

Prayer for Living
Daily Reflections
Liturgical Year B
September



True Greatness is to serve like Christ

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PRAYER FOR LIVING YEAR B

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Sunday, 1st September, 22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time.

Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-8, James 1: 17-18, 21-22, 27, Mark 7: 1-8, 14-15, 21-23

The Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered round Jesus, and they noticed that some of his disciples were eating with unclean hands, that is, without washing them. For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, keep the tradition of the elders and never eat without washing their arms as far as the elbow; and on returning from the market place they never eat without first sprinkling themselves. There are also many other observances which have been handed down to them to keep, concerning the washing of cups and pots and bronze dishes. So the Pharisees and scribes asked him, 'Why do your disciples not respect the tradition of the elders but eat their food with unclean hands?' He answered, 'How rightly Isaiah prophesied about you hypocrites in the passage of scripture: This people honours me only with lip-service, while their hearts are far from me. Their reverence of me is worthless; the lessons they teach are nothing but human commandments. You put aside the commandment of God to observe human traditions.' He called the people to him again and said, 'Listen to me, all of you, and understand. Nothing that goes into someone from outside can make that person unclean; it is the things that come out of someone that make that person unclean. For it is from within, from the heart, that evil intentions emerge: fornication, theft, murder, adultery, avarice, malice, deceit, indecency, envy, slander, pride, folly. All these evil things come from within and make a person unclean.'

The heart of the matter

"Pure unspoilt religion, in the eyes of God our Father is this coming to the help of orphans and widows when they need it, and keeping oneself uncontaminated by the world" (2nd reading). In the 2nd reading, St. James speaks to anyone contented with limiting their Christian faith to merely participating in religious activities and observing rituals and practices. He warns his community and us today that Christianity is not about living in a bubble of conventional, external, and formal religiosity but about living an active life of love. Pure, unspoilt religion is to care for those in need and not be driven by our selfish appetites and ambitions.

In today's gospel, the religious leaders are overly concerned with external rituals of handwashing to the point that they forget to

concentrate on having a heart full of love for God and others. Today, let us reflect on how we live our Christian faith. Do we simply go through the motions, or do our lives truly reflect God's honesty, generosity, and faithfulness? Let us open our hearts to God and allow His word to shape us to be more like Him.

Reflective question:

Do I focus on the externals and miss the point of my Christian faith?

Monday, 2nd September, 22nd Week in Ordinary Time.

1 Corinthians 2:1-5, Luke 4:16-30

Jesus came to Nazara, where he had been brought up, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day as he usually did. He stood up to read, and they handed him the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. Unrolling the scroll he found the place where it is written: The spirit of the Lord is on me, for he has anointed me to bring the good news to the afflicted. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives, sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim a year of favour from the Lord. He then rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the assistant and sat down. And all eyes in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to speak to them, 'This text is being fulfilled today even while you are listening.' And he won the approval of all, and they were astonished by the gracious words that came from his lips. They said, 'This is Joseph's son, surely?' But he replied, 'No doubt you will quote me the saying, "Physician, heal yourself," and tell me, "We have heard all that happened in Capernaum, do the same here in your own country." ' And he went on, '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.

The Good News

"The spirit of the Lord is on me, for he has anointed me to bring the good news to the afflicted...." At the start of His mission, Jesus is certain that God has sent Him to preach the Good News to the poor, the lowly and those who need help. The message that Jesus wants to impart through His words, actions and attitudes is that God is love, and His love has no boundaries. He is not, as the religious leaders declare, a God who punishes, places heavy demands on His people and reserves His love for selected people.

For those who want to follow in Jesus' footsteps, we need to be prepared to be messengers of the same Good News. We must help the vulnerable ones around us, dare to speak the truth, work for justice, and liberate people from meaningless religiosity in the church, even if we face dire consequences. Let us live the Good News of Jesus.

Reflective question:

How can my words and actions speak the Good News today?

Tuesday, 3rd September, St. Gregory the Great.

1 Corinthians 2:10-16, Luke 4:31-37

Jesus went down to Capernaum, a town in Galilee, and taught them on the Sabbath. And his teaching made a deep impression on them because his word carried authority. In the synagogue there was a man possessed by the spirit of an unclean devil, and he shouted at the top of his voice, 'Ha! What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are: the Holy One of God.' But Jesus rebuked it, saying, 'Be quiet! Come out of him!' And the devil, throwing the man into the middle, went out of him without hurting him at all. Astonishment seized them and they were all saying to one another, 'What is it in his words? He gives orders to unclean spirits with authority and power and they come out.' And the news of him travelled all through the surrounding countryside.

To have the mind of Christ

"But we are those who have the mind of Christ" (1st reading). Our minds are powerful because our thoughts shape who we are and who we will become, how we live our lives each day, and how we relate to others. If our minds are filled with comments such as *"You are not good enough"*

from others and we constantly repeat these words, they become deeply ingrained in our consciousness and influence how we perceive ourselves. Thus, the Book of Proverbs says: “*Be careful how you think; your life is shaped by your thoughts*” (Proverbs 4:23). Let us conform our minds to Christ’s by praying on His word, allowing it to shape our thoughts, transform our perspectives and thus, change the way we live each day.

What is the mind of Christ like? In today’s gospel, we can see that Jesus’ mind and heart are always focussed on loving and seeking the good of others. Today, let us ask Jesus for His grace to work in us so that we can live rooted in God’s love and be motivated to love others.

Reflective question:

How can I live today with the mind of Christ?

Wednesday, 4th September, 22nd Week in Ordinary Time.

1 Corinthians 3:1-9, Luke 4:38-44

Leaving the synagogue Jesus went to Simon’s house. Now Simon’s mother-in-law was in the grip of a high fever and they asked him to do something for her. Standing over her he rebuked the fever and it left her. And she immediately got up and began to serve them. At sunset all those who had friends suffering from diseases of one kind or another brought them to him, and laying his hands on each he cured them. Devils too came out of many people, shouting, ‘You are the Son of God.’ But he warned them and would not allow them to speak because they knew that he was the Christ. When daylight came he left the house and made his way to a lonely place. The crowds went to look for him, and when they had caught up with him they wanted to prevent him leaving them, but he answered, ‘I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns too, because that is what I was sent to do.’ And he continued his proclamation in the synagogues of Judaea.

A busy life

In today’s gospel, Jesus has a lot on his plate as crowds of people come to Him, bringing their loved ones to be healed. This is something we can identify ourselves with Jesus. We are busy and often struggle to find time to accomplish our tasks and try to meet the needs of others. Even though Jesus is busy, He values every person who comes to Him. Every person

matters. At the end of the day, Jesus goes to a deserted place so that He might have the time and space to be alone with His Father. He does not allow the busyness of the day to take away the quiet time He has with God.

Today, Jesus invites us to prioritise our relationship with Him over activities. Being with Him recharges us and gives us clarity for each step of the journey. We live, work, interact with others and get busy, but with the certainty that we are not alone because Jesus accompanies us. Let us be like Jesus as we live the busyness of each day.

Reflective question:

What is Jesus' invitation to me in this time of prayer?

Thursday, 5th September, St. Teresa of Kolkata.

1 Corinthians 3:18-23, Luke 5:1-11

Jesus was standing one day by the Lake of Gennesaret, with the crowd pressing round him listening to the word of God, when he caught sight of two boats at the water's edge. The fishermen had got out of them and were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats -- it was Simon's - - and asked him to put out a little from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. When he had finished speaking he said to Simon, 'Put out into deep water and pay out your nets for a catch.' Simon replied, 'Master, we worked hard all night long and caught nothing, but if you say so, I will pay out the nets.' And when they had done this they netted such a huge number of fish that their nets began to tear, so they signalled to their companions in the other boat to come and help them; when these came, they filled both boats to sinking point. When Simon Peter saw this he fell at the knees of Jesus saying, 'Leave me, Lord; I am a sinful man.' For he and all his companions were completely awestruck at the catch they had made; so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were Simon's partners. But Jesus said to Simon, 'Do not be afraid; from now on it is people you will be catching.' Then, bringing their boats back to land they left everything and followed him.

A fool for Christ

"...if any one of you thinks of himself as wise, in the ordinary sense of the word, then he must learn to be a fool before he really can be wise..."

(1st reading). Are we ready to be fools for Christ? We try our best to fit in this world and to be liked and respected by people because we do not want to feel inadequate and excluded. Thus, we struggle to swim against the tide of the world and live the Gospel values of simplicity, forgiveness, honesty, selflessness, etc. Yet, today, Jesus needs people willingly and happily to follow Him and be His fools.

“...they left everything and followed him.” In today’s gospel, Jesus calls Peter and his friends to follow Him. They leave behind everything- their great catch in the nets and worldly securities- to catch people and bring them to God’s love. Each day, Jesus calls us to follow Him so that we will live our time here on earth, making a difference. Jesus draws us to Him so that we can bring others to Him. Let us be fools for Christ today.

Reflective question:

Am I willing to be a fool for Christ?

Friday, 6th September, 22nd Week in Ordinary Time.

1 Corinthians 4:1-5, Luke 5:33-39

The Pharisees and the scribes said to him, 'John's disciples are always fasting and saying prayers, and the disciples of the Pharisees, too, but yours go on eating and drinking.' Jesus replied, 'Surely you cannot make the bridegroom's attendants fast while the bridegroom is still with them? But the time will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them; then, in those days, they will fast.' He also told them a parable, 'No one tears a piece from a new cloak to put it on an old cloak; otherwise, not only will the new one be torn, but the piece taken from the new will not match the old. And nobody puts new wine in old wineskins; otherwise, the new wine will burst the skins and run to waste, and the skins will be ruined. No; new wine must be put in fresh skins. And nobody who has been drinking old wine wants new. "The old is good," he says.

New wineskin

“People must think of us as Christ’s servants, stewards entrusted with the mysteries of God. What is expected of stewards is that each one should be found worthy of his trust.” (1st Reading). As Jesus’ disciples, we are His servants and stewards, ready to do what He tells us to do. All He wants from us is to love as He loves. To imitate Christ’s love is a challenge. However, we must never forget that the mission to love others

always begins with opening our hearts to receive God's infinite and unconditional love. Today, let us pray for the grace to be faithful stewards by making God's love visible through our actions and words.

In today's gospel, Jesus speaks of the importance of putting new wine into fresh skins, not old wineskins. Jesus desires to bring His new wine into our lives. This new wine can be a deeper experience of His love, a new perspective of looking at life's situation, a call to forgive someone, etc. To welcome Jesus' new wine, we need to break away from our old selves and step out of our comfort zone to embrace what Jesus has for us.

Reflective question:

What strikes me as I pray with the passages today?

Saturday, 7th September, 22nd Week in Ordinary Time.

1 Corinthians 4:6-15, Luke 6:1-5

One Sabbath Jesus happened to be taking a walk through the cornfields, and his disciples were picking ears of corn, rubbing them in their hands and eating them. Some of the Pharisees said, 'Why are you doing something that is forbidden on the Sabbath day?' Jesus answered them, 'So you have not read what David did when he and his followers were hungry- how he went into the house of God and took the loaves of the offering and ate them and gave them to his followers, loaves which the priests alone are allowed to eat?' And he said to them, 'The Son of man is master of the Sabbath.'

To love as the main priority

In today's gospel, some religious leaders are scandalised by Jesus' disciples picking ears of corn, rubbing them in their hands, and eating them on a Sabbath day. They are so focused on preserving structure and norms that they neglect to show love. God's law never excludes people from basic needs. God is neither legalistic nor indifferent. He cares for us and provides us with what we need. The religious leaders are too self-righteous to discern what truly matters. Jesus reminds them and us to let love always be our guide.

Close-minded individuals who rigidly adhere to the letter of the law shut themselves off from love. As Christians, let us not follow the path of the

Pharisees, who follow external observances and norms but neglect to put love into practice.

Reflective question:

What can I do to let love be my motivation today?

Sunday, 8th September, 23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time.

Isaiah 35:4-7, James 2:1-5, Mark 7:31-37

Returning from the territory of Tyre, Jesus went by way of Sidon towards the Lake of Galilee, right through the Decapolis territory. And they brought him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they asked him to lay his hand on him. He took him aside to be by themselves, away from the crowd, put his fingers into the man's ears and touched his tongue with spittle. Then looking up to heaven he sighed; and he said to him, 'Ephphatha,' that is, 'Be opened.' And his ears were opened, and at once the impediment of his tongue was loosened and he spoke clearly. And Jesus ordered them to tell no one about it, but the more he insisted, the more widely they proclaimed it. Their admiration was unbounded, and they said, 'Everything he does is good, he makes the deaf hear and the dumb speak.'

God is near

“Say to all faint hearts, ‘Courage! Do not be afraid: ‘Look, your God is coming...’” (1st reading). How is your heart? Is it beating with fear and anxiety, or is it just tired? The prophet Isaiah tells us today: “*Courage! Do not be afraid*”. These words provide hope and strength when we are anxious about the future or feeling lonely and misunderstood. The reason for our courage is because God is here. We trust deeply that He is with us and guides us as we walk on.

“...*put his fingers into the man's ears and touched his tongue...*” In today's gospel, Jesus puts His fingers into the man's ears and touches his tongue to show that He empathises with his condition. Jesus, God incarnated, is not indifferent but can identify and feel compassion for this man. This is our Good News! Jesus inserts Himself into our human reality and understands our fears, joys, pains, loneliness, etc. Let us open ourselves to the presence of Christ and trust that His love gives us life.

Reflective question:

What is Jesus saying to me today?

Monday, 9th September, 23rd Week in Ordinary Time.**1 Corinthians 5:1-8, Luke 6:6-11**

On the Sabbath Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach, and a man was present, and his right hand was withered. The scribes and the Pharisees were watching him to see if he would cure somebody on the Sabbath, hoping to find something to charge him with. But he knew their thoughts; and he said to the man with the withered hand, 'Get up and stand out in the middle!' And he came forward and stood there. Then Jesus said to them, 'I put it to you: is it permitted on the Sabbath to do good, or to do evil; to save life, or to destroy it?' Then he looked round at them all and said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' He did so, and his hand was restored. But they were furious and began to discuss the best way of dealing with Jesus.

Agents of God's goodness

In today's gospel, Jesus heals a man with a withered hand on a Sabbath day. The Pharisees are watching His moves to see if He might be doing wrong so that they can have the opportunity to condemn Him. Yet, Jesus does not care about how others look at Him. The only thing that matters to Him is to do good and help others in need. Jesus urges us always to be motivated by love for others and make a positive impact on the lives of those around us. Following the footsteps of Jesus, we live each day using our gifts and talents, our time and energy, to do good and enhance the lives of others.

Jesus' mission is to do good and save lives, and He entrusts us with this same mission. If we tend to watch and find fault with others, let us turn to Jesus and allow Him to guide us back to His work of doing good for others.

Reflective question:

How open am I to collaborate with Jesus' mission today?

Tuesday, 10th September, 23rd Week in Ordinary Time.

1 Corinthians 6:1-11, Luke 6:12-19

Jesus went onto the mountain to pray; and he spent the whole night in prayer to God. When day came he summoned his disciples and picked out twelve of them; he called them 'apostles': Simon whom he called Peter, and his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon called the Zealot, Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot who became a traitor. He then came down with them and stopped at a piece of level ground where there was a large gathering of his disciples, with a great crowd of people from all parts of Judaea and Jerusalem and the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon who had come to hear him and to be cured of their diseases. People tormented by unclean spirits were also cured, and everyone in the crowd was trying to touch him because power came out of him that cured them all.

Praying and deciding

Jesus is a man of prayer. He prays after the busyness of each day. Here, we see Him praying before making a major decision. Staying in communion with God the Father, Jesus discerns those who will be in His inner circle and help Him with His mission. Do we allocate time for prayer before making important decisions, or do we make our choices and then seek God's blessing? We need God to guide us in our decisions, be it about relationships, careers, etc., so that we have the clarity to align ourselves with His will.

After a long time of prayer, Jesus chooses Peter, Andrew, James, John, etc. They are chosen not because they are wealthy and powerful. Instead, Jesus trusts that these simple and ordinary people have the capacity to learn, love and live His mission. May we prioritise prayer in our lives so that our decisions reflect God's will as we bring His presence of love to others.

Reflective question:

Do I include God in my decision-making and allow Him to show me the best and most loving thing to do?

Wednesday, 11th September, 23rd Week in Ordinary Time.

1 Corinthians 7: 25-31, Luke 6:20-26

Fixing his eyes on his disciples he said: 'How blessed are you who are poor: the kingdom of God is yours. Blessed are you who are hungry now: you shall have your fill. Blessed are you who are weeping now: you shall laugh. Blessed are you when people hate you, drive you out, abuse you, denounce your name as criminal, on account of the Son of man. Rejoice when that day comes and dance for joy, look!-your reward will be great in heaven. This was the way their ancestors treated the prophets. But alas for you who are rich: you are having your consolation now. Alas for you who have plenty to eat now: you shall go hungry. Alas for you who are laughing now: you shall mourn and weep. Alas for you when everyone speaks well of you! This was the way their ancestors treated the false prophets.'

Beatitudes: The path of love

Jesus calls us to follow Him by living out the Beatitudes daily. Every day, we have the choice to walk with Him along this path of love that leads to true happiness. The world presents us with happiness derived from accumulating wealth and power, getting admiration from our peers, being always in control of everything, etc. Today, let us listen to Jesus as He speaks to us about a new way of being happy, to His way of true joy. He invites us to dare to go against the current of the world and be determined to change how we look at ourselves and others.

Walking the path of love that leads to happiness also invites us to step into the world with the awareness that we need to seek changes in society. We need to put ourselves in the shoes of those who are poor, hungry, and suffering and personally serve and work for their good.

Reflective question:

Do I want to have the true happiness that Jesus wants to give to me?

Thursday, 12th September, The Most Holy Name of Mary.

1 Corinthians 8:1-7, 11-13, Luke 6:27-38

Jesus said to his disciples: 'But I say this to you who are listening: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who treat you badly. To anyone who slaps you on one cheek, present the other cheek as well; to anyone who takes your

cloak from you, do not refuse your tunic. Give to everyone who asks you, and do not ask for your property back from someone who takes it. Treat others as you would like people to treat you. If you love those who love you, what credit can you expect? Even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit can you expect? For even sinners do that much. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to get money back, what credit can you expect? Even sinners lend to sinners to get back the same amount. Instead, love your enemies and do good to them, and lend without any hope of return. You will have a great reward, and you will be children of the Most High, for he himself is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be compassionate just as your Father is compassionate. Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and there will be gifts for you: a full measure, pressed down, shaken together, and overflowing, will be poured into your lap; because the standard you use will be the standard used for you.'

Love for enemies

“Love” is a word that has been used loosely, to the point that it sometimes has lost its meaning. It refers to a range of things, from loving food to people. In today’s gospel, Jesus shows us that love has to be our way of being. *“But I say this to you who are listening: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who treat you badly.”* Who are our enemies? Let us take time to think about it. There are people we cannot get along with and do not like due to different personalities and values, past hurts and misunderstandings. The easiest thing to do is to ignore them. Jesus calls us today to put love into practice by showing mercy to them and praying for them.

To love as Jesus calls us to, we must set aside our prejudices and resentments, listen to what He is saying and allow Him to fill our hearts with His boundless love. Being loved by Him makes it much easier to see people His way and reach out to them with mercy.

Reflective question:

In the context of the gospel passage, how can I put love into practice today?

Friday, 13th September, St. John Chrysostom.

1 Corinthians 9:16-19, 22-27, Luke 6:39-42

Jesus told a parable to the disciples, 'Can one blind person guide another? Surely both will fall into a pit? Disciple is not superior to teacher; but fully trained disciple will be like teacher. Why do you observe the splinter in your brother's eye and never notice the great log in your own? How can you say to your brother, "Brother, let me take out that splinter in your eye," when you cannot see the great log in your own? Hypocrite! Take the log out of your own eye first, and then you will see clearly enough to take out the splinter in your brother's eyes.'

Judge less, love more

"I do not boast of preaching the gospel, since it is a duty which has been laid on me..." (1st reading). St. Paul regards his mission of preaching the gospel as a duty, a responsibility that God has entrusted to him. It is not a task that he takes on just to gain personal benefits. Instead, he gives his everything in order to serve all and to bring as many as possible to know and love Christ. Today, we have the same mission as St. Paul. We have the responsibility to preach the gospel by word and action, and we do it in all circumstances and at all times.

If we are to preach the gospel, we must have a vision that looks at others kindly instead of judging them. Jesus tells us to judge less because we do not know all the facts of the situation and cannot see the heart of each person. Today, let us ask Jesus to help us expand our hearts to have more room for merciful love for those around us.

Reflective question:

How can I put into practice what I understood in my prayer time?

Saturday, 14th September, The Exaltation of the Cross.

Numbers 21:4-9 or Philippians 2:6-11, John 3:13-17

Jesus said to Nicodemus: 'No one has gone up to heaven except the one who came down from heaven, the Son of man; as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so must the Son of man be lifted up 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.'

Loving to the end

As we celebrate the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, let us not reduce the cross to merely an object of piety or a religiosity that cuts us off from the realities of society, our family life, and the Church. At the heart of the cross of Christ is the profound love of God for the world that calls us to a new way of love. The love of the cross calls us to a self-giving love that goes beyond our own selves and opens up to our brothers and sisters who are in need.

Christ does not want us to simply adore the cross, but He wants us to go out and serve others by doing small acts of love, thoughtfulness and kindness. The acts of love we do will have lasting effects on our lives and the lives of others. Today, let us look at the cross of Jesus and listen to Him telling us, "*I love you here, now and forever*". All He asks of us is to respond to His love by loving others.

Reflective question:

How can I show love to the people I meet today?

Sunday, 15th September, 24th Sunday in Ordinary Time.

Isaiah 50:5-9, James 2:14-18, Mark 8:27-35

Jesus and his disciples left for the villages round Caesarea Philippi. On the way he put this question to his disciples, 'Who do people say I am?' And they told him, 'John the Baptist, others Elijah, others again, one of the prophets.' 'But you,' he asked them, 'who do you say I am?' Peter spoke up and said to him, 'You are the Christ.' And he gave them strict orders not to tell anyone about him. Then he began to teach them that the Son of man was destined to suffer grievously, and to be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and to be put to death, and after three days to rise again; and he said all this quite openly. Then, taking him aside, Peter tried to rebuke him. But, turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said to him, 'Get behind me, Satan! You are thinking not as God thinks, but as human beings do.' He called the people and his disciples to him and said, 'If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me.'

Anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it."

Cost of discipleship

"If one of the brothers or sisters is in need of clothes and has not enough food to live on, and one of you says to them, 'I wish you well; keep yourself warm and eat plenty', without giving them these bare necessities of life, then what good is that? Faith is like that: if good works do not go with it, it is quite dead" (1st reading). St. James speaks to us of what discipleship is all about. We imitate Jesus, our Master, by putting our entire life- our talents, strengths, material resources, etc. - at the service of the people around us. This is a constant challenge because it means that we always need to prioritise the needs of others over our own.

We can relate to the conflict that Peter faces in today's gospel. He wants to follow Jesus but cannot accept the consequences of that following, namely suffering and death. Most of us want to follow Jesus but do not want to embrace the cost of discipleship. Today, let us be willing to die to our self-interest and follow Jesus by doing good works for the benefit of others.

Reflective question:

How can I live my life wholeheartedly out of love for Jesus and others?

Monday, 16th September, SS.Cornelius & Cyprian.

1 Corinthians 11:17-26, 33, Luke 7:1-10

When Jesus had come to the end of all he wanted the people to hear, he went into Capernaum. A centurion there had a servant, a favourite of his, who was sick and near death. Having heard about Jesus he sent some Jewish elders to him to ask him to come and heal his servant. When they came to Jesus they pleaded earnestly with him saying, 'He deserves this of you, because he is well disposed towards our people; he built us our synagogue himself.' So Jesus went with them, and was not very far from the house when the centurion sent word to him by some friends to say to him, 'Sir, do not put yourself to any trouble because I am not worthy to have you under my roof; and that is why I did not presume to come to you myself; let my boy be cured by your giving the word. For I am under authority myself, and have soldiers under me; and

I say to one man, "Go," and he goes; to another, "Come here," and he comes; to my servant, "Do this," and he does it.' When Jesus heard these words he was astonished at him and, turning round, said to the crowd following him, 'I tell you, not even in Israel have I found faith as great as this.' And when the messengers got back to the house they found the servant in perfect health.

Jesus and the Roman centurion

In today's gospel, a Roman centurion requests that Jesus heal his sick servant. Jesus does not refuse to help simply because the man is a Roman centurion, an enemy of the Jewish people. Instead, He immediately sets off to his house. Indeed, Jesus loves His enemies. He puts into practice what He preaches: "*Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you...*" (Luke 6:27). Jesus calls us to imitate Him by offering love and mercy to the people we encounter, friends and enemies alike.

The Roman centurion has never seen Jesus or His works of healing but hears stories about Him. Yet, the stories he hears are enough to move his heart to believe that Jesus will have the compassion to care for his servant. The simple childlike trust of this centurion amazes Jesus. He values the centurion's faith more than his great deeds, such as building the synagogue. Today, let us follow the example of the Roman centurion and have faith in God's active presence in our lives.

Reflective question:

What strikes me as I pray with the gospel passage?

Tuesday, 17th September, St. Robert Bellarmine, St. Hildegard of Bingen.

1 Corinthians 12:12-14, 27-31, Luke 7:11-17

Jesus went to a town called Nain, accompanied by his disciples and a great number of people. Now when he was near the gate of the town there was a dead man being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And a considerable number of the townspeople was with her. When the Lord saw her he felt sorry for her and said to her, 'Don't cry.' Then he went up and touched the bier and the bearers stood still, and he said, 'Young man, I tell you: get up.' And the dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him to his mother. Everyone was

filled with awe and glorified God saying, 'A great prophet has risen up among us; God has visited his people.' And this view of him spread throughout Judaea and all over the countryside.

I am with you always

Have you experienced a tragedy or a loss in your life? In today's gospel, there was a woman, accompanied by her friends and neighbours, walking alongside the coffin of her son. Her child, whom she loved dearly, was no longer with her. Though a crowd of people surrounded her, she felt alone in her sadness and grief because nobody could understand the pain she was going through.

"When the Lord saw her he felt sorry for her and said to her, 'Don't cry.'" Jesus saw the woman and empathised with her pain. He did not walk away but was there to provide her comfort. In our moments of distress, God tells us, *"Don't cry. I am with you. Trust me."* To suffer is not at all God's plan for us because He is not a cruel God. We must accept that suffering is part of life and take comfort that God walks with us through our joys and pains. Let us draw near to God, who understands our struggles and shares in our suffering.

Reflective question:

Do I turn to God in the midst of a crisis?

Wednesday, 18th September, 24th Week in Ordinary Time.

1 Corinthians 12:31-13:13, Luke 7:31-35

Jesus said to the people: 'What comparison, then, can I find for the people of this generation? What are they like? They are like children shouting to one another while they sit in the market place: We played the pipes for you, and you wouldn't dance; we sang dirges, and you wouldn't cry. For John the Baptist has come, not eating bread, not drinking wine, and you say, "He is possessed." The Son of man has come, eating and drinking, and you say, "Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners." Yet wisdom is justified by all her children.'

Wisdom's children

"Love is always patient and kind; it is never jealous; love is never boastful or conceited; it is never rude or selfish..." (1st reading). 1 Corinthians 13 is a passage that many of us are familiar with. Today, let the words of St.

Paul challenge us to live a life of love that is focused not on oneself but on the well-being of others. We should look to Jesus as our example of how to love with patience, kindness, selflessness, and forgiveness. The world tells us to love by prioritising ourselves and our needs before others. However, Jesus never stops calling us to dedicate ourselves to seeking the good of others.

“Yet wisdom is justified by all her children.” In the gospel, Jesus compares those who oppose His way of life to children, who judge and compare others for doing something different from the norm. Wisdom's children, those whom the Holy Spirit guides, are open to seeing goodness in others and choosing to love instead of condemning them. May we be mature individuals with hearts full of love, welcoming others in their differences.

Reflective question:

Am I open to love in the way that Jesus wants me to?

Thursday, 19th September, St. Januarius.

1 Corinthians 15:1-11, Luke 7:36-50

One of the Pharisees invited Jesus to a meal. When he arrived at the Pharisee's house and took his place at table, suddenly a woman came in, who had a bad name in the town. She had heard he was dining with the Pharisee and had brought with her an alabaster jar of ointment. She waited behind him at his feet, weeping, and her tears fell on his feet, and she wiped them away with her hair; then she covered his feet with kisses and anointed them with the ointment. When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, 'If this man were a prophet, he would know who this woman is and what sort of person it is who is touching him and what a bad name she has.' Then Jesus took him up and said, 'Simon, I have something to say to you.' He replied, 'Say on, Master.' 'There was once a creditor who had two men in his debt; one owed him five hundred denarii, the other fifty. They were unable to pay, so he let them both off. Which of them will love him more?' Simon answered, 'The one who was let off more, I suppose.' Jesus said, 'You are right.' Then he turned to the woman and said to Simon, 'You see this woman? I came into your house, and you poured no water over my feet, but she has poured out her tears over my feet and wiped them away with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but she has been covering my feet with

kisses ever since I came in. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. For this reason I tell you that her sins, many as they are, have been forgiven her, because she has shown such great love. It is someone who is forgiven little who shows little love.' Then he said to her, 'Your sins are forgiven.' Those who were with him at table began to say to themselves, 'Who is this man, that even forgives sins?' But he said to the woman, 'Your faith has saved you; go in peace.'

Monologue to dialogue

"When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, 'If this man were a prophet...'" Simon the Pharisee invites Jesus to a meal in his home. While they are eating, an unnamed woman, who has a bad reputation in town, enters and starts to wash Jesus' feet with her tears, wipes them with her hair and pour perfume on them. Simon looks at what is happening before him and thinks negatively about Jesus and the woman. Jesus knows Simon's unspoken thoughts and says to him, *"Simon, I have something to say to you."* Thus, by saying this, Jesus does not want to leave Simon alone with his monologue but brings him into a dialogue to open his mind and heart to love more.

We often have unspoken thoughts of criticism and judgment about others. Today, let us listen to Jesus, telling us, *"Listen. I have something to say to you."* May we be open to allowing Jesus to lead us to dialogue with Him, trusting that His words can help us grow to become more loving.

Reflective question:

What is Jesus saying to me in this time of prayer?

Friday, 20th September, SS. Laurent Imbert, Jacques Chastan (Penang College General Fathers), SS. Andrew Kim Tae-gon and Paul Chong Ha-sang and Companions.

1 Corinthians 15:12-20, Luke 8:1-3

Jesus made his way through towns and villages preaching and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. With him went the Twelve, as well as certain women who had been cured of evil spirits and ailments: Mary surnamed the Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, Joanna the wife of Herod's steward Chuza, Susanna, and many others who provided for them out of their own resources.

Women disciples

In today's gospel, Jesus goes to different towns and villages to preach and proclaim the Good News. The Twelve and a group of women disciples accompany him on His journey. These women collaborate with Jesus in His mission by providing for Him out of their own resources. Today, as Jesus' disciples, we are called to give of ourselves- our time, abilities, creativity, etc., to be partners with Jesus in His work of spreading the gospel.

In Jesus's society, women are placed in an inferior status due to the patriarchal system. Yet, Jesus includes women as His disciples, not as secondary presences but as trusted friends and collaborators. They follow Jesus faithfully to the end without betraying, denying, or abandoning Him. Let these women, Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna, and many other women disciples of Jesus throughout the centuries, be a model of discipleship for us today. We also pray for a truly synodal church that values women's dignity, rights, roles, and contributions.

Reflective question:

What is Jesus saying to me now, and what is my response to Him?

Saturday, 21st September, St Matthew, Apostle and Evangelist.

Ephesians 4:1-7, 11-13, Matthew 9:9-13

As Jesus was walking on from there he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office, and he said to him, 'Follow me.' And he got up and followed him. Now while he was at table in the house it happened that a number of tax collectors and sinners came to sit at the table with Jesus and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, 'Why does your master eat with tax collectors and sinners?' When he heard this he replied, 'It is not the healthy who need the doctor, but the sick. Go and learn the meaning of the words: Mercy is what pleases me, not sacrifice. And indeed I came to call not the upright, but sinners.'

Call to a life of love

"I, the prisoner in the Lord, implore you to lead a life worthy of your vocation. Bear with one another charitably, in complete selflessness, gentleness and patience. Do all you can to preserve unity..." (1st reading). St. Paul speaks about living a life that God has called us to - a

life of love, not success according to the world. We can be successful and achieve a lot in life, even in our work for God. However, being successful is meaningless if we are not willing to bear with one another with humility, show kindness and patience, and work for unity.

In the gospel, Jesus calls Matthew to a life of love, not success, wealth, status and power. He demonstrates the meaning of love by sharing a meal with sinners and being in communion with them, showing Matthew what this life is about. "*Mercy is what pleases me, not sacrifices.*" Jesus gathers all people to Him and does not build walls to divide, revealing the depth of God's merciful love. Today, Jesus calls us to live a life of love by being merciful as God is merciful.

Reflective question:

What is God's message to me in this time of prayer?

Sunday, 22nd September, 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time.

Wisdom 2:12, 17-20, James 3:16-4:3, Mark 9:30-37

After leaving the mountain 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 power 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 got into the house he asked them, 'What were you arguing about on the road?' They said nothing, because on the road 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 whom he set among them and embraced, and he said to them, 'Anyone who welcomes a little child such as this in my name, welcomes me; and anyone who welcomes me, welcomes not me but the one who sent me.'

The ambition to serve

"Wherever you find jealousy and ambition, you find disharmony, and wicked things of every kind being done..." (2nd reading). We have been told to strive for success and do whatever it takes to achieve pleasure, wealth, and power. This wisdom of the world leads us to self-centred ambition and jealousy. This is not the wisdom of God, which, according

to St. James, is a wisdom that promotes peace, kindness, consideration, and compassion and is demonstrated through good actions.

In today's gospel, Jesus' disciples argue among themselves to see who is the greatest. Jesus, knowing their self-ambition, steps in to tell them that true greatness lies not in wealth, power, or status but in humble service to others. Today, Jesus invites us to avoid measuring greatness in terms of material possessions and titles but to strive to express love by being a servant to all. We do not need to do grand acts, but it can be as simple as comforting a friend in need, washing the plates after dinner, etc. Let us ask Jesus to help us to follow in His footsteps and serve others with love.

Reflective question:

How can I show my love by serving others today?

Monday, 23rd September, St. Pius of Pietrelcina.

Proverbs 3:27-35, Luke 8:16-18

Jesus said to his disciples: 'No one lights a lamp to cover it with a bowl or to put it under a bed. No, it is put on a lamp-stand so that people may see the light when they come in. For nothing is hidden but it will be made clear, nothing secret but it will be made known and brought to light. So take care how you listen; anyone who has, will be given more; anyone who has not, will be deprived even of what he thinks he has.'

Kindness is never wasted

"...do not refuse a kindness to anyone who begs it, if it is in your power to perform it. Do not say to your neighbour, 'Go away! Come another time! I will give it tomorrow' if you can do it now..." (1st reading). We are called to offer kindness to everyone and treat everyone equally, regardless of their importance. Kindness is caring for others and can be expressed in many ways, such as helping a family member with a simple chore, buying a packet of tissue paper from a beggar, being respectful to a stranger, etc. No acts of kindness will go to waste, no matter how small.

Our acts of kindness, whether big or small, are ways in which we can be like lighted lamps, shining brightly to point the way for others to see God

in our lives. Today, may we choose to be kind and be a blessing to those around us.

Reflective question:

To whom can I show kindness today?

Tuesday, 24th September, 25th Week in Ordinary Time.

Proverbs 21:1-6, 10-13, Luke 8:19-21

The mother and the brothers of Jesus came looking for him, but they could not get to him because of the crowd. He was told, 'Your mother and brothers are standing outside and want to see you.' But he said in answer, 'My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and put it into practice.'

Belonging to God's family

In the gospel, Jesus' mother and brothers want to see Jesus. However, He does not ask the crowd to make room for them or go out to meet them. Instead, Jesus takes the opportunity to teach an important lesson. He says, "*My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and put it into practice*". For Jesus, those who desire to listen and do God's will are His family.

We are part of Jesus' family by hearing and acting on God's word. What God desires from us is to love by serving others. No one is superior or dominant to others, and no one is better than others. In this family of God, our communion with one another must spring first from our intimate communion with God. Today, let us ask for the grace to remember that we belong to God and find the joy to do His will.

Reflective question:

Do you show that I belong to Jesus' family through the way I live?

Wednesday, 25th September, 25th Week in Ordinary Time.

Proverbs 30:5-9, Luke 9:1-6

Jesus called the Twelve together and gave them power and authority over all devils and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal. He said to them, 'Take nothing for the journey: neither staff, nor haversack, nor bread, nor money; and do not have a spare tunic. Whatever house you enter, stay there; and when you

leave let your departure be from there. As for those who do not welcome you, when you leave their town shake the dust from your feet as evidence against them.' So they set out and went from village to village proclaiming the good news and healing everywhere.

Travel light

"Take nothing for the journey: neither staff, nor haversack, nor bread, nor money; and do not have a spare tunic". Jesus sends His disciples on the mission of preaching the Good News. He instructs them not to take anything with them. The message that Jesus wants to highlight to them is the importance of travelling light. Material possessions can get in the way of the mission. Moreover, Jesus wants them to travel light so that they can depend on God. He will provide them with their daily necessities and motivate others to be generous in providing for them.

Today, Jesus calls us to spread the Good News. He needs us to travel light as we journey through life, trusting that He will provide us with what we need. By freeing ourselves from distraction and anxiety over possessions, we can more clearly experience the presence of God within us. Let us have the courage to simplify our lives and rid ourselves of clutter so that we can truly enjoy depending on God in mission and in life.

Reflective question:

Is God prompting me to simplify my life so that I can truly reflect His presence to others?

Thursday, 26th September, SS. Cosmas and Damian.

Ecclesiastes 1:2-11, Luke 9:7-9

Herod the tetrarch had heard about all that was going on; and he was puzzled, because some people were saying that John had risen from the dead, others that Elijah had reappeared, still others that one of the ancient prophets had come back to life. But Herod said, 'John? I beheaded him. So who is this I hear such reports about?' And he was anxious to see him.

God, the centre of our lives

“Vanity of vanities, the Preacher says. Vanity of Vanities. All is vanity! For all his toil, his toil under the sun, what does man gain by it?” (1st reading). On the surface level, the book of Ecclesiastes seems to offer a message of despair and hopelessness. The Preacher looks at life and views it as vanity, meaningless and emptiness. Yet he asserts that pursuing success, wealth, comfort, and material things is futile without God at the centre of our lives.

In the gospel, Herod, the Tetrarch, is curious about Jesus, having heard many stories about Him. His desire is fulfilled when Pilate sends Jesus to him during the passion story. However, Herod does not make use of the opportunity to know Jesus; instead, he chooses to mock Him. Herod is obsessed with power and has no room for faith in God. Today, Jesus invites us once more to deeply know and love Him so that we can put Him at the centre of our lives. In Him, we find the true meaning of life.

Reflective question:

What is Jesus' message to me today?

Friday, 27th September, St. Vincent de Paul.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-11, Luke 9:18-22

One day Jesus was praying alone, and his disciples came to him and he put this question to them, 'Who do the crowds say I am?' And they answered, 'Some say John the Baptist; others Elijah; others again one of the ancient prophets come back to life.' 'But you,' he said to them, 'who do you say I am?' It was Peter who spoke up. 'The Christ of God,' he said. But he gave them strict orders and charged them not to say this to anyone. He said, 'The Son of man is destined to suffer grievously, to be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes and to be put to death, and to be raised up on the third day.'

In every season of life, God is there

“There is a season for everything, a time for every occupation under heaven: A time for giving birth, a time for dying; a time for planting, a time for uprooting what has been planted...” (1st reading). There is a time for everything. We move through various stages of life, such as birth, death, growth, love, and separation, and the fear of the unknown often accompanies us. We feel helpless as we find ourselves unable to control

the transitions of life. The comforting truth is that God is with us as we walk through each season of life.

In the gospel, Jesus asks His disciples, “*Who do you say I am?*”. Today, He asks us this fundamental question too. Let us look at our story- the experiences of crisis, joy, failures, new beginnings, etc.- and recognise Jesus’ continuing presence in every moment of our lives. From our life stories, we give our personal response to His question.

Reflective question:

Who is Jesus for me?

Saturday, 28th September, St. Wenceslaus, SS. Lawrence Ruiz and Companions.

Ecclesiastes 11:9-12:8, Luke 9:43-45

Everyone was awestruck by the greatness of God. But while everyone was full of admiration for all Jesus did, he said to his disciples, 'For your part, you must have these words constantly in mind: The Son of man is going to be delivered into the power of men.' But they did not understand what he said; it was hidden from them so that they should not see the meaning of it, and they were afraid to ask him about it.

For God

In today’s gospel, the people around Jesus are full of admiration for all that He has done. Instead of basking in their praises and enjoying being the star of the crowd, Jesus turns to His disciples at that very moment and tells them, “*For your part, you must have these words constantly in mind: The Son of man is going to be delivered into the power of men.*” Jesus is very clear that human admiration is fickle; thus, He is not motivated to do things just to please people. Instead, Jesus is determined to go to Jerusalem to bring the Good News of God’s love, even though He will not be well-received in that city. He is determined to go there because of His faithfulness to the mission.

Today, let us listen to Jesus’ invitation not to let the need for human approval motivate us but to seek to do God’s will and be collaborators in His mission.

Reflective question:

What is the source of my motivation?

Sunday, 29th September, 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time, World Day of Migrants and Refugees.

Numbers 11: 25-29, James 5:1-6, Mark 9:38-43, 45, 47-48

John said to Jesus, 'Master, we saw someone who is not one of us driving 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 could soon afterwards speak evil of me. Anyone who is not against us is for us. If anyone gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ, then in truth I tell you, he will most certainly not lose his reward. But anyone who is the downfall of one of these little ones who have faith, would be better thrown into the sea with a great millstone hung round his neck. And if your hand should be your downfall, 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 can never be put out. And if your foot should be your downfall, cut it off; it is better for you enter into life lame, than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. And if your eye should be your downfall, 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 will never die nor their fire be put out.'

Unity and scandal

In today's gospel, John wants Jesus to stop a man from performing miracles because he is not part of their group. However, Jesus responds, "Anyone who is not against us is for us". Jesus welcomes and loves all who do good, even if they are not part of His disciples. We may struggle to recognise God's work in individuals we perceive as inferior or flawed. Let us be open to recognising that God can work through the lives of those we consider "outsiders" or inferiors and use them to bring goodness to others. May we look at one another with kindness and accept that each person, flaws and all, can help build God's kingdom here on earth.

Jesus also warns us not to be a stumbling block to those around us. We are called to be good examples through our words and actions so that we can lead people to God. Let us draw close to Jesus and let Him shape our hearts and minds so that we can be instruments of His love.

Reflective question:

How can my words and actions help to create unity and guide others towards God?

Monday, 30th September, St. Jerome.**Job 1:6-22, Luke 9: 46-50**

An argument started between the disciples about which of them was the greatest. Jesus knew what thoughts were going through their minds, and he took a little child whom he set by his side and then he said to them, 'Anyone who welcomes this little child in my name welcomes me; and anyone who welcomes me, welcomes the one who sent me. The least among you all is the one who is the greatest.' John spoke up. 'Master,' he said, 'we saw someone driving out devils in your name, and because he is not with us we tried to stop him.' But Jesus said to him, 'You must not stop him: anyone who is not against you is for you.'

Jesus in the least

In today's gospel, the disciples start to talk about who among them is the greatest. This is also our daily struggle. In many ways, we all strive to be the best, the first, the greatest- for example, the first to know the news, the first to own the latest handphone, the best student, the best leader, and so on. We want people to recognise us as such. However, Jesus takes a little child and sets him at His side and says, "*Anyone who welcomes this little child in my name welcomes me; and anyone who welcomes me, welcomes the one who sent me. The least among you all is the one who is the greatest*". Jesus identifies Himself with the least, not the greatest. He tells His disciples and us today that true greatness consists in serving the least, the unimportant ones among us.

When we serve the most vulnerable, the weak and the needy, we are caring for Jesus. He is in every person we love and serve. Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus and let Him lead us to live a life of true greatness.

Reflective question:

How can I live today by serving Jesus through serving others, especially those in need?

