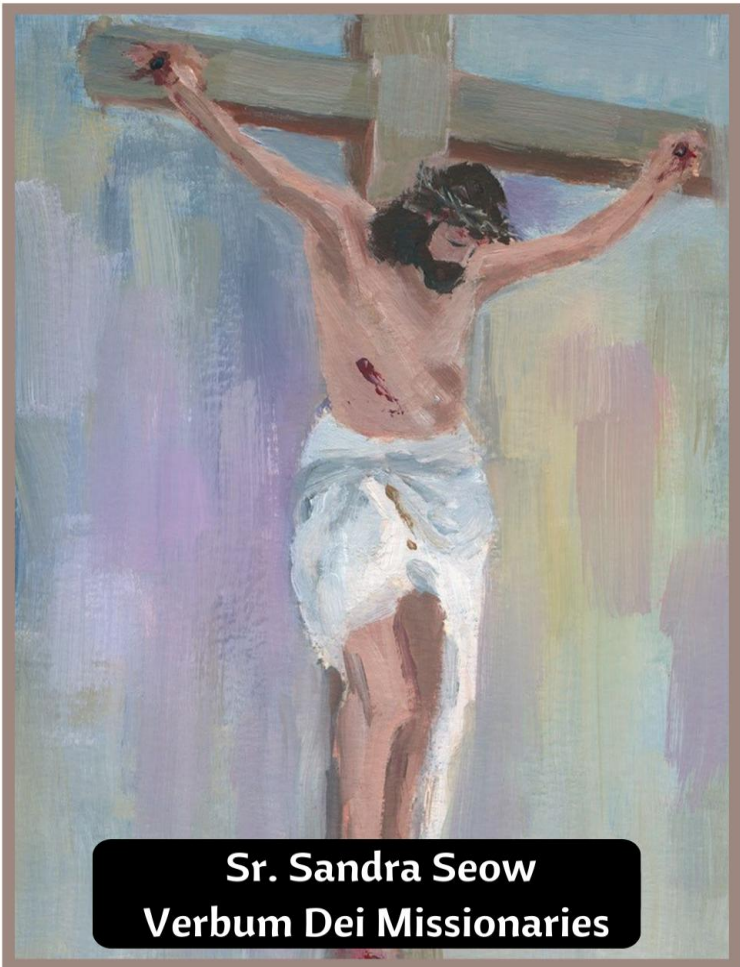


*Prayer for Living
Year C
September*

**On the cross,
we see the God of love**



PRAYER FOR LIVING YEAR C

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Monday, 1st September, 22nd Week in Ordinary Time.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, Luke 4:16-30

Jesus came to Nazara, where he had been brought up, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day as he usually did. He stood up to read and they handed him the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. Unrolling the scroll he found the place where it is written: The spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for he has anointed me. He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives and to the blind new sight, to set the downtrodden free, to proclaim the Lord's year of favour. He then rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the assistant and sat down. And all eyes in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to speak to them, 'This text is being fulfilled today even as you listen'. And he won the approval of all, and they were astonished by the gracious words that came from his lips. They said, 'This is Joseph's son, surely?' But he replied, 'No doubt you will quote me the saying, "Physician, heal yourself" and tell me, "We have heard all that happened in Capernaum, do the same here in your own countryside"'. And he went on, 'I tell you solemnly, no prophet is ever accepted in his own country. 'There were many widows in Israel, I can assure you, in Elijah's day, when heaven remained shut for three years and six months and a great famine raged throughout the land, but Elijah was not sent to any one of these: he was sent to a widow at Zarephath, a Sidonian town. And in the prophet Elisha's time there were many lepers in Israel, but none of these was cured, except the Syrian, Naaman.' When they heard this everyone in the synagogue was enraged. They sprang to their feet and hustled him out of the town; and they took him up to the brow of the hill their town was built on, intending to throw him down the cliff, but he slipped through the crowd and walked away.

Following Jesus in His mission

In today's gospel, we find Jesus in the synagogue on a Sabbath day. He stood up to read a passage from the prophet Isaiah, which were His first words in His public ministry. The words that He spoke revealed His understanding of His mission. Jesus was clear that He was not sent to seek attention or fame for Himself, nor to acquire status or power. Instead, His purpose was to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives, restore sight to the blind, to set the downtrodden free and to announce the Lord's favor. His mission would be other-

centred. Today, Jesus invites us to look at others around us and to minister to those who are most in need of our care and attention.

Just as Jesus came to those in need during His time, He also reaches out to us in our moments of struggle. When we feel poor, imprisoned, blind, or downtrodden, Jesus is there with us. His presence enriches us in our poverty, liberates us from our captivity, and brings clarity to our blindness. In Him, we discover true life. Consequently, we are empowered to share that life and love with others.

Reflective question:

How can I participate in Jesus' mission today?

Tuesday, 2nd September, 22nd Week in Ordinary Time.

1 Thessalonians 5:1-6, 9-11, Luke 4: 31-37

Jesus went down to Capernaum, a town in Galilee, and taught them on the Sabbath. And his teaching made a deep impression on them because he spoke with authority. In the synagogue there was a man who was possessed by the spirit of an unclean devil, and it shouted at the top of its voice, 'Ha! What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are: the Holy One of God.' But Jesus said sharply, 'Be quiet! Come out of him!' And the devil, throwing the man down in front of everyone, went out of him without hurting him at all. Astonishment seized them and they were all saying to one another, 'What teaching! He gives orders to unclean spirits with authority and power and they come out.' And reports of him went all through the surrounding countryside.

Children of light

In the first reading, St. Paul reminds the Thessalonians that they are children of light, not darkness. As a result, their lives should reflect this identity. This is also who we are: we are children of light. Therefore, what we do and say each day must flow from who we are for God. In the passage, St. Paul states, "*So, give encouragement to one another and keep strengthening each other...*" These are ways we can live our lives as children of light. Today, let us speak words that uplift others rather than bring them down, and perform acts of love that inspire others to live with hope and peace.

In today's gospel, the life of a man with an unclean spirit is transformed by his encounter with Jesus. He experiences the power of Jesus' Word, which brings the light of freedom into his life. As children of light, we should encounter Jesus daily through prayer, allowing ourselves to experience His love, mercy, and transformation. Through our encounters with Jesus, we can embody His love and shine as a light to others.

Reflective question:

How can I fully embrace the profound truth that I am a child of light and that I am meant to live with purpose?

Wednesday, 3rd September, St. Gregory the Great.

Colossians 1:1-8, Luke 4:38-44

Leaving the synagogue Jesus went to Simon's house. Now Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever and they asked him to do something for her. Leaning over her he rebuked the fever and it left her. And she immediately got up and began to wait on them. At sunset all those who had friends suffering from diseases of one kind or another brought them to him, and laying his hands on each he cured them. Devils too came out of many people, howling, 'You are the Son of God'. But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak because they knew that he was the Christ. When daylight came he left the house and made his way to a lonely place. The crowds went to look for him, and when they had caught up with him they wanted to prevent him leaving them, but he answered, 'I must proclaim the Good News of the kingdom of God to the other towns too, because that is what I was sent to do'. And he continued his preaching in the synagogues of Judaea.

A life pleasing to God

In today's gospel, Jesus healed Simon's mother-in-law from a fever, and she immediately began to serve Him and His companions. Many others then brought their sick loved ones to Jesus, and He healed each of them. Through these acts of healing, Jesus shows His compassion and desire to restore us to wholeness, allowing us to live life fully.

The gospel continues by stating that Jesus went to a quiet place to pray. The people searched for Him and urged Him to stay with them. However, Jesus responded, "*I must proclaim the Good News of the kingdom of God to the other towns too, because that is what I was sent to do.*" He

understood that this was what God wanted, and so, He chose to be faithful to God's will instead of giving in to what others wanted. Today, God gives us the gift of life to serve others and make a difference. If we find ourselves caught between what others want and what we know God wants, may we find the strength to remain true to God's calling.

Reflective question:

What is Jesus' invitation to you from this gospel passage?

Thursday, 4th September, 22nd Week in Ordinary Time.

Colossians 1:9-14, Luke 5:1-11

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

The deeper water

"Put out into deep water and let down your nets for a catch," Jesus instructed Peter to push his boat and venture into deeper waters. Although Peter was an experienced fisherman who had worked tirelessly all night without success, something about Jesus compelled him to obey despite his exhaustion and reluctance. By following Jesus into deeper waters, Peter experienced a great catch beyond anything he could have imagined.

“*Deeper water*” means going beyond the comfort of predictable waters and entering unfamiliar waters, but doing so with the trust that Jesus will guide and strengthen us. This call for greater trust might not be easy for us, as it implies the need to control every aspect of our lives and accept that some things are beyond our immediate understanding and influence. Today, the call is for a deeper faith, a greater trust in Jesus. Let us allow Jesus to be in our boats, in our lives, and live this day depending on Him who will always lead us to experience a life filled with meaning and purpose.

Reflective question:

What prevents me from going beyond my comfort zone and entering into deep waters with Jesus?

Friday, 5th September, St. Teresa of Calcutta.

Colossians 1:15-20, Luke 5:33-39

The Pharisees and scribes said to Jesus, ‘John’s disciples are always fasting and saying prayers, and the disciples of the Pharisees too, but yours go on eating and drinking’. Jesus replied, ‘Surely you cannot make the bridegroom’s attendants fast while the bridegroom is still with them? But the time will come, the time for the bridegroom to be taken away from them; that will be the time when they will fast.’ He also told them this parable, ‘No one tears a piece from a new cloak to put it on an old cloak; if he does, not only will he have torn the new one, but the piece taken from the new will not match the old. ‘And nobody puts new wine into old skins; if he does, the new wine will burst the skins and then run out, and the skins will be lost. No; new wine must be put into fresh skins. And nobody who has been drinking old wine wants new. “The old is good” he says.’

Jesus, image of the invisible God

In the first reading, St. Paul reminds us that "*Christ Jesus is the image of the unseen God.*" This is the central truth of our Christian faith: Jesus took on human flesh to reveal the very essence of God to humanity. Let us take a moment to reflect on this profound reality. The life of Jesus, marked by His compassionate acts, His words of reconciliation, and His unwavering commitment to selfless service, reveals a God whose essence is love. His invitation calls us to come to know the God He

reveals. Knowing God involves not just an intellectual understanding but also a friendship based on trust and faith in Him.

In today's gospel, Jesus challenged the Jewish religious leaders to go beyond the rigid and legalistic observances and to relate to God in a new and deeper way. Jesus invites us to embrace the joy and freedom of God's presence today. True spirituality stems from a joyful intimacy with God, rather than from strict adherence to rituals.

Reflective question:

How can I express my love for the God revealed by Jesus?

Saturday, 6th September, 22nd Week in Ordinary Time.

Colossians 1:21-23, Luke 6:1-5

One Sabbath Jesus happened to be taking a walk through the cornfields, and his disciples were picking ears of corn, rubbing them in their hands and eating them. Some of the Pharisees said, 'Why are you doing something that is forbidden on the Sabbath day?' Jesus answered them, 'So you have not read what David did when he and his followers were hungry how he went into the house of God, took the loaves of offering and ate them and gave them to his followers, loaves which only the priests are allowed to eat?' And he said to them, 'The Son of Man is master of the Sabbath'

The Sabbath rest

The Jewish people observe the Sabbath as a day of rest. The term "Sabbath" comes from the Hebrew word that means to stop and rest. God established the Sabbath to allow individuals to take a break from work and engage in acts of kindness, compassion, and service, reflecting His love and mercy. Unfortunately, Jewish religious leaders imposed a strict set of laws for observing the Sabbath. In their meticulous adherence to these rules, they sometimes overlooked the true meaning of Sabbath rest.

In today's gospel, Jesus' disciples felt hungry, plucked ripe grain, and ate it. The Pharisees were outraged, claiming they broke Sabbath law. Jesus reminded them that King David and his followers once ate the bread meant for priests out of hunger. For Jesus, the Sabbath is a time for doing good, emphasising that the needs of people should take

precedence over rules and regulations. This means that the hungry must be fed, the sick must be healed, the lonely must be listened to, and the poor must be aided. Let us connect with God and extend His love to others.

Reflective question:

How can I follow Jesus, the Master of the Sabbath, today?

Sunday, 7th September, 23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time.

Wisdom 9:13-18, Philemon 9-10,12-17, Luke 14:25-33

Great crowds accompanied Jesus on his way and he turned and spoke to them. 'If any man comes to me without hating his father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, yes and his own life too, he cannot be my disciple. Anyone who does not carry his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. 'And indeed, which of you here, intending to build a tower, would not first sit down and work out the cost to see if he had enough to complete it? Otherwise, if he laid the foundation and then found himself unable to finish the work, the onlookers would all start making fun of him and saying, "Here is a man who started to build and was unable to finish". Or again, what king marching to war against another king would not first sit down and consider whether with ten thousand men he could stand up to the other who advanced against him with twenty thousand? If not, then while the other king was still a long way off, he would send envoys to sue for peace. So in the same way, none of you can be my disciple unless he gives up all his possessions.'

Embracing the call to follow Jesus

Today's gospel emphasises the importance of commitment in following Jesus, highlighting the cost of discipleship. Just as a person building a tower or a king preparing for battle must consider their resources, those who wish to be Jesus' disciples need to take time to reflect on whether they are truly ready to prioritise Jesus above material possessions and family ties. What about us? When we express our desire to follow Jesus, are we truly willing to place Him, along with His values and love, above the ways of the world? Let us ask Jesus for the trust to follow Him wholeheartedly.

In today's second reading, St. Paul writes to Philemon and asks him to take back his runaway slave, Onesimus. He urges Philemon to welcome

Onesimus not as a slave, but as a beloved brother in Christ. Philemon is faced with a choice: to demonstrate Christian love and forgiveness by accepting Onesimus back, or to exercise his right to punish him as his master. Like Philemon, we are constantly faced with the decision to put love into action.

Reflective question:

Am I willing to follow Jesus radically and wholeheartedly, even if it means letting go of my pride and personal plans?

Monday, 8th September, The Nativity of Mother Mary.

Micah 5:1-4 or Romans 8:28-30, Matthew 1:1-16, 18-23

Roll of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, son of David, son of Abraham: Abraham fathered Isaac, Isaac fathered Jacob, Jacob fathered Judah and his brothers, Judah fathered Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar, Perez fathered Hezron, Hezron fathered Ram, Ram fathered Amminadab, Amminadab fathered Nahshon, Nahshon fathered Salmon, Salmon fathered Boaz, whose mother was Rahab, Boaz fathered Obed, whose mother was Ruth, Obed fathered Jesse; and Jesse fathered King David. David fathered Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife, Solomon fathered Rehoboam, Rehoboam fathered Abijah, Abijah fathered Asa, Asa fathered Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat fathered Joram, Joram fathered Uzziah, Uzziah fathered Jotham, Jotham fathered Ahaz, Ahaz fathered Hezekiah, Hezekiah fathered Manasseh, Manasseh fathered Amon, Amon fathered Josiah; and Josiah fathered Jechoniah and his brothers. Then the deportation to Babylon took place. After the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah fathered Shealtiel, Shealtiel fathered Zerubbabel, Zerubbabel fathered Abiud, Abiud fathered Eliakim, Eliakim fathered Azor, Azor fathered Zadok, Zadok fathered Achim, Achim fathered Eliud, Eliud fathered Eleazar, Eleazar fathered Matthan, Matthan fathered Jacob; and Jacob fathered Joseph the husband of Mary; of her was born Jesus who is called Christ. The sum of generations is therefore: fourteen from Abraham to David; fourteen from David to the Babylonian deportation; and fourteen from the Babylonian deportation to Christ. This is how Jesus Christ came to be born. His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph; but before they came to live together she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being an upright man and wanting to spare her disgrace, decided to divorce her informally. He had made up his mind to

do this when suddenly the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because she has conceived what is in her by the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son and you must name him Jesus, because he is the one who is to save his people from their sins.' Now all this took place to fulfil what the Lord had spoken through the prophet: Look! the virgin is with child and will give birth to a son whom they will call Immanuel, a name which means 'God-is-with-us'.

God's active presence in history

Today's gospel invites us to delve into the profound significance of Christ's genealogy. It is easy to overlook the list of names, as they might appear unfamiliar or daunting. Interestingly, Jesus' family tree is filled with individuals who were not perfect; they faced their own struggles and shortcomings. Yet, God chose to be born within a lineage that includes both the good and the bad, the faithful and the weak. Today, let us reflect on our own lives and families, embracing both the good and the bad, the saints and the sinners, in our personal histories. We trust that our faithful God will continue to shape our stories into a history of salvation for ourselves and for others.

On this special day of Mother Mary, she invites us to be instruments of God and allow Him to work in and through us. May we, through our actions and words, create opportunities for others to encounter God and hear His message of love, peace, and reconciliation.

Reflective question:

How can I allow God to work in my life so that I can be an instrument to bring His life and love to those around me?

Tuesday, 9th September, St. Peter Claver.

Colossians 2:6-15, Luke 6:12-19

Jesus went out into the hills to pray; and he spent the whole night in prayer to God. When day came he summoned his disciples and picked out twelve of them; he called them 'apostles': Simon whom he called Peter, and his brother Andrew; James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon called the Zealot, Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot who became a traitor. He then came down with them and stopped at a piece of level ground where there

was a large gathering of his disciples with a great crowd of people from all parts of Judaea and from Jerusalem and from the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon who had come to hear him and to be cured of their diseases. People tormented by unclean spirits were also cured, and everyone in the crowd was trying to touch him because power came out of him that cured them all.

In the silence, God is present

In the gospel today, we see Jesus retreating to the hills and spending the entire night praying to God the Father. He demonstrates the importance of silence and being present with God. Silence scares many of us because it is confusing and awkward. For many of us, silence can be intimidating. We might struggle with what to do during silent prayer, finding ourselves distracted by thoughts of what we need to do next. However, Jesus invites us to set aside time for prayer, regardless of our busy lives. In silence, we can truly find God and enter into an intimate and personal relationship with Him. The comforting truth is that God is the first to desire a loving communion with us. Thus, He waits for us patiently.

During our silent prayer, let us be aware that Jesus is calling us by name to deepen our relationship with Him. By being with Him, He sends us out to be His presence in the world today.

Reflective question:

How can I make staying with Jesus in prayer my top priority?

Wednesday, 10th September, 23rd Week in Ordinary Time.

Colossians 3:1-11, Luke 6:20-26

Fixing his eyes on his disciples Jesus said: 'How happy are you who are poor: yours is the kingdom of God. Happy you who are hungry now: you shall be satisfied. Happy you who weep now: you shall laugh. Happy are you when people hate you, drive you out, abuse you, denounce your name as criminal, on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice when that day comes and dance for joy, for then your reward will be great in heaven. This was the way their ancestors treated the prophets. 'But alas for you who are rich: you are having your consolation now. Alas for you who have your fill now: you shall go hungry. Alas for you who laugh now: you

shall mourn and weep. Alas for you when the world speaks well of you! This was the way their ancestors treated the false prophets.'

Embodying the Beatitudes

In the first reading from Colossians, St. Paul tells us, *"Since you have been brought back to true life with Christ, you must look for the things that are in heaven, where Christ is, sitting at God's right hand. Let your thoughts be on heavenly things, not on the things that are on earth..."*. To follow Jesus as His disciples is not a matter of lip service or subscribing to an ideology. Instead, because we are united with Christ, we should now live in a way that our words, attitudes and actions reflect Him. Our sights, affections and priorities should be set on God.

In today's gospel, Jesus outlines the journey that every true disciple must undertake. He proclaims, *"How happy are you who are poor... who are hungry now... who weep now... when people hate you..."* We are called to embrace simplicity, seek justice, and stand with the suffering. Living according to the Beatitudes means letting go of our desires for wealth, fame, and power in order to follow Jesus, who dedicated His life to serving God and caring for others.

Reflective question:

How can I actively follow Jesus as His disciple today?

Thursday, 11th September, 23rd Week in Ordinary Time.

Colossians 3:12-17, Luke 6:27-38

Jesus said to his disciples: "I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who mistreat you. If anyone hits you on one cheek, let him hit the other one too; if someone takes your coat, let him have your shirt as well. Give to everyone who asks you for something, and when someone takes what is yours, do not ask for it back. Do for others just what you want them to do for you. "If you love only the people who love you, why should you receive a blessing? Even sinners love those who love them! And if you do good only to those who do good to you, why should you receive a blessing? Even sinners do that! And if you lend only to those from whom you hope to get it back, why should you receive a blessing? Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount! No! Love your enemies and do good to them; lend and expect nothing back. You will

then have a great reward, and you will be children of the Most High God. For he is good to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful just as your Father is merciful. "Do not judge others, and God will not judge you; do not condemn others, and God will not condemn you; forgive others, and God will forgive you. Give to others, and God will give to you. Indeed, you will receive a full measure, a generous helping, poured into your hands—all that you can hold. The measure you use for others is the one that God will use for you."

Above all, love

"...and you should be clothed in sincere compassion, in kindness and humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with one another; forgive each other as soon as a quarrel begins...Over all these clothes, to keep them together and complete them, put on love...". These words from St. Paul to the Colossians are relevant for us today as well. Tensions, arguments, and disagreements are common in our relationships with others. However, as disciples of Christ, we must put love into action by being compassionate, kind, humble, gentle, and patient with one another.

In the Gospel, Jesus challenges us to love our enemies, do good to those who hate us, bless those who curse us, and pray for those who mistreat us. Jesus is not giving us an option; rather, loving others is a command that requires a deliberate choice to act in a loving way, even towards those who may be difficult to love. Today, let us put love into action, reflecting the loving heart of Jesus in our interactions with everyone around us.

Reflective question:

What is stopping me from following Jesus' path of love?

Friday, 12th September, The Most Holy Name of Mary.

1 Timothy 1:1-2, 12-14, Luke 6:39-42

Jesus told a parable to the disciples, "Can one blind man guide another? Surely both will fall into a pit? The disciple is not superior to his teacher; the fully trained disciple will always be like his teacher. Why do you observe the splinter in your brother's eye and never notice the plank in your own? How can you say to your brother, "Brother, let me take out the splinter that is in your eye", when you cannot see the plank in your own?"

Hypocrite! Take the plank out of your own eye first, and then you will see clearly enough to take out the splinter that is in your brother's eye."

Called to love, not to judge

"Before you judge my life, my past or my character... walk in my shoes, walk the path I have travelled, live my sorrow, my doubts, my fear, my pain and laughter. Remember, everyone has a story. When you live my life, then you can judge me." (Unknown) In today's gospel, Jesus invites us to step outside ourselves and engage with others, not through the lens of judgment, but with the open arms of acceptance, recognising everyone as our brothers and sisters. Each person has a story to tell, and we cannot see the struggles that lie beneath the shadows of their past. Therefore, we are called to ask for the grace to grow in our capacity to love and be compassionate.

Jesus beckons us to draw near to Him, encouraging us to experience His unconditional love, even amid our own brokenness, scars, and imperfections. Being loved by Jesus empowers us to relate to others with love, not judgment.

Reflective questions:

Do I often judge others and see them at their worst? How can I grow in love?

Saturday, 13th September, St. John Chrysostom.

1 Timothy 1:15-17, Luke 6:43-49

Jesus said to his disciples: "There is no sound tree that produces rotten fruit, nor again a rotten tree that produces sound fruit. Every tree can be told by its own fruit: people do not pick figs from thorns, nor gather grapes from brambles. Good people draw what is good from the store of goodness in their hearts; bad people draw what is bad from the store of badness. For the words of the mouth flow out of what fills the heart. Why do you call me, "Lord, Lord" and not do what I say? Everyone who comes to me and listens to my words and acts on them -- I will show you what such a person is like. Such a person is like the man who, when he built a house, dug, and dug deep, and laid the foundations on rock; when the river was in flood it bore down on that house but could not shake it, it was so well built. But someone who listens and does nothing is like the

man who built a house on soil, with no foundations; as soon as the river bore down on it, it collapsed; and what a ruin that house became!”

Good fruit, solid foundation

In today's gospel, Jesus speaks of the metaphor of a tree and its fruit to convey the truth that a person's actions reveal their true character. A good tree produces good fruit, while a bad tree produces bad fruit. As we enter this time of prayer, let us deeply reflect and ask ourselves, "What fruit do I produce in my daily life? Are my words and actions a true reflection of the state of my heart?" Today, let us ask Jesus to fill our hearts with His love, forgiveness, compassion and faithfulness. The essence of what we have within our hearts shapes the words we speak and the actions we take.

Jesus calls us to build our lives on Him, our firm, solid rock foundation. But how do we do this? By putting into practice the word of God, we can cultivate a life that yields good fruit and stands strong amidst the storms of life.

Reflective question:

What concrete steps can I take in order to produce the good fruit of God's love?

Sunday, 14th September, The Exaltation of the Holy Cross.

Numbers 21:4-9, Philippians 2:6-11, John 3:13-17

Jesus said to Nicodemus: 'No one has gone up to heaven except the one who came down from heaven, the Son of Man who is in heaven; and the Son of Man must be lifted up as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him. Yes, God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not be lost but may have eternal life. For God sent his Son into the world not to condemn the world, but so that through him the world might be saved.'

Contemplating Jesus on the cross

Today, as we celebrate the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, we reflect deeper on the profound significance of the cross in our lives as disciples of Jesus. It is at the foot of the cross where we encounter the embodiment of faithful love- the kind of love so profound that it turned

even the greatest suffering into a testament of hope. As we look at Jesus on the cross, let us be reminded that He willingly laid down His life, not only as a sacrifice but as a gift, so that we might embrace life in all its richness and fullness.

To truly approach the cross is to confront ourselves; it demands a transformation that requires us to leave behind something of ourselves, i.e. our pride, prejudices, jealousy, anger and indifference. It is in dying to ourselves that we open our hearts to receive Jesus' love and to share it with others. Let us contemplate Jesus on the cross and allow ourselves to be unconditionally loved by Jesus. Even when we turn away or harden our hearts against Him, His love remains steadfast and unwavering. His love is our hope and joy.

Reflective question:

What does the cross mean for me?

Monday, 15th September, Our Lady of Sorrows.

Hebrews 5:7-9, John 19:25-27 or Luke 2:33-35

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.

Mother of Sorrows

Today, we celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows. Mary is called the Mother of Sorrows because she experienced deep suffering throughout her life. She suffered when she gave birth to her Son in a stable. She suffered again when she and Joseph were forced to flee to Egypt with their newborn child to escape King Herod. Her heart ached as she witnessed her Son being rejected by religious leaders. Most heartbreakingly, she stood at the foot of the cross, watching her Son tortured and killed for a crime He did not commit. Through it all, Mary remained by her Son's side with strength and courage, never allowing herself to be discouraged.

As we prayerfully reflect on the Gospel passage, we can find solace in knowing that just as Mary stood at the foot of Jesus' cross, she is also

present beside us in our moments of pain, illness, loneliness, and failure. Mary, our Lady of Sorrows, our Mother in faith, invites us to seek comfort and rest in her loving presence.

Reflective question:

How can I welcome Mary into my life as my Mother, accompanying me through the ups and downs of my life?

Tuesday, 16th September, SS. Cornelius & Cyprian.

1 Timothy 3:1-13, Luke 7:11-17

Jesus went to a town called Nain, accompanied by his disciples and a great number of people. When he was near the gate of the town, it happened that a dead man was being carried out for burial, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And a considerable number of the townspeople were with her. When the Lord saw her he felt sorry for her. 'Do not cry' he said. Then he went up and put his hand on the bier and the bearers stood still, and he said, 'Young man, I tell you to get up'. And the dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him to his mother. Everyone was filled with awe and praised God saying, 'A great prophet has appeared among us; God has visited his people'. And this opinion of him spread throughout Judaea and all over the countryside.

"Do not cry"

As Jesus approached the town gate, He saw a widow mourning her only son. Moved by her sadness, He said, *"Do not cry."* Jesus then touched the bier and proclaimed, *"Young man, I tell you to get up."* To everyone's amazement, the dead man rose and began to speak, turning the mother's tears of sorrow into joy.

We all experience personal tragedies or know people who have suffered. In these moments, Jesus comes to us and says, *"Do not cry."* He wants to bring us solace in our sorrow and peace in our pain. While our loved ones may remain gone, our broken hearts may still ache, and our sickness might continue or worsen, we have comfort in knowing that Jesus is with us. He grieves with us, hurts with us, and suffers with us. He is our hope and security.

Reflective question:

Can I remember the moments when I felt Jesus' comforting presence during my deepest pain?

Wednesday, 17th September, St. Robert Bellarmine & St. Hildegard of Bingen.

1 Timothy 3:14-16, Luke 7:31-35

Jesus said to the people, 'What description, then, can I find for the men of this generation? What are they like? They are like children shouting to one another while they sit in the market place: "We played the pipes for you, and you wouldn't dance; we sang dirges, and you wouldn't cry". 'For John the Baptist comes, not eating bread, not drinking wine, and you say, "He is possessed". The Son of Man comes, eating and drinking, and you say, "Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners". Yet Wisdom has been proved right by all her children.'

Belonging to Wisdom

John the Baptist, who lived an austere life in the desert, was perceived by the people as "possessed". In contrast, Jesus came eating and drinking and was labelled as a "glutton, a drunkard, and a friend of tax collectors and sinners". People judged both John and Jesus based on superficial appearances, but things are not always as they seem from the outside. The invitation today is to stop being judgmental, as there are always hidden truths in others that we may not know.

At the end, Jesus said, "Yet Wisdom has been proved right by all her children." Today, we are called to live as children of God's Wisdom, which often contradicts human expectations and standards. Let us allow Wisdom to guide us as we make choices that reflect God's love and truth.

Reflective question:

How can I demonstrate that I am a child of Wisdom in my daily life?

Thursday, 18th September, 24th Week in Ordinary Time.

1 Timothy 4:12-16, Luke 7:36-50

One of the Pharisees invited Jesus to a meal. When he arrived at the Pharisee's house and took his place at table, a woman came in, who had a bad name in the town. She had heard he was dining with the Pharisee and had brought with her an alabaster jar of ointment. She waited behind

him at his feet, weeping, and her tears fell on his feet, and she wiped them away with her hair; then she covered his feet with kisses and anointed them with the ointment. When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, 'If this man were a prophet, he would know who this woman is that is touching him and what a bad name she has'. Then Jesus took him up and said, 'Simon, I have something to say to you'. 'Speak, Master' was the reply. 'There was once a creditor who had two men in his debt; one owed him five hundred denarii, the other fifty. They were unable to pay, so he pardoned them both. Which of them will love him more?' 'The one who was pardoned more, I suppose' answered Simon. Jesus said, 'You are right'. Then he turned to the woman. 'Simon,' he said 'you see this woman? I came into your house, and you poured no water over my feet, but she has poured out her tears over my feet and wiped them away with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but she has been covering my feet with kisses ever since I came in. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. For this reason I tell you that her sins, her many sins, must have been forgiven her, or she would not have shown such great love. It is the man who is forgiven little who shows little love.' Then he said to her, 'Your sins are forgiven'. Those who were with him at table began to say to themselves, 'Who is this man, that he even forgives sins?' But he said to the woman, 'Your faith has saved you; go in peace'.

Being forgiven by God

In today's gospel, the woman who entered Simon's house to be in Jesus' presence was immediately judged as a sinner by those around her, particularly Simon the Pharisee. He scrutinised her every move and labelled her as a sinner. Simon condemned both her and Jesus, appalled that Jesus would allow a sinner to wash His feet. In contrast, the woman courageously expressed her love for Jesus, weeping and anointing His feet, undeterred by the whispers around her. Jesus, aware of the judgments, shared a parable about how true love stems from a heart that has been forgiven.

Today, Jesus calls us to acknowledge our need for God's mercy and to experience forgiveness. It is through experiencing being forgiven by God that we gain the capacity to love others, rather than judging them.

Reflective question:

What message does Jesus have for me about how to relate to others?

Friday, 19th September, St. Januarius.

1 Timothy 6:2-12, Luke 8:1-3

Jesus made his way through towns and villages preaching, and *proclaiming the Good News of the kingdom of God. With him went the Twelve, as well as certain women who had been cured of evil spirits and ailments: Mary surnamed the Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, Joanna the wife of Herod's steward Chuza, Susanna, and several others who provided for them out of their own resources.*

Women disciples of Jesus

In today's gospel, St. Luke the evangelist introduces us to the faithful travelling companions of Jesus, highlighting the presence of women alongside the male disciples. These women, filled with courage and conviction, left behind the familiar comforts of their homes—a bold choice in a society where women had limited rights and freedoms. By stepping into the unknown to follow Jesus on His journey, they defied societal expectations. Jesus, in turn, embraced these women with respect and admiration, recognising their vital role in spreading the Good News.

Throughout history, many extraordinary Christian women have exemplified unwavering faith and dedication on their path of discipleship. They have embodied resilience and love in their service to Jesus. Notable figures include St. Teresa of Calcutta, St. Mary MacKillop, and St. Teresa of Avila, among others. We also remember the ordinary women in our lives—our grandmothers, mothers, aunts, religious and mentors—who lived their faith in practical, yet impactful ways, often unnoticed. Their stories inspire us to deepen our commitment and to follow the call of Jesus with renewed passion and determination.

Reflective question:

How can I emulate the faith and courage of the dedicated women who followed Jesus to the end?

Saturday, 20th September, SS. Laurent Imbert, Jacques Chastan, SS. Andrew Kim Tae-gon & Paul Chiong Ha-sang, & Companions.

1 Timothy 6:13-16, Luke 8:4-15

With a large crowd gathering and people from every town finding their way to him, Jesus told this parable: 'A sower went out to sow his seed. Now as he sowed, some fell on the edge of the path and was trampled on; and the birds of the air ate it up. Some seed fell on rock, and when it came up it withered away, having no moisture. Some seed fell in the middle of thorns and the thorns grew with it and choked it. And some seed fell into good soil and grew and produced its crop a hundredfold.' Saying this he cried, 'Anyone who has ears for listening should listen!' His disciples asked him what this parable might mean, and he said, 'To you is granted to understand the secrets of the kingdom of God; for the rest it remains in parables, so that they may look but not perceive, listen but not understand. 'This, then, is what the parable means: the seed is the word of God. Those on the edge of the path are people who have heard it, and then the devil comes and carries away the word from their hearts in case they should believe and be saved. Those on the rock are people who, when they first hear it, welcome the word with joy. But these have no root; they believe for a while, and in time of trial they give up. As for the part that fell into thorns, this is people who have heard, but as they go on their way they are choked by the worries and riches and pleasures of life and never produce any crops. As for the part in the rich soil, this is people with a noble and generous heart who have heard the word and take it to themselves and yield a harvest through their perseverance.'

Jesus, the patient Sower

In today's gospel, Jesus tells the parable of the sower who sows his seed carelessly. He does not seem to mind where the seed lands—whether on the hard path, the rocky ground, or the thorny soil. Jesus is like this sower. He spreads the seed of God's Word in the hearts of all people, regardless of their circumstances.

We take comfort in knowing that Jesus sows the seed of His Word, but He does not simply walk away afterwards. He remains actively involved in our lives, carefully tending to the soil of our hearts. He cares for the soil of our hearts by patiently guiding, nourishing and forgiving us. He waters hardened hearts and removes rocky and thorny obstacles that

prevent our growth. Jesus never stops working in us and through us because He wants the seed of His Word to take root in our hearts. This allows us to live a meaningful and purposeful life that produces an abundant harvest, filled with love, joy, and hope.

Reflective question:

Do I recognise Jesus' love at work in my life, even during challenging times?

Sunday, 21st September, 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time.

Amos 8:4-7, 1 Timothy 2:1-8, Luke 16:1-13

Jesus said to his disciples, "There was a rich man and he had a steward who was denounced to him for being wasteful with his property. He called for the man and said, "What is this I hear about you? Draw me up an account of your stewardship because you are not to be my steward any longer." Then the steward said to himself, "Now that my master is taking the stewardship from me, what am I to do? Dig? I am not strong enough. Go begging? I should be too ashamed. I know what I will do to make sure that when I am dismissed from office there will be some to welcome me into their homes." Then he called his master's debtors one by one. To the first he said, "How much do you owe my master?" "One hundred measures of oil," he said. The steward said, "Here, take your bond; sit down and quickly write fifty." To another he said, "And you, sir, how much do you owe?" "One hundred measures of wheat," he said. The steward said, "Here, take your bond and write eighty." The master praised the dishonest steward for his astuteness. For the children of this world are more astute in dealing with their own kind than are the children of light. And so I tell you this: use money, tainted as it is, to win you friends, and thus make sure that when it fails you, they will welcome you into eternal dwellings. Anyone who is trustworthy in little things is trustworthy in great; anyone who is dishonest in little things is dishonest in great. If then you are not trustworthy with money, that tainted thing, who will trust you with genuine riches? And if you are not trustworthy with what is not yours, who will give you what is your very own? No servant can be the slave of two masters: he will either hate the first and love the second, or be attached to the first and despise the second. You cannot be the slave both of God and of money."

Serve God, not money

In the first reading, the prophet Amos says, *“Listen to this, you who trample on the needy and try to suppress the poor people of the country...The Lord swears it by the pride of Jacob, “Never will I forget a single thing you have done”*. Amos wants the people to understand that God cares about every individual, especially the poor and the vulnerable. He sees every act of dishonesty, indifference and injustice. This message is relevant for us today as well. Our Catholic faith goes beyond attending Mass or volunteering at parishes; it calls us to be kind and compassionate and engage meaningfully with the world. We are urged to treat everyone with fairness, recognising their inherent dignity, and to offer compassion to those in need.

In the gospel, Jesus tells a parable about a steward who gets into trouble by focusing on accumulating wealth for himself. He then shifts his focus to building relationships instead. Jesus concludes by saying, *“You cannot serve both God and money.”* While wealth itself is not inherently bad, the love of money can blind us to the needs of those around us. Today, Jesus invites us to put God first above all else and to use our resources to support and care for those in need, particularly the poor.

Reflective question:

Am I attentive to the needs of those around us, especially the poor and the vulnerable in society?

Monday, 22nd September, 25th Week in Ordinary Time.

Ezra 1:1-6, Luke 8:16-18

Jesus said to the crowds, ‘No one lights a lamp to cover it with a bowl or to put it under a bed. No, he puts it on a lamp-stand so that people may see the light when they come in. For nothing is hidden but it will be made clear, nothing secret but it will be known and brought to light. So take care how you hear; for anyone who has will be given more; from anyone who has not, even what he thinks he has will be taken away.

Call to shine our faith

Just as we do not light a lamp and cover it or hide it, we should not conceal our faith in God. Instead, we must proclaim it clearly through our words and actions. Our Christian faith is not a private matter; it is meant to be public. At times, we struggle to demonstrate that we are disciples

of Jesus because we fear being ostracised or ridiculed by others. It can be challenging to heed Jesus' call to let our faith shine brightly for all to see.

To have the courage to let our light of faith shine, we need to encounter God continually. When we experience God's deep and unconditional love, our fears begin to fade, allowing Him to be the light that guides us on our life's journey. Today, let us take the time to encounter our living God, who calls us and reveals His love—love that precedes us and upon which we can rely for security and for building our lives. From this encounter, we can go out and shine!

Reflective question:

What does Jesus's statement that a lamp must be placed on a lampstand rather than hidden mean to me?

Tuesday, 23rd September, St. Pius of Pietrelcina.

Ezra 6:7-8, 12, 14-20, Luke 8: 19-21

The mother and brothers of Jesus came looking for him, but they could not get to him because of the crowd. He was told, 'Your mother and brothers are standing outside and want to see you' But he said in answer, 'My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and put it into practice'.

Belonging to the household of God

In today's Gospel, when Jesus' family came looking for Him, He said, "*My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and put it into practice.*" It might seem that Jesus was rejecting His own family, but He was actually broadening the concept of family to include all who hear and follow God's Word.

Our belonging to Jesus' household is not determined simply by our baptism certificates or by fulfilling the external obligations of our Catholic faith. It is defined by our complete commitment to listening attentively to God and putting His Word into action. When we do this, we become part of Jesus' spiritual family. Acting on what God says means loving every person we encounter, even those we may find difficult to like. Today, let us celebrate our place in the household of God and be inspired to go out and live a life of love and service.

Reflective question:

What does it mean for me to be part of Jesus' spiritual family?

Wednesday, 24th September, 25th Week in Ordinary Time.

Ezra 9:5-9, Luke 9: 1-6

Jesus called the Twelve together and gave them power and authority over all devils and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal. He said to them, 'Take nothing for the journey: neither staff, nor haversack, nor bread, nor money; and let none of you take a spare tunic. Whatever house you enter, stay there; and when you leave, let it be from there. As for those who do not welcome you, when you leave their town, shake the dust from your feet as a sign to them.' So they set out and went from village to village proclaiming the Good News and healing everywhere.

God cares

In today's gospel, Jesus sent His disciples on a mission. He told them, *"Take nothing for the journey: neither staff, nor haversack, nor bread, nor money, and let none of you take a spare tunic."* Typically, a traveller would carry a staff for protection against thieves and wild animals. A haversack was used to carry food or begging for alms. Additional bread would provide extra security, and a spare tunic would keep them warm if they had to sleep outdoors. These items seemed essential for travelling, so why did Jesus advise them not to take them? Jesus wanted to convey to His disciples the importance of allowing God to be a part of their lives and learning to depend completely on Him.

Today, Jesus calls us to bring the Good News of God's love wherever we go. As we embark on this journey, we do so with the awareness that God accompanies us, providing us with all the strength, courage and joy that we need. With each step, we place our trust in God's unwavering care.

Reflective question:

What is holding me back from fully trusting that God provides for what I need in the mission to be His messenger of the Good News?

Thursday, 25th September, 25th Week in Ordinary Time.

Haggai 1:1-8, Luke 9:7-9

Herod the tetrarch had heard about all that was going on; and he was puzzled, because some people were saying that John had risen from the dead, others that Elijah had reappeared, still others that one of the ancient prophets had come back to life. But Herod said, 'John? I beheaded him. So who is this I hear such reports about?' And he was anxious to see him.

Who are you?

In today's gospel, Herod's question, "*Who is this I hear such reports about?*" is one of humanity's most significant questions. However, instead of seeking an answer, he was haunted by his past wrongs against John the Baptist and feared John's return. Herod's interest in Jesus came from a desire to ease his guilty conscience rather than to know Him personally.

Today, let us ask Jesus, "*Who are you?*" With eyes of faith, we look at Jesus with love and allow Him to reveal who He truly is. With ears of faith, we listen for Jesus' voice as He calls us by our names, and we trustingly follow Him. With hearts of faith, we long to let go of our self-centred pride to enter into a lasting relationship with Him and be united with the One we love. Although Herod asked the right question, he lacked the courage to confront Christ. Let us take this opportunity to encounter Jesus and seek a deeper experiential knowledge of His faithful love.

Reflective question:

Who is Jesus for me at this point in my life?

Friday, 26th September, SS. Cosmas & Damien.

Haggai 1:15-2:9, Luke 9:18-22

One day when Jesus was praying alone in the presence of his disciples he put this question to them, 'Who do the crowds say I am?' And they answered, 'John the Baptist; others Elijah; and others say one of the ancient prophets come back to life'. 'But you,' he said 'who do you say I am?' It was Peter who spoke up. 'The Christ of God' he said. But he gave them strict orders not to tell anyone anything about this. 'The Son of Man' he said 'is destined to suffer grievously, to be rejected by the elders and

chief priests and scribes and to be put to death, and to be raised up on the third day.'

Following Jesus

The gospel passage today marks a significant turning point in what it means to follow Jesus. He states, "*The Son of Man is destined to suffer greatly, to be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, to be put to death, and to be raised on the third day.*" In this statement, Jesus emphasises the necessity of enduring rejection, suffering, death, and ultimately, resurrection. He understands that His disciples view the Messiah as someone who will liberate Israel from Roman rule. However, that is not the type of Messiah Jesus is. His path involves taking up the cross.

Jesus wants everyone who follows Him to understand the cost of discipleship. They must follow the path of the cross, committing to die to themselves and live for Him. Today, as His disciples, our lives should no longer revolve around what we want, but rather what Jesus wants for us. This can be challenging because we often want Jesus to align with our own plans, comforts and ambitions. Instead, we are called to follow Him where He leads us, even if it means walking the uncomfortable path of the cross, which ultimately leads us to fullness of life.

Reflective question:

How is Jesus calling me to follow Him?

Saturday, 27th September, St. Vincent de Paul.

Zechariah 2:5-9, 14-15, Luke 9:43-45

At a time when everyone was full of admiration for all he did, Jesus said to his disciples, 'For your part, you must have these words constantly in your mind: The Son of Man is going to be handed over into the power of men'. But they did not understand him when he said this; it was hidden from them so that they should not see the meaning of it, and they were afraid to ask him about what he had just said.

Finding my worth in God

Jesus was at the pinnacle of his life. Large crowds greatly admired Him for all He said and did. Despite this, He was not swayed by external praises and accomplishments. Jesus understood the hearts of the

people; those who marvelled at His work would soon be the same ones handing Him over to death. Throughout it all, Jesus continued to focus solely on God, His Father. His life was in God's hands, not in men's.

We often seek the admiration and praise of others, striving for success and recognition. The challenge we face is to set our hearts completely on God. God loves us unconditionally, and His love for us transcends our achievements and failures. We are loved regardless of how the world perceives and values us. In our prayers, when we listen to Jesus, He reassures us of God's love and our value in His eyes. Let us attentively listen to the voice of Love so we can live each moment of success and failure, joy and sorrow, by focusing our hearts on God alone.

Reflective questions:

How do I define my worth? Is it based on God's love or external factors?

Sunday, 28th September, 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time.

Amos 6:1, 4-7, 1 Timothy 6:11-16, Luke 16:19-31

Jesus said to the Pharisees: 'There was a rich man who used to dress in purple and fine linen and feast magnificently every day. And at his gate there lay a poor man called Lazarus, covered with sores, who longed to fill himself with the scraps that fell from the rich man's table. Dogs even came and licked his sores. Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to the bosom of Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. 'In his torment in Hades he looked up and saw Abraham a long way off with Lazarus in his bosom. So he cried out, "Father Abraham, pity me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in agony in these flames". "My son," Abraham replied "remember that during your life good things came your way, just as bad things came the way of Lazarus. Now he is being comforted here while you are in agony. But that is not all: between us and you a great gulf has been fixed, to stop anyone, if he wanted to, crossing from our side to yours, and to stop any crossing from your side to ours." 'The rich man replied, "Father, I beg you then to send Lazarus to my father's house, since I have five brothers, to give them warning so that they do not come to this place of torment too". "They have Moses and the prophets," said Abraham "let them listen to them.". "Ah no, father Abraham," said the rich man "but if someone comes to them from the dead, they will repent." Then Abraham said to him, "If they will not listen either to Moses or to

the prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone should rise from the dead”.

Open our hearts to care

In the first reading, the Prophet Amos says, *“Woe to those ensconced so snugly in Zion and to those who feel so safe on the mountain of Samaria...they drink wine by the bowlful, and use the finest oil for anointing themselves, but about the ruin of Joseph they do not care at all...”*. The prophet criticises those who live in comfort while remaining indifferent to the pain and suffering of others, particularly those in need. Having faith in and love for God means that we should open our eyes to those around us and demonstrate our care and mercy towards them. In the Gospel, Jesus tells a parable about a rich man who leads a self-centred life, ignoring Lazarus, the poor beggar at his gate. The way he treats Lazarus reflects his relationship with God.

Let us examine our own relationship with God. When He is central in our hearts, we naturally feel compelled to care for and love those around us, especially the vulnerable. May we follow Jesus’ example by embracing generosity and serving others for their benefit.

Reflective question:

What barriers do I face that prevent me from connecting with those in need?

Monday, 29th September, SS. Michael, Gabriel & Raphael, Archangels.

Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14 or Revelation 12:7-12, John 1:47-51

When Jesus saw Nathanael coming, he said of him, ‘There, truly, is an Israelite in whom there is no deception.’ Nathanael asked, ‘How do you know me?’ Jesus replied, ‘Before Philip came to call you, I saw you under the fig tree.’ Nathanael answered, ‘Rabbi, you are the Son of God, you are the king of Israel.’ Jesus replied, ‘You believe that just because I said: I saw you under the fig tree. You are going to see greater things than that.’ And then he added, ‘In all truth I tell you, you will see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending over the Son of man.’

Integrity

In today's Gospel, when Jesus sees Nathanael approaching Him, He describes him as *"an Israelite in whom there is no deception."* What does this mean? It signifies that Jesus recognises Nathanael as an honest man who sincerely desires to deepen his love for God and serve Him wholeheartedly. Unlike the religious leaders of his time, Nathanael is not concerned with maintaining outward appearances or seeking praise from others. Jesus values this quality in Nathanael even before they exchange any words.

Can Jesus' words about Nathanael apply to us as well? Today's Gospel challenges us to be honest and sincere with ourselves, others, and God. Proverbs 4:23 states, *"More than all else, keep watch over your heart, since here are the wellsprings of life."* During this time of prayer, let us examine our hearts and ask for God's grace to live authentically and with integrity.

Reflective questions:

How do people around me see me? How does Jesus see me?

Tuesday, 30th September, St. Jerome.

Zechariah 8:20-23, Luke 9:51-56

As the time drew near for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely took the road for Jerusalem and sent messengers ahead of him. These set out, and they went into a Samaritan village to make preparations for him, but the people would not receive him because he was making for Jerusalem. Seeing this, the disciples James and John said, 'Lord, do you want us to call down fire from heaven to burn them up?' But he turned and rebuked them, and they went off to another village.

Following Jesus wherever He leads

Jesus resolutely travelled not the easy road of life, but the hard one. He chose to walk the path leading to Jerusalem, where He would face rejection, suffering, and ultimately death. On His way to Jerusalem, Jesus entered a Samaritan village. He could have taken a long, indirect route to avoid contact with Samaritans, who were long-time enemies of the Jews. However, Jesus chose not the easy way but the difficult one. He likely hoped to share the Good News with the villagers and spend

time with them. Unfortunately, they rejected Him and refused to welcome Him.

We desire to follow Jesus, but we also want to enjoy life, which makes us hesitant to face conflict or rejection. We often seek the easiest path, one that offers a smooth and carefree existence. However, to follow Jesus means adopting His determination. It involves making His destiny our own and embracing His journey as ours.

Reflective question:

Am I willing to follow Jesus resolutely on the path that He wants to lead me to?



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