

Prayer for Living Daily  
Reflections  
Liturgical Year B



“Follow Me”

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# **PRAYER FOR LIVING YEAR B**

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**Monday, 1<sup>st</sup> January, Mary, the Mother of God.  
Numbers 6:22-27; Galatians 4:4-7; Luke 2:16-21**

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

Pondering and treasuring Jesus' presence

Today's solemnity invites us to rejoice that God came to be with us in the flesh through the total openness of a woman named Mary. Her 'yes' to God brought about the presence of Jesus in and among us. Jesus' presence is the greatest blessing that we have received. However, it is easy to miss Him, especially with this festive season's many celebrations and gatherings.

The gospel calls us to imitate Mary's attitude of making time amidst the feasting to stop and ponder so that we can see, enjoy and treasure Jesus being alive in our lives. He is present with us in every moment of the day, whether alone or with others, in the noisier or quieter moments. Being aware of Him brings us peace, even if we are going through turbulent times in life. As we also commemorate World Day of Peace today, let us start the year by having the Prince of Peace Himself in our hearts so that the world can come to experience peace through us.

**Reflective question:**

Do I take time to ponder on Jesus' presence in my life?

**Tuesday, 2<sup>nd</sup> January, SS. Basil the Great and Gregory Nazianzen.  
1 John 2:22-28, John 1:19-28**

*This is how John appeared as a witness. When the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?," he not only declared, but he declared quite openly, "I am not the Christ." "Well then," they asked, "are you Elijah?" "I am not," he said. "Are you the Prophet?" He answered, "No." So they said to him, "Who are you? We must take*

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

### Being who we truly are

It is impactful when we see someone, like John the Baptist, remaining true to his/her identity even in the face of temptations and challenges. He was deeply aware that he was not the Messiah but Christ's own witness. As such, he did not lead the people astray and was able to be an effective instrument in leading others not to himself but to Jesus.

What about us? Are we also aware of who we are called to be? None of us is the saviour of the world, but each of us is called to be like John the Baptist, an effective witness of Jesus so that others can come to know and have a personal encounter with Jesus. We do this by loving those whom we meet daily. We look out for what is in their best interest, even if it means dying to our pride, foregoing our own gains or going the extra mile on our part. Then, we become who we truly are: God's own instruments who bring the presence of Emmanuel, God-with-us, to the lives of many.

### **Reflective question:**

How can I be God's instrument today?

### **Wednesday, 3<sup>rd</sup> January, The Most Holy Name of Jesus.**

#### **1 John 2:29-3:6, John 1:29-34**

*The next day, seeing Jesus coming towards him, John said, "Look, there is the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. This is the one I spoke of when I said: A man is coming after me who ranks before me because he existed before me. I did not know him myself, and yet it was to reveal him to Israel that I came baptising with water." John also declared, "I saw the Spirit coming down on him from heaven like a dove and resting on him. I did not know him myself, but he who sent me to*

*baptise with water had said to me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and rest is the one who is going to baptise with the Holy Spirit.' Yes, I have seen and I am the witness that he is the Chosen One of God."*

### Recognising Jesus

*"You know that God is righteous – you must recognise that everyone whose life is righteous has been begotten by him" (1<sup>st</sup> reading). It is important to note that righteousness, in the biblical sense, refers to love. Therefore, since God is love, those who live in love are begotten by God. In today's gospel, this is how John the Baptist recognised Jesus, in and through His life of love. Jesus lived being loved constantly by His Father and spent time loving others with the same love – a true life in the Spirit.*

Similarly, we recognise Jesus is present with us when we experience love or see someone living his/her life in love. Today, let us be open to recognise Him even in the most unexpected person or situation that may come our way. We ask for the grace to perceive the love behind the words spoken and acts done to us so that we may be slower to judge negatively and have the wisdom to see Jesus in our lives. In recognising Him, may we be filled with joy and gratitude for His nearness.

### **Reflective question:**

In which moments of the day have I recognised Jesus?

### **Thursday, 4<sup>th</sup> January, Weekday of Christmas Time.**

#### **1 John 3:7-10, John 1:35-42**

*As John stood with two of his disciples, Jesus passed, and John stared hard at him and said, "Look, there is the lamb of God." Hearing this, the two disciples followed Jesus. Jesus turned round, saw them following and said, "What do you want?" They answered, "Rabbi," – which means Teacher – "where do you live?" "Come and see" he replied; so they went and saw where he lived, and stayed with him the rest of that day. It was about the tenth hour. One of these two who became followers of Jesus after hearing what John had said was Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter. Early next morning, Andrew met his brother and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" – which means the Christ – and he took Simon to Jesus. Jesus looked hard at him and said, "You are Simon son of John; you are to be called Cephas" – meaning Rock.*

## A living encounter with Jesus

The gospel recounts to us an encounter that John's disciples had with Jesus. It marked a turning point in their lives because, in Jesus, they encountered God Himself, who welcomed them into His own life of love.

Like the disciples, we also need to have our own living encounters with Jesus. We can meet Him in concrete moments during the day. For example, when we pray and experience Him alive and real in our lives and feel loved as we are by God, or when we sense that we are accompanied by a faithful God through a challenging situation we find ourselves in, or when He challenges us to follow His selfless way of loving someone, etc. As we enter this new year, Jesus invites us to encounter Him again: "*Come and see*". Let us heed His call and welcome Him, the Word made flesh, into our lives as He welcomes us into His.

### **Reflective question:**

How do I encounter Jesus welcoming me into His life of love?

### **Friday, 5<sup>th</sup> January, Weekday of Christmas Time.**

#### **1 John 3:11-21, John 1:43-51**

*After Jesus had decided to leave for Galilee, he met Philip and said, "Follow me." Philip came from the same town, Bethsaida, as Andrew and Peter. 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. 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."*

### Seeing the good

Today's gospel tells us of yet another encounter, between Nathanael and Jesus. In Jesus, Nathanael encountered someone who sees deeper into

his heart and pointed out the good that is present in him: *“There is an Israelite who deserves the name, incapable of deceit. Before Philip came to call you, I saw you...”*

Often, seeing the good in ourselves and others is not so easy. It is much easier to find and focus solely on the bad, forgetting the good. In prayer today, let us allow Jesus to look deeply at us as He did to Nathanael and to point out the good we miss seeing in ourselves: honesty, kindness, patience, perseverance, thoughtfulness, diligence, etc. From there, let us be renewed in our vision to see others not just in their negative points but also to point out their good. In this liturgical season of Christmas, may we experience more and more the loving gaze of Jesus, who has come to dwell with us here on earth.

**Reflective question:**

What are the good points that Jesus is pointing out in myself and others?

**Saturday, 6<sup>th</sup> January, Weekday of Christmas Time.**

**1 John 5:5-13, Mk 1:7-11**

*In the course of his preaching, John said, “Someone is following me, someone who is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to kneel down and undo the strap of his sandals. I have baptised you with water, but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit.” It was at this time that Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptised in the Jordan by John. No sooner had he come up out of the water than he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit, like a dove, descending on him. And a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on you.”*

A lesson in humility

*“Someone is following me, someone who is more powerful than I am.”* With these words stated clearly by John the Baptist, there was an expectation that when Jesus came, He would be coming in lording it over John. However, the gospel tells us that Jesus did not do that. Instead, He was humble enough to recognise John as God’s appointed instrument to prepare the way for Him. Thus, Jesus trusted in what God had planned for Him and humbly obeyed to be baptised by John. Through His trusting obedience, Jesus was affirmed as the Beloved Son of God.

As followers of Jesus, let us also take on His humble attitude in not despising or dismissing others, especially those we consider to be 'below' us in status, intelligence or virtue. Instead, let us be open to recognise God working through anyone and everyone. We pray for the grace to begin this year with a humble and obedient heart to God and His plan, trusting, like Jesus did, in the deep love that the Father has for us.

### **Reflective question:**

How can I exercise humility today?

### **Sunday, 7<sup>th</sup> January, The Epiphany of the Lord.**

#### **Isaiah 60:1-6, Ephesians 3:2-3, 5-6, Matthew 2:1-12**

*After Jesus had been born at Bethlehem in Judaea during the reign of King Herod, some wise men came to Jerusalem from the east. "Where is the infant king of the Jews?" they asked. "We saw his star as it rose and have come to do him homage." When King Herod heard this he was perturbed, and so was the whole of Jerusalem. He called together all the chief priests and the scribes of the peoples and inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. "At Bethlehem in Judaea," they told him, "for this is what the prophet wrote: 'And you Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, you are by no means least among the leaders of Judah, for out of you will come a leader who will shepherd my people Israel.'" Then Herod summoned the wise men to see him privately. He asked them the exact date on which the star had appeared, and sent them on to Bethlehem. "Go and find out all about the child," he said, "and when you have found him, let me know, so that I too may go and do him homage." Having listened to what the king had to say, they set out. And there in front of them was the star they had seen rising; it went forward and halted over the place where the child was. The sight of the star filled them with delight, and going into the house they saw the child with his mother Mary, and falling to their knees they did him homage. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh. But they were warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, and returned to their own country by a different way.*

#### Courage, perseverance and faithfulness

The feast of the Epiphany celebrates the truth of faith that Jesus was born not just for the Jews but also for the non-Jews, i.e. for all. It is God's



desire that everyone could come to journey and encounter Jesus personally, just like the wise men.

In praying with their journey, there are three attitudes that we can learn to have in our own faith journey in life. Firstly, to have the courage to step out of our comfort zone to the unknown, just like they did: to wherever or whomever God calls us to. Secondly, to persevere when the going gets tough like they did amidst the obstacles of being lost and meeting an adversary in Herod. Lastly, we are to learn from them how to remain faithful in holding on to God's promise, signified by the star. God's promise is never empty nor deceiving because He is faithful and true. So, let us be accompanied by the star that always guides us towards more of Jesus.

**Reflective question:**

Which attitude do I need to have in my journey of faith right now?

**Monday, 8<sup>th</sup> January, The Baptism of the Lord.**

**Isaiah 55:1-11, Mark 1:7-11**

*In the course of his preaching, John the Baptist said, "Someone is following me, someone who is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to kneel down and undo the strap of his sandals. I have baptised you with water, but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit." It was at this time that Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptised in the Jordan by John. No sooner had he come up out of the water than he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit, like a dove, descending on him. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on you."*

Being unconditionally loved

Today's feast invites us to ponder on what the experience of Jesus' baptism means for us. It is an experience of being unconditionally loved and accompanied fully in life by God. It means experiencing the heavens being torn apart such that there are no more barriers to our relationship with God. He is no longer someone distant and indifferent. Rather, He comes close to us as a Father who knows and cares about the events in our lives. It means seeing the Spirit descending to stay permanently in our hearts such that we never need to walk alone in life but always accompanied. It means listening and believing in the Father's voice,

assuring us of His favour – His unconditional love for us, His own children.

For Jesus, the conviction of being unconditionally loved as God's Beloved Son became the foundation of His public life. It enabled Him to be guided and sustained throughout His life to love all till the end. Let us experience anew this deep love of God for us so that, like Jesus, we can continue to love till the end.

### **Reflective question:**

What is God's message for me in prayer today?

**Tuesday, 9<sup>th</sup> January, 1<sup>st</sup> Week in Ordinary Time.**

**1 Samuel 1:9-20, Mark 1:21-28**

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

### Powerful teaching

In the gospel, the power and authority of Jesus' teaching are evident, especially when He sent an unclean spirit out of a man. The imagery of the unclean spirit represents whatever hinders us from relating to others in love and living our lives fully. It may be our bad temper, cynical attitude in life, laziness or other persistent bad habits that seem to 'possess' us and continually plague and weaken us.

Today, Jesus is also coming to effect a change in us. He helps us to send out our personal '*unclean spirit*' by teaching us patience, forgiveness, trust, purposeful vitality, etc., again so that we can truly live in love. Let

us be open to Jesus in prayer and allow His teaching of life and love to resound anew in us. When we find the challenge of change too daunting, let us not be discouraged. Instead, we turn again to find Jesus, our Teacher, right by our side, ready to give us His power and strength to continue changing for the better.

**Reflective question:**

What change is Jesus inviting me to make in my life now?

**Wednesday, 10<sup>th</sup> January, 1<sup>st</sup> Week in Ordinary Time.**

**1 Samuel 3:1-10, 19-20, Mark 1:29-39**

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

Following God's will alone

Today, we are shown an action-packed day of Jesus, where He attended to the needs of many people who came to Him with their various ailments. Jesus was doing good and effective work. Given the countless needs of the people and the positive results of His healing work, everyone assumed that Jesus should and would continue what He was doing there. Surprisingly, that was not the case. Jesus did not get carried away by people's demands, legitimate as they may seem. His only concern was following God's will alone, which He discerned in prayer, even if it seemed to go against human logic.

*"In the morning, long before dawn, he got up and left the house, and went off to a lonely place and prayed there."* Jesus invites us to do the same: to make a purposeful stop amidst our non-stop daily activities for a dialogue with God. To find time and space to be quiet and to listen, above all, to what God wants. We ask for the grace to discern what is good according to God and the courage to act on it.

### **Reflective question:**

How can I follow God's will today?

### **Thursday, 11<sup>th</sup> January, 1<sup>st</sup> Week in Ordinary Time.**

#### **1 Samuel 4:1-11, Mark 1:40-45**

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

#### Touched by compassion

We can see the desperation felt by the leper in the gospel as he came kneeling and pleading to Jesus, *"If you want to, you can cure me."* The leper's despair was also not lost on Jesus. In fact, it must have affected Him deeply such that His response was not to cure him from afar but to do it by touching him. It was a significant gesture of compassion from Jesus because in doing so, He Himself ran, and indeed endured, the risk of being ostracised by society at that time for touching a leper. Despite the consequences, Jesus' determination and joy in curing the leper was clear: *"Of course, I want to!"*

Jesus, too, came to touch us with compassion in our difficult moments. In turn, His compassion moves us to be compassionate to others, making us listen deeper, not just to people's words but also to their feelings. He makes us unafraid to be involved out of love, even when it

means running the risk of being inconvenienced or misunderstood. Through us, may many come to experience Jesus' compassionate love.

### **Reflective question:**

To whom am I called to be compassionate?

### **Friday, 12<sup>th</sup> January, 1<sup>st</sup> Week in Ordinary Time.**

#### **1 Samuel 8:4-7, 10-22, Mark 2:1-12**

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

#### Creative and daring

It is amazing to see the unusual act done by the group of people who brought the paralytic up close and personal to Jesus. Even more so when we consider the amount of thought, effort and determination behind it. It showed how much the paralytic was loved and how much faith these people had in Jesus. Their love and faith pushed them to dare think outside the box.

Do we find ourselves sharing the same spirit as these people in our lives, or do we feel constrained? Perhaps we are afraid of rejection or of failing in trying out a new and unknown way. Maybe our excessive timidity or

can't-be-bothered attitude hinders and stops us. Then, let us draw inspiration from the gospel and the example of so many such people in the world who have the same daring faith and love others creatively. Let us be encouraged in our efforts to bring others to encounter Jesus, knowing that it will be worthwhile, for in Him, each person will come to rise and walk joyfully in life.

### **Reflective question:**

How can I be creative and daring to love?

### **Saturday, 13<sup>th</sup> January, 1<sup>st</sup> Week in Ordinary Time.**

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

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

### Resting in Love

*"I did not come to call the virtuous, but sinners."* These words may not be new to some of us, but let us allow Jesus to speak them anew to our hearts. For they are words that remind us of the truth – that none of us is perfect, yet knowing this, Jesus looked at us and wanted us. He did not hesitate to call us to follow Him, as He did to Levi. His actions showed the kind of love Jesus had. It is not a love with hidden selfish motives but a selfless love that seeks only the best for the beloved.

Today, we rest in Jesus' love. We find in His gaze the security to let our guards down, remove our masks and breathe freely. In front of Jesus, we do not have to be somebody else but ourselves, for it is not the flawless version of ourselves that Jesus wants and calls. He calls us to Him as we are, here and now. Let today be a day of enjoying with freedom and gratitude this great gift of being loved truly by Jesus.

**Reflective question:**

What do I understand from prayer today?

**Sunday, 14<sup>th</sup> January, 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time.**

**1 Samuel 3:3-10, 19, 1 Corinthians 6: 13-15, 17-20, John 1:35-42.**

*As John stood with two of his disciples, Jesus passed, and John stared hard at him and said, "Look, there is the lamb of God." Hearing this, the two disciples followed Jesus. Jesus turned round, saw them following and said, "What do you want?" They answered, "Rabbi," – which means Teacher – "where do you live?" "Come and see" he replied; so they went and saw where he lived, and stayed with him the rest of that day. It was about the tenth hour. One of these two who became followers of Jesus after hearing what John had said was Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter. Early next morning, Andrew met his brother and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" – which means the Christ – and he took Simon to Jesus. Jesus looked hard at him and said, "You are Simon son of John; you are to be called Cephas" – meaning Rock.*

**Orienting others to God**

*"Eli then understood that it was the Lord who was calling the boy and he said to Samuel, "Go and lie down, and if someone calls say, 'Speak, Lord, your servant is listening'" (1<sup>st</sup> reading). From the first reading and the gospel, we see Eli, John the Baptist and Andrew as those who, in their own times and ways, had oriented others towards God. Due to their faithfulness, the lives of Samuel, John's disciples and Peter bore fruit in God for generations to come.*

In our lives, we have also been blessed by specific persons who have oriented us to God, especially in times of darkness. Today, let us remember them. We thank God for the gift of each of them in our lives and pray for their faithfulness. Let us also be the ones who also orient others towards God, especially those who are close to us.

**Reflective question:**

How can I give thanks to God and others?

**Monday, 15<sup>th</sup> January, 2<sup>nd</sup> Week in Ordinary Time.**

**1 Samuel 15:16-23, Mark 2:18-22**

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

### Newness of Jesus

In today's gospel, it was difficult for both John's disciples and the Pharisees to understand the ways of Jesus and how faith should be lived out. All along, their understanding of living the faith was focused strictly on following the rules and regulations of the law. However, Jesus showed a new way to live faith as more than obeying norms. Instead, it is to live in a relationship with God Himself. They were invited to be open to this newness of relating to God in love.

We, too, are called to live in the same newness of faith – of being in a loving relationship with God. Our faith becomes alive from this relationship with a personal God that gives us joy. Today, let us heed the invitation of Jesus to be open in welcoming the newness that He brings into our lives. Let us perceive the presence of Jesus walking with us in life so that we can rejoice in His company as the bridegroom's attendants rejoice in the presence of the bridegroom.

### **Reflective question:**

How can I welcome the newness Jesus brings to my life?

**Tuesday, 16<sup>th</sup> January, 2<sup>nd</sup> Week in Ordinary Time.**

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

*One sabbath day Jesus happened to be taking a walk through the cornfields, and his disciples began to pick ears of corn as they went*



*along. And the Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing something on the sabbath day that is forbidden?" And he replied, "Did you never read what David did in his time of need when he and his followers were hungry – how he went into the house of God when Abiathar was high priest, and ate the loaves of offering which only the priests are allowed to eat, and how he also gave some to the men with him?" And he said to them, "The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath; so the Son of Man is master even of the sabbath."*

### Our compassionate God

In prayer, we are invited to reflect on the image of God we hold in our minds and hearts. Perhaps, like the Pharisees in the gospel, we may still have the lingering fearful image of God as a harsh law-keeper or a punishing judge. Yet, Jesus showed a different image of God – one who goes beyond the superficial legalistic view of things to take into account the needs of the situations and conditions of life. *"God does not see as man sees; man looks at appearances but the Lord looks at the heart"* (1<sup>st</sup> reading).

Today, let us reencounter God personally in our lives. Let us experience Him as one who looks deep into our hearts. He sees and knows where we are in life and how we are inside. We encounter God, who knows our needs and hunger. He comes to us not as a judge but as a Friend. Our God comes to love and to fill us. He is a Friend who embraces us with great understanding and compassion in His heart.

### **Reflective question:**

What kind of image do I have of God?

### **Wednesday, 17<sup>th</sup> January, St. Anthony, Abbot.**

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

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

*The Pharisees went out and at once began to plot with the Herodians against him, discussing how to destroy him.*

### Do good, give life

The gospel tells us of the opposition Jesus faced because of His way of living in love. Yet, He was not deterred but remained firm and focused in love. He continued to do good, not just for the sick man but also for all those watching in the synagogue. In healing the man, Jesus brought across an important point: religious law does not exist for its own sake but to ensure the good and growth of a person's life.

We are called to imitate His same way of loving others: to put each person, his/her good and growth, as the main reason and end purpose of all that we think, say and do. It may sound like a tall order, but let us not be overwhelmed. Instead, we do this starting with the people we encounter daily: family members, neighbours, colleagues, etc. We place them in the centre of our prayer and ask Jesus to help us see how to do good and give them life in the way they need it today.

### **Reflective question:**

To whom is Jesus sending me to love today?

### **Thursday, 18<sup>th</sup> January, 2<sup>nd</sup> Week in Ordinary Time.**

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

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

### All came to Him

*"Great numbers who had heard of all he was doing came to him."* At this point in the gospel, the news about Jesus and His good works had spread far and wide. Many had come to see Him and also to seek help

from Him. Jesus did not reject the people. Instead, He told His disciples to have a boat ready for Him so that He could attend better to them.

Likewise, let us be attracted to come to Jesus. We come with the desire to see Him, listen to Him and seek help from Him. In prayer, we bring to Jesus the worries, problems and difficulties in life. We believe that He would not reject us and that in Jesus, no obstacles or afflictions are too great to handle. We come and put our trust in Jesus, the Son of God. Today, being the start of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, let us also pray for unity among all Christians. May we first unite with Jesus and allow Him to bring us into union with others.

**Reflective question:**

What strikes me in prayer today?

**Friday, 19<sup>th</sup> January, 2<sup>nd</sup> Week in Ordinary Time.**

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

*Jesus went up into the hills and summoned those he wanted. So they came to him and he appointed twelve; they were to be his companions and to be sent out to preach, with power to cast out devils. And so he appointed the Twelve: Simon to whom he gave the name Peter, James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James, to whom he gave the name Boanerges or 'Sons of Thunder'; then Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, the man who was to betray him.*

Community

The apostles were called to be with Jesus, not just as individuals but together as a community. Jesus formed the community by calling and choosing each member. So, what distinguishes a Christian community from any other is the presence of Jesus at its centre. Indeed, it is Jesus who makes the true unity between the different and diverse community members possible.

As we look at each apostle in the list of the Twelve, we also realize that none of them was perfect. Each one had his own imperfection. Some had their imperfections more hidden, like Judas, who betrayed Jesus unexpectedly at the end. In contrast, others showed theirs more

obviously: Peter was reckless, James and John were hot-tempered and Thomas was prone to doubt, etc. In the same way, we also have our imperfections. Just as the apostles' imperfections did not stop Jesus from choosing them to be His community, neither are our imperfections a hindrance for Jesus to make us part of the Christian community. Today, Jesus calls us anew to be part of His community. Let us respond to Him joyfully!

**Reflective question:**

How is my response to Jesus' call to be part of His community?

**Saturday, 20<sup>th</sup> January, St. Fabian, St. Sebastian.**

**2 Samuel 1:1-4, 11-12, 17, 19, 23-27, Mark 3:20-21**

*Jesus went home, and such a crowd collected that they could not even have a meal. When his relatives heard of this, they set out to take charge of him, convinced he was out of his mind.*

Open to growth

The gospel tells us that while the crowd sought Jesus out with a favourable attitude, His relatives set out to meet Him with a disapproving one. Interestingly, even before they saw or spoke and listened to Him, they were already prejudiced against Him. Perhaps they felt that they already knew everything there was to know about Him. Often, familiarity breeds contempt.

We, too, may be tempted to think that we already know everything about someone, about his/her capabilities. We may also be tempted to think that way about ourselves. As such, we may miss seeing the work that God is doing in one's life. While realistic knowledge of oneself and others is important, it is also important not to close ourselves to the possibility of change and growth that a relationship with God can bring about. Today, let us ask for the grace to be open, not to allow our prejudices to prevent us from seeing the growth, however small, that God is working in our lives and in that of others.

**Reflective question:**

Do I see God working in me and in each person?

## **Sunday, 21<sup>st</sup> January, Sunday of the Word of God.**

**Jonah 3:1-5, 10, 1 Corinthians 7:29-31, Mark 1:14-20**

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

### Jesus, the Word of God

By the Sea of Galilee, Peter, Andrew, James and John experienced Jesus walking right into their lives, meeting them where they were in life, and speaking words that gave them true direction and new purpose. Similarly, we experience Jesus coming to meet us where we are in life as He is present to us in and through the Word of God. As we read the Scripture prayerfully, it is Jesus who speaks to us. Listening to Him attentively, His Word touches us deeply because He does not speak about abstract matters. Rather, He speaks right into the situations of our lives. For He is not a faraway God, but He, the Word made flesh is close to us.

As we celebrate the Sunday of the Word of God today, let us remember the moments when His Word brings peace and consolation to our hearts or when His Word shakes and rouses us to love more in life. Above all, we give thanks when, through His Word, we come to encounter the Person of Jesus, real and alive, walking to us and calling us to follow Him.

### **Reflective question:**

How do I encounter Jesus, the Word of God, today?

**Monday, 22<sup>nd</sup> January, St. Vincent, Deacon and Martyr.**

**2 Samuel 5:1-7, 10, Mark 3:22-30**

*The scribes who had come down from Jerusalem were saying, "Beelzebul is in him" and, "It is through the prince of devils that he casts devils out." So Jesus called them to him and spoke to them in parables, "How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot last. And if a household is divided against itself, that household can never stand. Now if Satan has rebelled against himself and is divided, he cannot stand either – it is the end of him. But no one can make his way into a strong man's house and burgle his property unless he has tied up the strong man first. Only then can he burgle his house. I tell you solemnly, all men's sins will be forgiven, and all their blasphemies; but let anyone blaspheme against the Holy Spirit and he will never have forgiveness: he is guilty of an eternal sin." This was because they were saying, "An unclean spirit is in him."*

Come Holy Spirit!

Today's parable points out two conditions for a house to be securely protected. Firstly, when there is a strong man in it. Secondly, when it is united and not divided against itself. The strong man refers to the Holy Spirit, God Himself, and the house refers to our hearts. The Holy Spirit is already present in us, as written in Romans 5:5, *"the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given us."* Come what may, the Spirit remains in us because He loves us.

All that is required of us is to be united to the Holy Spirit. We do this when we are aware of His presence in us and spend time learning to listen, recognise His voice and obey His promptings. Gently, He tells us to have courage, to learn to forgive and be forgiven, to enjoy life's simple things, to work for peace, etc. This week, as we continue praying for Christian unity, let us ask the Spirit's help, knowing that for Him, nothing is impossible.

**Reflective question:**

What is the Holy Spirit prompting me today?

**Tuesday, 23<sup>rd</sup> January, 3<sup>rd</sup> Week in Ordinary Time.**

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

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

### Relationship with God

*"Anyone who does the will of God, that person is my brother and sister and mother."* For someone to do another's will freely and willingly implies a close relationship between them. In the gospel, Jesus highlighted this priority to anyone who wants to follow Him: having and building their relationship with God above any other relationship. Why? Simply because God is love. The more we relate with God, the more we are taught how to relate in love and with love. From here, little by little, we learn not only to connect with God in love but to relate with everyone else in our lives with love. This is the true outcome of prioritising our relationship with God. Putting God first does not mean that we neglect our other relationships. On the contrary, a true relationship with God leads us to turn to love others deeply.

Let us spend quality time with God to learn to be loved and to love. We also ask Mary to help us deepen our relationship with God so we can do His will in our lives as she did in hers.

### **Reflective question:**

How can I relate deeper with God?

**Wednesday, 24<sup>th</sup> January, St. Francis de Sales.**

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

*Jesus began to teach by the lakeside, but such a huge crowd gathered around him that he got into a boat on the lake and sat there. The people were all along the shore, at the water's edge. He taught them many things in parables, and in the course of his teaching he said to them, "Listen! Imagine a sower going out to sow. Now it happened that, as he sowed, some of the seed fell on the edge of the path, and the birds came*

*and ate it up. Some seed fell on rocky ground where it found little soil and sprang up straightaway, because there was no depth of earth: and when the sun came up it was scorched and, not having any roots, it withered away. Some seed fell into thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it produced no crop. And some seeds fell into rich soil and, growing tall and strong, produced crop; and yielded thirty, sixty, even a hundredfold." And he said, "Listen, anyone who has ears to hear!" When he was alone, the Twelve, together with the others who formed his company, asked what the parables meant. He told them, "The secret of the kingdom of God is given to you, but to those who are outside everything comes in parables, so that they may see and see again, but not perceive; may hear and hear again, but not understand; otherwise they might be converted and be forgiven." He said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? Then how will you understand any of the parables? What the sower is sowing is the word. Those on the edge of the path where the word is sown are people who have no sooner heard it than Satan comes and carries away the word that was sown in them. Similarly, those who receive the seed on patches of rock are people who, when first they hear the word, welcome it at once with joy. But they have no root in them, they do not last; should some trial come, or some persecution on account of the word, they fall away at once. Then there are others who receive the seed in thorns. These have heard the word, but the worries of this world, the lure of riches and all the other passions come in to choke the word, and so it produces nothing. And there are those who have received the seed in rich soil: they hear the word and accept it and yield a harvest, thirty and sixty and a hundredfold."*

### Listening

The parable invites us to reflect on our attitude when we hear the Word of God in prayer. Do we hear God's word with attention and interest? Are we determined and patient enough to allow God to help us understand His word? Do we quieten the voices of worries in our minds and hearts or put aside other distractions to hear Jesus' gentle voice? Finally, when we hear and understand God's word, do we believe Him? Those who are compared to rich soil heard and accepted the word with faith. Like them, we are called to listen and believe the word of Jesus.

*"Listen! Imagine a sower going out to sow."* Let us start our prayer with this beautiful image of a faithful God who goes out without fail each day



to sow His Word. He comes to speak His life-giving word to us. He may tell us to let go of fear, to believe that we are loved, to persevere in doing good, etc. Today, let us listen well to Jesus and believe Him!

**Reflective question:**

What kind of attitude do I need to have to listen well?

**Thursday, 25<sup>th</sup> January, The Conversion of St. Paul.**

**Acts 22:3-16 or Acts 9:1-22, Mark 16:15-18**

*Jesus showed himself to the Eleven and said to them, "Go out to the whole world; proclaim the Good News to all creation. He who believes and is baptised will be saved; he who 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."*

Conversion of St. Paul

Today, we celebrate the feast of St. Paul's conversion. As such, he was counted among those who believed and were baptised. In fact, at the heart of his conversion was his life-changing encounter with the Risen Jesus in Damascus. This encounter marked a decisive turning point in St. Paul's life journey as it became the starting point of his active, deep and loving relationship with Jesus. Throughout his life, he became God's chosen instrument who ventured tirelessly to the whole world with a single-minded purpose: proclaiming the Good News to all peoples, including those of non-Jewish origin, like many of us.

What a powerful testimony of missionary zeal we find in St. Paul. Let us imitate his passion for Jesus and his zeal to bring Jesus to all. In prayer, let the Risen Jesus reencounter us so that we can live in the faith of the One who loved us and gave Himself for us (cf. Gal 2:20). From prayer, urged by the love of Christ (cf. 2 Cor 5:14), we go to proclaim His love joyfully to the world.

**Reflective question:**

What can I learn from St. Paul?

**Friday, 26<sup>th</sup> January, SS. Timothy and Titus.**

**2 Timothy 1:1-8 or Titus 1:1-5, Luke 10:1-9**

*The Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them out ahead of him, in pairs, to all the towns and places he himself was to visit. He said to them, "The harvest is rich but the labourers are few, so ask the Lord of the harvest to send labourers to his harvest. Start off now, but remember, I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. Carry no purse, no haversack, no sandals. Salute no one on the road. Whatever house you go into, let your first words be, 'Peace to this house!' And if a man of peace lives there, your peace will go and rest on him: if not, it will come back to you. Stay in the same house, taking what food and drink they have to offer, for the labourer deserves his wages; do not move from house to house. Whenever you go into a town where they make you welcome, eat what is set before you. Cure those in it who are sick, and say, 'The kingdom of God is very near to you.'"*

### Jesus' ambassadors

Today, we celebrate the feast of Saints Timothy and Titus, St. Paul's beloved companions and co-workers. They were often the missionaries St. Paul sent to the Christian communities he planned to visit. In this way, they were not only St. Paul's valuable representatives but, more importantly, SS. Timothy and Titus became true ambassadors of Jesus Himself as the gospel tells us: *"The Lord appointed...and sent them out ahead of him, in pairs, to all the towns and places he himself was to visit."*

Like the two saints, we are called to become Jesus' own ambassadors. Ambassadors who, through our words, deeds and way of life, make Jesus' presence seen and heard, felt and known. We do this by following His instructions in the gospel: to live simply with gratitude and trust in God, to desire peace and speak words of peace to others, to help the unfortunate and pray for the sick, and to be a friend to all, just as Jesus is. As we go, we ask Jesus to come and teach us how to be His ambassadors of life and love.

### **Reflective question:**

To whom am I sent to be Jesus' ambassador?

**Saturday, 27<sup>th</sup> January, St. Angela Merici.**

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

*With the coming of evening, Jesus said to his disciples, "Let us cross over to the other side." And leaving the crowd behind they took him, just as he was, in the boat; and there were other boats with him. Then it began to blow a gale and the waves were breaking into the boat so that it was almost swamped. But he was in the stern, his head on the cushion, asleep. They woke him and said to him, "Master, do you not care? We are going down!" And he woke up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Quiet now! Be calm!" And the wind dropped, and all was calm again. Then he said to them, "Why are you so frightened? How is it that you have no faith?" They were filled with awe and said to one another, "Who can this be? Even the wind and the sea obey him."*

### Together with Jesus

Like the disciples in the gospel, when the boat of our lives gets caught up in the middle of an unexpected storm, we often react in the same way. We panic because we feel that we are losing control of the situation. In our fear, we may lose sight of the fact that the One present with us in our boat is God.

The Word of God reminds us today of the following truths of faith. Firstly, we are never alone in life's storms. Secondly, Jesus is in control even if He seems asleep. Let us then not be afraid to look for Jesus to express all that we carry in our hearts: our fears, our worries, our sense of helplessness and fatigue, etc. As He listens to us, let us perceive His care and calm, assuring us of His constant presence. May we always find Jesus weathering the storms together with us so that each storm can be turned into an opportunity for us to root our faith deeper in Him.

### **Reflective question:**

What strikes me from the passage?

**Sunday, 28<sup>th</sup> January, 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time.**

**Deuteronomy 18:15-20, 1 Corinthians 7:32-35, Mark 1:21-28**

*Jesus and his followers went as far as Capernaum, and as soon as the Sabbath came Jesus went to the synagogue and began to teach. And his teaching made a deep impression on them because, unlike the scribes, he taught them with authority. In their synagogue just then there*

*was a man possessed by an unclean spirit, and it shouted, "What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are: the Holy One of God." But Jesus said sharply, "Be quiet! Come out of him!" And the unclean spirit threw the man into convulsions and with a loud cry went out of him. The people were so astonished that they started asking each other what it all meant. "Here is a teaching that is new," they said, "and with authority behind it: he gives orders even to unclean spirits and they obey him." And his reputation rapidly spread everywhere, through all the surrounding Galilean countryside.*

### Prophets of today

*"The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet...to him you must listen" (1<sup>st</sup> reading). One listens to a prophet because he/she is called to speak God's word to the people. However, firstly, a prophet has to listen deeply to God because He leads us to be in touch with the realities of others. Jesus Himself did this in the gospel when He healed the possessed man. He listened and saw someone who was not free inside to be himself and live life to the fullest. Understanding the man's suffering, Jesus spoke the word that freed and restored him to true life.*

As Christians, we are called to share in the prophetic role of Jesus. We are the prophets of today: in our places and among the people God has given us. God wants to speak His word of healing and freedom to His people through us. Desiring the same, let us listen to God so that, in turn, we can speak His word to those suffering.

### **Reflective question:**

Am I living my Christian calling as a prophet of today?

### **Monday, 29<sup>th</sup> January, 4<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time.**

#### **2 Samuel 15:13-14, 30, 16:5-13, Mark 5:1-20**

*Jesus and his disciples reached the country of the Gerasenes on the other side of the lake, and no sooner had he left the boat than a man with an unclean spirit came out from the tombs towards him. The man lived in the tombs and no one could secure him any more, even with a chain; because he had often been secured with fetters and chains but had snapped the chains and broken the fetters, and no one had the strength to control him. All night and all day, among the tombs and in the mountains, he would howl and gash himself with stones. Catching sight*

*of Jesus from a distance, he ran up and fell at his feet and shouted at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, son of the Most High God? Swear by God you will not torture me!" – For Jesus had been saying to him, "Come out of the man, unclean spirit." "What is your name?" Jesus asked. "My name is legion," he answered, "for there are many of us." And he begged him earnestly not to send them out of the district. Now there was there on the mountainside a great herd of pigs feeding, and the unclean spirits begged him, "Send us to the pigs, let us go into them." So he gave them leave. With that, the unclean spirits came out and went into the pigs, and the herd of about two thousand pigs charged down the cliff into the lake, and there they were drowned. The swineherds ran off and told their story in the town and in the country around about; and the people came to see what had really happened. They came to Jesus and saw the demoniac sitting there, clothed and in his full senses – the very man who had had the legion in him before and they were afraid. And those who had witnessed it reported what had happened to the demoniac and what had become of the pigs. Then they began to implore Jesus to leave the neighbourhood. As he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed begged to be allowed to stay with him. Jesus would not let him but said to him, "Go home to your people and tell them all that the Lord in his mercy has done for you." So the man went off and proceeded to spread throughout the Decapolis all that Jesus had done for him. And everyone was amazed.*

### All that the Lord has done for us

It is striking to see how different the man in today's gospel was before and after his healing encounter with Jesus. Before, he lived in the tombs with a chain, howling and gashing himself with stones. Afterwards, he sat calmly, clothed, and fully aware. With such a transformation, it is no surprise that Jesus gave him the task of going home to his people to tell them *"all that the Lord in his mercy has done for you."*

Perhaps not all of us have such dramatic or drastic experiences of change in our lives. However, in the big and small moments of life, we, too, have experienced the many loving actions of Jesus for us, as He did to this man. In prayer, let us remember and savour these moments again, allowing gratitude and joy to fill our hearts. For it is from such a heart that one could proclaim to the people the Good News of Jesus; *"for the mouth speaks what the heart is full of"* (Luke 6:45).

## **Reflective question:**

How have I experienced God's love in my life?

## **Tuesday, 30<sup>th</sup> January, 4<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time.**

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

*When Jesus had crossed in the boat to the other side, a large crowd gathered round him and he stayed by the lakeside. Then one of the synagogue officials came up, Jairus by name, and seeing him, fell at his feet and pleaded with him earnestly, saying, "My little daughter is desperately sick. Do come and lay your hands on her to make her better and save her life." Jesus went with him and a large crowd followed him; they were pressing all around him. Now there was a woman who had suffered from a hemorrhage for twelve years; after long and painful treatment under various doctors, she had spent all she had without being any the better for it, in fact, she was getting worse. She had heard about Jesus, and she came up behind him through the crowd and touched his cloak. "If I can touch even his clothes," she had told herself, "I shall be well again." And the source of the bleeding dried up instantly, and she felt in herself that she was cured of her complaint. Immediately aware that power had gone out from him, Jesus turned around in the crowd and said, "Who touched my clothes?" His disciples said to him, "You see how the crowd is pressing around you and yet you say, 'Who touched me?' "But he continued to look all around to see who had done it. Then the woman came forward, frightened and trembling" because she knew what had happened to her, and she fell at his feet and told him the whole truth. "My daughter," he said, "your faith has restored you to health; go in peace and be free from your complaint." While he was still speaking some people arrived from the house of the synagogue official to say, "Your daughter is dead: why put the Master to any further trouble?" But Jesus had overheard this remark of theirs and he said to the official, "Do not be afraid; only have faith." And he allowed no one to go with him except Peter and James and John the brother of James. So they came to the official's house and Jesus noticed all the commotion, with people weeping and wailing unrestrainedly. He went in and said to them, "Why all this commotion and crying? The child is not dead, but asleep." But they laughed at him. So he turned them all out and, taking with him the child's father and mother and his own companions, he went into the place where the child lay. And taking the child by the hand he said to her,*

*"Talitha, kum!" which means, "Little girl, I tell you to get up." The little girl got up at once and began to walk about, for she was twelve years old. At this they were overcome with astonishment, and he ordered them strictly not to let anyone know about it, and told them to give her something to eat.*

### Have faith

The gospel tells us of two desperate situations: that of a woman who suffered an incurable haemorrhage and of Jairus, a father whose daughter was dying. Both were facing situations that seemed to be beyond hope. Yet, both refused to give up and chose to put their faith in Jesus, believing that in Him, all would be well. Thus, their faith became a light that led them through life's dark tunnel.

*"Do not be afraid; only have faith."* In prayer, let us listen to Jesus speaking these words to us. As we walk through life's different moments, let them ring constantly in our minds and hearts. Let us follow Jesus wherever He leads, even if the way seems unfamiliar and not according to our plan. Let us continue to trust Him and not be swayed or dismayed by the doubt and fear that may come our way. Today, we ask for the grace to pray as Mother Teresa did when she said, *"I do not pray for success, I ask for faithfulness."*

### **Reflective question:**

Which are the situations in my life where Jesus invites me to have faith in Him?

### **Wednesday, 31<sup>st</sup> January, St. John Bosco.**

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

*Jesus went to his home town and his disciples accompanied him. With the coming of the sabbath he began teaching in the synagogue and most of them were astonished when they heard him. They said, "Where did the man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been granted him, and these miracles that are worked through him? This is the carpenter, surely, the son of Mary, the brother of James and Joset and Jude and Simon? His sisters, too, are they not here with us?" And they would not accept him. And Jesus said to them, "A prophet is only despised in his own country, among his own relations and in his own house"; and he could*

*work no miracle there, though he cured a few sick people by laying his hands on them. He was amazed at their lack of faith.*

### Freedom to be open

Today's gospel highlights to us, firstly, the need for the openness of faith for God to enter and act in one's life. In His hometown, Jesus could not act in the people's lives because they rejected Him. Secondly, the gospel shows us that each person was free to respond to Jesus' presence. He did not force them to believe in Him. This is Good News for us. Jesus is not a God who obliges us with fear or punishment. He highly values our freedom and respects our choices. He is the God who waits patiently for our response while lovingly inviting us to be more and more open to Him.

Let us continue our journey of opening ourselves a little more each day to Jesus so that He can act more in us and through us. In our relationship with others, may we follow the footsteps of Jesus and cultivate a heart full of patient love for others and ourselves.

### **Reflective question:**

How can I be open to Jesus today?



