

**Tuesday, 1<sup>st</sup> May, St. Joseph the Worker**  
**Genesis 1:26-2:3, Matthew 13:54-58**

*Jesus came to his home town and taught the people in their synagogue in such a way that they were astonished and said, 'Where did the man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers? This is the carpenter's son, surely? Is not his mother the woman called Mary, and his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Jude. His sisters, too, are they not all here with us? So where did the man get it all?' And they would not accept him. But Jesus said to them, 'A prophet is only despised in his own country and in his own house', and he did not work many miracles there because of their lack of faith.*

**For the glory of God**

Jesus went to His home town, but He was not welcomed by His people because they saw Him as simply *'the carpenter's son'*. Despite all the wise things Jesus taught and the miracles He performed, they could not accept Him.

Haven't we experienced being devalued through our works, ideas, efforts, etc. just because others see us simply as ordinary or perhaps insignificant? We should never allow others' labels to prevent us from trying to do good and making a difference in this world through our talents and abilities. Jesus knows us deeply and sees beyond how the world might see us.

Today, as we celebrate St. Joseph the Worker, may we contemplate on how we can offer to God all our gifts and talents whole-heartedly. St. Joseph did not limit himself to be 'just a' carpenter because he used his talents to do his work of God. Let St. Joseph inspire us always to work for God and bring glory to Him alone!

**Question for reflection:**

1) In all what I do, how can I bring glory to God?

**Wednesday, 2<sup>nd</sup> May, St. Athanasius**  
**Acts 15:1-6, John 15:1-8**

*Jesus said to his disciples: 'I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that bears no fruit he cuts away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes to make it bear even more. You are pruned already, by means of the word that I have spoken to you. Make your*

*home in me, as I make mine in you. As a branch cannot bear fruit all by itself, but must remain part of the vine, neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me, with me in him, bears fruit in plenty; for cut off from me you can do nothing. Anyone who does not remain in me is like a branch that has been thrown away – he withers; these branches are collected and thrown on the fire, and they are burnt. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask what you will and you shall get it. It is to the glory of my Father that you should bear much fruit, and then you will be my disciples.'*

### **Remain in me**

In this time of prayer, let us open ourselves to a renewed encounter with Jesus. Jesus Himself tells us, *"Remain in me."* We are called to remain in Jesus, not as a theory or concept, but as a living person. He is alive and present in our lives.

*"Do you really know the living Jesus - not from books but from being with Him in your heart? Have you heard the loving words He speaks to you? ... The devil may try to use the hurts of life, and sometimes our own mistakes - to make you feel it is impossible that Jesus really loves you, is really cleaving to you. This is a danger for all of us. And so sad because it is completely the opposite of what Jesus is really wanting, waiting to tell you. Not only that He loves you, but even more - He longs for you."* (Saint Teresa of Calcutta)

Yes, our life might be full of brokenness - broken friendships, broken promises, broken dreams, etc. We might be burdened by several instances of pain. However, we, as Jesus' disciples, are called to return again and again to the True Vine and allow Jesus to simply love us. Without remaining in Jesus, we will easily be led to the darkness of despair and sadness. With Jesus, we receive the love, peace and joy we need to walk on in this journey of life.

Let us keep renewing our encounter with Jesus so that His presence will enable us to bear much fruit forever.

### **Questions for reflection:**

- 1) Do I know the living Jesus, not from books, but by being with Him in my heart?
- 2) What prevents me from remaining with Jesus in my daily life?

**Thursday, 3<sup>rd</sup> May, Ss. Philip and James**  
**1 Corinthians 15:1-8, John 14:6-14**

*Jesus said to Thomas: 'I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one can come to the Father except through me. If you know me, you know my Father too. From this moment you know him and have seen him.' Philip said, 'Lord, let us see the Father and then we shall be satisfied'. 'Have I been with you all this time, Philip,' said Jesus to him 'and you still do not know me? 'To have seen me is to have seen the Father, so how can you say, "Let us see the Father"? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak as from myself: it is the Father, living in me, who is doing this work. You must believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; believe it on the evidence of this work, if for no other reason. I tell you most solemnly, whoever believes in me will perform the same works as I do myself, he will perform even greater works, because I am going to the Father. Whatever you ask for in my name I will do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask for anything in my name, I will do it.'*

**To aim high with Jesus**

*"A final question: what can I, a weak fragile sinner, do? God says to you, Do not be afraid of holiness; do not be afraid to aim high, to let yourself be loved and purified by God; do not be afraid to let yourself be guided by the Holy Spirit. Let us be infected by the holiness of God. Every Christian is called to sanctity (see Dogmatic Constitution, Lumen gentium, nos.19–42); and sanctity does not consist especially in doing extraordinary things, but in allowing God to act." (Pope Francis)*

Today, as we celebrate the feast day of Ss. Philip and James, let us remember that Jesus called them, not because they were perfect and flawless. But rather, they were called because Philip and James were among the disciples who argued about who was the greatest (Luke 22:24), and they were also the ones who ran away from Jesus when He was captured to be crucified. Yet, Jesus called them again and renewed their discipleship after His resurrection. Their personal encounter of love and forgiveness from the Risen Lord led them to give their lives. Both were martyred for their faith.

Today, listen to Jesus as He tells us, *"I am the Way, the Truth and the Life."* We are all fragile sinners, yet we are all called to holiness. Holiness is not perfectionism. Holiness is to be like Christ, who is fullness of love. Each day,

we are called to follow Jesus faithfully because He is the way to show us the narrow path of love that we must walk. We are called to root ourselves in the truth that is God's love. We are called to embrace the fullness of life that Jesus brings to us. Only He can lead us to be *'infected by the holiness of God'*.

Let us aim high with Jesus!

**Question for reflection:**

1) Is Jesus my only way, truth and life? Why?

**Friday, 4<sup>th</sup> May**

**Acts 15:22-31, John 15:12-17**

*Jesus said to his disciples: 'This is my commandment: love one another, as I have loved you. A man can have no greater love than to lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends, if you do what I command you. I shall not call you servants anymore, because a servant does not know his master's business; I call you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have learnt from my Father. You did not choose me, no, I chose you; and I commissioned you to go out and to bear fruit, fruit that will last; and then the Father will give you anything you ask him in my name. What I command you is to love one another.'*

**Love one another**

Jesus commands us to love. Twice in today's gospel, Jesus instructed His disciples to love one another. This is not an option or a suggestion, but a directive that we are called to obey. As Jesus' friends, we must learn from Him what His directive truly means for us today.

*'Love one another as I have loved you.'* This is the key to how we too should love. Jesus tells us to observe the way He has shown His love for us, and then to emulate the way He loves.

In the gospel, we see Jesus constantly going out of Himself to love those around Him with kindness and patience despite their weaknesses. He forgave sinners and gave them a chance for new life. He served others without expecting any rewards or praises. He even admonished people so that they will grow in the truth.

Jesus calls us His friends and invites us to put love into action today. Love

that gives away its own rights so that others can be enriched. Love that forgets about self and is lost in caring for others.

Today, as we start this day, let us remain once more in Jesus, our true vine so that we can allow His love to flow through us to others.

*Jesus, I want to experience the joy of loving like you, today!*

**Questions for reflection:**

- 1) How has Jesus loved me?
- 2) How is Jesus inviting me to love others?

**Saturday, 5<sup>th</sup> May**

**Acts 16:1-10, John 15:18-21**

*Jesus said to his disciples: "If the world hates you, remember that it hated me before you. If you belonged to the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you do not belong to the world, because my choice withdrew you from the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the words I said to you: A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you too; if they kept my word, they will keep yours as well. But it will be on my account that they will do all this, because they do not know the one who sent me."*

**I belong not to the world, but to Jesus**

The true mark of a disciple is love. The world will hate us if we take our following of Jesus seriously. This is because we will refuse to identify ourselves with the values and concerns of the secular world. Instead, we will reject competitiveness, self-absorption, anger, revenge, and desire for status and power which are ingrained in the lives of so many people.

*"My choice withdrew you from the world..."*

Jesus chose us to live and love differently from the world's ways. Perhaps, the most horrifying thing that can ever happen to us, as Christians, is that we are loved and honoured by this world. This means that we have failed to witness God's love to the people around us. This means that we have chosen to live a self-centred life.

*"There is one and only one possible road to joy: selfless love." (Peter Kreeft)*

It is a challenge to walk this one possible road to joy. Yet, as people loved and chosen by Jesus, we are invited to choose His life of love.

**Question for reflection:**

1) What prevents me from loving selflessly like Jesus'?

**Sunday, 6<sup>th</sup> May, Sixth Sunday of Easter**

**Acts 10:25-26, 34-35,44-48, 1 John 4:7-10, John 15:9-17**

*Jesus said to his disciples: 'As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Remain in my love, if you keep my commandments you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my own joy may be in you and your joy be complete. This is my commandment: love one another, as I have loved you. A man can have no greater love than to lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends, if you do what I command you. I shall not call you servants anymore, because a servant does not know his master's business; I call you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have learnt from my Father. You did not choose me, no, I chose you; and I commissioned you to go out and to bear fruit, fruit that will last; and then the Father will give you anything you ask him in my name. What I command you is to love one another'*

**A fruitful life**

Jesus comes and makes our life bear fruits that last forever. The world, on the other hand, drives us to work for success and productivity. Driven by success, we will inevitably measure our self-worth according to the amount of money we have in our bank account, the number of friends we have, the type of cars we own, etc. Success is like a greedy monster that demands us always to get more, achieve more for ourselves. Or else, we are never good enough.

The questions that we need to pause and ask ourselves are: Am I happy? Is this one life that I have simply to work for productivity and success? What does Jesus call me to be: Fruitful or successful?

In today's gospel, Jesus calls us to remain in Him so that our life will be fruitful. A fruitful life makes us contented with who we are and gives us the joy to use the unique gifts we have been given for the good of others. Jesus,

our friend and companion, desires that we will use our one life to do good and to love.

*“In the evening of our life, we will be judged by love alone.” (St. John of the Cross)*

When we meet God at the end of our life, He will only judge us by how much we have invested in love. This is because love is the fruit that will never die. Love is eternal.

**Monday, 7<sup>th</sup> May**

**Acts 16:11-15, John 15:26-16:4**

*Jesus said to his disciples: ‘When the Advocate comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who issues from the Father, he will be my witness. And you too will be witnesses, because you have been with me from the outset I have told you all this that your faith may not be shaken. They will expel you from the synagogues, and indeed the hour is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is doing a holy duty for God. They will do these things because they have never known either the Father or myself. But I have told you all this, so that when the time for it comes you may remember that I told you.’*

### **Witnessing**

*‘Modern man listens more willing to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses.’ (Pope Paul VI)*

What does it mean to be a witness?

A witness is one who has encountered the faithful love of Jesus and cannot keep this experience to him/herself but has the desire to share it with others. A witness is one who can, through his/her life and words, make the Gospel visible. A witness is one who manifests Jesus and awakens in others the attraction to Him.

The world today needs credible witnesses who dare to challenge the superficial values of society and can courageously bring Jesus to the workplace, to the family life, to friendships, to parish groups, to society at large.

Jesus’ message of love is for all, not only for those who are receptive and

welcoming. However, we must never be afraid of bringing Christ into every area of life, even to those who seem to be unresponsive and hardened against faith. Even if we face ridicule and rejection, we know that we are never alone in this mission because Jesus has given us His Holy Spirit to lead and guide us. The Spirit of Truth will never fail to remind us to give personal witness to the love of God to every person we meet. He will also help us to overcome our fears and self-centredness so that we can manifest Christ through our words and deeds.

Let us not be afraid but go and be witnesses of God's love to all!

**Questions for reflection:**

- 1) To whom can I give personal witness to the love of God?
- 2) Am I afraid to be a witness in my family, office/school, church? Why?

**Tuesday, 8<sup>th</sup> May**

**Acts 16:22-34, John 16:5-11**

*Jesus said to his disciples: 'Now I am going to the one who sent me. Not one of you has asked, "Where are you going?" Yet you are sad at heart because I have told you this. Still, I must tell you the truth: it is for your own good that I am going because unless I go, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I do go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will show the world how wrong it was, about sin, and about who was in the right, and about judgement: about sin: proved by their refusal to believe in me; about who was in the right: proved by my going to the Father and your seeing me no more; about judgement: proved by the prince of this world being already condemned.'*

**I will send the Holy Spirit to you**

Jesus' disciples were sad because they knew that their beloved Master would be leaving them. However, Jesus did not want His disciples to live in sadness and grief. In the same way, He does not want us to be constantly controlled by sorrow, but to turn to joy and peace.

That is why Jesus assured His disciples that they had to rejoice because He would continue to be with them. He would send the Holy Spirit who would live, move and act in them. Instead of focussing on their loss, they had to focus on their gain.



As we prepare for the Feast of the Pentecost, we need to fix our hearts, not on the spirits of pessimism, negativity and sadness, but we should always fix our hearts on the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit steadies our hearts and makes us live this life with His joyful courage.

Today, let us ask ourselves: Is my heart fixed on what brings pessimism and sadness to me and others? Is my heart fixed on things that do not bring me fullness of life? Is my heart fixed on the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit, our Advocate and Helper, will always help us to take steps to move forward, despite being surrounded by life's difficulties.

*'I will send him to you...'*

This is the promise of Jesus to each one of us. Let us live today dwelling in His Spirit who will always lead us to live as joyful Christians!

**Wednesday, 9<sup>th</sup> May**

**Acts 17:15,22-18:1, John 16:12-15**

*Jesus said to his disciples: 'I still have many things to say to you but they would be too much for you now. But when the Spirit of truth comes he will lead you to the complete truth, since he will not be speaking as from himself but will say only what he has learnt; and he will tell you of the things to come. He will glorify me, since all he tells you will be taken from what is mine. Everything the Father has is mine; that is why I said: All he tells you will be taken from what is mine.'*

### **The Spirit of truth**

The Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of truth, will lead us to the complete truth. What is the 'Truth'? Can we really know the 'Truth'? In the world of today where relativism exists, people are cynical about truth. Many people believe that nothing is definitive, and thus, no one can claim that they have the complete truth.

Yet, Jesus promises us that the Holy Spirit will lead us all to the complete truth. What then is Jesus saying? The Holy Spirit will guide us into a deeper communion with Jesus himself and allow us to be truly loved by Him. From this deep communion, we will have the certainty of our identity as children of God, as His beloveds, and so live fully this life with unwavering faith.

Each day, we need to be sensitive to the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. In this way, we can be led to the complete truth of God's unconditional and faithful love.

**Questions for reflection:**

- 1) Am I open to the Holy Spirit so that I can be more sensitive to His presence and to the realities of God?
- 2) How can I live this day more with the Holy Spirit?

**Thursday, 10<sup>th</sup> May, Ascension of the Lord**  
**Acts 1:1-11, Ephesians 4:1-13 Mark 16:15-20**

*Jesus showed himself to the Eleven, and said to them, 'Go out to the whole world; proclaim the Good News to all creation. He who believes and is baptised will be saved; he who does not believe will be condemned. These are the signs that will be associated with believers: in my name they will cast out devils; they will have the gift of tongues; they will pick up snakes in their hands, and be unharmed should they drink deadly poison; they will lay their hands on the sick, who will recover.' And so the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven: there at the right hand of God he took his place, while they, going out, preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word by the signs that accompanied it.*

**Go out to the whole world!**

The last words of Jesus as He was taken up to heaven were: *'Go out to the whole world, proclaim the Good News to all creation.'* Today, as we celebrate the feast of the Ascension, let us ask Jesus to speak to our hearts and let us truly understand the meaning of His words.

By our baptism, we are all called to the task of evangelisation. It is not just the work of a few, but all Christians have the responsibility to be evangelizers. By our words and deeds, we share the Good News with all!

*"...evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize." (Apostolic Exhortation. Evangelii Nuntiandi, 14)*

Jesus who is with us today invites us again to look at the multitude of our brothers and sisters who live life as though there is no God. How can we

bring Jesus to them? How can we be evangelizers in our concrete family, office, society?

*Jesus, thank you for this beautiful feast of the Ascension. Let me be renewed by your presence so that I can go out and proclaim your love to those around me. Count on me, Jesus!*

**Friday, 11<sup>th</sup> May**

**Acts 18:9-18, John 16:20-23**

*Jesus said to his disciples: 'I tell you most solemnly, you will be weeping and wailing while the world will rejoice; you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn to joy. A woman in childbirth suffers, because her time has come; but when she has given birth to the child she forgets the suffering in her joy that a man has been born into the world. So it is with you: you are sad now, but I shall see you again, and your hearts will be full of joy, and that joy no one shall take from you. When that day comes, you will not ask me any questions. I tell you most solemnly, anything you ask for from the Father he will grant in my name.'*

### **In the light of joy**

As Christians, we are meant to be joyful, and not sad or disillusioned. This is the message of today's gospel - joy.

*"I shall see you again, and your hearts will be full of joy, and that joy no one shall take from you,"*

Jesus makes this promise to each of us today. Our hearts can rejoice even when we suffer from uncertainties or when people misunderstand us or when we struggle from family/work problems. Yet, we can remain joyful. This is because we, who are close to Jesus, have a joy that nobody and nothing can ever take away from us. The joy of Jesus in us pushes us to live with more hope, more peace and more faith. If we are not joyful people, then we should ask ourselves: Am I close to Jesus?

When we are not close to Jesus, we tend to live in constant fear and negativism which paralyzes us from living life fully with greater meaning and purpose.

*"(Fear is) a Christian's disease. We're afraid of joy. It's better to think: Yes, yes, God exists, but He is there. Jesus has risen and He is there. Somewhat*

*distant. We're afraid of being close to Jesus because this gives us joy. And this is why there are so many 'funeral' (mournful) Christians, isn't it? Those whose lives seem to be a perpetual funeral. They prefer sadness to joy. They move about better in the shadows, not in the light of joy, like those animals who only come out at night, not in the light of day, who can't see anything. Like bats. And with a little sense of humour we can say that there are Christian bats who prefer the shadows to the light of the presence of the Lord." (Pope Francis)*

Fear takes place when Jesus is not in our lives. Thus, we live in the shadows and not in the light of joy. Let us today choose to live in the presence of the Lord!

**Questions for reflection:**

- 1) Do I identify myself as a 'Christian bat'?
- 2) How can I choose to live in the light of joy today?

**Saturday, 12<sup>th</sup> May**

**Acts 18:23-28, John 16:23-28**

*Jesus said to his disciples: 'I tell you most solemnly, anything you ask for from the Father he will grant in my name. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and so your joy will be complete. I have been telling you all this in metaphors, the hour is coming when I shall no longer speak to you in metaphors; but tell you about the Father in plain words. When that day comes you will ask in my name; and I do not say that I shall pray to the Father for you, because the Father himself loves you for loving me and believing that I came from God. I came from the Father and have come into the world and now I leave the world to go to the Father.'*

**Ask and you will receive**

*"Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete."* This does not mean that we can make any request that comes into our head and expect all our prayers to be answered. When we ask for what we genuinely need and not just for what we want, then our prayers will be answered and our joy will be complete. What do we genuinely need?

We all need patience. We all need humility. We all need more love and understanding. We need these things so that we can put them into practice

and make others happy. Very often, we tend to pray and ask God for things we need to make us happy. Today, why don't we try asking for things that can help us to make others in our life, for example, our parents, spouses, children, friends, happy. It is when we make others happy that our joy will be complete because we are going out of our self-absorption and giving them God's love.

*"I do not say that I shall pray to the Father for you, because the Father himself loves you for loving me and believing that I came from God."*

This is our assurance today that God the Father Himself loves us and He knows all our needs. We go to Him with open hands and know that He will fill us with His love so that we can live this day for Him and for others.

**Question for reflection:**

1) What do I genuinely need to live this day with joy?

**Sunday, 13<sup>th</sup> May, Seventh Sunday of Easter**

**Acts 1:15-17,20-26, 1 John 4:11-16, John 17:11-19**

*Jesus raised his eyes to heaven and said: 'Holy Father, keep those you have given me true to your name, so that they may be one like us. While I was with them, I kept those you had given me true to your name. I have watched over them and not one is lost except the one who chose to be lost, and this was to fulfil the scriptures. But now I am coming to you and while still in the world I say these things to share my joy with them to the full. I passed your word on to them, and the world hated them, because they belong to the world no more than I belong to the world. I am not asking you to remove them from the world, but to protect them from the evil one. They do not belong to the world any more than I belong to the world. Consecrate them in the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world, and for their sake I consecrate myself so that they too may be consecrated in truth.'*

**Striving for unity**

None of us can possibly live alone in this world. We need each other. We are made to live in communion with one another. This is why Jesus prays that we may be one, not divided.

Jesus invites us to see people through His eyes, and to learn from Him how

to be humble, compassionate and merciful in order to always work for unity in our relationships with others. The unity that Jesus desires for us is not something superficial, but the unity that is one of love.

*'...so that they may be one like us.'*

When our hearts are not firmly fixed on Christ and we are not in union with Him, we can destroy unity in our families, in friendships, in the workplace, in our parish communities. We harbour grudges and blame others for our misery. We create cliques and ignore those who are different from us. We use words to harm the reputation of those whom we cannot get along with.

*'Do your best to preserve the unity which the Spirit gives by means of the peace that binds you together.'* (Ephesians 4:3)

Today, let us do our best to work for unity in our family, in the Church, in our workplace, in our friendships. May our hearts be firm in Jesus so that we can learn from Him how to love and be one!

**Questions for reflection:**

- 1) Do my actions and words unite or divide?
- 2) What is Jesus' invitation to me today?

**Monday, 14<sup>th</sup> May, St. Matthias**  
**Acts 1:15-17,20-26, John 15:9-17**

*Jesus said to his disciples, "As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Remain in my love, if you keep my commandments you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my own joy may be in you and your joy be complete. This is my commandment: love one another, as I have loved you. A man can have no greater love than to lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends, if you do what I command you. I shall not call you servants anymore, because a servant does not know his master's business; I call you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have learnt from my Father. You did not choose me, no, I chose you; and I commissioned you to go out and to bear fruit, fruit that will last; and then the Father will give you anything you ask him in my name. What I command you is to love one another."*

### **No longer servants, but friends**

Jesus calls us, "Friends". Let us stay in this intimate reality that we are Jesus' friends who are called to be with Him, and not simply workers or servants doing things for Him. We are Jesus' friends! To be Jesus' friends means to have the same heart of Jesus. To be Jesus' friends means to follow in the footsteps of Jesus - to serve rather than to be served. To be Jesus' friends means to be in constant relationship of mutual love and trust. Do we willingly accept Jesus' friendship? Do we rather do things for Jesus?

It is not something for us to boast about. Rather, it is a gift given that we are called to receive and live it out, and it is in this friendship that we experience ourselves fully loved, fully alive.

*"Are we not perhaps all afraid in some way? If we let Christ enter fully into our lives, if we open ourselves totally to him, are we not afraid that He might take something away from us? Are we not perhaps afraid to give up something significant, something unique, something that makes life so beautiful? Do we not then risk ending up diminished and deprived of our freedom? . . . No! If we let Christ into our lives, we lose nothing, nothing, absolutely nothing of what makes life free, beautiful and great. No! Only in this friendship are the doors of life opened wide. Only in this friendship is the great potential of human existence truly revealed. Only in this friendship do we experience beauty and liberation. And so, today, with great strength and great conviction, on the basis of long personal experience of life, I say to you, dear young people: Do not be afraid of Christ! He takes nothing away, and he gives you everything. When we give ourselves to him, we receive a hundredfold in return. Yes, open, open wide the doors to Christ – and you will find true life. Amen."* (Pope Benedict XVI)

#### **Question for reflection:**

1) How can I live this day with the awareness that I am Jesus' friend?

**Tuesday, 15<sup>th</sup> May**

**Acts 20:17-27, John 17:1-11**

*Jesus raised his eyes to heaven and said: 'Father, the hour has come: glorify your Son so that your Son may glorify you; and, through the power over all mankind that you have given him, let him give eternal life to all those you have entrusted to him. And eternal life is this: to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I have glorified you on earth and*

*finished the work that you gave me to do. Now, Father, it is time for you to glorify me with that glory I had with you before ever the world was. I have made your name known to the men you took from the world to give me. They were yours and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now at last they know that all you have given me comes indeed from you; for I have given them the teaching you gave to me, and they have truly accepted this, that I came from you, and have believed that it was you who sent me. I pray for them; I am not praying for the world but for those you have given me, because they belong to you: all I have is yours and all you have is mine, and in them I am glorified. I am not in the world any longer, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep those you have given me true to your name, so that they may be one like us.'*

### **Belonging**

*'Today, if we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other - that man, that woman, that child is my brother or my sister. If everyone could see the image of God in his neighbour, do you think we would still need tanks and generals?'* (Saint Teresa of Calcutta)

We belong to each other because we first belong to God. Today, Jesus prays for unity for those who belong to God. Jesus' final prayer for the ones He loved, His disciples, was not for them to have successful missions or to live a happy and contented life. But, He prayed for unity, togetherness, oneness! His prayer revealed His deepest desire that His disciples would get along with each other because each of them belong to each other and to God the Father.

How can we work for unity among ourselves?

Unity starts with us. We have to be the ones who take the first steps to act for the sake of unity and love. We have to be the ones who actively remember that we belong to each other - that man, that woman, that child is my brother or my sister, and so we are called to live in peace and harmony.

Today, let us root ourselves once more in our belonging to God. From this sense of belonging, we have the inner motivation to work for unity with others.

### **Questions for reflection:**

1) How can I work for unity today?



2) What prevents me from seeing the image of God in the people around me?

**Wednesday, 16<sup>th</sup> May**

**Acts 20:28-38, John 17:11-19**

*Jesus raised his eyes to heaven and said, 'I am not in the world any longer, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep those you have given me true to your name, so that they may be one like us. While I was with them, I kept those you had given me true to your name. I have watched over them and not one is lost except the one who chose to be lost, and this was to fulfil the scriptures. But now I am coming to you and while still in the world I say these things to share my joy with them to the full. I passed your word on to them, and the world hated them, because they belong to the world no more than I belong to the world. I am not asking you to remove them from the world, but to protect them from the evil one. They do not belong to the world any more than I belong to the world. Consecrate them in the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world, and for their sake I consecrate myself so that they too may be consecrated in truth.'*

**Consecrate them in the truth**

*'Consecrate them in the truth; your word is truth.'*

Jesus who is Himself the Word (John 1:1) and the truth (John 14:6), draws us to be intimately and deeply one in His presence. We are consecrated, i.e. set apart from the world in order to belong totally to Him alone. To have Jesus' presence in us, we are commissioned to be sent into the world to bear witness to His love and offer His life to all those we meet and encounter.

*'Christ has no body now but mine. He prays in me, works in me, looks through my eyes, speaks through my words, works through my hands, walks with my feet and loves with my heart.'* (St Teresa of Avila)

There are many people around us who are living without inner strength and joy because they do not have Jesus in their hearts. Many people do not have a community of faith to journey with them and support them in their faith. Many live without meaning in life. Look up and look around us! Jesus places us in this world - into a concrete family, workplace, school, relationships - for a reason. We are there to offer Jesus to everyone.

Let us listen to Jesus as He prays for us, and allow Him to draw us into His presence of love.

*Jesus, consecrate me in the truth of your word, your love.*

**Questions for reflection:**

- 1) Do I allow Jesus to pray in me, work in me, look through my eyes, speak through my words, work through my hands, walk with my feet and love with my heart?
- 2) What is Jesus' invitation to me today?

**Thursday, 17<sup>th</sup> May**

**Acts 22:30,23:6-11, John 17:20-26**

*Jesus raised his eyes to heaven and said: 'I pray not only for these, but for those also who through their words will believe in me. May they all be one. Father, may they be one in us, as you are in me and I am in you, so that the world may believe it was you who sent me. I have given them the glory you gave to me, that they may be one as we are one. With me in them and you in me, may they be so completely one that the world will realise that it was you who sent me and that I have loved them as much as you loved me. Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, so that they may always see the glory you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. Father, Righteous One, the world has not known you, but I have known you, and these have known that you have sent me. I have made your name known to them and will continue to make it known, so that the love with which you loved me may be in them, and so that I may be in them.'*

**To be with Jesus where He is**

*'Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am...'*

As Christians, we cannot be Jesus' disciples if we are not where Jesus is. The question to ask ourselves then is: Where is Jesus?

Jesus is found in the poor, the suffering, the weak and the oppressed. Jesus is found in those who have no voice as well as those who have no basic rights. While on earth, Jesus lived among the outcasts of His society and offered

them love and dignity. Can we see Jesus in the poor? Are we with Jesus where He is?

*'It has been said that the only real regret lies in not being a saint (L. Bloy); we could also say that there is only one real kind of poverty: not living as children of God and brothers and sisters of Christ.'* (Pope Francis)

There are many people who are suffering from this poverty of not knowing and living the joy of being the beloved children of God and brothers and sisters of Jesus. Jesus suffers in their lives, as they turn away from God and seek meaning in worldly pleasures and material satisfactions.

As disciples of Jesus, it is time to adjust our lives and choose to be close to Jesus and be with Him where He is.

*Jesus, give me the desire to be with you where you are. Help me to see you in others so that I can bring them to a closer encounter with you.*

**Questions for reflection:**

- 1) Is my heart close to my brothers and sisters who are suffering from material poverty and spiritual poverty?
- 2) How can I be with Jesus where He is?

**Friday, 18<sup>th</sup> May, St. John I**  
**Acts 25:13-21, John 21:15-19**

*Jesus showed himself to his disciples, and after they had eaten he said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you love me more than these others do?' He answered, 'Yes Lord, you know I love you'. Jesus said to him, 'Feed my lambs'. A second time he said to him, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' He replied, 'Yes, Lord, you know I love you'. Jesus said to him, 'Look after my sheep'. Then he said to him a third time, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' Peter was upset that he asked him the third time, 'Do you love me?' and said, 'Lord, you know everything; you know I love you'. Jesus said to him, 'Feed my sheep. 'I tell you most solemnly, when you were young you put on your own belt and walked where you liked; but when you grow old you will stretch out your hands, and somebody else will put a belt round you and take you where*

*you would rather not go.’ In these words he indicated the kind of death by which Peter would give glory to God. After this he said, ‘Follow me’.*

### **Agape love**

Peter had been a self-assured leader among Jesus’ disciples. He was the one who told Jesus during the Last Supper that he would rather choose death than deny His beloved Master (Matthew 26:35). Yet, Peter went through the shame of saying thrice that he did not know Jesus because he was afraid to be identified with Him. In today’s gospel, Peter was no longer confident and proud. How could Peter face the Resurrected Jesus who continued to look at him with love, despite what had happened?

In Greek, there are different words that are a translation of ‘love’. Among the many words, there are two that are important for us to understand today’s gospel. They are Phileo and Agape. Phileo is a love that is the affection between brothers and best friends. Agape, on the other hand, is a sacrificial love that looks for the good of the others, and puts others ahead of self.

*Jesus asked Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love (agape) me more than these others do?” Peter answered, “Yes Lord, you know that I love (phileo) you.” “Feed my lambs.” The second time, Jesus asked Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love (agape) me?” Peter answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love (phileo) you.” “Look after my sheep.” The third time Jesus asked Peter, “Simone, son of John, do you (phileo) me?” Peter was upset that Jesus asked him the third time. He said, “Lord, you know everything, you know that I love (phileo) you.”*

Jesus was asking for an agape love from Peter. However, Jesus knew that Peter, at this stage of his life, could only offer Him phileo, and not agape love. Jesus took what Peter could offer and was contented to have His friendship. With trust, Jesus continued to put the mission of shepherding the people towards God’s love into Peter’s hands.

Today, Jesus is happy with the love we can offer to Him. He asks us the same question that He posed to Peter, *“Do you love me?”* Jesus will never give up on us, but continues to wait for us to respond to Him. He wants also to give us the mission of being shepherds for His people because He trusts us so much. What will our response be today?

**Saturday, 19<sup>th</sup> May**

**Acts 28:16-20,30-31, John 21:20-25**

*Peter turned and saw the disciple Jesus loved following them - the one who had leaned on his breast at the supper and had said to him, 'Lord, who is it that will betray you?' Seeing him, Peter said to Jesus, 'What about him, Lord?' Jesus answered, 'If I want him to stay behind till I come, what does it matter to you? You are to follow me.' The rumour then went out among the brothers that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus had not said to Peter, 'He will not die', but, 'If I want him to stay behind till I come'. This disciple is the one who vouches for these things and has written them down, and we know that his testimony is true. There were many other things that Jesus did; if all were written down, the world itself, I suppose, would not hold all the books that would have to be written.*

### **You are to follow me!**

Peter and John were both called by Jesus to be His disciples. Each of them, with their different characters, personalities, talents and weaknesses, had different roles to play in the community. Peter's role was to be a Shepherd of Jesus' flock. He was to lay down his life for Christ and the church. John, on the other hand, was to bear witness through writing the gospel and letters to the early Christians. He never stopped giving witness to Jesus throughout his life.

When Peter saw John the Beloved disciple following them, Peter asked Jesus, "What about him, Lord?" What made Peter ask this question? Curiosity? Doubt? Did Peter see John as a rival? Did his insecurity make him compare himself with John? Jesus knew all what Peter had in his heart. Thus, Jesus reminded Peter, "You are to follow me".

What about us? What is our main concern in life? Do we have the tendency to compare ourselves with others? Why do we compare ourselves with others? Why are we not contented with the roles we have and the mission we have been entrusted by Jesus?

We, with our talents and weaknesses, are all called by Jesus to follow Him. This is something which we must never forget or lose sight of. Let us not waste time comparing ourselves with another. Instead, we must listen again and again to Jesus' voice calling us, "You are to follow me!" Jesus wants us to never lose sight of Him, but continue to follow Him, and Him alone!

*Jesus, you call me to follow you. Help me to turn away from my own selfish interest, insecurities and fears. Even if the path is difficult to see, guide me always to pick up the cross and follow you. Forgive me for being quick to question and so slow to obey you. Give me the grace to follow you without fear, knowing that you are always with me!*

**Sunday, 20<sup>th</sup> May, Pentecost Sunday**

**Acts 2:1-11, Galatians 5:16-25, John 15:26-27; 16: 12-15**

*Jesus said to his disciples: "When the Advocate comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who issues from the Father, he will be my witness. And you too will be witnesses, because you have been with me from the outset. I have told you all this that your faith may not be shaken. They will expel you from the synagogues, and indeed the hour is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is doing a holy duty for God. They will do these things because they have never known either the Father or myself. But I have told you all this, so that when the time for it comes you may remember that I told you. I did not tell you this from the outset, because I was with you; but now I am going to the one who sent me. Not one of you has asked, "Where are you going?" Yet you are sad at heart because I have told you this. Still, I must tell you the truth: it is for your own good that I am going because unless I go, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I do go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will show the world how wrong it was, about sin, and about who was in the right, and about judgement: about sin: proved by their refusal to believe in me; about who was in the right: proved by my going to the Father and your seeing me no more; about judgement: proved by the prince of this world being already condemned. I still have many things to say to you but they would be too much for you now. But when the Spirit of truth comes he will lead you to the complete truth, since he will not be speaking as from himself but will say only what he has learnt; and he will tell you of the things to come. He will glorify me, since all he tells you will be taken from what is mine. Everything the Father has is mine; that is why I said: All he tells you will be taken from what is mine."*

**I am not afraid because the Spirit lives in me!**

*"The Holy Spirit overcomes fear. We know that the disciples sought shelter in the Upper Room after the arrest of their Lord and that they had remained isolated for fear of suffering the same fate. After Jesus' resurrection their fear was not suddenly dispelled. But here at Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit rested*

*upon them, those men emerged fearless and began to proclaim the Good News of the Crucified and Risen Christ to all. They were not afraid because they felt they were in the hands of the strongest One...” (Pope Benedict XVI)*

Today, as we celebrate the Feast of Pentecost, let us be assured that we too are in the hands of the strongest One, who puts all our fears to flight and fills us with the courage to proclaim Jesus to all! The Holy Spirit, who dwells in us, will never let our faith be shaken.

*Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love!*

**Monday. 21<sup>st</sup> May**

**James 3:13-18, Mark 9:14-29**

*When Jesus, with Peter, James and John came down from the mountain and rejoined the disciples they saw a large crowd round them and some scribes arguing with them. The moment they saw him the whole crowd were struck with amazement and ran to greet him. ‘What are you arguing about with them?’ he asked. A man answered him from the crowd, ‘Master, I have brought my son to you; there is a spirit of dumbness in him, and when it takes hold of him it throws him to the ground, and he foams at the mouth and grinds his teeth and goes rigid. And I asked your disciples to cast it out and they were unable to.’ ‘You faithless generation’ he said to them in reply. ‘How much longer must I be with you? How much longer must I put up with you? Bring him to me.’ They brought the boy to him, and as soon as the spirit saw Jesus it threw the boy into convulsions, and he fell to the ground and lay writhing there, foaming at the mouth. Jesus asked the father, ‘How long has this been happening to him?’ ‘From childhood,’ he replied ‘and it has often thrown him into the fire and into the water, in order to destroy him. But if you can do anything, have pity on us and help us.’ ‘If you can?’ retorted Jesus. ‘Everything is possible for anyone who has faith.’ Immediately the father of the boy cried out, ‘I do have faith. Help the little faith I have!’ And when Jesus saw how many people were pressing round him, he rebuked the unclean spirit. ‘Deaf and dumb spirit,’ he said ‘I command you: come out of him and never enter him again.’ Then throwing the boy into violent convulsions it came out shouting, and the boy lay there so like a corpse that most of them said, ‘He is dead’. But Jesus took him by the hand and helped him up, and he was able to stand. When he had gone indoors his disciples asked him*

*privately, 'Why were we unable to cast it out?' 'This is the kind' he answered 'that can only be driven out by prayer.'*

### **Help my little faith!**

A situation of hopelessness and despair. A father requested the disciples of Jesus to heal his son but they could not do so at that moment. When Jesus came into the picture, the father approached him with just one final desperate plea, *"I do have faith. Help the little faith I have!"*

The main message of today's gospel is not about how mighty and deep our faith is, but in whom we put our faith. The father realised that it did not matter if his faith was small and weak, but all he had to do was to put it in Jesus. What about us?

Like the father in today's gospel passage, we too face situations in which we feel helpless. We tend to ask God, *"Why? Why must my child suffer so much? Why me? Why is this happening to me?"* In moments like these, we can either go closer to Jesus or walk away from Him.

Faith makes us to depend on Jesus more and grow into mature Christians as we learn to live suffering and difficulties with Him.

*Lord, I do have faith. Help my little faith! I want to put my trust in you alone!*

**Tuesday, 22<sup>nd</sup> May, St. Rita of Cascia**  
**James 4:1-10, Mark 9:30-37**

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



### **The path of Humility**

*From the desire of being esteemed,*

*Deliver me, O Jesus.*

*From the desire of being loved,*

*Deliver me, O Jesus.*

*From the desire of being honoured,*

*Deliver me, O Jesus.*

*From the desire of being praised,*

*Deliver me, O Jesus.*

*From the desire of being preferred to others,*

*Deliver me, O Jesus.*

*That others may be loved more than I,*

*Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.*

*That others may be chosen and I set aside,*

*Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.*

*That others may be praised and I go unnoticed,*

*Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.*

*(Litany of Humility by Merry Cardinal del Val)*

In our society, we are considered great for the achievements, money and popularity we have.

However, in Jesus' eyes, we are great when we learn how to be little and a servant to all.

Look at Jesus! His true greatness came from His power of service, His power of love. In this new day, let us ask for the grace to set our hearts on Jesus again, and learn from Him the way to true happiness.

#### **Question for reflection:**

1) Is it hard for me to put the litany of humility into practice? Why?

#### **Wednesday, 23<sup>rd</sup> May**

**James 4:13-17, Mark 9:39-40**

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

### **Not one of us**

The world we live in has taught us the culture of exclusion from a very young age. During play time, the popular ones are chosen to be in the team while the unpopular ones are the last to be picked or are not selected at all. During school days, the ones with the best grades always make it to the top classes while the rest are placed at the bottom. At work, the culture of exclusion continues. The good ones climb the ladder of success while the rest are somehow excluded from being promoted, praised, etc. Nobody likes to be excluded in the family, in the community, in the workplace and in friendship.

In today's gospel passage, John and the rest of the disciples practiced the culture of exclusion too. They saw a man, who was not one of the disciples doing good deeds, and immediately forbade him from doing such good deeds. The reason John gave to Jesus was that the man was "...not one of us". The disciples failed to see the goodness of the man but simply based their judgement on the fact that he was not part of their group.

Today, Jesus calls us to break through such closed mentality and work for inclusion instead. For Jesus, it was not essential if the man was part of the disciples or not, but rather more important was whether the man was doing good or not.

We meet people of different personalities, people with different ways of doing things, different habits, different educational level, etc. We must learn how to include others. Wherever there is love, there is God. Wherever there is unity, there is God.

Let us be part of the Kingdom of love where everyone has a place.

### **Questions for reflection:**

- 1) Have I experienced being excluded or have I excluded someone?
- 2) How can I be open to accept the differences in others?

**Thursday, 24<sup>th</sup> May**

**James 5:1-6, Mark 9:41-50**

*Jesus said to his disciples: 'If anyone gives you a cup of water to drink just because you belong to Christ, then I tell you solemnly, he will most certainly not lose his reward.' 'But anyone who is an obstacle to bring down one of these little ones who have faith, would be better thrown into the sea with a*

*great millstone round his neck. And if your hand should cause you to sin, cut it off; it is better for you to enter into life crippled, than to have two hands and go to hell, into the fire that cannot be put out. And if your foot should cause you to sin, cut it off; it is better for you to enter into life lame, than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. And if your eye should cause you to sin, tear it out; it is better for you to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell where their worm does not die nor their fire go out. For everyone will be salted with fire. Salt is a good thing, but if salt has become insipid, how can you season it again? Have salt in yourselves and be at peace with one another.'*

### **Obstacle or blessing?**

Jesus had strong words for those who caused the little ones to lose their faith in God.

Today, we might think that we will never be obstacles to others because we are baptised, we go to church, we participate in parish activities, etc. We think that by going to church we are strong in matters of faith. However, when we see young people leaving the church or family members simply stopping to believe in Jesus, do we ever question why such things are happening?

*"One might say, 'I am a Christian!' but if you do not live like a Christian, if you do not act like a Christian, if you do not think like a Christian and feel like a Christian, something is amiss. There is a certain inconsistency!... All Christians are called to give testimony to Jesus Christ... Christians who ordinarily and commonly live inconsistently do great harm."* (Pope Francis)

When Jesus taught about cutting off the hand and foot if these caused us to sin, he did not mean it literally. We need to look at the meaning behind Jesus' words. Jesus wanted to make the point that Christians must live as Christians by rooting their lives consistently in God, and not in sins that cause others to be scandalised and fall away from the right path.

As Christians, we are called to have salt in us and be at peace with one another. What is the message behind Jesus' words? Salt is significant to make food tasty. Thus, when we live Christ's love consistently with our family members, with the community at large, we are the salt that gives good taste and flavour to wherever we may be. We reveal God's presence! If we,

instead choose to live our Christian faith in an inconsistent way, we lose our flavour. What then is the use of salt that is good-for-nothing?

**Friday, 25<sup>th</sup> May, St. Bede the Venerable**

**James 5:9-12, Mark 10:1-12**

*Jesus came to the district of Judaea and the far side of the Jordan. And again crowds gathered round him, and again he taught them, as his custom was. Some Pharisees approached him and asked, 'Is it against the law for a man to divorce his wife?' They were testing him. He answered them, 'What did Moses command you?' 'Moses allowed us' they said 'to draw up a writ of dismissal and so to divorce.' Then Jesus said to them, 'It was because you were so unteachable that he wrote this commandment for you. But from the beginning of creation God made them male and female. This is why a man must leave father and mother, and the two become one body. They are no longer two, therefore, but one body. So then, what God has united, man must not divide.' Back in the house the disciples questioned him again about this, and he said to them, 'The man who divorces his wife and marries another is guilty of adultery against her. And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another she is guilty of adultery too.'*

### **True love is possible**

*"God calls you to make definitive choices, and he has a plan for each of you: to discover that plan and to respond to your vocation is to move forward toward personal fulfilment. God calls each of us to be holy, to live his life, but he has a particular path for each one of us. Some are called to holiness through family life in the sacrament of Marriage. Today, there are those who say that marriage is out of fashion. Is it out of fashion? In a culture of relativism and the ephemeral, many preach the importance of 'enjoying' the moment. They say that it is not worth making a life-long commitment, making a definitive decision, 'forever', because we do not know what tomorrow will bring. I ask you, instead, to be revolutionaries, I ask you to swim against the tide; yes, I am asking you to rebel against this culture that sees everything as temporary and that ultimately believes you are incapable of responsibility, that believes you are incapable of true love. I have confidence in you and I pray for you. Have the courage 'to swim against the tide'. And also have the courage to be happy." (Pope Francis)*

Each of us has a specific vocation to which we respond and find happiness in it. Some are called to married life, others are called to religious life and

others are called to singlehood. Each vocation is good in itself and leads us towards an intimate union with God.

In today's gospel passage, Jesus was asked about divorce. According to Jesus, Moses allowed divorce because the Israelites in his time were unteachable. However, Jesus went back to God's original plan for marriage, i.e. faithful commitment to reach everlasting communion.

Whatever state of life we are in, we all belong to God and we first commit ourselves to Him, and then to parents, spouse, children and grandparents. Rooted in this belonging to God, we commit to 'swim against the tide' and show to the world that true love is possible - true love for God, true love for spouses, true love for parents, true love for children and true love for grandparents.

**Questions for reflection:**

- 1) Am I happy and contented with the state of life I am in?
- 2) Do I commit my life to God and to my family? How can I increase God's presence as the centre of my family life?

**Saturday, 26<sup>th</sup> May, St. Philip Neri**  
**James 5:13-20, Mark 10:13-16**

*People were bringing little children to Jesus, for him to touch them. The disciples turned them away, but when Jesus saw this he was indignant and said to them, 'Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. I tell you solemnly, anyone who does not welcome the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.' Then he put his arms round them, laid his hands on them and gave them his blessing.*

**Bridges leading to Jesus**

*"People were bringing little children to Jesus, for him to touch them."*

Jesus welcomed the people who brought their little children to Him. Today, we too can be these 'people' who bring our children, our friends, our parents, our relatives, our colleagues, etc. to Jesus, for Him to touch their hearts with His love.

How wonderful it is to know that Jesus will always welcome the people

because of us! We are the bridge between Jesus and our loved ones. We are the connection between heaven and earth.

We are living bridges that bring people to Jesus. In order to be strong and steady bridges, we ourselves must first be connected to Jesus, and make Him the centre of our lives. If not, it is so easy to be obstacles that lead people away from Jesus instead.

As Christians, we need to make a powerful but simple statement everyday to those around us - i.e. Jesus loves you.

May we, through our words and actions, be strong and steady bridges which people cross over to find Jesus' presence.

**Questions for reflection:**

- 1) Do I see myself as a bridge where others can cross freely and find Jesus?
- 2) Where can I be a bridge today?

**Sunday, 27<sup>th</sup> May, The Holy Trinity**

**Deuteronomy 4:32-34,39-40, Romans 8:14-17, Matthew 28:16-20**

*The eleven disciples set out for Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had arranged to meet them. When they saw him they fell down before him, though some hesitated. Jesus came up and spoke to them. He said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations; baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you. And know that I am with you always; yes, to the end of time.'*

**The Holy Trinity is with us always**

What are we celebrating in this feast of the Holy Trinity?

We celebrate with joy that our Trinitarian God exists in intimacy with one another. God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit experience perfect sincerity, union, trust and mutual sharing with one another. The Good News is that God wants to share this intimacy with us. Thus, we are made for intimacy, not loneliness or isolation.

We hunger for intimacy of love and trust in our relationships with others. We desire for cars, gadgets, money, etc., with the hope that these external things can fill our deepest yearnings. Yet, no matter how much our parents,

spouses, children, friends love us or the number of cars and gadgets we have, our hearts will remain fidgety and restless for something purer, something deeper and something beautiful.

As St Augustine said, *“God, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you.”*

Today, as we celebrate the feast of the Holy Trinity, let us repeat the words of St. Augustine to God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit: *“God, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you.”*

Allow this prayer to sink slowly into our hearts, and truly find inner peace from the special joy that only God can fulfil our hearts’ deepest longings.

*“And know that I am with you always, yes, to the end of time.”*

God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is with us always, and so, we can journey in this life with trust and peace.

**Questions for reflection:**

- 1) What does today’s feast mean to me?
- 2) Am I aware of the Trinity’s presence in my life? How can I learn to relate to the Trinity with more intimacy and love?

**Monday, 28<sup>th</sup> May**

**1 Peter 1:3-9, Mark 10:17-27**

*Jesus was setting out on a journey when a man ran up, knelt before him and put this question to him, ‘Good master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?’ Jesus said to him, ‘Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: You must not kill; You must not commit adultery; You must not steal; You must not bring false witness; You must not defraud; Honour your father and mother.’ And he said to him, ‘Master, I have kept all these from my earliest days’. Jesus looked steadily at him and loved him, and he said, ‘There is one thing you lack. Go and sell everything you own and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.’ But his face fell at these words and he went away sad, for he was a man of great wealth. Jesus looked round and said to his disciples, ‘How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!’ The*

*disciples were astounded by these words, but Jesus insisted, 'My children,' he said to them 'how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. 'They were more astonished than ever. 'In that case' they said to one another 'who can be saved?' Jesus gazed at them. 'For men' he said 'it is impossible, but not for God: because everything is possible for God.'*

### **God alone is enough**

*The rich young man went up to Jesus and asked the right question: "Good master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" This young man desired for something more in his life. He went to Jesus knowing that He would get the right answer. However, finally, he made the wrong decision when he walked away from Jesus. He could not let go of his many possessions and so he went away, sad.*

Let us look deeper into this character of the rich young man. This rich young man placed his security and happiness in what he owned - his money, property, comforts, etc. He was possessive of his wealth, and thus, he could not let God be his only possession.

*"Let nothing upset you, let nothing startle you.*

*All things pass; God does not change.*

*Patience wins all it seeks.*

*Whoever has God lacks nothing:*

*God alone is enough."* (St Teresa of Avila)

Today, let us desire and long for God alone.

### **Questions for reflection:**

- 1) Is it enough for me to have only God? Is He the source of my joy and security?
- 2) How can I follow Jesus more closely today?

**Tuesday, 29<sup>th</sup> May**

**1 Peter 1:10-16, Mark 10:28-31**

*'What about us?' Peter asked Jesus. 'We have left everything and followed you.' Jesus said, 'I tell you solemnly, there is no one who has left house, brothers, sisters, father, children or land for my sake and for the sake of the gospel who will not be repaid a hundred times over, houses, brothers, sisters,*



*mothers, children and land - not without persecutions - now in this present time and, in the world to come, eternal life. Many who are first will be last, and the last first.'*

### **We belong to God's family**

Peter honestly wanted to know what benefits he and the rest of the disciples would receive for leaving everything to follow Jesus. Jesus presented Peter with an honest answer: Those who have left everything for Him and for the Gospel would belong to a new spiritual family of God with new relations beyond blood ties. In belonging to this new family of God, nobody will be in need because all will share their possessions generously.

Gratuitous love and humble service will be the main foundation of the family of God. However, belonging to this new family of God implies also persecutions. Why? This is because there will be people who do not understand or agree with the gospel way of life. In the same way that Jesus was persecuted and even crucified, those who follow Him will also experience a similar persecution. However, Jesus promised them that they will have eternal life in the world to come.

Today, we are part of this family of God by our baptism. We, as Christians, belong to a bigger family beyond blood ties and personal interests, but united now by the desire to follow Jesus authentically. Now, we are witnesses to the Kingdom of God present among us, in us. As God's daughters and sons, we take part in loving one another gratuitously and becoming servants to one another: No more gossips, no more competitions, no more status, no more divisions. We are one even with the Christians in other parts of the world. When Christians are persecuted brutally for believing in Christ, we too stand by them through our prayers and sacrifices.

Each one of us is now called to enter into eternal life - into an intimate relationship with God, here, now and forever. Let us take pride in being Christians!

### **Questions for reflection:**

1) Do I have a sense of belonging to God's family - in the local church, in the Universal Church? Why?

**Wednesday, 30<sup>th</sup> May, St. Joan of Arc**

**1 Peter 1:18-25, Mark 10:32-45**

*The disciples were on the road, going up to Jerusalem; Jesus was walking on ahead of them; they were in a daze, and those who followed were apprehensive. Once more taking the Twelve aside he began to tell them what was going to happen to him: 'Now we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man is about to be handed over to the chief priests and the scribes. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the pagans, who will mock him and spit at him and scourge him and put him to death; and after three days he will rise again.' James and John, the sons of Zebedee, approached him. 'Master,' they said to him 'we want you to do us a favour.' He said to them, 'What is it you want me to do for you?' They said to him, 'Allow us to sit one at your right hand and the other at your left in your glory'. 'You do not know what you are asking' Jesus said to them. 'Can you drink the cup that I must drink, or be baptised with the baptism with which I must be baptised?'*

*They replied, 'We can'. Jesus said to them, 'The cup that I must drink you shall drink, and with the baptism with which I must be baptised you shall be baptised, but as for seats at my right hand or my left, these are not mine to grant; they belong to those to whom they have been allotted'. When the other ten heard this they began to feel indignant with James and John, so Jesus called them to him and said to them, 'You know that among the pagans their so-called rulers lord it over them, and their great men make their authority felt. This is not to happen among you. No; anyone who wants to become great among you must be your servant, and anyone who wants to be first among you must be slave to all. For the Son of Man himself did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.'*

### **Entering into Jesus' logic**

Jesus had just spoken to His disciples regarding His coming passion and death. However, none of them seemed to fully understand Him. The next moment, the sons of Zebedee went to Jesus in order to get positions of prominence. When the rest of the disciples heard about their request, they became indignant with the two brothers because they too were seeking status and power.

For Jesus, true power does not come from status and position, but from selfless service. It is a life freely lived for others.

*"We must not forget that true power, at whatever level, is service, which has its luminous summit on the Cross. With great wisdom Benedict XVI reminded*

*the Church many times that for man, authority is often synonymous with possession, dominion, success. For God authority is always synonymous with service, humility, love. It means to enter into Jesus' logic, who bends down to wash the feet of the Apostles." (Pope Francis)*

Are we ready to live a life of selfless service, a life for others?

**Thursday, 31<sup>st</sup> May, The Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary  
Zephaniah 3:14-18, or Romans 12:9-16, 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.*

**Selfless love**

After receiving Angel Gabriel's announcement that she would be the Mother of God, Mary did not focus on herself and her emotions, worries and thoughts. Instead, she immediately went to visit Elizabeth after hearing that her cousin was also pregnant. What do we see here? Love in action! Mary selflessly gave herself for the good of others.

What can we learn from Mary today?

Selflessness is a virtue which makes us grow out of our pride and meanness

in order to give ourselves without any personal motives or expectation of anything in return. Selflessness makes us live freely for others and God, not for ourselves only.

As we celebrate the Feast of the Visitation, let us ask Mother Mary to help us to also have the courage to de-centre from ourselves so that we can selflessly give ourselves more to others.

*“There is one and only one possible road to joy: selfless love” (Peter Kreeft)*

**Questions for reflection:**

1) How can I imitate Mary’s selfless love today?