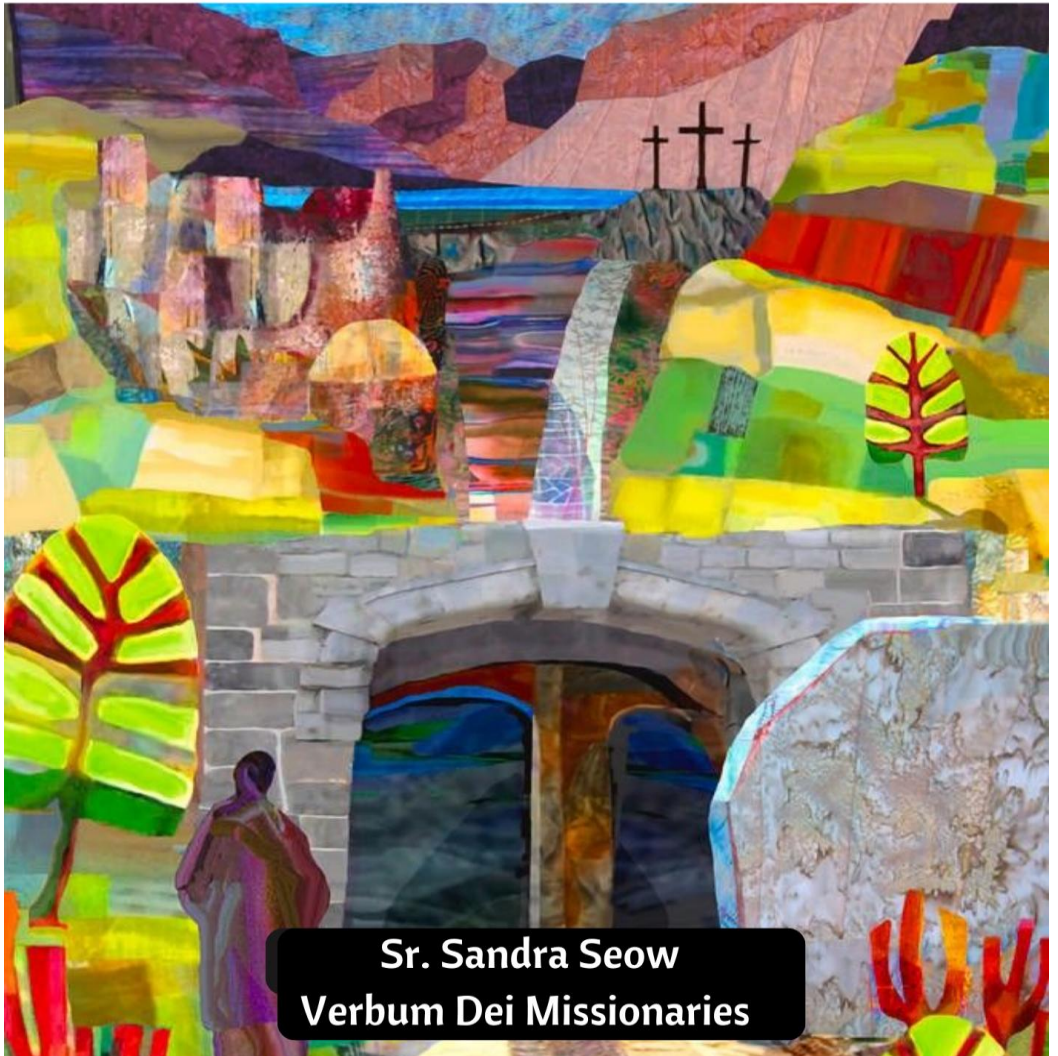


# *Prayer for Living* *Year C* *APRIL*

**Death gives birth to Life**



**Sr. Sandra Seow**  
**Verbum Dei Missionaries**

# PRAYER FOR LIVING YEAR C

Copyright © 2025 Sr. Sandra Seow

All rights reserved. This book or any portion thereof may not be reproduced or used in any manner whatsoever without the author's written permission.

**Tuesday, 1<sup>st</sup> April, 4<sup>th</sup> Week of Lent**  
**Ezekiel 47:1-9, 12, John 5:1-3, 5-16**

*After this there was a Jewish festival, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now in Jerusalem next to the Sheep Pool there is a pool called Bethesda in Hebrew, which has five porticos; and under these were crowds of sick people, blind, lame, paralysed. One man there had an illness which had lasted thirty-eight years, and when Jesus saw him lying there and knew he had been in that condition for a long time, he said, 'Do you want to be well again?' 'Sir,' replied the sick man, 'I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is disturbed; and while I am still on the way, someone else gets down there before me.' Jesus said, 'Get up, pick up your sleeping-mat and walk around.' The man was cured at once, and he picked up his mat and started to walk around. Now that day happened to be the Sabbath, so the Jews said to the man who had been cured, 'It is the Sabbath; you are not allowed to carry your sleeping-mat.' He replied, 'But the man who cured me told me, "Pick up your sleeping-mat and walk around."' ' They asked, 'Who is the man who said to you, "Pick up your sleeping-mat and walk around"?' ' The man had no idea who it was, since Jesus had disappeared, as the place was crowded. After a while Jesus met him in the Temple and said, 'Now you are well again, do not sin any more, or something worse may happen to you.' The man went back and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had cured him. It was because he did things like this on the Sabbath that the Jews began to harass Jesus.*

Life-giving water

The first reading is written to the exiled Israelites in Babylonia who had lost their hope and were living in despair. In a vision, the prophet Ezekiel witnessed a stream of water coming from the Temple, flowing through the wilderness and into the Dead Sea. The water coming from the Temple became the life-giving instrument of God as it flowed and nourished everything in its path, including hostile environments. *"Whenever the river flows, all living creatures teeming in it will live."* (1<sup>st</sup> reading). The powerful life-giving water reveals the loving presence of God, who will never fail to share His life-giving presence that will regenerate His people and bring them to live in hope again.

In the gospel, Jesus encountered a paralysed man by a pool called Bethesda, which was believed to have the power to heal the sick. Out of compassion, Jesus healed the man directly without needing water from the pool, thus giving him new life and wholeness. Jesus is the life-giving

water that flows and makes everything new. Remaining near Jesus, we will experience new life even in the midst of our moments of hopelessness and despair.

### **Reflective question:**

Am I thirsty for the life-giving water that Jesus wants to offer to me today?

### **Wednesday, 2<sup>nd</sup> April, 4<sup>th</sup> Week of Lent.**

#### **Isaiah 49:8-15, John 5:17-30**

*Jesus said to the Jews, 'My Father still goes on working, and I am at work, too.' But that only made the Jews even more intent on killing him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he spoke of God as his own Father and so made himself God's equal. To this Jesus replied: In all truth I tell you, by himself the Son can do nothing; he can do only what he sees the Father doing: and whatever the Father does the Son does too. For the Father loves the Son and shows him everything he himself does, and he will show him even greater things than these, works that will astonish you. Thus, as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so the Son gives life to anyone he chooses; for the Father judges no one; he has entrusted all judgement to the Son, so that all may honour the Son as they honour the Father. Whoever refuses honour to the Son refuses honour to the Father who sent him. In all truth I tell you, whoever listens to my words, and believes in the one who sent me, has eternal life; without being brought to judgement such a person has passed from death to life. In all truth I tell you, the hour is coming -- indeed it is already here -- when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and all who hear it will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself; and, because he is the Son of man, has granted him power to give judgement. Do not be surprised at this, for the hour is coming when the dead will leave their graves at the sound of his voice: those who did good will come forth to life; and those who did evil will come forth to judgement. By myself I can do nothing; I can judge only as I am told to judge, and my judging is just, because I seek to do not my own will but the will of him who sent me.'*

### **Manifest God's love in us**

Lent is often a challenging time in which we focus on “giving up” and “sacrificing”, which can make the season feel long and dreary. However, the first reading today turns our gaze back to God, whose loving and faithful presence brings us comfort during difficult and confusing times. God is always with us, even when we feel alone. Listen to God telling us,

*“Does a woman forget her baby at the breast, or fail to cherish the son of her womb? Yet even if these forget, I will never forget you” (1<sup>st</sup> reading). We are never forgotten by God because of His unwavering love for us.*

*“...and whatever the Father does the Son does too...” (The gospel). Jesus makes the Father’s love for Him visible through His good works and loving words. As we journey through this Lenten season, let us root ourselves in God’s personal love for us and express that love through our good works and words. Let us be the reflection of God’s love today!*

**Reflective question:**

Do people experience God’s love through my works and words?

**Thursday, 3<sup>rd</sup> April, 4<sup>th</sup> Week of Lent.**

**Exodus 32:7-14, John 5:31-47**

*Jesus said to the Jews: ‘Were I to testify on my own behalf, my testimony would not be true; but there is another witness who speaks on my behalf, and I know that his testimony is true. You sent messengers to John, and he gave his testimony to the truth- not that I depend on human testimony; no, it is for your salvation that I mention it. John was a lamp lit and shining and for a time you were content to enjoy the light that he gave. But my testimony is greater than John’s: the deeds my Father has given me to perform, these same deeds of mine testify that the Father has sent me. Besides, the Father who sent me bears witness to me himself. You have never heard his voice, you have never seen his shape, and his word finds no home in you because you do not believe in the one whom he has sent. You pore over the scriptures, believing that in them you can find eternal life; it is these scriptures that testify to me, and yet you refuse to come to me to receive life! Human glory means nothing to me. Besides, I know you too well: you have no love of God in you. I have come in the name of my Father and you refuse to accept me; if someone else should come in his own name you would accept him. How can you believe, since you look to each other for glory and are not concerned with the glory that comes from the one God? Do not imagine that I am going to accuse you before the Father: you have placed your hopes on Moses, and Moses will be the one who accuses you. If you really believed him you would believe me too, since it was about me that he was writing; but if you will not believe what he wrote, how can you believe what I say?’*

## Seeking glory

*“Human glory means nothing to me. Besides, I know you too well: you have no love of God in you...”* (The gospel). Let us stay with these words and allow the profound message to resonate within us. In this time of prayer, let us open our hearts and minds and let Jesus speak to us. We all want to be praised by others, and so we work hard, do all the right things, perform amazing works, etc., just to get people’s attention and appreciation. Is it wrong to desire glory? It is not wrong to want glory, but it is important that we consider the source from which we seek this glory.

Today, Jesus tells us to seek glory from God. When we chase after people’s fleeting admiration, we often find ourselves discontented and empty. During this day, let us place God, not ourselves, as the centre of our lives and the motivation for our words and actions. We seek glory from God because we love Him, and He is the only one who can give us the joy and contentment we long for.

## **Reflective question:**

How can I concretely break the need to seek human glory?

## **Friday, 4<sup>th</sup> April, 4<sup>th</sup> Week of Lent.**

### **Wisdom 2:1, 12-22, John 7:1-2, 10, 25-30**

*Jesus travelled round Galilee; he could not travel round Judaea, because the Jews were seeking to kill him. As the Jewish feast of Shelters drew near, after his brothers had left for the festival, Jesus went up as well, not publicly but secretly. Meanwhile some of the people of Jerusalem were saying, ‘Isn’t this the man they want to kill? And here he is, speaking openly, and they have nothing to say to him! Can it be true the authorities have recognised that he is the Christ? Yet we all know where he comes from, but when the Christ appears no one will know where he comes from.’ Then, as Jesus was teaching in the Temple, he cried out: You know me and you know where I came from. Yet I have not come of my own accord: but he who sent me is true; You do not know him, but I know him because I have my being from him and it was he who sent me. They wanted to arrest him then, but because his hour had not yet come no one laid a hand on him.*

## The road less travelled

What does it mean to be Jesus’ disciples today? To be Jesus’ disciple means walking the road less travelled and taking a firm stand in living out the gospel values of love, compassion, and forgiveness, even in the

face of opposition and ridicule. In today's gospel, Jesus was aware that the religious leaders were looking for ways to get rid of Him. Thus, he went to the Feast of the Shelters privately rather than openly. However, Jesus, noticing the crowd, refused to let fear silence the Good News, so He began preaching in public. He faced the choice of taking the easy route by avoiding conflict or following the narrow path of doing what was right. He chose to remain faithful to the mission that God had entrusted to Him and walked the road less travelled.

Today, Jesus invites us with these words, *"If any of you want to come with me, you must forget yourself, carry your cross, and follow me"* (Matthew 16:24). Jesus desires committed disciples who choose to walk behind Him and take the path He takes, even when it involves facing the challenges of misunderstanding and rejection. Let us remain faithful to our calling as Jesus' disciples and to our mission of living a life of love to the very end.

**Reflective question:**

How can I live out my discipleship today?

**Saturday, 5<sup>th</sup> April, 4<sup>th</sup> Week of Lent.**

**Jeremiah 11:18-20, John 7:40-52**

*Some of the crowd who had been listening to Jesus said, 'He is indeed the prophet,' and some said, 'He is the Christ,' but others said, 'Would the Christ come from Galilee? Does not scripture say that the Christ must be descended from David and come from Bethlehem, the village where David was?' So the people could not agree about him. Some wanted to arrest him, but no one actually laid a hand on him. The guards went back to the chief priests and Pharisees who said to them, 'Why haven't you brought him?' The guards replied, 'No one has ever spoken like this man.' 'So,' the Pharisees answered, 'you, too, have been led astray? Have any of the authorities come to believe in him? Any of the Pharisees? This rabble knows nothing about the Law -- they are damned.' One of them, Nicodemus -- the same man who had come to Jesus earlier -- said to them, 'But surely our Law does not allow us to pass judgement on anyone without first giving him a hearing and discovering what he is doing?' To this they answered, 'Are you a Galilean too? Go into the matter, and see for yourself: prophets do not arise in Galilee.'*

## Trust and courage

*"...I, for my part, was like a trustful lamb being led to the slaughterhouse, not knowing the schemes they were plotting against me..."* (1<sup>st</sup> reading). The prophet Jeremiah was distressed by the betrayal of his friends and neighbours. Recognising his naivety, he turned to God, saying, *"But you, Lord of hosts, who pronounce a just sentence, who probe the loins and heart, let me see the vengeance you will take on them, for I have committed my cause to you."* Rather than seeking revenge, Jeremiah trusted God's protection and justice. Today, let us follow the example of the prophet Jeremiah by trusting in God and believing that He will take care of us, even in difficult moments.

In the Gospel, Nicodemus defended Jesus before the religious leaders, arguing that He deserved a fair hearing before judgment. It took courage to challenge the consensus of one's peers. May we not rush to judge or condemn others simply to fit in with the prevailing view. Instead, may we continue to seek the truth and remain open to recognising the goodness in others.

### **Reflective question:**

How do today's readings inspire me to stay faithful to God's ways at all times?

### **Sunday, 6<sup>th</sup> April, Fifth Sunday of Lent.**

#### **Isaiah 43:16-21, Philippians 3:8-14, John 8:1-11**

*Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. At daybreak he appeared in the Temple again; and as all the people came to him, he sat down and began to teach them. The scribes and Pharisees brought a woman along who had been caught committing adultery; and making her stand there in the middle they said to Jesus, 'Master, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery, and in the Law Moses has ordered us to stone women of this kind. What have you got to say?' They asked him this as a test, looking for an accusation to use against him. But Jesus bent down and started writing on the ground with his finger. As they persisted with their question, he straightened up and said, 'Let the one among you who is guiltless be the first to throw a stone at her.' Then he bent down and continued writing on the ground. When they heard this they went away one by one, beginning with the eldest, until the last one had gone and Jesus was left alone with the woman, who remained in the middle. Jesus again straightened up and said, 'Woman, where are they? Has no one*



*condemned you?' 'No one, sir,' she replied. 'Neither do I condemn you,' said Jesus. 'Go away, and from this moment sin no more.'*

### A new thing called love

*"No need to recall the past, no need to think about what was done before. See, I am doing a new deed, even now it comes to light; can you not see it?" (1<sup>st</sup> reading). As we begin the Fifth week of Lent, God invites us to let go of the old and embrace the new, even if it means stepping into the unknown. He is God, who is always at work in our lives for our good and our growth, guiding us to true freedom and love.*

In the gospel, the Pharisees and scribes strictly adhered to external rules, often putting down those who did not meet their standards. They focussed on being morally good rather than striving to become loving individuals. In contrast, Jesus extended a hand of love to the woman, uplifting her by forgiving her and restoring her dignity as a child of God. He chose not to let her past define her, recognising her potential for change and greatness. Today, Jesus calls us to leave the old and embrace the new- a new way of loving, a new way of seeing others and a new way of hoping in others.

### **Reflective question:**

What newness is God inviting me to embrace?

### **Monday, 7<sup>th</sup> April, 5<sup>th</sup> Week of Lent.**

#### **Daniel 13:1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33-62, John 8:1-11**

*Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. At daybreak he appeared in the Temple again; and as all the people came to him, he sat down and began to teach them. The scribes and Pharisees brought a woman along who had been caught committing adultery; and making her stand there in the middle they said to Jesus, 'Master, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery, and in the Law Moses has ordered us to stone women of this kind. What have you got to say?' They asked him this as a test, looking for an accusation to use against him. But Jesus bent down and started writing on the ground with his finger. As they persisted with their question, he straightened up and said, 'Let the one among you who is guiltless be the first to throw a stone at her.' Then he bent down and continued writing on the ground. When they heard this they went away one by one, beginning with the eldest, until the last one had gone and Jesus was left alone with the woman, who remained in the middle. Jesus again straightened up and said, 'Woman, where are they? Has no one*

*condemned you?' 'No one, sir,' she replied. 'Neither do I condemn you,' said Jesus. 'Go away, and from this moment sin no more.'*

### The way of mercy

*"Neither do I condemn you."* These words spoken by Jesus express the merciful love of our God, whose gaze on us is always full of love. God never condemns us for our sins and mistakes. His love always looks at our potential to walk on a new path that leads to happiness, freedom, and life. His love never stops giving us second chances. Let us stay in these words of Jesus that are addressed to us personally, *"Neither do I condemn you. Even if people around you see you as having no hope, even if you yourself cannot let go of your mistakes, even if you feel that you are unlovable, ... I do not condemn you because I love you."*

The scribes and Pharisees stand ready to condemn the woman, armed with stones. Yet, they go away one by one when Jesus tells them, *"Let the one among you who is guiltless be the first to throw a stone at her"*. Too often, we are quick to condemn others for their mistakes. As we enter into the Fifth week of Lent, let us ask for the grace and courage to be merciful and drop the stones of condemnation we have against others. The way of Jesus should be our way, i.e. the way of mercy and forgiveness.

### **Reflective question:**

How can I put mercy into action today?

### **Tuesday, 8<sup>th</sup> April, 5<sup>th</sup> Week of Lent.**

#### **Numbers 21:4-9, John 8: 21-30**

*Jesus said to the Pharisees: 'I am going away; you will look for me and you will die in your sin. Where I am going, you cannot come. So the Jews said to one another, 'Is he going to kill himself, that he says, "Where I am going, you cannot come?" ' Jesus went on: You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. I have told you already: You will die in your sins. Yes, if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.' So they said to him, 'Who are you?' Jesus answered: What I have told you from the outset. About you I have much to say and much to judge; but the one who sent me is true, and what I declare to the world I have learnt from him. They did not recognise that he was talking to them about the Father. So Jesus said: When you have lifted up the Son of man, then you will know that I am He and that I do nothing of my own accord. What I say is what the Father has taught me;*

*he who sent me is with me, and has not left me to myself, for I always do what pleases him.” As he was saying this, many came to believe in him.*

### Paradox of the cross

“So they said to him, ‘Who are you?’”. The religious leaders asked Jesus this question after listening to His teachings, watching Him heal the sick, forgiving sins, eating with sinners, etc. They recognised that Jesus was unlike anyone else, and His identity was beyond their understanding. The question, “Who are you?”, could only be understood when He is lifted up on the cross. Jesus told them, “When you have lifted up the Son of man, then you will know that I am He”. On the cross, Jesus reveals God to us: God who suffers, God who loves unconditionally and a God who is always with us. The world sees the cross as failure, hatred, suffering, and death, but we, with eyes of faith, recognise the fullness of God’s faithful love that nobody and nothing can take away from us.

“No one has greater love than this: to lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). As we draw closer to Holy Week, let us allow God to speak to us, especially during the dark moments of our loss, pain and suffering. Look at Jesus on the cross. There, He reveals the greater love, the profound love He has for us. This love serves as our daily comfort and strength.

### **Reflective question:**

When I look at the crucifix, what do I see?

### **Wednesday, 9<sup>th</sup> April, 5<sup>th</sup> Week of Lent.**

#### **Daniel 3:14-20, 91-92, 95, John 8:31-42**

*To the Jews who believed in him Jesus said: ‘If you make my word your home you will indeed be my disciples; you will come to know the truth, and the truth will set you free. They answered, ‘We are descended from Abraham and we have never been the slaves of anyone; what do you mean, “You will be set free?” ’ Jesus replied: In all truth I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave. Now a slave has no permanent standing in the household, but a son belongs to it for ever. So if the Son sets you free, you will indeed be free. I know that you are descended from Abraham; but you want to kill me because my word finds no place in you. What I speak of is what I have seen at my Father’s side, and you too put into action the lessons you have learnt from your father. They repeated, ‘Our father is Abraham.’ Jesus said to them: If you are*

*Abraham's children, do as Abraham did. As it is, you want to kill me, a man who has told you the truth as I have learnt it from God; that is not what Abraham did. You are doing your father's work. They replied, 'We were not born illegitimate, the only father we have is God.' Jesus answered: If God were your father, you would love me, since I have my origin in God and have come from him; I did not come of my own accord, but he sent me.'*

### Trust

*"Nebuchadnezzar exclaimed, 'Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego: he has sent his angel to rescue his servants who, putting their trust in him, defied the order of the king...' (1<sup>st</sup> reading). Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were faithful Jews who defied King Nebuchadnezzar's order to bow to a golden statue. As punishment, the king threw them into a furnace, but they remained unharmed. The king was so amazed by this event and praised them for their trust in God and recognised the help they had received from Him. This story reminds us to trust in God, who is always by our side. When we choose to place our trust in God rather than succumb to despair, we become living testimonies of His loving presence at work in our lives, which can lead others to encounter God as well.*

*"...you will come to know the truth, and the truth will set you free". What is the truth? The truth that Jesus comes to offer us is that God is love, and He loves us unconditionally here, now and forever. When we root ourselves in this truth, we grow in our trust in God and find peace even amid our struggles.*

### **Reflective question:**

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

### **Thursday, 10<sup>th</sup> April, 5<sup>th</sup> Week of Lent.**

#### **Genesis 17:3-9, John 8:51-59**

*Jesus said to the Jews, 'In all truth I tell you, whoever keeps my word will never see death.' The Jews said, 'Now we know that you are possessed. Abraham is dead, and the prophets are dead, and yet you say, "Whoever keeps my word will never know the taste of death." Are you greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? The prophets are dead too. Who are you claiming to be?' Jesus answered: If I were to seek my own glory my glory would be worth nothing; in fact, my glory is conferred by the Father, by the one of whom you say, 'He is our God,'*

*although you do not know him. But I know him, and if I were to say, 'I do not know him,' I should be a liar, as you yourselves are. But I do know him, and I keep his word. Your father Abraham rejoiced to think that he would see my Day; he saw it and was glad. The Jews then said, 'You are not fifty yet, and you have seen Abraham!' Jesus replied: In all truth I tell you, before Abraham ever was, I am. At this they picked up stones to throw at him; but Jesus hid himself and left the Temple.*

### Covenant of love

*"God said this to Abraham, 'Here now is my covenant with you: you shall become the father of a multitude of nations... and I will be your God'" (1<sup>st</sup> reading).* God made a covenant of love with Abraham, promising him a multitude of descendants who would become a great nation. He assured him of a homeland and that He would be their God, guiding them throughout generations. In virtue of our baptism, we enter into a covenantal relationship with God, and we find comfort in knowing that God continues to be our God and will never stop taking care of us in every moment of our lives.

In the gospel, Jesus, *"I do know Him, and I faithfully keep his word"*. Jesus was speaking about His relationship with God the Father. His love for His Father motivated Him to keep God's word faithfully. May we also keep God's word by living a life aligned with the Gospel values of love, freedom and truth, taking Jesus as our model. When we commit to being faithful to God's word, we will receive glory from God. His glory, unlike human glory, is what truly matters.

### **Reflective question:**

How can I respond to God's faithful love in my daily life?

### **Friday, 11<sup>th</sup> April, 5<sup>th</sup> Week of Lent.**

#### **Jeremiah 20:10-13, John 10:31-42**

*The Jews fetched stones to stone him, so Jesus said to them, 'I have shown you many good works from my Father; for which of these are you stoning me?' The Jews answered him, 'We are stoning you, not for doing a good work, but for blasphemy; though you are only a man, you claim to be God.' Jesus answered: Is it not written in your Law: I said, you are gods? So it uses the word 'gods' of those people to whom the word of God was addressed -- and scripture cannot be set aside. Yet to someone whom the Father has consecrated and sent into the world you say, 'You are blaspheming' because I said, 'I am Son of God.' If I am not doing my*

*Father's work, there is no need to believe me; but if I am doing it, then even if you refuse to believe in me, at least believe in the work I do; then you will know for certain that the Father is in me and I am in the Father. They again wanted to arrest him then, but he eluded their clutches. He went back again to the far side of the Jordan to the district where John had been baptising at first and he stayed there. Many people who came to him said, 'John gave no signs, but all he said about this man was true'; and many of them believed in him.*

### Presence of love

*"But the Lord is at my side, a mighty hero; my opponents will stumble, mastered, confounded by their failure..."* (1<sup>st</sup> reading). The prophet Jeremiah stayed faithful to a rather challenging mission that God entrusted him with, i.e. to speak a harsh message to the rebellious people of Israel. Because of it, he experienced rejection, abandonment and persecution from those who opposed him. Despite his suffering, Jeremiah turned to God and felt His loving presence alongside him, like a mighty hero who would always protect and strengthen him.

*"...the Father is in me and I am in the Father".* In the gospel, Jesus experienced disappointment with the fickle-mindedness of the people. The same people who welcomed Him when He worked many good works for them were the same ones who now wanted to stone Him. Like Jeremiah, Jesus looked to God and remained rooted in His Father's loving presence in Him. Often, we might also have stressful moments when we feel discouraged, disappointed and frustrated. Today's readings invite us to keep looking to God, who will not abandon us but accompany us.

### **Reflective question:**

How can I be consciously aware that God is with me, in me today?

### **Saturday, 12<sup>th</sup> April, 5<sup>th</sup> Week of Lent.**

#### **Ezekiel 37:21-28, John 11:45-56**

*Many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him, but some of them went to the Pharisees to tell them what Jesus had done. Then the chief priests and Pharisees called a meeting. 'Here is this man working all these signs,' they said, 'and what action are we taking? If we let him go on in this way everybody will believe in him, and the Romans will come and suppress the Holy Place and our nation.' One of them, Caiaphas, the high priest that year, said,*

*'You do not seem to have grasped the situation at all; you fail to see that it is to your advantage that one man should die for the people, rather than that the whole nation should perish.'* He did not speak in his own person, but as high priest of that year he was prophesying that Jesus was to die for the nation- and not for the nation only, but also to gather together into one the scattered children of God. From that day onwards they were determined to kill him. So Jesus no longer went about openly among the Jews, but left the district for a town called Ephraim, in the country bordering on the desert, and stayed there with his disciples. The Jewish Passover was drawing near, and many of the country people who had gone up to Jerusalem before the Passover to purify themselves were looking out for Jesus, saying to one another as they stood about in the Temple, 'What do you think? Will he come to the festival or not?'

### Give me a heart like Yours, Jesus

In today's gospel, the Jewish religious leaders made up their minds to put Jesus to death because they felt threatened by His growing popularity. They allowed the seed of envy to take root in their hearts. Have we ever been envious of someone? While envy may seem harmless, it is not. It can lead to insecurity and strain our relationship. During this time of prayer, let us ask Jesus to fill our hearts with His love because a heart that is full of love has no room for envy to grow.

*"...it is to your advantage that one man should die for the people, rather than that the whole nation should perish"*. The high priest, Caiaphas, believed that the well-being of the majority should take priority over the life of one individual. However, for Jesus, every single person held infinite value, making each individual's life important. He called each disciple by name to follow Him. He reached out to the Samaritan woman. He took time to dialogue with Nicodemus. May we follow Jesus' footsteps and recognise the preciousness of each person we meet each day.

### **Reflective question:**

How is Jesus inviting me to live today?

### **Sunday, 13<sup>th</sup> April, Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord.**

#### **Isaiah 50:4-7, Philippians 2:6-11, Luke 22:14-23:56**

*... Jesus then left to make his way as usual to the Mount of Olives, with the disciples following. When he reached the place he said to them, 'Pray not to be put to the test.'* Then he withdrew from them, about a stone's

*throw away, and knelt down and prayed. 'Father,' he said, 'if you are willing, take this cup away from me. Nevertheless, let your will be done, not mine.'* Then an angel appeared to him, coming from heaven to give him strength. In his anguish he prayed even more earnestly, and his sweat fell to the ground like great drops of blood. When he rose from prayer he went to the disciples and found them sleeping for sheer grief. And he said to them, 'Why are you asleep? Get up and pray not to be put to the test.' Suddenly, while he was still speaking, a number of men appeared, and at the head of them the man called Judas, one of the Twelve, who went up to Jesus to kiss him. Jesus said, 'Judas, are you betraying the Son of man with a kiss?' His followers, seeing what was about to happen, said, 'Lord, shall we use our swords?' And one of them struck the high priest's servant and cut off his right ear. But at this Jesus said, 'That is enough.' And touching the man's ear he healed him...

### Father, if you are willing...

Today's gospel is a lengthy passage. Therefore, let us focus on Jesus' time in the Garden of Gethsemane. The disciples were filled with fear and uncertainty, knowing that something terrible was about to happen to their Master, though they did not know what it would be. Overwhelmed by exhaustion, they fell asleep. A short distance away, Jesus withdrew to pray alone. This was not unusual for Him, as He often sought solitary places for prayer. However, at this moment, Jesus was deeply troubled, experiencing fear, anguish and sadness. He looked to God and honestly expressed His feelings and thoughts to His Father, saying, "*Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me. Nevertheless, let your will be done, not mine*".

How often have we, too, looked to God and asked Him to take the cup of pain and suffering away from us? How often have we longed that there would be another way for us? "*Then an angel appeared to him, coming from heaven to give him strength.*" The gospel invites us to take comfort in the fact that God will give us the strength and courage we need to face the challenges that life brings to us.

### **Reflective question:**

Do I always look to God with trust and love?



## **Monday, 14<sup>th</sup> April, Monday of Holy Week.**

### **Isaiah 42:1-7, John 12:1-11**

*Six days before the Passover, Jesus went to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom he had raised from the dead. They gave a dinner for him there; Martha waited on them and Lazarus was among those at table. Mary brought in a pound of very costly ointment, pure nard, and with it anointed the feet of Jesus, wiping them with her hair; the house was filled with the scent of the ointment. Then Judas Iscariot -- one of his disciples, the man who was to betray him--said, 'Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?' He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he was in charge of the common fund and used to help himself to the contents. So Jesus said, 'Leave her alone; let her keep it for the day of my burial. You have the poor with you always, you will not always have me.' Meanwhile a large number of Jews heard that he was there and came not only on account of Jesus but also to see Lazarus whom he had raised from the dead. Then the chief priests decided to kill Lazarus as well, since it was on his account that many of the Jews were leaving them and believing in Jesus.*

### Being with our Friend

In today's gospel, Jesus was with his friends, Martha, Mary and Lazarus. Each of the siblings had a distinct personality and they expressed their affection for Jesus in different ways. Lazarus was content to sit with Jesus at the table, while Martha kept herself busy in the kitchen, preparing a meal for their guests. Meanwhile, Mary displayed her love and gratitude for Jesus by pouring a pound of expensive perfume on Jesus' feet and wiping them with her hair. Jesus accepted them just as they were and valued their friendship. Today, let us express our love for Jesus, our Friend, in the way we know best.

Judas, seeing Mary pouring away the expensive perfume, started to complain about being wasteful. Jesus defended her actions, acknowledging that her deed was rooted in love. He told Judas, "*You have the poor with you always, you will not always have me*". Here, Jesus tells us the importance of not taking people, including Himself, for granted. Often, we fail to live in the moment and miss out on opportunities to connect with people in our lives and also to enjoy staying with Jesus.

## **Reflective question:**

Do I want Jesus to be the central focus of this Holy Week?

**Tuesday, 15<sup>th</sup> April, Tuesday of Holy Week.**

**Isaiah 49:1-6, John 13:21-33, 36-38**

*While at supper with his disciples, Jesus was deeply disturbed and declared, 'In all truth I tell you, one of you is going to betray me.' The disciples looked at each other, wondering whom he meant. The disciple Jesus loved was reclining next to Jesus; Simon Peter signed to him and said, 'Ask who it is he means,' so leaning back close to Jesus' chest he said, 'Who is it, Lord?' Jesus answered, 'It is the one to whom I give the piece of bread that I dip in the dish.' And when he had dipped the piece of bread he gave it to Judas son of Simon Iscariot. At that instant, after Judas had taken the bread, Satan entered him. Jesus then said, 'What you are going to do, do quickly.' None of the others at table understood why he said this. Since Judas had charge of the common fund, some of them thought Jesus was telling him, 'Buy what we need for the festival,' or telling him to give something to the poor. As soon as Judas had taken the piece of bread he went out. It was night. When he had gone, Jesus said: Now has the Son of man been glorified, and in him God has been glorified. If God has been glorified in him, God will in turn glorify him in himself, and will glorify him very soon. Little children, I shall be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and, as I told the Jews, where I am going, you cannot come.' Simon Peter said, 'Lord, where are you going?' Jesus replied, 'Now you cannot follow me where I am going, but later you shall follow me.' Peter said to him, 'Why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.' 'Lay down your life for me?' answered Jesus. 'In all truth I tell you, before the cock crows you will have disowned me three times.'*

## Faithful to the end

*"...while I was thinking, 'I have toiled in vain, I have exhausted myself for nothing', and all the while my cause was with the Lord, my reward with my God. I was honoured in the eyes of the Lord, my God was my strength"* (1<sup>st</sup> reading). At the Last Supper with His disciples, Jesus likely felt a sense of disappointment as He watched Judas leave the table, determined to betray Him. He was aware that Peter would deny Him and that the rest of His disciples would abandon Him. At that meal, despite being surrounded by His disciples, Jesus must have felt profoundly alone. In such moments of darkness, Jesus looked to His Father, who

was His source of strength and chose to remain faithful to God to the end.

Judas and Peter each turned their attention from Jesus to themselves, allowing feelings of greed, fear, and cowardice to overshadow their love for Him. Today, let us, like Jesus, focus on God who is our strength, experience the depth of His love, and choose again to remain in that love. Each of us must respond to that love on our own; no one can do it for us.

### **Reflective question:**

How can I learn from the experiences of Judas and Peter to become a more faithful disciple of Jesus?

### **Wednesday, 16<sup>th</sup> April, Wednesday of Holy Week.**

#### **Isaiah 50:4-9, Matthew 26:14-25**

*One of the Twelve, the man called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, 'What are you prepared to give me if I hand him over to you?' They paid him thirty silver pieces, and from then onwards he began to look for an opportunity to betray him. Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus to say, 'Where do you want us to make the preparations for you to eat the Passover?' He said, 'Go to a certain man in the city and say to him, "The Master says: My time is near. It is at your house that I am keeping Passover with my disciples." ' The disciples did what Jesus told them and prepared the Passover. When evening came he was at table with the Twelve. And while they were eating he said, 'In truth I tell you, one of you is about to betray me.' They were greatly distressed and started asking him in turn, 'Not me, Lord, surely?' He answered, 'Someone who has dipped his hand into the dish with me will betray me. The Son of man is going to his fate, as the scriptures say he will, but alas for that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! Better for that man if he had never been born!' Judas, who was to betray him, asked in his turn, 'Not me, Rabbi, surely?' Jesus answered, 'It is you who say it.'*

#### To listen, to speak, to love like a disciple

*"The Lord has given me a disciples' tongue. So that I may know how to reply to the wearied, he provides me with speech. Each morning he wakes me to hear, to listen like a disciple..." (1<sup>st</sup> reading). God opened the prophet's ears each morning, enabling Him to listen to Him so that he, in turn, could bring the message of hope and strength to others. Similarly, we, too, must listen attentively to God in prayer to convey His*

hope. However, we must be prepared for rejection when we commit to God's mission. "...*The Lord comes to my help so that I am untouched by the insults...My vindicator is here at hand...*". The prophet's words remind us that God is always with us to help, and so we continue to speak, love, and serve as He calls us to do.

In the gospel, the disciples wondered who would betray Jesus. Today, we are invited to examine our hearts to see if we are truly following Jesus, our Master, or following other "masters" who pull us away from Him. Jesus calls us to return to Him and follow Him again.

### **Reflective question:**

What is Jesus' invitation to me today?

### **Thursday, 17<sup>th</sup> April, Holy Thursday (Mass of the Lord's Supper).**

#### **Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, John 13:1-15**

*It was before the festival of the Passover, Jesus, knowing that his hour had come to pass from this world to the Father, having loved those who were his in the world, loved them to the end. They were at supper, and the devil had already put it into the mind of Judas Iscariot son of Simon, to betray him. Jesus knew that the Father had put everything into his hands, and that he had come from God and was returning to God, and he got up from table, removed his outer garments and, taking a towel, wrapped it round his waist; he then poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel he was wearing. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, 'Lord, are you going to wash my feet?' Jesus answered, 'At the moment you do not know what I am doing, but later you will understand.' 'Never!' said Peter. 'You shall never wash my feet.' Jesus replied, 'If I do not wash you, you can have no share with me.' Simon Peter said, 'Well then, Lord, not only my feet, but my hands and my head as well!' Jesus said, 'No one who has had a bath needs washing, such a person is clean all over. You too are clean, though not all of you are.' He knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said, 'though not all of you are'. When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments again he went back to the table. 'Do you understand', he said, 'what I have done to you? You call me Master and Lord, and rightly; so I am. If I, then, the Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you must wash each other's feet. I have given you an example so that you may copy what I have done to you.'*

## Act of true love

On the night before Jesus was betrayed and led to His death, He performed an action that was the summary of His life and mission. While at supper, Jesus took off His outer garment, wrapped a towel around Himself, bent down and washed His disciples' feet, emptying Himself in the service of others, making Himself a humble servant for all. The act of Jesus bending and washing the feet of His disciples, even those of Judas, reveals what true love is: unconditional, compassion, forgiveness, and tenderness.

As we celebrate the Paschal Triduum today, let us look to Jesus with the heart of a disciple, eager to learn from and imitate our master. May this gospel passage not be just a story in the Bible but that we have the courage to make it come alive in our own lives. *"I have given you an example so that you may copy what I have done to you"*. Jesus calls us to love and serve others as He has shown us.

### **Reflective question:**

How can I copy Jesus' way of loving and serving?

### **Friday, 18<sup>th</sup> April, Good Friday.**

#### **Isaiah 52:13-53:12, Hebrews 4:14-16, 5:7-9, John 18:1-19:42**

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

*who saw it -- true evidence, and he knows that what he says is true -- and he gives it so that you may believe as well.*

### Death

*“For it is not as if we had a high priest who was incapable of feeling our weaknesses with us...” (2<sup>nd</sup> reading). We have a God who understands our weaknesses, sympathises with us, and suffers with us. Jesus, God in human form, emptied Himself and lived a human life, just like us. One of the greatest human weaknesses that Jesus faced was the process of dying and death itself. Many people are afraid of death. Today, as we contemplate the death of Jesus, let us be reminded that death is the starting point for living more intentionally like Jesus did. Jesus lived His life by putting God first. Thus, He chose to live a purposeful life that would please God: He loved fully, served humbly, stood up against injustice, etc.*

Today, let us resist the temptation to be overly familiar with Good Friday. Instead, let us stay with Jesus and listen to His invitation to embrace the shortness of our life here on earth and the preciousness of each moment. Let us live more authentically, courageously, and lovingly so that when our time on this earth comes to an end, we can echo Jesus' words, *“It is fulfilled.”*

### **Reflective question:**

How can I find meaning in my life and death?

### **Saturday, 19<sup>th</sup> April, Easter Vigil.**

**Genesis 1:1-2:2, Genesis 22:1-18, Exodus 14:15-15:1, Isaiah 54:5-14, Isaiah 55:1-11, Baruch 3:9-15, Ezekiel 36:16-28, Romans 6:3-11, Luke 24:1-12**

*On the first day of the week, at the first sign of dawn, the women went to the tomb with the spices they had prepared. They found that the stone had been rolled away from the tomb, but on entering they could not find the body of the Lord Jesus. As they stood there puzzled about this, two men in brilliant clothes suddenly appeared at their side. Terrified, the women bowed their heads to the ground. But the two said to them, 'Why look among the dead for someone who is alive? He is not here; he has risen. Remember what he told you when he was still in Galilee: that the Son of man was destined to be handed over into the power of sinful men and be crucified, and rise again on the third day.' And they remembered his words. And they returned from the tomb and told all this to the Eleven*

*and to all the others. The women were Mary of Magdala, Joanna, and Mary the mother of James. And the other women with them also told the apostles, but this story of theirs seemed pure nonsense, and they did not believe them. Peter, however, went off to the tomb, running. He bent down and looked in and saw the linen cloths but nothing else; he then went back home, amazed at what had happened.*

### He has risen!

The women disciples of Jesus set out early in the morning to visit His tomb, their hearts heavy with grief. Everything seemed to be over. Their beloved Master was dead and now lay in the sealed tomb. Often, we live our lives revisiting the tombs of our past mistakes, regrets, disappointments and weariness. We might look at life and feel powerless at the conflicts in family, society, and church. Jesus seems absent, and so do joy and peace.

*“Why look among the dead for someone who is alive? He is not here; he has risen...”* (The gospel). These are the words spoken by the two men in brilliant clothes to the women disciples. This message is meant for us today: *“Why look among the dead for someone who is alive? Why stay in the tomb which only robs you of joy, of peace, of life? Jesus lives!”* The call of Easter invites us to encounter the Living Jesus, reviving our hope and joy as true Easter people. With the Risen Jesus in us, disillusionment, suffering, and death do not have the final word.

### **Reflective question:**

How do I want to live this Easter season?

### **Sunday, 20<sup>th</sup> April, Easter Sunday.**

**Acts 10:34, 37-43, Colossians 3:1-4 or 1 Corinthians 5:6-8, John 20:1-9**

*It was very early on the first day of the week and still dark, when Mary of Magdala came to the tomb. She saw that the stone had been moved away from the tomb and came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved. 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb,' she said, 'and we don't know where they have put him.' So Peter set out with the other disciple to go to the tomb. They ran together, but the other disciple, running faster than Peter, reached the tomb first; he bent down and saw the linen cloths lying on the ground, but did not go in. Simon Peter, following him, also came up, went into the tomb, saw the linen cloths lying on the ground and also the cloth that had been over*

*his head; this was not with the linen cloths but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in; he saw and he believed. Till this moment they had still not understood the scripture, that he must rise from the dead.*

### The empty tomb

*“This day was made by the Lord, we rejoice and are glad”* (The Responsorial Psalm). On Easter Sunday and every day of our lives, we can rejoice because Jesus is not dead but alive; not absent but present with us. On Good Friday, the authorities silenced Him because they could not tolerate His radical values that challenged the status quo and stirred the hearts of many. His message of love, truth and justice clashed with their interests, and so they hung Him. However, Jesus did not stay dead. In today’s gospel, the three disciples, Mary Magdalene, John and Peter saw the empty tomb and did not fully understand what happened. Today, we are invited to ponder on the message of the empty tomb. What does it mean for us today? It tells us that when conflicts, violence, suffering and death seem to be in control, there is another power at work that brings peace out of conflict, joy out of suffering, life out of death.

Today, let us rejoice because we know for certain that God’s love conquers all.

### **Reflective question:**

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

### **Monday, 21<sup>st</sup> April, Monday within Easter Octave.**

#### **Acts 2:14, 22-33, Matthew 28:8-15**

*Filled with awe and great joy the women came quickly away from the tomb and ran to tell his disciples. And suddenly, coming to meet them, was Jesus. ‘Greetings,’ he said. And the women came up to him and, clasping his feet, they did him homage. Then Jesus said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers that they must leave for Galilee; there they will see me.’ Now while they were on their way, some of the guards went off into the city to tell the chief priests all that had happened. These held a meeting with the elders and, after some discussion, handed a considerable sum of money to the soldiers with these instructions, ‘This is what you must say, “His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.” And should the governor come to hear of this, we undertake to put things right with him ourselves and to see that*



*you do not get into trouble.' So they took the money and carried out their instructions, and to this day that is the story among the Jews.*

### Easter joy

*"...as David says of him, 'I saw the Lord before me always, for with him at my right hand nothing can shake me. So my heart was glad and my tongue cried out with joy... You have made known the way of life to me, you will fill me with gladness through your presence'" (1<sup>st</sup> reading). Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, proclaimed these words to the crowd in Jerusalem. He and the rest of Jesus' disciples went from being scared to joyful witnesses for the Risen Christ. In the first reading, Peter quoted Psalm 16, expressing the profound joy they had because of the presence of Jesus with them. Even though they were still filled with uncertainty, they rejoiced.*

In the gospel, we see the women filled with great joy after receiving the news of the empty tomb. Their joy increased even more after they met the risen Jesus and were given the mission of sharing the good news with the rest of His disciples. Today, let us allow joy to fill our hearts and bear witness to Jesus and all that He stood for: love, forgiveness, peace, and justice.

### **Reflective question:**

How can I share my joy with others today?

### **Tuesday, 22<sup>nd</sup> April, Tuesday within Easter Octave.**

#### **Acts 2:36-41, John 20:11-18**

*Mary was standing outside near the tomb, weeping. Then, as she wept, she stooped to look inside, and saw two angels in white sitting where the body of Jesus had been, one at the head, the other at the feet. They said, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' 'They have taken my Lord away,' she replied, 'and I don't know where they have put him.' As she said this she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, though she did not realise that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? Who are you looking for?' Supposing him to be the gardener, she said, 'Sir, if you have taken him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will go and remove him.' Jesus said, 'Mary!' She turned round then and said to him in Hebrew, 'Rabbuni!' -- which means Master. Jesus said to her, 'Do not cling to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to the brothers, and tell them: I am ascending to my Father and*

*your Father, to my God and your God.' So Mary of Magdala told the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord,' and that he had said these things to her.*

### The Risen Jesus' encounter with Mary Magdalene

*"Mary was standing outside near the tomb, weeping"* (The gospel). Like Mary Magdalene, haven't we experienced the pain of losing someone we love? When a parent, child, spouse, mentor or friend dies, we suffer deeply. *"Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? Who are you looking for?'"* Jesus was not indifferent to Mary's sadness. He stepped into her suffering because He wanted to transform her darkness into light and her grief into joy. Today, we are invited to recognise Jesus' presence in moments of grief or in moments of feeling hopeless and allow Him to allow His peace and joy to touch our lives.

*"Jesus said, 'Mary!'"* Jesus called Mary by name, and she recognised Him as her beloved Master and Friend. Jesus calls us, too, by our name, knowing us deeply and loving us as we are. Jesus invites us to enter into a personal, loving relationship with Him. In this time of prayer, let us listen attentively to Jesus, who is alive and present with us.

### **Reflective question:**

Have I experienced Jesus' comforting, life-giving presence in moments of our sorrows and struggles?

### **Wednesday, 23<sup>rd</sup> April, Wednesday within Easter Octave.**

#### **Acts 3:1-10, Luke 24:13-25**

*Two of them were on their way to a village called Emmaus, seven miles from Jerusalem, and they were talking together about all that had happened. And it happened that as they were talking together and discussing it, Jesus himself came up and walked by their side; but their eyes were prevented from recognising him. He said to them, 'What are all these things that you are discussing as you walk along?' They stopped, their faces downcast. Then one of them, called Cleopas, answered him, 'You must be the only person staying in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have been happening there these last few days.' He asked, 'What things?' They answered, 'All about Jesus of Nazareth, who showed himself a prophet powerful in action and speech before God and the whole people; and how our chief priests and our leaders handed him over to be sentenced to death, and had him crucified. Our own hope had been that he would be the one to set Israel free. And this is not all: two whole days have now gone by since it all happened;*

*and some women from our group have astounded us: they went to the tomb in the early morning, and when they could not find the body, they came back to tell us they had seen a vision of angels who declared he was alive. Some of our friends went to the tomb and found everything exactly as the women had reported, but of him they saw nothing.' Then he said to them, 'You foolish men! So slow to believe all that the prophets have said! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer before entering into his glory?' Then, starting with Moses and going through all the prophets, he explained to them the passages throughout the scriptures that were about himself. When they drew near to the village to which they were going, he made as if to go on; but they pressed him to stay with them saying, 'It is nearly evening, and the day is almost over.' So he went in to stay with them. Now while he was with them at table, he took the bread and said the blessing; then he broke it and handed it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognised him; but he had vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other, 'Did not our hearts burn within us as he talked to us on the road and explained the scriptures to us?' They set out that instant and returned to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven assembled together with their companions, who said to them, 'The Lord has indeed risen and has appeared to Simon.' Then they told their story of what had happened on the road and how they had recognised him at the breaking of bread.*

### Walking with Jesus

In today's gospel, two dejected disciples walked away from the community and Jerusalem because they had lost hope. Their Master was cruelly killed by the authorities. The rest of the disciples hid behind closed doors, afraid and uncertain. As a result, they chose to walk away with heavy hearts in search of relief from their pain. Many of us can relate to the disappointment and grief of these two disciples. "*Jesus himself came up and walked by their side...*" (The gospel). Although these two disciples might have given up, Jesus never gave up on them. He accompanied them, listened to them and spoke to them, which brought about a change within them. They later expressed, "*Did not our hearts burn within us as he talked to us on the road and explained the scriptures to us?*" Jesus' risen presence renewed their faith and hope.

Today, Jesus continues to accompany us on our journey through life. Let us listen to Him in the Scriptures, recognise His presence in the sacraments, and remember the many moments when we experience His

love and mercy. In silence, let us allow Him to restore us so that our hearts can be filled with renewed hope and joy.

**Reflective question:**

What is Jesus' message to us today?

**Thursday, 24<sup>th</sup> April, Thursday within Easter Octave.**

**Acts 3:11-26, Luke 24:35-48**

*The disciples told their story of what had happened on the road and how they had recognised Jesus at the breaking of bread. They were still talking about all this when he himself stood among them and said to them, 'Peace be with you!' In a state of alarm and fright, they thought they were seeing a ghost. But he said, 'Why are you so agitated, and why are these doubts stirring in your hearts? See by my hands and my feet that it is I myself. Touch me and see for yourselves; a ghost has no flesh and bones as you can see I have.' And as he said this he showed them his hands and his feet. Their joy was so great that they still could not believe it, as they were dumbfounded; so he said to them, 'Have you anything here to eat?' And they offered him a piece of grilled fish, which he took and ate before their eyes. Then he told them, 'This is what I meant when I said, while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses, in the Prophets and in the Psalms, was destined to be fulfilled.' He then opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, 'So it is written that the Christ would suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that, in his name, repentance for the forgiveness of sins would be preached to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses to this.'*

**Believe in the Good News!**

*"Their joy was so great that they still could not believe it, as they were dumbfounded..."* (The gospel). The risen Jesus appeared to His disciples, showing them His hands and feet and offering them His presence of peace with these words, *"Peace be with you"*. Seeing Him, the disciples were filled with joy, but they struggled to believe that He was really alive. Perhaps the image of the crucified Jesus was still fresh in their minds, contributing to their doubts. Pain and suffering in life often impact us more profoundly than the positive Easter message of newness and hope. This is because we are surrounded by the constant news of conflicts, loss, death, etc., and we ourselves personally experience suffering in our own lives. As a result, we sometimes find it hard to

appreciate and embrace the Easter message that Christ invites us to believe in.

Today, let us ask Jesus for the grace to truly believe in the good news of Easter and to recognise that the risen Christ is with us, saying to us, "*Peace be with you.*" Let Jesus' peace fill our hearts so that we, too, can offer His peace to those around us.

**Reflective question:**

Do I struggle to truly believe in the good news of Easter and allow it to affect my life each day?

**Friday, 25<sup>th</sup> April, Friday within Easter Octave.**

**Acts 4:1-12, John 21:1-14**

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

## It is the Lord

After Jesus was crucified, the disciples were unsure of where to go or what to do, so they returned to what they knew best: fishing. They spent the whole night working hard, but as the gospel passage states, they “*caught nothing*”. At dawn, the Risen Jesus stood by the shore of the Sea of Galilee, like a light shining in the darkness. He told them to cast their nets on the other side of the boat. Although they did not recognise Him at first, they did as they were told, and to their surprise, they caught a net full of fish. It was John, the Beloved disciple, whose sensitivity to Jesus and deep love for Him, was the first to recognise, “*It is the Lord*”.

“*Without me, you can do nothing*” (John 15:5). Today, we are called to trust in Jesus and allow Him to guide and direct us in life. When we feel we are labouring fruitlessly, may we trust that the light of Jesus always shines in our darkness, making our efforts fruitful. Yes, it is the Lord who patiently stands at the shore of our lives, speaking His life-giving word to us.

### **Reflective question:**

How can I live this day with Jesus?

### **Saturday, 26<sup>th</sup> April, Saturday within Easter Octave.**

#### **Acts 4:13-21, Mark 16:9-15**

*Having risen in the morning on the first day of the week, Jesus appeared first to Mary of Magdala from whom he had cast out seven devils. She then went to those who had been his companions, and who were mourning and in tears, and told them. But they did not believe her when they heard her say that he was alive and that she had seen him. After this, he showed himself under another form to two of them as they were on their way into the country. These went back and told the others, who did not believe them either. Lastly, he showed himself to the Eleven themselves while they were at table. He reproached them for their incredulity and obstinacy, because they had refused to believe those who had seen him after he had risen. And he said to them, 'Go out to the whole world; proclaim the gospel to all creation.'*

### Being trusted by Jesus

In today's gospel, Mary Magdalene and the two disciples from Emmaus shared the news that Jesus had risen. They struggled to believe, as it seemed impossible for a crucified and buried Jesus to be alive again. Jesus then appeared to them and reproached them for doubting the

testimonies of the other disciples. Despite their doubts, Jesus entrusted them with the mission to go out and proclaim the good news to all. Today, many of us may also struggle with a dry prayer life or have doubts about our faith, etc. Yet, Jesus still counts on us to help Him in His mission to proclaim the good news through our words and actions. He trusts us because He loves us and will never stop believing in us.

In the first reading, Peter and John told the Jewish leaders, “...*We cannot promise to stop proclaiming what we have seen and heard*”. This transformation- from struggling to believe the good news of the resurrection to becoming convicted witnesses to the risen Christ- occurred because of their encounter with Jesus. His trust in them had a profound effect on His disciples. Today, let us allow the risen Jesus to encounter us and transform our disbelief into courageous faith.

### **Reflective question:**

How can I witness Christ to others today?

### **Sunday, 27<sup>th</sup> April, Divine Mercy.**

#### **Acts 5:12-16, Apocalypse 1:9-13, 17-19, John 20:19-31**

*In the evening of that same day, the first day of the week, the doors were closed in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews. Jesus came and stood among them. He said to them, 'Peace be with you,' and, after saying this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples were filled with joy at seeing the Lord, and he said to them again, 'Peace be with you. 'As the Father sent me, so am I sending you.' After saying this he breathed on them and said: Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven; if you retain anyone's sins, they are retained. Thomas, called the Twin, who was one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples said to him, 'We have seen the Lord,' but he answered, 'Unless I can see the holes that the nails made in his hands and can put my finger into the holes they made, and unless I can put my hand into his side, I refuse to believe.' Eight days later the disciples were in the house again and Thomas was with them. The doors were closed, but Jesus came in and stood among them. 'Peace be with you,' he said. Then he spoke to Thomas, 'Put your finger here; look, here are my hands. Give me your hand; put it into my side. Do not be unbelieving any more but believe.' Thomas replied, 'My Lord and my God!' Jesus said to him: You believe because you can see me. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe. There were many other signs that Jesus worked in the sight of the disciples, but they*

*are not recorded in this book. These are recorded so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing this you may have life through his name.*

### Mercy

Today, we celebrate the Feast of Divine Mercy. More than just a devotion, this feast should challenge us to examine our hearts and ask ourselves, "Am I a merciful person? Do I extend mercy to those around me?" In the gospel, the first words that the risen Jesus told His disciples were, "*Peace be with you*". Let us take a moment to absorb the powerful scene of Jesus standing among His disciples, who had failed Him during His passion. It speaks to us about mercy. Despite what they did, Jesus offered them His peace. When Jesus appeared to the disciples, Thomas was not present, and so he did not believe when the rest told him what happened. Jesus' mercy did not give up on Thomas. Instead, He encountered Thomas and led him to experience Easter joy.

Like the disciples, we might doubt and wander away from Jesus, yet He always meets us where we are, not to condemn us but to give us His presence of peace. As we receive His peace, we are called to become His missionaries of mercy by extending His peace to those around us.

### **Reflective question:**

Is there someone I can treat with loving mercy as Jesus would want?

**Monday, 28<sup>th</sup> April, St. Peter Chanel, St. Louis M. Grignion de Monfort.**

**Acts 4:23-31, John 3:1-8**

*There was one of the Pharisees called Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews, who came to Jesus by night and said, 'Rabbi, we know that you have come from God as a teacher; for no one could perform the signs that you do unless God were with him .' Jesus answered: In all truth I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above. Nicodemus said, 'How can anyone who is already old be born? Is it possible to go back into the womb again and be born?' Jesus replied: In all truth I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born through water and the Spirit; what is born of human nature is human; what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be surprised when I say: You must be born from above. The wind blows where it pleases; you can hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.*



## Born again

Nicodemus was a good and moral Jew and was a respected leader in the Jewish community. Many of us can relate to Nicodemus. Like him, we are good Catholics who attend mass regularly, participate in church events, and make efforts to follow the rules. But is there more to our Christian faith than just all these external practices? Have we overlooked the bigger picture? Despite being a good religious Jew, Nicodemus sensed that something was missing in his life, which led him to seek Jesus, believing He could fill that void. Today, let us learn from Nicodemus by turning to Jesus and allowing Him to guide us on the path to a more authentic growth in our spiritual life.

Jesus told Nicodemus, *"In all truth, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above."* He invited him to experience a new spiritual birth by allowing the Holy Spirit to recreate a new life in him. Today, Jesus extends the same invitation to us. This means we must first let go of control and allow the Holy Spirit to guide and transform us so that we can be born again.

### **Reflective question:**

Do I desire to be born again, i.e. to experience deeper growth in my spiritual life?

### **Tuesday, 29<sup>th</sup> April, St. Catherine of Siena.**

#### **Acts 4:32-37, John 3:7-15**

*Jesus said to Nicodemus: 'Do not be surprised when I say: You must be born from above. The wind blows where it pleases; you can hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit. 'How is that possible?' asked Nicodemus. Jesus replied, 'You are the Teacher of Israel, and you do not know these things! In all truth I tell you, we speak only about what we know and witness only to what we have seen and yet you people reject our evidence. If you do not believe me when I speak to you about earthly things, how will you believe me when I speak to you about heavenly things? No one has gone up to heaven except the one who came down from heaven, the Son of man; as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so must the Son of man be lifted up so that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.'*

## The Holy Spirit

In today's gospel, we continue with Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus. Nicodemus was struggling to understand Jesus when He told him that he had to be born again, born from above. Jesus told Nicodemus, "*The wind blows where it pleases; you can hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit*". Today, Jesus tells us the same: We need to surrender to the Holy Spirit. We are not masters of the Holy Spirit, and we cannot control His movements. Instead, we are called to trust in the Holy Spirit, who is always at work within us, shaping us to reflect God's unconditional love more clearly.

*"It is the Spirit of God who impels us to love. When we find within a hitherto unknown ability to forgive, to love someone who doesn't love us in return, it is the Spirit who has taken hold of us. When we move beyond mere self-serving words and turn to our brothers and sisters with that tenderness which warms the heart, we have indeed been touched by the Holy Spirit"* (Pope Francis, 2014).

### **Reflective question:**

Am I open to letting the Holy Spirit navigate me to live a life of love today?

### **Wednesday, 30<sup>th</sup> April, 2<sup>nd</sup> Week of Easter.**

#### **Acts 5:17-26, John 3:16-21**

*Jesus said to Nicodemus: 'For this is how God loved the world: he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. For God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but so that through him the world might be saved. No one who believes in him will be judged; but whoever does not believe is judged already, because that person does not believe in the Name of God's only Son. And the judgement is this: though the light has come into the world people have preferred darkness to the light because their deeds were evil. And indeed, everybody who does wrong hates the light and avoids it, to prevent his actions from being shown up; but whoever does the truth comes out into the light, so that what he is doing may plainly appear as done in God.'*

### God's life-giving love

*"For this is how God loved the world: he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life"* (The gospel). Many people regard God as an impersonal force, a distant

being who is indifferent to our lives, or a punishing figure who is always out to punish us for our mistakes. Such a perspective often leads us to approach God with caution and fear. However, Jesus tells us today that God is a God of love- an unconditional and universal love that is authentic and life-giving. God expresses His love for us by giving us Jesus, His Son, so that we can follow Him and experience the fullness of life here, now and forever.

Today, let us respond to God's love by making Jesus the centre of our lives and allowing ourselves to be guided by His loving light to become the person God has created us to be.

**Reflective question:**

*“For this is how God loved the world: he gave his only Son...”*: What are some ways that I can apply the truth to my daily life?

