

PRAYER FOR LIVING

**“Jesus is not here,
He has risen”**

APRIL
YEAR A



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PRAYER FOR LIVING YEAR A

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Wednesday, 1st April, Wednesday of Holy Week
Isaiah 50:4-9, Matthew 26:14-25

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 that moment he looked 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?' 'Go to so-and-so in the city' he replied '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 disciples. And while they were eating he said 'I tell you solemnly, one of you is about to betray me' They were greatly distressed and started asking him in turn, 'Not I, 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 I, Rabbi, surely?' 'They are your own words' answered Jesus.

Trust and fidelity

As we journey through this Holy Week, we are called to walk closely with Jesus, who freely loves to the very end. In the first reading, the prophet Isaiah presents the suffering servant as one who listens intently. The passage states, *"Each morning he wakes me to hear, to listen like a disciple,"* emphasising that listening is the foundation of his obedience. Even when he is struck and insulted, he remains steadfast, not allowing bitterness to take hold. Instead, he places his trust in God, declaring, *"The Lord comes to my help so that I am untouched by the insults."* We are called to be like this servant, listening attentively to God and trusting in Him amid our own challenges.

In the gospel, Judas' betrayal of Jesus reminds us that we all have the capacity for betrayal. In the small ways, like Judas, we may compromise love: moments of self-interest, silence when we should stand for truth, or distancing ourselves from Christ when it is inconvenient. Even in moments of our weakness, Jesus continues to love us. Today, let us choose trust and fidelity over fear and self-preservation.

Reflective question:

Where might I be betraying Jesus through my choices, attitudes, or lack of love?

Thursday, 2nd April, Thursday of the Lord's Supper.

Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, John 13:1-15

It was before the festival of the Passover, and Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to pass from this world to the Father. He had always loved those who were his in the world, but now he showed how perfect his love was. They were at supper, and the devil had already put it into the mind of Judas Iscariot son of Simon, to betray him. Jesus knew that the Father had put everything into his hands, and that he had come from God and was returning to God, and he got up from table, removed his outer garment and, taking a towel, wrapped it round his waist; he then poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel he was wearing. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, 'Lord, are you going to wash my feet?' Jesus answered, 'At the moment you do not know what I am doing, but later you will understand'. 'Never!' said Peter 'You shall never wash my feet.' Jesus replied, 'If I do not wash you, you can have nothing in common with me'. 'Then, Lord,' said Simon Peter 'not only my feet, but my hands and my head as well!' Jesus said, 'No one who has taken a bath needs washing, he is clean all over. You too are clean, though not all of you are.' He knew who was going to betray him, that was why he said, 'though not all of you are'. When he had washed their feet and put on his clothes again he went back to the table. 'Do you understand' he said 'what I have done to you? You call me Master and Lord, and rightly; so I am. If I, then, the Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you should wash each other's feet. I have given you an example so that you may copy what I have done to you.'

A perfect love

The gospel passage states, "...now he showed how perfect his love was..." Jesus shows His unconditional love for His disciples by taking the humble step of washing their feet, a task typically reserved for servants. He washes their feet, knowing that Judas will betray Him for thirty silver coins, that Peter will deny Him, and that the rest will abandon Him. Despite this, He chooses to kneel down and wash their feet. We might be too familiar with this image to overlook its profound significance. Let

us pause to reflect on what it truly represents. It is Jesus, God in human form, who humbly bends to wash His disciples' feet, imperfect individuals with messy, complicated lives.

It highlights the essence of Christian love: "*We love because God first loved us*", as St John reminds us in 1 John 4:19. God always takes the initiative to meet us where we are. He does not demand that we be perfect or successful; instead, He loves us as we are. Having experienced His love, Jesus calls us to follow His footsteps and embody His example of perfect love by loving others, especially those whom we find difficult to love.

Reflective questions:

What barriers prevent me from following Jesus' way of loving today? Are they fear, pride, or unresolved conflicts?

Friday, 3rd April, The Passion of the Lord.

Isaiah 52:13-53:12, Hebrews 4:14-16, 5:7-9, John 18:1-19:42

... Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala. Seeing his mother and the disciple he loved standing near her, Jesus said to his mother, 'Woman, this is your son. Then to the disciple he said, 'This is your mother'. And from that moment the disciple made a place for her in his home. After this, Jesus knew that everything had now been completed, and to fulfil the scripture perfectly he said: 'I am thirsty'. A jar-full of vinegar stood there, so putting a sponge soaked in the vinegar on a hyssop stick they held it up to his mouth. After Jesus had taken the vinegar he said, 'It is accomplished'; and bowing his head he gave up his spirit.

The thirst of Jesus today

As we celebrate the Passion of our Lord, let us take a moment to reflect in quiet contemplation of Jesus on the crucifix, and listen to Him as He cries out to us today, "*I thirst.*" This profound expression of longing from Jesus reaches out to each of us. In recognising His thirst, we can ask ourselves how we can respond to this call and bring fulfilment to Jesus' longing in our own lives.

Jesus deeply thirsts for our love and desires us to express it by staying with Him in prayer and solitude. In our fast-paced lives, it is easy to be

caught up in a whirlwind of activities and projects, losing sight of the simple act of being still and recognising the presence of Jesus in our lives. Jesus never stops yearning for us to enter into a deeper relationship with Him, one that is built on trust. In this moment of prayer, Jesus calls us, *"I thirst."* Are we truly hearing Him? Jesus also longs for us to extend our love to our brothers and sisters around us. He is present in a loved one we have neglected, in a friend seeking affection, and in the voiceless and marginalised of society. As He hung on the cross at Calvary, Jesus experienced thirst, and that thirst continues to resonate in our world today. Let us listen to Jesus' call and quench His thirst with our lives.

Reflective question:

How is Jesus on the cross inviting me to quench His thirst today?

Saturday, 4th April, Easter Vigil.

Genesis 1:1-2:2 or 1:1,26-31, Genesis 22:1-18 or 22:1-2,9,10-13,15-18, Exodus 14:15-15:1, Isaiah 54:5-14, Isaiah 55:1-11, Baruch 3:9-15,32-4:4, Ezekiel 36:16-17,18-28, Romans 6:3-11, Matthew 28:1-10

After the Sabbath, and towards dawn on the first day of the week, Mary of Magdala and the other Mary went to visit the sepulchre. And suddenly there was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled away the stone and sat on it. His face was like lightning, his robe white as snow. The guards were so shaken by fear of him that they were like dead men. But the angel spoke; and he said to the women, 'There is no need for you to be afraid. I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said he would. Come and see the place where he lay, then go quickly and tell his disciples, "He has risen from the dead and now he is going ahead of you to Galilee; that is where you will see him." Look! I have told you.' Filled with awe and great joy the women came quickly away from the tomb and ran to tell his disciples. And suddenly, coming to meet them, was Jesus. 'Greetings,' he said. And the women came up to him and, clasping his feet, they did him homage. Then Jesus said to them, 'Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers that they must leave for Galilee; there they will see me.'

Jesus is risen

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary come to the tomb, with fear, uncertainty and love, expecting to encounter death. Instead, they are met with the unexpected: the stone rolled away, the empty tomb, and the message that changes everything, "*He is not here; He has been raised.*" When they encounter the risen Jesus, they take hold of His feet and worship Him. Fear is still present, but it is transformed into joy. And immediately, they are given a mission: "*Go and tell my brothers...*"

As we celebrate the Easter Vigil, we approach the Risen Jesus just as we are, with our wounds, fears, and uncertainties. He assures us, "*I am here. I am with you always. I am alive.*" This affirmation is the heart of Easter joy: the powerful truth that Jesus is not dead, but alive, transcending despair and death. With His presence with us, He gives us the peace and strength we need each day. As the Risen Jesus comes into our lives, He calls us to share His love with others. We are witnesses of His resurrection, with the mission of spreading the message of hope and renewal that comes from His victory over death.

Reflective questions:

Where in my life am I still stuck in fear, loss, or things that feel final? How is the risen Christ encouraging me to move towards trust, joy, and the courage to share His presence with others?

Sunday, 5th April, Easter Sunday.

Acts 10:34,37-43, Colossians 3:1-4 or 1 Corinthians 5:6-8, John 20:1-10

It was very early on the first day of the week and still dark, when Mary of Magdala came to the tomb. She saw that the stone had been moved away from the tomb and came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved. 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb' she said 'and we don't know where they have put him.' So Peter set out with the other disciple to go to the tomb. They ran together, but the other disciple, running faster than Peter, reached the tomb first; he bent down and saw the linen cloths lying on the ground, but did not go in. Simon Peter who was following now came up, went right into the tomb, saw the linen cloths on the ground, and also the cloth that had been over his head; this was not with the linen cloths but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in; he

saw and he believed. Till this moment they had failed to understand the teaching of scripture, that he must rise from the dead.

Easter today

The celebration of Christ's resurrection may seem unrelated to our everyday experiences. However, Easter is much more than a distant concept; it carries deep significance for us when we allow it to shape and influence our daily choices. As Christians, we are indeed called to "*look for things in heaven*" as stated in the second reading by making decisions that reflect the life of the risen Christ. This means choosing patience over anger, forgiveness over holding on to hurt, showing love even when no one is watching, and choosing time to be with God in prayer amid a tight schedule. Easter becomes real when we live each ordinary moment of the day with the spirit of Easter.

In the Gospel, Mary Magdalene discovers the empty tomb and runs to inform Simon Peter and the beloved disciple. They see the linen cloths left behind but do not fully understand their significance. Despite their confusion about the meaning of the resurrection, they choose to take the next step. Today, we are invited to recognise that we should not wait for perfect faith to live out the resurrection; instead, we should focus on making small, faithful responses. By doing so, we find that our faith in the Risen Christ grows stronger.

Reflective question:

What concrete action can I take today to show that I believe Christ is truly risen?

Monday, 6th April, Monday within Octave of Easter.

Acts 2:14,22-23, Matthew 28:8-15

Filled with awe and great joy the women came quickly away from the tomb and ran to tell the disciples. And there, coming to meet them, was Jesus. 'Greetings' he said. And the women came up to him and, falling down before him, clasped his feet. Then Jesus said to them, 'Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers that they must leave for Galilee; they will see me there'. While they were on their way, some of the guard went off into the city to tell the chief priests all that had happened. These held a meeting with the elders and, after some discussion, handed a considerable sum of money to the soldiers with these instructions, 'This

is what you must say, “His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep”. And should the governor come to hear of this, we undertake to put things right with him ourselves and to see that you do not get into trouble.’ The soldiers took the money and carried out their instructions, and to this day that is the story among the Jews.

From fear to joy

“On the day of Pentecost, Peter stood up with the Eleven and addressed the crowd in a loud voice, ‘Men of Israel, listen to what I am going to say...’” The first reading today starts with Peter’s bold proclamation about Jesus Christ, who was crucified, yet raised by God. This same Peter, who once was afraid and hid in the Upper Room, now stands before the crowd and testifies about Jesus. His faith is no longer based on what others said, but rooted in his encounter with the Risen Lord. This is what gives him boldness. Faith is not just knowing about Jesus; it is knowing Him personally. When we encounter Him, we cannot remain silent.

In the Gospel, we see the women joyfully leaving the empty tomb and running to share the news. Along the way, they encounter Jesus, and their overwhelming joy propels them into mission. In contrast, the guards and religious leaders face the same empty tomb, but choose to respond with fear and suspicion. Instead of receiving the truth, they create a false story to explain it away. Today, God continues to act in our lives, sometimes in unexpected ways. May we respond with trust, even when we do not fully understand, rather than resisting and clinging to what is safe.

Reflective question:

How can I witness to Him today, through words, actions, or presence?

Tuesday, 7th April, Tuesday within Octave of Easter.

Acts 2:36-41, John 20:11-18

Meanwhile Mary stayed outside near the tomb, weeping. Then, still weeping, she stooped to look inside, and saw two angels in white sitting where the body of Jesus had been, one at the head, the other at the feet. They said, ‘Woman, why are you weeping?’ ‘They have taken my Lord away’ she replied ‘and I don’t know where they have put him.’ As she said this she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, though she did

not recognise him. Jesus said, 'Woman, why are you weeping? Who are you looking for?' Supposing him to be the gardener, she said, 'Sir, if you have taken him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will go and remove him'. Jesus said, 'Mary!' She knew him then and said to him in Hebrew, 'Rabbuni!' - which means Master. Jesus said to her, 'Do not cling to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go and find the brothers, and tell them: I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.' So Mary of Magdala went and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord and that he had said these things to her.

Where is my Lord?

Mary of Magdala is overwhelmed with deep sorrow, weeping bitterly over the absent body of her beloved Master and Friend. Her grief consumes her so completely that she fails to recognise Jesus, who is alive and no longer dead. Often, we become preoccupied with work, finances, and fulfilling the demands of others. In all this busyness, we frequently lose sight of Jesus. We rush through life chasing dreams that ultimately leave us unfulfilled. Amidst our distractions, we often miss the call of our Risen Lord, who beckons us by name and invites us to follow Him once more.

"Where is my Lord?" This heartfelt question from Mary reflects her profound longing; all she truly desires is to be with Jesus and nothing more. Today, let us embrace that same yearning to invite Jesus into our lives and be open to His presence. Each day, He reaches out to us, eager to strengthen and renew our faith. Let us keep our focus on Him, taking His hand as we journey the ups and downs of life together.

Reflective question:

Do I recognise the presence of the Risen Lord in my life today?

Wednesday, 8th April, Wednesday within Octave of Easter.

Acts 3:1-10, Luke 24:13-35

Two of Jesus' disciples were on their way to a village called Emmaus, seven miles from Jerusalem, and they were talking together about all that had happened. Now as they talked this over, Jesus himself came up and walked by their side; but something prevented them from recognising him. He said to them, 'What matters are you discussing as you walk along?' They stopped short, their faces downcast. Then one of

them, called Cleopas, answered him, 'You must be the only person staying in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have been happening there these last few days'. 'What things?' he asked. 'All about Jesus of Nazareth' they answered 'who proved he was a great prophet by the things he said and did in the sight of God and of the whole people; and how our chief priests and our leaders handed him over to be sentenced to death, and had him crucified. Our own hope had been that he would be the one to set Israel free. And this is not all: two whole days have gone by since it all happened; and some women from our group have astounded us: they went to the tomb in the early morning, and when they did not find the body, they came back to tell us they had seen a vision of angels who declared he was alive. Some of our friends went to the tomb and found everything exactly as the women had reported, but of him they saw nothing.' Then he said to them, 'You foolish men! So slow to believe the full message of the prophets! Was it not ordained that the Christ should suffer and so enter into his glory?' Then, starting with Moses and going through all the prophets, he explained to them the passages throughout the scriptures that were about himself. When they drew near to the village to which they were going, he made as if to go on; but they pressed him to stay with them. 'It is nearly evening' they said 'and the day is almost over.' So he went in to stay with them. Now while he was with them at table, he took the bread and said the blessing; then he broke it and handed it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognised him; but he had vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other, 'Did not our hearts burn within us as he talked to us on the road and explained the scriptures to us?' They set out that instant and returned to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven assembled together with their companions, who said to them, 'Yes, it is true. The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.' Then they told their story of what had happened on the road and how they had recognised him at the breaking of bread.

From disappointment to joy

In today's Gospel passage, we see the two disciples of Jesus feel deeply disappointed and disillusioned. With heavy hearts, they turn their backs on the rest of the disciples and begin their walk away. As they converse, their doubts begin to multiply. However, Jesus, always the Good Shepherd, draws near to these lost sheep of His. He listens attentively to their concerns and uncertainties. With great patience, He opens their

minds to the meaning of the scriptures and helps them interpret the events surrounding His Resurrection. With every word He speaks, their hearts begin to glow with renewed hope and joy. It is only when Jesus breaks bread with them that their eyes are opened, and they recognise Him.

Each of us embarks on our own journey to Emmaus. Along this path, we all face moments when we feel downcast and hopeless. Even in these times, Jesus walks alongside us, often without us realising it. He speaks gently to our hearts, relighting our faith. He seizes every opportunity to help us see Him. When we finally recognise and encounter the Risen Lord, we find ourselves walking again with renewed hope and joy. Like the two disciples, we must learn to walk with Jesus by our side.

Reflective question:

When have I felt overwhelmed by sadness or disappointment, failing to recognise God's presence walking alongside me?

Thursday, 9th April, Thursday Within Octave of Easter.

Acts 3:11-26, Luke 24:35-48

The disciples told their story of what had happened on the road and how they had recognised Jesus at the breaking of bread. They were still talking about all this when he himself stood among them and said to them, 'Peace be with you!' In a state of alarm and fright, they thought they were seeing a ghost. But he said, 'Why are you so agitated, and why are these doubts rising in your hearts? Look at my hands and feet; yes, it is I indeed. Touch me and see for yourselves; a ghost has no flesh and bones as you can see I have.' And as he said this he showed them his hands and feet. Their joy was so great that they still could not believe it, and they stood there dumbfounded; so he said to them, 'Have you anything here to eat?' And they offered him a piece of grilled fish, which he took and ate before their eyes. Then he told them, 'This is what I meant when I said, while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses, in the Prophets and in the Psalms has to be fulfilled'. He then opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, 'So you see how it is written that the Christ would suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that, in his name, repentance for the forgiveness of sins would be preached to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses to this.'

Peace be with you

The disciples struggle to accept the reality of Jesus' resurrection. Even after hearing the testimonies of those who have witnessed it, they are still shaken and frightened when Jesus appears to them, proclaiming, "*Peace be with you!*" We can relate to the disciples in many ways. Often, we feel anxious about what the future holds, the events occurring around the world, health concerns, and more. Today, we are invited to embrace the truth that Jesus is alive and wants to offer us a peace that no one and nothing else can provide.

Jesus speaks to each of us, saying, "*Peace be with you. Peace in your struggles. Peace amid your anxieties about the future. Peace in your regrets of the past. Peace be with you.*" When His peace fills our hearts, we become channels of His peace to others.

Reflective question:

Am I ready to accept Jesus' peace and share it with others today?

Friday, 10th April, Friday Within Octave of Easter.

Acts 4:1-12, John 21:1-14

Jesus showed himself again to the disciples. It was by the Sea of Tiberias, and it happened like this: Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee and two more of his disciples were together. Simon Peter said, 'I'm going fishing'. They replied, 'We'll come with you'. They went out and got into the boat but caught nothing that night. It was light by now and there stood Jesus on the shore, though the disciples did not realise that it was Jesus. Jesus called out, 'Have you caught anything, friends?' And when they answered, 'No', he said, 'Throw the net out to starboard and you'll find something'. So they dropped the net, and there were so many fish that they could not haul it in. The disciple Jesus loved said to Peter, 'It is the Lord'. At these words 'It is the Lord', Simon Peter, who had practically nothing on, wrapped his cloak round him and jumped into the water. The other disciples came on in the boat, towing the net and the fish; they were only about a hundred yards from land. As soon as they came ashore they saw that there was some bread there, and a charcoal fire with fish cooking on it. Jesus said, 'Bring some of the fish you have just caught'. Simon Peter went aboard and dragged the net to the shore, full of big fish, one hundred and fifty-three of them; and in spite of there being

so many the net was not broken. Jesus said to them, 'Come and have breakfast'. None of the disciples was bold enough to ask, 'Who are you?'; they knew quite well it was the Lord. Jesus then stepped forward, took the bread and gave it to them, and the same with the fish. This was the third time that Jesus showed himself to the disciples after rising from the dead.

Light draws near

In today's Gospel reading, Simon Peter tells the rest of the disciples, "*I am going fishing,*" and they go along with him. The disciples, feeling the weight of uncertainty in the wake of Jesus' resurrection, choose to return to their former way of life. It is a return to familiar routines and the old lifestyle, as if nothing has truly changed. They climb into the boat, and soon night falls—a reflection of their inner state, devoid of faith and hope. In their troubled hearts, they catch nothing. We, too, experience moments in our faith journey when we find ourselves in the dark, lacking the light of hope and belief. It can feel as if our challenges remain unchanged with Easter: family issues persist, sadness often overpowers joy, and worries never seem to fade. We grapple with our own internal darkness.

The passage states a powerful statement: "*It was light by now and there stood Jesus on the shore...*" Jesus appears to His disciples along the shores of Lake Tiberias, and He also draws near to us in the everyday moments of our lives. With His presence, He transforms our darkness into light, despair into hope, and sadness into joy. Through His resurrection, Jesus opens our eyes, allowing us to see ourselves, others, and our circumstances with renewed faith.

Reflective questions:

In what areas of my life am I currently feeling darkness? How can I invite Jesus' presence to transform those moments into a light of hope?

Saturday, 11th April, Saturday Within Octave of Easter.

Acts 4:13-21, Mark 16:9-15

Having risen in the morning on the first day of the week, Jesus appeared first to Mary of Magdala from whom he had cast out seven devils. She then went to those who had been his companions, and who were mourning and in tears, and told them. But they did not believe her when

they heard her say that he was alive and that she had seen him. After this, he showed himself under another form to two of them as they were on their way into the country. These went back and told the others, who did not believe them either. Lastly, he showed himself to the Eleven themselves while they were at table. He reproached them for their incredulity and obstinacy, because they had refused to believe those who had seen him after he had risen. And he said to them, 'Go out to the whole world; proclaim the Good News to all creation.'

Fearless witnesses

In today's first reading, we see Peter and John standing before the Jewish authorities. They are ordinary men, simple and uneducated, unlike the Jewish religious leaders. Yet, there is courage, clarity and conviction in them, and they boldly proclaim, "*You must judge whether in God's eyes it is right to listen to you and not to God. We cannot promise to stop proclaiming what we have seen and heard.*" Even in the face of a threat, Peter and John remain bold in sharing the Good News.

In the Gospel, Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene and two others, but the disciples do not believe their testimonies. It is only when Jesus appears to them that they begin to believe. Even with their imperfect faith, He sends them, "*Go out to the whole world; proclaim the Good News to all creation.*" In the first reading, the disciples are fearless witnesses, but in the Gospel, they are doubtful and hesitant to believe. The change happens because of their experience of being met by the risen Jesus, even in their weakness. Today, Jesus comes to us as we are. Courage to be His witness comes from His presence with us. Let us stay close to Jesus, so that we can be bearers of His Good News.

Reflective question:

What step is Jesus inviting me to take today in sharing His love?

Sunday, 12th April, Divine Mercy Sunday.

Acts 2:42-47, 1 Peter 1:3-9, John 20:19-31

In the evening of that same day, the first day of the week, the doors were closed in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews. Jesus came and stood among them. He said to them, 'Peace be with you', and showed them his hands and his side. The disciples were filled with joy when they saw the Lord, and he said to them again, 'Peace be with you.'

'As the Father sent me, so am I sending you.' After saying this he breathed on them and said: *'Receive the Holy Spirit. For those whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven; for those whose sins you retain, they are retained.'* Thomas, called the Twin, who was one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. When the disciples said, *'We have seen the Lord'*, he answered, *'Unless I see the holes that the nails made in his hands and can put my finger into the holes they made, and unless I can put my hand into his side, I refuse to believe'*. Eight days later the disciples were in the house again and Thomas was with them. The doors were closed, but Jesus came in and stood among them. *'Peace be with you'* he said. Then he spoke to Thomas, *'Put your finger here; look, here are my hands. Give me your hand; put it into my side. Doubt no longer but believe.'* Thomas replied, *'My Lord and my God!'* Jesus said to him: *'You believe because you can see me. Happy are those who have not seen and yet believe.'* There were many other signs that Jesus worked and the disciples saw, but they are not recorded in this book. These are recorded so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing this you may have life through his name.

Mercy that meets us where we are

On Divine Mercy Sunday, the Gospel passage shows us the disciples gathering in fear and uncertainty after the death of Jesus. Jesus comes and stands among them, not with anger or disappointment, but with a simple and powerful gift: *"Peace be with you."* This is the heart of Divine Mercy. Jesus does not wait for us to fix ourselves before coming to us. He enters our fear, our failure, and even our doubt. He comes with wounds still visible, not to condemn, but to heal.

We also meet Thomas, also known as Doubting Thomas. Thomas is actually very honest. He struggles to believe what others say, but wants to have his own experience. Jesus meets him where he is. He invites Thomas to touch His wounds, which leads him to move from doubt to a profound confession of faith: *"My Lord and my God!"* Today, Jesus invites us to encounter Him again so that our doubts and wounds can be places of deeper faith and love.

Reflective question:

Am I, like Thomas, open to meeting Jesus personally rather than just relying on others' faith?

Monday, 13th April, St. Martin I.

Acts 4:23-31, John 3:1-8

There was one of the Pharisees called Nicodemus, a leading Jew, who came to Jesus by night and said, 'Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who comes from God; for no one could perform the signs that you do unless God were with him'. Jesus answered: 'I tell you most solemnly, unless a man is born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God'. Nicodemus said, 'How can a grown man be born? Can he go back into his mother's womb and be born again?' Jesus replied: 'I tell you most solemnly, unless a man is born through water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God: what is born of the flesh is flesh; what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be surprised when I say: You must be born from above. The wind blows wherever it pleases; you hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. That is how it is with all who are born of the Spirit.

Born from above

In the first reading, the early Christian community faces opposition and threats. Yet they do not pray for safety or comfort, but for boldness: "*Help your servants to proclaim your message with all boldness.*" This prayer expressed their deep trust in God and His faithfulness. God hears their prayer, and the place where they are gathered is shaken. They are filled with the Holy Spirit and begin to speak the Word of God with courage. This boldness is not the result of human confidence, but it is the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

In the Gospel, we meet Nicodemus, a learned and respected Pharisee. He comes to Jesus at night, perhaps unsure, perhaps searching. Jesus tells him something unexpected: "*Unless one is born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*" To be "*born from above*", i.e., to be born from the Spirit, is not an abstract idea, but it refers to a transformation that changes how we live, from fear to courage, from control to trust, from silence to witness. During this Easter season, we are invited to be born from above and to remain to change.

Reflective question:

What step can I take this week to be more attentive and responsive to the Spirit?

Tuesday, 14th April, 2nd Week of Easter.

Acts 4:32-37, John 3:7-15

Jesus said to Nicodemus: “Do not be surprised when I say: You must be born from above. The wind blows wherever it pleases; you hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. That is how it is with all who are born of the Spirit.” ‘How can that be possible?’ asked Nicodemus. ‘You, a teacher in Israel, and you do not know these things!’ replied Jesus. ‘I tell you most solemnly, we speak only about what we know and witness only to what we have seen and yet you people reject our evidence. If you do not believe me when I speak about things in this world, how are you going to believe me when I speak to you about heavenly things? No one has gone up to heaven except the one who came down from heaven, the Son of Man who is in heaven; and the Son of Man must be lifted up as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.”

The transformative power of faith

The first reading describes the early Christian community with these words: “*The whole group of believers was united, heart and soul; no one claimed for his own use anything that he had, as everything they owned was held in common.*” Their faith in the risen Christ is not just something they believe; it changes how they live. When faith takes root in the heart, it allows us to let go of our attachment to possessions, status, and self-interest. It helps us to see others not as strangers, but as brothers and sisters.

In the gospel, Nicodemus, a respected Jew, believed he had a firm grasp on God through his careful study of his faith. However, Jesus challenged him to move beyond mere intellectual knowledge and embrace a more intimate relationship with God. Like Nicodemus, Jesus invites us to grow deeper in our connection with God, one that transcends simply knowing about Him to a personal experience filled with trust and love. This deeper relationship with God compels us to live a life for the good of others.

Reflective question:

What is one thing I can share, for example, time, resources, or attention, so that someone else may experience God’s love through me today?

Wednesday, 15th April, 2nd Week of Easter.

Acts 5:17-26, John 3:16-21

Jesus said to Nicodemus: "For this is how God loved the world: he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. For God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but so that through him the world might be saved. No one who believes in him will be judged; but whoever does not believe is judged already, because that person does not believe in the Name of God's only Son. And the judgement is this: though the light has come into the world people have preferred darkness to the light because their deeds were evil. And indeed, everybody who does wrong hates the light and avoids it, to prevent his actions from being shown up; but whoever does the truth comes out into the light, so that what he is doing may plainly appear as done in God."

The ultimate gift of love

"For this is how God loved the world: he gave his only Son..." This verse reveals the depth of God's love. It is not distant or abstract, but generous and self-giving. God does not merely proclaim His love through words, but shows it through giving His most cherished gift to us, Jesus, His Son. This act of love reflects God's faithful commitment to us.

To believe in Jesus is to trust in this love by receiving it personally and to live in the hope it offers. Eternal life is not just a future promise, but it begins here and now through a relationship with a God who loves without measure. The real challenge is not whether God loves us; the truth is, He does. The question is whether we are willing to receive that love and let it change the way we live.

Reflective question

Do I truly believe that God loves me personally, and how does my faith in His love shape the way I live and love today?

Thursday, 16th April, 2nd Week of Easter.

Acts 5:27-33, John 3:31-36

John the Baptist said to his disciples: 'He who comes from above is above all others; he who is born of the earth is earthly himself and speaks in an earthly way. He who comes from heaven bears witness to the things he has seen and heard, even if his testimony is not accepted;

though all who do accept his testimony are attesting the truthfulness of God, since he whom God has sent speaks God's own words: God gives him the Spirit without reserve. The Father loves the Son and has entrusted everything to him. Anyone who believes in the Son has eternal life, but anyone who refuses to believe in the Son will never see life: the anger of God stays on him."

The call to believe

In the first reading, Peter and the apostles are brought before the Jewish authorities and questioned for preaching about Jesus. Their response is "*We must obey God rather than men,*" expressing their courage to be faithful to the truth. No threat or pressure can silence them. Their obedience flows from a relationship of deep faith in the risen Jesus, not obligation.

In the Gospel, we are reminded why faith in Jesus matters. Jesus comes "*from above,*" speaking the words of God and filled with the Spirit without measure. To believe in Him calls for our response: choosing Him again and again by aligning our lives with His teachings and example. This choice is reflected in the daily decisions we make, the love we extend to others, and the values that shape our lives. It influences our priorities, urging us to focus on what truly matters, and transforms our attitudes towards ourselves and those around us. Thus, each moment becomes an opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to Him through our actions and words. True faith in Jesus cannot remain hidden.

Reflective question:

Do I truly believe in Jesus as the One "from above," and how does that shape my daily decisions?

Friday, 17th April, 2nd Week of Easter.

Acts 5:34-42, John 6:1-15

After this, Jesus crossed the Sea of Galilee -- or of Tiberias- and a large crowd followed him, impressed by the signs he had done in curing the sick. Jesus climbed the hillside and sat down there with his disciples. The time of the Jewish Passover was near. Looking up, Jesus saw the crowds approaching and said to Philip, 'Where can we buy some bread for these people to eat?' He said this only to put Philip to the test; he himself knew exactly what he was going to do. Philip answered, 'Two

hundred denarii would not buy enough to give them a little piece each.' One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said, 'Here is a small boy with five barley loaves and two fish; but what is that among so many?' Jesus said to them, 'Make the people sit down.' There was plenty of grass there, and as many as five thousand men sat down. Then Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed them to those who were sitting there; he then did the same with the fish, distributing as much as they wanted. When they had eaten enough he said to the disciples, 'Pick up the pieces left over, so that nothing is wasted.' So they picked them up and filled twelve large baskets with scraps left over from the meal of five barley loaves. Seeing the sign that he had done, the people said, 'This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world.' Jesus, as he realised they were about to come and take him by force and make him king, fled back to the hills alone.

What matters is trust

In today's Gospel, a crowd of people who follow Jesus is hungry. Jesus, noticing their hunger, asks Philip, "*Where can we buy some bread for these people to eat?*" Philip answers Him, "*Two hundred denarii would not buy enough to give them a little piece each.*" Andrew notices a boy with five loaves and two fish, but he doubts that this would be enough for such a large crowd. Jesus takes the five loaves and two fish that are already available, gives thanks, and transforms them into more than enough.

Often, we are like the disciples, focusing on what we lack, such as time, energy, ability and resources. Because of this, we hesitate to offer ourselves, feeling that what we have seems too insignificant. However, Jesus does not want abundance; rather, He asks for our trust, willingness, generosity, and cooperation. When we put our five loaves and two fish into the hands of Jesus, what initially seems small can transform into great abundance.

Reflective question:

What is the "five loaves and two fish" in my life right now that I hesitate to offer to Jesus?

Saturday, 18th April, 2nd Week of Easter.

Acts 6:1-7, John 6:16-21

In the evening, the disciples went down to the shore of the lake and got into a boat to make for Capernaum on the other side of the lake. It was getting dark by now, and Jesus had still not rejoined them. The wind was strong, and the sea was getting rough. They had rowed three or four miles when they saw Jesus walking on the lake and coming towards the boat. This frightened them, but he said, 'It is I. Do not be afraid.' They were for taking him into the boat, but in no time, it reached the shore at the place they were making for.

Jesus in our storms

In today's gospel, the disciples face a storm with rough sea and strong winds, and Jesus is not with them. It is a scene many of us can identify with, especially at times when life feels overwhelming. In the midst of the storm, Jesus comes toward them, walking on the water. At first, they are terrified. Even though what they need is right before them, they do not recognise Him. Fear often clouds our vision in the same way, and we fail to see that God is already near.

Jesus tells His disciples, "*It is I. Do not be afraid.*" These words still comfort us when we face tough times. Jesus does not promise that life will always be calm, but He assures us that He is with us. When the disciples take Jesus into the boat, they reach the shore safely. This shows us that His presence makes a difference. He does not always take away the storm right away, but He helps us through it.

Reflective questions:

Am I ready to recognise that Jesus is with me in the storms I am facing now? Will I invite Him into my "boat" and trust that He will guide me to safety?

Sunday, 19th April, Third Sunday of Easter.

Acts 2: 14, 22-33, 1 Peter 1:17-21, Luke 24:13-35

Two of Jesus' disciples were on their way to a village called Emmaus, seven miles from Jerusalem, and they were talking together about all that had happened. Now as they talked this over, Jesus himself came up and walked by their side; but something prevented them from recognising him. He said to them, 'What matters are you discussing as

you walk along?’ They stopped short, their faces downcast. Then one of them, called Cleopas, answered him, ‘You must be the only person staying in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have been happening there these last few days’. ‘What things?’ he asked. ‘All about Jesus of Nazareth’ they answered ‘who proved he was a great prophet by the things he said and did in the sight of God and of the whole people; and how our chief priests and our leaders handed him over to be sentenced to death, and had him crucified. Our own hope had been that he would be the one to set Israel free. And this is not all: two whole days have gone by since it all happened; and some women from our group have astounded us: they went to the tomb in the early morning, and when they did not find the body, they came back to tell us they had seen a vision of angels who declared he was alive. Some of our friends went to the tomb and found everything exactly as the women had reported, but of him they saw nothing.’ Then he said to them, ‘You foolish men! So slow to believe the full message of the prophets! Was it not ordained that the Christ should suffer and so enter into his glory?’ Then, starting with Moses and going through all the prophets, he explained to them the passages throughout the scriptures that were about himself. When they drew near to the village to which they were going, he made as if to go on; but they pressed him to stay with them. ‘It is nearly evening’ they said ‘and the day is almost over.’ So he went in to stay with them. Now while he was with them at table, he took the bread and said the blessing; then he broke it and handed it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognised him; but he had vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other, ‘Did not our hearts burn within us as he talked to us on the road and explained the scriptures to us?’ They set out that instant and returned to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven assembled together with their companions, who said to them, ‘Yes, it is true. The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.’ Then they told their story of what had happened on the road and how they had recognised him at the breaking of bread.

The gifts of the Word and the Eucharist

As we celebrate the Third Sunday of Easter, let us be thankful for the two gifts that sustain our faith: Scripture and the Eucharist. The Gospel passage tells the story of the two disciples walking to Emmaus, away from Jerusalem. They are feeling discouraged and confused, and when Jesus walks alongside them, they are unable to recognise Him. It is

through the Scripture that their hearts begin to change. Later, they remark, “*Did not our hearts burn within us as he talked to us on the road and explained the scriptures to us?*” The Word of God relights their hope. It is only at the breaking of the bread that their eyes are fully opened, and they truly recognise the Risen Jesus.

Today, in Scripture, Jesus continues to walk with us, giving meaning to our lives and setting our hearts on fire with constant hope. In the Eucharist, He gives Himself to us and nourishes us with His loving presence. When we feel discouraged or uncertain, we find comfort in His Word and the Eucharist. Like the two disciples, when we recognise Him, we are called to share the Good News with others. An encounter with Jesus is never meant to be kept to ourselves.

Reflective questions:

When I feel down or distant, do I let God’s presence in the Scripture and the Eucharist comfort me and guide me? Or do I live life alone without realising that He is already by my side?

Monday, 20th April, 3rd Week of April.

Acts 6:8-15, John 6:22-29

After Jesus had fed the five thousand, his disciples saw him walking on the water. The next day, the crowd that had stayed on the other side saw that only one boat had been there, and that Jesus had not got into the boat with his disciples, but that the disciples had set off by themselves. Other boats, however, had put in from Tiberias, near the place where the bread had been eaten. When the people saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into those boats and crossed to Capernaum to look for Jesus. When they found him on the other side, they said to him, ‘Rabbi, when did you come here?’ Jesus answered: ‘I tell you most solemnly, you are not looking for me because you have seen the signs but because you had all the bread you wanted to eat. Do not work for food that cannot last, but work for food that endures to eternal life, the kind of food the Son of Man is offering you, for on him the Father, God himself, has set his seal.’ Then they said to him, ‘What must we do if we are to do the works that God wants?’ Jesus gave them this answer, ‘This is working for God: you must believe in the one he has sent’.

Seek Jesus

In today's gospel, we see a crowd seeking out Jesus, motivated by their hunger for free bread. They have tasted the miraculous bread He multiplied for them and want more. Jesus knows their true intentions: they come not for Him, but for the food He provides.

Even today, many people approach Jesus with a long list of requests, hoping to gain something from Him. Yet, how many genuinely seek Him just to be in His presence and love Him for who He truly is? Jesus does not want to be viewed as our personal vending machine; He desires a true relationship with us, one grounded in intimacy and trust. When this strong foundation is in place, everything else will naturally fall into place.

Reflective questions:

Who is Jesus to me? How can I build a closer relationship with Him?

Tuesday, 21st April, St. Anselm.

Acts 7:51-8:1, John 6:30-35

The people said to Jesus, 'What sign will you give to show us that we should believe in you? What work will you do? Our fathers had manna to eat in the desert; as scripture says: He gave them bread from heaven to eat'. Jesus answered: 'I tell you most solemnly, it was not Moses who gave you bread from heaven, it is my Father who gives you the bread from heaven, the true bread; for the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world'. 'Sir,' they said 'give us that bread always.' Jesus answered: 'I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never be hungry; he who believes in me will never thirst.'

Jesus, the bread of life

In today's Gospel, the crowd continues to seek Jesus, but their focus is still on signs and physical bread. They ask for something visible, something immediate. They recall the manna in the desert and want Jesus to give them bread like that again. However, Jesus patiently leads them deeper: to see beyond Moses, and to recognise that God is the one who gave the true bread then, and now, He is giving something far greater. Then He declares: *"I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never be hungry; he who believes in me will never thirst."*

The hunger Jesus speaks of is not just physical but a deeper hunger within every human heart: the hunger for meaning, for love and acceptance, for peace, purpose, and lasting joy. We often try to satisfy this hunger with many things—success, relationships, comfort, achievements. These may satisfy us temporarily, but they do not endure. Today, Jesus invites us to something more enduring: Himself. In Him, we receive not just "enough" but fullness.

Reflective question:

Am I bringing my hunger to Jesus, who is the Bread of Life, or am I trying to fill it with something else?

Wednesday, 22nd April, 3rd Week of Easter.

Acts 8:1-8, John 6:35-40

Jesus said to the crowd: 'I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never be hungry; he who believes in me will never thirst. But, as I have told you, you can see me and still you do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I shall not turn him away; because I have come from heaven, not to do my own will, but to do the will of the one who sent me. Now the will of him who sent me is that I should lose nothing of all that he has given to me, and that I should raise it up on the last day. Yes, it is my Father's will that whoever sees the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and that I shall raise him up on the last day.'

God is at work

In the first reading, after Stephen's death, the early Church experienced persecution, forcing believers to leave their homes. Despite this tragedy, God remained present as they spread the Gospel. Philip travelled to Samaria, sharing Christ's message and bringing great joy to the town. What began as suffering transformed into a mission, demonstrating that God can work through our circumstances. Even in difficult times, He is actively involved in our lives, bringing grace in unexpected places.

In the Gospel, Jesus says, "*I am the bread of life... whoever comes to me I shall not turn him away.*" In a world where we often feel scattered, uncertain, or lost, He promises that we are loved and not forgotten. Jesus clearly states that it is the Father's will for Him to keep all that has been given to Him. This is a promise of unconditional care. Even when

life feels overwhelming, as it did for the early Christians who were scattered, Jesus is holding us close and guiding us toward a full life and love.

Reflective question:

Today, how can I turn to Jesus, the Bread of Life, to hold and sustain me?

Thursday, 23rd April, St. George, St. Adalbert.

Acts 8:26-40, John 6:44-51

Jesus said to the crowd: 'No one can come to me unless he is drawn by the Father who sent me, and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets: They will all be taught by God, and to hear the teaching of the Father, and learn from it, is to come to me. Not that anybody has seen the Father, except the one who comes from God: he has seen the Father. I tell you most solemnly, everybody who believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the desert and they are dead; but this is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that a man may eat it and not die. I am the living bread which has come down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live for ever; and the bread that I shall give is my flesh, for the life of the world.' Then the Jews started arguing with one another: 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?' they said. Jesus replied: I tell you most solemnly, if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you will not have life in you. Anyone who does eat my flesh and drink my blood has eternal life, and I shall raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink.'

God takes the first step

In today's reading, Philip is led by the Spirit to encounter an Ethiopian official, a man seeking deeper meaning in life by reading Scripture but struggling to understand it fully. The Holy Spirit guides Philip to explain the Scripture to this official, whose heart is opened, and he recognises the truth of what he hears. The official joyfully asks, "Look, there is some water; is there anything to stop me from being baptised?" He then receives baptism and continues on his way, rejoicing. Like the Ethiopian, we may sometimes find ourselves searching for something more, unsure of the way forward; however, God is already at work. He places people in our paths to lead us closer to Him.

In the Gospel passage, Jesus reveals God as the one who always takes the initiative to draw us to Him and to take the first step in reaching out to us, inviting us into a deeper relationship with Him. The statement of Jesus, “*No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father,*” highlights the reality that our journey toward faith is not just a result of our own efforts, but it is through the grace of God. The call for us is to respond with trust and openness.

Reflective question:

How is God drawing me closer to Him right now, and am I open to responding with trust and joy?

Friday, 24th April, St. Fideli of Sigmaringen.

Acts 9:1-20, John 6:52-59

The Jews started arguing with one another: ‘How can this man give us his flesh to eat?’ they said. Jesus replied: I tell you most solemnly, if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you will not have life in you. Anyone who does eat my flesh and drink my blood has eternal life, and I shall raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I live in him. As I, who am sent by the living Father, myself draw life from the Father, so whoever eats me will draw life from me. This is the bread come down from heaven; not like the bread our ancestors ate: they are dead, but anyone who eats this bread will live forever.’ He taught this doctrine at Capernaum, in the synagogue.

Take and eat

In today’s gospel, Jesus’ words shock the Jews and divide His followers. His command to eat His flesh and drink His blood left many in disbelief; they simply cannot grasp His teaching. Even now, Jesus continues to say, “*For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink.*” In offering Himself, He becomes our nourishment, particularly in our moments of struggle and sadness. Do we sometimes take Jesus’ love, especially in the Eucharist, for granted? Are we open to allowing His sacrificial love to transform our feelings of sadness, loneliness, and frustration into a profound sense of peace and joy?

Each time we approach Jesus in the Eucharist, we need to remember that we are not merely performing an act for God; rather, God is acting

for us. He is our source of sustenance, granting us the peace, rest, courage, and strength we need to journey through life. Jesus invites us with open arms: “*Take and eat.*” He never tires of coming close to us, and He is the true food that can make us truly alive.

Reflective question:

How can I better appreciate the Eucharist as a source of strength and nourishment in my daily life, especially during struggles or sadness?

Saturday, 25th April, St. Mark the Evangelist.

1 Peter 5:5-14, Mark 16:15-20

Jesus said to the Eleven, 'Go out to the whole world; proclaim the gospel to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptised will be saved; whoever does not believe will be condemned. These are the signs that will be associated with believers: in my name they will cast out devils; they will have the gift of tongues; they will pick up snakes in their hands and be unharmed should they drink deadly poison; they will lay their hands on the sick, who will recover.' And so the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven; there at the right hand of God he took his place, while they, going out, preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word by the signs that accompanied it.

Courageous witnesses of the Good News

Today, we celebrate the Feast of Mark the Evangelist. We are invited to reflect on his journey, a life that was not perfect, yet transformed and courageously given for the sake of the Gospel. In Acts 13:13, we see that Mark faced challenges with the mission, but later he grew in maturity and became a faithful companion of Peter and the author of the Gospel.

The command of Jesus: “*Go into the whole world and proclaim the good news to all creation,*” is for each one of us. We may feel unsure of what to do and say, thinking that we need special knowledge or ability to share the Gospel. Yet Jesus calls us simply to share our personal stories of faith. These include moments when we felt God’s loving presence and support. Our faith stories are powerful because they are authentic. Let us then be like St. Mark, and have the courage to share what we have seen and experienced. We are not called to be perfect witnesses, but to continue trusting that God will use us even in our weaknesses.

Reflective question:

What is one story of God's presence in my life that I can share with someone this week?

Sunday, 26th April, Good Shepherd Sunday.**Acts 2:14, 36-41, 1 Peter 2, 20-25, John 10:1-10**

Jesus said: 'I tell you most solemnly, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold through the gate, but gets in some other way is a thief and a brigand. The one who enters through the gate is the shepherd of the flock; the gatekeeper lets him in, the sheep hear his voice, one by one he calls his own sheep and leads them out. When he has brought out his flock, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow because they know his voice. They never follow a stranger but run away from him: they do not recognise the voice of strangers.' Jesus told them this parable but they failed to understand what he meant by telling it to them. So Jesus spoke to them again: 'I tell you most solemnly, I am the gate of the sheepfold. All others who have come are thieves and brigands; but the sheep took no notice of them. I am the gate. Anyone who enters through me will be safe: he will go freely in and out and be sure of finding pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full.'

Jesus, the gate and Shepherd

Jesus is the gate of life, inviting us into a profound relationship with Him where we can experience love and grace. He stands firm as our gate and also serves as our Good Shepherd, guiding us toward abundance and fulfilment. His unwavering commitment means He is always by our side, ready to offer support and guidance in times of trouble.

As sheep of our Good Shepherd, we must listen to His voice and heed the gentle guidance that aids us on our journey. However, it is all too easy to get distracted by the clamour of conflicting messages that surround us each day, including societal expectations, worries about the future, and our own inner doubts, which can easily drown out His call. Yet Jesus never grows tired of calling us by our names. He patiently invites us to tune our hearts to His voice, encouraging us to follow Him closely and to embrace the peace that His presence can provide. It is through this closeness that we can cultivate a sense of inner joy, a joy

that surpasses all understanding and is rooted in our relationship with Him.

Reflective question:

What steps can I take to cultivate a deeper relationship with Jesus as my Good Shepherd?

Monday, 27th April, 4th Week of Easter.

Acts 11:1-18, John 10:11-18

Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep. The hired man, since he is not the shepherd and the sheep do not belong to him, abandons the sheep as soon as he sees a wolf coming, and runs away, and then the wolf attacks and scatters the sheep; he runs away because he is only a hired man and has no concern for the sheep. I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for my sheep. And there are other sheep I have that are not of this fold, and I must lead these too. They too will listen to my voice, and there will be only one flock, one shepherd. The Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me; I lay it down of my own free will, and as I have power to lay it down, so I have power to take it up again; and this is the command I have received from my Father."

Following the footsteps of love

In today's Gospel passage, Jesus presents Himself as the Good Shepherd, a powerful image that expresses His deep commitment and love for His followers. The contrast between the Good Shepherd and the hired hand shows the difference between true faithfulness and mere obligation. The hired man flees when danger approaches, revealing a lack of genuine concern for the sheep, while the Good Shepherd willingly lays down His life for them.

Today, let us contemplate the nature of our own commitments and relationships. Are we like the Good Shepherd, willing to put others' needs before our own, or do we sometimes adopt a more self-serving attitude, retreating when challenges arise? Jesus shows what self-sacrifice looks like. He teaches us that true love means caring for others, even at personal cost.

Reflective question:

Do I look out for others and prioritise their needs, like the Good Shepherd, or do I often put myself first?

Tuesday, 28th April, St. Peter Chanel, St. Louis M. Grignion de Montfort.

Acts 11:19-26, John 10:22-30

It was the time of the feast of Dedication in Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was in the Temple walking up and down in the Portico of Solomon. The Jews gathered round him and said, 'How much longer are you going to keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us openly.' Jesus replied: I have told you, but you do not believe. The works I do in my Father's name are my witness; but you do not believe, because you are no sheep of mine. The sheep that belong to me listen to my voice; I know them and they follow me. I give them eternal life; they will never be lost and no one will ever steal them from my hand. The Father, for what he has given me, is greater than anyone, and no one can steal anything from the Father's hand. The Father and I are one."

Christians: known and loved by the Shepherd

In the first reading, the Church in Antioch begins to grow, and Barnabas is sent to guide them. Recognising the need for the believers to deepen their faith further, he brings Paul to help him with this task. It is here that something significant happens: "*It was in Antioch that the disciples were first called Christians.*" This name is not just a label, but it reflects a way of life. Their actions, relationships, and witness made Christ visible. People could recognise something different in them. Let us strive to be Christians, not merely by name, but by reflecting our faith in the way we live our lives. May we be Christians, not just by title, but show it through our lives.

To live as authentic Christians, we must first be rooted in a relationship of love and trust with Jesus, our Shepherd. In the Gospel, Jesus speaks of this deep belonging: "*My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me.*" To be known and loved by Jesus is our source of confidence and peace. Today, let us listen to the voice of our Shepherd and follow Him faithfully so that others can "see" Him in us.

Reflective question:

Can others around me recognise Christ in the way I live?

Wednesday, 29th April, St Catherine of Siena.**Acts 12:24-13:5, John 12:44-50**

Jesus declared publicly: 'Whoever believes in me believes not in me but in the one who sent me, and whoever sees me, sees the one who sent me. I, the light, have come into the world, so that whoever believes in me need not stay in the dark any more. If anyone hears my words and does not keep them faithfully, it is not I who shall condemn him, since I have come not to condemn the world, but to save the world: he who rejects me and refuses my words has his judge already: the word itself that I have spoken will be his judge on the last day. For what I have spoken does not come from myself; no, what I was to say, what I had to speak, was commanded by the Father who sent me, and I know that his commands mean eternal life. And therefore what the Father has told me is what I speak.'

Jesus, the Revelation of God and Light of the world

In today's Gospel, Jesus declares, "*whoever sees me, sees the one who sent me.*" Thus, to see Jesus is to see God. This reminds us that Jesus is the full revelation of God's heart. In Him, we encounter a God who desires to be known and loved, not distant or indifferent.

Jesus also says, "*I, the light, have come into the world, so that whoever believes in me need not stay in the dark anymore.*" Light is essential for us. It guides and gives life. Yet, light can also be uncomfortable because it exposes what we might prefer to keep hidden. Coming to Jesus, the Light, is to allow Him to illuminate our lives. He comes not to condemn but to save, offering fullness of life. On our part, we need to respond to Jesus constantly by trusting in Him as God's revelation, stepping into His light and allowing His Word to shape how we live. Jesus wants to bring us out of darkness into life. The question is whether we are willing to receive that light and walk in it.

Reflective question:

At this stage of my life, what does it mean to fully step into His truth and trust His Word?

Thursday, 30th April, St. Pius V.

Acts 13:13-25, John 13:16-20

After He had washed the feet of his disciples, Jesus said to them: 'I tell you most solemnly no servant is greater than his master, no messenger is greater than the man who sent him. Now that you know this, happiness will be yours if you behave accordingly. I am not speaking about all of you: I know the ones I have chosen; but what scripture says must be fulfilled: Someone who shares my table rebels against me. I tell you this now, before it happens, so that when it does happen you may believe that I am He. I tell you most solemnly, whoever welcomes the one I send welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me.'

Called to put love into action

Today's gospel follows Jesus washing His disciples' feet. He says to them, "*I tell you most solemnly, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you understand this, you will find happiness if you apply it in your lives.*" By saying this, Jesus is encouraging His disciples to serve one another as He has done, emphasising that serving is putting love into action.

In our world, love is often seen as an intense romantic feeling, sometimes confused with dependency or possessiveness, where one expects the other to fulfil their needs. For Jesus, however, love is all about placing oneself in the service of others and wanting what is best for them. It is not about being self-centred or seeking personal gain, but it is about being focused on others. As His disciples today, we are called to joyfully fix our eyes on Him and walk the same path of love and service.

Reflective question:

How can I put love into action today?



Artist: Mike Moyers

