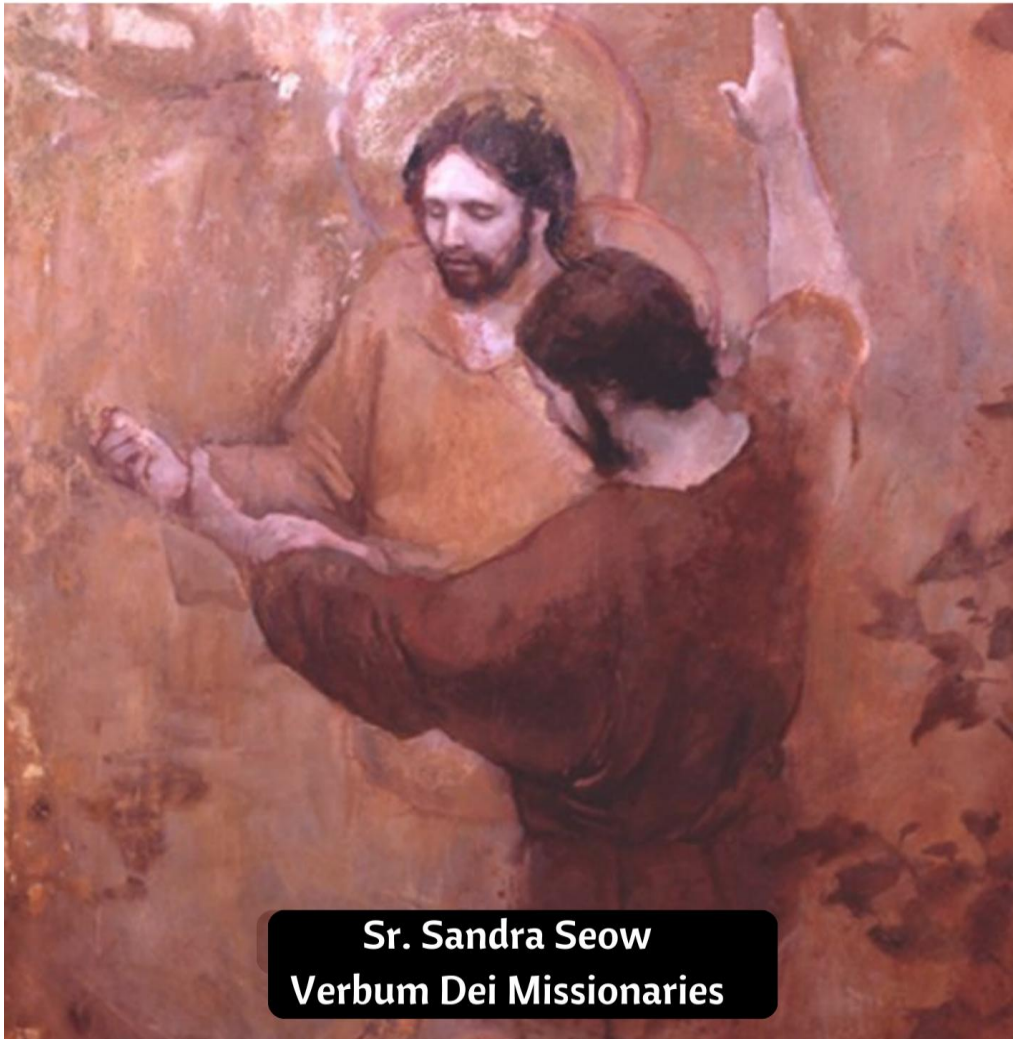


Prayer for Living
Year C
JANUARY

“You are my Son”



Sr. Sandra Seow
Verbum Dei Missionaries

PRAYER FOR LIVING YEAR C

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**Wednesday, 1st January, Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God.
Numbers 6:22-27, Galatians 4:4-7, Luke 2:16-21**

The shepherds hurried away and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. When they saw the child they repeated what they had been told about him, and everyone who heard it was astonished at what the shepherds said to them. As for Mary, she treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart. And the shepherds went back glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as they had been told. When the eighth day came and the child was to be circumcised, they gave him the name Jesus, the name the angel had given him before his conception.

A New Year with God

“May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord let his face shine on you and be gracious to you. May the Lord uncover his face to you and bring you peace” (1st reading). Today, as we listen to this prayer, we enjoy the gift God wants to bestow on us. He blesses and protects us, guiding us to face the uncertain tomorrow with trust. His face shining upon us symbolises His constant attention to us, reminding us that He is a God who is not distant but close to us. By uncovering His face, He conveys His unconditional love, allowing us to experience His peace, even during difficult times.

“As for Mary, she treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart” (The Gospel). Mary is an example for us to follow as we begin the New Year. She treasured what truly mattered in her heart and recognised God’s loving presence in everything, leading her to trust Him. Like Mother Mary, let us focus on God and live in a constant relationship with Him today and every day throughout this New Year.

Reflective question:

How can I focus on being present with God this year?

**Thursday, 2nd January, SS. Basil the Great & Gregory Nazianzen.
1 John 2:22-28, John 1:19-25**

This was the witness of John, when the Jews sent to him priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, 'Who are you?' He declared, he did not deny but declared, 'I am not the Christ.' So they asked, 'Then are

you Elijah?' He replied, 'I am not.' 'Are you the Prophet?' He answered, 'No.' So they said to him, 'Who are you? We must take back an answer to those who sent us. What have you to say about yourself?' So he said, 'I am, as Isaiah prophesied: A voice of one that cries in the desert: Prepare a way for the Lord. Make his paths straight!' Now those who had been sent were Pharisees, and they put this question to him, 'Why are you baptising if you are not the Christ, and not Elijah, and not the Prophet?'

I am just a voice

In today's gospel passage, the religious leaders questioned John the Baptist, "Who are you?" He clearly stated who he was not, answering, "I am not the Christ, I am not Elijah, and I am not the Prophet." At the same time, he made it clear who he was: he was the voice preparing the way for Jesus, the Messiah, pointing Him out so that others could follow Him. John the Baptist humbly recognised that he was just a voice, merely a messenger calling attention, not to himself, but to the coming of Jesus.

During this time of prayer, let us ask ourselves: Do I know who I am for Jesus? Do I know who Jesus is for me? When we know who we are and recognise who Jesus is, we can joyfully and passionately point Him to others and guide them to Him. Like John the Baptist, may we not seek to put ourselves on the pedestal and instead exalt Jesus through our words and actions.

Reflective question:

How can I allow humility, rather than pride, to guide my heart?

Friday, 3rd January, The Most Holy Name of Jesus.

1 John 2:29-3:6, John 1:29-34 (From morning mass of the weekday)

The next day, John saw Jesus coming towards him and said, 'Look, there is the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. It was of him that I said, "Behind me comes one who has passed ahead of me because he existed before me." I did not know him myself, and yet my purpose in coming to baptise with water was so that he might be revealed to Israel.' And John declared, 'I saw the Spirit come down on him like a dove from heaven and rest on him. I did not know him myself, but he who sent me to baptise with water had said to me, "The man on whom you see the

Spirit come down and rest is the one who is to baptise with the Holy Spirit." I have seen and I testify that he is the Chosen One of God.'

God's love

"Think of the love that the Father has lavished on us, by letting us be called God's children; and that is what we are" (1st reading). Let us take a moment to savour the truth of God's love for us. He extravagantly lavished and poured out His love on us. He does not love us because of the great things we do or the many religious obligations we complete. He loves us with an overflowing love because He is love (1 John 4:16). This is our certainty and security as we journey through life. Let us ponder and reflect on whether we truly believe that God loves us, even in the moments when we do not love Him. Do we trust in His love?

In today's gospel, John the Baptist, rooted in God's love as His foundation, pointed Jesus out to others. He wanted people to know Jesus, not just by head knowledge but by encountering Him and having a heart knowledge of who He was. We are the John the Baptist of today. Rooted in our personal experience of God's love, we are ready to reveal the God of love to those we meet each day.

Reflective question:

Is God's love the foundation of my life and mission?

Saturday, 4th January, Weekday of Christmas Time.

1 John 3:7-10, John 1:35-42

As John stood there again with two of his disciples, Jesus went past, and John looked towards him and said, 'Look, there is the lamb of God.' And the two disciples heard what he said and followed Jesus. Jesus turned round, saw them following and said, 'What do you want?' They answered, 'Rabbi' -- which means Teacher -- 'where do you live?' He replied, 'Come and see'; so they went and saw where he lived, and stayed with him that day. It was about the tenth hour. One of these two who became followers of Jesus after hearing what John had said was Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother and say to him, 'We have found the Messiah' -- which means the Christ- and he took Simon to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, 'You are Simon son of John; you are to be called Cephas' -- which means Rock.

What do you want?

“What do you want?”—This is the question that Jesus posed to John the Baptist’s disciples when He found them following Him. Today, let us allow Jesus to ask us this meaningful question: *“What do you want? What is your heart seeking?”* The two disciples did not ask for either material wealth or health. Instead, they asked Jesus, *“Where do you live?”* This reflects their desire to know Jesus and be close to Him, and not just to seek more information about Him or to see miracles. Knowing their desire, Jesus told them, *“Come and see”*, inviting them to come, encounter and stay with Him. From that moment on, the two disciples’ lives changed. The encounter with Jesus was so impactful that they felt the need to share the gift they received. One of the first things they did was go out and bring others to Jesus. Andrew, one of the two disciples, told his brother, *“We have found the Messiah”*.

Today, listen to Jesus personally asking us, *“What do you want? What are you looking for?”* Let us seek Jesus so that we can stay with Him and witness the Gospel through our words and actions.

Reflective question:

What do I desire most?

Sunday, 5th January, Epiphany of the Lord.

Isaiah 60:1-6, Ephesians 3:2-3, 5-6, Matthew 2:1-12

After Jesus had been born at Bethlehem in Judaea during the reign of King Herod, suddenly some wise men came to Jerusalem from the east asking, 'Where is the infant king of the Jews? We saw his star as it rose and have come to do him homage.' When King Herod heard this he was perturbed, and so was the whole of Jerusalem. He called together all the chief priests and the scribes of the people, and enquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They told him, 'At Bethlehem in Judaea, for this is what the prophet wrote: And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, you are by no means the least among the leaders of Judah, for from you will come a leader who will shepherd my people Israel.' Then Herod summoned the wise men to see him privately. He asked them the exact date on which the star had appeared and sent them on to Bethlehem with the words, 'Go and find out all about the child, and when you have found him, let me know, so that I too may go and do him homage.' Having listened to what the king had to say, they set out. And suddenly the star

they had seen rising went forward and halted over the place where the child was. The sight of the star filled them with delight, and going into the house they saw the child with his mother Mary, and falling to their knees they did him homage. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh. But they were given a warning in a dream not to go back to Herod, and returned to their own country by a different way.

Epiphany of God's love

Today, we celebrate the Epiphany of our Lord and let us not merely go through the motions of celebrating it in church. Instead, we should allow this feast to become a practical reality in our lives. In the gospel passage, the wise men, traditionally known as Melchior, Balthazar, and Caspar, represent the three continents of Asia, Africa, and Europe. As we look at the figures of the wise men worshipping baby Jesus, let us contemplate God's universal love. Out of love, He reveals Himself to all people, not just specific groups. This is the truth of our faith, which we are called to live out in our daily lives by loving, serving and doing good to everyone, especially the marginalised ones.

This feast also challenges us to follow in the footsteps of the wise men by seeking God. God reveals Himself to us in our everyday lives- in our circumstances, work, relationships with others, etc. We need faith to see God actively working in our lives and our world. By doing so, we can experience the profound joy of having Him with us and within us.

Reflective question:

What is the practical significance of this feast for me?

Monday, 6th January, Monday after Epiphany.

1 John 3:22-4:6, Matthew 4:12-17, 23-25

Hearing that John had been arrested Jesus withdrew to Galilee, and leaving Nazara he went and settled in Capernaum, beside the lake, on the borders of Zebulun and Naphtali. This was to fulfil what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: Land of Zebulun! Land of Naphtali! Way of the sea beyond Jordan. Galilee of the nations! The people that lived in darkness have seen a great light; on those who lived in a country of shadow dark as death a light has dawned. From then onwards Jesus began his proclamation with the message, 'Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is close at hand.' He went round the whole of Galilee teaching in their

synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing all kinds of disease and illness among the people. His fame spread throughout Syria, and those who were suffering from diseases and painful complaints of one kind or another, the possessed, epileptics, the paralysed, were all brought to him, and he cured them. Large crowds followed him, coming from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judaea and Transjordan.

To repent and to love

In today's gospel, Jesus told the people, "*Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is close at hand.*" This call resonates with us today, inviting us to pause and examine ourselves to identify and turn away from behaviours, choices and attitudes that obstruct our path to align our lives with God's will. God desires for us to live a life rich in love- an authentic and self-giving love. Let us take a moment to recognise the occasions when we have loved and extended kindness to others and the times when we may have missed the mark in our capacity to love fully. When we choose to love, we bring God's kingdom to this world.

In the Gospel, we see Jesus loving the people by tirelessly teaching and healing throughout Galilee. Today, Jesus relies on us to be His agents in spreading the Good News and bringing healing by restoring hope and peace to those around us.

Reflective question:

What is one obstacle in me that prevents me from loving like Jesus?

Tuesday, 7th January, St Raymond of Penyafort.

1 John 4:7-10, Mark 6:34-44

As Jesus stepped ashore he saw a large crowd; and he took pity on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd, and he set himself to teach them at some length. By now it was getting very late, and his disciples came up to him and said, 'This is a lonely place and it is getting very late, so send them away, and they can go to the farms and villages round about, to buy themselves something to eat.' He replied, 'Give them something to eat yourselves.' They answered, 'Are we to go and spend two hundred denarii on bread for them to eat?' He asked, 'How many loaves have you? Go and see.' And when they had found out they said, 'Five, and two fish.' Then he ordered them to get all the people to sit

down in groups on the green grass, and they sat down on the ground in squares of hundreds and fifties. Then he took the five loaves and the two fish, raised his eyes to heaven and said the blessing; then he broke the loaves and began handing them to his disciples to distribute among the people. He also shared out the two fish among them all. They all ate as much as they wanted. They collected twelve basketfuls of scraps of bread and pieces of fish. Those who had eaten the loaves numbered five thousand men.

Love in action

“My dear people, let us love one another since love comes from God and everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God. Anyone who fails to love can never have known God, because God is love” (1st reading). God is love, and love reveals His true nature. Today, let us pause and reflect on this truth. God’s love is not an abstract idea but love in action. In today’s gospel, we can see the powerful example of God’s love through Jesus, who addressed the needs of the hungry crowd.

Jesus saw the spiritual hunger of the crowd and did not turn them away. He spoke to them about God and His boundless love for them. Later, as it was getting late, He also noticed their physical hunger as well. His disciples told Him to send the crowd away to find food for themselves. However, Jesus, moved by their needs, could not turn them away. Instead, He invited His disciples to join Him to involve themselves in showing practical care for the people by sharing the little they had. Today, Jesus invites us to embrace His shepherd’s heart and put love into action by reaching out to those in need.

Reflective question:

How can I put love into action today?

Wednesday, 8th January, Wednesday after Epiphany.

1 John 4:11-18, Mark 6:45-52

After the five thousand had eaten and were filled, Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side near Bethsaida, while he himself sent the crowd away. After saying goodbye to them he went off into the hills to pray. When evening came, the boat was far out on the sea, and he was alone on the land. He could see that they were hard pressed in their rowing, for the wind was against them;

and about the fourth watch of the night he came towards them, walking on the sea. He was going to pass them by, but when they saw him walking on the sea they thought it was a ghost and cried out; for they had all seen him and were terrified. But at once he spoke to them and said, 'Courage! It's me! Don't be afraid.' Then he got into the boat with them and the wind dropped. They were utterly and completely dumbfounded, because they had not seen what the miracle of the loaves meant; their minds were closed.

“After saying goodbye to them...” (The gospel). Jesus spent time saying goodbye to the people after teaching and feeding them. Let us pause for a moment and reflect on this simple action of Jesus. His farewell shows His attentive care for the people. We often think we need to express our love in grand, self-giving gestures. However, it is often the simple acts of love that can truly make a difference in the lives of those around us. This could be as simple as sending a message to someone having difficulty or cooking a favourite dish to make a family member happy.

The gospel recounts Jesus walking on the stormy water to be with His disciples as they struggled with their fears. As we reflect on these verses, let us find comfort that Jesus is always with us, even in moments when we find ourselves in the storms of life. Listen to Jesus as He tells us today, “*Courage! It's me! Don't be afraid.*”. Let us hold onto these words with trust and remember that God truly cares for us.

Reflective question:

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

Thursday, 9th January, Thursday after Epiphany.

1 John 4:19-5:4, Luke 4:14-22

Jesus, with the power of the Spirit in him, returned to Galilee; and his reputation spread throughout the countryside. He taught in their synagogues and everyone glorified him. He came to Nazara, where he had been brought up, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day as he usually did. He stood up to read, and they handed him the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. Unrolling the scroll he found the place where it is written: The spirit of the Lord is on me, for he has anointed me to bring

the good news to the afflicted. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives, sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim a year of favour from the Lord. He then rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the assistant and sat down. And all eyes in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to speak to them, 'This text is being fulfilled today even while you are listening.' And he won the approval of all, and they were astonished by the gracious words that came from his lips. They said, 'This is Joseph's son, surely?'

Love

"We are to love, because God loved us first. Anyone who says, 'I love God', and hates his brother, is a liar..." (1st reading). God loved us first. Believing that God loves us deeply, despite our flaws and the poor choices we make, empowers us and changes our hearts to love others, especially those we struggle to love. Today, let us show our love for God by putting love into action, for example, doing a good deed to a colleague, being patient with a family member, etc.

"The spirit of the Lord is on me, for he has anointed me to bring the good news to the afflicted. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives, sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free..." (The gospel). Jesus shows us what love is about. It is not a fleeting idea or a well-meaning intention, but it is expressed in action. Jesus, God incarnate, is always on the side of those suffering. His love radiates compassion, reaching out to the broken-hearted and marginalised, offering comfort and support to those in need. Let us open our hearts to love like Jesus.

Reflective question:

What strikes me as I pray with today's readings?

Friday, 10th January, Friday after Epiphany.

1 John 5:5-13, Luke 5:12-16

Jesus was in one of the towns when suddenly a man appeared, covered with a skin-disease. Seeing Jesus he fell on his face and implored him saying, 'Sir, if you are willing you can cleanse me.' He stretched out his hand, and touched him saying, 'I am willing. Be cleansed.' At once the skin-disease left him. He ordered him to tell no one, 'But go and show yourself to the priest and make the offering for your cleansing just as Moses prescribed, as evidence to them.' But the news of him kept

spreading, and large crowds would gather to hear him and to have their illnesses cured, but he would go off to some deserted place and pray.

Jesus and the leper

During the time of Jesus, those suffering from leprosy were shunned by those around them for the rest of their lives, as it was a contagious and incurable disease. They lived a life of isolation and loneliness. In today's gospel, a leper went to Jesus and begged him to heal him. Jesus could have healed the leper from a distance with just His words. However, He chose to approach him, reach out and touch him. By doing this, He wanted to demonstrate that the leper was loved and cared for by God.

Let us remember that some individuals who like the leper, may seem unlovable to us. These could be people who speak badly of us, betray our trust or have difficult personalities. Additionally, there are also others who are rejected by their families, society or even the church, leading them to experience loneliness. Jesus calls us today to go out and try to love those who are unloved, demonstrating through our words and actions that God cares for them as well. Before sharing God's love with others, let us seek Jesus, spend time with Him, and allow Him to love us first.

Reflective question:

Is there someone in my life who needs me to show them love?

Saturday, 11th January, Saturday after Epiphany.

1 John 5:14-21, John 3:22-30

Jesus went with his disciples into the Judaeen countryside and stayed with them there and baptised. John also was baptising at Aenon near Salim, where there was plenty of water, and people were going there and were being baptised. For John had not yet been put in prison. Now a discussion arose between some of John's disciples and a Jew about purification, so they went to John and said, 'Rabbi, the man who was with you on the far side of the Jordan, the man to whom you bore witness, is baptising now, and everyone is going to him.' John replied: 'No one can have anything except what is given him from heaven. 'You yourselves can bear me out. I said, "I am not the Christ; I am the one who has been sent to go in front of him." 'It is the bridegroom who has the bride; and yet the bridegroom's friend, who stands there and listens

to him, is filled with joy at the bridegroom's voice. This is the joy I feel, and it is complete. He must grow greater, I must grow less.'

For Jesus

"He must grow greater, I must grow less": These are the words of John the Baptist in today's gospel. His disciples went to him and said that Jesus was baptising and that many people were going to him. They felt that their master was being overlooked. However, John the Baptist did not compare himself to Jesus or feel envious of His growing popularity. Instead, John the Baptist reminded his disciples that he was just the friend of the Bridegroom, the voice shouting in the desert for the Messiah, Jesus, to come. He rejoiced because Jesus had arrived, and he had done all that he was supposed to do.

We admire the virtue of humility, yet we often struggle to practice it in our lives, as we tend to focus on ourselves. In this time of prayer, let us ask Jesus to teach us the true meaning of humility so that we can be like John the Baptist, know who we are in God's sight, and live a life centered on Him alone.

Reflective question:

What does being humble mean to me at this point in my life?

Sunday, 12th January, The Baptism of the Lord.

Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11, Titus 2:11-14; 3:4-7, Luke 3:15-16, 21-22

A feeling of expectancy had grown among the people, who were beginning to wonder whether John might be the Christ, so John declared before them all, 'I baptise you with water, but someone is coming, who is more powerful than me, and I am not fit to undo the strap of his sandals; he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire. Now it happened that when all the people had been baptised and while Jesus after his own baptism was at prayer, heaven opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in a physical form, like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son; today have I fathered you.'

Baptism

As we conclude the Christmas season, we find ourselves reflecting on the baptism of Jesus. After His baptism, while in prayer, He heard the voice of God proclaiming, *"You are my Son; today I have begotten you."*

This profound experience marked a significant turning point in Jesus' life. Filled with the Holy Spirit and strengthened by the Father's words, Jesus began His mission to reveal the true heart of God, touching the lives of many through His words and actions.

Our baptism should define and shape our lives. We are God's beloved sons and daughters. This is the truth of who we are: God's children, His beloveds. Nothing can take away this identity from us—not anxiety, fear, or pride. When we are rooted in our true identity, we allow God's love to live in and through us. Each day, we set out on a journey to reflect and share God's love with others.

Reflective question:

How has my baptism marked my words, actions, and decisions?

Monday, 13th January, St Hilary.

Hebrews 1:1-6, Mark 1:14-20

After John had been arrested, Jesus went into Galilee. There he proclaimed the gospel from God saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is close at hand. Repent, and believe the gospel.' As he was walking along by the Lake of Galilee he saw Simon and Simon's brother Andrew casting a net in the lake -- for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, 'Come after me and I will make you into fishers of people.' And at once they left their nets and followed him. Going on a little further, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John; they too were in their boat, mending the nets. At once he called them and, leaving their father Zebedee in the boat with the men he employed, they went after him.

Jesus, I follow you

"...in our own time, the last days, he (God) has spoken to us through his Son..." (1st reading). Jesus, the Final Word of God and the human form of God, comes to communicate and reveal the Father's love, through His words, actions and entire being. *"Whoever has seen me, has seen the Father."* (John 14:9). As we begin the Ordinary Time, let us fix our eyes on Jesus, allowing Him to guide us in living our lives according to how God wants us to and leading us to a deeper union with Him.

In the gospel, Jesus called His first four disciples, “*Follow me*”. He extends the same call to us today, “*Follow me*”. This call from Jesus invites us to follow Him by making His priority to be ours, His values to be ours, and His mission to be ours. Today, let us not allow the Word of God to be mere words on a page; instead, may it come alive in our lives.

Reflective question:

How can I concretely respond to Jesus’ call to follow Him today?

Tuesday, 14th January, 1st Week in Ordinary Time.

Hebrews 2:5-12, Mark 1:21-28

Jesus and his disciples went as far as Capernaum, and at once on the Sabbath he went into the synagogue and began to teach. And his teaching made a deep impression on them because, unlike the scribes, he taught them with authority. And at once in their synagogue there was a man with an unclean spirit, and he shouted, 'What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are: the Holy One of God.' But Jesus rebuked it saying, 'Be quiet! Come out of him!' And the unclean spirit threw the man into convulsions and with a loud cry went out of him. The people were so astonished that they started asking one another what it all meant, saying, 'Here is a teaching that is new, and with authority behind it: he gives orders even to unclean spirits and they obey him.' And his reputation at once spread everywhere, through all the surrounding Galilean countryside.

Authority

We often view authority as a means to gain personal benefits and exert control over others. This is evident in various contexts, such as in families, workplaces, governments, and even religious institutions, where individuals in positions of authority may misuse their power for selfish purposes. In today’s gospel, Jesus healed a man with an uncleaned spirit. The people who witnessed what He did were amazed and said, “*Here is a teaching that is new, and with authority behind it...*”. Jesus, as the beloved Son of God, had authority but used it to serve and help others rather than for His own benefit.

Each of us holds some form of authority, whether at work, home, in our parish or within our faith community. We are called to use our authority not in the way the world does but like how He did. Our authority should

be a reflection of our ability to love, show mercy, be patient and extend forgiveness. May the authority behind our words and actions mirror that of Jesus.

Reflective question:

How can I exercise my authority in daily life?

Wednesday, 15th January, St. Paul the Hermit.

Hebrews 2:14-18, Mark 1:29-39

On leaving the synagogue, Jesus went with James and John straight to the house of Simon and Andrew. Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed and feverish, and at once they told him about her. He went in to her, took her by the hand and helped her up. And the fever left her and she began to serve them. That evening, after sunset, they brought to him all who were sick and those who were possessed by devils. The whole town came crowding round the door, and he cured many who were sick with diseases of one kind or another; he also drove out many devils, but he would not allow them to speak, because they knew who he was. In the morning, long before dawn, he got up and left the house and went off to a lonely place and prayed there. Simon and his companions set out in search of him, and when they found him they said, 'Everybody is looking for you.' He answered, 'Let us go elsewhere, to the neighbouring country towns, so that I can proclaim the message there too, because that is why I came.' And he went all through Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out devils.

Following Jesus by living a life of loving service

"Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed and feverish, and at once they told him about her. He went in to her, took her by the hand and helped her up. And the fever left her and she began to serve them" (The gospel). Simon's mother-in-law began to serve Jesus and His companions as soon as she was healed. This indicates that Jesus did not merely cure her illness; He also transformed her heart, inspiring her to live a purposeful and fulfilling life. As a result, she chose to follow Jesus by serving others.

When we open our hearts to Jesus' love and mercy, we find ourselves transformed and inspired to lead meaningful and purposeful lives. His love compels us to serve others and bring them to experience the

presence of God through our words and deeds. Thus, we become instruments of hope and healing, inviting those around us to live life fully.

Reflective question:

Am I living my life fully with Jesus and for Jesus?

Thursday, 16th January, 1st Week in Ordinary Time.

Hebrews 3:7-14, Mark 1:40-45

A man suffering from a virulent skin-disease came to him and pleaded on his knees saying, 'If you are willing, you can cleanse me.' Feeling sorry for him, Jesus stretched out his hand, touched him and said to him, 'I am willing. Be cleansed.' And at once the skin-disease left him and he was cleansed. And at once Jesus sternly sent him away and said to him, 'Mind you tell no one anything, but go and show yourself to the priest, and make the offering for your cleansing prescribed by Moses as evidence to them.' The man went away, but then started freely proclaiming and telling the story everywhere, so that Jesus could no longer go openly into any town, but stayed outside in deserted places. Even so, people from all around kept coming to him.

Listen

"The Holy Spirit says: If only you would listen to him today; do not harden your hearts..." (1st reading). Today, we are called to listen attentively to the voice of God because He speaks to us wherever we are- at home, at our workplace, in the church, in our dialogue with others, etc. He comes to us and speaks to us words of peace, hope and joy. Listen to His soft voice within, which always speaks for our good.

In today's gospel, a leper went to Jesus and begged Him to heal him from his dreaded skin disease, saying, "*If you are willing, you can cleanse me*". He waited for Jesus' response, trusting that He would offer him words of healing. Jesus told the man, "*I am willing. Be cleansed*". The man was healed at once. Let us listen attentively to the voice of Jesus. He comes to us, always desiring what is best for our growth and good.

Reflective question:

What message is Jesus telling me in this time of prayer?

Friday, 17th January, St. Anthony.

Hebrews 4:12-16, Mark 2:13-17

When Jesus returned to Capernaum, some time later word went round that he was in the house; and so many people collected that there was no room left, even in front of the door. He was preaching the word to them when some people came bringing him a paralytic carried by four men, but as they could not get the man to him through the crowd, they stripped the roof over the place where Jesus was; and when they had made an opening, they lowered the stretcher on which the paralytic lay. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, 'My child, your sins are forgiven.' Now some scribes were sitting there, and they thought to themselves, 'How can this man talk like that? He is being blasphemous. Who but God can forgive sins?' And at once, Jesus, inwardly aware that this is what they were thinking, said to them, 'Why do you have these thoughts in your hearts? Which of these is easier: to say to the paralytic, "Your sins are forgiven" or to say, "Get up, pick up your stretcher and walk"? But to prove to you that the Son of man has authority to forgive sins on earth' -- he said to the paralytic-'I order you: get up, pick up your stretcher, and go off home.' And the man got up, and at once picked up his stretcher and walked out in front of everyone, so that they were all astonished and praised God saying, 'We have never seen anything like this.'

True friends

In today's gospel, four friends carried their paralysed friend on a mat and tried to bring him to Jesus. When they saw that the crowd surrounding Jesus was too big to get their friend to Him, they opened a large hole in the roof and lowered him to where Jesus was. They did all this because they trusted that Jesus could heal their sick friend.

What about us? Are we ready to get ourselves involved to help those who are incapable of helping themselves? Many people around us might not be physically paralysed, but they can be emotionally or spiritually paralysed, struggling to help themselves. Instead of being indifferent or judging them harshly, we can recognise their helplessness and hopelessness and reach out to them as best as we can. Through our love and care, we reflect Jesus' healing presence to them. Today, let us be true friends to others.

Reflective question:

How can I help those who are living without hope?

Saturday, 18th January, 1st Week in Ordinary Time.**Hebrews 4:12-16, Mark 2:13-17**

Jesus went out again to the shore of the lake; and all the people came to him, and he taught them. As he was walking along he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax office, and he said to him, 'Follow me.' And he got up and followed him. When Jesus was at dinner in his house, a number of tax collectors and sinners were also sitting at table with Jesus and his disciples; for there were many of them among his followers. When the scribes of the Pharisee party saw him eating with sinners and tax collectors, they said to his disciples, 'Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?' When Jesus heard this he said to them, 'It is not the healthy who need the doctor, but the sick. I came to call not the upright, but sinners.'

God who sympathises with us

"... For it is not as if we had a high priest who was incapable of feeling our weaknesses with us; but we have one who has been tempted in every way that we are, though he is without sin. Let us be confident then in approaching the throne of grace, that we shall have mercy from him and find grace when we are in need of help" (1st reading). In Jesus, we have a God who understands our weaknesses and can truly sympathise with us. This means we can confidently go to Him, knowing He understands our struggles and offers us His merciful love.

This depth of God's love is illustrated in today's gospel where Jesus dined with tax collectors and sinners. The religious leaders were scandalised by Jesus' actions, such as calling Levi and sharing a meal with those considered sinners. Yet, through these actions, Jesus revealed that God wants to be in communion with us as we are, despite our weaknesses and flaws. It is this unconditional love from God that empowers us to live the fullness of life that He intends for us.

Reflective question:

Can I adopt God's logic of love as my own?

**Sunday, 19th January Second Sunday in Ordinary Time.
Isaiah 62:1-5, 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, John 2:1-11**

There was a wedding at Cana in Galilee. The mother of Jesus was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited. And they ran out of wine, since the wine provided for the feast had all been used, and the mother of Jesus said to him, 'They have no wine.' Jesus said, 'Woman, what do you want from me? My hour has not come yet.' His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.' There were six stone water jars standing there, meant for the ablutions that are customary among the Jews: each could hold twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to the servants, 'Fill the jars with water,' and they filled them to the brim. Then he said to them, 'Draw some out now and take it to the president of the feast.' They did this; the president tasted the water, and it had turned into wine. Having no idea where it came from -- though the servants who had drawn the water knew -- the president of the feast called the bridegroom and said, 'Everyone serves good wine first and the worse wine when the guests are well wined; but you have kept the best wine till now.' This was the first of Jesus' signs: it was at Cana in Galilee. He revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him.

When the wine runs out

"...and the mother of Jesus said to him, 'They have no wine.'" (The gospel). There are moments in our lives when we feel as though we have run out of "wine", and life seems to lack meaning. Our faith seems dry. Everything we do starts to feel pointless. No matter how hard we work and the many good intentions we have, we find ourselves living a life devoid of joy and hope. The invitation for us is to be like Mother Mary, go to Jesus, the source of life, vitality and joy, and cry out to Him, "Jesus, I have no wine, just emptiness and despair."

"Do whatever He tells you"- Mary directs these words to us today. This call is relevant for us today, reminding us to listen to Jesus and do what He tells us, regardless of our circumstances, as it will ultimately be for our benefit. Jesus' words have the power to fill our lives with hope, joy and peace, transforming our fears into courage and our emptiness into an abundance of life. Let us live each day with Jesus, the endless source of life and love.

Reflective question:

What is Jesus' invitation to me today?

Monday, 20th January. St. Fabian, St. Sebastian.**Hebrews 5:1-10, Mark 2:18-22**

John's disciples and the Pharisees were keeping a fast, when some people came to Jesus and said to him, 'Why is it that John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not?' Jesus replied, 'Surely the bridegroom's attendants cannot fast while the bridegroom is still with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the time will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then, on that day, they will fast. No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old cloak; otherwise, the patch pulls away from it, the new from the old, and the tear gets worse. And nobody puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost and the skins too. No! New wine into fresh skins!'

New wineskins

When our lives are driven by the simple desire to welcome Jesus's presence, the ordinary becomes extraordinary.

Today, we are invited to become like new wineskins, opening ourselves to allow Jesus to transform us from within. Like the Pharisees, we often cling to our old wineskins, preventing us from embracing the new wine that Jesus wants to offer us. We find solace in these familiar forms: our prayer habits, established routines, and our understanding of God and our faith. Perhaps now is the time to let go of those old wineskins and embrace a broader horizon of faith, deepening our relationship with Jesus and living a more genuine discipleship. He calls us always towards growth, towards new life.

Reflective question:

Am I open to the new wine of Christ in my life today?

Tuesday, 21st January, St. Agnes.**Hebrews 6:10-20, Mark 2:23-28**

One Sabbath day Jesus was taking a walk through the cornfields, and his disciples began to make a path by plucking ears of corn. And the Pharisees said to him, 'Look, why are they doing something on the

Sabbath day that is forbidden?' And he replied, 'Have you never read what David did in his time of need when he and his followers were hungry- how he went into the house of God when Abiathar was high priest, and ate the loaves of the offering which only the priests are allowed to eat, and how he also gave some to the men with him?' And he said to them, 'The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath; so the Son of man is master even of the Sabbath.'

The law of love

In today's gospel, Jesus' disciples picked heads of grain to eat because they were hungry. Unfortunately, they did it on the Sabbath, which led the religious leaders to accuse them of reaping and, thus, breaking the Sabbath law. In defence of His disciples, Jesus cited the incident with King David and his men, who ate the consecrated bread when no other food was available. By saying this, Jesus challenged the religious leaders to expand their narrow interpretation of the Law and to prioritise the spirit of the Law, which places human needs above all else. A person who loves is someone who fulfils the law.

"Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law. The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not covet," and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbour as yourself." Love does no harm to a neighbour. Therefore love is the fulfilment of the law" (Romans 13:8-10). Jesus values our love for others more than mere rituals. Let us practice love!

Reflective question:

How can I live the law of love today?

Wednesday, 22nd January, St. Vincent.

Hebrews 7:1-3, 15-17, Mark 3:1-6

Jesus went into the synagogue, and there was a man present whose hand was withered. And they were watching him to see if he would cure him on the Sabbath day, hoping for something to charge him with. He said to the man with the withered hand, 'Get up and stand in the middle!' Then he said to them, 'Is it permitted on the Sabbath day to do good, or to do evil; to save life, or to kill?' But they said nothing. Then he looked

angrily round at them, grieved to find them so obstinate, and said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' He stretched it out and his hand was restored. The Pharisees went out and began at once to plot with the Herodians against him, discussing how to destroy him.

To show loving mercy like Jesus

Jesus entered the synagogue and observed a man with a withered hand. His immediate response was to reach out and heal him, fully aware that this would break the Sabbath law. God's mercy was at the heart of His mission. He preached about God's love and demonstrated, in very tangible ways, the limitless capacity of that love.

Today, we are called to follow in Jesus' footsteps and boldly walk the path of loving mercy, even when faced with opposition. We must learn from Jesus how to show compassion, especially towards the needy and vulnerable in our society. We commit to making mercy our identity and actively putting it into practice.

Reflective question:

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

Thursday, 23rd January, 2nd Week in Ordinary Time.

Hebrews 7:25-8:6, Mark 3:7-12

Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the lakeside, and great crowds from Galilee followed him. From Judaea, and from Jerusalem, and from Idumaea and Transjordan and the region of Tyre and Sidon, great numbers who had heard of all he was doing came to him. And he asked his disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd, to keep him from being crushed. For he had cured so many that all who were afflicted in any way were crowding forward to touch him. And the unclean spirits, whenever they saw him, would fall down before him and shout, 'You are the Son of God!' But he warned them strongly not to make him known.

Jesus and the crowd

In today's gospel, we see that large crowds of people came to Jesus, especially those who were suffering. They understood that Jesus would not overlook their needs. Instead, He would draw close to them, heal them, and make them whole again. Indeed, Jesus did not turn anyone

away. Out of His compassionate love for all, He made time for each person. We, too, are part of this great crowd coming to Jesus because we need Him. With loving trust, we go to Jesus in moments when we feel tired, vulnerable and broken. We seek Him because we recognise that He is our source of life, joy and hope. He gives us strength when we are weak and joy when we feel distressed.

Today, Jesus asks us to show the same love, concern and compassion to the people around us who are in need, especially to those closest to us who need our time, attention and friendship. Let us humbly ask Jesus for a heart that loves.

Reflective question:

Do I demonstrate Jesus' compassion and love to the people I meet daily?

Friday, 24th January, St. Francis De Sales.

Hebrews 8:6-13, Mark 3:13-19

Jesus went up onto the mountain and summoned those he wanted. So they came to him and he appointed twelve; they were to be his companions and to be sent out to proclaim the message, with power to drive out devils. And so he appointed the Twelve, Simon to whom he gave the name Peter, James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James, to whom he gave the name Boanerges or 'Sons of Thunder'; Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, the man who was to betray him.

Call and response

In today's gospel, Jesus called those He wanted. Among those He chose was Judas Iscariot, the one who would eventually betray Him for thirty silver coins. Although Jesus chose Judas, in the end, Judas chose to walk away from Him. Today, Jesus calls and chooses us to be His disciples because He desires our companionship. His call is renewed each day, inspiring us to respond. However, He does not force us to answer, just as He did not compel Judas to make a choice for Him. Jesus invites us to respond freely to His call.

Jesus calls us to be His companions, His friends above all. He wants us to be with Him. From this friendship, He sends us out as His instruments

to spread His love and make a difference in the lives of those around us. Let us take time to be with Jesus, our Master and Friend, before we are to go forth to collaborate with Him in His mission.

Reflective question:

Do I freely respond to Jesus' call today?

Saturday, 25th January, The Conversion of St. Paul.

Acts 22:3-16 or Acts 9:1-22, Mark 16:15-18

Jesus showed himself to the Eleven and said to them, 'Go out to the whole world; proclaim the gospel to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptised will be saved; whoever does not believe will be condemned. These are the signs that will be associated with believers: in my name they will cast out devils; they will have the gift of tongues; they will pick up snakes in their hands and be unharmed should they drink deadly poison; they will lay their hands on the sick, who will recover.'

To trust and to entrust

Today, as we celebrate the Feast of St. Paul, let us listen to Jesus' words to His disciples in today's gospel: "Go out to the whole world; proclaim the gospel to all creation." Despite their weaknesses and failures, Jesus entrusted His mission of spreading His word and His love to His disciples. Look at St. Paul's life. He was a zealous persecutor of the early Church, causing many Christians to suffer. Despite what he did, Jesus called him and entrusted him with the mission to preach the Good News to the Gentiles. Let us rejoice that there is always a place for us in God's heart, and He will never stop trusting us to collaborate in His mission.

Often, we struggle to trust others because we see their flaws and mistakes, leading us to doubt them. Yet, Jesus invites us to be humble and to trust others as He trusts us as we work together to build God's kingdom here and now.

Reflective question:

What strikes me most as I pray with today's passages?

Sunday, 26th January, Sunday of the Word of God.

Nehemiah 8: 2-6, 8-10, 1 Corinthians 12:12-30, Luke 1:1-4; 4:14-21

Seeing that many others have undertaken to draw up accounts of the events that have reached their fulfilment among us, as these were handed down to us by those who from the outset were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, I in my turn, after carefully going over the whole story from the beginning, have decided to write an ordered account for you, Theophilus, so that your Excellency may learn how well founded the teaching is that you have received. Jesus, with the power of the Spirit in him, returned to Galilee; and his reputation spread throughout the countryside. He taught in their synagogues and everyone glorified him. He came to Nazara, where he had been brought up, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day as he usually did. He stood up to read, and they handed him the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. Unrolling the scroll he found the place where it is written:

'The spirit of the Lord is on me, for he has anointed me to bring the good news to the afflicted. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives, sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim a year of favour from the Lord.' He then rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the assistant and sat down. And all eyes in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to speak to them, *'This text is being fulfilled today even while you are listening.'*

Jesus, the Word of God

"This text is being fulfilled today, even as you listen." With these profound words, Jesus wrapped up His message, assuring His listeners that the long-awaited moment had arrived; He was indeed the fulfilment of the Scriptures they had cherished.

In this present day, Jesus walks with us, pouring out His Spirit into our lives. We are invited not just to observe but to actively take part in His mission of conveying God's boundless love to everyone around us. This calling encourages us to share the gifts and compassion we have received from Jesus, transforming our everyday interactions into acts of love and kindness. On this Sunday of the Word of God, let us allow Jesus, the Word-made-flesh, to infuse our lives with purpose and shape our very identity. It is time for us to start embodying His love, reaching out to those in our communities, and sharing with them hope today!

Reflective question:

How can I actively be part of Jesus' mission?

Monday, 27th January, St. Angela Merici.

Hebrews 9:15, 24-28, Mark 3:22-30

The scribes who had come down from Jerusalem were saying, 'Beelzebul is in him,' and, 'It is through the prince of devils that he drives devils out.' So Jesus called them to him and spoke to them in parables, 'How can Satan drive out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot last. And if a household is divided against itself, that household can never last. Now if Satan has rebelled against himself and is divided, he cannot last either -- it is the end of him. But no one can make his way into a strong man's house and plunder his property unless he has first tied up the strong man. Only then can he plunder his house. 'In truth I tell you, all human sins will be forgiven, and all the blasphemies ever uttered; but anyone who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven, but is guilty of an eternal sin.' This was because they were saying, 'There is an unclean spirit in him.'

Being misunderstood

Moved by the Holy Spirit, Jesus went around healing people and touching the lives of many. His actions were expressions of love and kindness. However, the religious leaders saw his gestures of love as evil. By claiming that Beelzebul was within Jesus and working through Him, the scribes from Jerusalem intentionally closed their hearts to recognising any goodness in Him. They refused to see the hand of God in all that Jesus did. In contrast, the simple and humble crowd surrounding Jesus was able to see the wonders of God through His actions and rejoiced in Him.

We have all experienced being misunderstood while striving to do good and loving things. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, who did not give up but continued to spread goodness wherever He went. Today, let us deepen our relationship with Jesus and let Him be the motivation behind all that we do and say.

Reflective question:

How open am I to follow Jesus by doing good and spreading goodness today?

Tuesday, 28th January, St. Thomas Aquinas.

Hebrews 10:1-10, Mark 3:31-35

The mother and the brothers of Jesus arrived and, standing outside, sent in a message asking for him. A crowd was sitting round him at the time the message was passed to him, 'Look, your mother and brothers and sisters are outside asking for you.' He replied, 'Who are my mother and my brothers?' And looking at those sitting in a circle round him, he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers. Anyone who does the will of God, that person is my brother and sister and mother.'

God's will is for us to love

"You who wanted no sacrifice or oblation, prepared a body for me. You took no pleasure in holocausts or sacrifices for sin; then I said, just as I was commanded in the scroll of the book, 'God, here I am! I am coming to obey your will'" (1st reading). This is Jesus' stance: He is always ready to do the Father's will. What is God's will? Simply put, it is for us to love. God loves us unconditionally and calls us to extend that same love to others. However, we recognize that loving others is not always easy, especially when they are difficult to love. Jesus invites us to cultivate a continuous and deep connection with Him, as it is through this relationship that He equips us with the ability to love selflessly. By drawing upon His strength, we are inspired to actively work for the welfare of others, making a meaningful impact in their lives.

In today's gospel, we are reminded that we are active members of God's family when we seek to do His will. Let us ask Jesus to help us love as He loved.

Reflective question:

How can I seek to do God's will today?

Wednesday, 29th January, 3rd Week in Ordinary Time.

(Chinese New Year)

Hebrews 10:11-18, Mark 4:1-20

Jesus began to teach them by the lakeside, but such a huge crowd gathered round him that he got into a boat on the water and sat there. The whole crowd were at the lakeside on land. He taught them many things in parables, and in the course of his teaching he said to them,

'Listen! Imagine a sower going out to sow. Now it happened that, as he sowed, some of the seed fell on the edge of the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some seed fell on rocky ground where it found little soil and at once sprang up, because there was no depth of earth; and when the sun came up it was scorched and, not having any roots, it withered away. Some seed fell into thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it produced no crop. And some seeds fell into rich soil, grew tall and strong, and produced a good crop; the yield was thirty, sixty, even a hundredfold.' And he said, 'Anyone who has ears for listening should listen!' When he was alone, the Twelve, together with the others who formed his company, asked what the parables meant. He told them, 'To you is granted the secret of the kingdom of God, but to those who are outside everything comes in parables, so that they may look and look, but never perceive; listen and listen, but never understand; to avoid changing their ways and being healed.' He said to them, 'Do you not understand this parable? Then how will you understand any of the parables? What the sower is sowing is the word. Those on the edge of the path where the word is sown are people who have no sooner heard it than Satan at once comes and carries away the word that was sown in them. Similarly, those who are sown on patches of rock are people who, when first they hear the word, welcome it at once with joy. But they have no root deep down and do not last; should some trial come, or some persecution on account of the word, at once they fall away. Then there are others who are sown in thorns. These have heard the word, but the worries of the world, the lure of riches and all the other passions come in to choke the word, and so it produces nothing. And there are those who have been sown in rich soil; they hear the word and accept it and yield a harvest, thirty and sixty and a hundredfold.'

Good soil

Today's parable illustrates the profound freedom that God grants us. He scatters the seed of His word and allows us to choose the type of soil we wish to be: whether we want to be like the hard-packed edge of the path, the inhospitable rocky ground, the overgrown thorns, or the nurturing rich soil. In the Gospel of Matthew 11:6, Jesus says: *"Blessed is the one who does not lose faith in me."* By consciously choosing to be like the good soil, we actively cultivate our faith in Jesus, creating a space for His Word to flourish and take root in our hearts and lives.

Today, Jesus asks us, much like He did to His disciples, "*Do you not understand this parable?*" Parables are not mere stories; they are transformative narratives that beckon us to reflect and take action. We cannot afford to remain indifferent; we must make a deliberate choice: to embrace Jesus wholeheartedly or to turn our backs on Him. Each choice shapes the condition of our hearts and our relationship with Him and others.

Reflective questions:

Which soil do I identify myself right now? Why?

Thursday, 30th January, 3rd Week in Ordinary Time.

Hebrews 10:19-25, Mark 4:21-25

Jesus said to the crowd, 'Is a lamp brought in to be put under a tub or under the bed? Surely to be put on the lamp-stand? For there is nothing hidden, but it must be disclosed, nothing kept secret except to be brought to light. Anyone who has ears for listening should listen!' He also said to them, 'Take notice of what you are hearing. The standard you use will be used for you -- and you will receive more besides; anyone who has, will be given more; anyone who has not, will be deprived even of what he has.'

Generosity

"Teach us, good Lord, to serve you as you deserve; to give, and not to count the cost, to fight, and not to heed the wounds, to toil, and not to seek for rest, to labour, and not to ask for reward, except that of knowing that we are doing your will" (St. Ignatius of Loyola). This prayer of St. Ignatius resonates with what Jesus conveys through today's gospel: *"anyone who has, will be given more"*. It is a call to be generous, to give without counting the cost and not to expect any rewards. Often, being truly generous is not easy for us. We struggle with thoughts like, *"What do I get in return for what I give?"*, *"What will others think of me?"*, *"Is it worth giving to this person?"*.

Today, let us put this question to Jesus: *"Lord, what do you ask of me?"* Jesus calls us to be generous, not just by giving away money or material things but by giving ourselves to others - through our time, talents and presence. When we are generous, we allow God's light to shine through us for others.

Reflective question:

How can I live out true generosity today?

Friday, 31st January, St. John Bosco.**Hebrews 10:32-39, Mark 4:26-34**

Jesus said to the crowd, 'This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the land. Night and day, while he sleeps, when he is awake, the seed is sprouting and growing; how, he does not know. Of its own accord the land produces first the shoot, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. And when the crop is ready, at once he starts to reap because the harvest has come.' He also said, 'What can we say that the kingdom is like? What parable can we find for it? It is like a mustard seed which, at the time of its sowing, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth. Yet once it is sown it grows into the biggest shrub of them all and puts out big branches so that the birds of the air can shelter in its shade.' Using many parables like these, he spoke the word to them, so far as they were capable of understanding it. He would not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything to his disciples when they were by themselves.

Smallness

The Kingdom of God does not manifest through grand, awe-inspiring events; instead, it often begins in the humble, unassuming moments of our daily lives. It is in these simple instances—like a kind word shared, a helping hand offered, or a moment of genuine connection—where the seeds of love are quietly sown and grown.

We are called to place our trust in God, who nurtures these tiny seeds of love and helps them flourish. Just as a mustard seed, despite its small size, can develop into a large tree that provides shelter and nourishment, God has the power to transform our lives in similar ways. He nurtures seeds of love within us, transforming us into sources of hope and support for those around us. Through our words and actions, people can experience His limitless love.

Reflective question:

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

