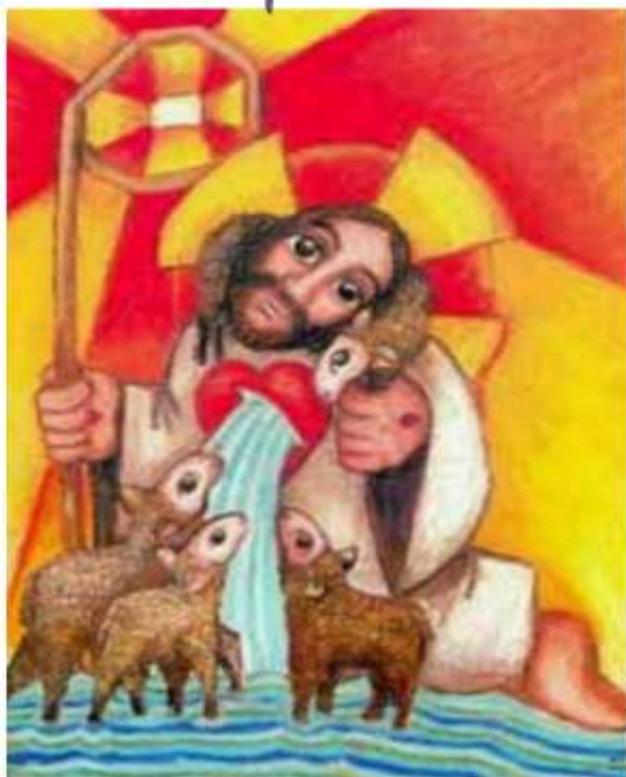


*In the Shepherd's love*



## **PRAYER FOR LIVING**

DAILY REFLECTIONS FOR  
LITURGICAL YEAR C~  
MAY 2022

*Sr. Sandra Seow*

# PRAYER FOR LIVING YEAR C

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**Sunday, 1<sup>st</sup> May, 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter.**

**Acts 5:27-32, 40-41, Apocalypse 5:11-14, John 21:1-19**

*Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples. It was by the Sea of Tiberias, and it happened like this: Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee and two more of his disciples were together. Simon Peter said, 'I'm going fishing.' They replied, 'We'll come with you.' They went out and got into the boat but caught nothing that night. When it was already light, there stood Jesus on the shore, though the disciples did not realise that it was Jesus. Jesus called out, 'Haven't you caught anything, friends?' And when they answered, 'No,' he said, 'Throw the net out to starboard and you'll find something.' So they threw the net out and could not haul it in because of the quantity of fish. The disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, 'It is the Lord.' At these words, 'It is the Lord,' Simon Peter tied his outer garment round him (for he had nothing on) and jumped into the water. The other disciples came on in the boat, towing the net with the fish; they were only about a hundred yards from land. As soon as they came ashore they saw that there was some bread there and a charcoal fire with fish cooking on it. Jesus said, 'Bring some of the fish you have just caught.' Simon Peter went aboard and dragged the net ashore, full of big fish, one hundred and fifty-three of them; and in spite of there being so many the net was not broken. Jesus said to them, 'Come and have breakfast.' None of the disciples was bold enough to ask, 'Who are you?'. They knew quite well it was the Lord. Jesus then stepped forward, took the bread and gave it to them, and the same with the fish. This was the third time that Jesus revealed himself to the disciples after rising from the dead. When they had eaten, 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 hurt that he asked him a third time, 'Do you love me?' and said, 'Lord, you know everything; you know I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my sheep. In all truth I tell you, 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.'*

### Christ is risen. So what?

After the excitement of encountering the Risen Jesus (John 20:19-29), Peter and the disciples went back to their familiar routine, fishing. However, they caught nothing. Their catching no fish reflects their inner state of emptiness. It was in that moment of experiencing their limitations that Jesus appeared. As Jesus stood at the shore, the darkness of night gave way to the dawn of a new day, of new hope and new life. Jesus' resurrection takes place in our daily life routines and in moments when we feel empty of purpose and joy. We need to have eyes of faith, like the Beloved disciple, to see that Jesus is with us and wants to bring us new hope, new strength, new possibility, new direction.

Today, Jesus asks us, "*Do you love me?*". It is a call to place Him again at the center of our lives. Our friendship with Jesus leads us joyfully to feed His sheep, to take care of the people He places in our lives. Thus, living with the Risen Jesus, life is never the same anymore!

### **Question for reflection:**

How does the Risen Jesus make a difference in my life?

### **Monday, 2<sup>nd</sup> May, St. Athanasius.**

#### **Acts 6: 8-15, John 6:22-29**

*After Jesus had fed the five thousand, his disciples saw him walking on the water. Next day, the crowd that had stayed on the other side saw that only one boat had been there, and that Jesus had not got into the boat with his disciples, but that the disciples had set off by themselves. Other boats, however, had put in from Tiberias, near the place where the bread had been eaten. When the people saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into those boats and crossed to Capernaum to look for Jesus. When they found him on the other side, they said to him, 'Rabbi, when did you come here?' Jesus answered: In all truth I tell you, you are looking for me not because you have seen the signs but because you had all the bread you wanted to eat. Do not work for food that goes bad, but work for food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of man will give you, for on him the Father, God himself,*

*has set his seal. Then they said to him, 'What must we do if we are to carry out God's work?' Jesus gave them this answer, 'This is carrying out God's work: you must believe in the one he has sent.'*

### To seek Jesus

After being fed by Jesus, the crowd went searching for Him. Do we search for Jesus in the midst of our daily lives? Why do we search for Him? In the gospel today, Jesus knew that the people were searching for Him, not because they wanted to be with Him, but because they wanted to get more material food from Him. Let us reflect on our motive for going to Jesus. Like the crowd in today's gospel, we are often interested in Jesus for what He can do for us, not for who He is. Is Jesus our friend whom we love and seek to be with, or do we use Him for our interest? Today, let us go to Jesus and desire to deepen our friendship with Him once more.

Jesus told the crowd, "...*you must believe in the one he sent*". Our seeking should lead us to believe in Him by treasuring His friendship, listening attentively to Him, and allowing His values to shape our lives. Jesus is asking us for a living faith in Him.

### **Question for reflection:**

How does my faith in Jesus affect and transform my life?

### **Tuesday, 3<sup>rd</sup> May, SS. Philip and James.**

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

*Jesus said to Thomas: 'I am the Way; I am Truth and Life. No one can come to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father too. From this moment you know him and have seen him.'* Philip said, 'Lord, show us the Father and then we shall be satisfied.' *Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? 'Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father, so how can you say, "Show us the Father"? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? What I say to you I do not speak of my own accord: it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his works. You must believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe it on the evidence of these works. In all truth I tell you, whoever believes in me will perform the same works as I do myself,*

*and will perform even greater works, because I am going to the Father. Whatever you ask in my name I will do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.'*

### To know and love Jesus

Philip expressed his longing through his request to Jesus, "*Lord, show us the Father and then we shall be satisfied*". Philip's request brings to mind the words of St. Augustine, "*Our hearts are restless till they find rest in you*". We too long for God and desire to be closely connected to Him. The good news is that God is the first one who longs to be with us, and He is the one who constantly calls us to enter more deeply into a loving relationship with Him. Jesus told Philip, "*Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father*", and this is what He wants us to understand too. None of us can say that we do not know God. This is because Jesus is the human face of God. He reveals to us the loving heart of God, who loves us unconditionally and limitlessly. In and through Jesus, we know God as who He truly is and enter into a loving relationship with Him.

Thus, it is Jesus who can truly satisfy us and make our restless hearts to be at peace, at rest.

### **Question for reflection:**

How can I strengthen my relationship with Jesus?

### **Wednesday, 4<sup>th</sup> May, 3<sup>rd</sup> Week of Easter.**

#### **Acts 8:1-8, John 6:35-40**

*Jesus said to the crowd: 'I am the bread of life. No one who comes to me will ever hunger; no one who believes in me will ever thirst. But, as I have told you, you can see me and still you do not believe. Everyone whom the Father gives me will come to me; I will certainly not reject anyone who comes to me, because I have come from heaven, not to do my own will, but to do the will of him who sent me. Now the will of him who sent me is that I should lose nothing of all that he has given to me, but that I should raise it up on the last day. It is my Father's will that whoever sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and that I should raise that person up on the last day.'*

### Jesus' faithful love that never rejects

*"I will certainly not reject anyone who comes to me, because I have come from heaven, not to do my own will, but to do the will of him who sent me".* Let us read these words of Jesus and allow ourselves to experience the faithful heart of God, who loves all without limits. In life, we might have the experiences of being rejected by others, and thus, we are afraid to get hurt again and struggle to let go of the pain we feel. Today, Jesus calls us to come to Him.

*"I am the bread of life".* Jesus is the bread of life for all of us. He, the incarnated God, does not reject us but wants to nourish and sustain us with His very life. Even if we turn away from Him, He will always remain for us the bread of life and will never reject us when we make our way back to Him. Therefore, let us never get tired of going to Jesus and opening our hearts to receive His faithful love.

### **Question for reflection:**

What is Jesus' message to me as I ponder on the following words, *"I will certainly not reject anyone who comes to me"*?

### **Thursday, 5<sup>th</sup> May, 3<sup>rd</sup> Week of Easter.**

#### **Acts 8:26-40, John 6:44-51**

*Jesus said to the crowd: 'No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me, and I will raise that person up on the last day. It is written in the prophets: They will all be taught by God; everyone who has listened to the Father, and learnt from him, comes to me. Not that anybody has seen the Father, except him who has his being from God: he has seen the Father. In all truth I tell you, everyone who believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate manna in the desert and they are dead; but this is the bread which comes down from heaven, so that a person may eat it and not die. I am the living bread which has come down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live for ever; and the bread that I shall give is my flesh, for the life of the world.'*

### Jesus, the bread of life for all

*"...everyone who believes has eternal life".* Isn't this good news for us? We can have eternal life here and now when we believe in Jesus and follow Him in faith. We often think that eternal life is life after we die.

However, Jesus assures us that we can experience eternal life here and now when we live each day in a loving relationship with Him.

*"I am the bread of life"*. Receiving Jesus in the Eucharist is not simply a ritual that we go through, but it has to make a difference in our lives. With eyes of faith, we recognise Jesus in the Eucharist and marvel at the humility of God, who willingly humbles Himself to become a piece of bread for us. When we eat the bread of life, we enter into deep loving communion with Jesus Himself. To be in communion with Jesus leads to having the determination to pull down walls of indifference and hatred and pursue unity with those around us.

**Question for reflection:**

What does it mean for me that Jesus is *"the bread of life"*?

**Friday, 6<sup>th</sup> May, 3<sup>rd</sup> Week of Easter.**

**Acts 9:1-20, John 6:52-59**

*The Jews started arguing among themselves, 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?' Jesus replied to them: 'In all truth I tell you, if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Anyone who does eat my flesh and drink my blood has eternal life, and I shall raise that person up on the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I live in that person. As the living Father sent me and I draw life from the Father, so whoever eats me will also draw life from me. This is the bread which has come down from heaven; it is not like the bread our ancestors ate: they are dead, but anyone who eats this bread will live for ever.' This is what he taught at Capernaum in the synagogue.*

Jesus, our true life

The Jews who listened to Jesus about the need to eat His flesh were shocked at His words. They were confused as they asked, *"How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"*. In the Last Supper, when Jesus took the bread and the cup of wine and said, *"This is my body... This is my blood"*, He presented His body and blood in the form of bread and wine. Do we take Jesus' loving presence in the bread and wine for granted?

Today, each time we gather round the Eucharistic meal, we listen once more to His words, "*This is my body...This is my blood*". He gives Himself to each one of us so that we can enter into ever deeper communion with Him and draw life from Him. Jesus is our life, so we are not meant to exist from day to day. Instead, we are called to be in communion with Him so that we can bring His life to others.

**Question for reflection:**

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

**Saturday, 7<sup>th</sup> May, 3<sup>rd</sup> Week of Easter.**

**Acts 9:31-42, John 6:60-69**

*After hearing his doctrine, many of the followers of Jesus said, 'This is intolerable language. How could anyone accept it?' Jesus was aware that his followers were complaining about it and said, 'Does this disturb you? What if you should see the Son of man ascend to where he was before? It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh has nothing to offer. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. But there are some of you who do not believe.' For Jesus knew from the outset who did not believe and who was to betray him. He went on, 'This is why I told you that no one could come to me except by the gift of the Father.' After this, many of his disciples went away and accompanied him no more. Then Jesus said to the Twelve, 'What about you, do you want to go away too?' Simon Peter answered, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the message of eternal life, and we believe; we have come to know that you are the Holy One of God.'*

Do you also want to leave?

Jesus turned to the Twelve and asked them, "*What about you, do you want to go away too?*" Today, Jesus asks each of us the same question too, "*Do you want to go away? Do you want to follow the easy way?*" What about us? What will our response be if we find Jesus' teachings and ways too hard to handle? Would we choose to walk away or stay?

Today's gospel passage shows us the capacity of our human hearts. We have the ability to reject Jesus despite experiencing His call to follow Him, like many of His followers who chose to walk away. However, we can also take steps to trust Jesus even when we do not fully understand

His ways like Peter and the rest of the Twelve. In this time of prayer, let us stay with Peter's reply, "*Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the message of eternal life...*", and let these words resound in our hearts.

**Question for reflection:**

If I were Peter, how would I reply to Jesus' question?

**Sunday, 8<sup>th</sup> May, 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter, Good Shepherd Sunday.**

**Acts 13:14, 43-52, Apocalypse 7:9,14-17, John 10:27-30**

*Jesus said: 'The sheep that belong to me listen to my voice; I know them and they follow me. I give them eternal life; they will never be lost and no one will ever steal them from my hand. The Father, for what he has given me, is greater than anyone, and no one can steal anything from the Father's hand. The Father and I are one.'*

Listen and follow the Shepherd

We often associate this day with praying for priestly and religious vocations as we celebrate Good Shepherd's Sunday. It is also a day for all of us as baptised people to reflect on our own baptismal vocation. We, as baptised Christians, have the vocation to listen to the voice of Jesus, our Shepherd and follow Him. When we do not listen to Jesus, we end up listening to the voices of society that can sometimes lead us to distance ourselves from Him and His values. How can we listen to Jesus? Jesus is present in the Scripture, and there, He encounters us and speaks to us. Let us strive to become Jesus' sheep that listen to His voice and allow His word to renew our faith and transform our lives.

Our listening should lead us to follow Jesus by living a life of love and service as He did. We are to help the poor as He did, be the voice for the voiceless as He did, and face life with trust in God as He did. Today, let us renew our response to His call.

**Question for reflection:**

Am I willing to listen attentively to Jesus and follow Him with greater faithfulness?

## **Monday, 9<sup>th</sup> May, 4<sup>th</sup> Week of Easter.**

### **Acts 11:1-18, John 10:1-10**

*Jesus said: 'In all truth I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold through the gate, but climbs in some other way, is a thief and a bandit. He who enters through the gate is the shepherd of the flock; the gatekeeper lets him in, the sheep hear his voice, one by one he calls his own sheep and leads them out. When he has brought out all those that are his, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow because they know his voice. They will never follow a stranger, but will run away from him because they do not recognise the voice of strangers.'* Jesus told them this parable but they failed to understand what he was saying to them. So Jesus spoke to them again: *'In all truth I tell you, I am the gate of the sheepfold. All who have come before me are thieves and bandits, but the sheep took no notice of them. I am the gate. Anyone who enters through me will be safe: such a one will go in and out and will find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full.'*

### Jesus, our gate and shepherd

*"Don't be afraid: He's waiting for you. Be lively, have the courage to enter through His gate. All are invited to pass through this gate, to pass through the gate of faith, to enter into His life, and to allow Him to enter into our life, because He transforms it, renews it, the gifts of full and lasting joy." (Pope Francis)*

Let us listen to Jesus as He tells us, *"I am the gate"*. Jesus is the open gate through which we are with God and through which God comes to be with us. We are all invited to keep entering through this gate courageously and experience the life of God. Let us also find comfort that Jesus is not only the gate but also the Shepherd who knows us through and through and loves us so much that He willingly gives Himself to us. This is our God who comes not to get something from us, but instead, He comes to give His very self to us. In this time of prayer, let us stay close to Jesus, our gate and our Shepherd.

### **Question for reflection:**

Do I treasure this reality that Jesus is my gate and shepherd?

**Tuesday, 10<sup>th</sup> May, St. John of Avila, St. Damien of Molokai.**  
**Acts 11:19-26, John 10:22-30**

*It was the time of the feast of Dedication in Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was in the Temple walking up and down in the Portico of Solomon. The Jews gathered round him and said, 'How much longer are you going to keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us openly.' Jesus replied: I have told you, but you do not believe. The works I do in my Father's name are my witness; but you do not believe, because you are no sheep of mine. The sheep that belong to me listen to my voice; I know them and they follow me. I give them eternal life; they will never be lost and no one will ever steal them from my hand. The Father, for what he has given me, is greater than anyone, and no one can steal anything from the Father's hand. The Father and I are one.'*

Jesus is our shepherd and we are His sheep

*"...they will never be lost and no one will ever steal them from my hand".* Jesus is our Good Shepherd who commits Himself to each of us. St. Paul personally experienced Jesus' faithful love and declared with conviction, *"For I am certain that nothing can separate us from his love: neither death nor life, neither angels nor other heavenly rulers or powers, neither the present nor the future, neither the world above nor the world below—there is nothing in all creation that will ever be able to separate us from the love of God which is ours through Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Romans 8:38-39). Jesus loves us so much that He works hard to draw us close to Him.

We have a part to play in this relationship of love. Jesus commits Himself to us, we too have to commit ourselves to Him. As His sheep, we listen attentively to the Shepherd's voice and follow where He leads us. Today, let us fix our eyes on Jesus and confidently walk with Him.

**Question for reflection:**

How can I listen and follow Jesus today?

**Wednesday, 11<sup>th</sup> May, 4<sup>th</sup> Week of Easter.**  
**Acts 12:24-13:5, John 12:44-50**

*Jesus declared publicly: 'Whoever believes in me believes not in me but in the one who sent me, and whoever sees me, sees the one who sent*

*me. I have come into the world as light, to prevent anyone who believes in me from staying in the dark any more. If anyone hears my words and does not keep them faithfully, it is not I who shall judge such a person, since I have come not to judge the world, but to save the world: anyone who rejects me and refuses my words has his judge already: the word itself that I have spoken will be his judge on the last day. For I have not spoken of my own accord; but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and what to speak, and I know that his commands mean eternal life. And therefore what the Father has told me is what I speak.'*

### True light from true light

*"I have come into the world as light, to prevent anyone who believes in me from staying in the dark any more"*. Jesus is the light that reveals the true face of God the Father. Jesus is the light that reaches into the dark shadowy areas of pride and hatred in our lives and brings His healing presence of mercy and peace. Jesus declares and calls out to us to believe in Him by allowing ourselves to be bathed in the light of His love so that we may be saved and be in an intimate relationship with God. Today, we have the freedom to accept or reject Him; we have the choice to take a step towards the light or to remain in darkness.

Today, let us put our faith in Jesus. He, the Light, will always lead us along the way towards communion with God. With Jesus, we are not afraid. Let our faith lead us to live for others who are still living in darkness. Let us be lights that shine and point them in the direction of Jesus, the Light.

### **Question for reflection:**

How can I live in the light of Christ today?

### **Thursday, 12<sup>th</sup> May, St. Pancras.**

#### **Acts 13:13-25, John 13:16-20**

*After he had washed the feet of his disciples, Jesus said to them, 'In all truth I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, no messenger is greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know this, blessed are you if you behave accordingly. I am not speaking about all of you: I know the ones I have chosen; but what scripture says must be fulfilled: 'He who shares my table takes advantage of me. I tell you this now, before*

*it happens, so that when it does happen you may believe that I am He. In all truth I tell you, whoever welcomes the one I send, welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me, welcomes the one who sent me.'*

No servant is greater than his master

*"In all truth I tell you, no servant is greater than his master".* What is the message that Jesus wants to convey to us today? These words of Jesus were taken after He washed the feet of the Twelve disciples. He, their Master, washed their feet, so too must they do the same. Today, Jesus invites us to follow Him as He leads us to walk the same path of loving service. In this prayer time, let us reflect and examine if any blocks prevent us from serving and loving like Jesus.

As disciples of Jesus, we are called to serve all, even those who do not appreciate our acts of kindness or reject our gestures of love. The way we relate to people should not be determined by how they relate to us. Jesus washed Judas' feet, and yet he betrayed Jesus. Even still, Jesus responded to Judas' betrayal with love by calling him, *"Friend"* (Matthew 26:50). Today, let us ask Jesus for the courage to pattern ourselves after Jesus.

**Question for reflection:**

Is there anything in me that prevents me from living and loving like Jesus?

**Friday, 13<sup>th</sup> May, Our Lady of Fatima.**

**Isaiah 61:9-11, Luke 11:27-28**

*As Jesus was speaking, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said, 'Blessed the womb that bore you and the breasts that fed you!' But he replied, 'More blessed still are those who hear the word of God and keep it!'*

Blessed are we

In today's gospel, a woman in the crowd was listening to Jesus and she called out: *"Blessed the womb that bore you and the breasts that fed you!"*. Jesus answered her, *"More blessed still are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"*. Through these words, Jesus was saying that Mary was indeed blessed and happy. However, her blessedness was

not because she was His mother who gave birth to Him, but because her greater happiness was that she lived her whole life in communion with God by listening to His word and putting it into action.

In the silence of our prayer, we listen to God as He speaks to us and constantly calls us to love more, trust more, etc. However, it is not enough to listen, we need to put the call of God into practice, to let the Word of God shape us, guide us, and influence our thoughts and actions. As we celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of Fatima, let us ask Mary to help us become people whose true happiness is listening and doing what God desires.

**Question for reflection:**

Do I believe that communion with God is the source of my happiness?

**Saturday, 14<sup>th</sup> May, St. Matthias.**

**Acts 1:15-17, 20-26, 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.'*

**No longer servants, but friends**

Today, let us listen with deep gratitude to Jesus as He personally calls us, "*Friends*". Allow joy and peace to fill our hearts as we stay in this intimate reality that we are Jesus' friends. As His friends, we are called to be with Him, not simply to be workers or servants doing things for Him. We are Jesus' friends! To be Jesus' friends means having the same heart like Jesus, i.e., having a heart that loves others.

*“My command to you is to love one another”.* The core of Christianity is love. Jesus loves each of us unconditionally and totally. He gives His love to us regardless of whether we are good or bad. Each day, we need to fill our hearts with His love so that we, in turn, can love those in our lives with the same quality of love.

**Question for reflection:**

How can I live this day with the awareness that I am Jesus’ friend?

**Sunday, 15<sup>th</sup> May, 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter.**

**Acts 14:21-27, Apocalypse 21:1-5, John 13:31-35**

*When Judas had gone, Jesus said: ‘Now has the Son of man been glorified, and in him God has been glorified. If God has been glorified in him, God will in turn glorify him in himself, and will glorify him very soon. Little children, I shall be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and, as I told the Jews, where I am going, you cannot come. I give you a new commandment: love one another; you must love one another just as I have loved you. It is by your love for one another, that everyone will recognise you as my disciples.’*

Love is action

Love is at the heart of our Christian faith. In today’s gospel, Jesus gives us a commandment to love. He does not give us an option to choose to love or not to love. He simply tells us to love. Christian love is concrete, visible, practical giving of self. It is not something we can just say, but it is something that we need to do. Sometimes, it is just about listening with a compassionate ear, making time to be with someone, or finding ways to make them feel special. *“We cannot all do great things. But we can do small things with great love”* (St. Teresa of Calcutta). It is these simple small acts of love that Jesus wants from us.

Jesus’ love for us is visible, practical and concrete. He gives Himself to us in so many ways, especially in the Word and the Eucharist. Today, we are called to allow ourselves to be loved by Him. Filled with His unconditional love, we go and love as He loved.

**Question for reflection:**

How can I reflect the love of Jesus today?

**Monday, 16<sup>th</sup> May, 5<sup>th</sup> Week of Easter.****Acts 14:5-18, John 14:21-26**

*Jesus said to his disciples: 'Whoever holds to my commandments and keeps them is the one who loves me; and whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I shall love him and reveal myself to him.' Judas -- not Judas Iscariot -- said to him, 'Lord, what has happened, that you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?' Jesus replied: Anyone who loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we shall come to him and make a home in him. Anyone who does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not my own: it is the word of the Father who sent me. I have said these things to you while still with you; but the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all I have said to you.'*

**The Holy Spirit, always and forever, in my life**

The Holy Spirit is our Advocate, our Helper who always leads us to Jesus. In today's gospel, Jesus told His disciples that He would soon be leaving them as He was about to face His death. However, He would continue to be with them after His death in and through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, the Advocate, would be with them to guide them and to remind them of all that Jesus had said to them.

We need the Holy Spirit in a very special way in these times of so much uncertainty. Today, Jesus reminds us that He gives us His Holy Spirit to be our Advocate who will teach and remind us of all that is essential for us to become authentic disciples living in trusting faith in God. The Holy Spirit is with us to bring us always to God and God to us. Today, let us call out, "*Come, Holy Spirit, I need you*" and allow Him to fill us with His loving presence.

**Question for reflection:**

Is the Holy Spirit involved in my daily life?

**Tuesday, 17<sup>th</sup> May, 5<sup>th</sup> Week of Easter.**

**Acts 14:19-28, John 14:27-31**

*Jesus said to his disciples: 'Peace I bequeath to you, my own peace I give you, a peace which the world cannot give, this is my gift to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid. You heard me say: I am going away and shall return. If you loved me you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. I have told you this now, before it happens, so that when it does happen you may believe. I shall not talk to you much longer, because the prince of this world is on his way. He has no power over me, but the world must recognise that I love the Father and that I act just as the Father commanded.'*

### I give you peace

Peace is neither the absence of trouble nor the avoidance of confrontation. It neither depends on external events nor on feeling good. Rather, peace is the inner calmness we possess even in the midst of life's challenges. Only Jesus can give us this inner peace that we yearn for.

In this time of prayer, listen attentively to the loving words of Jesus to our hearts, "*Peace I bequeath you, my own peace I give you, a peace the world cannot give, this is my gift to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid.*" Where do we truly need to experience peace as we look at our lives? Perhaps we need His peace in the family, in a friendship, at the workplace, etc. Let these words of Jesus guide us as we live through this day. Stay close to Jesus because He, and only He, can give us real peace.

### **Question for reflection:**

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

**Wednesday, 18<sup>th</sup> May, St. John I.**

**Acts 15:1-6, John 15:1-8**

*Jesus said to his disciples: 'I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that bears no fruit he cuts away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes to make it bear even more. You are clean already, by means of the word that I have spoken to you. Remain in me, as I in you. As a branch cannot bear fruit all by itself,*

*unless it remains part of the vine, neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me, with me in him, bears fruit in plenty; for cut off from me you can do nothing. Anyone who does not remain in me is thrown away like a branch -- and withers; these branches are collected and thrown on the fire and are burnt. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for whatever you please and you will get it. It is to the glory of my Father that you should bear much fruit and be my disciples.'*

### Being fruitful, not successful

The world speaks to us about being successful. Jesus, however, invites us to be fruitful. The world adores successful people who have money, power and status. Today, Jesus wants to remind us that we have not been created to become successful people according to the standards of this world but fruitful according to God. Therefore, Jesus invites us to remain in Him so that we will strive to be fruitful.

Jesus lived his whole life loving, serving and doing good deeds. He was a simple itinerant preacher without any stable income or comfortable life. In His mission, He sometimes experienced acceptance from people, but He had many who opposed Him. In the end, Jesus died a humiliating death. Is Jesus successful in the eyes of the world?

### **Questions for reflection:**

What am I working for in my life: success or fruitfulness? What prevents me from striving to be fruitful?

### **Thursday, 19<sup>th</sup> May, 5<sup>th</sup> Week of Easter.**

#### **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.'*

### Remain in Jesus' love and rejoice!

In today's gospel, Jesus calls us to remain in and be embraced by His love. Jesus said these words at the scene of the Last Supper. He knew

that He would soon face a terrible death on the cross. However, He remained joyful because His joy was rooted in the conviction of His Father's faithful and unconditional love for Him. Thus, rooted in His Father's love, He had the courage to walk on to face the prospect of the cross.

While happiness is a feeling that depends on external circumstances, joy is a certainty because we know that Jesus is with us and His love will never fail us no matter what happens. Therefore, joy has its source in the risen Jesus who is with us. Today, Jesus calls us to remain in His love so that we can be joyful as we journey through the ups and downs of life.

**Question for reflection:**

What is the joy that Jesus is offering me today?

**Friday, 20<sup>th</sup> May, 5<sup>th</sup> Week of Easter.**

**Acts 15:22-31, John 15:12-17**

*Jesus said to his disciples: '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.'*

Love one another

Jesus calls us to love one another as He loves us. This is not a heavy burden that Jesus places on us but an invitation to journey towards having a mature and total love of Jesus. Thus, we need to keep going back to Jesus' infinite love for us and listen again as He calls us, "*You are my friends*". The more we experience Jesus' love, the more we are able to love the concrete people that Jesus places in our paths each day.

Therefore, this is good news for us! Jesus will never make us do something impossible for us to do. When we remain in Jesus, His love

will flow from us to others. Today, let us make the loving choice to love others, even those who we do not like.

**Question for reflection:**

How can I love those whom I do not like?

**Saturday, 21<sup>st</sup> May, SS. Christopher Magallanes and Companions.  
Acts 16:1-10, John 15:18-21**

*Jesus said to his disciples: 'If the world hates you, you must realise that it hated me before it hated 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 of you has drawn you out of the world, that is why 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 to you, because they do not know the one who sent me.'*

To go against the current and live the gospel values

Are we serious about following Jesus? If we are, we must then be ready to face rejection and hostility in the same way Jesus did. In today's gospel, Jesus warned His disciples, "*If the world hates you, you must realise that it hated me before it hated you...*". Today, He continues to tell us the same. The "*world*" refers to those who do not hold the gospel values of peace, forgiveness, justice and compassion. We might not be facing persecution in the places where we are. However, we can still be afraid to go against the current and make an opinion that others do not like. Thus, it is easier to keep our heads down and be quiet.

*"...you do not belong to the world, because my choice of you has drawn you out of the world, that is why the world hates you"*. Jesus has chosen us to be His disciples who dare to bear witness to Him today. Let us be grounded once more in our friendship with Jesus so that our lives may reflect His loving presence.

**Question for reflection:**

Am I ready to stand up for Christ?

**Sunday, 22<sup>nd</sup> May, Sixth Sunday of Easter.**

**Acts 15:1-2,22-29, Apocalypse 21:10-14, 22-23, John 14:23-29**

*Jesus said to his disciples: 'Anyone who loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we shall come to him and make a home in him. Anyone who does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not my own: it is the word of the Father who sent me. I have said these things to you while still with you; but the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all I have said to you. Peace I bequeath to you, my own peace I give you, a peace which the world cannot give, this is my gift to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid. You heard me say: I am going away and shall return. If you loved me you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. I have told you this now, before it happens, so that when it does happen you may believe.'*

Come, Holy Spirit!

Today's gospel is taken from the scene of the Last Supper. The disciples knew that Jesus, their Master and Friend, would soon be facing His death. They were sad at the prospect of losing Him and scared at what would happen next. Jesus, however, told them that they would not be alone. Instead, they would be able to be in a relationship with Him in a new way. He would still be with them, though not in bodily form, but the form of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit who dwelled in them would bring God's peace to their troubled hearts.

In life, we go through experiences of loss, uncertainty, fear, etc. Today, Jesus reminds us that we are not alone because His Spirit of peace is with us and in us. Listen to Jesus as He speaks these words to the deepest part of our hearts, "*Peace I bequeath to you, my own peace I give you, a peace which the world cannot give, this is my gift to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid*".

**Question for reflection:**

Am I open to the presence of the Spirit that brings me the lasting peace that I need?

**Monday, 23<sup>rd</sup> May, 6<sup>th</sup> Week of Easter.**

**Acts 6: 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.'*

To follow Jesus as His witnesses

"*You too will be witnesses*". Jesus addresses these words to us today because we are His living witnesses who reveal His presence to the world today. As baptised Catholics, witnessing is part of our very being. In fact, we can proudly say that we are walking advertisements where we make the invisible God visible through our words and actions. Our faith is not about legalistically following rules and regulations, but rather, our faith is about having an intimate friendship with Jesus and revealing His presence to those around us.

Today, let us also count on the Holy Spirit in our witnessing to Jesus. The Holy Spirit will never leave us but give us the joyful courage to bring Jesus to the world and the world to Jesus.

**Question for reflection:**

How can I give witness to Jesus' presence today?

**Tuesday, 24<sup>th</sup> May, 6<sup>th</sup> 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 asks, 'Where are you going?' Yet you are sad at heart because I have told you this. Still, I am telling you the truth: it is for your own good that I am going, because unless I go, the Paraclete will not come to you; but if I 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: in that they refuse to believe*

*in me; about who was in the right: in that I am going to the Father and you will see me no more; about judgement: in that the prince of this world is already condemned.'*

### Holy Spirit brings joy in our sadness

"... you are sad at heart because I have told you this". In today's gospel, Jesus knew that His disciples were filled with sadness as they sensed that He would soon be facing His death. In their sadness, Jesus comforted them by assuring them that He would send the Holy Spirit, the Advocate, to be with them in their journey of life.

We, too, can identify with the disciples as we have experienced sadness for various reasons. For example, we are sad when people reject us for what we believe in, when we face a crisis at home or work, when we grieve for the death of a significant person in our lives, etc. Today, Jesus assures us that we are not alone in our difficult times because He comes to us in and through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, our Advocate, comforts us with His peace and fills our hearts with joy. Thus, even in our sadness, we can rejoice because God is with us.

### **Question for reflection:**

How can I be more sensitive to the presence of the Holy Spirit in me today?

**Wednesday, 25<sup>th</sup> May, St. Bede the Venerable, St. Gregory VII, St. Mary Magdalene de Pazzi.**

**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 to bear now. However, when the Spirit of truth comes he will lead you to the complete truth, since he will not be speaking of his own accord, but will say only what he has been told; and he will reveal to you the things to come. He will glorify me, since all he reveals to you will be taken from what is mine. Everything the Father has is mine; that is why I said: all he reveals to you will be taken from what is mine.'*

## Counting on the wisdom of the Spirit

In today's Gospel, Jesus had many things to tell His disciples, but He knew that it was not the right time and space because of their sadness, fear and confusion. Jesus simply let go and trusted that the time would one day come when they would be ready to listen, to understand and to live out what He had to say. It would be the Holy Spirit who would be with them and guide them to walk on the path of truth.

We have the Spirit of Truth within us. He is the one who gives us the wisdom to know when to say to someone about an important matter and when to keep quiet. Sometimes, people might not be ready to welcome the word of concern and advice we know we need to say to them. Therefore, we can count on Him to lead others to live in the light of truth and love. He guides us on how best to reach out and love others in their time and space.

### **Question for reflection:**

What prevents me from trusting and hoping in others and their growth process?

### **Thursday, 26<sup>th</sup> May, Ascension of the Lord.**

#### **Acts 1:1-11, Hebrews 9:24-28, 10:19-23, Luke 24:46-53**

*Jesus said to his disciples, 'You see how it was written that the Christ would suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that, in his name, repentance for the forgiveness of sins would be preached to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses to this. And now I am sending upon you what the Father has promised. Stay in the city, then, until you are clothed with the power from on high.' Then he took them out as far as the outskirts of Bethany, and raising his hands he blessed them. Now as he blessed them, he withdrew from them and was carried up to heaven. They worshipped him and then went back to Jerusalem full of joy and they were continually in the Temple praising God.*

### To be Spirit-filled witnesses

The disciples gathered around the risen Jesus and knew that their journey with Him would soon end. Yet, the ending with Jesus would start a new chapter for their journey as disciples. In this new beginning, Jesus

would continue to be with them, no longer physically, but in and through the Holy Spirit; and accompanied by the Spirit, they would be sent for the mission to become witnesses to Jesus in the world. Jesus told them, “*Stay in the city, then, until you are clothed with the power from on high*”. The call to mission always involves being empowered by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the disciples had to learn to rely on the power of the Holy Spirit and not on their own human will and strength.

On this Ascension Day, we are reminded that we are His witnesses today. However, this mission of being His witnesses does not depend on our own strength, intelligence and will. Instead, we need to be open to receiving the Holy Spirit, who is the one who can transform us to become empowered witnesses for Christ.

**Question for reflection:**

Do I depend on the strength of the Holy Spirit as I carry on the work of being Christ’s witness today?

**Friday, 27<sup>th</sup> May, St. Augustine of Canterbury.**

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

*Jesus said to his disciples: 'In all truth I tell you, 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 human being 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. In all truth I tell you, anything you ask from the Father he will grant in my name.'*

With Jesus, our joy will be complete

When a child is born, the intense pain of labour disappears, and the mother’s anguish gives way to profound joy. In today’s gospel, Jesus used the experience of childbirth to illustrate the joy of the resurrection that would replace the pain and sadness of the cross. Jesus told His disciples, “*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*”. Let us listen attentively to Jesus as He speaks these exact words

to us today. He invites us to have the same joy that comes from the conviction that He is alive and is with us; that springs from the experience of being unconditionally loved by Him.

The joy that Jesus gives us is something no one can take away. In this time of prayer, let us strengthen our friendship with Jesus and savour the joy that comes from His presence.

**Question for reflection:**

Is Jesus the cause of my joy?

**Saturday, 28<sup>th</sup> May, 6<sup>th</sup> Week of Easter.**

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

*Jesus said to his disciples, 'When that day comes, you will not ask me any questions. In all truth I tell you, anything you ask from the Father he will grant in my name. Until now you have not asked anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and so your joy will be complete. I have been telling you these things in veiled language. The hour is coming when I shall no longer speak to you in veiled language 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 am leaving the world to go to the Father.'*

Ask and you will receive

“*Ask and you will receive, and so your joy will be complete.*” Jesus told His disciples to ask God with trust in their hearts for what they truly needed. What does “*ask and you will receive*” mean for us? Jesus, too, wants us to ask God with trust that He would provide. However, we know that there are many times when we ask God for things, and He does not seem to answer our prayers. As a result, we end up feeling disappointed and discouraged.

“*...the Father himself loves you for loving me*”. Let us ponder on these words of Jesus and allow the reality that God loves us to sink into our hearts. Often, we bring our prayers to God and say to Him how we want our prayers to be answered, what He has to do, when the prayers have

to be fulfilled, etc. If we truly are convinced that God loves us and trusts in His care for us, we would pray and let go of the need to be in control. Today, let us ask for a trusting heart that allows God to be God.

**Question for reflection:**

What is Jesus' message for me today?

**Sunday, 29<sup>th</sup> May, 7<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter.**

**Acts 7:55-60, Apocalypse 22:12-14, 16-17, 20, John 17:20-26**

*Jesus raised his eyes to heaven and said: 'I pray not only for these but also for those who through their teaching will come to believe in me. May they all be one, just as, Father, you are in me and I am in you, so that they also may be in us, 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 perfected in unity that the world will recognise that it was you who sent me and that you have loved them as you have loved me. Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, so that they may always see my glory which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. Father, Upright 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.'*

May we be one!

"*May they all be one*". In today's gospel, Jesus is praying for us to be bridge builders, to be people who work for unity, not division. Pope Francis once said, "*I invite you not to build walls but bridges, to conquer evil with good, offence with forgiveness, to live in peace with everyone*". As Jesus' disciples, we are called to be bridges that unite. When there is a lack of unity, we can feel the effects of hatred, anger, indifference, etc., in the family, faith communities, and society. Thus, true unity is a consequence of our active, daily decision always to do the right action, the good action, the loving action.

The kind of unity that Jesus desires from us does merely come from human love but is the fruit of God's love within us. Our communion with

God is the foundation of our communion with one another. Let us ask the Holy Spirit to fill us with His love so that we can build bridges, not burn bridges.

**Question for reflection:**

How can I be a bridge builder today?

**Monday, 30<sup>th</sup> May, 7<sup>th</sup> Week of Easter.**

**Acts 19:1-8, John 16:29-33**

*His disciples said to Jesus, 'Now you are speaking plainly and not using veiled language. Now we see that you know everything and need not wait for questions to be put into words; because of this we believe that you came from God.' Jesus answered them: 'Do you believe at last? Listen; the time will come -- indeed it has come already -- when you are going to be scattered, each going his own way and leaving me alone. And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me. I have told you all this so that you may find peace in me. In the world you will have hardship, but be courageous: I have conquered the world.'*

**Do not be afraid, I am with you!**

*"...and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me. I have told you all this so that you may find peace in me."* Today, let us sit and listen to Jesus as He speaks these words to us. Allow them to fill our hearts with peace. We are often overwhelmed by the many bad news of war and violence. We might feel powerless, disillusioned and afraid because we cannot seem to solve the many issues in our personal lives. Jesus wants to reassure us that we are not alone because He is with us. His presence with us is the source of our peace.

*"I plead with you--never, ever give up on hope, never doubt, never tire, and never become discouraged. Be not afraid."* (St. Pope John Paul II)  
We can have the strength to never give up on hope and never become discouraged when we are in a loving friendship with Jesus. May we once more draw close to Jesus and stay in His love.

**Question for reflection:**

How is Jesus inviting me to live through moments when I sense myself walking through the dark tunnel of fear and uncertainty?

**Tuesday, 31<sup>st</sup> May, Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.  
Zephaniah 3:14-18 or Romans 12:9-16, Luke 1:39-56**

*Mary set out at that time and went as quickly as she could into the hill country to a town in Judah. She went into Zechariah's house and greeted Elizabeth. Now it happened that 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? Look, 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 rejoices in God my Saviour; because he has looked upon the humiliation of his servant. Yes, from now onwards all generations will call me blessed, for the Almighty has done great things for me. Holy is his name, and his faithful love extends age after age to those who fear him. He has used the power of his arm, he has routed the arrogant of heart. He has pulled down princes from their thrones and raised high the lowly. He has filled the starving with good things, sent the rich away empty. He has come to the help of Israel his servant, mindful of his faithful love -according to the promise he made to our ancestors -- of his mercy to Abraham and to his descendants for ever' Mary stayed with her some three months and then went home.*

**Carrying the presence of God**

After receiving Angel Gabriel's announcement that she would be the Mother of God, Mary did not focus on herself, her emotions, worries and thoughts. Instead, she immediately visited Elizabeth after hearing that her cousin was also pregnant. In her movement towards Elizabeth, Mary, carrying Jesus in her womb, brought God's presence to her.

We are all called to be God-bearing. Whenever we go out of ourselves and make our way to others, we bring God's presence to them like Mary. Maybe we can honestly ask ourselves if people can see God's presence when we are with them. Today, as we celebrate the Feast of the Visitation, let us ask Mother Mary to help us also have the courage to

de-centre from ourselves so that we can go to those around us and bring God's loving presence to them.

**Question for reflection:**

Do I carry the presence of God to those around me?

