

PRAYER FOR LIVING

“Mother of Hope, Pray for Us”

AUGUST
YEAR A



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PRAYER FOR LIVING YEAR A

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Saturday, 1st August, St. Alphonsus Liguori.

Jeremiah 26:11–16, 24, Matthew 14:1–12

Herod the tetrarch heard about the reputation of Jesus, and said to his court, 'This is John the Baptist himself; he has risen from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him'. Now it was Herod who had arrested John, chained him up and put him in prison because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife. For John had told him, 'It is against the Law for you to have her'. He had wanted to kill him but was afraid of the people, who regarded John as a prophet. Then, during the celebrations for Herod's birthday, the daughter of Herodias danced before the company, and so delighted Herod that he promised on oath to give her anything she asked. Prompted by her mother she said, 'Give me John the Baptist's head, here, on a dish'. The king was distressed but, thinking of the oaths he had sworn and of his guests, he ordered it to be given her, and sent and had John beheaded in the prison. The head was brought in on a dish and given to the girl who took it to her mother. John's disciples came and took the body and buried it; then they went off to tell Jesus.

Walking John the Baptist's path

Today's gospel invites us to think about the important cost of truth and the dangers of a divided heart. Herod is intrigued by John the Baptist's message but is hesitant to make real changes. Unfortunately, his pride and rash promise led to John's death. John represents integrity and the courage to stand firm, while Herod shows that being merely interested, without true repentance, can lead to harmful actions.

Living out discipleship today means following the example of John the Baptist rather than Herod. We must keep Jesus at the centre of our lives, always remembering the importance of prayer and ensuring that our words match our actions. Jesus invites us to speak the truth with courage and to stand firm in our convictions, calling us to a life of repentance. A true disciple of Jesus will not seek to please people, hold onto grudges or make hasty promises. Instead, we need to allow our words and actions to direct others to Christ rather than shine the spotlight on ourselves.

Reflective question:

What truth must I speak or live so that I can be a living witness pointing others to Christ?

Sunday, 2nd August, 18th Sunday in Ordinary Time.

Isaiah 55:1–3; Romans 8:35, 37–39, Matthew 14:13–21

When Jesus received this news of John the Baptist's death, he withdrew by boat to a lonely place where they could be by themselves. But the people heard of this and, leaving the towns, went after him on foot. So, as he stepped ashore he saw a large crowd; and he took pity on them and healed their sick. When evening came, the disciples went to him and said, 'This is a lonely place, and the time has slipped by; so send the people away, and they can go to the villages to buy themselves some food'. Jesus replied, 'There is no need for them to go: give them something to eat yourselves'. But they answered, 'All we have with us is five loaves and two fish'. 'Bring them here to me' he said. He gave orders that the people were to sit down on the grass; then he took the five loaves and the two fish, raised his eyes to heaven and said the blessing. And breaking the loaves handed them to his disciples who gave them to the crowds. They all ate as much as they wanted, and they collected the scraps remaining; twelve baskets full. Those who ate numbered about five thousand men, to say nothing of women and children.

Come to God, who never disappoints

In today's first reading, the prophet Isaiah invites us, saying, "*Come to the water, all you who are thirsty; even if you have no money, come!*" This invitation is for everyone who feels empty and tired. We can approach God as we are, praying honestly and bringing our hunger to Him, rather than seeking fulfilment in what the world offers. Today, in this time of prayer, let us identify the "thirst" that we keep trying to satisfy on our own and listen to God as He invites us to come to Him and receive what we truly need.

In the gospel, Jesus takes the small offering of five loaves and two fish, looks up to heaven, blesses, breaks and gives it to the crowds, until they are all fed, with baskets of leftovers to spare. This shows us that the generous heart of God the Father is at work through the Son. When we place our "little", whether it be time, resources, love or talents, into God's hands, He multiplies it for our good and the good of others. Our trust in

Him grows as we remember His past faithfulness, and we choose to rely on His love, which will never let us down.

Reflective question:

What are my “five loaves and two fish” today that I can place in Jesus’ hands?

Monday, 3rd August, 18th Week in Ordinary Time.

Jeremiah 28:1–17, Matthew 14:22–36 (Alternate Gospel)

Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side while he would send the crowds away. After sending the crowds away he went up into the hills by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, while the boat, by now far out on the lake, was battling with a heavy sea, for there was a head-wind. In the fourth watch of the night he went towards them, walking on the lake, and when the disciples saw him walking on the lake they were terrified. ‘It is a ghost’ they said, and cried out in fear. But at once Jesus called out to them, saying, ‘Courage! It is I! Do not be afraid.’ It was Peter who answered. ‘Lord,’ he said ‘if it is you, tell me to come to you across the water.’ ‘Come’ said Jesus. Then Peter got out of the boat and started walking towards Jesus across the water, but as soon as he felt the force of the wind, he took fright and began to sink. ‘Lord! Save me!’ he cried. Jesus put out his hand at once and held him. ‘Man of little faith,’ he said ‘why did you doubt?’ And as they got into the boat the wind dropped. The men in the boat bowed down before him and said, ‘Truly, you are the Son of God’ Having made the crossing, they came to land at Gennesaret. When the local people recognised him they spread the news through the whole neighbourhood and took all that were sick to him, begging him just to let them touch the fringe of his cloak. And all those who touched it were completely cured.

Trust, do not be afraid

Jesus meets His disciples during a storm. He walks on the water and says, “Courage! It is I! Do not be afraid.” Peter trusts Jesus and steps out to walk on the water, but starts to sink when he looks at the wind. Jesus grabs him and calms the storm, and tells him, “Man of little faith, why do you doubt?” It is not to shame him, but to invite him deeper into trust by leaning on His presence, taking the next step with confidence, and believing that, with Him, every storm can be faced without fear.

Trust means meeting Jesus right in our moments of fear. He comes to us, saying, *"It is I."* We trust Him enough to move toward Him, even when circumstances seem messy and difficult. When we lose focus and start to feel overwhelmed, He hears our cries for help and lifts us up. The more we practice fixing our eyes on Him, taking small steps forward despite our fears and relying on His support when we falter, the deeper our trust in Him becomes. Jesus is faithful and will never leave us alone to face our storms.

Reflective question:

What does *"Courage! It is I! Do not be afraid"* mean for the fear I am facing?

Tuesday, 4th August, St. John Vianney.

Jeremiah 30:1–2,12–15,18–22, Matthew 15:1–2,10–14 (Alternate Gospel)

Pharisees and scribes from Jerusalem then came to Jesus and said, 'Why do your disciples break away from the tradition of the elders? They do not wash their hands when they eat food.' He called the people to him and said, 'Listen, and understand. What goes into the mouth does not make a man unclean; it is what comes out of the mouth that makes him unclean.' Then the disciples came to him and said, 'Do you know that the Pharisees were shocked when they heard what you said?' He replied, 'Any plant my heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots. Leave them alone. They are blind men leading blind men; and if one blind man leads another, both will fall into a pit.'

A cleansed heart

In today's gospel, Jesus says, *"Listen, and understand. What goes into the mouth does not make a man unclean; it is what comes out of the mouth that makes him unclean"*, inviting us to move from appearance to what lies within the heart. God looks beyond external appearances and actions, but He sees our inner thoughts and motives.

We often want to appear good and stick to familiar routines to feel secure and safe. However, when our love for image and habit replaces true love, our actions and words become mere performances rather than expressions of quiet fidelity. Today, let His Word purify our hearts so that our outward actions are motivated by love. May love shape every word

we speak and every deed we do. Let us honestly ask Jesus, "*What is in my heart that needs to be purified? Is it pride, envy, or anger?*" Let us choose to be more intentional in how we show our love throughout our day.

Reflective question:

What change do I need to let God work in me so that love will guide me today?

Wednesday, 5th July, The Dedication of the Basilica of St. Mary Major

Jeremiah 31:1–7, Matthew 15:21–28

Jesus left that place and withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. Then out came a Canaanite woman from that district and started shouting, 'Sir, Son of David, take pity on me. My daughter is tormented by a devil.' But he answered her not a word. And his disciples went and pleaded with him. 'Give her what she wants,' they said 'because she is shouting after us.' He said in reply, 'I was sent only to the lost sheep of the House of Israel'. But the woman had come up and was kneeling at his feet. 'Lord,' she said 'help me.' He replied, 'It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the house-dogs'. She retorted, 'Ah yes, sir; but even house-dogs can eat the scraps that fall from their master's table'. Then Jesus answered her, 'Woman, you have great faith. Let your wish be granted.' And from that moment her daughter was well again.

God's constant love

In the first reading, God through the prophet Jeremiah declares, "*I have loved you with an everlasting love, so I am constant in my affection for you.*" He first spoke this to the exile people of Israel who felt far from home and hopeless, and it still speaks to us today. God's love is active and can rebuild what is broken in our lives and turn our sorrow into real joy. Today, let us ground ourselves in God's constant love and trust that He is already working in our lives, even when we feel stuck or worn out.

In the gospel, Jesus shows love by reaching out to a Canaanite woman, an outsider in Jewish society. At first, it looks like He is turning her away, but her persistent faith leads Him to grant her request. This shows us that God's constant love goes beyond status, mistakes, reputations or titles. Today, let us bring our needs to Jesus, even when His answers

seem slow. Let us also open our hearts to welcome those who are often ignored and make space for them in our lives. Just as God's love is inclusive, so must ours be.

Reflective question:

Where have I recently experienced God's constant love?

Thursday, 6th August, Transfiguration of the Lord

Daniel 7:9–10, 13–14, or 2 Peter 1:16–19, 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'.

Only Jesus

Today, as we celebrate the Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord, let us take a moment to listen to the voice of God the Father, who tells us, *"This is my Son, the Beloved; he enjoys my favour. Listen to him."* In the Gospel, when the disciples hear the Father's voice, they are afraid. Jesus goes to them and touches them, saying, *"Stand up, do not be afraid."* They look up, and they see no one, but *"only Jesus"*. This is the centre of our faith: only Jesus is enough. In moments of doubt and distraction, we can find *"only Jesus"* by our side, and His presence is all that we need to steady us and give us courage to take the next step.

At the end, Jesus came down the mountain with His disciples, showing us that those mountaintop moments are gifts that remind us of God's

closeness to steady our hearts. Jesus leads us down to the valley where faith grows in the midst of everyday challenges like deadlines, pressures, heartaches, relationships, and struggles. It is there that He stands with us, giving us the courage to walk on with trust.

Reflective question:

What things do I get caught up in that keep me from seeing “*only Jesus*”?

Friday, 7th August, St. Sixtus II & Companions; St. Cajetan.

Nahum 2:1, 3, 3:1–3, 6–7, Matthew 16:24-28

Jesus said to his disciples, ‘If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me. For anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for my sake will find it. What, then, will a man gain if he wins the whole world and ruins his life? Or what has a man to offer in exchange for his life? ‘For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of his Father with his angels, and, when he does, he will reward each one according to his behaviour. I tell you solemnly, there are some of these standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming with his kingdom.’

The paradox of discipleship

We often see life through “I, me, mine,” as if everything revolves around us. In today’s Gospel, Jesus tells us to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Him. This is the challenge of being a disciple: if we want to gain, we must learn to lose, turning from self-focus to the good of others.

What holds us back from self-giving? Is it comfort, reputation, the need to control, or the need to be right? Jesus calls us to become channels of His love, inviting us to embrace a transformative journey that pushes us beyond our own personal ambitions and self-interest. Today, let us choose to love selflessly, allowing it to shape our character and define our relationships with others. We commit to walk this journey, for the sake of others and our own growth as disciples after the heart of Jesus.

Reflective questions:

Is it challenging for me to deny myself, take up my cross, and follow Jesus? If so, why?

Saturday, 8th August, St. Dominic.

Habakkuk 1:12–2:4, Matthew 17:14–20

A man came up to Jesus and went down on his knees before him. ‘Lord,’ he said ‘take pity on my son: he is a lunatic and in a wretched state; he is always falling into the fire or into the water. I took him to your disciples and they were unable to cure him.’ ‘Faithless and perverse generation!’ Jesus said in reply ‘How much longer must I be with you? How much longer must I put up with you? Bring him here to me.’ And when Jesus rebuked it the devil came out of the boy who was cured from that moment. Then the disciples came privately to Jesus. ‘Why were we unable to cast it out?’ they asked. He answered, ‘Because you have little faith. I tell you solemnly, if your faith were the size of a mustard seed you could say to this mountain, “Move from here to there”, and it would move; nothing would be impossible for you.’

Mustard seed faith

In the Gospel, a desperate father brings his sick son to be healed. The disciples try to help but could not. When the father asks Jesus for help, Jesus heals the boy and returns him to his father. When the disciples asked Jesus why they could not heal the boy, He points out their “*little faith*.” He then tells them that faith as small as a mustard seed could move mountains. The key lies not in the size of the faith, but in the attitude of trust that prays, surrenders, persists and keeps hoping.

The power of faith is about saying with trust, “*God, I can’t, but You can,*” and then taking the next small, obedient step while leaving the outcome in His hands. Today, let us ask for the grace of having this active trust, choosing to hope when nothing seems to change.

Reflective question:

How can I actively choose to trust in God when I am faced with difficulties or uncertainties?

Sunday, 9th August, 19th Sunday in Ordinary Time.

1 Kings 19:9,11–13, Romans 9:1–5, Matthew 14:22–33

Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side while he would send the crowds away. After sending the crowds away he went up into the hills by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, while the boat, by now far out on the lake, was

battling with a heavy sea, for there was a headwind. In the fourth watch of the night he went towards them, walking on the lake, and when the disciples saw him walking on the lake they were terrified. 'It is a ghost' they said and cried out in fear. But at once Jesus called out to them, saying, 'Courage! It is I! Do not be afraid.' It was Peter who answered. 'Lord,' he said, 'if it is you, tell me to come to you across the water.' 'Come' said Jesus. Then Peter got out of the boat and started walking towards Jesus across the water, but as soon as he felt the force of the wind, he took fright and began to sink. 'Lord! Save me!' he cried. Jesus put out his hand at once and held him. 'Man of little faith,' he said 'why did you doubt?' And as they got into the boat, the wind dropped. The men in the boat bowed down before him and said, 'Truly, you are the Son of God.'

Be still and know that God is here

In the first reading, we see Elijah standing at the entrance of a cave on Horeb, drained and afraid, expecting God to reveal Himself dramatically in wind, earthquake, fire, but the Lord comes in a gentle whisper. God's presence is not noise or spectacle but a quiet nearness that steadies his tired heart. In a world of constant noise, God meets us in the quiet stillness of our lives. His voice often brings peace amid pressure, guiding words from Scripture, gentle reminders of mercy, and convictions that lead to freedom. Today, let us make space for His presence, as He is near us all along.

In the Gospel, amid the strong wind and waves, Jesus comes near to His disciples. He tells them, "*Courage! It is I! Do not be afraid.*" His quiet presence is stronger than the storm. Peter walks on water but sinks when he notices the wind. Jesus immediately reaches out and holds him up, and the sea becomes still. Today, let us fix our eyes on Jesus whenever we feel afraid, take the next small step of trust and let His presence steady our hearts.

Reflective question:

How will I make time and space today to notice His quiet presence?

Monday, 10th August, St. Lawrence.

2 Corinthians 9:6–10, John 12:24–26

Jesus said to his disciples: 'I tell you, most solemnly unless a wheat grain falls on the ground and dies, it remains only a single grain; but if it dies,

it yields a rich harvest. Anyone who loves his life will lose it; anyone who hate his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If a man serves me, he must follow me, wherever I am, my servant will be there too. If anyone serves me, my Father will honour him.'

The grain of wheat

"Thin sowing means thin reaping; the more you sow, the more you reap."

In today's first reading, St. Paul tells us that when we are generous, we reveal God's heart. He generously provides us, the sowers, with seeds of resources, ideas, and opportunities. He also grants us the grace, timing, and strength to use them wisely. As we sow faithfully through kindness, generosity, and service, let us trust God to sustain and multiply our efforts.

In the Gospel, Jesus talks about a grain of wheat that brings life through self-giving. The grain must fall and die to grow; if it does not, it stays alone. The process of letting go is needed for growth and fruitfulness. To follow Jesus means letting go of self-preservation and instead focusing on loving and serving others. Today, let us follow the downward movement of the grain of wheat by giving our time to someone in need, forgiving those who have wronged us and showing care to others. Trust that God will make our small yes to love meaningful.

Reflective question:

How can I choose to love rather than focus on protecting myself?

Tuesday, 11th August, St. Clare.

Ezekiel 2:8–3:4, Matthew 18:1–5, 10, 12–14

The disciples came to Jesus and said, 'Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' So he called a little child to him and set the child in front of them. Then he said, 'I tell you solemnly, unless you change and become like little children you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. And so, the one who makes himself as little as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Anyone who welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me. See that you never despise any of these little ones, for I tell you that their angels in heaven are continually in the presence of my Father in heaven. 'Tell me. Suppose a man has a hundred sheep and one of them strays; will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hillside and go in search of the stray? I tell you solemnly, if he

finds it, it gives him more joy than do the ninety-nine that did not stray at all. Similarly, it is never the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little ones should be lost.'

True greatness

The disciples asked Jesus, *"Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"* Jesus replied, *"Unless you change and become like little children...The one who humbles himself like this child is the greatest."* In this passage, Jesus redefines greatness as childlike humility: it is not about striving for higher status but rather living a life of trust, doing small, unseen acts of love, and relying on the Father. Today, let us seek this true greatness not by trying to impress others, but by welcoming the *"little ones,"* serving quietly, protecting the vulnerable, and rejoicing when the lost are found.

Jesus then told the parable of the lost sheep, where the shepherd left the ninety-nine to look for that one sheep. This parable reflects the heart of God who is always moved toward the lost and the least. This gives us comfort because we know that God actively seeks us when we are lost in the busyness of life, consumed by work and success, paralysed by anger and unforgiveness, and stuck in hopelessness and anxiety. We can take solace in His constant love. Having found by this love, may we reach out to others and share that same love with them.

Reflective question:

Who is God asking me to reach out to with love and patience?

Wednesday, 12th August, St. Jane Frances de Chantal.

Ezekiel 9:1–7, 10:18–22, Matthew 18:15–20

Jesus said to his disciples: 'If your brother does something wrong, go and have it out with him alone, is between your two selves. If he listens to you, you have won back your brother. If he does not listen, take one or two others along with you: the evidence of two or three witnesses is required to sustain any charge. But if he refuses to listen to these, report it to the community; and if he refuses to listen to the community, treat him like a pagan or a tax collector. I tell you solemnly, whatever you bind on earth shall be considered bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth shall be considered loosed in heaven. I tell you solemnly once again, if two of you on earth agree to ask anything at all, it will be granted

to you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three meet in my name, I shall be there with them.'

Reconciliation

Conflict in our families and faith communities is normal because each member has different personalities and goals. In today's Gospel, Jesus shows us that conflict is okay because it can become a sacred space where love, truth, and healing can meet. It is important to remember that every person, including those who may have offended us, is a child of God and our brother and sister. The goal is always to seek reconciliation. However, if the other party refuses to engage in this process, we need to set boundaries. This is done not with anger or a desire for revenge, but instead with a heart that continues to hope for them to return.

Jesus also points out that the work of reconciliation should always be grounded in prayer and connected to His presence. He tells us, *"For where two or three meet in my name, I shall be there with them."* In challenging and honest conversations and decisions, Jesus is always with us, acting and guiding in our midst. Today, let us remain close to Jesus and seek His guidance.

Reflective question:

When I have a conflict, do I seek reconciliation or do I want to be right?

Thursday, 13th August, SS. Pontian & Hippolytus.

Ezekiel 12:1–12, Matthew 18:21–19:1

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.’ Jesus had now finished what he wanted to say, and he left Galilee and came into the part of Judaea which is on the far side of the Jordan.

True forgiveness

In today’s Gospel, Jesus calls us to forgive from the heart. The parable of the unforgiving servant reveals the difference between God’s unconditional mercy toward us and our often small mercy toward others. God never stops loving and forgiving us. When we refuse to forgive, we live as if we have not received God’s mercy. Forgiving from the heart does not mean forgetting, excusing harm, or setting justice aside, but it does mean letting go of bitterness and the desire for revenge. Forgiveness is a slow, sometimes painful journey where we bring our hurt into the light of God’s love and allow Him to soften what has grown hard.

Today, let us be determined to participate in God’s mercy by being vessels of that mercy in our daily lives. Each act of loving mercy we share serves as a reminder of the love that connects us all.

Reflective question:

What small step can I take, like praying for the other person or letting go of a harsh story I often tell, that would bring me closer to true forgiveness?

Friday, 14th August, St. Maximilian Kolbe.

Ezekiel 16:1–15, 60, 63 or Ezekiel 16:59–63, Matthew 19:3–12

Some Pharisees approached Jesus, and to test him they said, ‘Is it against the Law for a man to divorce his wife on any pretext whatever?’ He answered, ‘Have you not read that the creator from the beginning

made them male and female and that he said: This is why a man must leave father and mother, and cling to his wife, and the two become one body? They are no longer two, therefore, but one body. So then, what God has united, man must not divide'. They said to him, 'Then why did Moses command that a writ of dismissal should be given in cases of divorce?' 'It was because you were so unteachable' he said 'that Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but it was not like this from the beginning. Now I say this to you: the man who divorces his wife -I am not speaking of fornication - and marries another, is guilty of adultery.' The disciples said to him, 'If that is how things are between husband and wife, it is not advisable to marry'. But he replied, 'It is not everyone who can accept what I have said, but only those to whom it is granted. There are eunuchs born that way from their mother's womb, there are eunuchs made so by men and there are eunuchs who have made themselves that way for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let anyone accept this who can.'

Call to communion

In the Gospel, the Pharisees ask Jesus a question on divorce. Instead of looking at the matter through the legalistic lens, Jesus goes back to God's original design for humanity by recalling creation: "*Have you not read that the creator from the beginning made male and female...They are no longer two therefore, but one body.*" Marriage is about communion of love between a man and a woman, a mutual self-gift in which each belongs to the other and both grow together toward God.

Yet this call to communion is not limited to marriage. Friendship also shows the innate need in every human person to be in relationship with others. In true friendship, we are accepted as who we are and encouraged to grow even more. We share joys, struggles, hopes and fears. Whether in marriage, family, or friendship, our relationships reveal that we are not meant to be alone or self-sufficient. Instead, we flourish in a network of loving connections where we can both give and receive from others. This reflects the heart of God, who exists in eternal Trinitarian community.

Reflective question:

How might God be inviting me today to take one step toward communion, for example, an honest conversation, an apology?

Saturday, 15th August, 19th Week in Ordinary Time.

Ezekiel 18:1–10, 13b, 30–32, Psalm 51, and Matthew 19:13–15

People brought little children to him so he could lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples scolded them, but Jesus said, 'Let the little children alone, and do not stop them from coming to me; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of Heaven belongs.' Then he laid his hands on them and went on his way.

Let the children come to me

Today's Gospel shows Jesus welcoming children. This makes us think about how we often judge people based on their status, productivity, and usefulness. Jesus tells us that the kingdom belongs to those who are small, dependent, and often overlooked. By blessing the children, He not only makes space for them but also places them at the centre as teachers to teach us what it means to receive God, i.e. with open trust and dependence on Him.

This Gospel passage also challenges us to reflect on our own attitudes. The disciples wanted to help, but their “not now” response kept people from receiving grace. Jesus corrects them and encourages us to remove hidden barriers like being too busy, feeling proud, or wanting to perform. Instead, we should be sources of blessings, not obstacles. Let us approach others with the openness of a child and invite them to experience God's loving presence.

Reflective question:

What habits help me practice childlike trust in God?

Sunday, 16th August, The Assumption of Mary.

Apocalypse 11:19, 12:1–6, 10, 1 Corinthians 15:20–27, Luke 1:39–56

Mary set out at that time and went as quickly as she could to a town in the hill country of Judah. She went into Zechariah's house and greeted Elizabeth. Now as soon as Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leapt in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. She gave a loud cry and said, 'Of all women you are the most blessed, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. Why should I be honoured with a visit from the mother of my Lord? For the moment your greeting reached my ears, the child in my womb leapt for joy. Yes, blessed is she who believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled.' And Mary said: 'My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord and my spirit exults in God my saviour; because he has looked upon his lowly handmaid. Yes, from this day forward all generations will call me blessed, for the Almighty has done great things for me. Holy is his name, and his mercy reaches from age to age for those who fear him. He has shown the power of his arm, he has routed the proud of heart. He has pulled down princes from their thrones and exalted the lowly. The hungry he has filled with good things, the rich sent empty away. He has come to the help of Israel his servant, mindful of his mercy - according to the promise he made to our ancestors - of his mercy to Abraham and to his descendants forever.' Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months and then went back home.

To be a blessing for others

In today's Gospel for the Feast of the Assumption, we see Mary fully giving herself to God. Her "yes" at the Annunciation immediately becomes a "yes" in action: she quickly goes to help her cousin, Elizabeth. She does not focus on herself, but on what God wants and how she can help. Out of love, she offers her whole life - her body, time, plans and feelings - to God. She trusts God and lets His word shape her future, her relationships and her understanding of who she is for Him. As she says, "*He has looked upon his lowly handmaid. ...*" Mary does not hold anything back; she belongs to God, and because of this, she brings blessings to others.

As Mary sings the Magnificat, she does not boast of what she has done; instead, she magnifies what God has done in her. This is the source of her joy. Because she has given herself completely to God, her heart

expands, allowing her to see the needs of others, especially the poor and lowly. Today, let us follow Mary's example by giving our lives to God. When we do this, our joy grows, our hearts widen, and our lives become a quiet blessing for others.

Reflective question:

What is one concrete way I can be a blessing to those around me, as Mary was?

Monday, 17th August, 20th Week in Ordinary Time.

Ezekiel 24:15–23, Matthew 19:16–22

There was a man who came to Jesus and asked, 'Master, what good deed must I do to possess eternal life?' Jesus said to him, 'Why do you ask me about what is good? There is one alone who is good. But if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.' He said, 'Which?' 'These:' Jesus replied 'You must not kill. You must not commit adultery. You must not bring false witness. Honour your father and mother, and: you must love your neighbour as yourself.' The young man said to him, 'I have kept all these. What more do I need to do?' Jesus said, 'If you wish to be perfect, go and sell what you own and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me'. But when the young man heard these words, he went away sad, for he was a man of great wealth.

Letting go to hold on to Jesus

A rich young man comes to Jesus with a sincere question: "*What good deed must I do to have eternal life?*" He is a good person who has followed the commandments and lived a decent life, but he feels that something is missing. Jesus points out what is holding him back: "*Go and sell what you own ... then come, follow me.*" To have a deeper and meaningful faith, he must let go of his attachment to his riches. This will allow him to fully follow Christ. Sadly, he leaves feeling sad because he chooses to cling to his wealth instead of Jesus.

As we reflect on this passage, let us think about what holds us back from fully trusting Jesus. What is the thing that takes our attention away from Him? Is it our possessions, comfort, control, a relationship, or even our ministry? Jesus asks us to let go of certain things so that we can connect more deeply with Him, our true treasure. In the Gospel, letting go is not

about being indifferent, but it is about freeing our hearts from distractions so we can love Jesus fully. When we give up what we cling to out of love for Him, we experience greater joy and a more fulfilled life.

Reflective question:

Do I see detachment as loss, or as a way of making more room for Jesus and for others in my life?

Tuesday, 18th August, 20th Week in Ordinary Time.

Ezekiel 28:1–10, Matthew 19:23–30

Jesus said to his disciples, 'I tell you solemnly, it will be hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Yes, I tell you again, it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.' When the disciples heard this they were astonished. 'Who can be saved, then?' they said. Jesus gazed at them. 'For men' he told them 'this is impossible; for God everything is possible.' Then Peter spoke. 'What about us?' he said to him 'We have left everything and followed you. What are we to have, then?' Jesus said to him, 'I tell you solemnly, when all is made new and the Son of Man sits on his throne of glory, you will yourselves sit on twelve thrones to judge the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses, brothers, sisters, father, mother, children or land for the sake of my name will be repaid a hundred times over, and also inherit eternal life. Many who are first will be last, and the last, first.'

Prioritising God over wealth

In today's Gospel, Jesus tells His disciples that it is hard for a rich person to enter God's kingdom. What does this mean for us today? Jesus is not saying that being rich is bad. There is nothing wrong with having money and possessions. The issue arises when money and things control us. The main point is about what rules our hearts. God should be our source of security and focus. Money should serve us and help others, not control us. Material things are tools for love, not masters that dictate our choices, time, and peace.

We should ask ourselves: Who am I really following today—Jesus or money? We can only let go of our attachment to money when we form a greater attachment to Jesus. Today, let us focus on building a personal relationship with Him. We can do this by praying with God's Word,

helping the poor, and seeking His guidance in our daily lives. As we grow closer to Him, we learn to trust His loving voice more than the false promises of wealth. Then, sharing more, living simply, and avoiding dishonest gain will feel like freedom, not loss, because our hearts will rest in Him, not in things.

Reflective question:

How can I make one small change in my life to have more freedom to love and follow Jesus?

Wednesday, 19th August, St. John Eudes

Ezekiel 34:1–11, Matthew 20:1–16

Jesus told this parable to his disciples: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner going out at daybreak to hire workers for his vineyard. He made an agreement with the workers for one denarius a day, and sent them to his vineyard. Going out at about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the market place and said to them, “You go to my vineyard too and I will give you a fair wage”. So, they went. At about the sixth hour and again at about the ninth hour, he went out and did the same. Then at about the eleventh hour he went out and found more men standing round, and he said to them, “Why have you been standing here idle all day?” “Because no one has hired us” they answered. He said to them, “You go into my vineyard too”. In the evening, the owner of the vineyard said to his bailiff, “Call the workers and pay them their wages, starting with the last arrivals and ending with the first”. So those who were hired at about the eleventh hour came forward and received one denarius each. When the first came, they expected to get more, but they too received one denarius each. They took it, but grumbled at the landowner. “The men who came last” they said, “have done only one hour, and you have treated them the same as us, though we have done a heavy day’s work in all the heat.” He answered one of them and said, “My friend, I am not being unjust to you; did we not agree on one denarius? Take your earnings and go. I choose to pay the last comer as much as I pay you. Have I no right to do what I like with my own? Why be envious because I am generous?” Thus the last will be first, and the first, last.’

God's generous love

In today's Gospel, the landowner pays all workers one denarius, regardless of their hours worked. Those who toil all day under the sun feel cheated and complain, questioning why those who work less receive the same pay. It seems unfair from a human point of view because we usually believe that doing more work deserves more pay.

Jesus reveals that God's way of thinking is not our way. God is like this landowner whose generosity overflows the limits of human calculations. The "*one denarius*" symbolises God's boundless love and mercy, offered not just to the "worthy" but also to those we deem undeserving. His desire is to bring everyone, early starters and latecomers, saints and sinners, closer to Him, no matter where they are in their journey. We should let this parable open our hearts. Instead of comparing ourselves to each other, we can celebrate that God's mercy is broader, deeper, and more generous than we can imagine, even for us.

Reflective question:

What is one practical way I can show God's generosity today—through giving my time, patience, or understanding, to someone I am tempted to judge?

Thursday, 20th August, St. Bernard of Clairvaux.

Ezekiel 36:23–28, Matthew 22:1–14

Jesus began to speak in parables once again to the chief priests and elders of the people: 'The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a feast for his son's wedding. He sent his servants to call those who had been invited, but they would not come. Next, he sent some more servants. "Tell those who have been invited" he said "that I have my banquet all prepared, my oxen and fattened cattle have been slaughtered, everything is ready. Come to the wedding." But they were not interested: one went off to his farm, another to his business, and the rest seized his servants, maltreated them and killed them. The king was furious. He despatched his troops, destroyed those murderers and burnt their town. Then he said to his servants, "The wedding is ready; but as those who were invited proved to be unworthy, go to the crossroads in the town and invite everyone you can find to the wedding". So these servants went out on to the roads and collected together everyone they could find, bad and good alike; and the wedding hall was filled with

guests. When the king came in to look at the guests he noticed one man who was not wearing a wedding garment, and said to him, "How did you get in here, my friend, without a wedding garment?" And the man was silent. Then the king said to the attendants, "Bind him hand and foot and throw him out into the dark, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth". For many are called, but few are chosen.'

Come to the wedding

In the Gospel, Jesus tells a parable of a king who prepares a grand feast for his son and sends out invitations. However, many of the invited guests refuse to attend. In response, the king opens the feast to everyone in the streets, both the good and the bad, in order to fill his hall with guests. Through this parable, Jesus illustrates that God invites everyone to enter His kingdom. His desire is clear: He wants His house to be full and to share His joy with all.

Jesus also offers us an important reminder. Responding to God's call requires our active response to Him. In the parable, a man comes without a wedding garment and is cast out. It speaks to us about having the inner readiness of the heart. Accepting God's invitation to be with Him means that we need to be "clothed" in a new life, allowing for daily transformation of our attitudes, choices, and priorities. Today, let us put on the "*wedding garment*" of humility, faith and love, and be ready to fully share in the joy of being in God's presence.

Reflective question:

If the "*wedding garment*" means a changed heart, what part of my life still resists following Christ's way of thinking and loving?

Friday, 21st August, St. Pius X.

Ezekiel 37:1–14, Matthew 22:34–40

When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees they got together and, to disconcert him, one of them put a question, 'Master, which is the greatest commandment of the Law?' Jesus said, 'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second resembles it: You must love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments hang the whole Law and the Prophets also.'

The greatest commandment

When asked about the greatest commandment, Jesus emphasises the importance of love. He does not speak of a ritual or a rule as the greatest commandment but a relationship. He says, *"You must love the Lord your God...You must love your neighbour as yourself."* True love for God cannot be kept private or purely "spiritual", but it naturally flows outward into concrete love for those around us.

We are often overwhelmed with the busyness and complexity of life, with expectations and demands of others, with deadlines and responsibilities pulling us in many directions. In the midst of this chaos, Jesus wants to bring us back to what truly matters: To love God first and to love our neighbours as ourselves. Loving God means allowing Him to be the centre of our lives, shaping our thoughts, feelings and priorities. Loving our neighbours as ourselves involves recognising that each person is deeply loved by God, and treating them with the care and respect we desire to receive for ourselves.

Reflective questions:

Who is the *"neighbour"* I find it hardest to love right now? What is one small, concrete way I can show that person more patience, respect, or kindness?

Saturday, 22nd August, The Queenship of Mary.

Isaiah 9:1-6, Luke 1:26-38

The angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the House of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. He went in and said to her, 'Rejoice, you who enjoy God's favor. Today, God continues to call us to not be afraid when we encounter the darkness of failures, loss, confusion, and death because a Child will be given, and His light will not be overcome. The Lord is with you.' She was deeply disturbed by these words and asked herself what this greeting could mean, but the angel said to her, *'Mary, do not be afraid; you have won God's favour. Look! You are to conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you must name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David; he will rule over the House of Jacob for ever and his reign will have no end.'* Mary said to the angel, *'But how can this come about, since I have no knowledge of man?'* The angel

answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow. And so the child will be holy and will be called Son of God. And I tell you this too: your cousin Elizabeth also, in her old age, has conceived a son, and she whom people called barren is now in her sixth month, for nothing is impossible to God.' Mary said, 'You see before you the Lord's servant, let it happen to me as you have said.' And the angel left her.

A call to trust

In the first reading, the prophet Isaiah speaks of a promise: *"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light."* These words were addressed to the Israelites who were crushed by war and fear. The answer to the people's anxiety is not a great hero with a strong backing of an army, but a vulnerable child who will be known as *"Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."* He is the light that will come to bring the people out of darkness.

In the Gospel, through the trusting "yes" of Mary of Nazareth, the *"great light"* enters the world. God could have chosen a powerful and influential person according to the world's standard. However, He chooses Mary, who has no status or wealth, but only has a heart willing to trust. Surrendering herself to God, she says, *"Let it happen to me as you have said."* Today, God wants to carry out His plans through our humble and simple lives. We do not need to be impressive or successful for God to work in and through us. What He asks is a heart that trusts and is willing to say "Yes" to help Him bring His light and salvation to others.

Reflective question:

How is God inviting me, like Mary, to embrace His light and say "Yes" to His will for my life?

Sunday, 23rd August, 21st Sunday in Ordinary Time.

Isaiah 22:19–23, Romans 11:33–36, Matthew 16:13–20

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he put this question to his disciples, 'Who do people say the Son of Man is?' And they said, 'Some say he is John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' 'But you,' he said, 'who do you say I am?' Then Simon Peter spoke up, 'You are the Christ,' he said, 'the Son of the living God'. Jesus replied, 'Simon son of Jonah, you are a happy

man! Because it was not flesh and blood that revealed this to you but my Father in heaven. So I now say to you: You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church. And the gates of the underworld can never hold out against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven: whatever you bind on earth shall be considered bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth shall be considered loosed in heaven.’ Then he gave the disciples strict orders not to tell anyone that he was the Christ.

Who do you say I am?

Jesus asks His disciples, “*Who do people say the Son of Man is?*” They reply with general answers such as, “*John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.*” Then He moves from public opinion to personal faith and asks, “*Who do you say I am?*” Peter responds, “*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.*” His answer is not a guess; it comes from a deep, personal relationship with Jesus. Peter has walked alongside Him, heard His voice, observed His ways of loving, and followed Him closely.

Today, Jesus asks us the same question, “*Who do YOU say I am?*” Jesus does not want us to list the opinions of others or rely on information from the Internet and books. He wants our personal response that flows from our friendship with Him. Friendship with Jesus is not a one-time decision but a lifelong journey that deepens over time. Jesus is our Friend who always comes to meet us in the Scripture, in the Eucharist, in the daily events of life, through the love of others, in the silence of our hearts. We are called to never get tired of seeking an encounter with Him so that we can love Him with greater freedom and joy.

Reflective question:

What step will I take today to know and love Jesus a little more?

Monday, 24th August, St. Bartholomew.

Apocalypse 21:9–14, John 1:45–51

Philip found Nathanael and said to him, ‘We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, the one about whom the prophets wrote: he is Jesus son of Joseph, from Nazareth’. ‘From Nazareth?’ said Nathanael ‘Can anything good come from that place?’ ‘Come and see’ replied Philip. When Jesus saw Nathanael coming he said of him, ‘There is an Israelite who deserves the name, incapable of deceit’. ‘How do you know me?’

said Nathanael 'Before Philip came to call you,' said Jesus 'I saw you under the fig tree.' Nathanael answered, 'Rabbi, you are the Son of God, you are the King of Israel'. Jesus replied, 'You believe that just because I said: I saw you under the fig tree. so You will see greater things than that.' And then he added 'I tell you most solemnly, you will see heaven laid open and, above the Son of Man, the angels of God ascending and descending'.

Come and see

As we celebrate the Feast of St. Bartholomew, let us take a moment to reflect on today's Gospel passage and enter into the encounter between Bartholomew, also known as Nathanael, and Jesus. When Philip invites Nathanael with the words, "*Come and see,*" he approaches Jesus with a sense of scepticism. Nathanael struggles to believe that the Messiah could possibly come from Nazareth, a place he considers ordinary and unremarkable. However, when Jesus addresses him, saying, "*There is an Israelite who deserves the name, incapable of deceit... I saw you under the fig tree,*" Nathanael is struck by a profound realisation that Jesus sees him and deeply understands him. He understands then that Jesus is not just another teacher but indeed the Son of God.

Today, Jesus meets us personally. He knows our story, our wounds, our fears and our dreams, and He loves us as who we really are. He calls us by name and invites us to a deeper faith and a more meaningful relationship with Him. As we experience His love, we invite others, "*Come and see my Friend.*"

Reflective question:

How can I step out of my comfort zone and invite others to "*come and see*" the Jesus I have discovered on my faith journey?

Tuesday, 25th August, St. Louis, St. Joseph Calasanz.

2 Thessalonians 2:1–3, 14–17, Matthew 23:23–26

Jesus said: 'Alas for you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You who pay your tithe of mint and dill and cummin and have neglected the weightier matters of the Law - justice, mercy, good faith! These you should have practised, without neglecting the others. You blind guides! Straining out gnats and swallowing camels! Alas for you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You who clean the outside of cup and dish

and leave the inside full of extortion and intemperance. Blind Pharisee! Clean the inside of cup and dish first so that the outside may become clean as well.'

The weightier matters of faith

Today, Jesus calls us to take off the masks that make us look outwardly good, righteous, and virtuous. True Christianity is not formality that tries to placate God, but action rooted in the “*weightier matters*”: justice, mercy, and faithfulness. These are the real measures of a Christian life.

Jesus tells us, “*Clean the inside of the cup and dish first so that the outside may become clean as well.*” He calls us to look beneath our behaviours and ask why we do what we do. It is possible to attend Mass, give alms, or follow rules while still having resentment, envy, or a sense of superiority. We may pray in public but speak harshly at home, serve in ministry yet gossip about those we serve with, or give generously while judging those who are in need. In the Gospel, Jesus emphasises the importance of integrity and cautions against hypocrisy. He warns us not to appear clean on the outside while remaining untouched in the heart. True worship connects our actions to inner conversion. Today, let us ask the Spirit to purify our motives and move us to mercy.

Reflective question:

How can I practice justice, mercy and faithfulness in my interactions with others today?

Wednesday, 26th August, 21st Week in Ordinary Time.

2 Thessalonians 3:6–10, 16–18, Matthew 23:27–32

Jesus said, ‘Alas for you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You who are like whitewashed tombs that look handsome on the outside, but inside are full of dead men’s bones and every kind of corruption. In the same way you appear to people from the outside like good honest men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. ‘Alas for you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You who build the sepulchres of the prophets and decorate the tombs of holy men, saying, “We would never have joined in shedding the blood of the prophets, had we lived in our fathers’ day”. So! Your own evidence tells against you! You are the sons of those who murdered the prophets! Very well then, finish off the work that your fathers began.’

Integrity

In the first reading, St. Paul encourages the Thessalonian community, saying, *“We urge you, brothers, to keep away from any of the brothers who refuse to work...You know how you are supposed to imitate us: now we were not idle when we were with you...We worked night and day, slaving and straining, so as not to be a burden on any of you...May the Lord of peace himself give you peace all the time and in every way. The Lord be with you all.”* He encourages each of the Thessalonians to live a life of integrity by working diligently and quietly, avoiding becoming a burden to others and taking responsibility, so that they can help ensure that God's peace remains with the entire community.

In the Gospel, Jesus also speaks about integrity and warns against hypocrisy. We are not meant to be *“whitewashed tombs”*, looking pure outside while the heart remains untouched. Both readings call us to let God constantly reshape our inner lives so that our outer life of work and words will align with our faith. Jesus wants us to avoid superficial displays of religion but instead focus on living a coherent and mature faith. This way, God's peace can take root in our homes, communities, workplaces and society.

Reflective question:

What is one concrete action I can take to live with integrity and build peace?

Thursday, 27th August, St. Monica.

1 Corinthians 1:1–9, Matthew 24:42–51

Jesus said to his disciples: ‘Stay awake, because you do not know the day when your master is coming. You may be quite sure of this that if the householder had known at what time of the night the burglar would come, he would have stayed awake and would not have allowed anyone to break through the wall of his house. Therefore, you too must stand ready because the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. ‘What sort of servant, then, is faithful and wise enough for the master to place him over his household to give them their food at the proper time? Happy that servant if his master’s arrival finds him at this employment. I tell you solemnly, he will place him over everything he owns. But as for the dishonest servant who says to himself, “My master is taking his time”, and sets about beating his fellow servants and eating and drinking with

drunkards, his master will come on a day he does not expect, and at an hour he does not know. The master will cut him off and send him to the same fate as the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth.'

Enriched in Christ

In the first reading, St. Paul tells the church of Corinth: *"I never stop thanking God for all the graces you have received through Jesus Christ. I thank him that you have been enriched in so many ways..."* Today, these words resonate with us as well. God has already given us the grace of His forgiving love, new life, and strength through Christ. He has enriched us with every spiritual gift we need to bless others in our daily lives. This includes offering wise words to a discouraged friend, sharing our knowledge to help someone understand their faith and showing mercy by listening without judging.

In the Gospel, Jesus asks us to be faithful servants who are always ready to help others. We should focus on doing simple acts of kindness with love instead of drifting into complacency or self-interest. God gives us grace, and in return, we say "yes" each day to care and serve others, allowing love to guide us until He arrives.

Reflective question:

How can I use one gift I have received to serve someone today?

Friday, 28th August, St. Augustine.

1 Corinthians 1:17–25, Matthew 25:1–13

Jesus said to his disciples: 'Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this: Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were sensible: the foolish ones did take their lamps, but they brought no oil, whereas the sensible ones took flasks of oil as well as their lamps. The bridegroom was late, and they all grew drowsy and fell asleep. But at midnight there was a cry, "The bridegroom is here! Go out and meet him." At this, all those bridesmaids woke up and trimmed their lamps, and the foolish ones said to the sensible ones, "Give us some of your oil: our lamps are going out". But they replied, "There may not be enough for us and for you; you had better go to those who sell it and buy some for yourselves". They had gone off to buy it when the bridegroom arrived. Those who were ready went in

with him to the wedding hall and the door was closed. The other bridesmaids arrived later. "Lord, Lord," they said "open the door for us." But he replied, "I tell you solemnly, I do not know you". So stay awake, because you do not know either the day or the hour.'

Wisdom of the cross

At the end of the first reading, St. Paul states, *"For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength."* He is talking about the cross. What seems like a failure is actually a manifestation of God's wisdom. What appears weak in that moment is really the power that brings salvation. Let us take a moment to reflect on what St. Paul is saying. We often measure wisdom and power by material possessions, social status, control, and wealth. However, the cross shows us a different kind of wisdom and power: it speaks of forgiveness, of faithful love and humble service.

In the Gospel, Jesus calls us to be like the five wise bridesmaids who kept oil ready for the bridegroom's arrival. That *"oil"* is a life of constant prayer that keeps faith burning and moves us to love and serve others. Let us stay awake and vigilant, and let God shape our daily words and actions so that we can live by the wisdom of the cross.

Reflective question:

How can I trust in the *"wisdom of the cross"* instead of my usual desire for control, dominance or appearances?

Saturday, 29th August, The Passion of St. John the Baptist Jeremiah 1:17-19, Mark 6:17-29

Herod had sent to have John arrested, and had him chained up in prison because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife whom he had married. For John had told Herod, 'It is against the law for you to have your brother's wife'. As for Herodias, she was furious with him and wanted to kill him; but she was not able to, because Herod was afraid of John, knowing him to be a good and holy man, and gave him his protection. When he had heard him speak he was greatly perplexed, and yet he liked to listen to him. An opportunity came on Herod's birthday when he gave a banquet for the nobles of his court, for his army officers and for the leading figures in Galilee. When the daughter of this same Herodias came in and danced, she delighted Herod and his guests; so the king said to the girl,

‘Ask me anything you like and I will give it you’. And he swore her an oath, ‘I will give you anything you ask, even half my kingdom’. She went out and said to her mother, ‘What shall I ask for?’ She replied, ‘The head of John the Baptist’ The girl hurried straight back to the king and made her request, ‘I want you to give me John the Baptist’s head, here and now, on a dish’. The king was deeply distressed but, thinking of the oaths he had sworn and of his guests, he was reluctant to break his word to her. So the king at once sent one of the bodyguard with orders to bring John’s head. The man went off and beheaded him in prison; then he brought the head on a dish and gave it to the girl, and the girl gave it to her mother. When John’s disciples heard about this, they came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.

I am with you always

“Brace yourself for action. Stand up and tell them all I command you...I will make you into a fortified city, a pillar of iron and a wall of bronze...They will fight against you but shall not overcome you, for I am with you to deliver you.” These words come from the first reading from the prophet Jeremiah, where God strengthens the prophet for the difficult task of proclaiming His message. We too can find comfort in these words, as we experience our own struggles and face opposition in life when we try to witness to our faith. With God by our side, we can stand firm in our faith and faithfully follow Jesus until the very end.

In the Gospel, John the Baptist speaks God’s truth to Herod, showing no fear of the consequences that might follow. His death is not a failure but is a witness of the inner strength gained from living a life rooted deeply in God’s presence. Today, we are called to have the same courage, trusting that God’s “*I am with you*” is sufficient to help us face challenges and opposition with peace.

Reflective question:

What steps to live out my faith with coherence while trusting in His promise, “*I am with you*”?

Sunday, 30th August, 22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time.

Jeremiah 20:7–9, Romans 12:1–2, Matthew 16:21–27

Jesus began to make it clear to his disciples that he was destined to go to Jerusalem and suffer grievously at the hands of the elders and chief

priests and scribes, to be put to death and to be raised up on the third day. Then, taking him aside, Peter started to remonstrate with him. 'Heaven preserve you, Lord;' he said 'this must not happen to you'. But he turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle in my path, because the way you think is not God's way but man's.' Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me. For anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for my sake will find it. What, then, will a man gain if he wins the whole world and ruins his life? Or what has a man to offer in exchange for his life? 'For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of his Father with his angels, and, when he does, he will reward each one according to his behaviour.'

Transformation

In today's second reading from St. Paul's letter to the Romans, we are invited to offer our entire lives as a living sacrifice and to undergo a transformation through the renewal of our minds, allowing us to know what God wants for us. Too often, we let the pressures and values of the world shape us, leading us to chase after power and status. We get stuck in our fears and insecurities while seeking comfort and a perfect image. The real invitation is to allow God to renew our minds. This shift enables us to perceive the world as Jesus does, love as He loves, and live as He wants us to.

The Gospel shows what a renewed mind truly looks like: seeing the cross as a path to follow Jesus. It invites us to willingly deny ourselves, take up our cross, and embark on this journey to follow Him. Transformation is a reorientation from self-centred love to self-giving love, so that our words and actions can be aligned with Jesus' path.

Reflective question:

Am I open to allow God to renew my mind today so that I can follow Jesus' path of love?

Monday, 31st August, 22nd Week in Ordinary Time.

1 Corinthians 2:1–5, Luke 4:16–30

Jesus came to Nazara, where he had been brought up, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day as he usually did. He stood up to

read and they handed him the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. Unrolling the scroll he found the place where it is written: The spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for he has anointed me. He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives and to the blind new sight, to set the downtrodden free, to proclaim the Lord's year of favour. He then rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the assistant and sat down. And all eyes in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to speak to them, 'This text is being fulfilled today even as you listen'. And he won the approval of all, and they were astonished by the gracious words that came from his lips. They said, 'This is Joseph's son, surely?' But he replied, 'No doubt you will quote me the saying, "Physician, heal yourself" and tell me, "We have heard all that happened in Capernaum, do the same here in your own countryside"'. And he went on, 'I tell you solemnly, 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 Sidonian town. And in the prophet Elisha's time there were many lepers in Israel, but none of these was cured, except the Syrian, Naaman.' 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 down the cliff, but he slipped through the crowd and walked away.

The Good News of God's love

Filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus began his ministry by quoting the words of Isaiah: "*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me... to bring good news to the poor, freedom to the captives, sight to the blind, and liberation for the oppressed, announcing the Lord's favour.*" These words define Jesus' task entrusted to Him by God His Father: to establish God's reign of justice and compassion for the marginalised and forgotten in society. For Jesus, the Good News of God's love is meant for everyone.

Today, our mission is to bring good news by embodying Christ's love, especially to those on the margins. They most need to know that God sees them and loves them. We are called to restore hope and proclaim peace, not only in words but through genuine, consistent presence. By walking alongside others, serving with compassion, and listening with

care, we make God's love tangible and allow the Good News to be truly experienced.

Reflective question:

Who is God inviting me to bring the Good News of His love to?



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