

Prayer for Living *Year C* *August*

**“There is no need to
be afraid, little flock...”**



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PRAYER FOR LIVING YEAR C

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Friday, 1st August, St. Alphonsus Liguori.

Leviticus 23:1, 4-11, 15-16, 27, 34-37, Matthew 13:54-58

Coming to his hometown. Jesus taught in the synagogue, and those who heard him were amazed. "Where did he get such wisdom?" they asked. "And what about his miracles? Isn't he the carpenter's son? Isn't Mary his mother, and aren't James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas his brothers? Aren't all his sisters living here? Where did he get all this?" And so they rejected him. Jesus said to them, "A prophet is respected everywhere except in his hometown and by his own family." Because they did not have faith, he did not perform many miracles there.

A carpenter's son

"Isn't he the carpenter's son?" This remark, made in a derogatory manner, was spoken by the people in Jesus' hometown. They dismissed Jesus as simply the carpenter's son, viewing Him as a nobody, an ordinary figure, and thus undermining His ministry. They were unable to recognise God profoundly present and working through this seemingly ordinary man from a humble background. God chose not to enter the world as someone of grandeur or power. Instead, He took on human form in a setting marked by simplicity and humility, showing that greatness can emerge from the most unassuming backgrounds.

Often, we overlook people based on preconceived notions, believing we have them all figured out. We overlook the possibility that God may choose to convey His love and peace through anyone, even those we least expect. Let us open our hearts and minds to the extraordinary ways in which God can reach us and ask Him to help us recognise His presence in our lives today.

Reflective question:

What is the message that God wants to tell me today?

Saturday, 2nd August, St. Eusebius of Vercelli, St. Peter Julian Eymard.

Leviticus 25:1, 8-17, Matthew 14:1-12

Herod the tetrarch heard about the reputation of Jesus and said to his court, 'This is John the Baptist himself; he has risen from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him.' Now it was Herod who had arrested John, chained him up and put him in prison because of

Herodias, his brother Philip's wife. For John had told him, 'It is against the Law for you to have her.' He had wanted to kill him but was afraid of the people, who regarded John as a prophet. Then, during the celebrations for Herod's birthday, the daughter of Herodias danced before the company and so delighted Herod that he promised on oath to give her anything she asked. Prompted by her mother she said, 'Give me John the Baptist's head, here, on a dish.' The king was distressed but, thinking of the oaths he had sworn and of his guests, he ordered it to be given her, and sent and had John beheaded in the prison. The head was brought in on a dish and given to the girl, who took it to her mother. John's disciples came and took the body and buried it; then they went off to tell Jesus.

Commitment to truth and love

In today's gospel, we reflect on the story of John the Baptist, who was imprisoned and later beheaded for his unwavering commitment to God and His ways of justice and truth. Many people continue to follow in John the Baptist's footsteps today, standing for Jesus and embodying the Gospel values of love, honesty, faithfulness and peace. On 15th June 2025, Blessed Floribert Bwana Chui, a young Congolese man, was beatified in the Vatican. He served as a customs officer in Goma, Congo, where he refused to accept bribes and prevented the import of contaminated food into the country, as he wanted to protect the poor people from the harmful food. His dedication to honesty and justice ultimately cost him his life. In 2007, at the age of 26, he was kidnapped by unidentified individuals, tortured and killed.

As Christians, we are called to choose what is good and loving, walking away from worldly ways that do not reflect the Gospel values. We can only stay firm in our faith by rooting ourselves deeply in God's love. Today, let us place God at the centre of our lives and allow Him to influence the way we speak and act.

Reflective question:

Are my values aligned with the Gospel or with the values of the world?

Sunday, 3rd August, 18th Sunday in Ordinary Time.

Ecclesiastes 1:2; 2:21-23, Colossians 3:1-5, 9-11, Luke 12:13-21

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

True wealth

What truly lasts in life? Pleasure, wealth, power, popularity? In today's first reading, the author of the book of Ecclesiastes proclaims, "*Vanity of vanities. All is vanity!*" For him, everything on this earth will one day fade away. He adds that our hard labour and our achievements will all end in death, and our wealth will go to someone who has done nothing to work for it. Thus, everything is pointless.

In the gospel, Jesus shows us that what truly matters in life is having a relationship of love and trust with God and living a life of being generous towards others. In the parable, the wealthy man had a good harvest. Instead of sharing with those around him, he decided to build bigger barns to store the fruits of his labour. Today, Jesus wants us to tell us that true wealth is having God as the centre of our lives, and not wealth or possessions. Let us remember that life is fragile and short, and so, may we strive to be rich in love for others and in our relationship with God.

Reflective question:

Do I fill my barns, my life, with material things or with love?

Monday, 4th August, St. John Vianney.
Numbers 11:4-15, Matthew 14:13-21

When Jesus received this news of John the Baptist's death, he withdrew by boat to a lonely place where they could be by themselves. But the crowds heard of this and, leaving the towns, went after him on foot. So as he stepped ashore he saw a large crowd; and he took pity on them and healed their sick. When evening came, the disciples went to him and said, 'This is a lonely place, and time has slipped by; so send the people away, and they can go to the villages to buy themselves some food.' Jesus replied, 'There is no need for them to go: give them something to eat yourselves.' But they answered, 'All we have with us is five loaves and two fish.' So he said, 'Bring them here to me.' He gave orders that the people were to sit down on the grass; then he took the five loaves and the two fish, raised his eyes to heaven and said the blessing. And breaking the loaves he handed them to his disciples, who gave them to the crowds. They all ate as much as they wanted, and they collected the scraps left over, twelve baskets full. Now about five thousand men had eaten, to say nothing of women and children.

Giving love amidst sorrow

In the gospel, Jesus had just received the tragic news of the brutal death of his cousin, John the Baptist. All He wanted to do was to be alone to grieve, but when He saw the large crowd of people coming to Him, He sat down and chose to stay with them. He taught, listened to them and healed those who were in need, all the while experiencing His own sadness and pain. This shows us the compassionate heart of Jesus and inspires us to do the same, giving love and care to others even amidst our own suffering.

Jesus tells us, “*Give them something to eat yourselves*”. He calls us to share our time, energy, faith and love with people around us, especially those in need. We may worry that what we have is not enough to meet the needs of others. However, we must not forget that Jesus is the one who takes our five loaves and two fish and multiplies the little we have for the good of others. All that is needed is for us to offer ourselves to Jesus with trust.

Reflective question:

What is Jesus' message for me today?

**Tuesday, 5th August, Dedication of the Basilica of St. Mary Major.
Numbers 12:1-13, Matthew 14:22-36**

Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side while he sent the crowds away. After sending the crowds away he went up into the hills by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, while the boat, by now some furlongs from land, was hard pressed by rough waves, for there was a head-wind. In the fourth watch of the night he came towards them, walking on the sea, and when the disciples saw him walking on the sea they were terrified. 'It is a ghost,' they said, and cried out in fear. But at once Jesus called out to them, saying, 'Courage! It's me! Don't be afraid.' It was Peter who answered. 'Lord,' he said, 'if it is you, tell me to come to you across the water.' Jesus said, 'Come.' Then Peter got out of the boat and started walking towards Jesus across the water, but then noticing the wind, he took fright and began to sink. 'Lord,' he cried, 'save me!' Jesus put out his hand at once and held him. 'You have so little faith,' he said, 'why did you doubt?' And as they got into the boat the wind dropped. The men in the boat bowed down before him and said, 'Truly, you are the Son of God.' Having made the crossing, they came to land at Gennesaret. When the local people recognised him they spread the news through the whole neighbourhood and took all that were sick to him, begging him just to let them touch the fringe of his cloak. And all those who touched it were saved.

Do not be afraid

In today's gospel, as Jesus' disciples crossed the lake, a fierce storm arose, tossing their boat. Terrified, they saw Jesus walking on the water and thought He was a ghost. Jesus comforted them, saying, "*Courage! It's me! Don't be afraid.*" Like the disciples, we face storms in our lives—illness, loss, financial struggles, and more. We also grapple with fears and anxieties. Jesus reassures us, "*Courage! It's me! Don't be afraid.*" Let us hold on to His words, trusting that He is always with us, especially in our trials.

We allow Henri Nouwen's words to empower us to live life with faith, not fear: "*When I trust deeply that today God is truly with me and holds me safe in a divine embrace, guiding every one of my steps, I can let go of my anxious need to know how tomorrow will look or what will happen next month or next year. I can be fully where I am and pay attention to the many signs of God's love within me and around me.*"

Reflective question:

Do I trust Jesus even when facing life's challenges?

Wednesday, 6th August, Transfiguration of the Lord.

Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14 or 2 Peter 1:16-19, Luke 9:28-36

Jesus took with him Peter and John and James and went up the mountain to pray. As he prayed, the aspect of his face was changed and his clothing became brilliant as lightning. Suddenly there were two men there talking to him; they were Moses and Elijah appearing in glory, and they were speaking of his passing which he was to accomplish in Jerusalem. Peter and his companions were heavy with sleep, but they kept awake and saw his glory and the two men standing with him. As these were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, 'Master, it is wonderful for us to be here; so let us make three tents, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah'. - He did not know what he was saying. As he spoke, a cloud came and covered them with shadow; and when they went into the cloud the disciples were afraid. And a voice came from the cloud saying, 'This is my Son, the Chosen One. Listen to him.' And after the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. The disciples kept silence and, at that time, told no one what they had seen.

God speaks in silence

In today's gospel, Jesus brings Peter, James, and John up the mountain, a place away from everything and everyone else, to be with God. Jesus goes up to the silence of the mountain to pray and listen to what God wants to tell Him.

In our fast-paced world, we often find ourselves overwhelmed by a cacophony of noises- noises from the traffic, the radio, the television and the chatter of people. In this relentless din, we frequently overlook the beauty of silence. Yet, it is precisely in these quiet moments that God speaks, inviting us to listen and connect with Him on a deeper level. If we desire to deepen our journey of faith and follow Jesus more closely, we must make a conscious effort to seek out those "mountaintop" moments of prayer and embrace the stillness, allowing ourselves to hear and discern the voice of God the Father. Let us make time to be with God in prayer and listen to Him.

Reflective question:

What small steps can I take this week to create time and space for prayer, in order to deepen my intimacy with God and allow Him to guide me in my daily life?

Thursday, 7th August, St. Sixtus II and Companions, St Cajetan.

Numbers 20:1-13, Matthew 16:12-23

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 he is 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, 'You are the Christ,' he said 'the Son of the living God'. Jesus replied, 'Simon son of Jonah, you are a happy man! Because it was not flesh and blood 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 Church. And the gates of the underworld can never hold out against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven: whatever you bind on earth shall be considered bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth shall be considered loosed in heaven.' Then he gave the disciples strict orders not to tell anyone that he was the Christ. From that time Jesus began to make it clear to his disciples that he was destined to go to Jerusalem and suffer grievously at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, to be put to death and to be raised up on the third day. Then, taking him aside, Peter started to remonstrate with him. 'Heaven preserve you, Lord,' he said 'this must not happen to you'. But he turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle in my path, because the way you think is not God's way but man's.'

You are Peter

When Jesus asked His disciples, "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus praised Peter for speaking the truth and entrusted him with the task of being the Rock upon which the Church would be built. Jesus then began to explain to them what was to happen to Him: that He would suffer, die and be raised to life. Peter protested against this talk of suffering and death. In response, Jesus told Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle in my path...". In an instant, Peter, from being a steady rock, became a stumbling block for Jesus because he was not thinking according to

God's ways. Despite this, Jesus did not give up on Peter. He loved him in both his best and worst moments and continued to trust him.

In the same way, Jesus loves us, trusts us, and continues to work in us and through us despite our failures and limitations. Today, let us ask Jesus to help us deepen our relationship with Him so that He can be our ultimate Rock, the firm foundation of our lives.

Reflective question:

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

Friday, 8th August, St. Dominic.

Deuteronomy 4:32-40, Matthew 16:24-28

Jesus said to his disciples, 'If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me. For anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for my sake will find it. What, then, will a man gain if he wins the whole world and ruins his life? Or what has a man to offer in exchange for his life? 'For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of his Father with his angels, and, when he does, he will reward each one according to his behaviour. I tell you solemnly, there are some of these standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming with his kingdom.'

Renounce yourself and follow Jesus

It is human nature to view life through the narrow lens of "I, me, mine." We often get caught up in the belief that the world revolves around ourselves. In today's Gospel, Jesus powerfully challenges this self-centered mindset, urging us to renounce our egos, take up our crosses, and follow Him. This call invites us to shift our focus away from our self-absorption and to engage deeply with the needs of others.

Today, let us open our hearts to the beauty of selflessness. Let us consciously set aside our pride and selfish urges in order to love unconditionally and care compassionately for those around us, especially those who are suffering or in need. By embracing this call to love, we follow Jesus in creating a more connected and compassionate world.

Reflective question:

What prevents me from renouncing myself, taking up my cross and following Jesus?

Saturday, 9th August, St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross.

Deuteronomy 6:4-13, Matthew 17:14-20

A man came up to Jesus and went down on his knees before him. 'Lord,' he said, 'take pity on my son: he is demented and in a wretched state; he is always falling into fire and into water. I took him to your disciples and they were unable to cure him.' In reply, Jesus said, 'Faithless and perverse generation! How much longer must I be with you? How much longer must I put up with you? Bring him here to me.' And when Jesus rebuked it the devil came out of the boy, who was cured from that moment. Then the disciples came privately to Jesus. 'Why were we unable to drive it out?' they asked. He answered, 'Because you have so little faith. In truth I tell you, if your faith is the size of a mustard seed you will say to this mountain, "Move from here to there," and it will move; nothing will be impossible for you.'

Love and trust

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and strength..." (1st reading). Loving God is an active commitment that influences every part of our lives. It shapes our thoughts, feelings, and actions, encouraging us to serve others for their good. Our love for God is a response to His love for us, as St. John said, *"We love because He first loved us"* (1 John 4:19). God's love for us, with all our weaknesses, is our source of peace and hope.

In today's gospel, a man approaches Jesus seeking help because the disciples are unable to heal his son. After the boy is healed, the disciples question why they lacked the ability to perform the healing. Jesus responds, *"Because you have so little faith."* He acknowledges that they do have faith, but it is not strong enough for them to trust that God will work through them. Like the disciples, we often struggle to trust God enough to overcome the mountains of fear and hopelessness that we have in us, especially during the challenging situations we encounter in life. Today, let us renew our trust in God and His love.

Reflective question:

How can I express my love for God and my trust in Him?

Sunday, 10th August, 19th Sunday in Ordinary Time.

Wisdom 18:6-9, Hebrew 11:1-2, 8-19, Luke 12:32-48

Jesus said to his disciples: 'There is no need to be afraid, little flock, for it has pleased your Father to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give alms. Get yourselves purses that do not wear out, treasure that will not fail you, in heaven where no thief can reach it and no moth destroy it. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. See that you are dressed for action and have your lamps lit. Be like men waiting for their master to return from the wedding feast, ready to open the door as soon as he comes and knocks. Happy those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes. I tell you solemnly, he will put on an apron, sit them down at table and wait on them. It may be in the second watch he comes, or in the third, but happy those servants if he finds them ready. You may be quite sure of this, that if the householder had known at what hour the burglar would come, he would not have let anyone break through the wall of his house. You too must stand ready, because the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.' Peter said, 'Lord, do you mean this parable for us, or for everyone?' The Lord replied, 'What sort of steward, then, is faithful and wise enough for the master to place him over his household to give them their allowance of food at the proper time? Happy that servant if his master's arrival finds him at this employment. I tell you truly, he will place him over everything he owns. But as for the servant who says to himself, "My master is taking his time coming", and sets about beating the menservants and the maids, and eating and drinking and getting drunk, his master will come on a day he does not expect and at an hour he does not know. The master will cut him off and send him to the same fate as the unfaithful. The servant who knows what his master wants, but has not even started to carry out those wishes, will receive very many strokes of the lash. The one who did not know, but deserves to be beaten for what he has done, will receive fewer strokes. When a man has had a great deal given him, a great deal will be demanded of him; when a man has had a great deal given him on trust, even more will be expected of him.'

Fear not, I am with you

"There is no need to be afraid, little flock..." Let us reflect on these words of Jesus in today's gospel. What causes us fear and anxiety? Jesus invites us to recognise our fears and place them in His loving hands. He does not want us to be paralysed by fear; instead, He encourages us to trust that we are safe in His care and that He is always with us. He promises to walk with us through every season of life. When we grasp the truth that Jesus is always with us, fear loses its grip.

Jesus continues by saying, *"See that you are dressed for action and have your lamps lit."* Rooted in Jesus' love, we are called to put love into action in our daily lives. This can be seen when we help those in need, offer words of encouragement, give our best in our work, or share a smile with a stranger. Through these acts of service and words of love, we reflect and shine Jesus' presence in us for all to see.

Reflective question:

What word or phrase stands out to me in the gospel passage? Why?

Monday, 11th August, St. Clare.

Deuteronomy 10:12-22, Matthew 17:22-27

One day, when they were together in Galilee, Jesus said to his disciples, 'The Son of Man is going to be handed over into the power of men; they will put him to death, and on the third day he will be raised to life again'. And a great sadness came over them. When they reached Capernaum, the collectors of the half shekel came to Peter and said, 'Does your master not pay the half-shekel?' 'Oh yes' he replied, and went into the house. But before he could speak, Jesus said, 'Simon, what is your opinion? From whom do the kings of the earth take toll or tribute? From their sons or from foreigners?' And when he replied, 'From foreigners', Jesus said, 'Well then, the sons are exempt. However, so as not to offend these people, go to the lake and cast a hook; take the first fish that bites, open its mouth and there you will find a shekel; take it and give it to them for me and for you.'

Being handed over

"The Son of Man is going to be handed over into the power of men..." In today's gospel, Jesus revealed to His disciples a profound truth: He would soon be delivered into the hands of those who had no regard for

His divine authority. As the words echoed in their hearts, an overwhelming sadness washed over them. They had envisioned their Master as a figure of strength and authority, a leader who would triumph over adversities. The idea of Him being passively handed over was unthinkable. They longed for a powerful Messiah who would lead them to victory, not one destined for suffering, pain, and ultimately, death.

In our own lives, we share a similar desire for control and strength. We strive to shape our futures, to dictate the course of our journeys. However, life often surprises us, and we find ourselves "*handed over*" to challenges—illnesses that invade our bodies, circumstances that disrupt our plans, and crises that test our resolve. It is in these moments of vulnerability and uncertainty that we must remember to follow in Jesus' footsteps. Though the path may be full of trials, we must not fear; He walks beside us in our moments of anguish, offering comfort and strength as we navigate our own passions and struggles.

Reflective question:

How can I live each moment in life, relying on Jesus?

Tuesday, 12th August, St. Jane Frances de Chantal.

Deuteronomy 31:1-8, Matthew 18:1-5, 10, 12-14

At this time the disciples came to Jesus and said, 'Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' So he called a little child to him and set the child in front of them. Then he said, 'I tell you solemnly, unless you change and become like little children you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. And so, the one who makes himself as little as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Anyone who welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me. See that you never despise any of these little ones, for I tell you that their angels in heaven are continually in the presence of my Father in heaven. 'Tell me. Suppose a man has a hundred sheep and one of them strays; will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hillside and go in search of the stray? I tell you solemnly, if he finds it, it gives him more joy than do the ninety-nine that did not stray at all. Similarly, it is never the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little ones should be lost.'

To become like children

"Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" This was the question the disciples asked Jesus. In response, He placed a child among them. For Jesus, being the greatest means becoming like a little child. Generally, children embody humility and do not crave worldly desires for power, glory, position or status. They trust easily, especially in their parents, knowing they will be protected, loved, and provided for. Children are curious about the world around them and are always eager to learn. They also forgive quickly and are willing to move on from disagreements. Additionally, they are vulnerable and unafraid to be themselves or ask for help.

Today, we find comfort in knowing that God is our loving Father, who sees us as His children, His *"little ones."* We need the child-like qualities to open ourselves to more of God's love. Therefore, it is essential to set aside our pride and learn to trust God, being willing to seek His help and guidance in our daily lives.

Reflective question:

How can I let go of our pride for greatness and embrace humility and dependence on God?

Wednesday, 13th August, SS. Pontian and Hippolytus.

Deuteronomy 34:1-12, Matthew 18:15-20

Jesus said to his disciples: 'If your brother does something wrong, go and have it out with him alone, is between your two selves. If he listens to you, you have won back your brother. If he does not listen, take one or two others along with you: the evidence of two or three witnesses is required to sustain any charge. But if he refuses to listen to these, report it to the community; and if he refuses to listen to the community, treat him like a pagan or a tax collector. I tell you solemnly, whatever you bind on earth shall be considered bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth shall be considered loosed in heaven. I tell you solemnly once again, if two of you on earth agree to ask anything at all, it will be granted to you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three meet in my name, I shall be there with them.'

Community and reconciliation

God gives us the gift of community—our family, friends, our community of faith, and parish groups—so that we can build relationships based on mutual love. However, there are times when someone in the community does us wrong. What should we do? Can we still love the person as our brother or sister?

Today, Jesus invites us to work always for reconciliation. This is because He has given us love as the guiding principle in our relationships with one another. However, loving someone does not mean ignoring their wrongdoing. Out of love, we should approach the person and engage in a dialogue of understanding and forgiveness. If they resist our efforts at peace, we should involve another person or two to help. Whatever we do, we must always approach the individual with the spirit of reconciliation. May we have the strength and love to work toward building bridges.

Reflective question:

How can I apply this gospel passage in my life and relationships, especially during conflicts with others?

Thursday, 14th August, St. Maximilian Kolbe.

Joshua 3:7-11, 13-17, Matthew 18:21-19:1

Peter went up to him and said, 'Lord, how often must I forgive my brother if he wrongs me? As often as seven times?' Jesus answered, 'Not seven, I tell you, but seventy-seven times. And so the kingdom of Heaven may be compared to a king who decided to settle his accounts with his servants. When the reckoning began, they brought him a man who owed ten thousand talents; he had no means of paying, so his master gave orders that he should be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, to meet the debt. At this, the servant threw himself down at his master's feet, with the words, "Be patient with me and I will pay the whole sum." And the servant's master felt so sorry for him that he let him go and cancelled the debt. Now as this servant went out, he happened to meet a fellow-servant who owed him one hundred denarii; and he seized him by the throat and began to throttle him, saying, "Pay what you owe me." His fellow-servant fell at his feet and appealed to him, saying, "Be patient with me and I will pay you." But the other would not agree; on the contrary, he had him thrown into prison till he should pay

the debt. His fellow-servants were deeply distressed when they saw what had happened, and they went to their master and reported the whole affair to him. Then the master sent for the man and said to him, "You wicked servant, I cancelled all that debt of yours when you appealed to me. Were you not bound, then, to have pity on your fellow-servant just as I had pity on you?" And in his anger the master handed him over to the torturers till he should pay all his debt. And that is how my heavenly Father will deal with you unless you each forgive your brother from your heart.' Jesus had now finished what he wanted to say, and he left Galilee and came into the territory of Judaea on the far side of the Jordan.

Forgiveness

In today's Gospel, Peter approaches Jesus and asks, "Lord, how often must I forgive my brother if he wrongs me? Should I forgive him as many as seven times?" This question indicates that Peter believed there was a limit to the mercy he should extend to those who wronged him. However, Jesus replies, "*Not seven times, but seventy-seven times.*" With this, He emphasises that forgiveness should be limitless.

Jesus then shared a parable to illustrate His point. In the parable, a servant owed a large amount of money to his king, who, out of mercy, cancelled the entire debt. Yet, when this same servant encountered another servant who owed him a much smaller sum, he treated him harshly by throwing him into prison. Through this parable, Jesus teaches us that God's merciful love knows no bounds, just like that of the king. He forgives us every time because He loves us unconditionally. We are called to let His love flow through us to those who have hurt us and to continually seek reconciliation. Today, let us have the courage to approach God and experience His merciful and unconditional love for us. Filled with His love, we gain the strength to show mercy to others.

Reflective questions:

Do I struggle to forgive others? Why?

Friday, 15th August, the Assumption of Blessed Mary.

Revelations 11:19,12:1-6,10, 1 Corinthians 15:20-27, Luke 1:39-56

Mary set out at that time and went as quickly as she could to a town in the hill country of Judah. She went into Zechariah's house and greeted

Elizabeth. Now as soon as Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leapt in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. She gave a loud cry and said, 'Of all women you are the most blessed, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. Why should I be honoured with a visit from the mother of my Lord? For the moment your greeting reached my ears, the child in my womb leapt for joy. Yes, blessed is she who believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled.' And Mary said: 'My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord and my spirit exults in God my saviour; because he has looked upon his lowly handmaid. Yes, from this day forward all generations will call me blessed, for the Almighty has done great things for me. Holy is his name, and his mercy reaches from age to age for those who fear him He has shown the power of his arm, he has routed the proud of heart. He has pulled down princes from their thrones and exalted the lowly. The hungry he has filled with good things, the rich sent empty away. He has come to the help of Israel his servant, mindful of his mercy -according to the promise he made to our ancestors- of his mercy to Abraham and to his descendants forever.' Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months and then went back home.

Joy

Today's gospel beautifully depicts the encounter between two expecting mothers, Elizabeth and Mary. After receiving the good news from the angel that her cousin Elizabeth was pregnant, Mary, filled with excitement and purpose, quickly made her way to Zechariah and Elizabeth's home to share in this joyful moment. Upon her arrival, as Mary entered the house, the child in Elizabeth's womb leapt with joy. Elizabeth, overwhelmed too with joy, welcomed Mary with open arms, recognising her as the bearer of Christ, as the mother of her Lord. The warmth of their meeting radiated with the promise of new life and hope.

Today, as we celebrate the Feast of the Assumption, let us ask Mother Mary to help us be beacons of joy, not sources of pain, in the lives of those we encounter. We can do so because Christ, who is the source of joy, is present in our lives. He is in us and with us everywhere we go, even during difficult and challenging moments. Let us strive to share the radiant joy that Christ instils within us, sharing it with others through uplifting words, selfless acts of service, or simple gestures of peace.

Reflective question:

How can I be a beacon of joy to others today?

Saturday, 16th August, St. Stephen of Hungary.

Joshua 24:14-29, Matthew 19:13-15

People brought little children to Jesus, for him to lay his hands on them and say a prayer. The disciples turned them away, but Jesus said, 'Let the little children alone, and do not stop them coming to me; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs'. Then he laid his hands on them and went on his way.

Let the children come to me

In the gospel, people bring their children to Jesus, but the disciples turn them away. Their dismissive attitude towards the children reflects their belief that they were insignificant and unworthy of Jesus' attention. However, Jesus told them, "*Let the little children alone, and do not stop them coming to me, for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs.*" For Jesus, each person matters and is worthy of His attention. In fact, He goes around showing love and compassion to all, regardless of their background or status.

Today, we are called to follow in Jesus' footsteps. Every person who crosses our path matters, and we must show them respect, care, and attention. This means that we should not view people through our own prejudices and judgments, but rather through the lens of Jesus. When we recognise the inherent value of each individual, it will inspire us to create a just and loving community, family, society, and world.

Reflective question:

How do I treat the least in our society and community?

Sunday, 17th August, 20th Sunday in Ordinary Time.

Jeremiah 38:4-6,8-10, Hebrews 12:1-4, Luke 12:49-53

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

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

Living out the prophetic mission

"The king's leading men spoke to the king, 'Let Jeremiah be put to death, he is unquestionably disheartening the remaining soldiers in the city, and all the people too, by talking like this...'...So they took Jeremiah and threw him into the well..." (1st reading). The reason the prophet Jeremiah was thrown into the well was that he criticised the people for their corruption and injustice towards the poor. Some people did not like his message, and as a result, he was cast into the pit. This passage challenges us on how committed we are to living out our prophetic mission, which we received at baptism. Like Jeremiah, we are called to be God's prophet, His spokesperson, with the purpose of leading others to God, even if it means facing ridicule, criticism and opposition.

In the Gospel, Jesus Himself said that He came to bring division, not peace, because those who fully commit to living out the gospel values and speaking God's truth will likely encounter conflict with those who do not share our faith or values. Often, we tend to blend into worldly values to maintain external peace. Today, let us choose to remain true to our integrity and convictions, even if it may create tensions in our relationships with others.

Reflective question:

In what ways do the words of Jesus about bringing division challenge my understanding of peace?

Monday, 18th August, 20th Week in Ordinary Time.

Judges 2:11-19, Matthew 19:16-22

There was a man who came to Jesus and asked, 'Master, what good deed must I do to possess eternal life?' Jesus said to him, 'Why do you ask me about what is good? There is one alone who is good. But if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.' He said, 'Which?' 'These:' Jesus replied 'You must not kill. You must not commit adultery. You must not bring false witness. Honour your father and mother, and: you must love your neighbour as yourself' The young man said to him, 'I have kept all these. What more do I need to do?' Jesus said, 'If you wish to be perfect, go and sell what you own and give the money to the poor,

and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me'. But when the young man heard these words, he went away sad, for he was a man of great wealth.

Follow me

In today's gospel, a young, rich man went to Jesus seeking guidance on how to achieve eternal life. He was a good person, but he approached his faith in a legalistic manner, focusing heavily on external actions. Jesus invited him to sell off everything, give it to the poor and follow Him. The man wanted to deepen his faith and serve God more fully, but he was not ready to give up the security provided by his worldly wealth. As a result, he walked away from Jesus feeling sad. The story of the young rich man is also our story because we also have things we struggle to let go of.

"Go and sell what you own and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." Today, let us take a moment to sit quietly with this passage, be aware of Jesus' presence with us and have an honest conversation with Him about the things that we cling to and find it difficult to let go in our journey of following Him.

Reflective question:

What is the thing that keeps me from truly following Jesus with love and trust?

Tuesday, 19th August, St. John Eudes.

Judges 6:11-24, Matthew 19:23-30

Jesus said to his disciples, 'I tell you solemnly, it will be hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Yes, I tell you again, it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.' When the disciples heard this they were astonished. 'Who can be saved, then?' they said. Jesus gazed at them. 'For men' he told them 'this is impossible; for God everything is possible.' Then Peter spoke. 'What about us?' he said to him 'We have left everything and followed you. What are we to have, then?' Jesus said to him, 'I tell you solemnly, when all is made new and the Son of Man sits on his throne of glory, you will yourselves sit on twelve thrones to judge the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses, brothers, sisters, father, mother, children or land for the sake of my name will be

repaid a hundred times over, and also inherit eternal life. Many who are first will be last, and the last, first.'

The secret to true contentment

"I tell you solemnly, it will be hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven." There is nothing wrong with having money and things. Jesus' point is that having God, not money or material things, should be the centre of our lives and the one who directs how we live. Money and material possessions become obstacles when we make them our God. We can possess all the money, popularity, and security that the world offers, but if we do not place God at the centre of our lives and lack inner peace and joy, it amounts to nothing.

In the letter to the Philippians, St. Paul wrote about his experience of finding true joy and contentment in God, rather than material possessions: *"I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength"* (Philippians 4:12-13). May we find contentment in God alone and rely on Him for inner strength and joy.

Reflective question:

Do I believe that God, and not worldly securities, is my source of peace and joy?

Wednesday, 20th August, St. Bernard.

Judges 9:6-15, Matthew 20:1-16

Jesus told this parable to his disciples: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner going out at daybreak to hire workers for his vineyard. He made an agreement with the workers for one denarius a day, and sent them to his vineyard. Going out at about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the market place and said to them, "You go to my vineyard too and I will give you a fair wage". So they went. At about the sixth hour and again at about the ninth hour, he went out and did the same. Then at about the eleventh hour he went out and found more men standing round, and he said to them, "Why have you been standing here idle all day?" "Because no one has hired us" they answered. He said to them, "You go into my vineyard too". In the evening, the owner of the

vineyard said to his bailiff, "Call the workers and pay them their wages, starting with the last arrivals and ending with the first". So those who were hired at about the eleventh hour came forward and received one denarius each. When the first came, they expected to get more, but they too received one denarius each. They took it, but grumbled at the landowner. "The men who came last" they said "have done only one hour, and you have treated them the same as us, though we have done a heavy day's work in all the heat." He answered one of them and said, "My friend, I am not being unjust to you; did we not agree on one denarius? Take your earnings and go. I choose to pay the last comer as much as I pay you. Have I no right to do what I like with my own? Why be envious because I am generous?" Thus the last will be first, and the first, last."

God is generous

In today's gospel, the landowner paid each worker one denarius, regardless of whether they started working at the beginning, middle or end of the day. When those who worked longer saw that they received the same amount, they started to complain. To them, it seemed unjust that those who worked for a few hours received the same amount. However, the landowner responded, *"My friend, I am not being unjust to you; did we not agree on one denarius? Take your earnings and go. I choose to pay the last comer as much as I pay you. Have I no right to do what I like with my own? Why be envious because I am generous?"*

God is like this landowner whose generosity reached out to everyone. He offers one denarius of His love and mercy to those who are deserving and to those who are not. God's generosity is not based on a system of merit and reward. It extends to all, regardless of their achievements and contributions. Let us celebrate the depth of God's love for us and for others. As we experience His love, we are called to open our hearts and be generous to everyone, regardless of whether we consider them worthy of our love and mercy.

Reflective question:

How can I apply today's gospel to my life, especially with how I understand God's generosity?

Thursday, 21st August, St. Pius X.
Judges 11:29-39, Matthew 22:1-14

Jesus began to speak in parables once again to the chief priests and elders of the people: 'The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a feast for his son's wedding. He sent his servants to call those who had been invited, but they would not come. Next he sent some more servants. "Tell those who have been invited" he said "that I have my banquet all prepared, my oxen and fattened cattle have been slaughtered, everything is ready. Come to the wedding." But they were not interested: one went off to his farm, another to his business, and the rest seized his servants, maltreated them and killed them. The king was furious. He despatched his troops, destroyed those murderers and burnt their town. Then he said to his servants, "The wedding is ready; but as those who were invited proved to be unworthy, go to the crossroads in the town and invite everyone you can find to the wedding". So these servants went out on to the roads and collected together everyone they could find, bad and good alike; and the wedding hall was filled with guests. When the king came in to look at the guests he noticed one man who was not wearing a wedding garment, and said to him, "How did you get in here, my friend, without a wedding garment?" And the man was silent. Then the king said to the attendants, "Bind him hand and foot and throw him out into the dark, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth". For many are called, but few are chosen.'

Feast of love

Today, Jesus invites us to the greatest feast of all: to enter into a daily fellowship with God. This intimate relationship with Him ensures that our hearts will never be devoid of love and affection. Jesus encourages us not to wait but to come and partake in this feast of love. Like the king in the parable, God welcomes everyone—both the good and the bad—to enjoy a life with Him. This is the Good News of our Christian faith: God always loves us, regardless of our past actions, whether things we have done or things we have left undone.

There was a man who accepted the king's invitation and attended the feast. However, he did not make an effort to change his clothes, which symbolises the indifference of his heart—he is unwilling to alter his attitudes, habits, and behaviours. Yes, God invites everyone to the feast of having a relationship with Him. However, we must shed our negative

habits, old ways of thinking and judging, and the resentments and anger we carry in our hearts. We need to adopt new "clothes," embodying a transformed heart filled with love, compassion, humility, and patience.

Reflective question:

Do I want to be with God and feast on His unconditional love He has for me?

Friday, 22nd August, The Queenship of Mary.

Isaiah 9:1-7, Luke 1: 26-38

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

Mary's "Yes"

Today, we celebrate Mary's queenship. Mary, our Queen, is also our Mother, who wants to guide us in joyfully trusting God in our lives in the same way she did. In the gospel, Mary's response to God's call to be the mother of Jesus: "*You see before you the Lord's servant, let it happen to me as you have said*", reveals her deep and humble trust in God, even though it meant stepping out of her comfort zone and into the unknown. She gave God her "Yes" and it was an unconditional "Yes". Mary's life was full of tribulations, the greatest of which was witnessing her son

being cruelly and unjustly crucified. Nevertheless, she never took back her “Yes”.

God calls us to carry Jesus in our lives and bring Him to others by loving and serving them. Mary’s “Yes” to God continues to inspire our own commitment to Him in our daily lives, allowing Him to work in us and through us for our good and the good of others.

Reflective question:

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

Saturday, 23rd August, St. Rose of Lima.

Ruth 2:1-3, 8-11; 4:13-17, Matthew 23:1-12

Addressing the crowds and his disciples, Jesus said, ‘The scribes and the Pharisees occupy the chair of Moses. You must therefore do and observe what they tell you; but do not be guided by what they do, since they do not practise what they preach. They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on people’s shoulders, but will they lift a finger to move them? Not they! Everything they do is done to attract attention, like wearing broader headbands and longer tassels, like wanting to take the place of honour at banquets and the front seats in the synagogues, being greeted respectfully in the market squares and having people call them Rabbi. You, however, must not allow yourselves to be called Rabbi, since you have only one Master, and you are all brothers. You must call no one on earth your father, since you have only one Father, and he is in heaven. Nor must you allow yourselves to be called teachers, for you have only one Teacher, the Christ. The greatest among you must be your servant. Anyone who raises himself up will be humbled, and anyone who humbles himself will be raised up.’

True authority

In today’s gospel, Jesus highlights two important observations about the Jewish religious leaders of His time. First, they failed to practice what they preached, showing a disconnection between their words and actions. Second, they were more concerned with outward displays of piety, such as elaborate rituals and public showmanship, while neglecting the essential qualities of love and compassion for those around them. Jesus’ message resonates deeply not just with the religious leaders, but also all of us who hold positions of authority; after

all, we each serve as mentors or role models to others, influencing their lives in more ways than we may realise. To have authority is not to dominate or control others. Instead, it is to serve others and empower them to live life to the fullest.

"You must call no one on earth your father, since you have only one Father, and he is in heaven...": Jesus is inviting us to focus on God, who is our Father and Teacher, and to depend on Him for guidance in becoming authentic people who embody love and service.

Reflective question:

How do I understand and live out leadership and authority in my daily life?

Sunday, 24th August, 21st Sunday in Ordinary Time.

Isaiah 66:18-21, Hebrews 12:5-7, 11-13, Luke 13:22-30

Through towns and villages Jesus went teaching, making his way to Jerusalem. Someone said to him, 'Sir, will there be only a few saved?' He said to them, 'Try your best to enter by the narrow door, because, I tell you, many will try to enter and will not succeed. 'Once the master of the house has got up and locked the door, you may find yourself knocking on the door, saying, "Lord, open to us" but he will answer, "I do not know where you come from". Then you will find yourself saying, "We once ate and drank in your company; you taught in our streets" but he will reply, "I do not know where you come from. Away from me, all you wicked men!" 'Then there will be weeping and grinding of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves turned outside. And men from east and west, from north and south, will come to take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God. 'Yes, there are those now last who will be first, and those now first who will be last.'

Enter by the narrow door

In today's gospel, a person came up to Jesus and asked Him, *"Sir, will there be only a few saved?"*. This person was obsessed with how many would be saved in the next life. Rather than providing a straightforward answer, Jesus chose to shift the focus away from the abstract question of how many would be saved. Instead, He emphasised that what truly matters is how we conduct our lives in the present moment- with love,

compassion and integrity. It is our actions and words here and now that should be our primary concern.

Therefore, Jesus said, “*Try your best to enter by the narrow door...*” We need to make a conscious effort to live out our faith by following the same path as Jesus, living according to His values, and loving as He loves. Although Jesus calls us to strive to go through the narrow door, we can trust that He will help us in our efforts. He is not a distant God who scrutinises us from afar; rather, He is with us, guiding and empowering us as we live each day as His faithful disciples.

Reflective question:

How can I consciously enter through the narrow door by living a life that reflects Jesus’ values and ways?

Monday, 25th August, St. Louis, St. Joseph Calasanz.

1 Thessalonians 1:1-5, 8-10, Matthew 23:13-22

Jesus said: “Alas for you, scribes and Pharisees! You hypocrites! You who shut up the kingdom of heaven in men’s faces, neither going in yourselves nor allowing others to go in who want to. ‘Alas for you scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You who travel over sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when you have him you make twice as fit as hell you are. ‘Alas for you, blind guides! You who say, “If a man swears by the Temple, it has no force; but if a man swears by the gold of the Temple, he is bound.” Fools and blind! For which is of greater worth, the gold or the Temple that makes the gold sacred? Or else, “If a man swears by the altar it has no force; but if a man swears by the offering that is on the altar, he is bound.” You blind men! For which is of greater worth, the offerings or the altar he is swearing by that and by everything on it. And when a man swears by the Temple he is swearing by that and by the One who dwells in it. And when a man swears by heaven he is swearing by the throne of God and by the One who is seated there.’

Genuine faith, not hypocrisy

In today’s gospel, Jesus strongly rebuked the hypocrisy of the scribes and the Pharisees. They misused their authority, focusing on outward religious rituals over living a life of authentic faith. As a result, they became obstacles rather than helpers in leading people to God. Jesus recognised that their hearts were far from God.

Jesus' words challenge us to examine our hearts. Is God at the centre of our hearts, the very core of our inner being? Today, we are called to enter into a personal relationship with God once more. When He is our centre, He guides us to live our faith authentically, ensuring that we do not become hindrances to others seeking Him.

Reflective question:

How can I be a true guide who points the way for others to see and encounter God?

Tuesday, 26th August, 21st Week in Ordinary Time.

1 Thessalonians 2:1-8, Matthew 23:23-26

Jesus said: 'Alas for you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You who pay your tithe of mint and dill and cummin and have neglected the weightier matters of the Law - justice, mercy, good faith! These you should have practised, without neglecting the others. You blind guides! Straining out gnats and swallowing camels! Alas for you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You who clean the outside of cup and dish and leave the inside full of extortion and intemperance. Blind Pharisee! Clean the inside of cup and dish first so that the outside may become clean as well.'

Loving God's people

"Like a mother feeding and looking after her own children, we felt so devoted and protective towards you, and had come to love you so much, that we were eager to hand over to you not only the Good News but our whole life as well" (1st reading). St. Paul was convinced that everything he did and said was motivated by his desire to please God alone, rather than people. His love for God inspired him to care deeply for the people of Thessalonica, even in the face of opposition and criticism. He treated them with great gentleness, like a mother caring for her baby, and he willingly shared his life with them through selfless love and dedication. The invitation for us is to follow St. Paul's example by being trustworthy guides for others, prioritising their well-being and spiritual lives.

"Clean the inside of the cup and dish first so that the outside may become clean as well". In the gospel, Jesus encourages us to examine the motivations behind our actions and words. Sometimes, we may follow external rules while harbouring self-righteous judgments about

others in our hearts. Jesus invites us to allow Him to transform our hearts so that we can live a life grounded in love and for love.

Reflective question:

How can I be a guide for others to encounter Christ?

Wednesday, 27th August, St. Monica.

1 Thessalonians 2:9-13, Matthew 23:27-32

Jesus said, 'Alas for you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You who are like whitewashed tombs that look handsome on the outside, but inside are full of dead men's bones and every kind of corruption. In the same way you appear to people from the outside like good honest men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. 'Alas for you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You who build the sepulchres of the prophets and decorate the tombs of holy men, saying, "We would never have joined in shedding the blood of the prophets, had we lived in our fathers' day". So! Your own evidence tells against you! You are the sons of those who murdered the prophets! Very well then, finish off the work that your fathers began.'

Giving glory to God

In the Gospel, Jesus said to the Jewish religious leaders, *"In the same way you appear to people from the outside like good, honest men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness."* The scribes and Pharisees placed great emphasis on external appearances to project an image of righteousness, even though their hearts and minds were filled with self-love and contempt for others. They sought human glory rather than pursuing God's glory.

If we are committed to following Jesus, we must walk His path, which involves seeking God's glory instead of striving for human success. God's glory is what brings us lasting joy and peace. When we lead a life rooted in love, aligning our actions with our words, we truly honour God. As Pope Francis said, *"One cannot proclaim the Gospel of Jesus without the tangible witness of one's life. Those who listen to us and observe us must see in our actions what they hear from our lips, and thus give glory to God!"*

Reflective question:

Whose glory do I seek—my own or God's?

Thursday, 28th August, St. Augustine.

1 Thessalonians 3:7-13, Matthew 24:42-51

Jesus said to his disciples, 'So stay awake, because you do not know the day when your master is coming. You may be quite sure of this, that if the householder had known at what time of the night the burglar would come, he would have stayed awake and would not have allowed anyone to break through the wall of his house. Therefore, you too must stand ready because the Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect. Who, then, is the wise and trustworthy servant whom the master placed over his household to give them their food at the proper time? Blessed that servant if his master's arrival finds him doing exactly that. In truth I tell you, he will put him in charge of everything he owns. But if the servant is dishonest and says to himself, "My master is taking his time," and sets about beating his fellow-servants and eating and drinking with drunkards, his master will come on a day he does not expect and at an hour he does not know. The master will cut him off and send him to the same fate as the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth.'

The power of love

"May the Lord be generous in increasing your love and make you love one another and the whole human race as much as we love you..." (1st Reading). St Paul held a tender affection for the Church of Thessalonica, a bond that shines through in this First Reading as he earnestly prays for them. His prayer is filled with hope that God will not only deepen their capacity for love but also strengthen their ability to love one another within the community, as well as extend that love to those beyond their circle. For Paul, love is a powerful testimony to others, serving as a guiding light that draws them to encounter Christ and to have faith in Him.

In the Gospel, Jesus calls us to stay awake by engaging ourselves in a life filled with love, compassion, and service to others. He encourages us to open our hearts and attend to the needs of those around us, fostering a community rooted in kindness and support. Today, let us turn to Jesus and seek His grace, which empowers us to live with unwavering faith and extend our love generously to everyone we encounter.

Reflective question:

Am I actively putting love into action in my daily life?

Friday, 29th August, The Passion of St. John the Baptist.

Jeremiah 1:17-19, Mark 6:17-29

Herod had sent to have John arrested, and 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, because Herod was afraid of John, knowing him to be a good and holy 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 hurried straight back to the king and made her request, 'I want you to give me John the Baptist's head, here and now, 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. So the king at once sent one of the bodyguard with orders to bring John's head. The man went off and beheaded him in 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.

I will be with you

"I, for my part, today will make you into a fortified city, a pillar of iron, and a wall of bronze to confront all this land... They will fight against you but shall not overcome you, for I am with you to deliver you" (1st Reading). God called Jeremiah to be His prophet and share His message of repentance with His unfaithful people. Jeremiah was afraid because he knew that few would listen to his unpopular message. God told him that the people would fight against him. Although Jeremiah did not see himself as strong and resilient, God encouraged him to trust that he

would not be alone, as God would be with him. Jeremiah would stand firm to the end because God was by his side.

We are all called to witness to the Gospel through our words and actions. We trust that God is with us, and we draw strength from His presence, which protects and guides us. Today, we celebrate the Passion of St. John the Baptist, who was martyred for speaking the truth and refusing to compromise his message. May we draw inspiration from the steadfast commitment of both Jeremiah and John the Baptist, and strive to do what is right in our own lives.

Reflective question:

Am I willing to stand up for what is right, even if it means facing opposition?

Saturday, 30th July, 21st Week in Ordinary Time.

1 Thessalonians 4:9-11, Matthew 25:14-30

Jesus told his disciples this parable: 'It is like a man on his way abroad who summoned his servants and entrusted his property to them. To one he gave five talents, to another two, to a third is one; each in proportion to his ability. Then he set out. The man who had received the five talents promptly went and traded with them and made five more. The man who had received two made two more in the same way. But the man who had received one went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. Now a long time after, the master of those servants came back and went through his accounts with them. The man who had received the five talents came forward bringing five more. "Sir," he said "you entrusted me with five talents; here are five more that I have made." His master said to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you have shown you can be faithful in small things, I will trust you with greater; come and join in your master's happiness". Next the man with the two talents came forward. "Sir," he said "you entrusted me with two talents; here are two more that I have made." His master said to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you have shown you can be faithful in small things, I will trust you with greater; come and join in your master's happiness". Last came forward the man who had the one talent. "Sir," said he "I had heard you were a hard man, reaping where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered; so I was afraid, and I went off and hid your talent in the ground. Here it is; it was yours, you

have it back.” But his master answered him, “You wicked and lazy servant! So you knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered? Well then, you should have deposited my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have recovered my capital with interest. So now, take the talent from him and give it to the man who has the five talents. For to everyone who has will be given more, and he will have more than enough; but from the man who has not, even what he has will be taken away. As for this good-for-nothing servant, throw him out into the dark, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth.”

The talent of love

Today's Gospel highlights the Master's trust in his three servants, each receiving money according to their ability. While the first two servants actively invested their talents, the third buried his in fear.

God gives us talents, with the greatest being the capacity to love. This gift is meant to be actively shared, not hidden away due to fear or laziness. Love should not be seen merely as an emotion; true love, as exemplified by Jesus on the cross, requires action and self-giving. As Christians, we are called to exercise our ability to love by serving others. The more love we give, the more we receive. Let us embrace our capacity to love and put it into practice without hesitation.

Reflective question:

Today, how can I put love into practice?

Sunday, 31st August, 22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time.

Ecclesiasticus 3:17-20, 28-29, Hebrews 12:18-19, 22-24, Luke 14:1, 7-14

On a sabbath day, Jesus had gone for a meal to the house of one of the leading Pharisees, and they watched him closely. He then told the guests a parable, because he had noticed how they picked the places of honour. He said this, ‘When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take your seat in the place of honour. A more distinguished person than you may have been invited, and the person who invited you both may come and say, “Give up your place to this man”. And then, to your embarrassment, you would have to go and take the lowest place. No; when you are a guest, make your way to the lowest place and sit there,

so that, when your host comes, he may say, "My friend, move up higher". In that way, everyone with you at the table will see you honoured. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the man who humbles himself will be exalted.' Then he said to his host, 'When you give a lunch or a dinner, do not ask your friends, brothers, relations or rich neighbours, for fear they repay your courtesy by inviting you in return. No; when you have a party, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind; that they cannot pay you back means that you are fortunate, because repayment will be made to you when the virtuous rise again.'

Humility

"The greater you are, the more you should behave humbly, and then you will find favour with the Lord; for great though the power of the Lord is, he accepts the homage of the humble" (1st Reading). It goes against our human nature to strive for humility. Humility is not about belittling ourselves; it involves recognising our limitations and our dependence on God. He is the source of all our strengths and talents, which are meant to be used for His purpose. As Christians, we are called to embrace this virtue because it is the foundation of an intimate and personal relationship with God. For God, true greatness is not found in pride, but in humility.

In today's Gospel, Jesus observes how people choose places of honour at the table. This behaviour is common in various aspects of life, including the church, workplaces, family dynamics, and even our personal lives. We often seek recognition. Jesus invites us to embrace humility by using our gifts to serve the well-being of others without seeking titles, dignity, or status.

Reflective question:

In what ways can I try to see myself as less important than others?

