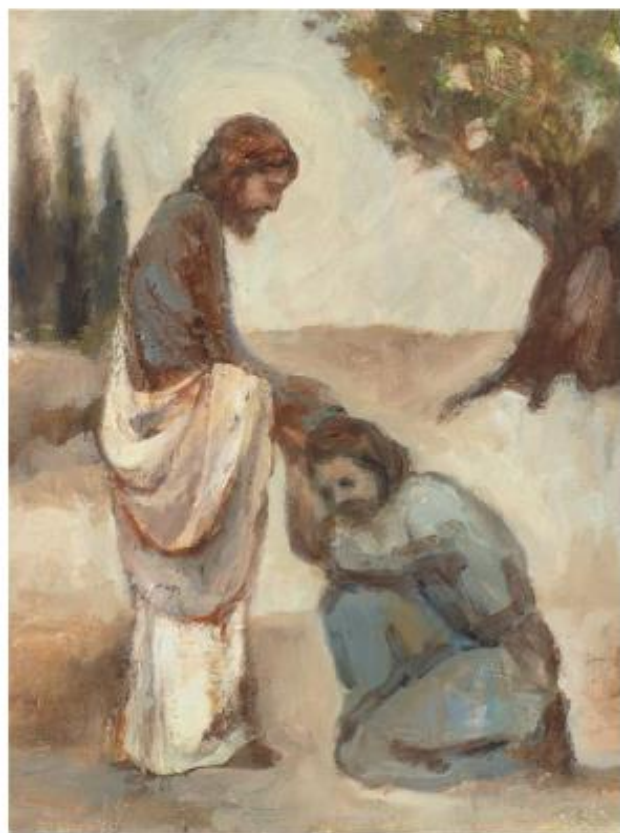


There were ten healed...
only one gave thanks



PRAYER FOR LIVING

DAILY REFLECTIONS FOR
LITURGICAL YEAR C~
OCTOBER 2022

Sr. Sandra Seow

PRAYER FOR LIVING YEAR C

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Saturday, 1st October, St. Therese of the Child Jesus.

Isaiah 66:10-14, Matthew 18:1-5

The disciples came to Jesus and said, 'Who is the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven?' So he called a little child to him whom he set among them. Then he said, 'In truth I tell you, unless you change and become like little children you will never enter the kingdom of Heaven. And so, the one who makes himself as little as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven. Anyone who welcomes one little child like this in my name welcomes me.'

From pride to humility

The disciples asked Jesus, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven?". They assumed that greatness would come from accomplishments and grand deeds. However, Jesus took a little child and said, "...the one who makes himself as little as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven". In His time, children are insignificant in the eyes of society. Thus, for Jesus, true greatness comes from being simple and humble.

In our society, power, status and wealth are considered important. Therefore, many of us tend to be engrossed in ourselves and driven to seek glory and honour. Today, Jesus calls us to change and learn to become like little children by striving to have a child-like humility to serve and love others.

Reflective question:

How can I learn to be more simple and humble?

Sunday, 2nd October, 27th Sunday in Ordinary Time.

Habakkuk 1: 2-3; 2:2-4, 2 Timothy 1:6-8, 13-14, Luke 17:5-10

The apostles said to the Lord, 'Increase our faith.' The Lord replied, 'If you had faith like a mustard seed you could say to this mulberry tree, "Be uprooted and planted in the sea," and it would obey you. Which of you, with a servant ploughing or minding sheep, would say to him when he returned from the fields, "Come and have your meal at once"? Would he not be more likely to say, "Get my supper ready; fasten your belt and wait on me while I eat and drink. You yourself can eat and drink afterwards"? Must he be grateful to the servant for doing what he was

told? So with you: when you have done all you have been told to do, say, "We are useless servants: we have done no more than our duty." '

Faith as little as a mustard seed

The disciples told Jesus, "*Increase our faith*" because it seemed difficult for them to follow Him and live the same way He did. They could become better disciples and handle things better if they had more faith. Jesus, however, told them that they did not need to upsize their faith because their little faith was enough for Jesus to work powerfully in and through them.

It is easy to think that we do not have enough faith to live the gospel values, be more loving, do an important task, etc. Today, let us take comfort that all God needs is for us to have faith as little as a mustard seed. Our little faith is enough to keep us faithful and continue to love Jesus by placing ourselves at the service of those around us. Jesus is the one who can work through us and empowers us to do great things.

Reflective question:

How can I concretely live my faith today?

Monday, 3rd October, 27th Week in Ordinary Time.

Galatians 1:6-12, Luke 10: 25-37

There was a lawyer stood up and, to test Jesus, asked, 'Master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?' He said to him, 'What is written in the Law? What is your reading of it?' He replied, 'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbour as yourself.' Jesus said to him, 'You have answered right, do this and life is yours.' But the man was anxious to justify himself and said to Jesus, 'And who is my neighbour?' In answer Jesus said, 'A man was once on his way down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell into the hands of bandits; they stripped him, beat him and then made off, leaving him half dead. Now a priest happened to be travelling down the same road, but when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. In the same way a Levite who came to the place saw him, and passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan traveller who came on him was moved with compassion when he saw him. He went up to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them. He then lifted him onto his own mount and took him to an inn and looked

after him. Next day, he took out two denarii and handed them to the innkeeper and said, "Look after him, and on my way back I will make good any extra expense you have." Which of these three, do you think, proved himself a neighbour to the man who fell into the bandits' hands? He replied, 'The one who showed pity towards him.' Jesus said to him, 'Go, and do the same yourself.'

Go and do the same yourself

Today, Jesus invites us, "*Go and do the same yourself. Go and be a good Samaritan to someone today*". In the parable, the Samaritan saw the wounded man lying on the road. He did not hesitate but immediately went over and did what was needed for this vulnerable man. He put loving compassion into action indiscriminately, unlike the priest and Levite, who passed by the broken man on the side of the road because they distinguished who to love and who not to love.

Christian love is neither an idea we think about nor a sentiment in our hearts. Christian love involves putting loving compassion into action and befriending and helping a person in need regardless of race, creed and colour. Today, let us go and do the same.

Reflective question:

How can I put loving compassion into action today?

Tuesday, 4th October, St. Francis of Assisi.

Galatians 1:13-24, Luke 10:38-42

Jesus came to a village, and a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. She had a sister called Mary, who sat down at the Lord's feet and listened to him speaking. Now Martha, who was distracted with all the serving, came to him and said, 'Lord, do you not care that my sister is leaving me to do the serving all by myself? Please tell her to help me.' But the Lord answered, 'Martha, Martha,' he said, 'you worry and fret about so many things, and yet few are needed, indeed only one. It is Mary who has chosen the better part, and it is not to be taken from her.'

The only one thing needed

"*Martha who was distracted with all the serving...*" Jesus did not rebuke Martha for her good work in serving. Instead, He reminded Martha that her distraction had led her to miss out on the '*only one*' thing needed, i.e.

to listen and be nourished by His words. From listening to His words, Martha would find peace to work and serve.

Today, let us listen to Jesus first so that His word of love can nourish and strengthen us. From there, we can truly serve with joy and peace in our hearts.

Reflective question:

What prevents me from allowing myself to be nourished by Jesus' words?

Wednesday, 5th October, St. Mary Faustina Kowalska.

Galatians 2:1-2, 7-14, Luke 11:1-4

Once Jesus was in a certain place praying, and when he had finished, one of his disciples said, 'Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.' He said to them, 'When you pray, this is what to say: Father, may your name be held holy, your kingdom come; give us each day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive each one who is in debt to us. And do not put us to the test.'

Praying to God, who is Father

There was something special in the way Jesus prayed that one of His disciples asked Him, "*Lord, teach us to pray...*". Most likely, they saw Jesus praying to God the Father as though He was speaking with someone He truly loved and was neither blabbing out words nor simply praying out of routine.

Jesus invited His disciples and each of us today to pray by relating with God as our loving Father. The prayer begins by asking that God's kingdom, His presence of love, would be a daily reality in our lives and the world. It goes on by asking God for the daily nourishment we need, the forgiveness of our sins and His help in times when our faith is put to the test.

Reflective question:

Do I allow the "*Our Father*" prayer to shape my relationship with God and others?

Thursday, 6th October, St. Bruno.

Galatians 3: 1-5, Luke 11:5-13

Jesus said to his disciples, 'Suppose one of you has a friend and goes to him in the middle of the night to say, "My friend, lend me three loaves, because a friend of mine on his travels has just arrived at my house and I have nothing to offer him;" and the man answers from inside the house, "Do not bother me. The door is bolted now, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up to give it to you." I tell you, if the man does not get up and give it to him for friendship's sake, persistence will make him get up and give his friend all he wants. So I say to you: Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; everyone who searches finds; everyone who knocks will have the door opened. What father among you, if his son asked for a fish, would hand him a snake? Or if he asked for an egg, hand him a scorpion? If you then, evil as you are, know how to give your children what is good, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!'

God gives the gift of the Holy Spirit

In today's gospel, Jesus invites never to get tired of asking God, never stop seeking God, and keep knocking on God's door. We need to go to God with trust that He will answer us, come looking for us and open the door to us. However, what do we ask God for? Many times, we pray by asking Jesus for material needs and wants. However, we must not forget that we, as God's beloved children, have the task of daily asking with open hands for what we really need, i.e. the Holy Spirit.

God our Father will never fail to give us His Spirit. The Holy Spirit will empower us to walk that path to live and love as God wants us. Today, let us be aware that we are God's beloved sons and daughters as we enter once more into a relationship of love and trust with Him.

Reflective question:

When I pray, do I ask God for the gift of His Spirit?

Friday, 7th October, Our Lady of the Rosary.

Acts 1:12-14, Luke 1:26-38

The angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the House of David; and

the virgin's name was Mary. He went in and said to her, 'Rejoice, you who enjoy God's favor! The Lord is with you.' She was deeply disturbed by these words and asked herself what this greeting could mean, but the angel said to her, 'Mary, do not be afraid; you have won God's favour. Look! You are to conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you must name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David; he will rule over the House of Jacob for ever and his reign will have no end.' Mary said to the angel, 'But how can this come about, since I have no knowledge of man?' The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow. And so the child will be holy and will be called Son of God. And I tell you this too: your cousin Elizabeth also, in her old age, has conceived a son, and she whom people called barren is now in her sixth month, for nothing is impossible to God.' Mary said, 'You see before you the Lord's servant, let it happen to me as you have said.' And the angel left her.

Overshadowing presence of the Spirit

"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow". These were the words of the Angel Gabriel to Mary. Jesus, the Incarnated God, was conceived and born through the presence of the Holy Spirit. In fact, the Holy Spirit continued to live and work in Mary throughout her life, even in moments when she faced hardships and sufferings.

As we celebrate this Feast of Mother Mary, let us ask her for the grace to recognise that we need the Holy Spirit to guide and empower us. With the Holy Spirit living and working in us, we, like Mary, can dare to give our "Yes" to be God's instrument today.

Reflective question:

Do I count on the help of the Holy Spirit to guide me in my daily life and live out God's purpose for me?

Saturday, 8th October, 27th Week in Ordinary Time.

Galatians 3:22-29, 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!'

Listening and keeping God's word

Real happiness is listening and keeping God's word. This, for Jesus, is real happiness. In the gospel, a woman praised Mary for being His mother. However, Jesus responded by saying that Mary was blessed, happy, not because of her title of being His mother, but because she heard God's word and kept it.

Today, Jesus invites us to experience real happiness by living according to God's word, listening to and keeping His word and allowing Him to shape and influence our words and actions. When God's word is at the centre of our lives, we will be recognised as blessed by Jesus.

Reflective question:

Do I seek the happiness that comes from being rooted in God's word?

Sunday, 9th October, 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time.

2 Kings 5:14-17, 2 Timothy 2:8-13, Luke 17:11-19

On the way to Jerusalem he was travelling in the borderlands of Samaria and Galilee. As he entered one of the villages, ten men suffering from a virulent skin-disease came to meet him. They stood some way off and called to him, 'Jesus! Master! Take pity on us.' When he saw them he said, 'Go and show yourselves to the priests.' Now as they were going away they were cleansed. Finding himself cured, one of them turned back praising God at the top of his voice and threw himself prostrate at the feet of Jesus and thanked him. The man was a Samaritan. This led Jesus to say, 'Were not all ten made clean? The other nine, where are they? It seems that no one has come back to give praise to God, except this foreigner.' And he said to the man, 'Stand up and go on your way. Your faith has saved you.'

The one who turned back and praised God

Jesus said to them, '*Go and show yourselves to the priests.*' Jesus told them, '*Go...*' They trusted in His word and went as they were told. On the other hand, we tend to put conditions before we take steps to do as God tells us. "*Lord, I will follow you if you solve my family problem.*", "*I will forgive this person as soon as you give me a sign.*" etc. These men

believed in Jesus, and their lives were never the same again. What about us? Do we trust in the life-giving word of Jesus?

All ten remembered God in their sickness but forgot Him in health. Only one turned back to Him to give thanks. May we learn from this Samaritan to need God in good and bad times.

Reflective question:

How is Jesus inviting me to live today?

Monday, 10th October, 28th Week in Ordinary Time.

Galatians 4:22-24, Luke 11:29-32

The crowds got even bigger and Jesus addressed them, 'This is an evil generation; it is asking for a sign. The only sign it will be given is the sign of Jonah. For just as Jonah became a sign to the people of Nineveh, so will the Son of man be a sign to this generation. On Judgement Day the Queen of the South will stand up against the people of this generation and be their condemnation, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, look, there is something greater than Solomon here. On Judgement Day the men of Nineveh will appear against this generation and be its condemnation, because when Jonah preached they repented; and, look, there is something greater than Jonah here.'

There is someone greater...

In today's gospel, the crowds surrounded Jesus, but many who were present did not believe Him. He knew that they wanted a sign that God was working in and through Him. But, unfortunately, they missed the greatest sign, i.e. Jesus Himself.

Today, let us ask God, not for signs, but for eyes of faith to see His presence in our lives. Jesus, who is greater than Solomon and Jonah, is here with us. He is present in the Word of God, the Eucharist, nature, the persons around us, the silence of our hearts, etc. Jesus, who is present, is greater than our fear, flaw, anxiety, etc. This is our security, our guarantee.

Reflective question:

How can I live my day with eyes of faith that recognise Jesus is here with me?

Tuesday, 11th October, St. John XXIII.

Galatians 5:1-6, Luke 11:37-41

Jesus had just finished speaking when a Pharisee invited him to dine at his house. He went in and sat down at table. The Pharisee saw this and was surprised that he had not first washed before the meal. But the Lord said to him, 'You Pharisees! You clean the outside of cup and plate, while inside yourselves you are filled with extortion and wickedness. Fools! Did not he who made the outside make the inside too? Instead, give alms from what you have and, look, everything will be clean for you.'

To have the heart of Jesus

In today's gospel, a Pharisee criticised Jesus for not washing His hands before eating according to the Jewish Law. Jesus responded by reminding the Pharisee not to be so concerned with externals and to neglect what was within.

Today, like the Pharisee, we often forget that what matters for God is that we seek and live out the values of the Gospel. Jesus ended by saying, "...give alms from what you have and, look; everything will be clean for you". Jesus brings us back to the importance of giving ourselves to serve those in need.

Reflective question:

Do I focus on the externals, even in matters of faith, to the extent that I forget to pay attention to my attitudes and values?

Wednesday, 12th October, 28th Week in Ordinary Time.

Galatians 5:18-25, Luke 11:42-46

The Lord said to the Pharisees: 'Alas for you Pharisees, because you pay your tithe of mint and rue and all sorts of garden herbs and neglect justice and the love of God! These you should have practised, without neglecting the others. Alas for you Pharisees, because you like to take the seats of honour in the synagogues and to be greeted respectfully in the market squares! Alas for you, because you are like the unmarked tombs that people walk on without knowing it!' A lawyer then spoke up.

'Master,' he said, 'when you speak like this you insult us too.' But he said, 'Alas for you lawyers as well, because you load on people burdens that are unendurable, burdens that you yourselves do not touch with your fingertips.'

What matters is to live a life of love

The Pharisees knew the fundamental concepts of their faith intellectually, i.e. to love God and their neighbours. However, these remained simply ideas and not a reality in their lives. Jesus' strong words to the Pharisees and the religious leaders of His time were to drive home the point: love God, love neighbour.

Today, let us honestly look at our hearts again. We might be more anxious about keeping the norms than guiding people to encounter Jesus. We speak of love, forgiveness and mercy to others, but we do not practice what we say. Let us return to experience deeply God's love so that we will not forget the things that really matter in our Christian faith.

Reflective question:

How can I love God and my neighbours more today?

Thursday, 13th October, 28th Week in Ordinary Time.

Ephesians 1:1-10, Luke 11:47-54

Jesus said: 'Alas for you because you build tombs for the prophets, the people your ancestors killed! In this way you both witness to what your ancestors did and approve it; they did the killing, you do the building. And that is why the Wisdom of God said, "I will send them prophets and apostles; some they will slaughter and persecute, so that this generation will have to answer for every prophet's blood that has been shed since the foundation of the world, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the Temple." Yes, I tell you, this generation will have to answer for it all. Alas for you lawyers who have taken away the key of knowledge! You have not gone in yourselves and have prevented others from going in who wanted to.' When he left there, the scribes and the Pharisees began a furious attack on him and tried to force answers from him on innumerable questions, lying in wait to catch him out in something he might say.

The richness of the grace of God's love

"Before the world was made, he chose us, chose us in Christ...determining that we should become his adopted sons, through Jesus Christ...Such is the richness of the grace which he has showered on us..." (Today's 1st reading). In today's first reading, St. Paul spoke about the "richness of the grace" of being God's children and the gift of being able to enter into a loving relationship of love with God. Do we value this richness of grace that God has gifted us with?

In today's gospel, Jesus criticised the Jewish religious leaders for closing their hearts to God and, thus, preventing others from coming to know the truth of God's love and experiencing themselves as His beloved sons and daughters. We have an influence on others' faith. Today, let us first experience the richness of grace of being God's children so that we can bring others to this truth of our faith.

Reflective question:

Do I lead others to God or away from Him?

Friday, 14th October, St. Callistus I.

Ephesians 1:11-14, Luke 12:1-7

The people had gathered in their thousands so that they were treading on one another. And Jesus began to speak, first of all to his disciples. 'Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees -- their hypocrisy. Everything now covered up will be uncovered, and everything now hidden will be made clear. For this reason, whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight, and what you have whispered in hidden places will be proclaimed from the housetops. To you my friends I say: Do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. I will tell you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has the power to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, he is the one to fear. Can you not buy five sparrows for two pennies? And yet not one is forgotten in God's sight. Why, every hair on your head has been counted. There is no need to be afraid: you are worth more than many sparrows.'

God cares

"Can you not buy five sparrows for two pennies? And yet not one is forgotten in God's sight". For us, one sparrow might be unimportant. Yet,

for God, He remembers and cares for His creation, even the smallest and insignificant ones. God cares for His creation, and so too must we.

Jesus then states that God cares too for us, who are worth more than many sparrows. "*Why, every hair on your head has been counted*". Jesus reveals a God who is not impersonal or distant but actively involved in our lives. Why? Because He loves us. Thus, there is no need for us to live in constant fear and anxiety because we can entrust ourselves to God. Each one of us is loved by Him and is precious to Him.

Reflective question:

Do I believe that I am precious to God?

Saturday, 15th October, St. Teresa of Jesus.

Ephesians 1:15-23, Luke 12:8-12

Jesus said to his disciples: 'I tell you, if anyone openly declares himself for me in the presence of human beings, the Son of man will declare himself for him in the presence of God's angels. But anyone who disowns me in the presence of human beings will be disowned in the presence of God's angels. Everyone who says a word against the Son of man will be forgiven, but no one who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will be forgiven. When they take you before synagogues and magistrates and authorities, do not worry about how to defend yourselves or what to say, because when the time comes, the Holy Spirit will teach you what you should say.'

Holy Spirit in us pushes us to bear witness to Jesus

Our faith in Jesus is personal but not private. By virtue of our baptism, we are called to witness Jesus with our words and actions so that others may come to know and encounter Him. Today, Jesus assures us of the presence of the Holy Spirit. He is always with us to teach us what we should say and do.

We might be tempted to hide our Christian faith due to the subtle pressure in our society. Today, let us count on the help of the Holy Spirit, who is always with us in our efforts to live and share our faith with pride and joy.

Reflective question:

How can I open myself to bear witness to Jesus courageously?

Sunday, 16th October, 29th Sunday in Ordinary Time.**Exodus 17:8-13, 2 Timothy 3:14-4:2, Luke 18:1-8**

Jesus told his disciples a parable about the need to pray continually and never lose heart. 'There was a judge in a certain town,' he said, 'who had neither fear of God nor respect for anyone. In the same town there was also a widow who kept on coming to him and saying, "I want justice from you against my enemy!" For a long time he refused, but at last he said to himself, "Even though I have neither fear of God nor respect for any human person, I must give this widow her just rights since she keeps pestering me, or she will come and slap me in the face." ' And the Lord said, 'You notice what the unjust judge has to say? Now, will not God see justice done to his elect if they keep calling to him day and night even though he still delays to help them? I promise you, he will see justice done to them, and done speedily. But when the Son of man comes, will he find any faith on earth?'

Never lose heart but keep calm and pray

It is easier for many of us to be disappointed and stop praying in times of difficulty than to have the faith to persevere to pray continually. In today's gospel, Jesus told His disciples a parable about the need to keep praying with faith and without losing heart. In the parable, the widow did not give up going to the judge, described as someone "*who had neither fear of God nor respect for anyone*". However, he finally gave in to the widow's demand because of her persistence.

The parable does not equate God to the judge because God is a God of love and justice. The God we pray to cares for us. Instead, the parable asks us if we have the kind of faith as the widow. Today, Jesus calls us never to lose hope but to have faith that endures, even in hard times.

Reflective question:

How is my faith?

Monday, 17th October, St. Ignatius of Antioch.
Ephesians 2:1-10, Luke 12:13-21

A man in the crowd said to Jesus, 'Master, tell my brother to give me a share of our inheritance.' He said to him, 'My friend, who appointed me your judge, or the arbitrator of your claims?' Then he said to them, 'Watch, and be on your guard against avarice of any kind, for life does not consist in possessions, even when someone has more than he needs.' Then he told them a parable, 'There was once a rich man who, having had a good harvest from his land, thought to himself, "What am I to do? I have not enough room to store my crops." Then he said, "This is what I will do: I will pull down my barns and build bigger ones, and store all my grain and my goods in them, and I will say to my soul: My soul, you have plenty of good things laid by for many years to come; take things easy, eat, drink, have a good time." But God said to him, "Fool! This very night the demand will be made for your soul; and this hoard of yours, whose will it be then?" So it is when someone stores up treasure for himself instead of becoming rich in the sight of God.'

To be rich in the sight of God

What is the message that we can learn from this parable? In the parable, the rich man lived in his own world and lived for himself. With a clenched fist that held tightly to his wealth and possessions, he was not concerned about how he could help the needy around him by giving away the surpluses that he had. Instead, he was concerned with storing all that he had for himself.

Jesus calls us to strive to be rich in the eyes of God and not the world's. The world's mentality is to hoard and amass riches for ourselves. Following Jesus' way demands that we generously share all we have with those in need. Let us open our hands and enrich others with what we have, be it our possessions, time, talents, etc.

Reflective question:

Do I strive to be rich in God's sight?

Tuesday, 18th October, St Luke the evangelist.
2 Timothy 4:10-17, Luke 10:1-9

The Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them out ahead of him in pairs, to all the towns and places he himself would be visiting. And he

said to them, 'The harvest is rich but the labourers are few, so ask the Lord of the harvest to send labourers to do his harvesting. Start off now, but look, I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. Take no purse with you, no haversack, no sandals. Salute no one on the road. Whatever house you enter, let your first words be, "Peace to this house!" And if a man of peace lives there, your peace will go and rest on him; if not, it will come back to you. Stay in the same house, taking what food and drink they have to offer, for the labourer deserves his wages; do not move from house to house. Whenever you go into a town where they make you welcome, eat what is put before you. Cure those in it who are sick, and say, "The kingdom of God is very near to you."

Go and proclaim the gospel with your lives

Jesus invites us today to go forth and not procrastinate any longer. The mission is urgent as many people have not encountered His love.

Today, we celebrate the feast day of St. Luke, the evangelist who faithfully wrote the gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles to bring faith to Theophilus (Luke 1:1-4). May we also imitate St. Luke by not keeping our faith in Jesus and our love for Him to ourselves but by going forth from our comfort zone to others who need to hear the Good News that God loves them and is close to them.

Reflective question:

Today, with whom can I share the gospel?

Wednesday, 19th October, SS. John de Brébeuf & Isaac Jogues, St. John of the Cross.

Ephesians 3:2-12, Luke 12:39-48

Jesus said to his disciples: 'You may be quite sure of this, that if the householder had known at what time the burglar would come, he would not have let anyone break through the wall of his house. You too must stand ready, because the Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect.' Peter said, 'Lord, do you mean this parable for us, or for everyone?' The Lord replied, 'Who, then, is the wise and trustworthy steward whom the master will place over his household to give them at the proper time their allowance of food? Blessed that servant if his master's arrival finds him doing exactly that. I tell you truly, he will put him in charge of everything that he owns. But if the servant says to

himself, "My master is taking his time coming," and sets about beating the menservants and the servant-girls, and eating and drinking and getting drunk, his master will come on a day he does not expect and at an hour he does not know. The master will cut him off and send him to the same fate as the unfaithful. The servant who knows what his master wants, but has got nothing ready and done nothing in accord with those wishes, will be given a great many strokes of the lash. The one who did not know, but has acted in such a way that he deserves a beating, will be given fewer strokes. When someone is given a great deal, a great deal will be demanded of that person; when someone is entrusted with a great deal, of that person even more will be expected.'

Faithful stewards

In the gospel, Jesus spoke of the faithful steward who did the task that his master had given him. When the master returned from his long trip, the steward was still faithfully working. The keyword that describes the steward is faithfulness.

We are invited to be God's faithful stewards today, faithful to our calling and mission even in the face of challenges we face in life. As His stewards, we are entrusted to look after God's household, His family, His people. God's household includes our family members, friends, strangers we meet daily, etc. Therefore, let us give of ourselves to others, e.g. our time, talents, strength, creativity, faith, etc., so that they might grow and be strong in their faith in God. Our faithfulness to God is seen in how much we put ourselves at the loving service of others.

Reflective question:

How can I be God's faithful steward today?

Thursday, 20th October, 29th Week in Ordinary Time.

Ephesians 3:14-21, Luke 12: 49-53

Jesus said to his disciples: 'I have come to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were blazing already! There is a baptism I must still receive, and what constraint I am under until it is completed! Do you suppose that I am here to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. For from now on, a household of five will be divided: three against two and two against three; father opposed to son, son to father, mother to

daughter, daughter to mother, mother-in-law to daughter-in-law, daughter-in-law to mother-in-law.'

To swim against the tide

The mission of Jesus was to proclaim the good news of the kingdom. By doing so, He spoke and lived out God's values of justice, love, forgiveness, simplicity, etc. People were divided by His words and actions; some followed Him and others rejected Him.

Today, Jesus continues to work in and through our lives. When we live the gospel values, we might face resistance and rejection from our family members and friends. It is not easy to swim against the current of the world and follow Jesus faithfully. Thus, in the first reading, St. Paul reminds us to allow ourselves to be planted and built on Christ's love so that we can find the strength and support we need to stand firm in living His values and ways, regardless of the opposition we face from others.

Reflective question:

Do I dare to swim against the tide and take the path that Jesus calls me to take, even if I encounter hostility from those around me?

Friday, 21st October, 29th Week in Ordinary Time.

Ephesians 4:1-6, Luke 12:54-59

Jesus said to the crowds, 'When you see a cloud looming up in the west you say at once that rain is coming, and so it does. And when the wind is from the south you say it's going to be hot, and it is. Hypocrites! You know how to interpret the face of the earth and the sky. How is it you do not know how to interpret these times? Why not judge for yourselves what is upright? For example: when you are going to court with your opponent, make an effort to settle with him on the way, or he may drag you before the judge and the judge hand you over to the officer and the officer have you thrown into prison. I tell you, you will not get out till you have paid the very last penny.'

The signs of Jesus' presence

In the Gospel passage today, Jesus was frustrated with the people who claimed they could read and understand the signs of nature. Yet, these people could not recognise God's presence in the person of Jesus.

Today, we are quick to look at the sky and recognise if the day will be sunny or rainy. However, like the contemporaries of Jesus, we might be unaware that Jesus is with us in the midst of the circumstances we live. The presence of Jesus is real. He is with us, even in situations that seem to be lacking hope. He is present in the Scripture, the Eucharist, the silence of our hearts, the people we meet, etc. Let us be attentive to His presence and have ears of faith to listen to what He has to say to us each day.

Reflective question:

How can I be attentive to Jesus' presence today?

Saturday, 22nd October, St. John Paul II.

Ephesians 4:7-16, Luke 13:1-9

Some people arrived and told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with that of their sacrifices. At this he said to them, 'Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than any others, that this should have happened to them? They were not, I tell you. No; but unless you repent you will all perish as they did. Or those eighteen on whom the tower at Siloam fell, killing them all? Do you suppose that they were more guilty than all the other people living in Jerusalem? They were not, I tell you. No; but unless you repent you will all perish as they did.' He told this parable, 'A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came looking for fruit on it but found none. He said to his vinedresser, "For three years now I have been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and finding none. Cut it down: why should it be taking up the ground?" "Sir," the man replied, "leave it one more year and give me time to dig round it and manure it: it may bear fruit next year; if not, then you can cut it down." '

The mercy of God never fails

Jesus, in today's passage, did not give reasons why sufferings and deaths happen. Instead, He emphasised the need to repent in this journey of life. Repentance does not mean being regretful or guilty, but it implies a changed mind, a new way of seeing, and a new way of loving. It entails stepping out of the comfort zone of our bad habits and turning to God's merciful love.

Today, Jesus calls us to grab the chance and start living fully. He, our faithful gardener, is with us and patiently nurtures us with His love. Every moment of life becomes an opportunity for us to experience God's mercy and grow closer to Him.

Reflective question:

What is Jesus' message to me?

Sunday, 23rd October, 30th Sunday in Ordinary Time.

Ecclesiasticus 35:12-14, 16-19, 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18, Luke 18:9-14

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

The pride of the Pharisee and the humility of the tax collector

In today's gospel, Jesus told the parable of a Pharisee and a tax collector who went to the Temple to pray. The Pharisee prayed by presenting his moral achievements to God. From his prayer, he revealed himself as a self-centred person who looked down on others. On the other hand, the tax collector recognised his need for God and prayed for God's mercy and help. His prayer consisted of these words, "*God be merciful to me, a sinner*". The tax collector did not judge or despise the Pharisee. Instead, in humility, he judged himself and asked God for forgiveness. Those who listened to Jesus would expect Him to praise the Pharisee and condemn the tax collector. However, Jesus said that it was the prayer of the tax collector that was acceptable to God.

This parable is for all of us. Jesus invites us to be like the tax collector by focusing on God, not ourselves. Aware of our own limitations and need, we entrust ourselves to God, who is full of merciful love.

Reflective question:

Which one do I identify with, the Pharisee or the tax collector?

Monday, 24th October, St. Anthony Mary Claret.**Ephesians 4:32-5:8, Luke 13:10-17**

One Sabbath day Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues, and there before him was a woman who for eighteen years had been possessed by a spirit that crippled her; she was bent double and quite unable to stand upright. When Jesus saw her he called her over and said, 'Woman, you are freed from your disability,' and he laid his hands on her. And at once she straightened up, and she glorified God. But the president of the synagogue was indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, and he addressed all those present saying, 'There are six days when work is to be done. Come and be healed on one of those days and not on the Sabbath.' But the Lord answered him and said, 'Hypocrites! Is there one of you who does not untie his ox or his donkey from the manger on the Sabbath and take it out for watering? And this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan has held bound these eighteen years -- was it not right to untie this bond on the Sabbath day?' When he said this, all his adversaries were covered with confusion, and all the people were overjoyed at all the wonders he worked.

Follow Christ by loving

In the gospel, Jesus healed a woman who has crippled and bent over for many years. Her response was to praise God. The people who witnessed the healing also rejoiced at the wonder that happened before them. However, the president of the synagogue was indignant because Jesus healed the woman on the Sabbath. Sabbath was not the right time for him to do good and show God's love. By healing the woman, Jesus revealed that nobody and nothing could limit God's love and mercy.

Jesus today invites us to walk the same path of love as He did. In the first reading, St. Paul said, "*Try, then, to imitate God, as children of his that he loves, and follow Christ by loving as he loved you*". Many people are burdened by the weight of their past, fear, resentment, etc., and find it hard to stand straight and live each day without hope. We can follow Jesus by reaching out to them with love and bringing them peace and comfort.

Reflective question:

What is Jesus' message to me?

Tuesday, 25th October, 30th Week in Ordinary Time.

Ephesians 5:21-33, Luke 13:18-21

Jesus said, 'What is the kingdom of God like? What shall I compare it with? It is like a mustard seed which a man took and threw into his garden: it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air sheltered in its branches.' Again he said, 'What shall I compare the kingdom of God with? It is like the yeast a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour till it was leavened all through.'

Mustard seed and yeast

In the gospel, Jesus compared the kingdom of God with a man sowing a small mustard seed that later grew into a big tree where birds found shelter and some yeast mixed with flour to produce loaves of bread as nourishment for many. Small actions but significant outcomes.

God uses not big and grand but small and ordinary things to spread His Kingdom of love. Today, by our small acts of love and kindness to those we meet, we can open the way for the kingdom of God to be present among us.

Reflective question:

Am I aware that I am God's mustard seed and yeast that He has placed to make a difference in the places where I am?

Wednesday, 26th October, 30th Week in Ordinary Time.

Ephesians 6:1-9, Luke 13:22-30

Through towns and villages Jesus went teaching, making his way to Jerusalem. Someone said to him, 'Sir, will there be only a few saved?' He said to them, 'Try your hardest to enter by the narrow door, because, I tell you, many will try to enter and will not succeed. Once the master of the house has got up and locked the door, you may find yourself standing outside knocking on the door, saying, "Lord, open to us," but he will answer, "I do not know where you come from." Then you will start saying, "We once ate and drank in your company; you taught in our streets," but he will reply, "I do not know where you come from; away from me, all evil doers!" Then there will be weeping and grinding of teeth,

when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrown out. And people from east and west, from north and south, will come and sit down at the feast in the kingdom of God. Look, there are those now last who will be first, and those now first who will be last.'

Enter the narrow door by loving

"*Try your best to enter by the narrow door...*". What is this narrow door that Jesus spoke about in today's gospel passage?

The door we, as His disciples, are called to strive to enter is the narrow door of love. Love is shown best through concrete actions and not words. Examples of acts of love are: when a child falls ill, parents sacrifice time to care for him/her; when an elderly parent's mind becomes feeble, the caregiver puts in extra patience to love; when we pray for a depressed neighbour; when we stand up for the truth in the office, etc. Thus, the narrow door of love implies having a love that is patient, trusting, kind, forgiving, courageous, peaceful, faithful and self-giving. Today, Jesus calls us to enter this narrow door of love, which makes us people of depth and maturity.

Reflective question:

What prevents me from entering the narrow door of love?

Thursday, 27th October, 30th Week in Ordinary Time.

Ephesians 6:10-20, Luke 13:31-35

Some Pharisees came up to Jesus. 'Go away,' they said. 'Leave this place, because Herod means to kill you.' He replied, 'You may go and give that fox this message: Look! Today and tomorrow I drive out devils and heal, and on the third day I attain my end. But for today and tomorrow and the next day I must go on, since it would not be right for a prophet to die outside Jerusalem. Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you that kill the prophets and stone those who are sent to you! How often have I longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you refused! Look! Your house will be left to you. Yes, I promise you, you shall not see me till the time comes when you are saying: Blessed is he who is coming in the name of the Lord!'

In the loving arms of love

"How often have I longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings...". God is the source of our refuge and strength. He longs to gather us in His arms like the mother hen to her chicks. Thus, Jesus presents God as one who wants a personal and intimate relationship with each one of us.

In the gospel, Jesus recognised that the people of Jerusalem refused to enter into this relationship with God. Likewise, we too can refuse to desire to know and love God because we have the freedom to choose to be with Him or away from Him. The good news is that God continues to love us regardless of our response to Him. His faithful love encompasses us completely. May we have the faith to open to God's love.

Reflective question:

Do I trust that God loves me as I am?

Friday, 28th October, SS. Simon and Jude, Apostles.

Ephesians 2:19-22, Luke 6:12-19

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

Jesus' call and our "Yes" to Him

Jesus chose twelve ordinary people with their own strengths and limitations to be His closest companions.

Today, let us rejoice that Jesus never ceases to call each one of us, imperfect as we are, to be His disciples, His friends. Each day, we need

to respond to His call. With the call comes the mission. Jesus entrusts us to go out and share the Good News that God is love, He cares, and He is with us to the people around us. Let us continue to give ourselves to Jesus and allow Him to use our ordinary lives for His extraordinary mission.

Reflective question:

Am I open to collaborating with Jesus in the mission to share His love with those around me?

Saturday, 29th October, 30th Week in Ordinary Time.

Philippians 1:18-26, Luke 14:1, 7-11

Now it happened that on a Sabbath day, Jesus had gone to share a meal in the house of one of the leading Pharisees; and they watched him closely. He then told the guests a parable, because he had noticed how they picked the places of honour. He said this, 'When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take your seat in the place of honour. A more distinguished person than you may have been invited, and the person who invited you both may come and say, "Give up your place to this man." And then, to your embarrassment, you will have to go and take the lowest place. No; when you are a guest, make your way to the lowest place and sit there, so that, when your host comes, he may say, "My friend, move up higher." Then, everyone with you at the table will see you honoured. For everyone who raises himself up will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be raised up.'

Human praise is not what I seek

In today's gospel, Jesus was at a banquet and saw His fellow guests eager to have an honourable seat at the table. He then went on to speak about a parable about how those who seek the best places often had to take the lowly places while those who were contented to take the humble seat found themselves having the honourable places at the table. Thus, He is critical of those who want to seek honour for themselves. Jesus invites us not to be concerned with having honour and recognition from others because what matters most is the honour that we get from God.

In the first reading, St. Paul states with great conviction, "...I shall have the courage for Christ to be glorified in my body, whether by my life or by my death. Life to me, of course, is Christ...". Do we have the same

conviction as St. Paul? Can we say, "*Life is Christ, not honour, status, power. Having Him, I am contented*"?

Reflective question:

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

Sunday, 30th October, 31st Sunday in Ordinary Time.

Wisdom 11:22-12:2, 2 Thessalonians 1:11-2:2, Luke 19:1-10

Jesus entered Jericho and was going through the town and suddenly a man whose name was Zacchaeus made his appearance; he was one of the senior tax collectors and a wealthy man. He kept trying to see which Jesus was, but he was too short and could not see him for the crowd; so he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to catch a glimpse of Jesus who was to pass that way. When Jesus reached the spot he looked up and spoke to him, 'Zacchaeus, come down. Hurry, because I am to stay at your house today.' And he hurried down and welcomed him joyfully. They all complained when they saw what was happening. 'He has gone to stay at a sinner's house,' they said. But Zacchaeus stood his ground and said to the Lord, 'Look, sir, I am going to give half my property to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody I will pay him back four times the amount.' And Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because this man too is a son of Abraham; for the Son of man has come to seek out and save what was lost.'

A love that goes beyond labels

In today's gospel, Jesus went to the house of the chief tax collector, Zacchaeus. The people, unhappy with Jesus' gesture, started grumbling and complaining, "*He has gone to stay at a sinner's house*". They did not use Zacchaeus' name but labelled him "a sinner". However, for Jesus, Zacchaeus was more than this label because he was more than just the sum of his bad mistakes and faults. Jesus looked at Zacchaeus and perceived him beyond the label, his profession, and his wealth and recognised him as a person wanting something more in life, as a person seeking God.

Jesus calls us to imitate Him in how He looks at and loves others. Unfortunately, we often label people by their behaviour, appearances, mistakes, social status, etc. We focus on the negatives and end up not loving them unconditionally. Jesus calls us to go beyond labels and into

the reality of who the person is. Each person is a person with worth and dignity because he/she is a child of God, a fellow brother and sister of ours loved by God.

Reflective question:

Is it a challenge for me to love like Jesus?

Monday, 31st October, 31st Week in Ordinary Time.

Philippians 2:1-4, Luke 14:12-14

Jesus said to his host, 'When you give a lunch or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relations or rich neighbours, in case they invite you back and so repay you. No; when you have a party, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind; then you will be blessed, for they have no means to repay you and so you will be repaid when the upright rise again.'

Seeking no reward

What is Jesus' message for us as we pray with today's Gospel passage?

Jesus invites us to be generous and do good without seeking any reward. Sometimes, we do a good deed with the intention that the recipient can do something good for us in return. Thus, Jesus calls us to have genuine love that never asks the question, "*What will I get in return?*". Today, let us give without counting the cost; fight without heeding the wounds; toil without seeking rest; and labour without asking for a reward. Instead, we fix our eyes on Jesus and set our hearts to please Him alone.

Reflective question:

What is Jesus' invitation to me today?

