

Spirit of love, Come!



PRAYER FOR LIVING

DAILY REFLECTIONS FOR
LITURGICAL YEAR C~
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PRAYER FOR LIVING YEAR C

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Wednesday, 1st June, St Justin, Martyr
Acts 20:28-38, John 17:11-19

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

Jesus prays for us

"Holy Father, keep those you have given me true to your name". In the gospel, Jesus prays for each one of us, who are His disciples today, that we will continue to be true and faithful to God by allowing ourselves to be loved by Him and remaining in an intimate relationship with Him. Jesus knows that we will face many temptations that will entice us to take our relationship with God for granted. We do not belong to the world and, thus, must not seek the temporary happiness that the world brings and immerse ourselves in its cares and concerns. We are in the world in order to live a life of love and service and reveal God's presence to others.

Accompanied by Jesus and surrounded by His prayer for us, we live in the world as His faithful disciples today.

Question for reflection:

How can I live as Jesus' disciple today?

Thursday, 2nd June, 7th Week of Easter.
Acts 22:30; 23:6-11, John 17:20-28

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 they all be one

"*May they all be one*". Jesus desires that we may all be united, not divided. The challenging question that we need to ask ourselves is: Do we also yearn for unity, peace, and harmony? Jesus wants all of us to be at peace with one another. Do we? We need to be aware that the first step towards working for unity is to acknowledge that the other person is a child of God created in His love and a fellow brother and sister of ours. Often, we build walls because we struggle to welcome, embrace and celebrate the differences in others and instead, we become intolerant of others who are different from us in any way.

Today, let us listen to Jesus as He tells us, "*May you, your family, your faith community, your friends...be one in love*". Jesus counts on us to start breaking down the walls that divide us and build bridges that unite so that we can play our part in making the world a better place for all.

Question for reflection:

Is there someone I struggle to be in a communion of love and harmony?

Friday, 3rd June, SS. Charles Lwanga & Companions.

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

Jesus showed himself to his disciples, and after they had eaten he 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.'

Do you love me? Be a shepherd to others

The risen Jesus asked Peter, "*Do you love me?*" three times. Jesus did not ask Peter, "*Why didn't you stand by me? Why did you deny me?*". Instead of looking at the past, Jesus focussed on the present and asked Peter, "*Do you love me?*" We, like Peter, might turn away from Jesus, but He never gives up on us because He loves us unconditionally and faithfully. Today, Jesus comes to us and asks us personally, "*Do you love me?*" What will our response be?

The mission to do the work of Jesus and serve Him flows from the personal relationship of love we have with Jesus. Right after Peter responded with "*Yes, Lord, you know I love you*", Jesus entrusted Peter with the work of being a shepherd to His people. Today, Jesus places people in our lives so that we can be shepherds to them and feed them with God's presence. However, we can only do so if we ourselves are rooted in a close relationship with Jesus, our Good Shepherd.

Question for reflection:

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

Saturday, 4th June, 7th Week of Easter.

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

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

stay behind till I come.' This disciple is the one who vouches for these things and has written them down, and we know that his testimony is true. There was much else that Jesus did; if it were written down in detail, I do not suppose the world itself would hold all the books that would be written.

Follow me

Peter had just experienced an intimate moment of being forgiven and given the mission of being a shepherd to the flock by Jesus. He then heard Jesus calling him, "*Follow me*". Immediately, Peter got distracted when he turned and saw "*the disciple whom Jesus loved*", and became curious to know what would happen to this disciple. Again, Jesus turned Peter's attention back to Him by calling Him, "*Follow me*".

To love Jesus is to follow Him as His faithful friend and disciple. However, there are times when we shift our attention from Jesus and start to focus on what others are doing or not doing, compare ourselves to those in our faith communities, desire to be the centre of attention, etc. In the silence of prayer, let us listen to Jesus as He calls us again, "*Come, follow Me. Keep your eyes on Me.*" What matters is to follow Jesus, and He will always help us open our hearts to regard others not as rivals but as fellow companions in our faith journey.

Question to reflect:

What pulls me away from following Jesus with faithfulness?

Sunday, 5th June, Pentecost Sunday.

Acts 2:1-11, Romans 8:8-17, John 14:15-16, 23-26

Jesus said to his disciples: "If you love me you will keep my commandments. I shall ask the Father, and he will give you another Paraclete to be with you for ever. 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."

Holy Spirit, the Paraclete

Today, we celebrate the Feast of the Pentecost. What does it mean to have the Holy Spirit in our lives? In today's gospel, Jesus told His disciples that He would send the Paraclete or the Advocate, the Helper, the Comforter to be with them forever. Jesus knew that He would not be with His disciples for long as He would soon face His death. He wanted them to have the assurance that they would not have to be afraid because the presence of the Holy Spirit would be with them in their time of difficulties.

Now, more than ever, we need the presence of the Holy Spirit to be with us as we navigate through the uncertain and challenging times we are living. As our Paraclete, He stands with us and dwells within us in. He is in us to help us in times of our need, strengthen our faith and empower us to follow Jesus faithfully each day. Today, let us be open to come to know the Holy Spirit and recognise His ways of working in us and with us. Come, Holy Spirit, come!

Question for reflection:

Have I experienced the presence of the Holy Spirit in my life?

Monday, 6th June, Our Lady, Mother of the Church.

Genesis 3:9-15, 20 or Acts 1:12-14, John 19:25-34

Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala. Seeing his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing near her, Jesus said to his mother, 'Woman, this is your son.' Then to the disciple he said, 'This is your mother.' And from that hour the disciple took her into his home. After this, Jesus knew that everything had now been completed and, so that the scripture should be completely fulfilled, he said: I am thirsty. A jar full of sour wine stood there; so, putting a sponge soaked in the wine on a hyssop stick, they held it up to his mouth. After Jesus had taken the wine he said, 'It is fulfilled'; and bowing his head he gave up his spirit. It was the Day of Preparation, and to avoid the bodies' remaining on the cross during the Sabbath -- since that Sabbath was a day of special solemnity -- the Jews asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken away. Consequently the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with him and then of the other. When they came to Jesus, they saw he was already dead, and so instead of

breaking his legs one of the soldiers pierced his side with a lance; and immediately there came out blood and water.

"Here is your mother"

Today, we celebrate the memorial of Mary, Mother of the Church, which Pope Francis added in 2018 to the liturgical calendar of the Church. As we celebrate this day with Mother Mary, let us rejoice that she is the mother to all Christians and us personally.

In the gospel, Jesus, on the cross, gave His mother to "*the disciple whom He loved*". This beloved disciple represents all of us today, and He tells us the same as He told him, "*This is your mother*". Jesus then looked at His mother and said, "*Woman, this is your son*". At the foot of the cross, Mary becomes the mother of Jesus' disciples. In our following of Jesus, we need the presence of Mary. She, as our mother, is our constant companion who supports and guides us in our life journey. Jesus knows that we need her presence, and thus, He gives her to us. Let us appreciate and recognise the motherly presence of Mary in our lives.

Question for reflection:

Do I appreciate and recognise the motherly presence of Mary in my life?

Tuesday, 7th June, 10th Week in Ordinary Time.

1 Kings 17:7-16, Matthew 5:13-16

Jesus said to his disciples, 'You are salt for the earth. But if salt loses its taste, what can make it salty again? It is good for nothing, and can only be thrown out to be trampled under people's feet. You are light for the world. A city built on a hill-top cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp to put it under a tub; they put it on the lamp-stand where it shines for everyone in the house. In the same way your light must shine in people's sight, so that, seeing your good works, they may give praise to your Father in heaven.'

Be salt and light

We are people of Pentecost, and this is who we are as the People of God. Therefore, Jesus today calls us, as people of Pentecost, to become salt of the earth and light of the world. We know that salt helps to enhance the food we eat, and light illuminates the darkness. As salt is to food, we add flavour to the lives of others by the gospel values that we

live by. As light is to darkness, we, through our good works, shine the light of God's presence in the places where we are to bring His presence of love to others.

We have an essential mission. We can make a difference by touching the lives of those we meet each day. Today, let us commit ourselves to following Jesus with greater faithfulness and allow His Spirit to guide us to live the Gospel values. May we also remember that God is why we commit ourselves to this call to be the salt and light of the world. It is not to seek praises for ourselves but to bring people to encounter God and lead them to give glory to Him alone.

Question for reflection:

How can I be salt and light in the environment where I am and enhance the lives of those around me?

Wednesday, 8th June, 10th Week in Ordinary Time.

1 Kings 18:20-39, Matthew 5:17-19

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

To follow the law of love

On many occasions, the religious leaders accused Jesus of breaking the Jewish law. Jesus, however, did not reject the law. Instead, He followed the spirit of the law and brought it back to its basic: Love. In Matthew 22:37-40, Jesus said, " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

When we love God and others, we live according to the commandments. Today, Jesus invites us to put the law of love into practice by imitating the way He loves - which is with a patient, forgiving, and self-giving love. It goes against our nature to love like Jesus. Thus, we need to ask Him for the courage to take small steps to love. May we strive today to dedicate ourselves to putting love into action!

Question for reflection:

What is stopping me from practising this law of love?

Thursday, 9th June, 10th Week in Ordinary Time.

1 Kings 18:41-46, Matthew 5:20-26

Jesus said to his disciples: 'For I tell you, if your uprightness does not surpass that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never get into the kingdom of Heaven. You have heard how it was said to our ancestors, You shall not kill; and if anyone does kill he must answer for it before the court. But I say this to you, anyone who is angry with a brother will answer for it before the court; anyone who calls a brother "Fool" will answer for it before the Sanhedrin; and anyone who calls him "Traitor" will answer for it in hell fire. So then, if you are bringing your offering to the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar, go and be reconciled with your brother first, and then come back and present your offering. Come to terms with your opponent in good time while you are still on the way to the court with him, or he may hand you over to the judge and the judge to the officer, and you will be thrown into prison. In truth I tell you, you will not get out till you have paid the last penny.'

But I say to you... reconcile

In today's gospel, Jesus calls us to a virtue that goes beyond that of the scribes and Pharisees. It is not just a matter of following the letter of the commandment but following its spirit, which is to love. Jesus presents the commandment, "*You shall not kill*" and goes beyond the external action of harming and goes to the root cause, which is anger. Thus, He said, "*But I say this to you, anyone who is angry with a brother will answer for it before the court...*". Anger leads us to breed hatred and create walls that divide us from others. Jesus calls us to love by working for reconciliation with those who are estranged from us.

The path of reconciliation and forgiveness that Jesus calls us to embrace is not easy, but it is the way to experience true freedom and happiness. Today, let us allow the Holy Spirit to come and renew our minds and hearts so that we can reflect Jesus' love for others.

Question for reflection:

Can I put forgiveness and reconciliation into action in my own life?

Friday, 10th June, 10th Week in Ordinary Time.

1 Kings 19:9,11-16, Matthew 5:27-32

Jesus said to his disciples: 'You have heard how it was said, You shall not commit adultery. But I say this to you, if a man looks at a woman lustfully, he has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye should be your downfall, tear it out and throw it away; for it will do you less harm to lose one part of yourself than to have your whole body thrown into hell. And if your right hand should be your downfall, cut it off and throw it away; for it will do you less harm to lose one part of yourself than to have your whole body go to hell. It has also been said, Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a writ of dismissal. But I say this to you, everyone who divorces his wife, except for the case of an illicit marriage, makes her an adulteress; and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.'

The interior transformation of the heart

'Happy are the pure in heart, for they shall see God' (Matthew 5, 8). The heart, the inner core of our being, is where we keep the secrecy of our thought and feeling, and nobody knows if we choose not to reveal them. Jesus looks at our hearts and knows all the intentions and desires we have within. In today's gospel, Jesus uses the imagery of tearing out the eye and throwing it away to emphasise the need to examine the intentions of the heart. Looking at someone with lust is a physical act that links back to the desire that one has in their heart. Thus, Jesus calls us not just to have a change in the way we behave externally but more so to an internal change, a transformation of our hearts.

As we come before Jesus in prayer, let us open ourselves to allow Him to work within us to create a heart that reflects His heart of love.

Question for reflection:

How is my heart?

Saturday, 11th June, St. Barnabas.**Acts 11:21-26, 13:1-3, Matthew 10:7-13**

Jesus said to his apostles: 'And as you go, proclaim that the kingdom of Heaven is close at hand. Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those suffering from virulent skin-diseases, drive out devils. You received without charge, give without charge. Provide yourselves with no gold or silver, not even with coppers for your purses, with no haversack for the journey or spare tunic or footwear or a staff, for the labourer deserves his keep. Whatever town or village you go into, seek out someone worthy and stay with him until you leave. As you enter his house, salute it, and if the house deserves it, may your peace come upon it; if it does not, may your peace come back to you.'

The work of encouragement

Today, we celebrate the memorial of St. Barnabas, known as "*son of encouragement*" (Acts 4:36). In today's first reading, we could see the reason for this title. Barnabas, seeing God working in and through the church in Antioch, "*urged them all to remain faithful to the Lord with heartfelt devotion*". The first reading described how Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul and recognised that God was also at work in this man's life. He brought Saul back to Antioch, although some people were still suspicious of his past as the persecutor of the early church. Barnabas encouraged him to be involved in the mission, which later led Saul or Paul to become the apostle to the gentiles.

Barnabas responded to the call of Jesus to go out and proclaim the Kingdom of God by encouraging others to stay faithful and to use their talents for the mission. Today, we can follow in the footsteps of St. Barnabas by encouraging others to keep their faith, pray, support the good that others are doing, etc. By being a Barnabas to others, we are actively working for the Kingdom of God.

Question for reflection:

How can I be a Barnabas to those around me today?

Sunday, 12th June, Trinity Sunday.

Proverbs 8:22-31, Romans 5:1-5, 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."

God is Trinity

"...when the Spirit of truth comes he will lead you to the complete truth". What is this "complete truth"? Or rather, the right question that we should ask is, "Who is this "complete truth"? The truth that the Holy Spirit reveals is not a thing or a fact, but a person, i.e. Jesus. Jesus is the truth who leads us the way to the Father so that we can have life in all its fullness (John 14:6). The Holy Spirit leads us to Jesus, and by having Jesus in our lives, we enter into an intimate relationship with God the Father. The question is whether we are open to allowing the Holy Spirit to lead us to Jesus the Son and God the Father. As we celebrate the Feast of the Holy Trinity, we rejoice in this mystery of God as a communion of three persons, i.e. Father, Son and Holy Spirit, with whom we are called to enter into a relationship of love.

Professing our faith in God as Trinity, we can no longer live individualistic lives. Instead, we commit ourselves to creating communities of love in the family, parish, society, etc.

Question for reflection:

What does it mean for me to profess my faith in the Trinity?

Monday, 13th June, St. Anthony of Padua.

1 Kings 21:1-16, Matthew 5:38-42

Jesus said to his disciples: 'You have heard how it was said: Eye for eye and tooth for tooth. But I say this to you: offer no resistance to the wicked. On the contrary, if anyone hits you on the right cheek, offer him the other as well; if someone wishes to go to law with you to get your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. And if anyone requires you to go one mile,

go two miles with him. Give to anyone who asks you, and if anyone wants to borrow, do not turn away.'

An eye for an eye will leave the world blind

The world continues to live by the principle of an eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth. In many instances, people do not just take "an eye for an eye" but many eyes for revenge. Even in our relationships with others, we follow our human instinct to respond to an insult with another insult, a wrong with another wrong. Today, Jesus says to us, "*But I say this to you: offer no resistance to the wicked*". He presents His way of responding to evil with love. In His life and death, Jesus faced persecution and hatred with forgiveness, peace and love.

It is not easy for many of us to overcome evil with good. Yet, Jesus invites us to follow His way of love. Let us ask the Holy Spirit to help us retaliate against evil with love.

Question for reflection:

How can I overcome hatred, anger, and rejection with love?

Tuesday, 14th June, 11th Week in Ordinary Time.

1 Kings 21:17-29, Matthew 5:43-48

Jesus said to his disciples, 'You have heard how it was said, You will love your neighbour and hate your enemy. But I say this to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you; so that you may be children of your Father in heaven, for he causes his sun to rise on the bad as well as the good, and sends down rain to fall on the upright and the wicked alike. For if you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Do not even the tax collectors do as much? And if you save your greetings for your brothers, are you doing anything exceptional? Do not even the gentiles do as much? You must therefore be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect.'

Loving the bad and the good

"...*But I say this to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you...*". When we look at the violent killings taking place in many places around the world, for example, in Ukraine and Mynamma, we find it hard to apply love to those who cause harm to defenceless people. In our personal life, when people reject us or mistreat us, we

naturally react with hatred and anger. Thus, Jesus' teaching about loving our enemies and praying for them seems impossible for us to carry out. Yet, if we want to be His disciples, this is the way we need to take. Jesus calls us to be perfect as God our Father is perfect, which means love in the way God loves.

God's love does not discriminate. God's love is unconditional. As His children, we need to also love with an inclusive, unconditional love. We can love with such love only with the help of the Holy Spirit, who is always ready to fill our hearts with the love of God.

Question for reflection:

How does this passage touch me?

Wednesday, 15th June, 11th Week in Ordinary Time.

2 Kings 2:1, 6-14, Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

Jesus said to his disciples: 'Be careful not to parade your uprightness in public to attract attention; otherwise you will lose all reward from your Father in heaven. So when you give alms, do not have it trumpeted before you; this is what the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets to win human admiration. In truth I tell you, they have had their reward. But when you give alms, your left hand must not know what your right is doing; your almsgiving must be secret, and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you. And when you pray, do not imitate the hypocrites: they love to say their prayers standing up in the synagogues and at the street corners for people to see them. In truth I tell you, they have had their reward. But when you pray, go to your private room, shut yourself in, and so pray to your Father who is in that secret place, and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you. When you are fasting, do not put on a gloomy look as the hypocrites do: they go about looking unsightly to let people know they are fasting. In truth I tell you, they have had their reward. But when you fast, put scent on your head and wash your face, so that no one will know you are fasting except your Father who sees all that is done in secret; and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you.'

Only God

"Be careful not to parade your uprightness in public to attract attention".
What is the motivation for all that we do? Why do we pray, fast and give

alms? What drives us to serve others? Today, Jesus calls us to be careful not to do things for God but with the hidden desire to attract notice for ourselves and get praises from others. If we truly want to follow Him, we must stop being hypocrites and pretend to be what we are not.

We are beloved children of God, and this is all that matters. Rooted in our true identity, we fast, pray, give alms and serve others with the motivation to love God and please Him alone. "...*whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God*" (1 Corinthians 10:31).

Question for reflection:

Is my heart set on God alone?

Thursday, 16th June, 11th Week in Ordinary Time.

Ecclesiasticus 48:1-15, Matthew 6:7-15

Jesus said to his disciples: 'In your prayers do not babble as the gentiles do, for they think that by using many words they will make themselves heard. Do not be like them; your Father knows what you need before you ask him. So you should pray like this: *Our Father in heaven, may your name be held holy, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we have forgiven those who are in debt to us. And do not put us to the test, but save us from the Evil One. Yes, if you forgive others their failings, your heavenly Father will forgive you yours; but if you do not forgive others, your Father will not forgive your failings either.*'

To pray with trust

Jesus told the disciples that they did not need to pray by babbling, thinking they could sway and control God with many words. Instead, Jesus wanted His disciples to pray to God with trust. He then taught them the prayer of the Our Father, which is a prayer of trust, a prayer of deep awareness of the loving presence of God.

Today, Jesus wants us to pray with trust. The words of the Our Father prayer are so familiar to us that they become meaningless for us. Today, let us allow each phrase to sink into us. We pray for God's kingdom, which is His very presence of love, to come and that we can seek always to do His will, not ours. With God as the centre of our lives, we depend on Him to give us the daily bread of strength and peace, forgive our sins

as we forgive others, and help us to face trials and difficulties. The Our Father prayer is a prayer of trust in God, who loves us and wants the best for us.

Question for reflection:

Which phrase in the Our Father prayer brings comfort to me?

Friday, 17th June, 11th Week in Ordinary Time.

2 Kings 11:1-4,9-18,20, Matthew 6:19-23

Jesus said to his disciples: 'Do not store up treasures for yourselves on earth, where moth and woodworm destroy them and thieves can break in and steal. But store up treasures for yourselves in heaven, where neither moth nor woodworm destroys them and thieves cannot break in and steal. For wherever your treasure is, there will your heart be too. The lamp of the body is the eye. It follows that if your eye is clear, your whole body will be filled with light. But if your eye is diseased, your whole body will be darkness. If then, the light inside you is darkened, what darkness that will be!'

Jesus, the treasure

The world where we live screams out to us to want more, have more, possess more, and live with the security that we are not lacking in anything. In today's gospel passage, Jesus wants us to open our hearts to desire more of God than material, earthly possessions. Material things come and go. At the end of our lives, what matters is the love we put into our relationship with God and others, and all the material possessions and success that we attain here on earth remain behind.

"*For wherever your treasure is, there will your heart be too*". Where is my treasure? Jesus wants to be our treasure, the source of our true security and eternal happiness. When we have Him as our treasure, our hearts expand to love all whom He loves.

Question for reflection:

What is my treasure?

Saturday, 18th June, 11th Week in Ordinary Time.

2 Chronicles 24:17-25, Matthew 6:24-34

Jesus said to his disciples: 'No one can be the slave of two masters: he will either hate the first and love the second, or be attached to the first and despise the second. You cannot be the slave both of God and of money. That is why I am telling you not to worry about your life and what you are to eat, nor about your body and what you are to wear. Surely life is more than food, and the body more than clothing! Look at the birds in the sky. They do not sow or reap or gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they are? Can any of you, however much you worry, add one single cubit to your span of life? And why worry about clothing? Think of the flowers growing in the fields; they never have to work or spin; yet I assure you that not even Solomon in all his royal robes was clothed like one of these. Now if that is how God clothes the wild flowers growing in the field which are there today and thrown into the furnace tomorrow, will he not much more look after you, you who have so little faith? So do not worry; do not say, "What are we to eat? What are we to drink? What are we to wear?" It is the gentiles who set their hearts on all these things. Your heavenly Father knows you need them all. Set your hearts on his kingdom first, and on God's saving justice, and all these other things will be given you as well. So do not worry about tomorrow: tomorrow will take care of itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.'

Set your hearts on God's kingdom first

"That is why I am telling you not to worry about your life and what you are to eat, nor about your body and what you are to wear". In life, we worry about the health of our children and elderly parents. We worry about the future. We worry about the tasks we have to do. Jesus is not telling us not to worry at all because it would be an impossible task to do. After all, worry is part of being human. Instead, Jesus calls us not to be excessively preoccupied with food, drink and clothing, or other things, such as popularity or social status, that can make us separate ourselves from a loving and trusting relationship with God.

"You cannot be the slave both of God and of money". Material possessions should not be our top priority. As His disciples, we are invited to set our hearts on God's kingdom first, seeking to do God's will of love and service and living a life according to the Gospel values.

Question for reflection:

What am I giving my heart to?

Sunday, 19th June, Corpus Christi

Genesis 14:18-20, 1 Corinthians 11:23-36, Luke 9:11-17

Jesus made the crowds welcome and talked to them about the kingdom of God; and he cured those who were in need of healing. It was late afternoon when the Twelve came up to him and said, 'Send the people away, and they can go to the villages and farms round about to find lodging and food; for we are in a lonely place here.' He replied, 'Give them something to eat yourselves.' But they said, 'We have no more than five loaves and two fish, unless we are to go ourselves and buy food for all these people.' For there were about five thousand men. But he said to his disciples, 'Get them to sit down in parties of about fifty.' They did so and made them all sit down. Then he took the five loaves and the two fish, raised his eyes to heaven, and said the blessing over them; then he broke them and handed them to his disciples to distribute among the crowd. They all ate as much as they wanted, and when the scraps left over were collected they filled twelve baskets.

Love like Jesus

On this Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ, we recognise Jesus' presence in the Eucharist, who continues to love and give Himself to all of humanity. In the gospel passage, Jesus made the crowds welcome and talked to them about God's love. Later, when the people became hungry, and there was nowhere to get food, the disciples wanted to send them away. Instead, Jesus told them, "*Give them something to eat yourselves*". Looking at their meagre resources of five loaves and two fish, the disciples felt helpless to respond to Jesus' request. Yet, Jesus took the little that they had and fed the people. For Him, the people and their needs were important.

We sometimes tend to be unwelcoming to people when they come to us with their needs. Like the disciples, we are tempted to send them away. To celebrate the Feast of Corpus Christi means that we too are called to the same love of Jesus that welcomes, feeds, and serves others rather than sending them away.

Question for reflection:

How can I imitate the Eucharistic love of Jesus?

Monday, 20th June, 12th Week in Ordinary Time.**2 Kings 17:5-8, 13-15,18, Matthew 7:1-5**

Jesus said to his disciples: 'Do not judge, and you will not be judged; because the judgements you give are the judgements you will get, and the standard you use will be the standard used for you. Why do you observe the splinter in your brother's eye and never notice the great log in your own? And how dare you say to your brother, "Let me take that splinter out of your eye," when, look, there is a great log in your own? Hypocrite! Take the log out of your own eye first, and then you will see clearly enough to take the splinter out of your brother's eye.'

Not to judge, but to love

In today's gospel, Jesus tells us, "*Do not judge, and you will not be judged*". What does Jesus mean? We sometimes can be so focussed on judging others that we are unaware of our faults and failings. The invitation is for us to notice "*the great log*" in our eyes before we obsessively pay attention to the "*splinter*" in the other's eye. Let us ask Jesus to help us not regard ourselves as morally superior to others but rather be aware of our faults and work on them.

The invitation not to judge also implies that we need to love the person despite what they have done. We can disapprove of someone's behaviour and attitude, but we must never stop loving the person. In the gospel stories, Jesus was open to telling people to stop sinning and was critical of their actions. However, He continued to love the person for who they were and never stopped giving them the chance to become the person God had created them to be. Today, let us ask Jesus to give us His eyes to see as He sees.

Question for reflection:

What is Jesus' invitation for me today?

Tuesday, 21st June, St. Aloysius Gonzaga.**2 Kings 19:9-11, 14-21, 31-35, 36, Matthew 7: 6, 12-14**

Jesus said to his disciples: 'Do not give dogs what is holy; and do not throw your pearls in front of pigs, or they may trample them and then turn

on you and tear you to pieces. So always treat others as you would like them to treat you; that is the Law and the Prophets. Enter by the narrow gate, since the road that leads to destruction is wide and spacious, and many take it; but it is a narrow gate and a hard road that leads to life, and only a few find it.'

Narrow way that leads to life

To follow Jesus is to take the narrow gate and walk the hard road. It is not easy to do so because His values of self-giving love, trust, forgiveness and compassion are, to some extent, opposed to our society's norms where one's self-interest and well-being are more important than others. Yet, Jesus calls us today to follow Him by choosing to die to our pride and selfishness and work for the good of others before our own.

Though Jesus' path is difficult, it is the way that leads us and others to an abundance of life, here now and for eternity. Let us say "Yes" to follow Jesus and make His values ours.

Question for reflection:

"Enter by the narrow gate". How can I apply this call of Jesus concretely to my life today?

Wednesday, 22nd June, St. Paulinus of Nola, SS. John Fisher & Thomas More.

2 Kings 22:8-13, 23:1-3, Matthew 7:15-20

Jesus said to his disciples: 'Beware of false prophets who come to you disguised as sheep but underneath are ravenous wolves. You will be able to tell them by their fruits. Can people pick grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles? In the same way, a sound tree produces good fruit but a rotten tree bad fruit. A sound tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor a rotten tree bear good fruit. Any tree that does not produce good fruit is cut down and thrown on the fire. I repeat, you will be able to tell them by their fruits.'

A sound heart produces fruit of love

"Beware of false prophets who come to you disguised as sheep but underneath are ravenous wolves". Are we living a life disguising to be who we are not? Are we pretending to be externally like "harmless

sheep", but internally, we are like "*ravenous wolves*"? Often we want to appear good, loving and helpful in front of others, but within, we are filled with anger and resentment. For Jesus, the fruits, i.e. the values, that we bear are more important than our external appearances because they manifest the content of our hearts. A heart full of love will produce fruits of goodness, forgiveness and compassion.

We can have good hearts that bear good fruits when we are rooted in a personal relationship with Jesus. In this time of prayer, let us be drawn to Jesus so that our hearts may beat in the same rhythm as His.

Questions for reflection:

What do I have inside my heart? Is my heart full of love?

Thursday, 23rd June, The Nativity of St. John the Baptist.

Isaiah 49:1-6, Acts 13:22-26, Luke 1:57-66, 80

The time came for Elizabeth to have her child, and she gave birth to a son; and when her neighbours and relations heard that the Lord had lavished on her his faithful love, they shared her joy. Now it happened that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; they were going to call him Zechariah after his father, but his mother spoke up. 'No,' she said, 'he is to be called John.' They said to her, 'But no one in your family has that name,' and made signs to his father to find out what he wanted him called. The father asked for a writing-tablet and wrote, 'His name is John.' And they were all astonished. At that instant his power of speech returned and he spoke and praised God. All their neighbours were filled with awe and the whole affair was talked about throughout the hill country of Judaea. All those who heard of it treasured it in their hearts. 'What will this child turn out to be?' they wondered. And indeed the hand of the Lord was with him. Meanwhile the child grew up and his spirit grew strong. And he lived in the desert until the day he appeared openly to Israel.

With others and for others

"...when her neighbours and relations heard that the Lord had shown her so great a kindness, they shared her joy." Elizabeth and Zechariah did not celebrate the joyful birth of their son by themselves but were surrounded by their neighbours and relations who rejoiced with them. This reminds us of an essential aspect of our Christian life - community.

We are not meant to be isolated beings. We are not called to live our faith alone. With others, we communicate our joy. With others, we grow in our faith and share our sorrows.

In the company of his family and friends, St. John the Baptist grew up, and his spirit matured. The experience of being loved by his family and community led St John the Baptist to live his faith fully with others and for others by becoming the light for the nation and the voice preparing the way for the Messiah. Like St. John the Baptist, we are meant to be with others and for others. Let us find God's presence in our fellow Christians and form one community of faith where we can all grow mature in our inner lives with God.

Question for reflection:

How can I live my faith more with others and for others?

Friday, 24th June, Most Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Ezekiel 34:11-16, Romans 5:5-11, Luke 15:3-7

Jesus spoke this parable to the scribes and Pharisees: 'Which one of you with a hundred sheep, if he lost one, would fail to leave the ninety-nine in the desert and go after the missing one till he found it? And when he found it, would he not joyfully take it on his shoulders and then, when he got home, call together his friends and neighbours, saying to them, "Rejoice with me, I have found my sheep that was lost." In the same way, I tell you, there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner repenting than over ninety-nine upright people who have no need of repentance.'

The unconditional love of our Shepherd

Today, we celebrate the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which is a celebration of His heart that is full of unconditional love for us. The heart of Jesus is like the heart of the shepherd who leaves the ninety-nine sheep to search for the one lost sheep. Because each sheep, each person is precious in Jesus' eyes. He would do anything to bring that lost sheep back to His arms. When He finds it, there are no words of condemnation but joy.

Today, as we celebrate the Feast of Sacred Heart, let us open our hearts to experience the unconditional love of the Shepherd, especially in moments when we feel ourselves lost and vulnerable. We are also called

to be shepherds after the heart of the Good Shepherd and to go out to share His love with others.

Question for reflection:

How can I be a shepherd constantly guiding those around me to the Good Shepherd?

Saturday, 25th June, The Immaculate Heart Of Mary.

Isaiah 61:9-11, Luke 2:41-51

Every year the parents of Jesus used to go to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. When he was twelve years old, they went up for the Feast as usual. When the days of the Feast were over and they set off home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem without his parents knowing it. They assumed he was somewhere in the party, and it was only after a day's journey that they went to look for him among their relations and acquaintances. When they failed to find him they went back to Jerusalem looking for him everywhere. It happened that, three days later, they found him in the Temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them, and asking them questions; and all those who heard him were astounded at his intelligence and his replies. They were overcome when they saw him, and his mother said to him, 'My child, why have you done this to us? See how worried your father and I have been, looking for you.' He replied, 'Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?' But they did not understand what he meant. He went down with them then and came to Nazareth and lived under their authority. His mother stored up all these things in her heart.

A heart full of God

As we celebrate the memorial of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, we centre our prayer on Mother Mary and the state of her heart. She was a woman whose heart was centred on God and lived in constant trust in Him, even though she did not fully know what the future ahead would be. In today's gospel, Mary was distressed because she and Joseph could not find Jesus. He was finally found sitting among the teachers of the law, listening to them and asking them questions. She asked Him, "My child, why have you done this to us?". Jesus answered her, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?". Mary did not understand what He meant, but she knew that day that she had to learn to let go and allow Jesus to do God' will, not

her will. It was painful to let go of control as a parent, but she lived this experience with God and trusted in Him.

It is not easy to let go of those we love. We suffer the pain of loss when a loved one leaves or takes a different path that we do not envision for them, etc. Today, let us ask Mother Mary to help us live with God in our personal struggles and pain. We do not know what the future holds for our loved ones and us, but we know that God is close to us today.

Question for reflection:

How can I learn from Mother Mary to let go and let God?

Sunday, 26th June, 13th Sunday of Ordinary Time.

1 Kings 19:16, 19-21, Galatians 5: 1, 13-18, Luke 9:51-62

As the time drew near for him to be taken up, Jesus resolutely turned his face towards Jerusalem and sent messengers ahead of him. These set out, and they went into a Samaritan village to make preparations for him, but the people would not receive him because he was making for Jerusalem. Seeing this, the disciples James and John said, 'Lord, do you want us to call down fire from heaven to burn them up?' But he turned and rebuked them, and they went on to another village. As they travelled along they met a man on the road who said to him, 'I will follow you wherever you go.' Jesus answered, 'Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head.' Another to whom he said, 'Follow me,' replied, 'Let me go and bury my father first.' But he answered, 'Leave the dead to bury their dead; your duty is to go and spread the news of the kingdom of God.' Another said, 'I will follow you, sir, but first let me go and say good -- bye to my people at home.' Jesus said to him, 'Once the hand is laid on the plough, no one who looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.'

Following Jesus always

As Jesus and His disciples set off for Jerusalem, they went into a Samaritan village. The Samaritans in that village did not welcome Him. James and John reacted in anger, "Lord, do you want us to call down fire from heaven to burn them up?" Jesus, however, reprimanded them and simply went off in another direction. Jesus' mission was not of violence and revenge but peace and love. This is something that we, as

His disciples, must continue to follow. Instead of retaliation, we bring reconciliation. Instead of reacting, we respond with peace.

As they went on their way, three young men approached Jesus with the desire to follow Him. The answers of Jesus to them show that discipleship has a cost and demands total commitment. Today, we need to examine our following of Jesus and ask Him for the grace to follow Him as to how He wants us. Let us never be afraid of committing ourselves to Jesus, but open our hearts to Him and have more trust in Him.

Questions for reflection:

How can I follow Jesus at this point in life?

Monday, 27th June, St. Cyril of Alexandria.

Amos 2:6-10, 13-16, Matthew 8: 18-22

When Jesus saw the crowd all about him he gave orders to leave for the other side. One of the scribes then came up and said to him, 'Master, I will follow you wherever you go.' Jesus said, 'Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head.' Another man, one of the disciples, said to him, 'Lord, let me go and bury my father first.' But Jesus said, 'Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their dead.'

Follow me

In today's gospel, a scribe, in a moment of enthusiasm, went to Jesus and told Him that he wanted to go wherever He went. However, Jesus presented him with the harsh reality that to follow Him implied having no security. It is not enough to follow Jesus based on our feeling "high". Such feelings come and go and will not sustain us in our following of Jesus, especially when we face the challenges of dying to ourselves and carrying our crosses. Thus, we need to be in a daily relationship with Jesus and depend on His strength to uphold us so that we can follow Him faithfully each day.

Another person requested to follow Jesus but wanted first to go and bury his father. It was most likely that the father was not dead yet. He wanted to wait until his father died, and only then would he follow Jesus. Like this person, we tend to wait for the ideal moment to respond to Jesus'

call for us to act and do something. He wants us to understand that there is no perfect time to follow Him, except today, at this present moment.

Question for reflection:

Am I willing to follow Jesus faithfully today?

Tuesday, 28th June, St. Irenaeus.

Amos 3:1-8,4:11-12, Matthew 8:23-27

Jesus got into the boat followed by his disciples. Suddenly a storm broke over the lake, so violent that the boat was being swamped by the waves. But he was asleep. So they went to him and woke him saying, 'Save us, Lord, we are lost!' And he said to them, 'Why are you so frightened, you who have so little faith?' And then he stood up and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm. They were astounded and said, 'Whatever kind of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?'

Jesus is with us in our storms

In today's Gospel, Jesus and his disciples got into a boat and went on a journey on the lake. Along the way, they encountered a fierce storm. The disciples were terrified because they thought that their boat would capsize. Reflecting on this passage brings consolation to us. When we face our personal storms as we journey through life, we are not alone because Jesus is in our boats, our lives.

The disciples cried out, "Save us, Lord, we are lost!". We too can cry out to Jesus, "Save me... I am lost. Help me...I do not know what to do", and He will always come to help us when we feel vulnerable and in need. Jesus will never let us down. May we never stop trusting in Him.

Question for reflection:

What is Jesus' invitation to me today?

Wednesday, 29th June, St. Peter & Paul, Apostles.

Acts 12:1-11, 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 17-18, Matthew 16:13-19

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi he put this question to his disciples, 'Who do people say the Son of man is?' And they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' 'But you,' he said, 'who do you say I am?' Then Simon Peter spoke up and said, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.'

Jesus replied, 'Simon son of Jonah, you are a blessed man! Because it was no human agency that revealed this to you but my Father in heaven. So I now say to you: You are Peter and on this rock I will build my community. And the gates of the underworld can never overpower it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of Heaven: whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.'

Jesus remains faithful

Today, we celebrate the Feast of two great apostles, St. Peter and St. Paul. These two great saints of today were ordinary, imperfect men who lived through failures, struggles and disappointments in their lives. Peter denied Jesus three times, and Paul persecuted the early Church. Yet, Jesus continued to call them to be His disciples and work powerfully through their lives. His faithfulness to Peter and Paul empowered them to remain faithful to Him. As a result, both of them gave their lives to spread the Good News of Christ and run the race faithfully to the end.

We also rejoice that Jesus is always the first who stays faithful to us despite our failures and weaknesses. His faithfulness to us is the source of our faithfulness to Him. As we pray with the gospel passage of today, Jesus asks us the same question that He asked His disciples, "*Who do you say I am?*". May our response to Jesus be from the heart and not just from the head. The depth of our faithfulness to Jesus depends on our personal answer to His question.

Question for reflection:

Who is Jesus for me?

Thursday, 30th June, First Martyrs of the Holy Roman Church.

Amos 7:10-17, Matthew 9:1-8

Jesus got back in the boat, crossed the water and came to his home town. And suddenly some people brought him a paralytic stretched out on a bed. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, 'Take comfort, my child, your sins are forgiven.' And now some scribes said to themselves, 'This man is being blasphemous.' Knowing what was in their minds Jesus said, 'Why do you have such wicked thoughts in your hearts? Now, which of these is easier: to say, "Your sins are forgiven," or to say, "Get up and walk"? But to prove to you that the Son of man

has authority on earth to forgive sins,' -- then he said to the paralytic-'get up, pick up your bed and go off home.' And the man got up and went home. A feeling of awe came over the crowd when they saw this, and they praised God for having given such authority to human beings.

Carrying and being carried

"...some people brought him a paralytic stretched out on a bed". In today's gospel, the paralytic was healed not because of his ability to get close to Jesus but of the faith and care of the people around him. Jesus, seeing the faith of those who carried the paralytic, healed the man physically and spiritually. The image of the friends carrying the paralytic on the bed portrays what faith community is all about. We need one another as we make our way to Jesus. In our faith stories, we experience ourselves carried by the faith of others, be it our parents, friends, religious, etc. In other moments, we also experience that our faith in Jesus has helped to carry others to Him.

Today, let us remember with gratefulness and thank God for the people who have played a part in our faith journey. Without their faith in God, we might not be where we are today. We also pray for the concrete people we are "carrying" spiritually who cannot go to Jesus on their own due to their fears, doubts, anger, etc.

Question for reflection:

How can my faith in Jesus help others to experience His loving presence?

