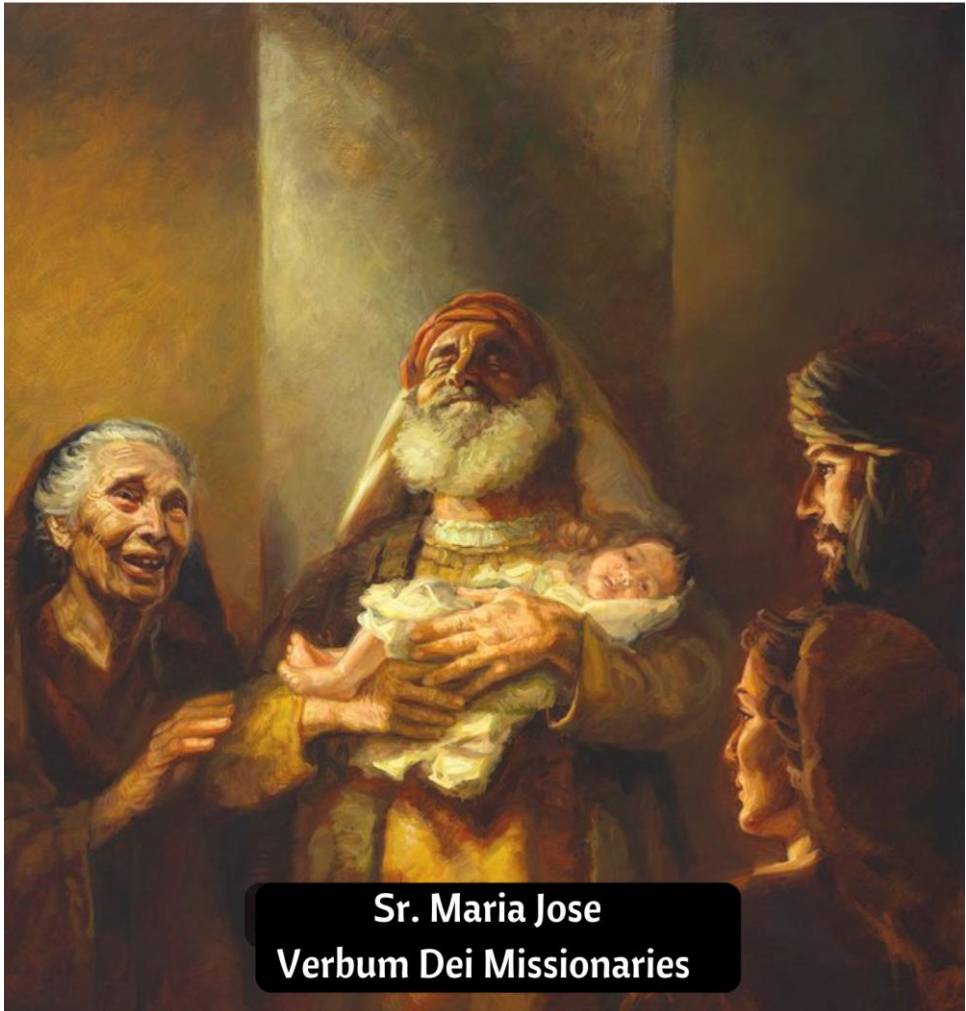


Prayer for Living
Year C
FEBRUARY

**“...my eyes have seen
the salvation”**



Sr. Maria Jose
Verbum Dei Missionaries

PRAYER FOR LIVING YEAR C

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Saturday, 1st February, 3rd Week in Ordinary Time
Hebrews 11:1-2, 8-9, Mark 4:35-41

With the coming of evening, Jesus said to his disciples, 'Let us cross over to the other side.' And leaving the crowd behind they took him, just as he was, in the boat; and there were other boats with him. Then it began to blow a great gale and the waves were breaking into the boat so that it was almost swamped. But he was in the stern, his head on the cushion, asleep. They woke him and said to him, 'Master, do you not care? We are lost!' And he woke up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, 'Quiet now! Be calm!' And the wind dropped, and there followed a great calm. Then he said to them, 'Why are you so frightened? Have you still no faith?' They were overcome with awe and said to one another, 'Who can this be? Even the wind and the sea obey him.'

The inner storm

It was evening, and Jesus was with His disciples, teaching the crowd. As they entered the boat, Jesus was tired and fell asleep. In His tiredness, we see His humanity, and we can relate to that feeling at the end of a long working day. The storm frightened the disciples, and they could not understand how Jesus could continue to sleep peacefully: *"Master, do you not care? We are lost?"*

There are moments in life when we may feel lost, without knowing what to do. Whether it is dealing with sickness, losing a job, or facing a difficult person in the family. In these moments, we may cry out to Jesus, telling Him: *"Lord, do you not care?"* Only to realize that, in the same way that He was in the boat with His disciples, He has always been in our lives, living with us our struggles and hardships as well as our moments of joy. He reminds us, *"Have you still no faith? Remember, I am always with you."*

Reflective question:

Do I believe that Jesus walks with me through the ups and downs of my life?

**Sunday, 2nd February, The Presentation of the Lord
Malachi 3:1-4, Hebrews 2:14-18, Luke 2:22-40**

When the day came for them to be purified as laid down by the Law of Moses, the parents of Jesus took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord- observing what is written in the Law of the Lord: Every first-born male must be consecrated to the Lord- and also to offer in sacrifice, in accordance with what is prescribed in the Law of the Lord, a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons. Now in Jerusalem there was a man named Simeon. He was an upright and devout man; he looked forward to the restoration of Israel and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death until he had set eyes on the Christ of the Lord. Prompted by the Spirit he came to the Temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the Law required, he took him into his arms and blessed God; and he said: Now, Master, you are letting your servant go in peace as you promised; for my eyes have seen the salvation which you have made ready in the sight of the nations; a light of revelation for the gentiles and glory for your people Israel. As the child's father and mother were wondering at the things that were being said about him, Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, 'Look, he is destined for the fall and for the rise of many in Israel, destined to be a sign that is opposed- and a sword will pierce your soul too -- so that the secret thoughts of many may be laid bare.' There was a prophetess, too, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was well on in years. Her days of girlhood over, she had been married for seven years before becoming a widow. She was now eighty-four years old and never left the Temple, serving God night and day with fasting and prayer. She came up just at that moment and began to praise God; and she spoke of the child to all who looked forward to the deliverance of Jerusalem. When they had done everything the Law of the Lord required, they went back to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. Meanwhile the child grew to maturity, and he was filled with wisdom; and God's favour was with him.

Recognizing God

Simeon and Anna had lived their long lives in faith and hope, devoted and faithful to the Lord. They believed in the promise of God that they would see the Messiah before they died, and they placed their trust in Him. Baby Jesus was one among many babies and had nothing to distinguish Him from the rest. So, how could Simeon and Anna recognize

Him as the Savior? What prompted Simeon to declare Jesus as the light of the world? The gospel tells us that both Simeon and Anna, the prophetess, were guided by the Holy Spirit. Their hearts were pure, and that is why they could see God in the infant Jesus (*"Blessed are the pure in heart: they shall see God."* Matthew 5:8)

Today, we do not physically see Jesus, but He tells us that whatever we do for the least of our brothers and sisters, we do it to Him; He identifies Himself with every child of God. Are our hearts pure enough and filled with love and compassion, to recognise Him in the people we encounter daily?

Reflective question:

How can I be more attentive to Jesus through the needs of people?

Monday, 3rd February, St. Blaise, St. Ansgar.

Hebrews 11:32-40, Mark 5:1-20

Jesus and his disciples reached the country of the Gerasenes on the other side of the lake, and when he disembarked, a man with an unclean spirit at once came out from the tombs towards him. The man lived in the tombs, and no one could secure him anymore, even with a chain, because he had often been secured with fetters and chains but had snapped the chains and broken the fetters, and no one had the strength to control him. All night and all day, among the tombs and in the mountains, he would howl and gash himself with stones. Catching sight of Jesus from a distance, he ran up and fell at his feet and shouted at the top of his voice, 'What do you want with me, Jesus, son of the Most High God? In God's name do not torture me!' For Jesus had been saying to him, 'Come out of the man, unclean spirit.' Then he asked, 'What is your name?' He answered, 'My name is Legion, for there are many of us.' And he begged him earnestly not to send them out of the district. Now on the mountainside there was a great herd of pigs feeding, and the unclean spirits begged him, 'Send us to the pigs, let us go into them.' So he gave them leave. With that, the unclean spirits came out and went into the pigs, and the herd of about two thousand pigs charged down the cliff into the lake, and there they were drowned. The men looking after them ran off and told their story in the city and in the country round about; and the people came to see what had really happened. They came to Jesus and saw the demoniac sitting there -- the man who had had the

legion in him -- properly dressed and in his full senses, and they were afraid. And those who had witnessed it reported what had happened to the demoniac and what had become of the pigs. Then they began to implore Jesus to leave their neighbourhood. As he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed begged to be allowed to stay with him. Jesus would not let him but said to him, 'Go home to your people and tell them all that the Lord in his mercy has done for you.' So the man went off and proceeded to proclaim in the Decapolis all that Jesus had done for him. And everyone was amazed.

Witnessing of life

The gospel focuses on a man who probably suffered from a mental illness and was excluded from the community because of it. We notice how Jesus was unafraid of him and drew close to him. He asked the man for his name and, by looking at him, acknowledged him as a person worthy of identity and dignity.

Everyone is important to Jesus, regardless of their condition. Each of us is precious to Him. He is always ready to bring out the best of us and remove any obstacle that prevents us from being free. We only need to call on Him and allow His word to touch our lives. In the same way that Jesus asked the man to return to his people and share how God changed his life, He also calls us to witness His love through our actions and to testify with our words about the experiences of His faithful presence.

Reflective question:

In what ways do I embody and share God's love through my daily life and words?

Tuesday, 4th February, 4th Week in Ordinary Time

Hebrews 12:1-4, Mark 5:21-43

When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a large crowd gathered round him and he stayed by the lake. Then the president of the synagogue came up, named Jairus, and seeing him, fell at his feet and begged him earnestly, saying, 'My little daughter is desperately sick. Do come and lay your hands on her that she may be saved and may live.' Jesus went with him and a large crowd followed him; they were pressing all round him. Now there was a woman who had suffered from

a haemorrhage for twelve years; after long and painful treatment under various doctors, she had spent all she had without being any the better for it; in fact, she was getting worse. She had heard about Jesus, and she came up through the crowd and touched his cloak from behind, thinking, 'If I can just touch his clothes, I shall be saved.' And at once the source of the bleeding dried up, and she felt in herself that she was cured of her complaint. And at once aware of the power that had gone out from him, Jesus turned round in the crowd and said, 'Who touched my clothes?' His disciples said to him, 'You see how the crowd is pressing round you; how can you ask, "Who touched me?" ' But he continued to look all round to see who had done it. Then the woman came forward, frightened and trembling because she knew what had happened to her, and she fell at his feet and told him the whole truth. 'My daughter,' he said, 'your faith has restored you to health; go in peace and be free of your complaint.' While he was still speaking some people arrived from the house of the president of the synagogue to say, 'Your daughter is dead; why put the Master to any further trouble?' But Jesus overheard what they said and he said to the president of the synagogue, 'Do not be afraid; only have faith.' And he allowed no one to go with him except Peter and James and John the brother of James. So they came to the house of the president of the synagogue, and Jesus noticed all the commotion, with people weeping and wailing unrestrainedly. He went in and said to them, 'Why all this commotion and crying? The child is not dead, but asleep.' But they ridiculed him. So he turned them all out and, taking with him the child's father and mother and his own companions, he went into the place where the child lay. And taking the child by the hand he said to her, 'Talitha kum!' which means, 'Little girl, I tell you to get up.' The little girl got up at once and began to walk about, for she was twelve years old. At once they were overcome with astonishment, and he gave them strict orders not to let anyone know about it, and told them to give her something to eat.

A heart filled with compassion

In today's gospel, we have two people, a man and a woman, united by suffering. Jairus, the father, was worried for his dying daughter, while the woman had spent every single penny she had seeking healing without any success. Each approached Jesus as their last resort: one openly asking for help and the other trying to remain unnoticed, but both possessed great faith. Jesus' heart was always filled with compassion

for those who suffered, and He responded quickly to Jairus' plea. Even when He heard that the girl had died, He did not lose hope but trusted God the Father. The faith of Jairus and the woman, together with the compassionate love of Jesus, enabled them to experience the fullness of life.

Today, Jesus' heart feels the same for each one of us, He shares in our suffering and rejoices in our joy. "*I have come for you to have the fullness of life*" (John 10:10). He came to bring us life. Have we placed our faith in Him?

Reflective question:

Do I open my heart to Jesus when I am in need?

Wednesday, 5th February, St. Agatha

Hebrews 12:4-7, 11-15, Mark 6:1-6

Jesus went to his home town, and his disciples accompanied him. With the coming of the Sabbath he began teaching in the synagogue, and most of them were astonished when they heard him. They said, 'Where did the man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been granted him, and these miracles that are worked through him? This is the carpenter, surely, the son of Mary, the brother of James and Joset and Jude and Simon? His sisters, too, are they not here with us?' And they would not accept him. And Jesus said to them, 'A prophet is despised only in his own country, among his own relations and in his own house'; and he could work no miracle there, except that he cured a few sick people by laying his hands on them. He was amazed at their lack of faith.

Recognising goodness around

Imagine Jesus's excitement upon returning to His hometown to share God's love and His Kingdom with the people. He encountered His Mother, relatives, and neighbours. But His countrymen looked at Him with disdain. At first, they admired His wisdom, but instead of recognising Him as a man of God, they rejected Him because they saw Him merely as one of their own.

It is difficult for us to see goodness in those close to us! Today's gospel teaches us to recognize the signs of goodness in the people we encounter daily and to value them. We should appreciate the efforts of

our parents who strive to give us the best opportunities for a better future, and we should value the friendships of those who support us in moments of hardship. Often, we take for granted the people who are closest to us, but they are frequently the ones who share with us God's goodness, and we fail to recognise Him in them.

Reflective question:

Do I recognise God in the goodness of those around me?

**Thursday, 6th February, SS. Paul Miki and Companions
Hebrews 12:18-19, 21-24, Mark 6:7-13**

Jesus made a tour of the villages, teaching. Then he summoned the Twelve and began to send them out in pairs, giving them authority over unclean spirits. And he instructed them to take nothing for the journey except a staff -- no bread, no haversack, no coppers for their purses. They were to wear sandals but, he added, 'Don't take a spare tunic.' And he said to them, 'If you enter a house anywhere, stay there until you leave the district. And if any place does not welcome you and people refuse to listen to you, as you walk away, shake off the dust under your feet as evidence to them.' So they set off to proclaim repentance; and they cast out many devils, and anointed many sick people with oil and cured them.

Trust in God

After instructing the disciples, Jesus sent them out to the villages, two by two, to preach the Good News. He ordered them not to carry with them food, money, and a spare tunic. Why did He do this?

First, Jesus emphasizes that we cannot live our faith alone; we need to live it out within a community. Our faith is not a static collection of beliefs but a relationship with God that needs to be shared with others. At the same time, Jesus asks us to trust in Him. Our mission does not depend on our gadgets or how powerful we are; it depends on allowing God to work through our work and trusting in Him. Finally, He prepares us for the reality of human failure. Just as Jesus and His disciples were rejected by certain groups of people, we will find that not everyone will accept our opinions or values. However, Jesus assures us that whatever we do for Him is never considered a failure in His eyes.

Reflective question:

Am I ready to live out my faith in Jesus' way?

Friday, 7th February, 4th Week in Ordinary Time

Hebrews 13:1-8, Mark 6:14-29

King Herod had heard about him, since by now his name was well known. Some were saying, 'John the Baptist has risen from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him.' Others said, 'He is Elijah,' others again, 'He is a prophet, like the prophets we used to have.' But when Herod heard this he said, 'It is John whose head I cut off; he has risen from the dead.' Now it was this same Herod who had sent to have John arrested and had had him chained up in prison because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife whom he had married. For John had told Herod, 'It is against the law for you to have your brother's wife.' As for Herodias, she was furious with him and wanted to kill him, but she was not able to do so, because Herod was in awe of John, knowing him to be a good and upright man, and gave him his protection. When he had heard him speak he was greatly perplexed, and yet he liked to listen to him. An opportunity came on Herod's birthday when he gave a banquet for the nobles of his court, for his army officers and for the leading figures in Galilee. When the daughter of this same Herodias came in and danced, she delighted Herod and his guests; so the king said to the girl, 'Ask me anything you like and I will give it you.' And he swore her an oath, 'I will give you anything you ask, even half my kingdom.' She went out and said to her mother, 'What shall I ask for?' She replied, 'The head of John the Baptist.' The girl at once rushed back to the king and made her request, 'I want you to give me John the Baptist's head, immediately, on a dish.' The king was deeply distressed but, thinking of the oaths he had sworn and of his guests, he was reluctant to break his word to her. At once the king sent one of the bodyguard with orders to bring John's head. The man went off and beheaded him in the prison; then he brought the head on a dish and gave it to the girl, and the girl gave it to her mother. When John's disciples heard about this, they came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.

Prophet of Truth

John the Baptist was arrested because he confronted Herod about him living with his brother's wife. As a fearless prophet, John the Baptist was

dedicated to his mission of preparing the way for Jesus by denouncing any wrongdoing and pointing out to the Messiah as the Good News. On the contrary, Herod was a powerful but cowardly and amoral king. He enjoyed listening to the truth but refused to act upon it. Like many prophets of the Old Testament, John the Baptist was killed for being faithful to the truth, which often disturbs those who prefer to live in a world of lies.

Today, this continues to be a reality. In the environments where we live, it can be difficult to stand for the truth and defend our beliefs those around us reject our convictions. John the Baptist invites us not to compromise the truth but to live out our faith, being a testimony for those who search for the truth.

Reflective question:

How can I be a witness to the truth of the gospel?

**Saturday, 8th February, St. Jerome Emiliani; St. Josephine Bakhita
Hebrews 13:15-17, 20-21, Mark 6:30-34**

The apostles rejoined Jesus and told him all they had done and taught. And he said to them, 'You must come away to some lonely place all by yourselves and rest for a while'; for there were so many coming and going that there was no time for them even to eat. So they went off in the boat to a lonely place where they could be by themselves. But people saw them going, and many recognised them; and from every town they all hurried to the place on foot and reached it before them. So as he 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.

Attending to different needs

After returning from a mission, the apostles went back to report to Jesus all that they did in the different villages. He noticed how exhausted they were and asked them to retreat and rest so that they would recover their strength. However, the crowds saw them leaving and followed them. Rather than sending them away, Jesus looked at the people with compassion. He understood that they were lost, searching for meaning in their lives, and He started to preach to them about the Kingdom of God.

Today, Jesus does not ignore us, He continues to see our needs and is sensitive to the challenges we face every day, whether at home or at work. He knows when we need to rest peacefully in His presence and when we need His word to regain our strength in order to continue our faith journey. He is always ready to help us, we just need to open our hearts to His love.

Reflective question:

Do I call on God when I experience spiritual tiredness and loneliness?

Sunday, 9th February, Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Isaiah 6:1-8, 1 Corinthians 15:1-11, Luke 5:1-11

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

Working with God

The scene in today's gospel shows Jesus preaching by the shore of the lake while the fishermen are washing their nets. Just as Jesus entered Simon's boat, He also comes into our lives. He does not need extraordinary events to communicate with us; instead, He joins us in our daily chores, as He did with the disciples.

In the gospel, the disciples failed to catch any fish despite all their efforts, leaving them feeling tired and disappointed. In our lives, we may experience similar moments; perhaps we have been trying hard to build a relationship with someone close to our heart but have failed, or we have worked extra hours at work for a promotion that did not materialize. Jesus comes and tells us, “*Do not give up! Work with Me; you are not meant to live alone. Trust Me!*” Only with Him are we able to succeed in whatever we may do.

Reflective question:

How can I include God in everything I do?

**Monday, 10th February, St. Scholastica
Genesis 1:1-19, Mark 6:53-56**

Having made the crossing, Jesus and his disciples came to land at Gennesaret and tied up. No sooner had they stepped out of the boat than people recognised him, and started hurrying all through the countryside and brought the sick on stretchers to wherever they heard he was. And wherever he went, to village or town or farm, they laid down the sick in the open spaces, begging him to let them touch even the fringe of his cloak. And all those who touched him were cured.

Receiving peace and hope

In Jesus' time, there were many sick people, and very few of them had the means to procure a cure. Jesus was known as a prophet, a holy man to whom the crowds would go, hoping to be touched by him and be healed.

Today, when we are ill, we go to the doctors and follow their prescriptions to be healed. However, sick individuals not only need medicines and treatments; they are also in need of inner peace and hope. These are the “medicines” that only Jesus can provide for our inner healing. In our vulnerable moments, He comes to us with His gentle touch- sometimes with His words, sometimes in silence - allowing us to rest in Him. He assures us that we are not alone in our pain and suffering but rather, He is living with us those difficult moments.

Reflective question:

Do I allow Jesus to touch me in my sickness and vulnerable moments?

Tuesday, 11th February, Our Lady of Lourdes

Genesis 1:20-2:4, Mark 7:1-13

The Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered round Jesus, and they noticed that some of his disciples were eating with unclean hands, that is, without washing them. For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, keep the tradition of the elders and never eat without washing their arms as far as the elbow; and on returning from the market place they never eat without first sprinkling themselves. There are also many other observances which have been handed down to them to keep, concerning the washing of cups and pots and bronze dishes. So the Pharisees and scribes asked him, 'Why do your disciples not respect the tradition of the elders but eat their food with unclean hands?' He answered, 'How rightly Isaiah prophesied about you hypocrites in the passage of scripture: This people honours me only with lip-service, while their hearts are far from me. Their reverence of me is worthless; the lessons they teach are nothing but human commandments. You put aside the commandment of God to observe human traditions.' And he said to them, 'How ingeniously you get round the commandment of God in order to preserve your own tradition! For Moses said: Honour your father and your mother, and, Anyone who curses father or mother must be put to death. But you say, "If a man says to his father or mother: Anything I have that I might have used to help you is Korban (that is, dedicated to God)," then he is forbidden from that moment to do anything for his father or mother. In this way, you make God's word ineffective for the sake of your tradition, which you have handed down. And you do many other things like this.'

Human rules versus God's commandment

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind" and "Love your neighbour as you love yourself." (Luke 10:27). These are the great commandments given by God to Israel, and the Pharisees and Scribes knew them by heart. However, in their daily lives, they were caught in their daily lives with many minor human laws that developed through tradition, often giving them greater importance than God's Law. Jesus reproached them for paying more attention to external, man-made rules than to God's

commandments. Before His passion, Jesus introduced the New Commandment, which summarized His life: “*Love one another as I have loved you*” (cf. Jn 13:34).

While there are practices and external rules that we may follow, we should learn from our Master not to overlook what is essential. We must prioritise and practice the core of our Christian life: showing our love for God by loving those around us.

Reflective question:

Is the love of God and neighbour the main commandments in my life?

Wednesday, 12th February, 5th Week in Ordinary Time

Genesis 2:4-9,15-17, Mark 7:14-23

Jesus called the people to him and said, 'Listen to me, all of you, and understand. Nothing that goes into someone from outside can make that person unclean; it is the things that come out of someone that make that person unclean. Anyone who has ears for listening should listen!' When he had gone into the house, away from the crowd, his disciples questioned him about the parable. He said to them, 'Even you -- don't you understand? Can't you see that nothing that goes into someone from outside can make that person unclean, because it goes not into the heart but into the stomach and passes into the sewer?' (Thus, he pronounced all foods clean.) And he went on, 'It is what comes out of someone that makes that person unclean. For it is from within, from the heart, that evil intentions emerge: fornication, theft, murder, adultery, avarice, malice, deceit, indecency, envy, slander, pride, folly. All these evil things come from within and make a person unclean.'

Purity of heart

“More than all else, keep watch over your heart since here are the wellsprings of life.” (Proverb 4:23) The heart is the core of a person; it is the wellspring of life and death. In the Bible, the heart and the mind are united, and it is where our thoughts shape our lives.

When somebody hurts us, we have the choice of how to respond. We can either look at the situation objectively, finding peace within ourselves by offering our pain and anger to God the pain, or we can choose to hold onto resentment. This often leads us to fixate on the person who

wronged us, producing anger and unforgiveness in our hearts. Pride, anger, envy, unforgiveness, etc., can cause significant harm to ourselves, often without realizing that we are the ones who will ultimately face the consequences of our choices. Through this gospel, Jesus invites us to be aware of the thoughts we allow to enter to take root in our minds and hearts, as the seeds we sow, ultimately determine the harvest we will reap.

Reflective question:

Am I willing to offer all my negative thoughts and feelings to God?

Thursday, 13th February, 5th Week in Ordinary Time

Genesis 2:18-25, Mark 7:24-30

Jesus left Gennesaret and set out for the territory of Tyre. There he went into a house and did not want anyone to know he was there; but he could not pass unrecognised. At once a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit heard about him and came and fell at his feet. Now this woman was a gentile, by birth a Syro-Phoenician, and she begged him to drive the devil out of her daughter. And he said to her, 'The children should be fed first, because it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to little dogs.' But she spoke up, 'Ah yes, sir,' she replied, 'but little dogs under the table eat the scraps from the children.' And he said to her, 'For saying this you may go home happy; the devil has gone out of your daughter.' So she went off home and found the child lying on the bed and the devil gone.

The miracle of humility

Today's passage shows us the love of a mother who persisted in her request, despite the Master's strong words to her. Her determination, accompanied by her humility in asking Jesus to cure her daughter, opened Jesus' mind to see her extraordinary faith and led Him to grant her request. At this moment, Jesus was travelling through the Jewish villages, preaching and healing all kinds of diseases. His primary mission was to announce the Good News of the Kingdom to His people, the chosen race of Israel. However, through the humility and faith of this gentile woman, the Good News was made accessible to the world. Jesus acknowledged that God is not only for the Jews, but He is the Father of all, and every person is His son or daughter.

In our society, we are surrounded by people of different cultures and beliefs, and each one of them is a child of God. Christ teaches us that we are all brothers and sisters, children of the same Father, God.

Reflective question:

Do I look at every person as a child of God the Father?

Friday, 14th February, SS. Cyril and Methodius

Genesis 3:1-8, Mark 7:31-37

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

'Be opened'

In today's gospel, it was not the deaf man who went to Jesus for healing but rather the people who brought him to Jesus out of goodwill. Jesus was always ready to do good to alleviate the pain of those who suffer. He touched the ears and the tongue and, looking at heaven, said: "*Be opened!*"

Today, Jesus also comes to us through His word. Just as He touched what was closed in the deaf man so that he could hear and speak, Jesus also touches the closed corners of our hearts with His word. This could be our lack of generosity, humility, availability, etc. When we listen to His word with an open heart, we become aware of the needs of people around us; our ears and hearts are opened, allowing our tongues to speak about the works that God has done in our lives. Like the people of Decapolis, we can also bring others to Jesus, especially those who need to hear His message and experience His touch.

Reflective question:

Do I allow Jesus to touch my life with His word?

Saturday, 15th February, 5th Week in Ordinary Time

Genesis 3:9-24, Mark 8:1-10

A great crowd had gathered, and they had nothing to eat. So Jesus called his disciples to him and said to them, 'I feel sorry for all these people; they have been with me for three days now and have nothing to eat. If I send them off home hungry they will collapse on the way; some have come a great distance.' His disciples replied, 'Where could anyone get these people enough bread to eat in a deserted place?' He asked them, 'How many loaves have you?' And they said to him, 'Seven.' Then he instructed the crowd to sit down on the ground, and he took the seven loaves, and after giving thanks, he broke them and began handing them to his disciples to distribute; and they distributed them among the crowd. They had a few small fishes as well, and over these he said a blessing and ordered them to be distributed too. They ate as much as they wanted, and they collected seven basketfuls of the scraps left over. Now there had been about four thousand people. He sent them away and at once, getting into the boat with his disciples, went to the region of Dalmanutha

The joy of sharing

Jesus is always concerned with the well-being of people, including their material, emotional, and spiritual needs. In this passage, He noticed that the crowd following Him was tired and hungry. His solution was not to send them away but to ask the disciples to share the little they had. Before distributing the fish and bread, He prayed to the Father for His blessings. Once the disciples started sharing their food, it is likely that others in the crowd were inspired to share the little they had brought. Sharing is contagious and makes it possible for many to receive what they need.

It is well-known that the earth has enough resources and food to feed the world's population, but these resources need to be shared. Jesus teaches us that if we share what we have—whether material or spiritual—many people will benefit, resulting in a fairer world.

Reflective question:

Have I experienced the joy of sharing?

Sunday, 16th February, 6th Sunday in Ordinary Time**Jeremiah 17:5-8, 1 Corinthians 15:12, 16-20, Luke 6:17, 20-26**

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

Blessed are you!

Jesus' teachings are not just philosophy or merely reflections on the Law; they came from His relationship with the Father. He embodied His teachings, and we can say that the Beatitudes are a summary of His own experiences. Jesus was the 'poor' per excellence, who trusted fully in God, seeking to fulfil His will until the end. He emptied Himself by sharing everything He knew and had with others. This mirrors the message from the prophet Jeremiah in the first reading: *"But I will bless the person who puts his trust in me. He is like a tree growing near a stream and sending out roots to the water. It is not afraid when hot weather comes because its leaves stay green; it has no worries when there is no rain; it keeps on bearing fruit."* (Jeremiah 17:7-8)

Who or what do we trust? If our trust lies in our possessions and power, the Kingdom of God will be far from us. However, if we place our trust in God and seek His will, God will make us fruitful.

Reflective question:

How can I live depending more on God?

**Monday, 17th February, Seven Holy Founders of the Servite Order
Genesis 4:1-15, 25, Mark 8:11-13**

The Pharisees came up and started a discussion with Jesus; they demanded of him a sign from heaven, to put him to the test. And with a profound sigh he said, 'Why does this generation demand a sign? In truth I tell you, no sign shall be given to this generation.' And, leaving them again, he re-embarked and went away to the other side.

Opening our eyes to reality

The saying: “*There are none so blind as those who do not want to see.*” This perfectly describes the Pharisees. They witnessed the miracles that Jesus performed and heard His preaching and wisdom, but their hearts remained closed to recognising Him as the Messiah sent by God. Through the prophet Jeremiah, God warned His people: “*Pay attention, you foolish people, who have eyes, but cannot see, and have ears, but cannot hear.*” (Jeremiah 5:21). Jesus sighed in sadness because He knew that no matter how many signs He provided, they would not believe because their hearts were hard like stone.

Often, when we pray, we ask God for a sign to believe or trust in His word. However, we might not realise that if we open our eyes, we will be able to see His presence in daily situations. This could manifest in moments of reconciliation, words of appreciation, or simply when we experience relief from our struggles. God's action is present all around us if we choose to see it.

Reflective question:

Do I perceive God's action in my daily life?

**Tuesday, 18th February, 6th Week in Ordinary Time
Genesis 6: 5-8, 7:1-5, 10, Mark 8:14-21**

The disciples had forgotten to take any food, and they had only one loaf in the boat. Then Jesus gave them this warning, 'Keep your eyes open; look out for the yeast of the Pharisees and the yeast of Herod.' And they said to one another, 'It is because we have no bread.' And Jesus knew it, and he said to them, 'Why are you talking about having no bread? Do

you still not understand, still not realise? Are your minds closed? Have you eyes and do not see, ears and do not hear? Or do you not remember? When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of scraps did you collect?' They answered, 'Twelve.' 'And when I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many baskets full of scraps did you collect?' And they answered, 'Seven.' Then he said to them, 'Do you still not realise?'

Relationship with God

Jesus continued His mission with His disciples and warned them, “*Keep your eyes open; look out for the yeast of the Pharisees and the yeast of Herod.*” What does Jesus mean by these words? The Pharisees believed in a relationship with God based on merits, where fulfilling norms and rules was necessary to obtain God’s favour. In contrast, Jesus reveals a gratuitous God who gives abundantly to everyone, regardless of their merits. His love is constant and we cannot manipulate Him with our good deeds or sacrifices.

We may also be tempted to relate with God in a transactional manner, trying to negotiate what we want to obtain from Him in exchange for our prayers and sacrifices. This approach will represent a false relationship or a false understanding of God that diverges from the Christian viewpoint. Our Father gives generously to everyone, and we can ask God for our needs, trusting that He listens to us and will give us what is truly best for us.

Reflective question:

Is my relationship with God gratuitous?

Wednesday, 19th February, 6th Week in Ordinary Time

Genesis 8:6-13, 20-22, Mark 8:22-26

Jesus and his disciples came to Bethsaida, and some people brought to him a blind man whom they begged him to touch. He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. Then, putting spittle on his eyes and laying his hands on him, he asked, 'Can you see anything?' The man, who was beginning to see, replied, 'I can see people; they look like trees as they walk around.' Then he laid his hands on the man's eyes again and he saw clearly; he was cured, and he could see everything

plainly and distinctly. And Jesus sent him home, saying, 'Do not even go into the village.'

Journey of faith

This passage of the blind man at Bethsaida illustrates a journey of faith. The gospel does not mention the name of the blind man, allowing us to see ourselves in his experience. He was led to Jesus by others. In the same way, we were accompanied by relatives or friends when we encountered God on the day of our Baptism. We were not alone but supported by those around us. Before encountering God, we were spiritually blind, we could not see with eyes of faith. He needed to touch our blindness repeatedly with His love and forgiveness so that our faith could grow and we could see life, not from the perspective of the materialistic world, but with spiritual insight, recognising ourselves and others as beloved children of the Father.

Christian faith is not static. It is not a set of commandments that one learns and practices but a journey that each one needs to walk, not alone but with God and in the community. This journey allows us to grow in vision, love, and understanding and to help others encounter Jesus as well.

Reflective question:

Is my journey of faith dynamic or static?

Thursday, 20th February, 6th Week in Ordinary Time

Genesis 9:1-13, Mark 8:27-33

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

The real Messiah

Jesus asked His disciples two questions. The first question, 'Who do people say I am?' was easy to answer because they were aware of the people's comments about Jesus. However, the second question, '*But you, who do you say I am?*' required a personal confession of faith. After spending significant time with the disciples, Jesus had developed a closer relationship with them, and so their answers were important to Him. Peter expressed the understanding of the twelve: '*You are the Christ.*' However, when Jesus revealed His journey ahead that would be filled with suffering, Peter tried to dissuade Him because he could not accept a suffering Messiah. In his mind, the Messiah was supposed to be triumphant. Peter would have to experience Jesus' death and resurrection in order to understand the real meaning of being a follower of the Master.

What about us? What is the image that we have of Christ? Do we follow Him with the expectation that He will solve all our problems and ensure our success? Or do we see He as someone who accompanies us in every situation, giving us the strength and courage we need in life?

Reflective question:

Who is Jesus in my life?

Friday, 21st February, St. Peter Damian

Genesis 11:1-9, Mark 8:34-9:1

Jesus called the people and his disciples to him and said, 'If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me. Anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. What gain, then, is it for anyone to win the whole world and forfeit his life? And indeed what can anyone offer in exchange for his life? For if anyone in this sinful and adulterous generation is ashamed of me and of my words, the Son of man will also be ashamed of him when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.' And he said to them, 'In truth, I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power.'

An authentic follower

As we meditate on today's gospel, it may initially seem that being a Christian is all about suffering. However, this perception is far from reality. Throughout the gospel passages, we see how Jesus, in His public life, constantly touches people's lives to take away their sufferings. God wants us to live a happy and fulfilling life. To be Jesus' follower implies renouncing materialistic worldly values, such as selfishness, pride, etc., and embracing the Kingdom's values of love and service. Pope Francis has said that following Jesus requires Christians to renounce themselves and take up their cross, which means living a life of service, humility, and generosity.

Living the Kingdom of God's values means putting the needs of those around us before ours and committing ourselves to the service of love. This change of values may require sacrifices on our part. What does Jesus offer His followers? If we accept His invitation to follow Him, He offers us a fullness of life here on earth and in eternity. We will not walk alone; His love will always be in us and with us.

Reflective question:

Am I ready to follow Jesus?

Saturday, 22nd February, Chair of St. Peter, The Apostle

1 Peter 5:1-4, Mathew 16:13-19

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi he put this question to his disciples, 'Who do people say the Son of man is?' And they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' 'But you,' he said, 'who do you say I am?' Then Simon Peter spoke up and said, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Jesus replied, 'Simon son of Jonah, you are a blessed man! Because it was no human agency that revealed this to you but my Father in heaven. So I now say to you: You are Peter and on this rock I will build my community. And the gates of the underworld can never overpower it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of Heaven: whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.'

The imperfect disciple

As Jesus began His ministry, Peter was one of the first disciples to leave his fishing profession and follow Him. Jesus chose Peter, together with John and James, to be present during the Transfiguration and in the Garden of Gethsemane. He was not only a disciple but a close friend of the Master. In today's gospel, Jesus offers Peter to be the rock of the living Church, imperfect as He was. Peter's love for Jesus was authentic, but at the same time, he was weak and cowardly. Out of fear of losing his life, he denied his friend. Nevertheless, his repentance strengthened his love for Jesus.

By virtue of our Baptism, we are all invited to follow in the footsteps of our Master, with the mission of being witnesses of His love. To stand firm in our faith, we need to strengthen our friendship with Jesus by nurturing our relationship with Him and remaining faithful to His words. In this way, when we fail, His love will be stronger in us than our weakness, and He will bring us back to Him.

Reflective question:

How is my friendship with Jesus?

Sunday, 23rd February, 7th Sunday in Ordinary Time

1 Samuel 26:2, 7-9, 12-13, 22-23, 1 Corinthians 15:45-49,

Luke 6:27-38

Jesus said to his disciples: 'I say this to you who are listening: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who treat you badly. To anyone who slaps you on one cheek, present the other cheek as well; to anyone who takes your cloak from you, do not refuse your tunic. Give to everyone who asks you, and do not ask for your property back from someone who takes it. Treat others as you would like people to treat you. If you love those who love you, what credit can you expect? Even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit can you expect? For even sinners do that much. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to get money back, what credit can you expect? Even sinners lend to sinners to get back the same amount. Instead, love your enemies and do good to them, and lend without any hope of return. You will have a great reward, and you will be children of the Most High, for he himself is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. 'Be

compassionate just as your Father is compassionate. Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and there will be gifts for you: a full measure, pressed down, shaken together, and overflowing, will be poured into your lap; because the standard you use will be the standard used for you.'

Christian love

"If we want to be disciples of Christ and call ourselves Christians, this is the only way; there is no other. Having been loved by God, we are called to love in return; having been forgiven, we are called to forgive; having been touched by love, we are called to love without waiting for others to love first; having been saved graciously, we are called to seek no benefit from the good we do. Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. This is the Christian innovation. It is the Christian difference. Pray and love." (Pope Francis homily in Bari, Italy, 2020)

"We love because God first loved us." (1 John 4:19). The experience of God's love in us enables us to do what seems impossible at first: to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. Only when we have encountered God's forgiveness can we forgive those who have hurt us. Violence can never end violence; only love can foster reconciliation and promote peace. Through our actions, let us express the love that God has for us.

Reflective question:

How Christian is my love for others?

Monday, 24th February, 7th Week in Ordinary Time

Ecclesiasticus 1:1-10, Mark 9:14-29

When Jesus, with Peter, James and John came down from the mountain and rejoined the disciples, they saw a large crowd round them and some scribes arguing with them. At once, when they saw him, the whole crowd were struck with amazement and ran to greet him. And he asked them, 'What are you arguing about with them?' A man answered him from the crowd, 'Master, I have brought my son to you; there is a spirit of dumbness in him, and when it takes hold of him it throws him to the ground, and he foams at the mouth and grinds his teeth and goes rigid. And I asked your disciples to drive it out and they were unable to.' In

reply he said to them, 'Faithless generation, how much longer must I be among you? How much longer must I put up with you? Bring him to me.' They brought the boy to him, and at once the spirit of dumbness threw the boy into convulsions, and he fell to the ground and lay writhing there, foaming at the mouth. Jesus asked the father, 'How long has this been happening to him?' 'From childhood,' he said, 'and it has often thrown him into fire and into water, in order to destroy him. But if you can do anything, have pity on us and help us.' 'If you can?' retorted Jesus. 'Everything is possible for one who has faith.' At once the father of the boy cried out, 'I have faith. Help my lack of faith!' And when Jesus saw that a crowd was gathering, he rebuked the unclean spirit. 'Deaf and dumb spirit,' he said, 'I command you: come out of him and never enter him again.' Then it threw the boy into violent convulsions and came out shouting, and the boy lay there so like a corpse that most of them said, 'He is dead.' But Jesus took him by the hand and helped him up, and he was able to stand. When he had gone indoors, his disciples asked him when they were by themselves, 'Why were we unable to drive it out?' He answered, 'This is the kind that can be driven out only by prayer.'

Help my lack of faith!

'I have faith. Help my lack of faith!' This was the heartfelt cry of a father desperate to see his son cured. In the different situations we encounter, we can borrow the father's words in our daily prayers to God. No doubt that we are people of faith. We pray, receive the sacraments and try to be witnesses of Christ. However, there are times when we need to ask Jesus to increase our faith and persevere it with enthusiasm, especially when things do not go as we would like them to. We may struggle with faith when we look at the future with pessimism, or when we see a loved one suffering from a painful sickness and we feel helpless to help. It is during these moments that our prayer needs to be intensified, asking God to help us trust in Him and to believe that even in the most painful situations, He is present, sharing in our struggles, and never leaving us alone.

Let us confidently place ourselves in God's hands as we seek Him to help us overcome our lack of faith.

Reflective question:

Is my faith strong enough to face the difficult situations of life?

Tuesday, 25th February, 7th Week in Ordinary Time
Ecclesiasticus 2:1-11, Mark 9:30-37

Jesus and his disciples made their way through Galilee; and he did not want anyone to know, because he was instructing his disciples; he was telling them, 'The Son of man will be delivered into the power of men; they will put him to death; and three days after he has been put to death he will rise again.' But they did not understand what he said and were afraid to ask him. They came to Capernaum, and when he got into the house he asked them, 'What were you arguing about on the road?' They said nothing, because on the road they had been arguing which of them was the greatest. So he sat down, called the Twelve to him and said, 'If anyone wants to be first, he must make himself last of all and servant of all.' He then took a little child whom he set among them and embraced, and he said to them, 'Anyone who welcomes a little child such as this in my name, welcomes me; and anyone who welcomes me, welcomes not me but the one who sent me.'

Be ready!

"If you are going to serve the Lord, be prepared for times when you will be put to the test..." (First reading). In the gospel, Jesus was preparing His disciples for the difficult times they would face in Jerusalem when He would be condemned and killed. However, the disciples' minds were closed to the idea of rejection and suffering because they believed that being followers of Jesus would lead to success, power and prestige. Thus, they were discussing who would be the greater among them.

By taking a child and using him as an example, Jesus teaches us that His ways are not about fame and honour but about humility and service. Being a friend of Christ does not mean that we will be free from problems or that we will succeed in everything simply by offering our prayers to Him. He assures us that He will be walking with us in every challenge and hardship we face as we follow His ways. That is our security.

Reflective question:

Am I ready to follow Jesus in His ways rather than my own?

Wednesday, 26th February, 7th Week in Ordinary Time
Ecclesiasticus 4:11-19, Mark 9:38-40

John said to Jesus, 'Master, we saw someone who is not one of us driving out devils in your name, and because he was not one of us we tried to stop him.' But Jesus said, 'You must not stop him; no one who works a miracle in my name could soon afterwards speak evil of me. Anyone who is not against us is for us.'

Being inclusive

The apostle John was troubled because he saw a man performing miracles in Jesus' name who did not belong to their group. Jesus's answer was very clear: *"You must not stop him. Anyone who is not against us is for us."* Jesus does not exclude anyone. He preaches to everyone and heals anyone who approaches Him with faith.

In our societies, exclusive clubs have many requirements for entry and participation, which promote exclusivity and social inequality. Sometimes, this happens also in the Church. There are some people who believe that God is confined to Catholics or Christians alone. However, we do not possess God - He is for everyone. Every person who serves the needs of others belongs to the Kingdom, and those who work for peace and reconciliation belong to the Kingdom. Everyone who works for goodness has Christ's love within them. Let us look at those around us as brothers and sisters, children of our Father God.

Reflective question:

Is my attitude inclusive or exclusive toward those who are different from me?

Thursday, 27th February, St. Gregory of Narek
Ecclesiasticus 5:1-8, Mark 9:41-50

Jesus said to his disciples: 'If anyone gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ, then in truth I tell you, he will most certainly not lose his reward. 'But anyone who is the downfall of one of these little ones who have faith, would be better thrown into the sea with a great millstone hung round his neck. And if your hand should be your downfall, cut it off; it is better for you to enter into life crippled, than to have two hands and go to hell, into the fire that can never be put out. And if your foot should be your downfall, cut it off; it is better for you enter

into life lame, than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. And if your eye should be your downfall, tear it out; it is better for you to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell where their worm will never die nor their fire be put out. For everyone will be salted with fire. Salt is a good thing, but if salt has become insipid, how can you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves and be at peace with one another.'

Living according to our faith

"Do not rely on money to make you independent. Do not think you have to have everything you want and then spend your energy trying to get it." (First reading) The Book of Ecclesiasticus tells us that having faith in God does not align with the worldly pursuit of wealth. Instead, it encourages us to focus our attention on our relationship with God rather than making money the centre of our lives

In the gospel, Jesus emphasizes that our actions (represented by our hands) can be selfish and fail to help others. The paths we choose (indicated by our feet) may lead us to forget God and become consumed by our own ego. Additionally, if we judge others based on our perspective (symbolised by our eyes) and exclude them from our circles, then we are far away from the Kingdom of God. Jesus invites us to be the salt of the earth, to bring the Christian flavour of God's love into the environments where we are by living our faith rooted in His love. This enables us to love others in the same way.

Reflective question:

How can I strengthen my faith in order to be salt for the world?

Friday, 28th February, 7th Week in Ordinary Time

Ecclesiasticus 6:5-17, Mark 10:1-12

Jesus came to the district of Judaea and the far side of the Jordan. And again crowds gathered round him, and again he taught them, as his custom was. Some Pharisees approached him and asked, 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?' They were putting him to the test. He answered them, 'What did Moses command you?' They replied, 'Moses allowed us to draw up a writ of dismissal in cases of divorce.' Then Jesus said to them, 'It was because you were so hard hearted that he wrote this commandment for you. But from the beginning of creation, he made

them male and female. This is why a man leaves his father and mother, and the two become one flesh. They are no longer two, therefore, but one flesh. So then, what God has united, human beings must not divide.' Back in the house the disciples questioned him again about this, and he said to them, 'Whoever divorces his wife and marries another is guilty of adultery against her. And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another she is guilty of adultery too.'

Faithful love

In this gospel passage, Jesus introduces us to the ideal conjugal love, where men and women are seen as equal, both created in the image of God and possessing the same capacity for love and the need to be loved. Jesus parallels marriage with God's unconditional and eternal love for humanity. The Sacrament of Marriage offers the actual grace, especially during the difficult moments couples may have. However, this kind of love is only possible when the love of the spouses is rooted in the love of Christ, which is sacrificial and prioritizes the needs of the other.

'A loyal friend is like a safe shelter; find one, and you have found a treasure... it is like a medicine that keeps you in good health.' (First reading) The book of Sirach highlights the richness of true and authentic friendship, nourished by selfless and loyal love. We can say that Jesus embodies this kind of friendship, which is why He tells us: "I do not call you servants; I *call you friends.*" (John 15:15) He is our shelter and the treasure we have found, serving as the foundation of every expression of love.

Reflective question:

Is my love rooted in Christ's love?

