

Prayer for Living Daily
Reflections
Liturgical Year B



“Hosanna!”

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PRAYER FOR LIVING YEAR B

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Friday, 1st March, 2nd Week of Lent.

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

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

God's stewards

In the gospel today, the responsible landowner provided everything that the tenants might need and left his vineyard in their hands. Like the owner of the vineyard, God is the true owner of all. He calls us to be good stewards of everything He has created. Thus, we are responsible for caring for the environment, including plants, animals, water, etc. The greatest way we exercise our stewardship is by caring for human life, especially the poor and the vulnerable.

The call to be good stewards begins at home and with the people God entrusted to us. We are good stewards when we care for, encourage, protect, and even correct those around us for their good. Let us reflect on the people in our lives and recognise that God is the one who places each of them in our hands. Have they changed for the better for having

known us? Do we love them as God loves them? As good stewards, let us go forth from ourselves towards our brothers and sisters, especially those needing our love.

Reflective question:

Who can I concretely show my care and concern today so as to exercise my stewardship?

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

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

The tax collectors and sinners, however, were all crowding round to listen to Jesus, and the Pharisees and scribes complained saying, 'This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.' So he told them this parable: Then he said, 'There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, "Father, let me have the share of the estate that will come to me." So the father divided the property between them. A few days later, the younger son got together everything he had and left for a distant country where he squandered his money on a life of debauchery. When he had spent it all, that country experienced a severe famine, and now he began to feel the pinch; so he hired himself out to one of the local inhabitants who put him on his farm to feed the pigs. And he would willingly have filled himself with the husks the pigs were eating but no one would let him have them. Then he came to his senses and said, "How many of my father's hired men have all the food they want and more, and here am I dying of hunger! I will leave this place and go to my father and say: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired men." So he left the place and went back to his father. While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with pity. He ran to the boy, clasped him in his arms and kissed him. Then his son said, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son." But the father said to his servants, "Quick! Bring out the best robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the calf we have been fattening, and kill it; we will celebrate by having a feast, because this son of mine was dead and has come back to life; he was lost and is found." And they began to celebrate. Now the elder son was out in the fields, and on his way back, as he drew near the house, he could hear music and dancing. Calling one of the servants he asked what it was all about. The servant told him,

"Your brother has come, and your father has killed the calf we had been fattening because he has got him back safe and sound." He was angry then and refused to go in, and his father came out and began to urge him to come in; but he retorted to his father, "All these years I have slaved for you and never once disobeyed any orders of yours, yet you never offered me so much as a kid for me to celebrate with my friends. But, for this son of yours, when he comes back after swallowing up your property -- he and his loose women -- you kill the calf we had been fattening." 'The father said, "My son, you are with me always and all I have is yours. But it was only right we should celebrate and rejoice, because your brother here was dead and has come to life; he was lost and is found."

This is God

We are used to referring to this parable of Jesus as the parable of the Prodigal Son or the Lost Son. However, we often forget that this story centres on the tenderness of the father who never stops loving both his sons. The father goes out running to meet his wayward younger son. The father patiently begs the prideful elder son to enter and join in the celebration. By telling us this parable, Jesus wants to show us that God is like the father. God does not want us to be far away from Him. He desires to be our parent and we as His beloved children. His love for us is unconditional, unlimited and compassionate, regardless of our response to Him.

Today, let us prayerfully read the gospel passage, let us allow ourselves to be loved by God and listen to Him telling us, *"My child, you are with me always and all I have is yours."* When we experience ourselves with God, we can truly be with others and love them as our fellow brothers and sisters.

Reflective question:

Have I experienced myself unconditionally loved by God? (With an attitude of grateful joy, I remember the God-moments in my life.)

Sunday, 3rd March, Third Sunday of Lent.

Exodus 20:1-17, 1 Corinthians 1:22-25, John 2:13-25

When the time of the Jewish Passover was near Jesus went up to Jerusalem, and in the Temple he found people selling cattle and sheep

and doves, and the money changers sitting there. Making a whip out of cord, he drove them all out of the Temple, sheep and cattle as well, scattered the money changers' coins, knocked their tables over and said to the dove sellers, 'Take all this out of here and stop using my Father's house as a market.' Then his disciples remembered the words of scripture: I am eaten up with zeal for your house. The Jews intervened and said, 'What sign can you show us that you should act like this?' Jesus answered, 'Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' The Jews replied, 'It has taken forty-six years to build this Temple: are you going to raise it up again in three days?' But he was speaking of the Temple that was his body, and when Jesus rose from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the scripture and what he had said. During his stay in Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he did, but Jesus knew all people and did not trust himself to them; he never needed evidence about anyone; he could tell what someone had within.

Rebuilding the temple of our hearts

In today's gospel, we see Jesus getting angry over the sight of the Temple becoming something resembling a marketplace. There, merchants set up stalls and crowds came to purchase items. By driving the sellers and buyers from the Temple, Jesus wanted to return the Temple to be the house of prayer and not a place of commercial.

"Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst?" (1 Corinthians 3: 16). As we prayerfully read the gospel, let us acknowledge that our hearts are the sanctuary where God dwells. Today, Jesus also wants to cleanse the temple of our hearts from hypocrisy, falsehoods, pride, anger, etc. All that prevents us from living in communion with God and placing Him as the centre of our lives. In our prayer, let us perceive that God is in us and let our lives reflect His presence by allowing Him to influence us so that we can walk through each day with renewed love for Him and one another.

Reflective question:

Is God the centre of my heart and do I allow Him to influence my words and actions today?

Monday, 4th March, 3rd Week of Lent.

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

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

A big God with a big heart

In the first reading, Naaman, a non-Jew and an army commander to the king of Aram, suffered from leprosy, sought healing from the prophet Elisha, and eventually experienced God's healing touch. The message of the story of Naaman shows us that God cares for all men and women and has a big heart with love for all humanity. In the gospel, the listeners of Jesus were enraged when He said that God was a God for all peoples, all nations and all races. They had a rather narrow view of God and struggled to accept that God could love people outside of Israel.

Do we allow Jesus to challenge the somehow restricted way we understand God and relate with Him? Today, let us allow Jesus to speak to us and show us that God is a God of love and that His love is for all, including those we look at with disdain and dislike. May Jesus expand our hearts to be more inclusive and loving like God.

Reflective question:

Is it good news for me that God loves without having any favourites?

Tuesday, 5th March, 3rd Week of Lent.

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

Peter went up to Jesus and said, 'Lord, how often must I forgive my brother if he wrongs me? As often as seven times?' Jesus answered,

'Not seven, I tell you, but seventy-seven times. 'And so the kingdom of Heaven may be compared to a king who decided to settle his accounts with his servants. When the reckoning began, they brought him a man who owed ten thousand talents; 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, with the words, "Be patient with me 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, saying, "Pay what you owe me." His fellow-servant fell at his feet and appealed to him, saying, "Be patient with me 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 the man and said to him, "You wicked servant, 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.'

Forgive us as we forgive others

Forgiveness is not easy when our hearts are full of pride, anger and resentment. In our own life experiences, we have witnessed the power of unforgiveness that destroys families and friendships. In today's gospel, Jesus calls us to love by showing mercy and forgiving.

"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?" In the parable, the servant refuses to cancel the small debt of a fellow servant even though he has just experienced the mercy shown by his master, who cancels off his huge debt. Do we identify ourselves with this unforgiving servant? Receiving God's merciful love demands that we too forgive others when they hurt us. As we journey through Lent, let us ask Jesus to fill our hearts with His merciful love and learn to let go of resentment and hatred and forgive others instead.

Reflective question:

Is there someone I struggle to forgive? (Speak to Jesus about this struggle.)

Wednesday, 6th March, 3rd Week of Lent.**Deuteronomy 4:1, 5-9, Matthew 5:17-19**

Jesus said to his disciples: 'Do not imagine that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to complete them. In truth I tell you, till heaven and earth disappear, not one dot, not one little stroke, is to disappear from the Law until all its purpose is achieved. Therefore, anyone who infringes even one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be considered the least in the kingdom of Heaven; but the person who keeps them and teaches them will be considered great in the kingdom of Heaven.'

To observe the Law of Love

In today's gospel, Jesus presents Himself as the fulfilment of the Law and the Prophets. He does not come to destroy or take away the Law of Moses, but He completes it by showing us that the Law of love is the absolute imperative to build a life as God wills it. Looking at Jesus in the gospels, we see Him as someone not tied down by ritual observances and not concerned with debating casuistic issues of morality. He lived a life of compassion, forgiveness, helping the poor and the needy, befriending the outcasts, etc.

In this season of Lent, let us live a life inspired by love. Nothing would please God more. Jesus, our companion in this journey, commits Himself to help and sustain us in our daily efforts to live out the Law of love.

Reflective question:

Am I really living according to the Law of love?

Thursday, 7th March, 3rd Week of Lent.**Jeremiah 7:23-28, Luke 11:14-23**

Jesus was driving out a devil and it was dumb; and it happened that when the devil had gone out the dumb man spoke, and the people were amazed. But some of them said, 'It is through Beelzebul, the prince of devils, that he drives devils out.' Others asked him, as a test, for a sign

from heaven; but, knowing what they were thinking, he said to them, 'Any kingdom which is divided against itself is heading for ruin, and house collapses against house. So, too, with Satan: if he is divided against himself, how can his kingdom last? - since you claim that it is through Beelzebul that I drive devils out. Now if it is through Beelzebul that I drive devils out, through whom do your own sons drive them out? They shall be your judges, then. But if it is through the finger of God that I drive devils out, then the kingdom of God has indeed caught you unawares. So long as a strong man fully armed guards his own home, his goods are undisturbed; but when someone stronger than himself attacks and defeats him, the stronger man takes away all the weapons he relied on and shares out his spoil. Anyone who is not with me is against me; and anyone who does not gather in with me throws away.'

Listen to my voice

"These were my orders: Listen to my voice, then I will be your God and you shall be my people. Follow right to the end the way that I mark out for you, and you will prosper. But they did not listen, they did not pay attention..." (1st Reading). God is the source of life and love and is not here to harm us but to guide us to live life to the fullest. Ultimately, He wants us to bring us to a loving relationship with Him. To hear the voice of God, we need solitude and a firm determination to listen attentively.

In the gospel, Jesus healed a dumb person, but the people were too hard-hearted to see God working in and through Him, and thus, they refused to listen to Him and distanced themselves from Him. Today, let us be determined to listen to Jesus and to have eyes of faith to recognise His life-giving presence around us.

Reflective question:

Do I truly listen to God and recognise His presence in my life?

Friday, 8th March, 3rd Week of Lent.

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

One of the scribes who had listened to them debating appreciated that Jesus had given a good answer and put a further question to him, 'Which is the first of all the commandments?' Jesus replied, 'This is the first: Listen, Israel, the Lord our God is the one, only Lord, and you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind

and with all your strength. The second is this: You must love your neighbour as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these.' The scribe said to him, 'Well spoken, Master; what you have said is true, that he is one and there is no other. To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and strength, and to love your neighbour as yourself, this is far more important than any burnt offering or sacrifice.' Jesus, seeing how wisely he had spoken, said, 'You are not far from the kingdom of God.' And after that no one dared to question him any more.

Love...

The two dimensions of love- loving God and loving our neighbours- characterise us as Jesus' disciples. Often, we focus on the need to give ourselves constantly to others by doing things for them. We try our best to love God by serving Him in parish ministries. In the end, we end up tired with all the doing. We forget that love is not just about doing things. Instead, our love for God and others is the channel of what we first receive from God, who loves us so much. Therefore, in today's first reading, the prophet Hosea reminds us of God's constant call to return to Him: "*Israel, come back to the Lord your God...*" (1st Reading). God desires to love us unconditionally so that our hearts are full, and not empty, of love. With our hearts full of love, we can love God and others as He wants us to.

We are sacraments of the unconditional love of God today. We serve and do things in His love and with His love.

Reflective question:

Is the commandment to love a top priority for me?

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

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

Jesus spoke the following parable to some people who prided themselves on being upright and despised everyone else, 'Two men went up to the Temple to pray, one a Pharisee, the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood there and said this prayer to himself, "I thank you, God, that I am not grasping, unjust, adulterous like everyone else, and particularly that I am not like this tax collector here. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes on all I get." The tax collector stood some distance away, not daring even to raise his eyes to heaven; but he beat his breast and said,

"God, be merciful to me, a sinner." This man, I tell you, went home again justified; the other did not. For everyone who raises himself up will be humbled, but anyone who humbles himself will be raised up.'

A heart full of merciful love

"...what I want is love, not sacrifice..." (1st reading). God values and appreciates a heart full of love rather than the empty sacrifices we make. We can serve God in ministries, help the church plan activities, go on many retreats, fast from our favourite food, etc. However, what is the point of doing all these with a heart that lacks merciful love for God and others?

In today's gospel, Jesus presents us with the Pharisees and the tax collector. The Pharisee was proud of all his good deeds for God; thus, he thought he had every right to judge others. Little did he know that he had lived his life without God. On the other hand, the tax collector placed himself in front of God because he knew that he needed His merciful love and help. He went home with a heart full of God's mercy and forgiveness. Today, like the tax collector, let us recognise that we depend on God for His mercy and love. May our lives, words and actions be pleasing to God.

Reflective question:

What is God's message to me today?

Sunday, 10th March, Fourth Sunday of Lent.

2 Chronicles 36:14-16, 19-23, Ephesians 2:4-10, John 3:14-21

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

truth comes out into the light, so that what he is doing may plainly appear as done in God.'

The joy of being loved

Lent is about returning to God and experiencing His boundless and unwavering love for us, not making empty and rigorous sacrifices. Let us turn to the words of Jesus in today's gospel: "*For this is how God loved the world: he gave his only Son...*". May we truly believe and experience God's love for us despite our messy lives and the many mistakes we made in the past. God loves us, and in His love, He forgives always. "*...though the light has come into the world people have preferred darkness to the light...*". Jesus is the light that brings God's forgiveness, mercy and peace. Sometimes, we can be afraid of drawing close to Jesus because we do not want Him to reveal our faults and sins and be punished by God. But God does not condemn or punish us. He never fails to forgive us without exception and wants to make peace with us. Today is Laetere Sunday, the Sunday of Joy. Indeed, we can rejoice because we have the certainty that no darkness of our faults and sins can separate us from God's love.

Reflective question:

How do I know that God loves me from my own experiences?

Monday, 11th March, 4th Week of Lent.

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

Jesus left for Galilee. He himself had declared that a prophet is not honoured in his own home town. On his arrival the Galileans received him well, having seen all that he had done at Jerusalem during the festival which they too had attended. He went again to Cana in Galilee, where he had changed the water into wine. And there was a royal official whose son was ill at Capernaum; hearing that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judaea, he went and asked him to come and cure his son, as he was at the point of death. Jesus said to him, 'Unless you see signs and portents you will not believe!' 'Sir,' answered the official, 'come down before my child dies.' 'Go home,' said Jesus, 'your son will live.' The man believed what Jesus had said and went on his way home; and while he was still on the way his servants met him with the news that his boy was alive. He asked them when the boy had begun to recover. They replied, 'The fever left him yesterday at the seventh hour.' The father

realised that this was exactly the time when Jesus had said, 'Your son will live'; and he and all his household believed. This new sign, the second, Jesus performed on his return from Judaea to Galilee.

The simplicity of faith: To believe in what God says

In the gospel today, Jesus encountered a desperate man whose son was ill and about to die. Most likely, the official had seen Jesus healing people and knew that He could help him, and so, he begged Jesus to heal his son. Jesus responded, *"Go home, your son will live"*. What did the official do next? *"The man believed what Jesus had said and went on his way home"* The official showed his faith in Jesus by trusting in His words. How many of us would continue to pester Jesus? This man believed in what Jesus told him, and with a heart full of trust, he walked back home.

As we pray with this gospel passage, let us learn from the official to have the faith to hear God's word, believe it and take action even when we have no idea where we are going and know for sure where the road ahead of us will end.

Reflective question:

How can I live by faith in Jesus today?

Tuesday, 12th March, 4th Week of Lent.

Ezekiel 47:1-9, 12, John 5:1-3, 5-16

After this there was a Jewish festival, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now in Jerusalem next to the Sheep Pool there is a pool called Bethesda in Hebrew, which has five porticos; and under these were crowds of sick people, blind, lame, paralysed. One man there had an illness which had lasted thirty-eight years, and when Jesus saw him lying there and knew he had been in that condition for a long time, he said, 'Do you want to be well again?' 'Sir,' replied the sick man, 'I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is disturbed; and while I am still on the way, someone else gets down there before me.' Jesus said, 'Get up, pick up your sleeping-mat and walk around.' The man was cured at once, and he picked up his mat and started to walk around. Now that day happened to be the Sabbath, so the Jews said to the man who had been cured, 'It is the Sabbath; you are not allowed to carry your sleeping-mat.' He replied, 'But the man who cured me told me, "Pick up your sleeping-mat and walk around."' ' They asked, 'Who is the man who said to you, "Pick up your sleeping-mat and walk around"' ' The man had no idea who it

was, since Jesus had disappeared, as the place was crowded. After a while Jesus met him in the Temple and said, 'Now you are well again, do not sin any more, or something worse may happen to you.' The man went back and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had cured him. It was because he did things like this on the Sabbath that the Jews began to harass Jesus.

Get up

“*Get up...*” This is the cry of Jesus resounding throughout this Lenten season. He tells us to get up from all that makes us spiritually paralysed and prevents us from living life full of God's love and joy. Years and years, like the paralytic man in today's gospel, we too are paralysed by our narrow worldview, crippling low self-esteem, unforgiveness toward someone, disappointment with a situation, self-righteous pride, etc. In our brokenness, we feel hopeless with ourselves and our lives and struggle to love, dream, and trust again.

Jesus always draws close to us and invites us to go deeper into God's love for us and not be contented to be in a shallow relationship with Him. The more we dive deep into a relationship with God, the more we find His presence that heals us and makes us live freely and joyfully. Listen as Jesus tells us, “*Do you want to be well again?...Get up, live again.*”

Reflective question:

Where am I paralysed in my life?

Wednesday, 13th March, 4th Week of Lent.

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

Jesus said to the Jews: 'My Father still goes on working, and I am at work, too.' But that only made the Jews even more intent on killing him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he spoke of God as his own Father and so made himself God's equal. To this Jesus replied: In all truth I tell you, by himself the Son can do nothing; he can do only what he sees the Father doing: and whatever the Father does the Son does too. For the Father loves the Son and shows him everything he himself does, and he will show him even greater things than these, works that will astonish you. Thus, as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so the Son gives life to anyone he chooses; for the Father judges no one; he has entrusted all judgement to the Son, so that all

may honour the Son as they honour the Father. Whoever refuses honour to the Son refuses honour to the Father who sent him. In all truth I tell you, whoever listens to my words, and believes in the one who sent me, has eternal life; without being brought to judgement such a person has passed from death to life. In all truth I tell you, the hour is coming -- indeed it is already here -- when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and all who hear it will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself; and, because he is the Son of man, has granted him power to give judgement. Do not be surprised at this, for the hour is coming when the dead will leave their graves at the sound of his voice: those who did good will come forth to life; and those who did evil will come forth to judgement. By myself I can do nothing; I can judge only as I am told to judge, and my judging is just, because I seek to do not my own will but the will of him who sent me.'

God's boundless love

"... I will say to the prisoners, 'Come out,' to those who are in darkness, 'Show yourselves'... and each bare height shall be their pasture. They will never hunger or thirst, scorching wind and sun shall never plague them; for he who pities them will lead them and guide them to springs of water..." (1st Reading). God's love does not depend on our performances or failures. He loves us simply because each of us is His beloved child. In the First Reading, toward prisoners and people living in darkness, i.e. people whose lives are not perfect, God continues to care for them by giving them abundant pasture and water. This Lent, we are called to experience God's love for us despite our messy and imperfect lives so that we can be more merciful toward others.

In the gospel, Jesus said, *"My Father goes on working, and so do I"*. These words bring comfort to us. God never stops working to touch our hearts and bring us back to Him because He never gives up on us and never stops loving us. May we love others the same!

Reflective question:

Do I rejoice with the reality that God loves me so much?

Thursday, 14th March, 4th Week of Lent.

Exodus 32:7-14, John 5:31-47

Jesus said to the Jews: 'Were I to testify on my own behalf, my testimony would not be true; but there is another witness who speaks on my behalf, and I know that his testimony is true. You sent messengers to John, and he gave his testimony to the truth- not that I depend on human testimony; no, it is for your salvation that I mention it. John was a lamp lit and shining and for a time you were content to enjoy the light that he gave. But my testimony is greater than John's: the deeds my Father has given me to perform, these same deeds of mine testify that the Father has sent me. Besides, the Father who sent me bears witness to me himself. You have never heard his voice, you have never seen his shape, and his word finds no home in you because you do not believe in the one whom he has sent. You pore over the scriptures, believing that in them you can find eternal life; it is these scriptures that testify to me, and yet you refuse to come to me to receive life! Human glory means nothing to me. Besides, I know you too well: you have no love of God in you. I have come in the name of my Father and you refuse to accept me; if someone else should come in his own name you would accept him. How can you believe, since you look to each other for glory and are not concerned with the glory that comes from the one God? Do not imagine that I am going to accuse you before the Father: you have placed your hopes on Moses, and Moses will be the one who accuses you. If you really believed him you would believe me too, since it was about me that he was writing; but if you will not believe what he wrote, how can you believe what I say?'

The works I do reflect God who sends me

"...these same deeds of mine testify that the Father has sent me". With these words, Jesus points out that the works He does reveal God's presence. The same applies for us too. The work we do, be it a service we do for the parish/our faith community, a job we do in the office, a task we do for the family, etc., needs to be a constant reflection of God and His values and attitudes that speak of honesty, justice, forgiveness, humility, etc. For our work to truly testify to God's presence in our lives, we must listen to Him through the Scripture and in the silence of our hearts so that His Word can transform our minds and reorient our priorities.

To be a Christian means more than simply going to Church on Sunday. It is about being a mirror of God's loving presence through our works and words. May the Holy Spirit empower us to live in His love today.

Reflective question:

Do my works show others that God is in me and sending me to be His instrument to the people I meet daily?

Friday, 15th March, 4th Week of Lent.

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

After this Jesus travelled round Galilee; he could not travel round Judaea, because the Jews were seeking to kill him. As the Jewish feast of Shelters drew near, after his brothers had left for the festival, Jesus went up as well, not publicly but secretly. Meanwhile some of the people of Jerusalem were saying, 'Isn't this the man they want to kill? And here he is, speaking openly, and they have nothing to say to him! Can it be true the authorities have recognised that he is the Christ? Yet we all know where he comes from, but when the Christ appears no one will know where he comes from.' Then, as Jesus was teaching in the Temple, he cried out: You know me and you know where I came from. Yet I have not come of my own accord: but he who sent me is true; You do not know him, but I know him because I have my being from him and it was he who sent me. They wanted to arrest him then, but because his hour had not yet come no one laid a hand on him.

From a loving relationship with God, comes courage

The gospel passage tells us that Jesus could no longer travel around as freely as He used to because "*the Jews were seeking to kill Him*". Yet, He went to the Feast of Shelters in Jerusalem. Though He knew that danger was around Him, Jesus courageously went to the Temple and preached. Truly, the Word of God cannot be quiet. Where did Jesus get His courage? His courageous passion for the mission came from His deep, intimate relationship with God His Father.

Jesus invites us to leave our comfort zone and live out our mission to bring God's presence to others through our words and works. However, to have the courage to say the truth and do what is right, we need to have a close relationship with God- a relationship that makes us trust

that He is with us and will always give us the strength to go out and do what we are called to do.

Reflective question:

Do I trust that God will give me what I need for this mission?

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

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

Some of the crowd who had been listening to Jesus said, 'He is indeed the prophet,' and some said, 'He is the Christ,' but others said, 'Would the Christ come from Galilee? Does not scripture say that the Christ must be descended from David and come from Bethlehem, the village where David was?' So the people could not agree about him. Some wanted to arrest him, but no one actually laid a hand on him. The guards went back to the chief priests and Pharisees who said to them, 'Why haven't you brought him?' The guards replied, 'No one has ever spoken like this man.' 'So,' the Pharisees answered, 'you, too, have been led astray? Have any of the authorities come to believe in him? Any of the Pharisees? This rabble knows nothing about the Law -- they are damned.' One of them, Nicodemus -- the same man who had come to Jesus earlier -- said to them, 'But surely our Law does not allow us to pass judgement on anyone without first giving him a hearing and discovering what he is doing?' To this they answered, 'Are you a Galilean too? Go into the matter, and see for yourself: prophets do not arise in Galilee.'

To know Jesus

In today's gospel, the people were perplexed with who Jesus was. Was He a prophet? Was He the Christ? Would the long-awaited Messiah come from Galilee? The Pharisees ordered the guards to arrest Jesus on the basis that He did not fit their idea of how the Messiah should be. Jesus was a "rabble" for them despite all the good things they had witnessed Him doing. In the end, the guards who were sent to arrest Jesus were confused with Him. They listened to Jesus speaking about God and His Kingdom and were intrigued by Him. They went back empty-handed without arresting Him. Thus, the people were divided over Jesus.

Are we really so different from the crowds, the Pharisees and the guards? Our pride, indifference, narrow-mindedness and inattention can make us miss knowing Jesus as who He is. May we be open to experiencing Jesus, our Friend, and be conscious of His presence with us. Listen to Jesus as He asks us, “*Who am I for you?*” Let Jesus be the person we want to know more and love more.

Reflective question:

How am I making time to know Jesus and having heart-to-heart encounters with Him?

Sunday, 17th March, Fifth Sunday of Lent.

Jeremiah 31:31-34, Hebrews 5:7-9, John 12:20-33

Among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. These approached Philip, who came from Bethsaida in Galilee, and put this request to him, 'Sir, we should like to see Jesus.' Philip went to tell Andrew, and Andrew and Philip together went to tell Jesus. Jesus replied to them: Now the hour has come for the Son of man to be glorified. In all truth I tell you, unless a wheat grain falls into the earth and dies, it remains only a single grain; but if it dies it yields a rich harvest. Anyone who loves his life loses it; anyone who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me, must follow me, and my servant will be with me wherever I am. If anyone serves me, my Father will honour him. Now my soul is troubled. What shall I say: Father, save me from this hour? But it is for this very reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name! A voice came from heaven, 'I have glorified it, and I will again glorify it.' The crowd standing by, who heard this, said it was a clap of thunder; others said, 'It was an angel speaking to him.' Jesus answered, 'It was not for my sake that this voice came, but for yours.'

Going downwards

“In all truth I tell you, unless a wheat grain falls into the earth and dies...”. The path of discipleship is walking the same path of Jesus, which implies dying to our “I”, our self-centeredness that seeks personal glory, power, recognition and popularity. Our world encourages us to be self-centred, rewarding strength, power, self-sufficiency, popularity and success. But Jesus calls us to imitate Him by going the opposite, not

climbing upwards but falling downwards. He calls us to become the grain of wheat that falls and dies to self in order to live selflessly for others.

Jesus calls us to be disciples imitating Him, not admirers admiring Him from afar. As we journey in this Lenten season, let us not simply be content to give up on our favourite snacks but also give up on our tendency to be preoccupied with ourselves. Today, let us humbly ask Jesus to give us the grace to be like Him and die to ourselves so that we can bear the fruit of love.

Reflective question:

As I pray with the gospel passage, how is Christ inviting me to become a fruitful grain of wheat?

Monday, 18th March, 5th Sunday of Lent.

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

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

Go and sin no more

The woman caught in adultery had no hope as the scribes and the Pharisees, with stones in their hands, were ready to kill her for her mistake. Thus, they closed the door of any hope for the woman by using the Law of Moses to judge and condemn her. Jesus, however, looked at

her with hope and loved her with God's merciful love. In His heart, she was more important than her sins. Judging her with the Law of love, Jesus gave this woman a new chance and a new start in life. He told the woman, "*Go away, and from this moment, sin no more*".

Today, let us recognise that Jesus continues to look at us with a lot of love. In His heart, we are more than our mistakes and failures. He never condemns us but forgives and loves us. In this Lent, let us make room for Jesus to come and love us as we are. It is also time for us to stop pointing accusing fingers at others but, with the help of the Holy Spirit, expand our hearts to love them like Jesus.

Reflective questions:

As I prayerfully read this passage, who do I identify myself with? Why?

Tuesday, 19th March, St. Joseph.

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

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

Let God dream in us

Today, as we celebrate the Feast of St. Joseph, let us allow him to encourage us to move from our personal dreams to embrace God's dreams for our lives. Like many people, Joseph was a man of dreams of finding a partner, settling down, and living a life of security. However, when God communicated His dream to Joseph and invited him to dream with Him, to be part of His love story with humanity, Joseph said "Yes".

Joseph did not just passively dream; he actively took steps to make it a reality by taking Mary as his wife.

“We were not created to dream about vacations or the weekend, but to make God’s dreams come true in this world. God made us capable of dreaming, so that we could embrace the beauty of life. The works of mercy are the most beautiful works in life.” (Pope Francis). God made us capable of dreaming with Him. We dream with Him when we commit ourselves to love and care for others, become instruments bringing Christ’s peace to broken relationships, work for the good of the poor and the most vulnerable in society, etc.

Reflective question:

Like St. Joseph, do I dare to dream with God?

Wednesday, 20th March, 5th Week of Lent.

Daniel 3:14-20, 91-92,95, John 8:31-42

To the Jews who believed in him Jesus said: If you make my word your home you will indeed be my disciples; you will come to know the truth, and the truth will set you free. They answered, 'We are descended from Abraham and we have never been the slaves of anyone; what do you mean, "You will be set free?" ' Jesus replied: In all truth I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave. Now a slave has no permanent standing in the household, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will indeed be free. I know that you are descended from Abraham; but you want to kill me because my word finds no place in you. What I speak of is what I have seen at my Father's side, and you too put into action the lessons you have learnt from your father. They repeated, 'Our father is Abraham.' Jesus said to them: If you are Abraham's children, do as Abraham did. As it is, you want to kill me, a man who has told you the truth as I have learnt it from God; that is not what Abraham did. You are doing your father's work. They replied, 'We were not born illegitimate, the only father we have is God.' Jesus answered: If God were your father, you would love me, since I have my origin in God and have come from him; I did not come of my own accord, but he sent me.'

The joy of belonging

"Now a slave has no permanent standing in the household, but a son belongs to it forever". Have you ever been with people who made you feel at home? Many of us would think of our family with whom we can be ourselves, and they love us despite our irritating habits. We also have good friends with whom we can share our joys and sadness, and they accept us but dare to challenge us to change for the better.

In today's gospel, Jesus calls us to remember who we are: sons and daughters of God. The sense of being at home with family and close friends is what we have with God. We belong to God. We have a place in His house, His heart. There, we can be ourselves, we can be happy and cry, we can make mistakes and find forgiveness. As His children, we belong in His heart forever and are unconditionally loved. In moments when we struggle with loneliness, being misunderstood or fear about the future, let us go back to God. There, we are home today and forever.

Reflection question:

How do I live out my belongingness to God?

Thursday, 21st March, 5th Week of Lent.

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

Jesus said to the Jews: 'In all truth I tell you, whoever keeps my word will never see death. The Jews said, 'Now we know that you are possessed. Abraham is dead, and the prophets are dead, and yet you say, "Whoever keeps my word will never know the taste of death." Are you greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? The prophets are dead too. Who are you claiming to be?' Jesus answered: If I were to seek my own glory my glory would be worth nothing; in fact, my glory is conferred by the Father, by the one of whom you say, 'He is our God,' although you do not know him. But I know him, and if I were to say, 'I do not know him,' I should be a liar, as you yourselves are. But I do know him, and I keep his word. Your father Abraham rejoiced to think that he would see my Day; he saw it and was glad. The Jews then said, 'You are not fifty yet, and you have seen Abraham!' Jesus replied: In all truth I tell you, before Abraham ever was, I am.' At this they picked up stones to throw at him; but Jesus hid himself and left the Temple.

“I AM”

“Jesus replied, ‘In all truth I tell you, before Abraham ever was, I am’. At this they picked up stones to throw at him...”. Jesus revealed Himself as the great “I am”. We might not consider it a big deal with the phrase “I am”. However, the Jewish listeners of Jesus knew that Jesus intentionally said, “I am” because He was claiming to be God. In Exodus 3:14, God revealed Himself: “I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”. Thus, the Jews were enraged with Jesus. Their hearts and minds were completely closed to what Jesus came to tell them.

Today, let us make room for Jesus in our hearts and minds as He reintroduces us to who He is- He is God who loves with compassion, not condemnation. He is a God who never throws a stone at anyone, but reflects mercy. He is a God who suffers with us and is not distant from our pain. Let us be open and listen to Jesus, the eternal and faithful “I Am”, as He speaks to us.

Reflective question:

How open am I to know God as He is?

Friday, 22nd March, 5th Week of Lent.

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

The Jews fetched stones to stone him, so Jesus said to them, 'I have shown you many good works from my Father; for which of these are you stoning me?' The Jews answered him, 'We are stoning you, not for doing a good work, but for blasphemy; though you are only a man, you claim to be God.' Jesus answered: Is it not written in your Law: I said, you are gods? So it uses the word 'gods' of those people to whom the word of God was addressed -- and scripture cannot be set aside. Yet to someone whom the Father has consecrated and sent into the world you say, 'You are blaspheming' because I said, 'I am Son of God.' If I am not doing my Father's work, there is no need to believe me; but if I am doing it, then even if you refuse to believe in me, at least believe in the work I do; then you will know for certain that the Father is in me and I am in the Father. They again wanted to arrest him then, but he eluded their clutches. He went back again to the far side of the Jordan to the district where John had been baptising at first and he stayed there. Many people who came

to him said, 'John gave no signs, but all he said about this man was true'; and many of them believed in him.

The Father is in me

This is the second incident where the Jews wanted to stone Jesus. We wonder, why? They did not stone Him for His good works but for the God He came to reveal. In His preaching, He proclaimed that the reign of God is for the poor and the outcast and that God is a Father who cares about the happiness of His people, a God who is close to them and constantly is moved by tenderness toward those who suffer.

What Jesus communicated to others was what He experienced personally in His life. He experienced the close union of love with His Father: *"the Father is in me and I am in the Father"*, and so He went out to proclaim it to others through His words and works. The season of Lent is a time of grace to open our ears of faith to listen to Jesus and allow Him to lead us into a deeper and more personal relationship with God so that we can courageously proclaim with joy His loving face.

Reflective question:

Am I willing to share the treasure of God's presence in me with others?

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

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

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

The Jewish Passover drew near, and many of the country people who had gone up to Jerusalem to purify themselves looked out for Jesus, saying to one another as they stood about in the Temple, 'What do you think? Will he come to the festival or not?' The chief priests and Pharisees had by now given their orders: anyone who knew where he was must inform them so that they could arrest him.

To live rejections with trust

The tensions increased. Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, which led many Jews to believe in Jesus, but some went to babble to the Pharisees about what happened. Increasingly, Jesus had upset the status quo and made the religious leaders feel threatened. Thus, they were determined to kill Him. Jesus was not naïve. He knew that His mission would eventually lead Him to a violent and fatal end. Despite it all, Jesus remained faithful to the God He had always trusted.

In our lives, we might also experience rejection, misunderstanding, and hardship due to opposition from people to our faith and our following of Jesus. Difficulties are not the end for us, but they are a call to trust God. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus and imitate His total trust in God.

Reflective question:

How can I deal with rejection and hardships in all areas of my life, especially when I am rejected for living out my faith?

Sunday, 24th March, Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord.

Isaiah 50:4-7, Philipians 2:6-11, Mark 14:1-15:47

(Using the Gospel from the start of the mass: Mark 11:1-10)

When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, close by the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples and said to them, 'Go to the village facing you, and as you enter it you will at once find a tethered colt that no one has yet ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone says to you, "What are you doing?" say, "The Master needs it and will send it back here at once." ' They went off and found a colt tethered near a door in the open street. As they untied it, some men standing there said, "What are you doing, untying that colt?' They gave the answer Jesus had told them, and the men let them go. Then they took the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on its back, and he mounted it. Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others greenery

which they had cut in the fields. And those who went in front and those who followed were all shouting, 'Hosanna! Blessed is he who is coming in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of David our father! Hosanna in the highest heavens!'

Riding on a donkey

"He humbled himself" ...These words show us God's way and, consequently, that which must be the way of Christians: it is humility. A way which constantly amazes and disturbs us: we will never get used to a humble God! Humility is above all God's way: God humbles himself to walk with his people ...This week, Holy Week, which leads us to Easter, we will take this path of Jesus' own humiliation. Only in this way will this week be 'holy' for us too!" (Pope Francis, Palm Sunday homily, 30th March 2015) In the Roman Empire, kings would ride on mighty stallions into the city in a triumphant procession to display their power, authority, and wealth. However, Jesus rode on a young donkey, reflecting His humility and gentleness. This is our humble God.

The crowd welcomed Jesus with joy and enthusiasm. Yet, soon, they would turn against Him and shout. "*Crucify Him!*". How fickle their hearts! Do we follow Jesus enthusiastically even if it leads us to the path of humiliation? Today is a call for us to put aside our pride that looks for recognition, self-glory, and popularity and follow Jesus with humility.

Reflective question:

What is Jesus' message to me?

Monday, 25th March, Monday of Holy Week.

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

Six days before the Passover, Jesus went to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom he had raised from the dead. They gave a dinner for him there; Martha waited on them and Lazarus was among those at table. Mary brought in a pound of very costly ointment, pure nard, and with it anointed the feet of Jesus, wiping them with her hair; the house was full of the scent of the ointment. Then Judas Iscariot - one of his disciples, the man who was to betray him - said, 'Why wasn't this ointment sold for three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor?' He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he was in charge of the common fund and used to help himself to the

contributions. So Jesus said, 'Leave her alone; she had to keep this scent for the day of my burial. You have the poor with you always, you will not always have me.' Meanwhile a large number of Jews heard that he was there and came not only on account of Jesus but also to see Lazarus whom he had raised from the dead. Then the chief priests decided to kill Lazarus as well, since it was on his account that many of the Jews were leaving them and believing in Jesus.

Impelled by love

In today's gospel, Jesus, knowing that His end was near, went to the house of His dearest friends, Martha, Mary and Lazarus. There, Mary, motivated by her deep love for Jesus, led her to take the most precious thing she had and spend it all on Him. Mary's action of extravagant love caused some murmurings in the crowd. Yet, she did not notice what others would say or think because love moved her to do what she did. Her action of love was a contrast to that of Judas. Judas, motivated by greed and jealousy, voiced his disapproval as he looked at Mary with disdain. His response reflected a heart that was already disconnected from Jesus. Jesus appreciated Mary's action because He saw love behind it.

At the start of Holy Week, may we take some time to reflect and identify what motivates us in the things we do. Let us draw close to Jesus and allow Him to fill us with His love so that we can be moved by love.

Reflective question:

Is love the motivation behind my actions?

Tuesday, 26th March, Tuesday of Holy Week.

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

Jesus was troubled in spirit and declared, 'I tell you most solemnly, one of you will betray me'. The disciples looked at one another, wondering which he meant. The disciple Jesus loved was reclining next to Jesus; Simon Peter signed to him and said, 'Ask who it is he means', so leaning back on Jesus' breast he said, 'Who is it, Lord?' 'It is the one' replied Jesus 'to whom I give the piece of bread that I shall dip in the dish.' He dipped the piece of bread and gave it to Judas son of Simon Iscariot. At that instant, after Judas had taken the bread, Satan entered him. Jesus then said, 'What you are going to do, do quickly'. None of the others at

table understood the reason he said this. Since Judas had charge of the common fund, some of them thought Jesus was telling him, 'Buy what we need for the festival', or telling him to give something to the poor. As soon as Judas had taken the piece of bread he went out. Night had fallen. When he had gone Jesus said: 'Now has the Son of Man been glorified, and in him God has been glorified. If God has been glorified in him, God will in turn glorify him in himself, and will glorify him very soon. 'My little children, I shall not be with you much longer. You will look for me, and, as I told the Jews, where I am going, you cannot come. Simon Peter said, 'Lord, where are you going?' Jesus replied, 'Where I am going you cannot follow me now; you will follow me later'. Peter said to him, 'Why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.' 'Lay down your life for me?' answered Jesus. 'I tell you most solemnly, before the cock crows you will have disowned me three times.'

Denial and betrayal

Jesus spent time with his closest friends at the last moments of his life by having the Last Supper with them. "*Night had fallen*"- after Judas' departure. The darkness was not just external; it reflected the internal state of Judas' heart. He silently made his plans and set the whole passion story in motion. Meanwhile, Peter made a promise, "*I will lay down my life for you*", and it was something that he did not keep. Yet, Jesus never stopped loving them to the end.

We too have walked away from Jesus and betrayed Him in moments of our lives when we failed to love the people around us. Today, Jesus knows our limitations and weaknesses, yet he continues to stay close to us and love us to the end. He calls us "*Friends*" (John 15:15), because this is who we are for Him despite our mistakes and faults. As we spend time with Jesus, let us be grateful for the depth of His love and ask Him to give us the grace to love Him faithfully to the end.

Reflective question:

Do I treasure the friendship of Jesus?

Wednesday, 27th March, Wednesday of Holy Week.

Isaiah 50:4-9, Matthew 26:14-25

Then one of the Twelve, the man called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, "What are you prepared to give me if I hand him over to you? They paid him thirty silver pieces, and from that moment he looked for an opportunity to betray him. Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus to say, "Where do you want us to make the preparations for you to eat the passover?" "Go to so-and-so in the city" he replied 'and say to him, "The Master says: My time is near. It is at your house that I am keeping Passover with my disciples.'" The disciples did what Jesus told them and prepared the Passover. When evening came he was at table with the twelve disciples. And while they were eating he said 'I tell you solemnly, one of you is about to betray me' They were greatly distressed and started asking him in turn, 'Not I, Lord, surely?' He answered, 'Someone who has dipped his hand into the dish with me, will betray me. The Son of Man is going to his fate, as the scriptures say he will, but alas for that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! Better for that man if he had never been born!' Judas, who was to betray him; asked in his turn, 'Not I, Rabbi, surely?' 'They are your own words' answered Jesus.

Betrayal

Judas, the man Jesus chose to be His apostle, betrayed Him for thirty silver coins. The fickle-minded crowd who shouted "Hosanna!" enthusiastically turned against Him and cried, "Crucify Him!". The rest of the disciples also betrayed Him when they ran away from Him at the moment of His suffering. Jesus suffered betrayal. Have we ever experienced betrayal from someone we loved and trusted? Have we ever felt the disappointment and hurt that overwhelmed us? A close family member, a best friend, the faith community, even the Church could betray us. It is a painful experience of betrayal which leaves us questioning our ability to trust again.

Today, let us recognised that Jesus suffered betrayal. We are not alone in our pain. Jesus tells us, "I am here. I am with you. I understand". Let us go to Jesus and find ourselves loved by His love that heals and renews. With Jesus, we learn again to trust.

Reflective question:

Can I pray for the person who has betrayed me?

Thursday, 28th March, Holy Thursday.

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

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

Love as I have loved you

Jesus, the Incarnate God of love, bent to wash His disciples' feet. One by one, He bent, poured the water from the jar, gently washed the feet and dried them with the towel tied around His waist. A job of a servant. Yet, Jesus took on the role of the foot-washer to express His unconditional love for them. As Jesus approached closer to Peter, he refused to allow Jesus to wash his feet. Jesus replied, *'If I do not wash you, you can have nothing in common with me.'* Peter would never have

known how to love others if he had not experienced the extent of Jesus' love for him.

Like Peter, we need to experience being one with Jesus before we can truly love others the way He wants us to. Jesus continues to wash our feet by showing His love to us in the Eucharist. Each time we receive the Eucharist, we receive His love that empowers us to love those around us.

Reflective question:

To whom can I concretely show my love today?

Friday, 29th March, Good Friday of the Passion of the Lord.

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

... They then took charge of Jesus, and carrying his own cross he went out of the city to the place of the skull or, as it was called in Hebrew, Golgotha, where they crucified him with two others, one on either side with Jesus in the middle. Pilate wrote out a notice and had it fixed to the cross; it ran: 'Jesus the Nazarene, King of the Jews'. This notice was read by many of the Jews, because the place where Jesus was crucified was not far from the city, and the writing was in Hebrew, Latin and Greek. So the Jewish chief priests said to Pilate, 'You should not write "King of the Jews", but "This man said: I am King of the Jews"'. Pilate answered, 'What I have written, I have written'. When the soldiers had finished crucifying Jesus they took his clothing and divided it into four shares, one for each soldier. His undergarment was seamless, woven in one piece from neck to hem; so they said to one another, 'Instead of tearing it, let's throw dice to decide who is to have it'. In this way the words of scripture were fulfilled: They shared out my clothing among them. They cast lots for my clothes. This is exactly what the soldiers did. Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala. Seeing his mother and the disciple he loved standing near her, Jesus said to his mother, 'Woman, this is your son. Then to the disciple he said, 'This is your mother'. And from that moment the disciple made a place for her in his home. After this, Jesus knew that everything had now been completed, and to fulfil the scripture perfectly he said: 'I am thirsty'. A jar-full of vinegar stood there, so putting a sponge soaked in the vinegar on a hyssop stick they held it up to his

mouth. After Jesus had taken the vinegar he said, 'It is accomplished'; and bowing his head he gave up his spirit...

The passion story continues...

Today, let us contemplate on the cross, read the passion story of Jesus slowly and ponder on Judas' betrayal, Peter's denial, Pilate's cowardice, the abandonment of most of the disciples, the painful and humiliating process of the crucifixion and the finally the death of Jesus. Let us read it in the context of our life's experience and allow new light of understanding to emerge.

Each of us has experienced our own journey to Calvary and has our own stories of passion to share. We need to look at Jesus and understand that we are never alone because He is with us as we carry our cross of illness, failures, grief, etc. Today, as we celebrate Good Friday, the call is to put our trust in Jesus and continue to walk through hardships with Him.

Reflective question:

How aware am I that Jesus is with me in my passion story?

Saturday, 30th March, Easter Vigil

Genesis 1:1-2:2 (Gen 1:1,26-31a) Genesis 22:1-18 (Gen 22:1-2,9a, 10-13, 15-18) Exodus 14:15-15:1, Isaiah 54:5-14, Isaiah 55:1-11 Baruch 3:9-15,32-4:4, Ezekiel 36:16-17a; 18-26, Romans 6:3-11, Mark 16:1-7

When the Sabbath was over, Mary of Magdala, Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought spices with which to go and anoint him. And very early in the morning on the first day of the week they went to the tomb when the sun had risen. They had been saying to one another, 'Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?' But when they looked they saw that the stone -- which was very big -- had already been rolled back. On entering the tomb they saw a young man in a white robe seated on the right-hand side, and they were struck with amazement. But he said to them, 'There is no need to be so amazed. You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified: he has risen, he is not here. See, here is the place where they laid him. But you must go and tell his disciples and Peter, "He is going ahead of you to Galilee; that is where you will see him, just as he told you."'

He is risen!

"You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified: he has risen, he is not here." This is our Christian joy! Jesus is dead no more but has risen from the dead. The resurrection of Jesus defines us as Christians and is the foundation of our faith.

In the gospel, the angel told Mary Magdala and the other Mary to tell Jesus' disciples to go to Galilee, where they would see him. Galilee was the place where they first encountered Jesus. Today, Jesus is also invites us to return to our "Galilee", to remember the first, precise moment we had with Jesus, an encounter so strong that He became the centre of our lives, He became the reason for our faith, He became the God who loves us. *"Each one knows where his Galilee is, each one knows his own place of interior resurrection, the initial, the foundational, the one that changed things"* (Pope Francis, April 2023). Let us return to Galilee and rejoice that Jesus is alive and is always with us.

Reflective question:

Can I recall my Galilee moment when I encountered Jesus and experienced His personal love for me?

Sunday, 31st March, Easter Sunday of the Lord's Resurrection.

Acts 10:34, 37-43, Colossians 3:1-4, John 20:1-9

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

The empty tomb

“Then the other disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in; he saw and he believed”. When Mary of Magdala told them that the tomb was empty, Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved and the one who stood faithfully at His cross, ran to the tomb. Peter went in the tomb and could not understand what was happening. The other disciple went in, saw what Peter saw and he believed.

On this Easter Sunday, we are invited to open our eyes and look at the empty tombs in our lives with eyes of faith, like the beloved disciple. Faith is essential to help us make sense of this life, perceive that God is with us and is at work in us, and trust that He wants to bring joy where there is sadness, light where there is darkness, and life where there is death. Thus, we can see the empty tombs in our lives and just see them as emptiness, or we can see them with faith and know that we are not alone in facing our empty tombs because Jesus is not dead but alive and has left His tomb to be with us.

Reflective question:

What blocks me from having Easter faith?



By: Mike Moyers