also known as the Sunday of rejoicing. The gospel shows us the joy that comes from encountering Christ. In the story, the blind man does not look for Jesus; Jesus is the one seeking him out. He puts mud on the blind man’s eyes and sends him to wash. When the man washes, he can see again. This restoration of physical sight leads to a deeper understanding. At first, the man calls Jesus “*the man called Jesus.*” Later, he refers to Jesus as “*a prophet.*” Finally, when Jesus reveals Himself as the Son of Man, the man responds in faith, saying, “*Lord, I believe,*” and he worships Jesus. In contrast, the Pharisees, who can see with their eyes, become spiritually blind. They hold on to their certainty, status, and control. The healed man, despite being questioned and rejected, stays open and brave. His journey goes from darkness to light, from ignorance to faith.

Lent is about moving toward light, not staying in darkness. Jesus wants to heal our blindness, prejudices, fears and self-deceptions. Sometimes, this process may lead to misunderstanding or opposition. But in the end, there is joy, that is, the joy of seeing and being seen by Christ.

Reflective Question:

Am I willing this Lent to let Jesus open my eyes, even if it challenges me?

Monday, 16th March, 4th Week of Lent.

Isaiah 65:17-21, John 4:43-54

Jesus left Samaria for Galilee. He himself had declared that there is no respect for a prophet in his own country, but on his arrival the Galileans received him well, having seen all that he had done at Jerusalem during the festival which they too had attended. He went again to Cana in Galilee, where he had changed the water into wine. Now there was a court official there whose son was ill at Capernaum and, hearing that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judaea, he went and asked him to come and cure his son as he was at the point of death. Jesus said, ‘So you will not believe unless you see signs and portents!’ ‘Sir,’ answered the official ‘come down before my child dies.’ ‘Go home,’ said Jesus ‘your son will live.’ The man believed what Jesus had said and started on his

way; and while he was still on the journey back his servants met him with the news that his boy was alive. He asked them when the boy had begun to recover. 'The fever left him yesterday' they said 'at the seventh hour.' The father realised that this was exactly the time when Jesus had said, 'Your son will live'; and he and all his household believed. This was the second sign given by Jesus, on his return from Judaea to Galilee.'

Walk home first

In the reading from Isaiah, God declares: "*I am creating new heavens and a new earth,*" reflecting His desire to renew what is broken. He wants us to experience joy instead of sorrow, security instead of fear, and hope instead of despair. Let us trust that God is still creating something new in our lives, even when we feel stuck or burdened.

In the gospel, a royal official seeks Jesus to heal his dying son, hoping for a miracle. Jesus challenges him, saying: "*So you will not believe unless you see signs and portents!*" The turning point comes when Jesus simply says, "*Go home, your son will live.*" The Gospel tells us: "*The man believed what Jesus had said, and started on his way.*" Before he sees the healing, he believes and walks back home with trust in his heart. And in that act of trust, something new is happening. Often, we want God to fix our problems immediately. Jesus sometimes invites us to walk home first, to trust first before we see. May we learn to let go with trust and let God create something new in us and around us.

Reflective question:

Where in my life is Jesus asking me to trust His word even before I see any sign that things are changing?

Tuesday, 17th March, 4th Week of Lent.

Ezekiel 47:1-9, John 5:1-16

There was a Jewish festival, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now at the Sheep Pool in Jerusalem there is a building, called Bethzatha in Hebrew, consisting of five porticos; and under these were crowds of sick people - blind, lame, paralysed. One man there had an illness which had lasted thirty-eight years, and when Jesus saw him lying there and knew he had been in this condition for a long time, he said, 'Do you want to be well again?' 'Sir,' replied the sick man 'I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is disturbed; and while I am still on the way

someone else gets there before me.’ Jesus said, ‘Get up, pick up your sleeping-mat and walk’. The man was cured at once, and he picked up his mat and walked away. Now that day happened to be the Sabbath, so the Jews said to the man who had been cured, ‘It is the Sabbath; you are not allowed to carry your sleeping-mat’. He replied, ‘But the man who cured me told me, “Pick up your mat and walk”’. They asked, ‘Who is the man who said to you, “Pick up your mat and walk”?’ *The man had no idea who it was, since Jesus had disappeared into the crowd that filled the place. After a while Jesus met him in the Temple and said, ‘Now you are well again, be sure not to sin any more, or something worse may happen to you’. The man went back and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had cured him. It was because he did things like this on the Sabbath that the Jews began to persecute Jesus.*

Jesus, the Living Water

In today’s gospel, Jesus meets a man who has been ill for thirty-eight years, lying by the pool, hoping for healing. Jesus asks, “*Do you want to be well again?*” This question probes deeper than physical healing; it addresses the man’s desire and readiness for change. Instead of saying “Yes,” the man explains why he cannot be healed: “*I have no one to put me into the pool.*” His years of disappointment have made him accustomed to his helplessness, and somehow, his identity is entangled with it.

Sometimes, feelings of brokenness, helplessness, and pain become familiar to us. Jesus asks us, “*Do you want to be well again? Are you ready to let go of your resentment, pride, and anger?*” Often, we find ourselves preferring to stay by the pool, blaming our circumstances and the people around us. We wait for perfect conditions and hope that someone else will change first. Today, Jesus, the Living Water, wants to heal us and offer us new hope and life. However, this transformation requires our cooperation. When we say “Yes”, He will give us the strength to rise and move forward again.

Reflective Questions:

What "mat" have I been lying on for a long time? Am I ready to let Jesus heal me, even if it means making uncomfortable changes?

Wednesday, 18th March, 4th Week of Lent.

Isaiah 49:8-15, John 5:17-30

Jesus said to the Jews, 'My Father goes on working, and so do I'. But that only made the Jews even more intent on killing him, because, not content with breaking the Sabbath, he spoke of God as his own Father, and so made himself God's equal. To this accusation Jesus replied: 'I tell you most solemnly, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees the Father doing: and whatever the Father does the Son does too. For the Father loves the Son and shows him everything he does himself, and he will show him even greater things than these, works that will astonish you. Thus, as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so the Son gives life to anyone he chooses; for the Father judges no one; he has entrusted all judgement to the Son, so that all may honour the Son as they honour the Father. Whoever refuses honour to the Son refuses honour to the Father who sent him. I tell you most solemnly, whoever listens to my words, and believes in the one who sent me, has eternal life; without being brought to judgement he has passed from death to life. I tell you most solemnly, the hour will come - in fact it is here already - when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and all who hear it will live. For the Father, who is the source of life, has made the Son the source of life; and, because he is the Son of Man, has appointed him supreme judge. Do not be surprised at this, for the hour is coming when the dead will leave their graves at the sound of his voice: those who did good will rise again to life; and those who did evil, to condemnation. I can do nothing by myself; I can only judge as I am told to judge, and my judging is just, because my aim is to do not my own will, but the will of him who sent me.'

Seen and loved by God

In the first reading from the prophet Isaiah, God speaks tenderly to His people. They feel forgotten and abandoned. They cry out, "*The Lord has abandoned me.*" But God responds, "*Can a mother forget her baby? Even if she could forget, I will never forget you.*" This is the heart of God, one that is faithful and compassionate. Even when we feel unseen or unheard, God holds us close. His love is not based on our success, strength, or performance. He remembers us always.

In the gospel, Jesus says, "*My Father goes on working, and so do I.*" God is always working by bringing life, healing, and hope. Jesus shows

us that God's work is to give life, not to condemn. He says that those who hear His word and believe will have life. Let us hold onto these words and find the peace to know that God has not forgotten us, He is still working and wants to give us fullness of life. His love brings new life where there seems to be none.

Reflective Question:

When I feel forgotten or discouraged, do I trust that God is still loving me and working for my good, even if I cannot see it?

Thursday, 19th March, St. Joseph.

2 Samuel 7:4-5,12-14,16, Romans 4:13,16-18,22, Matthew 1:16,18-21,24

Jacob was the father of Joseph the husband of Mary; of her was born Jesus who is called Christ. This is how Jesus Christ came to be born. His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph; but before they came to live together she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph; being a man of honour and wanting to spare her publicity, decided to divorce her informally. He had made up his mind to do this when the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because she has conceived what is in her by the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son and you must name him Jesus, because he is the one who is to save his people from their sins.' When Joseph woke up he did what the angel of the Lord had told him to do: he took his wife to his home.

A heart of trust

Today, we celebrate the feast of St. Joseph, a great and remarkable man, not because of his wealth or influence, but for his trusting heart that fully embraced God's will. When the angel appeared to him in a dream, asking him to take Mary as his wife, despite her being pregnant, Joseph replied 'Yes' and did what the angel told him. Although he could not see the path ahead, he chose to trust in God and move forward with faith.

There is much we can learn from this great saint. Often, we chase after riches, power and status, striving to be noticed and regarded as important by others. Yet, deep down, we often feel a restlessness that no number of achievements can fulfil. As we celebrate this feast, let us

strive to embody the spirit of this silent saint, who displayed his greatness through a life of trust and humility.

Reflective question:

How can I truly embody the footsteps of St. Joseph in my life?

Friday, 20th March, 4th Week of Lent.

Wisdom 2:1,12-22, John 7:1-2,10,25-30

Jesus stayed in Galilee; he could not stay in Judaea, because the Jews were out to kill him. As the Jewish feast of Tabernacles drew near. However, after his brothers had left for the festival, he went up as well, but quite privately, without drawing attention to himself. Meanwhile, some of the people of Jerusalem were saying, 'Isn't this the man they want to kill? And here he is, speaking freely, and they have nothing to say to him! Can it be true the authorities have made up their minds that he is the Christ? Yet we all know where he comes from, but when the Christ appears no one will know where he comes from. Then, as Jesus taught in the Temple, he cried out: 'Yes, you know me and you know where I came from. Yet I have not come of myself: no, there is one who sent me and I really come from him, and you do not know him, but I know him because I have come from him and it was he who sent me.' They would have arrested him then, but because his time had not yet come no one laid a hand on him.

Commitment

The Jewish leaders eagerly await an opportunity to capture Jesus. Despite the looming threat of death, the gospel reveals that Jesus consciously decides to go to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles. He has the option to remain in Galilee, where he could have easily found refuge from those who want to harm him. So, what motivates Him to step directly into danger? The answer lies in Jesus' unwavering commitment to God's will and His mission. He is not deterred by the threats posed by the religious leaders; instead, He focuses on His purpose: to embody and reveal the love and truth of God. Each step He takes towards Jerusalem is a testament to His resolution to fulfil His calling, demonstrating that no obstacle or personal danger can sway Him from living fully for God.

As Jesus' disciples today, we are called to have the same unwavering dedication to sharing the Good News with those around us. Even when we encounter ridicule or rejection from others, we must stand firm in our faith. As we approach the close of this Lenten season, let us take a moment to reflect on the life of Jesus. May we draw inspiration from Him to understand what it truly means to remain faithful to the very end, living out our faith boldly, even in the midst of conflict.

Reflective question:

What prevents me from fully living my mission of sharing the Good News of love, entrusted to me by God?

Saturday, 21st March, 4th Week of Lent.

Jeremiah 11:18-20, John 7:40-52

Several people who had been listening to Jesus said, 'Surely he must be the prophet', and some said, 'He is the Christ', but others said, 'Would the Christ be from Galilee? Does not scripture say that the Christ must be descended from David and come from the town of Bethlehem?' So the people could not agree about him. Some would have liked to arrest him, but no one actually laid hands on him. The police went back to the chief priests and Pharisees who said to them, 'Why haven't you brought him?' The police replied, 'There has never been anybody who has spoken like him'. 'So' the Pharisees answered 'you have been led astray as well? Have any of the authorities believed in him? Any of the Pharisees? This rabble knows nothing about the Law - they are damned.' One of them, Nicodemus - the same man who had come to Jesus earlier - said to them, 'But surely the Law does not allow us to pass judgement on a man without giving him a hearing and discovering what he is about?' To this they answered, 'Are you a Galilean too? Go into the matter, and see for yourself: prophets do not come out of Galilee.'

Standing on the side of Jesus

Jesus causes divisions among His listeners. While some doubt His role as a prophet, others recognise Him as the Messiah but hesitate to follow. The chief priests and Pharisees seek to condemn Him for violating the law. Nicodemus is the only one who defends Jesus, showing both respect and fear of his peers. He argues, "*But surely the Law does not permit us to pass judgment on a man without giving him a hearing.*" His fellow Pharisees respond with insults. Ultimately, Nicodemus aligns

himself with Jesus and, with Joseph of Arimathea, lays Him to rest in a tomb after the crucifixion (John 19:38-42).

A true encounter with Jesus urges us to move beyond simply forming opinions about who He is. We must consciously choose to commit ourselves to following Him, even if it means facing criticism and rejection from others. We can no longer sit on the sidelines; it is essential that we allow Jesus to shape how we live each day.

Reflective question:

How can I identify and overcome the challenges in my life that prevent me from fully committing to my faith?

Sunday, 22nd March, Fifth Sunday of Lent.

Ezekiel 37:12-14, Romans 8:8-11, John 11:1-45

The sisters sent this message to Jesus, 'Lord, the man you love is ill'. On receiving the message, Jesus said, 'This sickness will end not in death but in God's glory, and through it the Son of God will be glorified'. Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, yet when he heard that Lazarus was ill he stayed where he was for two more days before saying to the disciples, 'Let us go to Judaea'. On arriving, Jesus found that Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days already. Bethany is only about two miles from Jerusalem, and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to sympathize with them over their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus had come she went to meet him. Mary remained sitting in the house. Martha said to Jesus, 'If you had been here, my brother would not have died, but I know that, even now, whatever you ask of God, he will grant you'. 'Your brother' said Jesus to her 'will rise again.' Martha said, 'I know he will rise again at the resurrection on the last day'. Jesus said: 'I am the resurrection. If anyone believes in me, even though he dies he will live, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?' 'Yes, Lord,' she said 'I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who was to come into this world.' Jesus said in great distress, with a sigh that came straight from the heart, 'Where have you put him?' They said, 'Lord, come and see.' Jesus wept; and the Jews said, 'See how much he loved him!' But there were some who remarked, 'He opened the eyes of the blind man, could he not prevented this man's death?' Still sighing, Jesus reached the tomb: it was a cave with a stone to close the opening. Jesus said, 'Take the stone

away.' Martha said to him, 'Lord, by now he will smell; this is the fourth day.' Jesus replied, 'Have I not told you that if you believe you will see the glory of God?' So they took away the stone. Then Jesus lifted up his eyes and said: 'Father, I thank you for hearing my prayer. I knew indeed that you always hear me, but I speak for the sake of all these who stand round me, so that they may believe it was you who sent me.' When he had said this, he cried in a loud voice, 'Lazarus, here! Come out!' The dead man came out, his feet and hands bound with bands of stuff and a cloth round his face. Jesus said to them, 'Unbind him, let him go free'. Many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary and had seen what he did believed in him.

Jesus wept

In today's gospel, we see a tender side of Jesus. Lazarus, brother to Martha and Mary, is sick, and the sisters send word to Him. Jesus loves them but does not rush to their aid, and Lazarus dies. When He arrives, Martha questions Him, leading to the powerful verse: "*Jesus wept.*" Even though He knows He will raise Lazarus and that death will not have the final word, He weeps because love feels the pain of others and is not indifferent to their suffering.

Today, we allow this gospel to remind us that Jesus is not distant from our grief. When we lose someone, when we face disappointment, when prayers seem unanswered, Jesus is not cold or indifferent. He stands with us. He shares our tears. In the passage, Jesus calls Lazarus out of the tomb, and so the One who weeps is also the One who gives life. Thus, we hold onto Jesus, who walks with us in our sadness and leads us always toward hope.

Reflective Question:

Do I believe that Jesus loves me personally and that He brings me comfort in my darkest moments?

Monday, 23rd March, 5th Week of Lent.

Daniel 13:1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33-62, John 8:1-11

Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. At daybreak he appeared in the Temple again; and as all the people came to him, he sat down and began to teach them. The scribes and Pharisees brought a woman along who had been caught committing adultery; and making her stand there in the

middle they said to Jesus, 'Master, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery, and in the Law Moses has ordered us to stone women of this kind. What have you got to say?' They asked him this as a test, looking for an accusation to use against him. But Jesus bent down and started writing on the ground with his finger. As they persisted with their question, he straightened up and said, 'Let the one among you who is guiltless be the first to throw a stone at her.' Then he bent down and continued writing on the ground. When they heard this they went away one by one, beginning with the eldest, until the last one had gone and Jesus was left alone with the woman, who remained in the middle. Jesus again straightened up and said, 'Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?' 'No one, sir,' she replied. 'Neither do I condemn you,' said Jesus. 'Go away, and from this moment sin no more.'

True forgiveness

In today's gospel, the scribes and Pharisees bring a woman caught in adultery to Jesus, ready to stone her according to the law. Jesus bends down, writes on the ground, and says, *"Let the one among you who is guiltless be the first to throw a stone at her."* One by one, they leave. Alone with the woman, Jesus asks if anyone has condemned her. She replies, *"No one, sir."* He says, *"Neither do I condemn you. Go, and from this moment sin no more."*

This is true forgiveness. Jesus does not ignore her sin. He does not say it was acceptable. He also does not shame or reject her. He gives her dignity back and offers her a new beginning. This is something for us to ponder and put into practice: true forgiveness is not pretending nothing happened. It is choosing mercy over condemnation. It is giving someone and ourselves the chance to start again.

Reflective question:

Can I allow Jesus to teach me the courage of true forgiveness?

Tuesday, 24th March, 5th Week of Lent.

Numbers 21:4-9, John 8:21-30

Jesus said to the Pharisees: 'I am going away; you will look for me and you will die in your sin. Where I am going, you cannot come.' The Jews said to one another, 'Will he kill himself? Is that what he means by saying, "Where I am going, you cannot come"?' Jesus went on: 'You are from

below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. I have told you already: You will die in your sins. Yes, if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.’ So they said to him, ‘Who are you?’ Jesus answered: ‘What I have told you from the outset. About you I have much to say and much to condemn; but the one who sent me is truthful, and what I have learnt from him I declare to the world.’ They failed to understand that he was talking to them about the Father. So Jesus said: ‘When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He and that I do nothing of myself: what the Father has taught me is what I preach; he who sent me is with me, and has not left me to myself, for I always do what pleases him’. As he was saying this, many came to believe in him.

Never alone

Today, in the gospel passage, Jesus speaks about who He truly is. He tells the people, *“When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He...”* Many listening to Him are confused. They hear His words, but they do not fully trust Him. Jesus explains that He does nothing on His own but only what the Father teaches Him. He lives in constant trust and obedience to God. Because of this, He says, *“The one who sent me is with me.”*

Today, we are called not just to know Jesus with our minds, but to believe Him with our hearts. To believe in Jesus means trusting who He says He is, the One sent by the Father, the One who brings life and freedom. When we choose to trust in Jesus, we are not alone. Just as the Father was with Jesus, God is with us.

Reflective Question:

In what area of my life do I need to move from simply hearing Jesus’ words to truly trusting and living them?

Wednesday, 25th March, Annunciation of the Lord.

Isaiah 7:10-14, 8:10, Hebrews 10:4-10, Luke 1:26-38

The angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the House of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary. He went in and said to her, ‘Rejoice, so highly favoured! The Lord is with you.’ She was deeply disturbed by these words and asked herself what this greeting could mean, but the

angel said to her, 'Mary, do not be afraid; you have won God's favour. Listen! You are to conceive and bear a son, and you must name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David; he will rule over the House of Jacob forever and his reign will have no end.' Mary said to the angel, 'But how can this come about, since I am a virgin?' 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you' the angel answered 'and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow. And so the child will be holy and will be called Son of God. Know this too: your kinswoman Elizabeth has, in her old age, herself conceived a son, and she whom people called barren is now in her sixth month, for nothing is impossible to God' 'I am the handmaid of the Lord,' said Mary 'let what you have said be done to me.' And the angel left her.

Let it be done

As we celebrate the Feast of the Annunciation, we reflect on Mary's "Yes" and contemplate her unwavering faithfulness in embracing God's will. In the Gospel, Mary is called to dedicate her entire life to God by becoming the mother of His Son. Although she may not have fully grasped the significance of God's request when she says, "*I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word,*" she chooses to trust in His plan. Her trust comes from her deep love for God with all her heart, mind, and soul.

As we move into the final weeks of Lent, we are called to offer more than mere external sacrifices, such as fasting from our favourite food or screentime. Like Mary, we are invited to present our lives to God, allowing Him to use us as vessels of goodness and love in the world. Even when we struggle to understand God's ways, our commitment to trust Him remains steadfast.

Reflective question:

In my journey of following Jesus today, how can I truly say "Yes" to Him?

Thursday, 26th March, 5th Week of Lent.

Genesis 17:3-9, John 8:51-59

Jesus said to the Jews: 'I tell you most solemnly, whoever keeps my word will never see death.' The Jews said, 'Now we know for certain that you are possessed. Abraham is dead, and the prophets are dead, and

yet you say, "Whoever keeps my word will never know the taste of death". Are you greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? The prophets are dead too. Who are you claiming to be?' Jesus answered: 'If I were to seek my own glory that would be no glory at all; my glory is conferred by the Father, by the one of whom you say, "He is our God" although you do not know him. But I know him, and if I were to say: I do not know him, I should be a liar, as you are liars yourselves. But I do know him, and I faithfully keep his word. Your father Abraham rejoiced to think that he would see my Day; he saw it and was glad.' The Jews then said, 'You are not fifty yet, and you have seen Abraham!' Jesus replied: 'I tell you most solemnly, before Abraham ever was, I Am'. At this they picked up stones to throw at him; but Jesus hid himself and left the Temple.

Love, not hurt

Today's gospel passage ends with, *"At this they picked up stones to throw at him..."* The Jewish leaders reach for stones to throw at Jesus because they are driven by an intense desire to silence Him permanently. Their hardened hearts, blinded by anger and disbelief, are unable to perceive His teachings and actions. They reject Him for who He is.

Reflecting on our own relationships, we must ask ourselves whether we, too, sometimes pick up "stones" to hurl at others in moments of hurt, jealousy, or hatred. While we may not physically throw stones, we often engage in hurtful actions that mirror this violent response. An unkind word, a careless rumour, a lingering resentment, these are all ways we might inflict pain on those around us. In doing so, we repeat the very actions of the Jews who want to stone Jesus. Jesus never picks up stones to cast at anyone. Instead, He offers love, forgiveness and understanding even to those who oppose Him. Let us seek to transform our hearts, asking Jesus to help us love as He loves.

Reflective question:

What specific action is Jesus asking me to take in my relationships to embody His love and compassion?

Friday, 27th March, 5th Week of Lent.

Jeremiah 20:10-13, John 10:31-42

The Jews fetched stones to stone him, so Jesus said to them, 'I have done many good works for you to see, works from my Father; for which

of these are you stoning me?’ The Jews answered him, ‘We are not stoning you for doing a good work but for blasphemy: you are only a man and you claim to be God.’ Jesus answered: ‘Is it not written in your Law: I said, you are gods? So the Law uses the word gods of those to whom the word of God was addressed, and scripture cannot be rejected. Yet you say to someone the Father has consecrated and sent into the world, “You are blaspheming”, because he says, “I am the son of God”. If I am not doing my Father’s work, there is no need to believe me; but if I am doing it, then even if you refuse to believe in me, at least believe in the work I do; then you will know for sure that the Father is in me and I am in the Father.’ They wanted to arrest him then, but he eluded them. He went back again to the far side of the Jordan to stay in the district where John had once been baptising. Many people who came to him there said, ‘John gave no signs, but all he said about this man was true’; and many of them believed in him.

Words and actions

In today's gospel, Jesus makes a strong statement: “...*you will know for sure that the Father is in me and I am in the Father.*” This declaration shows the close unity between Jesus and God the Father, highlighting their important relationship that supports His authority and mission. The Jewish leaders see this as a claim that makes Jesus equal to God, which angers them. Even though their hearts are hard, Jesus asks them to judge Him by both His words and His actions.

As Christians, we are called to let our words and actions truly reflect the authenticity of our faith. Every deed, every gesture, and every word should clearly convey the communion of love we have with God. While the Jewish leaders choose not to believe in Jesus or His works, the simple folk across the Jordan witness His miracles, and many believe Him. Today, may we strive to have our lives express the depth of our faith.

Reflective question:

What are some ways I can put my faith into action today?

Saturday, 28th March, 5th Week of Lent.

Ezekiel 37:21-28, John 11:45-56

Many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary and had seen what Jesus did believed in him, but some of them went to tell the Pharisees what

Jesus had done. Then the chief priests and Pharisees called a meeting. 'Here is this man working all these signs' they said 'and what action are we taking? If we let him go on in this way everybody will believe in him, and the Romans will come and destroy the Holy Place and our nation.' One of them, Caiaphas, the high priest that year, said, 'You don't seem to have grasped the situation at all; you fail to see that it is better for one man to die for the people, than for the whole nation to be destroyed'. He did not speak in his own person, it was as high priest that he made this prophecy that Jesus was to die for the nation - and not for the nation only, but to gather together in unity the scattered children of God. From that day they were determined to kill him. So Jesus no longer went about openly among the Jews, but left the district for a town called Ephraim, in the country bordering on the desert, and stayed there with his disciples. The Jewish Passover drew near, and many of the country people who had gone up to Jerusalem to purify themselves looked out for Jesus, saying to one another as they stood about in the Temple, 'What do you think? Will he come to the festival or not?'

Seeing past differences

Intolerance among individuals and groups is increasingly common in our society, causing people to view one another with fear and discrimination instead of acceptance and openness. In today's gospel, some Jewish leaders, driven by their intolerance and fundamentalist views, plot to kill Jesus. His diverse beliefs and ideas set Him apart, leading to narrow-minded judgments that overlook His humanity and the respect He deserves. Caiaphas's declaration that "*it is better for one man to die for the people*" ultimately seals Jesus' fate.

As Christians, we are called to embrace the Gospel of truth, which encourages us to look past our differences and recognise each person—regardless of their skin colour, beliefs, or background—as a child of God. Let us open our hearts today and stand for life and love.

Reflective question:

Do I find it difficult to treat people, especially those who are different from me, with respect and love?

**Sunday, 29th March, Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord.
Isaiah 50:4-7, Philippians 2:6-11, Matthew 26:14-27:66**

One of the Twelve, the man called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, 'What are you prepared to give me if I hand him over to you?' They paid him thirty silver pieces, and from then onwards he began to look for an opportunity to betray him. Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus to say, 'Where do you want us to make the preparations for you to eat the Passover?' He said, 'Go to a certain man in the city and say to him, "The Master says: My time is near. It is at your house that I am keeping Passover with my disciples."' The disciples did what Jesus told them and prepared the Passover. When evening came he was at table with the Twelve. And while they were eating he said, 'In truth I tell you, one of you is about to betray me.' They were greatly distressed and started asking him in turn, 'Not me, Lord, surely?' He answered, 'Someone who has dipped his hand into the dish with me will betray me. The Son of man is going to his fate, as the scriptures say he will, but alas for that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! Better for that man if he had never been born!' Judas, who was to betray him, asked in his turn, 'Not me, Rabbi, surely?' Jesus answered, 'It is you who say it.' Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had said the blessing he broke it and gave it to the disciples. 'Take it and eat,' he said, 'this is my body.' Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he handed it to them saying, 'Drink from this, all of you, for this is my blood, the blood of the covenant, poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. From now on, I tell you, I shall never again drink wine until the day I drink the new wine with you in the kingdom of my Father.'...

Depth of love

In the gospel for today, we see betrayal, fear, denial, injustice, suffering, and finally the cross. Judas betrays. Peter denies. The disciples run away. The crowd that once shouted “*Hosanna*” now cries, “*Crucify Him!*” Yet through it all, Jesus remains steady. He does not fight back or defend Himself. He entrusts Himself to the Father. His silence is not weakness, but it is love. He carries the cross not because He must, but because He chooses to.

The Passion shows us how deeply God loves us. Jesus fully experiences human pain, betrayal by friends, false accusations, humiliation, and

suffering. He knows everything that happens in our lives. Palm Sunday reminds us that it is easy to praise Jesus when things are good. It is harder to stay with Him when the path leads to suffering. True discipleship means being with Him, not just in moments of glory, but also in times of hardship.

Reflective Question:

When following Jesus becomes difficult, do I stay with Him or do I step back like the crowd and the disciples?

Monday, 30th March, Monday of Holy Week.

Isaiah 42:1-7, John 12:1-11

Six days before the Passover, Jesus went to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom he had raised from the dead. They gave a dinner for him there; Martha waited on them and Lazarus was among those at table. Mary brought in a pound of very costly ointment, pure nard, and with it anointed the feet of Jesus, wiping them with her hair; the house was full of the scent of the ointment. Then Judas Iscariot - one of his disciples, the man who was to betray him - said, 'Why wasn't this ointment sold for three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor?' He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he was in charge of the common fund and used to help himself to the contributions. So Jesus said, 'Leave her alone; she had to keep this scent for the day of my burial. You have the poor with you always, you will not always have me.' Meanwhile a large number of Jews heard that he was there and came not only on account of Jesus but also to see Lazarus whom he had raised from the dead. Then the chief priests decided to kill Lazarus as well, since it was on his account that many of the Jews were leaving them and believing in Jesus.

True friendship

In today's gospel, we see a beautiful moment of friendship. Jesus is in Bethany with Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, friends whom He loved. They share a meal together. During the meal, Mary pours expensive perfume on Jesus' feet and wipes them with her hair. It is an act of love and gratitude. She does not calculate the cost, but gives generously because her heart is full.

Judas complains that the perfume is being wasted. However, Jesus defends Mary. True friendship with Jesus is not based on appearances or efficiency; it is founded on love. Real love involves giving, sacrificing, and respecting the other. As we reflect on this gospel passage, we are reminded that friendship with Jesus is personal. He desires not just our duty, but our love. Genuine friendship is also evident in how we treat others with generosity, presence, and honesty.

Reflective Question:

In my friendship with Jesus, do I give Him my time and love freely or only what is convenient and calculated?

Tuesday, 31st March, Tuesday of Holy Week.

Isaiah 49:1-6, John 13:21-33,36-38

While at supper with his disciples, Jesus was troubled in spirit and declared, 'I tell you most solemnly, one of you will betray me'. The disciples looked at one another, wondering which he meant. The disciple Jesus loved was reclining next to Jesus; Simon Peter signed to him and said, 'Ask who it is he means', so leaning back on Jesus' breast he said, 'Who is it, Lord?' 'It is the one' replied Jesus 'to whom I give the piece of bread that I shall dip in the dish.' He dipped the piece of bread and gave it to Judas son of Simon Iscariot. At that instant, after Judas had taken the bread, Satan entered him. Jesus then said, 'What you are going to do, do quickly'. None of the others at table understood the reason he said this. Since Judas had charge of the common fund, some of them thought Jesus was telling him, 'Buy what we need for the festival', or telling him to give something to the poor. As soon as Judas had taken the piece of bread he went out. Night had fallen. When he had gone Jesus said: 'Now has the Son of Man been glorified, and in him God has been glorified. If God has been glorified in him, God will in turn glorify him in himself, and will glorify him very soon. 'My little children, I shall not be with you much longer. You will look for me, and, as I told the Jews, where I am going, you cannot come. Simon Peter said, 'Lord, where are you going?' Jesus replied, 'Where I am going you cannot follow me now; you will follow me later'. Peter said to him, 'Why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.' 'Lay down your life for me?' answered Jesus. 'I tell you most solemnly, before the cock crows you will have disowned me three times.'

Jesus' love

Today's gospel shows the complexity of human choices and divine love. Even amid the shadows of betrayal, Jesus continues to offer His unwavering love to Judas. Judas ultimately chooses to embrace the darkness, selling his Master for thirty pieces of silver, a decision steeped in misguided ambition and greed. In contrast, we have Peter, who, despite his impulsiveness and declarations of loyalty, ultimately succumbs to moments of weakness and fear, denying Jesus three times. Throughout this ordeal, Jesus never loses hope in him.

Jesus exemplifies a type of love that offers hope to each of us, despite our imperfections and weaknesses. He addresses us with affection, calling us "friends", and eagerly awaits our response. May we open our hearts to the transformative power of love and friendship in Christ.

Reflective question:

In moments of weakness, how can I remind myself of Jesus' patient love and constant hope for me?



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