



IN OUR KNEES IN HIS HANDS

April 2017

**He is not here; he has risen!
Remember how he told you, while he
was still with you in Galilee: 'The Son
of Man must be delivered over to the
hands of sinners, be crucified and on
the third day be raised again.'**”

Luke 24:6-7

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April 2017

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“But I was like a gentle lamb led to the slaughter. I did not know it was against me they were plotting...”

Jeremiah 11:19

Jeremiah 11: 18-20

Psalm 7: 2-3, 9-12

John 7: 40-53

Today we complete the fourth week of Lent. Holy Week is one week away. How prepared am I to enter into ‘the passion experience’ of the Lord as I journey with Him? Saint Gregory says, “Worship Him who hung on the cross, because of you, even if you are hanging there yourself.”

The cross is a great privilege for it blesses us with the assurance of what really matters in life-what is real. The cross gives us the opportunity to encounter reality and to enter into reality like Christ and with Christ. Without the constant, daily experience of the cross, we would lose touch with its saving reality and become lax in our understanding and efforts. We ask the Lord to bless our experiences of the cross throughout this day. The Lord Jesus himself speaks in the readings...“I for my part like a trustful lamb was being led to the slaughterhouse...Lord of hosts I have committed my cause to you.”

The Gospel proclamation says some in the crowd acclaimed the Lord as ‘the prophet ‘ others , ‘the Christ ‘ despite a division that springs up the guards refuse to arrest him...why? They proclaim that no one has ever spoken like this man. He is the ‘searcher of mind and heart ‘ a ‘trusting lamb’ in whose slaughter we take refuge.

Through the troubles that befall us, God makes us realise that there is something greater at work than our problems in our lives. In my own life the destruction of a marriage which shook the very foundations of my beliefs and existence brought me into the knowledge and experience of a living God who has a greater purpose for us. He never leaves us alone. Today I live a complete life, filled with His love, joy, peace and righteousness.

A Dominican priest observed- God sees to it that everything contributes to our spiritual welfare - not only the grace but sickness too, contradictions and reversals of fortune. Experience has proved that the greatest misfortunes can have the most powerful liberating effect while the greatest successes can end in disaster. In trials if we continue to bless and thank God we will be giving Him the greatest glory!

Prayer: Abba Father you gave up your Son that we may live. Give us the grace to give up our own lives that your joy may be complete in us. Amen

"I will open your graves and bring you up from them.

I will put my Spirit in you and you will live" Ezk 37:13-14

Ezekiel 37: 12-14

Psalms 130: 1-8

Romans 8:8-11

John 11: 1-45

Today's readings are centered on death and resurrection. The First Reading is God's promise from the Old Testament. The Second Reading is how the early church lived that promise and the Gospel proclamation is the fulfillment of that promise from the Old Testament.

The background to the first reading from the Book of Ezekiel is that the people of Israel were exiled to Babylon. They had started to lead sinful lives, going against the commandments of God. They gave into the wants of their flesh and let go of God. God gives Ezekiel a vision of dry bones. The dry bones were a metaphor for the people of Israel. They were leading dead lives. The bones were dry, meaning that the person whose bones these were, had been dead a long time. The bones were so old that they had become dry and past the point of return. The Lord was showing Ezekiel that the people of Israel were far gone from Him that it seemed like they were at the point of no return. However, God shines a light of hope in verse 12 when He promises, "My people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel." God is telling Ezekiel it does not matter that the people are lying in tatters, the nation dispersed and the temple destroyed because He is powerful enough to give life to dead, dry bones. He is able to save the people who were thought to be past the point of no return.

The Psalmist speaks of how he cried to God in his despair. He recounts the great characteristics of God-- He does not keep a record of our sins but instead hears our cry and forgives us wholeheartedly. The Psalmist says he will wait for God to turn his curse into a blessing. He waits for God more than a watchman waits for the morning. The Psalmist is reassuring his readers that they can put their entire trust in the Lord's unfailing love, for He will always redeem a repentant sinner.

In the letter to the Romans, St. Paul tells them if they believe in God then the same power that raised Christ from the dead will be within them. Through this saving power, life will be given to their sinful bodies and the glory of God will be made manifest. St. Paul is assuring us that the power of God can save us when we believe in Him.

Today's Gospel proclamation is a real example of God's promise being put into practice by giving life to something beyond restoration.

Lazarus was a good friend of the Lord Jesus. When the Lord hears the news of the death of Lazarus, He is sad. However, He knows that this is an opportunity to bring glory to God. Instead of rushing to the tomb of Lazarus, the Lord Jesus stayed in prayer where He was. In those two days the body of Lazarus would have decayed beyond recognition. When the Lord finally arrives at the tomb of Lazarus, his body was past the point of no return. Yet, the Lord calls Lazarus out of the tomb by resurrecting him from the dead.

The dry bones from the first reading and the body of Lazarus were both beyond the point of being brought back to life. But in the end the power of God is so great that it is able to bring dry bones and a two-day dead body back to life. He is showing us that His power is far greater than anything we can imagine. Even when we think things are beyond being restored, God is able to restore them.

In our lives, we may go through a crisis that we think is too far gone to be saved by God. But today He is speaking to us. A problem or person is never too far gone to be saved by God. His power reaches far beyond the realm of our own understanding. All we have to do is wait in faith and expectation, as the Psalmist says, and we will see the glory of God.

Recently, I read the testimony of a woman who found out that her husband of one year and five months was having an affair and wanted a divorce. This woman stormed the throne of God asking Him to move to bring her husband back. She says from all counts and to the naked eye in the natural realm her marriage was dead and beyond repair. She attended church regularly but did not have a personal relationship with God. She cried every day but slowly began a relationship with God from ground zero. She repented for her sins and waited on God. Through the brokenness she spoke the Word of God over her marriage, released her husband and marriage to God and the Lord began to work in her life.

The husband who had told her that he had never loved her and was sorry he had married her, returned home to give their marriage a second chance.

Today, God is telling us that it does not matter what our situation looks like or how impossible and dead it seems. God can do the impossible for those who love and obey Him.

Prayer: Abba Father, I pray that the power that did the impossible and raised Christ from the dead, will enter my life and bring to life the parts that I thought were beyond repair. Amen.

Let the man who has no sin cast the first stone**John 8:7**

Daniel 13: 41-52

Psalm 23: 1-6

John 8:1-11

Chapter 13 & 14 of the Book of Daniel, were excluded among other books written in Greek as belonging to what the Protestants call Apocrypha or Deutrocanonical books. The delightful story reads like a modern day fairy tale. There is beautiful virtuous Princess falsely accused and nearly being put to death by a vicious unscrupulous band of people. She is rescued by a spirit inspired youth, while her accusers are soundly punished. But under the simple story there are many aspects well worth examining. Firstly we see the elders using their authority 'forgetting the demands of justice and virtue and giving into their perverted and lustful nature in accusing an innocent woman. We see Susannah determined to protect her virtue at any cost (ver 23) turning trustingly to God. God answers her and inspires Daniel to confront the elders bringing them the punishment they deserve.

Lust was the driving force that made of the elders. In the Gospel proclamation the religious leaders driven by jealousy and hatred bring a woman caught in adultery to the Lord. Their aim was to trap the Lord. Their attitude to the woman was vicious and condemnatory. They thought they had successfully trapped the Lord by their questions. If He said the woman should be stoned to death, His preaching on love and mercy would be negated. He would also be guilty of breaking the Roman law since Jews were forbidden to carry out a death sentence. On the other hand if He said she should be pardoned, He would be breaking the Mosaic law. But the Lord Jesus with extraordinary dexterity turned the trap against them leaving them shamed and fearful. He first stooped down and wrote with His fingers – was He consulting the Father? Was He writing down the sins of the accusers? When they insisted on an answer, He said 'Let him who has no sin cast the first stone' and continued writing. One by one they left. It was grace that brought her to the Lord Jesus, it was mercy that gave her the gift of new life.

In our own lives we have the tendency to look down on others whom we consider less virtuous than ourselves. We rarely try to see the circumstances that lead people to sin. We should have the humility to say 'there but for the grace of God'.

Prayer: Abba Father, help us to become more aware of our sinfulness before we condemn others. Amen

Tuesday 4th April

*Feast of St. Isidore of Seville, Bishop
and Doctor of the church*

**When I am in trouble, don't turn away from me. Listen to me
and answer me when I call**

Psalm 102: 2

Numbers 21: 4-9

Psalm 102: 2-3, 16-21

John 8: 21-30

After all the great things God did to free the Israelites from being slaves for 400 years they started to complain and even started to speak against God and Moses. We might be surprised at their ungrateful behaviour after seeing such great miracles.

We are no better when compared with the Israelites' who spoke against God 3500 years ago. If we look into our lives we come across many such similarities. In the past we would plead and pray to God. We would go in search of God with all with what we had and once God got us out of the trouble we would forget Him. We are thankful to God just for a short time like the Israelite's did and then whatever God gave us is not enough. We want more and we start desiring everything under the Sun. We expect God to make our lives a bed of roses. When things do not fall into place the way we expect them to, we start complaining. What a pathetic way of thinking. I personally used to live like this.

The attitude of Moses in the first reading amazes me. After doing so much to these people the poor man was penalised by them as well. But this great man of God, does something astonishing without cursing the people. His inner response personally challenged me. He pleads and intercedes on behalf of his people so God would heal them. We need to ask ourselves if we able to do what Moses did. Do we even have half his attitude?

Today we celebrate the feast of St. Isidore of Seville, a bishop and doctor of the church. He was born into a family of Saints. Two of his brothers and a sister are revered as saints. It is said that as a boy being frustrated by his inability to learn as fast as his brother, he ran away from home. While alone he noticed falling drops of water having no effect on solid stone. But over time the water drops had worn holes in the rock. Isidore realised that if he kept working at his studies, his small efforts would eventually pay off in great learning. Eventually his revelations caught fire in Spanish minds and held back the dark ages of barbarism from Spain. One of his greatest acts was to give all his possessions to the poor. The Lord is waiting to answer us in our trouble and show us a new way out.

Prayer: Abba Father, give us the grace to remember the great things you have done in our life. We thank and praise you in all situations. Amen.

**“And blessed is your holy and glorious name praiseworthy and exalted
above all for all ages Daniel 3: 52**

Daniel 3: 14-20,
91-95

Ps Daniel 3: 52-56

John 8:31-42

Three young men were forced to worship the idol. This was a challenge to the people of God who lived in exile. We do not live in exile or under any religious oppression, yet, idol worship is a huge mountain we face daily.

Who is our King Nebuchadnezzar? We can make a long list like the persons or things which demand our worship. They could be our career, our bosses, our wealth, our parents, our spouse, our children, our partner to be or our good name. The fear of losing one of these makes us slaves to these things we hold onto.

At present we find many people living under this oppression. Young men who could be powerful instruments in the hand of God have become slaves to collecting wealth, to marry the girl they desire and impress the intended family. Many young women out of fear of losing their jobs become victims of powerful bosses. Human freedom is lost. Greed, hunger and the thirst to become first in the society have made us slaves and we have created a hell for us to live in. Can we be like the three young men? Are we bold enough to talk back to the king, even in the face of death. Only God can set us free. We read it in the Gospel. When the Son sets you free, you are free indeed.

A young woman who was in love with a millionaire was challenged by the Lord Jesus to give up the relationship. That was a tough call for her. Yet by the time the challenge came to her, she had already shifted from living in the world to living in the word of God. That is the invitation from the Lord Jesus to us. Scripture which says, “What profit is there for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? What could one give in exchange for his life?” This inspired her to give up the relationship. The word of God set her free from worshiping an idol.

Today we celebrate the feast of St. Vincent Ferrer. He was close to the passion of Christ and fasted on Wednesdays & Fridays. At nineteen he entered the Dominican Order of preachers. He completed the difficult formation, eventually gained his doctorate and worked tirelessly during the western schism of the church. His words are “Whatever you do think not of yourself but of God”.

Prayer: Abba Father, cause us to accept your Son and live in the Spirit to witness to your living presence in the world. Amen.

“Whoever obeys my word will never see death”.

John 8:51

Genesis 17: 3-9

Psalms 105: 4-9

John 8: 51-59

God made a covenant with Abraham; to be his God and the God of his descendants after him. God called it an everlasting covenant. He promised; “I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you”. Then God said to Abraham, “As for you, you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you for the generations to come”.

Three generations later, most of them only knew God as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. With every Prophet who came their way, they got to know the power of their God and what He was capable of. Sadly, except for a prophet no one had direct access to God. Observing the law was compulsory, and whoever broke the law was dealt with severely. They offered various sacrifices to keep themselves acceptable to God. Yet, they had no idea who God was, His love for them, or how compassionate He really was.

They were so disconnected from God, that when God became man, He was seen as a threat. Every action of the Lord, every word he spoke was cross-checked against the law or the observances, and was declared blasphemy! They knew about God, but they did not know God. As a result, they had become arrogant and unteachable to God.

As a server, sometimes I feel I am not too different to the Jews at the time of the Lord. When I get stuck with what I think is “serving God” I too become arrogant. Judgment and criticism come quickly. I begin to serve God for the wrong reasons.

The Lord is speaking to me today; “whoever obeys my word will never see death”. He has called me to obey His word that comes to me through the Scripture, Holy Mass, and guidance from the community. His word reveals His heart to me and as I obey Him, He begins to move in my life. As I obey His word I will see Him healing, restoring and giving life to situations beyond hope. Instead of death I will begin to see life.

Prayer: Abba Father, give me the grace to know you intimately. Awaken my spirit to your presence, your voice and your leading. Amen.

Don't just talk... choose to walk

Jeremiah 20: 10-13

Psalm 18: 2-7

John 10: 31-42

In today's Gospel proclamation my heart was challenged by the word from John 10:37-38. "Do not believe me unless I do the works of my Father. But if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father."

God showed me how much I talk the talk but do not walk the walk. It is so easy talking to people about the Lord Jesus, His way and what He expects us to do and how He expects us to handle situations. But when it comes down to us, when we encounter some friction, temptation or resistance, our reason deserts us and we resort to our human ways of reacting and handling things. The Lord shows us that the testimony of our mouths can only take us so far.

A story is told about a preacher who was catching a bus one day to go into the city. As he came on the bus, he paid the bus driver \$1, the rate however only being 75 cents. The bus driver gave the preacher 35 cents change, and the preacher made his way to his seat. Once seated the preacher noticed the 10 cents error in his favour. For a moment he sat thinking about the situation, finally he got up and approached the bus driver stating that he was given too much change. The bus driver said, "I knew I gave you too much. I was in church last week and heard you preaching on honesty, and I just wanted to see if you practice what you preach. "

We need not only be preachers for us to be able to relate to this story. If we are Christian, this story should apply to us. As a mother, I am keenly aware that my children are watching to see if I live out the Christian ideals that I preach to them and expect of them. I would never be able to share my faith with them if my words and deeds contradicted one another. There are people all around us, every where we go, especially in our families, who are watching us to check the authenticity of the faith we profess to have.

One can argue with words but deeds cannot be contradicted. They speak for themselves. The world is watching the deeds of those who claim to be Christian and is often not impressed.

Prayer: Abba Father, let me be a doer of the Word and not just a hearer. Amen.

"I will comfort them and give them joy instead of sorrow"**Jeremiah 31:13**

Ezekiel 37: 21-28

Ps Jer 31: 10-13

John 11: 45-56

Ezekiel had a unique relationship with God. Not only did God give him visions but also used Ezekiel to speak His message to people. In today's first reading God speaks to us in the very same way he spoke to the Israelites. The immense love of a merciful father's heart is revealed to all of us today. His promise is to bring together a nation that was scattered, not just to bring together but

to bring them home.

This is an amazing promise extended to you and me. Just like Ezekiel, in these modern time, we are called by God to sit at his feet to receive such assurances every day of our lives. Then God will act and do what is needed to bring our families together and united, to bring back home the one gone astray, to rid one's loneliness and bring in comfort and so much more.

Through Jeremiah, God once again speaks to us and assures the promise He made through Ezekiel saying that He Himself will guard us like a Shepherd who guards his flock. The same security, love, mercy and hope is extended to us when we have a deep prayer life and hear his word. We are assured of deep rest in the arms of a Shepherd.

Through the Gospel proclamation we are called to reflect on the last few days of our Lord on this earth. The Pharisees, the Priests gather with the council of Sanhedrin to plan how they will execute the Lord Jesus. They have been tolerating the miracles and His teachings for almost three and a half years but this last thing he did in raising a dead man to life drives them out of control with fear. Fear of losing control over people, fear of losing favour & position, fear that people may see their true self from the pious appearances they put out.

Do we not have the same type of fears in our own lives? Our actions and responses are the same. We plan and plot to defend our positions or our ways of thinking, opinion, in the same way. Let us truly repent today and use this season of Lent to turn to God and hold on to the promises given for ourselves and our families, so that with the coming of Easter our new life in Christ will be manifested for the glory of God.

Prayer: Abba Father, we ask for the grace to see our own fears within us through the power of the Holy Spirit so that we can truly repent and be ready for the coming of your son as the Risen Lord and Master. Amen!

“My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may Your will be done.”

Matthew 26:42

Isaiah 50: 4-7

Psalms 22: 8-9, 17-24

Phil 2: 6-11

Matt 26: 14 - 27:66

Today is Palm Sunday, also known as Passion Sunday. It is the final Sunday of Lent, the beginning of Holy Week, and marks the triumphant arrival of Christ to Jerusalem, days before He was crucified. The Lord Jesus entered Jerusalem riding a donkey, in the midst of joyous praise of God by His followers, acknowledging Him as “Son of David” and “the King who comes in the Name of the Lord”. Yet the Church offers to us today, what followed the ‘Hosanna’s of those people, was the absolute trust and the unquestioning obedience of the Lord to His Father. This stood out as a beacon of light in the darkness of sin and evil.

The First Reading teaches us the secret of the total freedom enjoyed by the Lord Jesus, throughout His earthly life. “..He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ears to listen like one being instructed.” (Isaiah 50:4) This daily communication with the Father and being instructed by the Father, created a great trust in Him about the Father’s faithfulness. Hence He could say, “..Because the Sovereign Lord helps me, I will not be disgraced. Therefore ... I know I will not be put to shame.” (Isaiah 50:7) This trust was not shattered even when the Lord was betrayed, arrested, scourged and stripped, and crucified. Why? The Lord Jesus was living in the reality of His Heavenly Father, and not in the reality of this world. This is what the Lord is offering us today. We are invited to a deeper journey into the Heart of the Father through a daily communication with Him in prayer, and a deeper relationship with Him, so that trusting Him in times of failure and disappointment is not going to be an issue any more.

The Gospel proclamation narrates the passion and death of the Christ. The Lord Jesus who trusted the Father alone, and not humans, teaches us another important truth of our spiritual journey. There were many people who accompanied the Jesus as He made the triumphant entry to Jerusalem city. Many of them would have received some healing or a miracle from the Lord and almost all would have heard His sermons. Yet none of them was found anywhere near when the Lord was hanging on the cross. Where were they when the soldiers and the crowds mocked, slapped, scourged and finally crucified the Lord?

What was happening in the inner being of the Lord when the people were deserting Him, more so when His own disciples let Him down?

As a fully human person, He also felt lonely and was filled with sorrow and hence He cried out to the Father, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” (“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”) (Matthew 26:46) Yet His spirit remained rooted in the firm truth, that He could still trust His Heavenly Father, even when hell had broken loose and even when that trust meant giving up His life. Losing the love and loyalty of His friends and followers did not really matter, and the Lord surrendered His spirit to His Father. (Luke 23:46)

The Chief priests and the other elders assumed that finally they had got rid of the troublemaker whose life was too much of a challenge and a threat to their comfortable existence. They were not going to take any chances. Thus they approached Pilate and made arrangements to secure the tomb as best they knew. (cf. Matthew 27:65,66) Yet, we all know what happened! God the Father sent the Holy Spirit into the highly secured tomb and raised His Son, with a glorified body, never to suffer nor die again. Thus God proved that the maximum effort of human beings means nothing to God. Isn't this enough for us to let go of our anxiety and self effort, knowing that the Father will send His creative solution at the right time, when we hold on to His promises in faith, and grow deeper in our relationship with Him?

In the Second Reading, St Paul sums up the whole spiritual journey of the Lord Jesus in those few sentences. The Son, who had the very nature of God, did not consider His equality with the Father, as something to be used for His advantage, when His life and well being in the world was threatened. Though He had all the power to call down fire from heaven upon those who were tormenting Him, the Lord Jesus chose to become a servant and a slave, and be obedient even to death on the cross.

This inner response of humility and obedience shook the Heart of the Father, even though it did not soften the hearts of the human beings. The self-emptying of the Lord Jesus led to His glorification, Him being exalted to the highest place and that at the Name of Jesus, every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The Father, Son and Holy Spirit invite us to the same inner response today. Are we ready?

Prayer: Abba Father, I stand amazed at Your perfect plan to defeat evil and death and make me Your adopted child. Amen.

Which character are you?

Isaiah 42: 1-7

Psalm 27: 1-3,
13-14

John 12: 1-11

Today's Gospel reading is about Mary anointing the Lord Jesus' feet with perfume. Each character in this story represents a time or stage in our journey with the Lord.

Judas – John 13:27 tells us “As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him.” Although it says that Satan completely entered Judas' inner being at the last supper, I believe that Satan would have been slowly gaining territory within Judas' heart long before this. Today's reading tells us in John 12:6 “as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.” He was stealing from the money bag and using the money for his own needs. Even in our lives, this can happen to us without us even realizing it. We too can be giving into a small sin or a white lie. But the moment we give into a temptation, Satan slowly enters our being. It is then that we need to turn to the Lord in repentance.

Lazarus – Lazarus was saved by the Lord. His life was spared because it was not the will of the Father for Lazarus to die. God revealed His plan to His Son and the Lord accomplished the will of the Father. Now Lazarus is honoring and celebrating the man who saved his life. This is like the initial part of our journey. When we first encounter the Lord we want to do is praise Him and thank Him continually. We want to celebrate His presence in our lives.

Mary – Mary had grown in her initial relationship with the Lord Jesus and knew how to worship Him. Through a relationship with God, she left her sin behind and came and followed Him. A transformation happened in her life, and now she is pouring out everything she has at the Lord's feet. When we have built a relationship with the Lord this same thing will take place in our hearts as well.

The Lord Jesus – Christ is the fullness of God. He had the perfect relationship with the Father. He is our greatest role model of the kind of Christian we need to become. Our eyes should forever be on Him.

During Easter the Lord is calling us to a deeper relationship with Him. He will increase our faith and intimacy with Him.

Prayer: *Abba Father, I pray for the grace to be able to sit in Your presence and know You and worship You more and more. Amen.*

In you Lord, I have taken refuge; let me never be put to shame.

Psalms 71:1

Isaiah 49: 1-6

Ps 71: 1-6,15,17

John 13: 21-33,
36-38

The Lord Jesus is troubled in spirit and tells his disciples of what is about to happen. Is it because he hoped that things would change or did he want to get it over with, whatever the situation would be. It is clear that He was not very comfortable with what was happening on or what was going to happen.

It makes us wonder that here is the Son of God, who healed the sick, fed the multitude, raised the dead, calmed the storm had come to a place where He is distressed even to the extent of feeling helpless. Though we have all agreed and come to terms with God's bigger plan during this Holy Week let us walk the inner journey with the Lord Jesus. When Lord Jesus said yes to the will of God, He also said yes to many other things. He said yes to carry the sin of the world and to lose sight of God. This probably is the reason for the distress. He also said yes to people judging him, not only Him but also his faith. Who would have believed that the most favored by God would die on a cross?

We are sometimes called to walk this path, knowingly or unknowingly. Who would believe that someone favored by God would go through a financial crisis, an accident, a troubled marriage, a career flop it could be anything. What if during these forty days we had prayed for a breakthrough but God is calling us to know who he is. Though the Lord Jesus lost sight of God, though he could not hear him that night, he did not stop believing in him. This Holy Week as we look at our problems let us thank God, because we might have lost sight of God, and felt let down but in a plan we do not see, God still reigns over everything.

The Lord Jesus believed in God even unto death and that faith raised him from the death. Let us believe in our hearts and proclaim that God is good. The world may think our faith is futile, people may tell us to resort to astrology or other beliefs such as bad period or what ever it could be. Remember just as in the book of Isaiah God has called us from the time we were conceived and you have not labored in vain. He will surely lift us up.

Prayer: Abba Father! increase my faith in you. Amen.

"I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me."

Matt 26:21

Isaiah 50: 4-9

Ps 69: 8-10, 21,22,
31-34

Matt 26: 14-25

In today's first reading the Prophet Isaiah gives a clue about the nature of the Messiah who was to come. "I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard; I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting. Because the sovereign Lord helps me, I will not be disgraced. Therefore have I set my face like flint."

This description of the Messiah is completely different, to our own understanding, thinking & knowledge of the Messiah, then as well as in present time. At that time both the educated and uneducated could not understand Him. The Messiah who appeared before them was entirely different to the one whom they expected and dreamt of. They thought this is not the Saviour we expected and that He should have come in this manner and He should have acted in this manner. Though they were aware of the prophesies given by prophet Isaiah, blinded by the sin of self-righteousness, they rejected their Messiah. 'Judas' in today's Gospel is a good example for this.

In his Mind there was a Messiah that Judas expected. He expected a Messiah who will fight against the Roman rule, defeat them, throw them out from Judea and become their king. But in the Lord Jesus Christ was not evident the Saviour, Judas imagined of. When Judas saw what he wanted, what he desired and what he expected was not happening through the Messiah, he fell into sin. He betrayed the Lord Jesus for 30 shekels of silver.

Today, how many of us act the character of 'Judas'? When we do not receive from God what we want and what we like, we betray Him. The reason for this is, instead of believing in the Lord Jesus Christ proclaimed through the Word of God, we live with a Lord Jesus whom we know and whom we imagine of. When we do not receive from Him what we want, what we desire the way we want, like Judas we also fall into the trap of sin (stealing, lying, addictions) and betray Him. Ultimately the life of Judas was ruined. Let us repent and turn to Him so that we may not be perished in the same manner. Let us ask for His grace to believe in His promises, to surrender our lives to Him, to depend on Him and walk towards a life of holiness.

Prayer: Abba Father, forgive me for not understanding You and turning away from Your love. Give me the grace to be faithful to You and lead a life that is pleasing to You. Amen

Jesus' servanthood model

Exodus 12: 1-8,
11-14

Psalm 116: 12-18

John 13: 1-15

“If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do.”

In commemorating the events of Holy week, we do much more than just recall Christ's suffering and glorification, we actually celebrate life and share in His victory. Through His passion, death

and resurrection, the Lord Jesus accomplishes the mission to which His Father calls Him. He conquers sin and restores humanity to the justice of God.

Holy Thursday marks the end of the lent season. Tonight in a special way, we experience the Lord's gift of Himself in the Eucharist, which has been handed down to us. On this night we begin the three days that are the center of our year and indeed of the Christian Faith. On this night, the Lord gives us an image of what the church is suppose to look like, feel like and act like.

The Lord's supper is central in the Catholic church because it focuses sharply on the death of Jesus. The broken bread symbolizes His broken body and the wine, His shed blood. “As you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes” -1 Cor 11:26

The Eucharist is a summary of the Lord Jesus' call to lay down one's life for others. The laying down of Jesus' life for the whole world of human kind is not simply a gift but that which gives life; He dies in order to give life. Thus the Lord was not just killed, but his life sacrificed for us.

In fact St. Paul consistently emphasizes that Christ died “for others” - 1 Cor 8:11 which in turn also shows us the way God wants us to live. To celebrate the Eucharist is to commit ourselves to a discipleship in Jesus, not only in the ritual breaking of the bread and sharing of the cup; but also in the imitation of our Lord in the ongoing breaking of one's own body and shedding of one's own blood in remembrance of Jesus, for this reason St.Paul adds, “you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes” -1 Cor 11:26

Prayer: Abba Father, thank you for the Hope you have given me, it was lost but now it stands renewed. I will give my life Father to honour this. Give me the strength so that I may always say 'yes' to the will of you. Amen.

Jesus loves me

Ish 52: 13... - 53:12

Psalm 31: 2,6,12-
13, 25

John 18: 1...- 19:42

John 3:16 says, ' For God so loved the world, that he gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him, shall not perish but have eternal life.'

Throughout His life on earth, and throughout his suffering and crucifixion though He was tempted by the evil one to go against the will of God, the eyes of the Lord Jesus were fixed on God the Father. Therefore, more than the weight of the cross, He carried in His heart the weight of the sin of the people, while being battered emotionally, mentally and physically. Though this was in the eyes of the world because He was climbing Golgotha' in His spirit He was going back to the Father. Thus He was able to reveal to His own the full extent of God's love by forgiving, blessing and interceding to the very end for His own, who mocked Him, whipped Him, cursed Him, striped Him, abused Him, crucified Him & pierced Him. Being obedient to the Father to the end, in John 19:30 when the Lord Jesus says, "It is finished", He announces that once-and-for-all the sacrifice for our sins has been completed.

Today by His life, suffering, crucifixion and death we are forgiven, healed, restored, freed and are being made a new creation in Christ. How can we respond to our loving Lord Jesus who is deeply in love with us who went to the extent of becoming a slave for our sake? In obedience to the Father He chose to embrace a cursed death on the cross to free us from a cursed death.

We love Him because He loved us first and our loving God gives us just one command. The Lord Jesus asks us to love one another just as He has loved us. He loved us while we were still His enemies. Loved and forgiven by the Lord Jesus, He calls us to love the unlovable, to love, forgive, bless and intercede for those who give us a difficult time, for those who reject us, find fault with us, hate us and do not understand us. They are not out there. These difficult ones live within our families, offices, communities and parishes.

By our own strength we cannot give the same inner response that the Lord Jesus gave our so called enemies. This calls us to go beyond. In our weakness we find strength in the word which says, 'Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.' (Heb. 4:16)

Prayer: Abba Father, We do not have the strength. We do not have the power. Give us the grace to depend on you. Amen.

His will not my will



When the Lord Jesus said “my food is to do the will of God”, I believe He knew exactly where He would end up on Holy Saturday. The question is, did he expect the silence of God when He was hanging on the cross? “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me...?” He could bear the weight of the cross, the physical agony, the humiliation, but He could not handle the silence of God. Was God really absent? Was He really silent? Or was it the sin of the world placed on the sinless one, that clouded His reality of God? The Lord, hanging on the cross made a decision; not to believe what He felt. With just one last breath He gave up His spirit to God.

The Easter vigil begins with the church in complete darkness, as though to remind us of the darkness that covers our hearts when God is absent. Often we go through Holy Saturday’s of our own lives. The crisis grabs our complete attention, clouding our reality of God. We feel God is absent and we have been abandoned by Him.

When the broken, lifeless body of the Lord was placed on her lap, the Blessed Mother must have remembered the first moment she held Him. She must have remembered the words of the angel to the shepherds that she treasured in her heart; “a Savior has been born to you; He is the Messiah, the Lord”. The hopelessness in her heart would have been shattered by the promises of God given to her by Angel Gabriel: “He will be great. He will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give Him the place where His ancestor David sat. He will be King over the family of Jacob forever and His nation will have no end”. One by one, each promise, each prophecy would have pierced the cloud giving her hope in the one she came to know intimately through her son and her own relationship with God. She too must have made a decision to wait upon God in complete surrender for the fulfillment of the promises.

Holy Saturday reminds us that in our obedience and complete surrender to God, the power of sin and death is broken and victory awaits us. It gives us an assurance that waiting upon God brings His mind-blowing solutions. It challenges us not to dwell on death but to believe in the promises of God.

Prayer: Abba Father, may my reality of you be stronger than my struggle. Release the power of heaven into my life and my circumstances. Amen.

**He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses
whom God had already chosen**

Acts 10:40

Acts 10:34, 37-43

Ps 118: 1-2, 16-17,
22-23

Col 3: 1-4
John 20: 1-9

Today is Easter Sunday, the most important feast of the church. Sadly, to many of us, Christmas is our most celebrated feast. In some cultures, people celebrate their church feast with greater grandeur than any other feast. Yet none of those feasts would have had any meaning, if our Lord Jesus had not risen from the dead.

In today's first reading, St. Peter summarises the life and the work of our Lord Jesus. He initially sets the context, our Lord Jesus worked among the Jews, in the background of the Jewish interpretation and understanding of God. The ministry of Our Lord, begins soon after his baptism at the hands of St. John the Baptist. St. Peter goes on to explain that the anointing of the Holy Spirit was upon Our Lord Jesus, and God was with him. Because of that, when Jesus Christ ministers, all who are under the power of the devil are delivered.

As a side note, I made an interesting observation as I went through the first reading. St. Peter seems to club those who were sick as people who were under the power of the devil. I am inclined to think that much of the suffering that happens around us, and maybe even things we accept as normal, go against the will of God. Our Lord Jesus was a vessel who carried the presence of God to wherever he went. As a result, the will of God was enforced wherever he moved, breaking the patterns of natural law and the laws of cause and effect.

St. Peter goes on to say, that even though Our Lord Jesus went about doing good, they put him to death on a wooden cross. Our Lord Jesus had dedicated himself to walk with God and went about doing good. Yet it appears that he was not able to the shrewd plans of the clever, the learned, and the powerful. If the story ended at this point, what a sad meaningless life Our Lord Jesus would have led.

In today's Gospel reading, we see Mary Magdalene visiting the tomb. She notices that the stone blocking the tomb has moved away. She then sees the empty tomb and concludes that someone has stolen the body of Our Lord.

What has happened is beyond the comprehension of Mary. Her perspective and understanding is limited to the realm of possibilities that her mind can formulate. The last verse in the gospel reading says "Scripture clearly said that Jesus must rise from the dead." It

implies that looking at life through our own understanding, without taking God's word and revelation into account, can lead us to the wrong conclusions. In this case, Mary perceives the greatest miracle in the history of humanity as an act of great sadness and disrespect committed against one she loved and respected. The Lord is inviting us to look at the many empty tombs in our life, through His eyes and through His word.

Going back to the first reading, St. Peter continues that when our Lord Jesus trusted His Father, and when, instead of listening to his survival instincts and running away back to Galilee, He stays on in Jerusalem, His father raises Him back to life.

Can you imagine the state of the corpse of our Lord Jesus? After the scourging and the crucifixion, it must have been disfigured and bloodied beyond recognition. Add to that the exposure to the Middle Eastern sun for three days. His flesh must have been rotting and falling off. Then the Holy Spirit who brought forth creation visits the tomb, and in one moment the ugliest and disheartening of circumstances is changed in the most improbable way.

Sometimes I think that my heart is like the tomb, an ugly place with no hope. The Lord is reminding me that when the Holy Spirit, the creator enters my heart, it can be a place of great glory and transformation.

The second reading tells us to seek the things that are above. As we look around today we see religion being used for "things below". For example, Yoga was originally a Hindu practice of spiritual development. Today, many use Yoga as an exercise method or distressing method to cope with the stress from climbing the ladder in a worldly life. We too can limit God to praying and following him only when things go wrong in our life.

Going back to the first reading, St. Peter goes on record to say that not all encountered the Risen Lord. To them he encountered, he gives a relationship; He eats with them and drinks with them. He then gives them a mission not given to the others. This mission is not to become the most learned or become movers and shakers of the corporate world or become rich and successful. It is to be a vessel that carries the presence of God in to our world, just like He did.

Prayer: Abba Father we pray that your Son, Lord Jesus, will come and encounter us in our prayer time, just like with His disciples. Eat with us, drink with us, walk with us and give us a relationship. Then your kingdom will come in us, and your will be done in and around us, just like it happened with the disciples, after our Lord's resurrection. Amen

**“I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand,
I shall not be shaken”**

Psalm 16:8

Acts 2: 14, 22-23

Ps 16: 1-2, 5,7-11

Matt 28: 8-15

In today's readings the psalmist says that the Lord alone is his portion and cup, the Lord alone makes his lot secure. He declares aloud to God that without Him, the psalmist has no good thing. This was the life of Jesus; God alone was His portion and cup, God was at His right hand and He was not shaken. This is why Jesus was able to walk that lonely road to Calvary and to willingly give Himself up to a painful and tortuous death on behalf of the same people who were crucifying Him. Even through the surrounding agony, even through the confusion and the chaos, even through the pain and the apparent futility of it all, the Lord Jesus trusted in His Father – “you make my lot secure... surely I have a delightful inheritance”.

St Peter explains to the crowd of Jews that even though they thought that they had power over the Lord Jesus as they handed Him to be crucified, it happened only through the foreknowledge and deliberate plan of the Father because He had a plan for the Lord and humanity through that. The plan was for the salvation of these very souls that had strayed so far off from God that they were unable to recognise the messiah they had all been praying for. The miracles and signs were there, the wonder working was there but such was the blindness that they could not recognise God as He walked their streets.

Is this our life today? Are we so lost in our own problems, our own brokenness that we are unable to recognise the wonders and miracles God performs in our own lives? Are we too busy walking with our head bowed down that we miss our Lord as He walks towards us? Are we expecting miracles the way we define them that we completely miss the utter glory of God that He displays for us?

But the Lord comes looking for us today. We may be blind but He is the great Healer who can restore any sight. Lets ask today to be like those women who were given the grace to encounter the risen Lord and worship at His feet. Let us hurry away from the empty tombs of our lives, of the issues we are constantly stuck in, of the routines of our petitions and sighing and run towards the love of our Lord for “You make known to me the path of life, You will fill me with joy, with eternal pleasures at Your right hand”

Prayer: Abba Father, open our blind eyes so that we may see Jesus in our lives today. Amen

Repent and be baptized

Acts 2:38

Acts 2: 36-41

Ps 33: 4-5, 18-20, 22

John 20: 11-18

Today's first reading speaks about the first sermon given by St. Peter after being filled with the Holy Spirit. The people were amazed to hear what Peter was saying. One reason is because Peter was known to be the person who said the wrong words at the wrong time and being a fisherman he spoke with so much of wisdom. Each word was like a sword cutting their heart.

As the people listened to what was spoken they asked "Brothers what shall we do?" Peter replied "Repent and be baptized, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:37-38).

When I read these words of Peter the words "Repent and be baptized" caught my eyes. Why didn't Peter say "Be baptized" only? Why did he have to add the word "Repent?" in front of it? When I asked myself this question I recalled a few years back when I had a God experience for the 1st time.

At a prayer service as the preacher was speaking about forgiveness, I forgave every single person who had hurt me in my entire life since I realised it was pointless to carry those grudges within me. And as I did so I was able to see my sinful nature and the way I had reacted to those very people. I immediately asked forgiveness from God and thanked Him for those who hurt me. At that moment I felt so free and knew that the spirit of God was within.

To be baptized by the Holy Spirit we need to go through the process of repentance. And when we are filled with the spirit that created all things we become a power house of God. It feels so good where words cannot explain. I remember being afraid of speaking in front of more than 5 people. I just could not do it because I was so afraid. But today even if there are ten thousand people I will not be afraid to speak in front of them. That is the result of being filled with the Holy Spirit. Just imagine the great things we will be able to do when we are filled with the Holy Spirit. The Lord is inviting us to receive His Spirit so that we will be able to possess the same power.

Prayer: Abba Father, We pray for the grace to forgive who have offended us and repent from our sins, and as we do so give us the grace to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Amen

**“He remembers forever his covenant, the pact imposed
for a thousand generations”** **Psalm 105:8**

Acts 3: 1-10

Psalm 105: 1-9

Luke 24: 33-35

The baton for God's kingdom has been passed on St. Peter and the other Apostles to continue to gain grounds for Kingdom of God which was established by our Lord Jesus Christ. The Nazarene who was the miracle worker and the wise teacher has changed His being since His resurrection. What He did in limitation in bodily form before His passion, death and resurrection was done by His chosen Apostles after His resurrection.

God's Paschal Mystery and the greatest miracle, which was the resurrection not only divided the history of the world but were able to go beyond time and space. Only the Risen Lord could go to past and future whilst living in the present. This reality is sufficient for us to live victoriously. Unfortunately we often live defeated and miserable lives instead of living in joy.

We can put ourselves in the place of the crippled beggar at the Beautiful Gate. Can we imagine Peter and John walking up to us and saying that our crippled areas in life will gain life in the power of the Name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene? Will we believe? But the good news is that though we cannot believe in the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, unknowingly to us, the Lord Jesus Christ keeps on changing our lives after day. It happens because we call upon His name and do what He tells us to do.

The Lord Jesus' love and concern of our Lord Jesus Christ are clearly portrayed in the Gospel proclamation. The two disciples were in distress and despair. The expression 'evening' denotes the internal hopelessness of the two disciples. The Risen Lord appeared to them. They could not recognize the Lord. Is it that the resurrection changed the outer appearance of the Lord? Or could it be their own internal heaviness prevented them from recognizing the Lord? The Scripture reveals something important to us. It is the Holy Eucharist that opens our internal being to recognize the Risen Lord, especially in times of distress. When the breaking of the bread took place, they recognized the Lord. We need to understand and believe in the Word of God. Knowing about the Lord Jesus is insufficient. We need to experience the Lord Jesus through a relationship and the Holy Eucharist.

Prayer: Abba Father, only Your Holy Spirit coan make these divine mysteries an experience in our lives. Amen.

**“Repent therefore, and turn to God... sins may be wiped out,
so that times of refreshing may come Acts 3:19-20**

Acts 3: 11-26

Psalms 8: 2,5-9

Luke 24: 35-48

In today's first reading we hear St. Peter's sermon in Solomon's Portico. This was right after Peter healed a crippled beggar and the people were astonished at what they saw. Peter, who is now able to heal a person and talk to the crowd on repentance and God's forgiveness, was just an ordinary fisherman when he was chosen by the Lord Jesus.

He even denied the Lord Jesus three times because of his own broken nature. But when he was filled with the Holy Spirit; as we reflect in the four steps; when he was moved forward with Christ to in Christ, the Holy Spirit began to work in him and through him. Likewise, when we are baptized in the Holy Spirit, something ordinary will be transformed into something extraordinary with the power of the Holy Spirit. When we allow the Lord to enter into our lives, and hearts and turn to Him in repentance, He takes our brokenness, sinfulness and weaknesses, He forgives and makes us whole. And He turns every brokenness, curse, defeat into a great victory. God never looks at our past, He never looks at how good we are rather He invites us to come to Him as we are. This is an amazing invitation from the Lord. How unfortunate we will be if we do not hear this invitation and continue to live in our own broken nature while a whole new world is waiting for us.

Today's Gospel proclamation reflects on the Lord Jesus appearing to His disciples after His resurrection. As we read and reflect on this passage, we can get a sense as to how the disciples were so lost and desperate after seeing the Lord being crucified as their only hope is lost. They were in a battle between the natural circumstances and what the Lord said about Him when He was with them. The very people who were with Jesus, lived with Him, saw Him performing miracles, felt so lonely and did not understand what was happening as the promised Messiah was taken away from them. It was in that moment of chaos, disbelief, uncertainty, and fear, the Lord Jesus appeared to them.

It is the same Lord Jesus we have with us today. It is only His presence that can take away our fears and uncertainty and give us the assurance that He is with us and gives us hope in the midst of storms.

Prayer: Abba Father, I thank You for Your presence in my life as it is only You who are always with me through every season of my life! Amen

“Throw your net on the right side of the boat..”

John 21: 6

Acts 4: 1-12

Psalms 118: 1-2,
4,22-27

John 21: 1-14

In today's Gospel proclamation the risen Lord Jesus appears to the disciples for the third time. A few disciples get together by the Sea of Tiberias. It seems that they have still not understood the word of the Lord Jesus, “As the Father has sent me I am sending you.” St. Peter says, “I am going out to fish.” It seems he prefers to go back to his old life and the others agree to do the same.

In the face of their wrong decision the Lord Jesus acts in an entirely different manner. He says to them, “Throw your net on the right side of the boat..” a miracle happens. In facing and encountering that love they recognize the Lord Jesus. He prepares a meal for them out of that fish and nourishes them.

The risen Lord Jesus who was by the Sea of Tiberias then has come to meet me today. He has come to give me a direction to my life that which has become weary because of the wrong decisions I have taken without listening to His word. Today His mercy is encircling me.

We also face instances where we lose the living presence of the Lord Jesus. When our prayer life becomes weak, when we neglect to read the word of God, we lose sight of Him. In our depths we feel that we are lost. The way we lived our lives before we met the Lord Jesus becomes so real and big. We get caught up with the temptation that we have to look after our future by ourselves and our success is only in the world. Then the same thing that happened to St. Peter happens to us. A desire arises in us to get back to our old life. But because of His unlimited love, when our expectations are shattered for the second time, He comes looking for us and loves us. He ministers to us. Then that failure becomes a blessing. Therefore everyday we need to come before the Lord Jesus through personal prayer and the word of God.

Today, the book of Acts tells us, Saint Peter filled with the Holy Spirit, fearlessly preached the good news despite the suffering he had to endure. By continuously having a relationship with the risen Lord Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit and acting with great power, he and the disciples were able to take the good news to the whole world.

Prayer: *Abba Father, I thank and praise you, for you answered me and saved me. I offer my life to you. Fill me with your Holy Spirit and enlighten me. Amen.*

“We cannot stop proclaiming what we have seen and heard.”

Acts 4:20

Acts 4: 13-21

Psalms 118: 1, 14-21

Mark 16: 9-15

Today's Gospel proclamation is clear in that the Lord commands His disciples. "Go out to the whole world and proclaim the Good News to all creation" The Lord refers to the whole world and all creation. The Lord is speaking about the whole of creation, human beings, animals, plants, trees and our whole environment. God the Father gave us stewardship over creation.

We have heard the stories of St. Anthony preaching to the fish. St. Francis of Assisi preaching to animals and our own Saint St. Joseph Vaz calming a wild elephant. These are Holy men who preached the Good News either by word or by their loving action. Cardinal Thomas Cooray, another holy man who is now being prepared for Blessedness had a deep love for preserving the environment, including trees and plants.

There is a non-Christian server in the community. She is a lawyer by profession and a great lover of animals. She is deeply committed to interceding and praying for the healing of animals and has many other testimonies.

Therefore it is clear that we are called to preach the Gospel not only to human beings but to the whole creation through our words and deeds. St Francis of Assisi famously said "Preach at all times but use words only when necessary" During this season of lent it is this Good News of the Lord that we remind ourselves of. We think of His passion, death and the glorious resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. The question we must ask ourselves today is how faithful have we been to the call of our Lord Jesus Christ after His resurrection "to go out and preach to the whole world and proclaim the Good News to all creation" The first reading today from the book of Acts confirms the commitment the early church fathers had to this call of the Lord. They gave their lives to preach the Good News. St. Peter and St. John were made bold by the same Holy Spirit who raised Jesus Christ from the dead. They defied the authority call to stop preaching in the Name of Jesus. Let us remember that after 2000 years, the same Holy Spirit is waiting for us to receive Him and to be bold for the Name of Jesus.

Prayer: Abba Father, make us bold through your Holy Spirit to spread the Good News of salvation. Amen

“Receive the Holy Spirit”.**John 20:22**

Acts 2: 42-47

Psalm 118: 2-4, 13-15,
22-24

1 Peter 1: 3-9

John 20: 19-31

An argument begins to build up in my head as I read about the believers of the early church. They lived together sharing all their belongings, meeting together every day to break bread and praise God. Were they not being irresponsible and impractical? What if after sharing all they had, things did not work out? Did they have a backup plan? How can human beings who are

driven by self-interest, make conscious decisions to live completely other-centered?

The secret is at the beginning of the second chapter in the Acts of the Apostles; it was just after Pentecost. The Holy Spirit was moving powerfully in the early church. The supernatural power that was moving among them had changed the attitudes and lifestyles.

Most of these men in the early church were in fact responsible for the crucifixion of the Lord (Acts 2:23). Yet, the scripture says; “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer”. It is as though their very DNA has been recalibrated and made a complete shift in their hearts!

When people are touched by God’s love and mercy, they are completely transformed. We can see it started in the upper room. The apostles were hiding from the Jews. It is in moments like these that we get a glimpse into the heart of the Risen Christ. He visits those who are beyond hope. He meets us where we are. He shows us His wounds; reminding us that God can bring us back from what we think as the point of no return. Today’s Gospel proclamation says that when they saw the Lord, the disciples were full of joy. The sadness, the fears, the doubts simply disappeared. Even today, those who encounter the Lord in the heart of a crisis are filled with joy that cannot be explained.

My mother struggled with her insecurities from a young age. She expected things to go wrong even when there was no reason. Few months ago she was diagnosed with an incurable disease, and the community gathered around her in constant prayer. Some held her hand during excruciating pain, visited her daily in hospital, and spent time with her and in prayer with her. Priests visited her with the Holy Communion, to hear her confession and when possible, even

celebrated Holy Mass in her room. Quietly we started to see a shift in my mother's personality. She was becoming extremely cheerful. Even though she was in physical pain and discomfort we could not hear a single complaint. Finally, she had the most holy and beautiful death after completing her mission here on earth.

And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven." As I look back at the time that my mother was sick, I see this happened right here in the midst of us. When people who had received the Holy Spirit into their lives do little things, broken lives are touched and transformed. When they intercede, people receive breakthroughs. The power of God moves and the mercy of God restore the lives of those they minister to. In short, where they go, the Lord goes with them. When they speak, He confirms the spoken word through signs and wonders.

In today's second reading St Peter writes: In His great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. God shows us mercy by not dealing with us the way we deserve. Instead, St. Peter says He is giving us a new beginning! The Lord Jesus has taken away all that we deserve; the curses, the punishments, the retribution upon Himself and allowed Himself to be nailed to the cross with sin and its ugliness! Speaking of trials and suffering St Peter says: "These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith... may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed. We are blessed, challenged and encouraged by so many, who have discovered this treasure in the heart of a crisis, sicknesses and the struggle of a loved one.

Today we celebrate the feast of Divine Mercy. His Holiness Pope Francis speaking about God's mercy once said; In God's mercy, all of our infirmities find healing. His mercy, does not keep a distance: it seeks to encounter all forms of poverty and to free this world of so many types of slavery. Mercy desires to reach the wounds of all, to heal them. Today, to be apostles of mercy is to touch and soothe the wounds that afflict the bodies and souls of many of our brothers and sisters. While curing these wounds, we profess Jesus, we make him present and alive; we allow others to touch his mercy with their own hands, to recognize him as "Lord and God" (Jn 20:28), as did the Apostle Thomas. Truly, God's mercy is forever; it never ends, it never runs out, it never gives up when faced with closed doors, and it never tires.

Prayer: Abba Father, may your great mercy and your love transform me in my depths to go beyond my selfish, self-centered ways. Amen.

No one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again from above.

John 3:3

Acts 4: 23-31

Psalm 2: 1-9

John 3: 1-8

Sts. Peter and John have just been released after a warning and it is in this background that they gather together for prayer. The prayer must have been very special prayer, which was able to move the heart of God. St. Luke records the afterglow of the prayer as “After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.” This prayer is surely worth further examination.

In the first part of the prayer they remember who God is and what he is capable of. Then they pray a psalm of David. The psalm has taken new meaning for them. It has made them see the recent events of life in a new light. They are not seeing the events leading to the crucifixion as the cunning plan of jealous, scheming, and powerful politicians and religious leaders. “They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen.” A little further down, instead of praying for protection, they are praying “Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”

Recently Facebook and WhatsApp were flooded with prayer requests asking for the protection of Christians who were being persecuted by extremists. What is it with those gathered with St. Peter that made them pray for boldness rather than protection? Our Lord gives us an insight from today’s gospel proclamation. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit (John 3:6 NRSV). The response of St. Peter and those with him was born of the spirit and was so different to a response by normal men and women. Our Lord Jesus says that we must be born again in water and in the spirit. A new beginning coming from above. Some years ago I went through a conversion experience that was so profound that it can be described only as being born again. Many who have been through the Four Steps Retreat share this experience. Ever since then I observe that both the nature born of the flesh and the nature born of the spirit, coexist within me. Depending on the nature I feed, one eclipses the other.

Prayer: Abba Father, left to myself, the nature I inherit from my DNA takes over and I lose sight of you and I behave as though you don’t exist. Cause me to be born again so that I may see your kingdom. Amen

“Go into the world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature”**Mark 16:15**

1 Peter 5: 5-14

Psalm 89: 2-3, 6-7,
16-17

Mark 16: 15-20

In the first reading, the apostle gives directions, first to the elders, how to behave themselves toward their own, then to the younger, to be obedient and humble, and to cast their care upon God. He then speaks on watchfulness against temptations and steadfastness in the faith. He advises them to be clothed with humility, instead of pride and selfishness. When God gives grace to be humble, He will give more grace, wisdom, faith, holiness, and humility. The consideration of the omnipotent hand of God should make us humble and submissive to Him in what He brings upon us.

Our cares vary from person to person, in depth and volume. So does our anxiety- personal care, family cares, cares for the present and for the future, cares for ourselves, for others and for the church. They are burdensome and often sinful. They arise from unbelief, they torture and distract the mind, make us unfit toward our duties to each other and hinder our service to God. The evil is out to attack and if we are to resist we should be steadfast in faith. We must resist this trial and temptation by being well-grounded and steadfast in faith. “If you would overcome Satan, as a tempter, and accuser, or a persecutor, you must resist him steadfast in faith; if your faith gives way, you are gone; therefore above all take the shield of faith” Ephesians 6:16 St. Peter begins with a deep prayer to the God of all grace, similar to the way Jesus taught us to pray to the Our Father. All grace is from God, it is He who saves us by grace. Therefore we must earnestly seek Him through continual prayer and dependence upon His promises. The psalmist gives glory to God, mentioning God’s mercy, truth and His covenant. God is pleased with those who are in communion with Him.

In the Gospel proclamation our Lord Jesus’ appears to the eleven commissioning them to spread the good news to the world. The apostles were given such a commission only when God knew they were ready. They were humbled by God. They now had a deep and true relationship with Christ like they never had before. They began living a faithful life that believed in God’s word and was accompanied with God’s grace and power. This is our calling today.

Prayer: Abba Father, I believe that you are granting all of us the grace of prayer to know you more, touch you and hear you for voice. Amen

God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son,
John 3:16

Acts 5: 17-26

Psalm 34: 2-9

John 3: 16-21

Many moons ago when I had just fallen in love with my then boyfriend turned husband, I remember standing up against my family members who vehemently opposed our relationship. The love I had for him, made me muster all the courage and convince my family that he is the person I was going to spend the rest of my life with. The love we had for each other somehow enabled us to withstand some of the most testing periods of our lives in obedience to God until the day we said "I do" at the altar. If human love, with all its limitations could empower us to go to such lengths, how much more powerful is the supernatural love of God!

Today's Gospel proclamation contains one of the most highly celebrated verses of the scripture. John 3:16 speaks of the depth of the Love the father has for His children. This love St. John speaks about is not just a feeling or an emotion, but a power – a supernatural force that can transform a sinner into a saint.

When I first encountered the love of the Lord, I remember feeling on top of the world. It was the best feeling ever! All the heartache and pain was lifted at a 4 Steps Retreat. But the amazing thing about God's love is that it does not stop there. As I continued to journey with Him, God in His mercy began to reveal the not-so-pretty areas in my life. I had to deal with some of my deepest scars, most of which I would have really preferred to sweep under the carpet. But the greatness of God's love is that it sheds light over our blind spots. It will never be satisfied until we are transformed into the person He originally designed us to be. It plunges into our ugliest secrets and pulls out all the roots of addiction and sinfulness.

Today, I am still work in progress. There are plenty of areas in my Life that have a big "God at Work" sign over it. But I am thoroughly convinced of one thing. That the Love of God is the biggest power source that exists in the world. It has the power to pierce through the thickest darkness and change weak and fragile humans from the inside out. It is this same love that transformed the apostles into fearless men who thrived even under the heaviest persecution.

Prayer: Abba Father, the love I experience through your Son, our Lord Jesus has filled me with freedom, joy and peace. May this love be the experience of others as they read this reflection. Amen

The Lord hears the cry of the poor

Acts 5: 27-33

Ps 34: 2,9, 17-20

John 3: 31-36

In the afterglow of the Resurrection and Pentecost we see St Peter, once weak, faint hearted and often with his foot in the mouth—speaking out powerfully before the Jewish Supreme Court. Anointed by the power of the Holy Spirit, St Peter speaks out boldly in a manner that could have cost him his life.

Before Pentecost St Peter was perhaps one of the weakest of the earlier apostles and often blurted out without thinking, earning a rebuke from the Lord Jesus. He also denied the Lord thrice and was fearful till the Pentecost experience. For instance when the Lord once asked, “Who do you say I am” (Mathew 16: 13-23), St Peter was quick to answer, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” Then the Lord Jesus said to him “Blessed are you Simon for this was revealed to you by my Father in heaven”. But St Peter was so inconsistent if not uncertain in his faith that a short while later he was severely reprimanded by the Lord and described as a ‘stumbling block’. This came after the Lord Jesus told them that to demonstrate the magnitude of God’s unfailing and unending love, the Lord would be crucified by the chief priest but God would raise Him from the dead. St Peter insisted that such suffering should not and would not come upon the Lord. Therefore the Lord had to rebuke him. Even in Mathew 17 during the transfiguration on Mount Tabor then St. Peter blurted out and asked whether they should built some tents and remain in that experience of glory. But while the mountain top experiences are glorious, spiritual growth takes place mainly in valleys when we are going through our own Gethsemane or Calvary—suffering trials or tribulations. Here again the Lord rebukes St Peter but touches him and says they should go down and continue the journey of the cross, death, resurrection and eternal life.

What the Lord said to Peter He also tells us today. During the Tabor experience, perhaps a glorious visual in today’s terminology, Peter and two other apostles heard a voice from heaven saying, “This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. Listen to him”. The message to us is that the word of God is not a request but a command. If we do not obey we cannot be on a journey with the Lord.

Prayer: *Abba Father, I pray that the power that did the impossible and raised Christ from the dead, will enter my life and bring to life the parts that I thought were beyond repair. Amen.*

If it from God you will not be able to destroy it**Acts 5:42**

Acts 5: 34-42

Psalm 27: 1,4,13-14

John 6: 1-15

If our work, mission and calling is ordained by the Lord we have no one and nothing to fear. In fact God will bless the work and multiply it in His way and time. This principle was recognised by Gamaleil a teacher of the law, who was highly respected by the people.

There can be no stopping to the work even if in the natural realm there seems to be blocks and difficulties. This was the experience when before the Passover, the Lord Jesus was preaching to the people. The Passover was also the feast where God provided a way for the Israelites to escape from the clutches of the Egyptians and reach the Promised Land.

As the Lord Jesus spoke to the five thousand, His heart was suddenly disturbed by the lack of food for them. It reveals to us the heart of the Lord who is not only concerned about our spiritual health but even the yearning of our bodies. The Lord proceeds to find a way out of the lack though He is well aware of the way out and how He can provide. I am particularly intrigued by Andrew's response as he offers up the five loaves and two fish that a boy has. Do we have such hope in the Lord to offer up something insignificant to the Lord and trust God will do a miracle?

St. Peter Chanel was one such missionary who though he was successful in his parish and turned it around in a few years was not satisfied and headed to the island of Futuna which is French Polynesia. The King took his missionary work as a personal threat when the prince and princess were converted. St. Peter was tortured with the utmost cruelty and murdered. During his torture, St. Peter did not utter a word. With his death in a few years the whole island was brought to the faith and today the Catholic faith is strong and thriving on these islands. God multiplies the little given to Him in faith and love. Let us give the little that we have into the hands of our Lord Jesus. He will bless our efforts. What we have to offer may seem foolish and too little in the eyes of the world but to the Heavenly Father it will be pleasing. Let us begin like our Lord by giving thanks for what we have been blessed with.

Prayer: Abba Father, we thank you for all you have blessed us with. So often we imagine we need more and more. Today we know that nothing is too little or insignificant in your eyes and hands. Amen

Know your priorities

Acts 6: 1-7

Pslam 33: 1-2, 4-5,
18-19

John 6: 16-21

In our Christian journey we are called to relentlessly question where we stand and seek to do what is pleasing to the Lord. Once we ascertain what the Lord wants and correct the wrong, we will find an immediate blessing in store.

This was the experience of the early church. As the church grew and the responsibilities widened, the twelve began to question their role. They realised that since they were called to preach the word of God, they had to devote time to studying and preaching the word of God. Out of false humility they would have been serving tables and offering hospitality but the Lord wanted them to spend their time in prayer and preparation with the word of God.

Another learning is that though others were chosen for the task of serving the table, they were prayed over and hands were laid on them to perform that task. Even that task required the grace and love of God to be performed. The result of responding to the Lord's direction was that the number of disciples in Jerusalem increased greatly and even many priests accepted the faith.

St. Catherine of Sienna was a lay person who was chosen to marry her sister's husband. She sought the Lord and protested spending time in prayer and mortification. Ultimately she was allowed to follow her calling. Once again the Lord asked her to go out and serve the poor and she responded by giving all that she had to the poor to the point of being ridiculed by her own family members. She was also directed to write down here revelations for which she became a doctor of the church.

The disciples had the same experience with the Lord. When they invited Him into their boat in the midst of the storm and confusion, he offered them peace and hope and the most comforting words, 'It is I, do not be afraid. The result was that though they were four miles from the shore, the boat was brought to the shore instantly. Our learning is to seek the Lord's direction and leading and adapt to it. We will see the power of God in our lives and immediate results.

Prayer: *Abba Father, we invite you into our lives and seek your direction and leading. As you show us a way forward, give us the grace to do as you lead us. Amen*

The purpose of God is fulfilled... even in the resurrection

Acts 2: 14, 22, 23

Ps 16: 1-2, 5, 7-11

1 Peter 1: 17-21

Luke 24: 13-35

We are so prone to giving up hope for the slightest set back that we encounter in the natural realm. We often exhibit this in the spiritual realm and for the least thing we give up on God. When faced with no answers we respond by not going back to the feet of the Lord but turn to people for answers and direction till we are tired and hopeless.

The good news is that even in this state of hopelessness the Lord Jesus comes to us and offers us His love and comfort and this can be an everyday experience. This hope that we receive from God is the hope the Lord Jesus had as he descended to the world of the dead. It was prophesied by King David in Psalm 16 as he said: I saw the Lord always before me, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, you will not let your holy one see decay.

It tells us of the experience of the Lord Jesus as He went through His passion and death. Even when he cried out that the Father had abandoned Him, He still had the silent Father before Him and this Father was faithful because even in the abode of the dead the Father was with the Lord. The Father did not allow the Son to experience corruption but made known to Him the paths of life. This was the Lord Jesus' road to the Resurrection.

As St. Peter stood before the crowd he was telling the people in boldness that God's purpose was ultimately fulfilled even though the Religious leaders thought they had achieved their purpose by putting the Lord Jesus to death.

We have a purpose for our lives and we are told to take our salvation with all seriousness since we have a Father who judges each one according to the person's deeds. We are made to realise that we were freed from our useless way of life not by some work of magic but by the spilling of the precious blood of the Lord Jesus.

We are body, soul and spirit. When we are saved and baptised by the Holy Spirit we begin to live led by the spirit and then by the mind and soul. We liken the soul to the flesh. Sometimes we switch from being spirit led to being soul or flesh led. When this happens we begin to frustrate the plans of God because Galatians 6 tells us that the spirit is opposed to the flesh and the flesh is opposed to the spirit. In simple terms the flesh opposes the work of the spirit. This is war.

The connection is that the precious blood of the Lord Jesus shed for us is spilt in vain.

The same hopelessness marked the attitude and journey of Cleophas and his friend as they walked to Emmaus. It seemed that everything was over since the Lord Jesus was crucified and killed. While they were debating these topics the Lord Jesus chose to accompany the two followers.

Often we find numerous opportunities to accompany people who have lost hope. We find them at an office get-together, home party, wedding reception or children's sport's day. We are called to have a soft approach and yet have the love that the Lord had. The Lord took the chance to reveal the scriptures to the two followers. They were of a wrong opinion and the Lord took great pains to walk with the men right into the dusk and clarify with them God's purpose and plan. Finally the Lord Jesus proved that He was alive by breaking bread with the two and in the breaking of the bread He was revealed to them.

While the readings speak to us about the resurrection of our Lord Jesus, in a way they are telling us that God's purpose and plan are ultimately achieved and cannot be thwarted. We may go through hopelessness and blindness but the Lord chooses to accompany us himself, strengthen us and reveal to us the secrets of the kingdom.

Recently we had an experience where one young person chose to visit as many as twenty-two parishes, share his testimony and invite people for a four step retreat. As a result over hundred people attended a prayer meeting and four step retreat with no previous exposure to the Community of the Risen Lord. They were blessed and many lives were transformed.

The meaning of the Lord Jesus' resurrection and Him being alive with us is that we are called to live renewed lives. We are called to be assured that the Risen Lord is accompanying us as we travel from place to place and share the Gospel. We need to be assured of the presence of the Risen Lord. St Peter says, through Him, you have faith in God, who raised Him (Jesus) from the dead and glorified Him, in order that you might put all your faith and hope in God. To a world looking for proof of the Lord being alive and resurrected we are called to respond with boldness, passion and love so the world can say like the greeting the disciples heard, 'Yes it is true, the Lord is risen, He has appeared to these people.'

Prayer: Abba Father, nothing is impossible for you. Raise us up from lives of sadness, hopelessness to joyfulness and trust in you. Amen

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5 Keys

1. Praise God and be always Joyful

Praising God and being joyful always, is a choice you make. So with any situation that you have to deal with, your first response should be to praise God. He is turning your curses into blessings. But He can't do it if you don't have a heart of joy and praise. Make that choice now.

Philippians 4: 4-6 Rejoice in the Lord always.... Read Psalm 146: 1-10

2. Be kind to others, the Lord is near

Generally we are kind to outsiders but can be unforgiving to our family members and people we work with closely. Jesus asks us to forgive because He is involved in the situation. When you take up the cause, God gives it up. God says, "Okay, it's your job. You handle it." But if you give it to Him, He will handle it and fix it. You don't have to worry, Just be kind!

Genesis 50: 15 - 22 - Joseph was so sure of God's hand on his life that when his brothers came to him Joseph said to them, You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.

3. Refuse to be anxious

Say, "I refuse to be anxious." That's a choice we make. Anxiety will come from various places. In Refuse to be anxious and make a choice that you're not going down that road. Once you do that, the grace of God comes into your life to make it possible. So you can live an anxious free life.

Read of God's provision in Luke 12: 6 - 8

4. Instead, Pray and Intercede

This is a connection to refusing to be anxious. Every time you get anxiety coming from somewhere, you make it a moment to pray. Fr. Matthew Naickomparambil always says - instead of praying for yourself, pray for a thousand other people who are going through the same problem.

Read Ephesians 6:18 - And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.

5. Thank God

Be thankful in anticipation, God is going to find you a way.

Read Habakkuk 3:17-19