

Prayer for Living
Daily Reflections
Liturgical Year B



“ I call you FRIENDS.”

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PRAYER FOR LIVING YEAR B

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Wednesday, 1st May, St. Joseph the Worker.

Genesis 1:26-2:3, Mathew 13:54-58

Jesus came to his home town and taught the people in their synagogue in such a way that they were astonished and said, 'Where did the man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers? This is the carpenter's son, surely? Is not his mother the woman called Mary, and his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Jude? His sisters, too, are they not all here with us? So where did the man get it all?' And they would not accept him. But Jesus said to them, 'A prophet is despised only in his own country and in his own house,' and he did not work many miracles there because of their lack of faith.

Familiarity breeds contempt

Today, we celebrate the feast of St. Joseph the Worker, and with him, we acknowledge the value of honest work, which builds up and develops our world when we all contribute with our talents and capacities. Jesus was also a worker and a carpenter like St. Joseph. The people of His town knew Him and were very familiar with His family, so they could not believe He was a prophet. Their familiarity blinded them from understanding Jesus' teachings, seeing His miracles and preventing them from having faith in Him.

In our case, we may be very familiar with the Gospel readings and be used to receiving the Eucharist, but is that familiarity an obstacle to trusting more in God, or does it bring us closer to Him, accepting and embracing His thinking and ways of living?

Reflective question:

As I know Jesus more and more through his Word, how can my trust in Him grow?

Thursday, 2nd May, St. Athanasius.

Acts 15:7-21, John 15:9-11

Jesus said to his disciples: I have loved you just as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my own joy may be in you and your joy be complete.

May your joy be complete

The goal of Jesus' teachings is for us to achieve happiness, as He tells us: "*I have come for you to have fullness of life*" (Jn 10:10). Everything that He tells us is for us to have the same joy that He had, which is the joy of the Holy Spirit. In these few verses, He tells us the clue to having this joy. First of all, He tells us that the foundation of our life is the love that He has for us, a love that goes beyond any human love because it is the same love that He experienced from the Father. To know and to experience His love gives us stability in our lives, knowing that we are loved with eternal love.

This love we receive from Him is not for us to keep but for us to give. Only then will we experience and enjoy the fullness of His joy in us.

Reflective question:

How can I experience the joy Jesus offers me in this Gospel?

Friday, 3rd May, SS. Philip and James, Apostles

1 Corinthians 15:1-8, John 14:6-14

Jesus said: 'I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one can come to the Father except through me. If you know me, you know my Father too. From this moment, you know him and have seen him.' Philip said, 'Lord, let us see the Father, and then we shall be satisfied'. 'Have I been with you all this time, Philip,' said Jesus to him, 'and you still do not know me? 'To have seen me is to have seen the Father, so how can you say, "Let us see the Father"? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak as from myself: it is the Father, living in me, who is doing this work. You must believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; believe it on the evidence of this work, if for no other reason. I tell you most solemnly, whoever believes in me will perform the same works as I do myself, he will perform even greater works, because I am going to the Father. Whatever you ask for in my name I will do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask for anything in my name, I will do it.

"I AM"

In the Gospel today, Jesus says, "I am *The Way, The Truth, and The Life*". We live in a world of confusion, where it is difficult to know if we are on the right path or walking in the wrong direction. Jesus defines

Himself as "the Way" i.e. the way for us to follow, knowing that if we follow Him, we will never get lost because He is also the companion who walks with us. Jesus is also "the Truth", i.e. the fullness of truth that speaks to us about who we are, who God is, and the purposeful life we are called to live. We are constantly bombarded with fake news and half-truths by the media and even by those around us, to the point that we have developed a culture of doubt. Having Jesus as our Way and our Truth will lead us to the fullness of life because He is the Life, i.e. He is the source and meaning of it.

Thank you, Jesus, for allowing me to experience your life by following your way and rooting myself in your truth.

Reflective question:

Is Jesus my way, truth and life?

Saturday 4th May, 5th Week of Easter.

Acts 16:1-10, John 15:18-21

Jesus said to his disciples: 'If the world hates you, remember that it hated me before you. If you belonged to the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you do not belong to the world, because my choice withdrew you from the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the words I said to you: A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you too; if they kept my word, they will keep yours as well. But it will be on my account that they will do all this because they do not know the one who sent me.'

Belonging

By baptism, we are children of God. As His children, we belong to Him and have His love in us. His love is the light that guides, sustains, warms and makes us grow and flourish. In God, there is no darkness of selfishness, anger and hatred. We are called to stay in the light of His love and not live a navel-gazing and self-absorbed life.

Basking in God's light, we shine His love, justice and truth to those around us. The world does not accept us when we live a life of love. We might not be persecuted and thrown into prison like the first Christians, but we may be rejected and laughed at because of our Christian convictions. In such situations, we find comfort in Jesus' words: "*They*

will do all this because you do not belong to the world." Indeed, we rejoice that we belong to God and continue to live in the light of His love.

Reflective question:

Does the light of God shine in the world through my actions?

Sunday 5th May, 6th Sunday of Easter.

Acts 10:25-26,34-35,44-48, 1 John 4:7-10, John 15:9-17

Jesus said to his disciples: 'I have loved you just as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my own joy may be in you and your joy be complete. This is my commandment: love one another, as I have loved you. No one can have greater love than to lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I shall no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know the master's business; I call you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have learnt from my Father. You did not choose me, no, I chose you; and I commissioned you to go out and to bear fruit, fruit that will last; so that the Father will give you anything you ask him in my name. My command to you is to love one another.'

'I call you friends'

Jesus, after spending a few years with His disciples, teaching them the values of the Kingdom and sharing with them the love and compassionate face of The Father, told them, "*I do not call you servants any longer; rather, I call you friends.*" Why? What is the difference between a servant and a friend? A servant follows the master's orders and fulfils duties out of obligation, but he does not have a close relationship with him. Today, Jesus has many servants in the church who do things for Him out of obligation. They go to fulfil the duties of saying prayers, attending Sunday mass and receiving the Sacraments, but they do not share the heart of Jesus, their Master.

On the contrary, a friend has a personal relationship with his friend and relates to him out of love and not out of obligation. Listen to Jesus today as He calls us, "Friends", not "servants". His friendship can never be broken because He will never leave us alone. Let us rejoice at this

immense gift of His friendship. As His friends, Jesus wants to share God's very same love and life with us.

Reflective question:

Am I Jesus' friend or His servant?

Monday, 6th May, 6th Week of Easter.

Acts 16:11-15, John 15:26-16:4

Jesus said to his disciples: "When the Paraclete comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who issues from the Father, he will be my witness. And you, too, will be witnesses because you have been with me from the beginning. I have told you all this so that you may not fall away. They will expel you from the synagogues, and indeed, the time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is doing a holy service to God. They will do these things because they have never known either the Father or me. But I have told you all this, so that when the time for it comes, you may remember that I told you."

You will be my witnesses

When we receive the Sacrament of Confirmation, we are sent to be a witness of the Gospel wherever we are. What does it mean to be a witness? It is the attestation of an event, a fact. In today's gospel, Jesus says that we will be His witness because we know and love Him. Thus, to witness Jesus' life, we need to be in a personal relationship with Him and keep growing to be very familiar with Him so that His love becomes the centre of our lives. His love needs to transform our self-centered ways to His values of generosity, forgiveness, compassion, etc, and moves us to reach out to others in love.

We testify to Jesus through our words and actions. Today, Jesus places people in our lives so that we can be bridges that link them to Him.

Reflective question:

Am I ready to be Jesus' witness?

Tuesday, 7th May, 6th Week of Easter.

Acts 16:22-34, John 16:5-11

Jesus said to his disciples: Now I am going to the one who sent me. Not one of you has asked, "Where are you going?" Yet you are sad at heart

because I have told you this. Still, I must tell you the truth: it is for your own good that I am going because unless I go, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I do go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will show the world how wrong it was, about sin, and about who was in the right, and about judgement: about sin: proved by their refusal to believe in me; about who was in the right: proved by my going to the Father and your seeing me no more; about judgement: proved by the prince of this world being already condemned."

The Advocate is with you

In this gospel passage, Jesus promises the disciples the coming of the Advocate. An Advocate is one who defends a cause. In the Gospel of John, the Holy Spirit is called Advocate as well as Helper. He is the one who helps and defends us from erroneous beliefs. He is the Spirit of Truth who brings us to the complete truth.

While on earth, the Holy Spirit was with Jesus, guiding and helping Him in His mission. After His resurrection, Jesus gave us His Spirit to guide us. Now, we have the Spirit of Jesus in us. He lives in us, forming and guiding our conscience, giving us peace and joy whenever we follow His insinuations, and bothering us when we prefer to follow the world values of selfishness and indifference towards our brothers and sisters. Today, let us recognise the Holy Spirit in us and obey His voice, that will lead us to be like Jesus.

Reflective question:

Who is the Holy Spirit in my life?

Wednesday, 8th May, 6th Week of Easter.

Acts 17: 15, 22 - 18:1, John 16: 12-15

Jesus said to his disciples: 'I still have many things to say to you but they would be too much for you now. But when the Spirit of truth comes he will lead you to the complete truth, since he will not be speaking as from himself but will say only what he has learnt; and he will tell you of the things to come. He will glorify me, since all he tells you will be taken from what is mine. Everything the Father has is mine; that is why I said: All he tells you will be taken from what is mine.'

Understanding God

"I still have many things to say to you, but they would be too much for you now." Why did Jesus tell this to His disciples? Following the gospel, we notice how Jesus' disciples were ambitious in seeking glory and being in the first positions. When they were with Him, they could not grasp the full nature of Jesus' teachings. Only after the Holy Spirit was poured out to them at Pentecost did they fully understand Jesus's life, deeds, and words.

In our journey of faith, we also realise that our understanding of God increases little by little as we go deeper into our relationship with Him. We strengthen our friendship with Him by practising what we believe and living a coherent life. It is the Holy Spirit who reveals to us the depth of Christ as we walk hand in hand with Him. In this time of prayer, let us ask the Holy Spirit to help us seek Jesus consistently and increase our knowledge and love for Him.

Reflective question:

As I journey in life, how can I experience more God's love?

Thursday, 9th May, Ascension of the Lord.

Acts 1: 1-11, Ephesians 4: 1-13, Mark 16: 15-20

Jesus said to his disciples, '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.' And so the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven: there at the right hand of God he took his place, while they, going out, preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word by the signs that accompanied it.

Go and proclaim the Gospel with your lives

Before He was taken up into heaven, Jesus gave the disciples His last commandment: *"Go out to the whole world and proclaim the Good News."* From the missionary narratives in the Acts of the Apostles, we can see that Jesus' disciples did indeed fulfil His commandment. They

did not remain in Jerusalem but went as far as they could to proclaim the Good News of His love. What made the first Christians so passionate about spreading the Good News? It was the experience of the death and resurrection of the Lord. It was their deep conviction that He was alive.

Jesus's mandate was not only for His first disciples but for all of us who desire to follow Him today. We do not need to travel far away to announce that He is alive. First and foremost, we need to experience His love in our hearts and, from there, show to those around us through our concrete words and actions that He continues to be alive in our world today. We can share the Good News because we know and experience that He lives in and through us.

Reflective question:

Are we passionate enough about Jesus' life to share it with others?

Friday, 10th May, St. John de Avila, St. Damien of Molokai.

Acts 18: 9-18, John 16: 20-23

Jesus said to his disciples: 'I tell you most solemnly, you will be weeping and wailing while the world will rejoice; you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn to joy. A woman in childbirth suffers because her time has come, but when she has given birth to the child, she forgets the suffering in her joy that a man has been born into the world. So it is with you: you are sad now, but I shall see you again, and your hearts will be full of joy, and that joy no one shall take from you. When that day comes, you will not ask me any questions. I tell you most solemnly, anything you ask for from the Father he will grant in my name.'

Being joyful

Jesus came to the world for us to have fullness of life (C.f. Jn 10:10). During His public life, He took away the suffering of those people who came along His way: to the blind, He restored their sight; to the cripple, He empowered them to walk; to those who were rejected by their society because of their sickness, He cured and restored their dignity. Our God is a God of life, not of death; a God of health and joy, not of suffering.

We know that in our journey of life, we will have moments of suffering, sickness and hardships. During those situations, we need to remember that suffering is not the last word and that we have not reached the end

of the tunnel because the light of God's presence is near. Today, Jesus tells us that He will come to us in the midst of our suffering, and we will experience the joy of His presence and His peace. But do we have faith enough to wait patiently and trust in Him?

Reflective question:

Do I believe that Jesus is with me in the midst of my difficult moments?

Saturday, 11th May, Sixth Week of Easter.

Acts 18: 23-28, John 16: 23-28

Jesus said to his disciples: 'I tell you most solemnly, anything you ask for from the Father he will grant in my name. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and so your joy will be complete. I have been telling you all this in metaphors; the hour is coming when I shall no longer speak to you in metaphors but tell you about the Father in plain words. When that day comes, you will ask in my name, and I do not say that I shall pray to the Father for you because the Father himself loves you for loving me and believing that I came from God. I came from the Father and have come into the world, and now I leave the world to go to the Father.'

Asking and receiving

"Ask, and it will be given to you... Is there anyone among you who would hand his son a stone when he asked for bread?... If you, then, evil as you are, know how to give your children what is good, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him." (Mt 7:7-11) Jesus insists that we need to ask the Father, but at the same time, He tells us to trust that He knows what is best for us.

Sometimes, we ask God our Father for blessings: good health, no conflicts, a good job, etc. We often ask Him not for us to suffer. But isn't suffering part of being human, and isn't it helping us grow as mature people? We need to be clear that God does not send us suffering but does not spare us from difficulties or challenges. This is because, most of the time, the experience of hardship makes us grow as human beings. Let us be assured that God our Father promises He will be with us, as He was with Jesus in His Passion.

Reflective question:

Do I trust in God's ways more than in my own?

Sunday, 12th May, 7th Sunday of Easter.**Acts 1: 15-17, 20-26, 1 John 4:11-16, John 17: 11-19**

Jesus raised his eyes to heaven and said: 'Holy Father, keep those you have given me true to your name, so that they may be one like us. While I was with them, I kept those you had given me true to your name. I have watched over them and not one is lost except the one who chose to be lost, and this was to fulfil the scriptures. But now I am coming to you, and while still in the world, I say these things to share my joy with them to the full. I passed your word on to them, and the world hated them because they belong to the world no more than I belong to the world. I am not asking you to remove them from the world but to protect them from the evil one. They do not belong to the world any more than I belong to the world. Consecrate them in the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world, and for their sake, I consecrate myself so that they too may be consecrated in truth.

Belonging to God

Through this gospel passage, Jesus allows us to enter into His prayer. We can appreciate how Jesus expresses His prayer to the Father by interceding for His disciples. He knew He would soon not be with them and wanted to protect them unconditionally.

Today, we are Jesus' disciples, and He continues to pray for each one of us. The Lord knows that we live in a world that often blinds us to false happiness by offering us the wrong ways to achieve it. We do not belong to a world that is a mirage of reality; rather, we belong to God and His truth. Jesus' prayer assures us that we are not alone in our journey. He continues to pray for us and gives us His Word as a road sign to walk in the right path. *Thank you, Lord, for thinking more of me than of yourself, even at the end of your life! Your prayer gives me the strength to continue the journey.*

Reflective question:

Do I hold on to Jesus' prayer when I find it difficult to follow His ways?

Monday. 13th May, Our Lady of Fatima.

Isaiah 61: 9-11, Luke 11: 27-28 (Readings are taken from the Feast Day)

As Jesus was speaking, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said, 'Happy the womb that bore you and the breasts you sucked!' But he replied, 'Still happier those who hear the word of God and keep it!'

True happiness

Jesus was preaching to the crowd, who it seemed was receiving Jesus' words well, when a woman, who was listening, shouted in joy, praising His Mother. But Jesus answered her: "*Still happier those who hear the word of God and keep it!*". Jesus, through those words, was not underestimating His Mother; rather, He stated that real happiness is in doing what Mary did: To put into practice God's words.

Mother Mary was the first one who, upon hearing God's word through the angel Gabriel, kept it in her heart, pondered it, and invested her whole life to fulfil it as best as she could. She is the model of what it means and how to listen to God in order to respond to Him with promptness. At the same time, she teaches us that real happiness is not in what we possess or how important we are to the world but in who we are in front of God. Our inner happiness lies when we know that what we do is in accordance with God's will.

Reflective question:

What is the foundation of my happiness?

Tuesday, 14th May, St. Matthias, Apostle.

Acts 1: 15-17, 20-26, John 15: 9-17

Jesus said to His disciples: 'As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Remain in my love; if you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my own joy may be in you and your joy be complete. This is my commandment: love one another, as I have loved you. A man can have no greater love than to lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I shall not call you servants any more, because a servant does not know his master's business; I call you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have learnt from my Father. You did not choose me, no, I

chose you, and I commissioned you to go out and to bear fruit, fruit that will last; and then the Father will give you anything you ask him in my name. What I command you is to love one another.'

A witness of the resurrection

Today, we celebrate the feast of St. Matthias. He was a disciple of Jesus, chosen to be one of the twelve apostles in place of Judas. The criteria that the apostle Peter told the rest of the believers was that the person to be chosen should have been following the Lord from the beginning to the end of his public life and should have been a witness of his death, resurrection, and ascension (1st reading).

In the same way that the apostles were witnesses of Christ's life, death, and resurrection, each one of us, as Christians, needs to walk close to the Master so that we may experience that He is alive in us when we die to our pride, or we choose to follow His ways instead of the path of selfishness. In this way, we can say that we are witnesses of The Lord's resurrection in us; then, we will hear Jesus' voice again calling us '*Friends*,' and bear the fruit of His life and love in us.

Reflective question:

When do I experience Jesus alive in me?

Wednesday, 15th May, 7th Week of Easter.

Acts 20: 28-38, John 17: 11-19

Jesus raised his eyes to heaven and said: 'I am not in the world any longer, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep those you have given me true to your name, so that they may be one like us. While I was with them, I kept those you had given me true to your name. I have watched over them and not one is lost except the one who chose to be lost, and this was to fulfil the scriptures. But now I am coming to you and while still in the world I say these things to share my joy with them to the full. I passed your word on to them, and the world hated them, because they belong to the world no more than I belong to the world. I am not asking you to remove them from the world, but to protect them from the evil one. They do not belong to the world any more than I belong to the world. Consecrate them in the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world, and

for their sake I consecrate myself so that they too may be consecrated in truth.'

Embracing the world

Jesus' love for His disciples is expressed throughout the gospels, but especially in the gestures of love, such as washing their feet and praying for them to God His Father. In today's gospel, Jesus asked His Father to protect them, not from suffering, sickness, or even death, but from the evil one. What is evil? It is everything that may separate a person from God, who is the fullness of goodness, love, truth. On the other hand, evil is anything that destroys love (envy, greed, pride, egoism, etc.) We remember Jesus lamenting over Jerusalem as He said: "*I wanted to put my arms around all your people, just as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings...*" (Matthew 23:27). This was what Jesus wanted to do with his disciples: to embrace them in love and protect them from the alluring temptations of the world.

Today, we are His disciples, and as such, Jesus continues to place us in the arms of His loving Father to protect us so that we can live rooted in His love.

Reflective question:

How does Jesus' prayer touch my life today?

Thursday, 16th May, 7th Week of Easter.

Acts 22: 30, 23: 6-11, John 17: 20-26

Jesus raised his eyes to heaven and said: 'I pray not only for these, but for those also who through their words will believe in me. May they all be one. Father, may they be one in us, as you are in me and I am in you, so that the world may believe it was you who sent me. I have given them the glory you gave to me, that they may be one as we are one. With me in them and you in me, may they be so completely one that the world will realise that it was you who sent me and that I have loved them as much as you loved me. Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, so that they may always see the glory you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. Father, Righteous One, the world has not known you, but I have known you, and these have known that you have sent me. I have made your name known

to them and will continue to make it known so that the love with which you loved me may be in them and so that I may be in them.'

'That they may be one'

Jesus includes every human being in His prayer for unity. For Him, unity in the community is very important. We notice that even among the first Christians, there were divisions of opinion regarding different issues. Today, we continue to have divisions in the Church in matters of liturgy, moral issues, etc.

What is Jesus referring to when He prays for unity? To be united does not mean that we have to think all the same. Unity does not mean uniformity. The Lord invites us to be one in Him as He is one with the Father. To be one means to be one in love by loving with His love, so that the glory of God will be shown and the world may believe in Him. Only when we are united with God can we be united with one another, even if we do not think in the same way. Today, let us ask Jesus to give us the desire for unity and respect for one another without imposing our views and ways.

Reflective question:

Do I create unity with the way I love?

Friday, 17th May, 7th Week of Easter.

Acts 25: 13-21, John 21: 15-19

After the meal, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these others do?' He answered, 'Yes Lord, you know I love you'. Jesus said to him, 'Feed my lambs'. A second time, he said to him, 'Simon, son of John, do you love me?' He replied, 'Yes, Lord, you know I love you'. Jesus said to him, 'Look after my sheep'. Then he said to him a third time, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' Peter was upset that he asked him the third time, 'Do you love me?' and said, 'Lord, you know everything; you know I love you'. Jesus said to him, 'Feed my sheep. I tell you most solemnly, when you were young you put on your own belt and walked where you liked; but when you grow old you will stretch out your hands, and somebody else will put a belt round you and take you where you would rather not go.' In these words he indicated the kind of death by which Peter would give glory to God. After this he said, 'Follow me'.

Do you love me?

Throughout the gospels, Jesus posed some questions, sometimes to the crowd or his disciples, but in this gospel passage, He addressed the question directly to Peter: "*Simon, son of John, do you love me?*" For the first and the second time, the word that Jesus used was "*Agape*" in Greek, which means the pure love of God, but Peter replied with the Greek word '*Philia*', referring to the love of a friend. Peter could not use "*Agape*" because he knew that his love for Jesus was limited. Jesus accepted the love that Peter could offer. The third time, Jesus did not use "*Agape*" but asked Peter, "*Phileis m?*" or "*Do you love me as a friend?*".

Jesus asks us the same question, even though He knows that our love is not perfect and that, many times, it is contaminated by our need for self-recognition, our egoistic desires and pride. The Lord also knows that our deepest desire is to be His friend and to collaborate with Him in His mission. As He told Peter, Jesus entrusts us with His mission by telling us: "*Feed my sheep!*".

Reflective question:

What is my answer to Jesus' question, "*Do you agape me?*"

Saturday, 18th May, St. John I.

Acts 28: 16-20, 30-31, John 21: 20-25

Peter turned and saw the disciple Jesus loved following them – the one who had leaned on his breast at the supper and had said to him, 'Lord, who is it that will betray you?' Seeing him, Peter said to Jesus, 'What about him, Lord?' Jesus answered, 'If I want him to stay behind till I come, what does it matter to you? You are to follow me.' The rumour then went out among the brothers that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus had not said to Peter, 'He will not die,' but, 'If I want him to stay behind till I come.'

Follow Me!

Following Jesus is not an easy task. Often, the disciple will have to walk challenging paths that he would rather not walk. In today's gospel, instead of fixing his eyes on Jesus, Peter lost focus and looked at John,

who was following them, and he asked Jesus, “*What about him, Lord?*”. Jesus told Peter to mind his journey and focus on what mattered.

Today, Jesus reminds us to keep our eyes fixed on Him alone, follow Him faithfully, and help others in their journey. Everyone has a unique vocation and mission. Thus, we do not have to compare ourselves with others. Both Peter and John were Jesus’ apostles, and he loved both, but that did not mean that they had to follow Him in the same way. By baptism, we have been called to follow Jesus by being light for the world and loving with His love, but the way to accomplish it will vary according to the vocation that God calls us to.

Reflective question:

Am I ready to follow Jesus in the way He calls me to?

Sunday, 19th May, Pentecost Sunday.

Acts 2: 1-11, Galatians 5: 16-25, John 15: 26-27, 16: 12-15

Jesus said to his disciples: ‘When the Advocate comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who issues from the Father, he will be my witness. And you, too will be witnesses, because you have been with me from the outset. I still have many things to say to you but they would be too much for you now. But when the Spirit of truth comes, he will lead you to the complete truth, since he will not be speaking as from himself but will say only what he has learnt; and he will tell you of the things to come. He will glorify me, since all he tells you will be taken from what is mine. Everything the Father has is mine; that is why I said: All he tells you will be taken from what is mine.’

Allowing the Holy Spirit to touch our lives

In the first reading, the author of the Acts of the Apostles vividly described the scene of Pentecost. The disciples were all gathered in one place, still with fear and uncertainty in their hearts. Suddenly, there was a noise that sounded like a strong wind blowing. Then, they saw what looked like tongues of fire, which touched everyone there. As soon as they received the Holy Spirit, their fear disappeared, and everyone started to proclaim the ‘*Kerygma*,’ the Good News of the death and resurrection of Jesus.

When we are enclosed in our own world, in our pain and frustrations, concerned only with our own needs and wants, we do not have the

courage or the motivation to witness Jesus' life and express our faith openly to those around us. We need to be open to the Holy Spirit, who is always ready to touch our lives with His gifts to produce His fruits of love, joy, and peace in ourselves and others.

Reflective question:

Am I open to the gifts of the Holy Spirit?

Monday, 20th May, Mary, Mother of the Church.

Acts 1: 12-14, John 19: 25-34

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. It was Preparation Day, and to prevent the bodies remaining on the cross during the sabbath – since that sabbath was a day of special solemnity – the Jews asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken away. Consequently, the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with him and then of the other. When they came to Jesus, they found he was already dead, and so instead of breaking his legs one of the soldiers pierced his side with a lance; and immediately there came out blood and water.

Mary, Mother of the believers

It is not a coincidence that right after Pentecost Sunday, the Church celebrates the feast of Mary, Mother of the Church. Mary received the Holy Spirit in the Annunciation and remained faithful to His insinuations. She allowed herself to be guided by Him until the end of her life. On the cross, she received us all as her own children and committed to caring for our faith as we follow her Son. Moreover, in the first reading, we can see how Mother Mary gathered the disciples, praying with them and encouraging them to remain faithful to the Lord.

Today, she continues to pray for us and with us. She remains quietly but firmly at our side, accompanying us in our sufferings and hardships in the same way that she stood at the foot of Jesus' cross and being one with Him. As we stay close to her, she will undoubtedly encourage us "to do what Jesus tells us" as she told the servants at the wedding of Cana (John 2:1-11), because our Mother Mary will always bring us closer to her Son.

Reflective questions:

Who is Mother Mary in my life? Does she have a role?

Tuesday, 21st May, St. Christopher Magallanes.

James 4: 1-10, Mark 9: 30-37

Jesus and his disciples made their way through Galilee, and he did not want anyone to know, because he was instructing his disciples; he was telling them, 'The Son of Man will be delivered into the hands of men; they will put him to death; and three days after he has been put to death he will rise again'. But they did not understand what he said and were afraid to ask him. They came to Capernaum, and when he was in the house, he asked them, 'What were you arguing about on the road?' They said nothing because they had been arguing which of them was the greatest. So he sat down, called the Twelve to him and said, 'If anyone wants to be first, he must make himself last of all and servant of all'. He then took a little child, set him in front of them, put his arms round him, and said to them, 'Anyone who welcomes one of these little children in my name, welcomes me; and anyone who welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me'.

Change of mentality

Jesus was on the way to Galilee with His disciples. Along the way, He shared the sadness in His heart with them because He knew the suffering He would soon face. The disciples could not grasp the depth of His words. Instead, they discussed who among them would be the leader when Jesus established His Kingdom. Jesus patiently instructed them about the values that they should cultivate and live as His disciples: "If anyone wants to be first, he must make himself last of all and servant of all."

What about us? Do we understand that the worldly values of power and honour are opposite to the values of the Gospel? In the world's mindset, to be the first is to receive praise and be recognised by all. For Jesus, to be the first is to serve with humility without seeking recognition. Pope Francis said: "*Service is the only way to good leadership*". We need to change our worldly mentality to conform to the mind of our Master, who came to serve and not to be served.

Reflective question:

Am I ready to be at the service of the growth of others?

Wednesday, 22nd May, St. Rita of Cascia.

James 4: 13-17, Mark 9: 38-40

John said to Jesus, 'Master, we saw a man who is not one of us casting out devils in your name, and because he was not one of us, we tried to stop him'. But Jesus said, 'You must not stop him: no one who works a miracle in my name is likely to speak evil of me. Anyone who is not against us is for us.

Being inclusive

The disciples answered Jesus' call to follow Him and witnessed His miracles and work. They considered themselves as His close circle. Thus, they reacted negatively when they saw a man performing a miracle, and he was not one of them. Jesus corrected them, opening their minds to accept other people who did not belong to their group but were doing good works in His name.

Jesus wants us to be inclusive and value the goodness of others, even if they think differently or belong to different groups/faith communities. Wherever there is goodness and love, God is there, and we need to open our eyes to discover and value it. We should focus more on the good work done by others, even those with whom we disagree. *Lord, sometimes I find it hard to accept the goodness of people simply because they do not belong to my group or faith. Help me to be more open to the goodness of others.*

Reflective question:

Can I see God's goodness in people's life?

Thursday, 23rd May, 7th Week Ordinary Time.

James 5:1-6, Mark 9: 41-50

Jesus said to his disciples: 'If anyone gives you a cup of water to drink just because you belong to Christ, then I tell you solemnly, he will most certainly not lose his reward.' 'But anyone who is an obstacle to bring down one of these little ones who have faith, would be better thrown into the sea with a great millstone round his neck. And if your hand should cause you to sin, cut it off; it is better for you to enter into life crippled than to have two hands and go to hell, into the fire that cannot be put out. And if your foot should cause you to sin, cut it off; it is better for you to enter into life lame than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. And if your eye should cause you to sin, tear it out; it is better for you to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell where their worm does not die nor their fire go out. For everyone will be salted with fire. Salt is a good thing, but if salt has become insipid, how can you season it again? Have salt in yourselves and be at peace with one another.'

Basic principles

In this gospel text, Jesus teaches His disciples the basic norms of behaviour for the common good. In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus says, '*You are salt for the earth. But if salt loses its taste... It is good for nothing...*' (Mt 5:13). The disciples were called to make a difference in the world through their good works, but like everyone else, they would have temptations and could end up being a scandal more than an example for others. Jesus warned them against any kind of scandal and invited them to avoid everything that may cause them to fall into temptation.

As Christ's followers, we are also called to be salt and light for the world, letting our good deeds shine so that others can see God's face. However, we are also bombarded with temptations that might cause us to be scandals for others. Let us stay close to Jesus and allow His presence of love to empower us to live a life of love so that more people can see God in our words and actions.

Reflective question:

What is Jesus' message for me in this time of prayer?

Friday, 24th May, 7th Week Ordinary Time.

James 5: 9-12; Mark 10: 1-12

Jesus came to the district of Judaea and the far side of the Jordan. And again crowds gathered round him, and again he taught them, as his custom was. Some Pharisees approached him and asked, 'Is it against the law for a man to divorce his wife?' They were testing him. He answered them, 'What did Moses command you?' 'Moses allowed us' they said 'to draw up a writ of dismissal and so to divorce.' Then Jesus said to them, 'It was because you were so unteachable that he wrote this commandment for you. But from the beginning of creation, God made them male and female. This is why a man must leave father and mother, and the two become one body. They are no longer two, therefore, but one body. So then, what God has united, man must not divide. Back in the house, the disciples questioned him again about this, and he said to them, 'The man who divorces his wife and marries another is guilty of adultery against her. And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another, she is guilty of adultery too.'

Everything was very good

In the book of Genesis, we have the account of the creation of the world. On the sixth day, God created men: '*God created man in the image of himself, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them.*' (Gn 1:27) To have the same image of God means that we have been created with His same essence, which is love. St. John describes God as 'Love'. That is what He is. As His children, we share in His love.

We all have the capacity to love and the need to be loved because love is the prime matter of our nature. Without love, we may survive but not fully live. In the marriage, two persons unite themselves in Christ's love. He is the one who will assist them in moments of difficulties and conflicts. Jesus invites us to return to the reality that we have been created in God's image, by being aware that God's love is in us, and that is what we need to reflect to our family members, friends and those we meet each day.

Reflective question:

Have I experienced God's love in my life?

Saturday, 25th May, St. Bede the Venerable, St. Gregory VII, St. Mary Magdalene de Pazzi.

James 5: 13-20, Mark 10: 13-16

People were bringing little children to Jesus, for him to touch them. The disciples turned them away, but when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, 'Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. I tell you solemnly, anyone who does not welcome the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.' Then he put his arms round them, laid his hands on them and gave them his blessing.

Trusting like children

There are very few moments in which we see Jesus getting angry, and one of those moments is in this passage. He saw how the disciples were sending the children away from Him, and He scolded them because their actions meant that they did not understand their Master's values. For Jesus, the first in the Kingdom of God are the poor, the unseen ones without a voice in society. In the Jewish culture of Jesus' time, the children were among the last and the unimportant ones among the people.

Jesus not only teaches us to recognise and welcome the poor and abandoned, but He also tells us that, to enter His Kingdom, we need to be like children, humble and dependant, who trust in God more than our own qualities and talents. It is to be poor in spirit by acknowledging that, as God's children, He is the source of our life and love.

Reflective question:

Do I trust in God more than in myself?

Sunday, 26th May, The Most Holy Trinity.

Deuteronomy 4: 32-34, 39-40, Romans 8: 14-17, Matthew 28: 16-20

The eleven disciples set out for Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had arranged to meet them. When they saw him, they fell down before him, though some hesitated. Jesus came up and spoke to them. He said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations; baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to

observe all the commands I gave you. And know that I am with you always; yes, to the end of time.'

A commandment and a promise

Jesus wanted to meet with His disciples before He ascended to heaven, and He asked them to go to a familiar place, Galilee. What important message did the Lord want to communicate to the disciples? "*Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations*". Jesus was about to return to the Father, and now, the disciples would have the task of representing Him, living His mission, and bringing the Good News to the whole world. He promised them that He would always be with them.

Today, we are Jesus' disciples. By our baptism, we received the same commandment to go out and share the Good News of Jesus. For example, when we are in a conversation with someone at work about a moral issue, the Lord tells us, "*Go! Be brave and share my values!*"; or when we struggle to go the extra mile of offering forgiveness in a relationship, we can hear from Jesus, "*Go! Show my merciful love!*". The Lord promises us, as He did to His first disciples, that He will always be with us and that we will never be alone in living our mission of love.

Reflective question:

Do I count on Jesus to live my mission?

Monday, 27th May, 8th Week in Ordinary Time.

1Peter 1: 3-9, Mark 10: 17-27

Jesus was setting out on a journey when a man ran up, knelt before him and put this question to him, 'Good master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?' Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: You must not kill; You must not commit adultery; You must not steal; You must not bring false witness; You must not defraud; Honour your father and mother.' And he said to him, 'Master, I have kept all these from my earliest days'. Jesus looked steadily at him and loved him, and he said, 'There is one thing you lack. Go and sell everything you own and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.' But his face fell at these words, and he went away sad, for he was a man of great wealth. Jesus looked round and said to his disciples, 'How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!' The disciples

were astounded by these words, but Jesus insisted, ‘My children,’ he said to them, ‘how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.’ They were more astonished than ever. ‘In that case,’ they said to one another, ‘who can be saved?’ Jesus gazed at them. ‘For men,’ he said, ‘it is impossible, but not for God: because everything is possible for God.’

The genuine richness

“What to do to inherit eternal life?” This was the question that the man asked Jesus. Jesus gave him an answer in accordance with the Law of Moses, which every Jew knew. That was enough to be a good citizen, a good Jew. However, the person sought a deeper answer. Jesus perceived his desire. He looked at the man with love and offered him the treasure of following Him by being one of His disciples. The man left sad because he was rich and could not let go of his material possessions.

If we want to follow Jesus more radically, we are called to detach ourselves from our riches and embrace the real treasure that Jesus wants to give us. His treasure is His love, peace and joy that the world cannot offer us. We will be enriched with everything that He is. The rich man left sad because he preferred his worldly riches to Jesus’ treasure. What about us?

Reflective question:

Do I dare to ask Jesus how to follow Him better?

Tuesday, 28th May, 8th Week in Ordinary Week.

1Peter 1: 10-16, Mark 10: 28-31

At that time, Peter began to tell Jesus, ‘What about us?’ he asked him. ‘We have left everything and followed you.’ Jesus said, ‘I tell you solemnly, there is no one who has left house, brothers, sisters, father, children or land for my sake and for the sake of the gospel who will not be repaid a hundred times over, houses, brothers, sisters, mothers, children, and land – not without persecutions – now in this present time and, in the world to come, eternal life ‘Many who are first will be last, and the last first.’

Leaving and receiving

In the previous gospel passage, Jesus invited the young rich man to follow Him, but he left sad because his riches prevented him from doing so. Peter realised that he and the other disciples had left everything behind in order to follow the Master, and he wanted to know what their reward was. Jesus told him that by losing for the sake of the Kingdom of God, they were gaining new relationships and belonging to God's family.

Sometimes, we pray fervently, asking God for something, even making some sacrifices, thinking that the more prayers and actions we do for Him, the more chances we will have to obtain what we are praying for. God is not a vending machine from which we insert a coin and get something in return. God is the fountain of love and goodness; we receive what He is when we go to Him. His goodness may not materialise in material riches. Instead, it comes in the form of inner peace and hope. What we receive from God makes us live a more fulfilling life than whatever we leave behind when we follow Him.

Reflective question:

Am I open to receiving God's gifts?

Wednesday, 29th May, 8th Ordinary Time.

1Peter 1: 18-25, Mark 10: 32-45

The disciples were on the road, going up to Jerusalem; Jesus was walking on ahead of them; they were in a daze, and those who followed were apprehensive. Once more, taking the Twelve aside, he began to tell them what was going to happen to him: 'Now we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man is about to be handed over to the chief priests and the scribes. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the pagans, who will mock him and spit at him and scourge him and put him to death, and after three days, he will rise again. James and John, the sons of Zebedee, approached him. 'Master,' they said to him, 'we want you to do us a favour.' He said to them, 'What is it you want me to do for you?' They said to him, 'Allow us to sit one at your right hand and the other at your left in your glory'. 'You do not know what you are asking,' Jesus said to them. 'Can you drink the cup that I must drink, or be baptised with the baptism with which I must be baptised?' They replied, 'We can'. Jesus said to them, 'The cup that I must drink you shall drink, and with the baptism with which I must be baptised you shall be

baptised, but as for seats at my right hand or my left, these are not mine to grant; they belong to those to whom they have been allotted'. When the other ten heard this, they began to feel indignant with James and John, so Jesus called them to him and said to them, 'You know that among the pagans, their so-called rulers lord it over them, and their great men make their authority felt. This is not to happen among you. No; anyone who wants to become great among you must be your servant, and anyone who wants to be first among you must be slave to all. For the Son of Man himself did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.'

The cup of baptism

This gospel passage narrates Jesus' last journey to Jerusalem. At this point of time, His heart was already troubled by the knowledge of His passion, and He shared His anguish with His disciples. However, they were far from understanding the feelings of their Master. The two brothers, James and John, requested what was probably in the heart of every disciple: to have the best place in Jesus' Kingdom. Jesus did not get angry but simply asked them: "Are you ready to suffer the consequences of following me?".

Are we ready to live our baptismal promises? When we were baptised, we were immersed in Christ's death and resurrection. Thus, we now conform ourselves to live His life by going against the current of the world where people search for honour and power. Pope Francis says, "*The world tells us to seek success, power, and money; God tells us to seek humility, service, and love*". In humility and love, let us serve the people God has placed along our way.

Reflective question:

How can I grow in humility to serve others better?

Thursday, 30th May, 8th Week in Ordinary Time.

1 Peter 2: 2-5, 9-12, Mark 10: 46-52

As Jesus was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a large crowd, Bartimaeus (that is, the son of Timaeus), a blind beggar, was sitting at the side of the road. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout and to say, 'Son of David, Jesus, have pity on me'. And many of them scolded him and told him to keep quiet, but he only

shouted all the louder, 'Son of David, have pity on me'. Jesus stopped and said, 'Call him here'. So they called the blind man. 'Courage,' they said, 'get up; he is calling you.' So throwing off his so cloak, he jumped up and went to Jesus. Then Jesus spoke, 'What do you want me to do for you?' 'Rabbuni,' the blind man said to him, 'Master, let me see again.' Jesus said to him, 'Go; your faith has saved you'. And immediately, his sight returned, and he followed him along the road.

Lord, I want to see!

Bartimaeus was blind, and his condition made him a beggar. Though blind, he had the inner sight to see his need for Jesus. Indeed, he had heard about Jesus, the miracles He did and the teachings He taught. Thus, the moment blind Bartimaeus knew that Jesus was passing by, he persistently called out to Jesus and ignored the people trying to keep him quiet. Deep within, he knew that Jesus could give him back his sight and his dignity to live life fully. Seeing his faith, Jesus healed him. At once, Bartimaeus followed Jesus faithfully on the road of discipleship.

What is our inner need? Bartimaeus's deepest need was to see physically and stop living his life as a beggar and be part of those who followed Jesus. Are we eager also to follow the Master? Do we ask Him to have a deeper vision of reality and to see with His eyes? *Lord, open my eyes to see You so that I can follow You!*

Reflective question:

Do I get tired of calling Jesus for help?

Friday, 31st May, The Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Romans 12: 9-16, Luke 1, 39-56

Mary set out at that time and went as quickly as she could to a town in the hill country of Judah. She went into Zechariah's house and greeted Elizabeth. Now, as soon as Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leapt in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. She gave a loud cry and said, 'Of all women, you are the most blessed, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. Why should I be honoured with a visit from the mother of my Lord? For the moment your greeting reached my ears, the child in my womb leapt for joy. Yes, blessed is she who believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled.' And Mary said: 'My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord and my spirit exults in God

my saviour; because he has looked upon his lowly handmaid. Yes, from this day forward all generations will call me blessed, for the Almighty has done great things for me. Holy is his name, and his mercy reaches from age to age for those who fear him. He has shown the power of his arm, he has routed the proud of heart. He has pulled down princes from their thrones and exalted the lowly. The hungry he has filled with good things, the rich sent empty away. He has come to the help of Israel, his servant, mindful of his mercy -according to the promise he made to our ancestors- of his mercy to Abraham and to his descendants forever.’ Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months and then went back home.

At the service of humanity

The gospel of St. Luke narrates how after learning about her cousin Elizabeth's pregnancy, Mary started her way up Judah to help her. Mary did not think of her own pregnancy and the inconvenience of the trip. Instead, she immediately thought of her cousin's situation and how she could be at her service. Her attitude was not of one who felt proud because God honoured her to be the mother of Jesus, but one of humility of being the handmaid of the Lord and becoming the servant of humanity.

As Christians, we have the precious gift of faith. How do we use it in order to serve others? Our faith places us in a privilege of service. We are called to see every human being with God's eyes and serve them with the humility of our Mother Mary. Then, with her, we could proclaim with joy the greatness of the Lord and recognise that every gift that we have comes from Him.

Reflective question:

Do I follow Mary's attitude of service?



By: Mike Moyers