



IN OUR KNEES IN HIS HANDS

January 2018

Never be in a hurry; do everything quietly and in a calm spirit. Do not lose your inner peace for anything whatsoever, even if your whole world seems upset.

St. Francis de Sales

Published by:

The Life in the Spirit Communities of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, Colombo, Sri Lanka, (With Ecclesiastical Approval).

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On Our Knees In His Hands

January 2018

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“But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.”

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Luke 2:19

Numbers 6: 22-27

Ps 67: 2-8

Gal: 4: 4-7

Luke 2: 16-21

In the first reading from the book of Numbers we see God telling Moses to tell Aaron to direct the people to ask the Lord for a blessing. The Lord is not talking directly to Aaron. Instead He is giving Moses a message to be give to Aaron for the people. God had chosen Moses as the leader of the Israelites, while Aaron was the priest-- the man God chose to initiate worship and bless the

people. God chooses some to bless and worship, while others He calls to lead.

While reading this we may wonder why God had to go through Moses, Aaron and the people to bless the Israelites. Why did He have to go around and around? Hidden inside this reading is the nature of God. The Bible tells us that God lives in heaven and therefore He is a spiritual being. God chooses to come down to earth through a person. When a person hosts the presence of God within them, they carry Him wherever they go and He works through them to bless the world. Throughout the bible many people have hosted God. An example of this is Moses. He hosted God and therefore God was able to bless the people through Moses. God is always on the lookout for someone willing to host His presence and bring Him into the world. When we host God in our lives He will work through us. Then when we speak, He will speak. When we pray, He will manifest. When we seek Him, He will be found.

How are we able to host the presence of God in our lives? St. Paul tells us in his letter to the Galatians that it is because of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus that we are adopted by God to be called His children. Therefore we are no longer slaves to sin, but children and heirs of God. It is only a child of God that will really know the Father and begin a relationship with Him. As our relationship with the Father grows into intimacy we will be able to host His presence within us.

The church has dedicated the first day of the year 2018 to the Blessed Virgin Mary and her motherhood. God wanted to bring salvation to the world. He did not want the Lord Jesus to come to Jerusalem as fully grown man, but instead God wanted to partner with someone to bring the Messiah into the world. God could have been born into the emperor's family in Rome but instead He chose a young poor girl in the small village of Nazareth to partner with. God did not care about

wealth or family background, but was concerned with the person's devotion to God. Mary's family was too poor to live in a house and they lived in a cave, but they were a family devoted to God. God sent the Angel Gabrielle to ask the Blessed Mother if she would partner with Him to bring God into the world. When she said yes she began to host God within her. Thereafter, throughout her life, in everything she did she hosted the presence of God within her.

The Blessed Mother was the first to say "May it happen to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38). She was the first person to give up her life to the Father and she taught this same prayer to her son. It was because of her teaching that the Lord Jesus was able to host the presence of God inside Him and was also able to say "not my will, but yours be done" (Luke 22:42).

When the Angel Gabriel came to the Blessed Mother and told her that she would bear the Saviour of the world, she pondered over everything he had told her. She first had a human reaction of fear and sadness. Soon after this her faith took over and she was able to say "Let it be done unto me according to your word".

In today's Gospel proclamation, when the shepherds spread the word about this child the people were amazed. While the people were taken up with the power this child would possess to rescue them, Mother Mary treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart. She was able to do all this because she was a servant hosting the presence of God. She is our role model of what a servant of God should be like—someone who hosts the presence of God.

There are many times in our lives when we do not understand why we go through certain sorrows and pain. These struggles are like enclosed tombs we are placed in. Our initial response to these tombs may be a human reaction. It is in these times we can look at the Blessed Mother and the faith she had. She continued to be the handmaiden of the Lord, believing in God even after her son had died.

We must move from human reactions to faith as the Blessed Mother did. Through faith we can host His presence within us and move from despair to believing that God is in charge of everything and above everything in our lives.

Prayer: Abba Father, thank You for giving us Mother Mary as our role model and intercessor. Through her example may we also be able to host You in our lives. Amen.

**See that what you have heard from
the beginning remains in you...**

1 John 2:24

1 John 2: 22-28

Ps 98: 1-4

John 1: 19-28

The 1st Reading talks to us about many things, but the verse in 1 John 2:24-25 makes us think of certain things that we do not take a serious note of. It says “see that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you, if it does, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father. And this is what he promised us; eternal life.

St. John intention was to write this letter to the early church to encourage the people to live in fellowship with God and the second reason was to warn them against false teachings. He reminds us to remember what we have heard about the Lord Jesus Christ from the beginning and as we remind ourselves about it we will remain in Him, and by remaining in Him God promises us eternal life.

In this generation, the problem we face we often forgot what we have been taught and told about the Lord Jesus Christ, since most of us are caught up in this fast moving secular world where we often forget the purpose of our life and focus mostly on material things. There are others who have left the Catholic faith and moved to various other places since they have forgotten what was spoken to them initially.

The main reason that many of us are falling off is our failure to read and live the Bible on a daily or regular basis. There are some of us who do not have an idea of what is mentioned in the Bible. The Bible is the manual or tool book for every person to live a purposeful and complete life. By doing so we attain eternal life by the grace of God which is our ultimate goal. Many of us listen to the word of God only during Sunday Mass and by the time it is over we have forgotten what was said. To remain in Christ we need to read the word and live it because it is through the word that the Lord speaks to us personally.

The Lord Jesus Christ himself says in Matthew 4:4 “Man does not live by bread alone but by every word of God”. My dear brothers and sisters as we have entered into a new year, let us discipline ourselves and make a commitment to read the word on a daily basis without fail, seeking God’s grace in it. After reading the word we are called to spend some time meditating on what we read and being open to receiving new sights through the Holy Spirit.

Prayer: Abba Father, give me the grace to read your word on a daily basis without fail and make it the food for my soul. Amen.

“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world”**John 1: 29**

1 John 2: 29- 3:6

Ps 98: 1-6

John 1: 29-34

The most Holy name of the Lord Jesus is exalted today in a special way. We have celebrated Christmas and the lyrics of this beautiful hymn vibrates in the atmosphere; Jesus, name above all names, beautiful savior, glorious Lord, Emmanuel, God is with us, blessed redeemer, living word. We cannot fathom the lavishing love of God because we are human. A human person can understand another human person; animals understand the animal world. Animals cannot fully understand humans and similarly humans cannot fully understand God. Our tendency is to know the unknown with the similes we already know. What we do not understand is that God cannot be understood in that method because God is God and we are human.

In the first reading today St. John tries to explain the unfathomable love of God with limited human words. The only explanation according to St. John to a person who has not experienced the love of God is ‘Christ Jesus’. If anyone questions the amazing love of God we can lead that person to encounter Christ Jesus. People who have experienced this love which cannot be compared and substituted do not want to lose it for anything in the world. Over the centuries we have witnessed people facing martyrdom because they could not live a life of guilt and frustration by going against this amazing love of God. People were ready to die for the sake of the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Love came down to take away our sin. St. John the Evangelist quoted the insight or the revelation which was given to St. John the Baptist by God. Our attention is drawn by these words of urgency; ‘Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world’. No human being would willfully give his or her child to be slaughtered for the sake of human race. But God sent His only begotten Son to be the Lamb to be slaughtered. Yet do we not doubt God’s love? For a complete transformation of life our inner being needs to be illuminated. People who have not had their depths awakened by the Holy Spirit cannot taste the love of God. When we make a conscious decision to surrender our life to God, and when our will and God’s will for us meet, we begin to say no to our own desires and say yes to live God’s will.

Prayer: Abba Father, thank you that you exalted the Name of Lord Jesus above the earth, on earth and beneath the earth as the only sovereign name. Amen.

“Look!” Wake up! Pay attention!

1 John 3: 7-10

Ps 98: 1-9

John 1: 35-42

Today's Gospel proclamation tells us about St. John the Baptist's announcement about our Lord Jesus. He boldly instructs the disciples "Look!" Wake up! Pay attention! This is important. He wanted to inspire his followers to have the desire to get closer to Jesus. He was not looking for a specific statement of faith. He did not need them to say a special prayer. He did not demand any change of behaviour. John the Baptist only wanted his followers to find within themselves the desire to get close to this person he was identifying as "the Lamb of God."

St. John the Baptist trusted that, if his disciples found within themselves the desire to get close to the Lord, then everything else would flow from there. They only needed to open their hearts to all that the Lord Jesus exemplified. So, when Jesus saw these two disciples of John following him, he asked them, 'What are you looking for?' (John 1:38)

It is a great question for Advent, or for any time of year – What are we looking for? What is it we believe is our heart's desire? Where do we think we will find deep satisfaction and happiness in life? If we look at most of the Christmas celebrations as they are depicted in popular culture we may get the impression that what we are really looking for is about material things, or a perfect family festivity, or an impressive new outfit. But, most of us have undoubtedly sensed that we were in fact created for something more, for something deeper, than the pleasures that are offered on the surface of life.

Have we all ever longed to get close to the Lord, to find out where he is "staying?" To get close to Jesus Christ is to draw closer to those qualities He represents. To find where He is staying is to find those qualities of love, truth, peace, hope, beauty, and light that we know are our true nature. To get close to the Lord is to open more profoundly to the rich, extraordinary, beautiful beings we were created to be. The Lord desires that we might all become more truly the persons we were created to be. We will fulfill this goal, not by self-will, determination, but by opening to the presence of the Lord Jesus.

Prayer: *Abba Father may we receive more truly and deeply, the gift of our true self as we open more fully to the beauty of this season that is the presence of Jesus in our lives. Amen.*

They will know we are Christians by our love.

1 John 3: 11-21

Ps 100: 1-5

John 1: 43-51

Love. The word is so liberally used in today's society. The definition of love in the dictionaries of today say that it is "a profoundly tender, passionate affection for another person, feeling of warm personal attachment or deep affection, a sexual passion or desire." Basically it is something you feel. The Biblical meaning of the word is quite the opposite.

In the First Epistle of St. John, the apostle tells us that "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters." (verse 16) Love always means laying something down. Those of us who are husbands, wives, parents, we know that loving our spouses and children, oftentimes, means laying down our comfort, our own need, our ego, our desires. Those of us who are children know that loving our parents means sometimes to lay down what we think is best for us. This is the kind of love that Christ invites us to - a selfless, self effacing, sacrificial love.

St. John goes on to say in verse 18, "let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth." For example, simply stating that one is a great race-car driver, basketball player, golfer, Christian does not mean anything unless they can demonstrate who they are in a way that would convince any and all. The measure of our faith is NOT our "talk" it is our "walk". In the Christian life, faith and works go together, like inhaling and exhaling. In Acts 11:26 we read that the disciples were first called "Christians" at Antioch. Paul and Silas had been at Antioch for many months. They exemplified Christ so much through their lives there, that the people roundabout them began to call them "Christ ones" or "Christ followers". We have much to live up to.

As we begin yet another year, I think it's important for us to ask ourselves if we are deserving of the same title which was given to Saints Paul and Silas and the other apostles. Love reveals our relationship with God. We demonstrate our salvation as believers when we love one another as Christ loves us. Are you the real deal? Genuine faith will always be manifested in genuine works.

Prayer: Abba Father, teach us how to live as true followers of Your Son and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

**“And these words were heard from heaven,” You are my Son
the Beloved the One I have chosen”**

Mark1:11

1 John 5: 5-13

Ps 147: 12-15,
19-20

Mk 1: 7-11 or
Lk 3: 23-38

St John affirms in this first letter that if we have the Son of God, we have the total truth and we are in communion with God himself. Experiencing God’s love leads us to believe in His Son and thereby having faith is a victory. St John wrote the Book of Revelation to give hope to persecuted believers, showing them the victory they share with Christ, simply because they believe in him.

St. John repeats the same thing in this letter. He characterizes the Christian experience seen in the Lord Jesus himself with three words. Water, blood and the spirit. Water is the symbol of cleanliness and a prospect of new life. Blood is the epitome of sacrifice, painful atonement for sin - the blood of martyrs. The Spirit is the uncontainable power that animates life in Christ. These three witnesses have won for us the eternal salvation we long for. They are directly linked to the Sacraments of Baptism, Holy Eucharist and Confirmation.

St.Mark’s Gospel proclamation correspondingly gives us three important insights about salvation .St. John the Baptist announces the coming of the one sent by God; this Lord Jesus of whom all the great witnesses in the Old Testament spoke of. In him and by Him God’s salvation will be accomplished. Secondly, the Lord goes into the Jordan where the gates of the true Promised Land are opened. He is the Son of the Father on whom the Spirit rests. The Lord comes to reveal the mystery of God; the love of the Father, the love of God.-Father Son and the Spirit. Thirdly he reveals that in him and by him will be accomplished the reconciliation of all creation with God.

My own experience of being in a retreat brought me a great zeal to live my life in total obedience to God, in submission to his Holy will, Although I knew the Lord, when a crisis hit me I was shattered but clung to him. I continued to experience immense pain and suffering .I lived a farce pretending to be someone I was not. No one ever knew my pain. But today I look back and see what great things he has done. Challenges continue struggles are still there, but being reconciled to him, the Lord takes care of everything. It is a continuous journey of discovering his unconditional love. As the psalmist says, he has strengthened the bars of your gates....established peace.... feeds you with the finest of wheat.

Prayer: Lord Jesus I love you and surrender totally to you as I know I am special and chosen by you for a mission. Thank you for your unconditional love. Amen

Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

Isaiah 60:3

Isaiah 60: 1-6

Ps 72: 1-2, 7-13

Eph 3: 2-3, 5-6

Mt 2: 1-12

In the Old Testament the Israelites, the people of God, strayed away from God and flirted with other gods named Baal throughout their history. This Baal god was not as complicated as the God of Israel. The Baal god had a name, they built a figure for this god and each Baal god had a specific function (ex- one Baal god for fertility, another Baal god for harvests, etc). Therefore the people of Israel were tempted to worship these Baal gods.

This is because the God of Israel was more complicated than the Baal gods. The God of Israel did not have a name; He had no image, etc. Therefore the people found it easier to relate to the god of Baal. But when they did this, it always ended up in the ruination of their lives and they eventually ended up crying out to the God of Israel to save them once again. People would follow the Baal gods until they got completely lost and then they would realize they had abandoned their true God and cry out to Him. God wanted to redeem the people once and for all from their sinfulness and asked His one and only Son to come to the earth.

God speaks of the future in the first reading from the prophet Isaiah. He calls the people to arise out of the darkness they have been living in; into the light of God. The glory of God is greater than the darkness that covers the earth and therefore He is able to save all the people. When He comes to the world the radiance of God will shine on the people and their hearts will be full of a joy that the world cannot give.

The second reading from St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians speaks of how the early church lived the promise of salvation the Lord had given in the first reading. St. Paul speaks of mystery that was made known to him by the power of God. This revelation was that the Gospel that bares the good news would be revealed not only to Jews, God's own people, but also to the Gentiles. God's mission was not just to the people of Israel, but the prophecy was extended to the whole world.

The Gospel reading from St. Matthew speaks of the Magi's visit to see the Messiah. This is the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy. The light of God came into the world through the birth of the Saviour and through Him we are all saved from our sins. The Magi knew the prophecy and had studied the patterns in the sky and followed the star to find

this person of great importance. It is clear that King Herod also got this message: that these wise men were not searching for a mere, ordinary and human successor to him. They were searching for the final king, to end all kings. Unlike Anna and Simeon in Luke 2, who felt unspeakable happiness when they saw in the face of an infant the face of a great Savior God, King Herod who had not even seen the infant, felt threatened. He did not even know the simple Scriptures about the Messiah but he knew anyone who could be called king had to go, for he wanted to be only king at that time.

St. Matthew focuses on the foreigners coming from the east to worship the Lord Jesus. Matthew 2:1 says, “Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, ‘Where is He who has been born King of the Jews?’” The Lord Jesus was a universal Messiah for the nations and not just for the Jews. The first worshipers of this universal king are wise men not from Israel but from the east. They were unclean gentiles. Just as St. Paul says in the second reading, the Messiah had come for everyone; not just for the Jews. The mystery St. Paul speaks of was already unraveling itself.

Isaiah 60:3 says, “Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.” This was fulfilled when the magi representing the nations and kings came to worship the Lord Jesus as the ruler of the world. This all happened according to God’s plan. He fulfilled His prophecy then and continues to do so now. His aim is that all the nations worship His Son. This is God’s will for everybody—to do as the Magi did. The magi came and saw the Messiah and we are to go and tell the good news.

Today the Lord is calling each of us to become a bearer of the Good News to all the people in the world—whether it may be people in our homes, workplaces, social gatherings, communities, etc. Just as the Magi followed the star to find the Messiah, we too must follow the teachings of our Saviour and experience His love for us.

Once we have had an experience of Him in our lives we will be able to give Him to others that live in darkness. When we do, their lives will be filled with the light of Christ and they will experience a joy and happiness like no other.

Prayer: Abba Father, thank You for sending Your one and only Son into our lives to melt the darkness into light and bring us unspeakable joy. Amen.

Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of Zion, for great is
the Holy One of Israel among you. Isaiah 12:6

Is 55: 1-11

Is 12: 2-6

1 Jn 5: 1-9

Mk 1: 7-11

How comforting and wholly satisfying is the invitation in Isaiah's prophecy! God's love, mercy and forgiveness are freely promised. We are invited to "Come, listen and Seek Him" He will speak the word which will accomplish His will - which is that people will receive the free gift of salvation.

For years the voice of prophecy was stilled till St. John the Baptist came preaching repentance and announcing the coming of the Messiah. People flocked to listen to Him recognising the voice of God, since John the Baptist lived his message. Humility was his badge. His self recognition, effacement and utter dependence on the One who was to come, were the hallmarks of his message. His aim was not to take centre stage but connect people with one greater than him - one who would baptise not with water but with the Holy Spirit. It is strange that the Lord Jesus, the sinless one, came to be baptised by a mere mortal. But for the Lord it was a moment of Kairos with the sign of John the Baptist. He identifies himself with all humanity and He needed the approval of the Father before He could launch out on His mission. He went into the Jordon for a Baptism of water and emerged with the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and the voice of approval from the Father. This which equipped Him to fulfil His mission.

Today we need to reflect on our own Baptism. Are we so complacent as to believe that it is a certificate to enter Heaven? For the Lord Jesus, His deep experience of Sonship enabled Him to give a radical response to life and death itself. (We see this during His passion) We too are called to the same experience of Sonship. We too are called to be Priests, Kings and Prophets (in the sense of speaking God's word)

It is in the Baptism of the Holy Spirit that we live out our calling . If our lives are not transformed by receiving the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit, if we continue to live selfish and mediocre lives, merely fulfilling the rites and rituals of our faith, then we have missed our calling. Out of countless people we have been chosen not for ourselves but to participate in the building of the kingdom.

Prayer: Abba Father, I want to hear your voice, claiming me as your child whom you are pleased with. Amen

“What authority! He even gives orders to impure spirits
and they obey him.” -

Mark 1:27

1 Sam 1: 9-20

1 Sam 2: 1-8

Mark 1: 21-28

The first reading tells us about the Prophet Samuel's mother, Hannah. She had been married for several years but could not conceive a child. Hannah had no human answer to this problem. In her desperation she ran to the feet of God and prayed that He may give her a child. Her prayer to God was simple, “Lord Almighty, if you will only look on your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the Lord for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head.” We can learn a lot from Hannah. When we go through problems without any human answers we can go to the feet of the Lord because He is bigger than anything else. When we rely on God, He can turn our curses into blessings. Many people do not know that when they fall at the feet of God He can give them a solution better than anything they can think of.

If Hannah had children in the first years of her marriage she may have never given them to the Lord. Samuel was only able to become the Lord's because Hannah went through this struggle. We see this same thing countless times in the bible. In Moses life the same thing takes place. It is because of the struggle Moses' mother had of wanting to keep her child alive that she let him go into the hands of God. Moses belonged to God because of his mother's struggle. The same happened in the life of John the Baptist. It is because his parents went through the struggle of not being able to have a child for many years that he was dedicated and belonged to God. The same took place with Abraham and Isaac. When the angel came to Mother Mary and told her the plan of God she responded ‘let it be done to me according to your will’. Mother Mary was able to give up her life into the hands of God even at the risk of being stoned to death. When the situation is bad and crisis is deep we learn how to surrender to God. The Gospel reading from St. Mark is about how the Lord Jesus drove out an impure spirit from a person. We see the authority the Lord Jesus has over everything on earth. There is no limit to His saving grace. Philippians 2:10-11 says, “At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Prayer: *Abba Father, give me the strength to fall at Your feet every moment of my life. For in You I find the answer to everything in my life. Amen.*

“Speak Lord, for your servant is listening.”

1 Sam.3: 10

1 Sam 3: 1-10, 19-20

Ps 40: 2-10

Mk 1: 29-39

Today's first reading reveals a secret that many Catholics do not know. That is, God can speak. In the Old Testament we find God speaking to Moses and to prophets like Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and Hosea. In the New Testament the angel Gabriel speaks to the Virgin Mary. Today through the risen Lord Jesus Christ, He speaks to us. Why? He 'needs a person'. He needs us who live a blessed life, redeemed of the curse of sin at the expense of His own life. He wants us to take His good news to thousands of others who do not know Him and have not heard His voice. Romans 10:9 says, "If you confess with your mouth 'Jesus is Lord' and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." He needs a husband/wife, a mother/father, a son/daughter who believes and proclaims this good news. Today how many are ready to say, "Speak Lord, for your servant is listening."

I heard the voice of God when I was 35 years. Till then I heard the voice of the world, the voice of science, the voice of friends and relatives. I believed that voice, proclaimed that voice and my life was led by that voice. It was only when my life fell apart at the age of 35 I realized that I had run behind a mirage. It is true that I prayed, went to church and participated in novenas. Yet I did not hear the voice of God. The reason is I did not listen. I did not know that God can speak. Therefore I listened and accepted as truth the voice of the world. Finally that voice deceived me. Led me astray and put me to shame. It made me fall and when I fell it let go of me.

When I did not have help from any one and when I had lost everything I heard the voice of God. "Come as you are, I love you." To proclaim that voice to me by that time God had called Lalith Thaththa. Since he said 'yes' to the call of God through him, God brought salvation into my life. We who have received the sacrament of baptism are called to this mission. Psalm 40:10 says, "I do not hide your righteousness in my heart; I speak of your faithfulness and salvation. I do not conceal your love and your truth from the great assembly." Today let us ask for the power and strength to listen to His voice and say 'yes' to His mission.

Prayer: Abba Father, Here I am. Give your servant the leading, power and strength to say 'yes' to your mission and fulfill it. Amen.

God is not tired of forgiving, it's we human beings who have stopped asking for forgiveness. Pope Francis

1 Sam 4: 1-11

Ps 44: 10-11,
14-15, 24-25

Mk 1: 40-45

We are called to the Sacrament of Reconciliation at least once a year, especially when we get separated from the body of Christ in a significant way. However I have learnt through my journey with the church and specially the CRL to go more regularly not just to reconcile with God but also to keep my sense of sin refined. While all Christians do not participate in this practice the need for forgiveness, is essential. We all fall short of the glory of God, and only His grace can help fill the gap.

In the Gospel proclamation the leper's story takes on a different context. The Lord Jesus cleanses the man on the basis of his faith, but sternly warns him that he must make his reconciliation complete through the priests in accordance with "what Moses prescribed," because sin separates us not just from God but from our community. It disrupts the agape love in which we should live with our brothers and sisters in Christ and in the world. This does not need to take the form of walking the streets shouting "Unclean! Unclean!", but it does require recognition of the damage our sin does not just to ourselves but to those around us as well.

Eventually, we rationalize that we are without a blemish, but have beauty marks, and then begin to convince ourselves that sin doesn't actually exist, period. We assume that God forgives us anyway even though we are imperfect and rebellious, and so there's not much reason to dwell on those beauty marks anyway. Or alternately, we convince ourselves that our sins have become so great that even God cannot overcome them. Sometimes we believe both at the same time. We think that we're still dwelling in the camp, even while we keep pitching our own tents farther away. We end up on the perimeter from time to time, having cut ourselves off spiritually from the body of Christ. With the help of a priest who offers up our sins to assist in our reconciliation, as is our tradition we are forgiven. At one time I was "unclean, unclean," and was screaming on the inside for cleansing and salvation from Jesus Christ, and happy to receive it. Believe me, I have to bathe a lot more than once a year in this sense, even if occasionally I have to be dragged to the bath.

Prayer: Abba Father, Create in me a new, clean heart, fill me with clean thoughts and right desires. Restore to me again the joy of your salvation, and make me willing to obey you. Amen.

“Child your sins are forgiven, I say to you, rise,
pick up your mat & go home.”

1 Sam 8: 4-10, 10-22

Ps 89 16-19

Mk 2: 1-12

In today's first reading the elders of Israel go to Samuel and request him to appoint a king for them. The background to this incident was that Samuel's sons who were appointed as judges were not ruling the people justly. They accepted bribes and were mainly interested in personal gain. This became a crisis to the people and they needed a solution. But the mistake was that they did not look up to God. They rejected God, who brought them out of Egypt and gave their own solution to the crisis, looking at the surrounding nations which were worshipping other gods. The Lord through Samuel warns them of the consequences of appointing a king, yet they wanted their way. They did not have faith in the Lord, who fought for them and parted the Red Sea to save them from the Egyptians.

In contrast the paralytic, who must have been struggling with paralysis for years, chose to turn to the Lord Jesus. The men carrying him believed that the Lord Jesus was the answer to their crisis and dared to open the roof above the place. They lowered the mat that the paralytic was laying on before the Lord Jesus. There was no other way to get near the Lord Jesus because of the crowds.

It was the simple faith and the related action of the paralytic and those who carried him that moved the Lord Jesus to heal the sick man. Similarly the woman who was suffering from hemorrhage for years, in faith dared to touch the edge of the cloak of the Lord Jesus. Jairus in faith fell at the feet of the Lord Jesus and pleaded earnestly to cure his daughter who was at the point of death. The faith of the Syro-phoenician woman and her insistence compelled the Lord Jesus to drive out the unclean spirit that had taken possession of her daughter.

These healings and many more miracles reveal our 'faith' and the 'related action' as a requisite to experience or exercise the healing powers of the Lord Jesus. (The paralytic was lowered on the mat; the woman touched the cloak; Jairus fell at the feet; The Syro-phoenician woman persisted) Today are we paralyzed, because of failures, sickness, pain & temptations? We do not have to turn to the world or to other gods and end up destroying our lives. He is near us and is waiting for us to take that step of faith, to heal and restore us.

Prayer: Abba Father, we rejoice in your holy name all day long. Amen.

**“It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick.
I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.” Mark 2:17**

1 Sam 9:1-4, 17-19
10:1
Ps 21:2-7
Mk 2: 13-17

It is a common phenomenon that our hospitals are filled with people any time we visit a friend or a loved one or few ourselves are sick and go to meet a doctor. Whatever the hospital is, it is always crowded. Every time we see such sick people in hospitals we should be reminded of today's Gospel? In the gospel today, our Lord Jesus tells us that only the sick needs a doctor's

attention. How sick are we in our spirit and in our soul. Do we know that we are sick and sinful? Do we flock to the feet of the divine physician who can heal any sickness spiritual, psychological or physical? Our Lord Jesus tells us today that He came down from heaven for the sinners, for me and for you, but we seldom want to go to Him for healing.

Earlier in the Gospel proclamation, Lord Jesus calls a tax collector who was a symbol of all things impure in the times and culture of the Lord Jesus, in Israel. A person who was hated by everyone is called by the Lord to “Follow Him” and later He goes to sit and share a meal in the house of a sinner. That is the depth of compassion the Lord has for sinners and that is the same love and compassion He has for you and me today. This invitation is renewed every morning to “Follow Him”.

The first reading today reminds us that none of us are here in this world without a plan of God. We have already been chosen by God just like young Saul was and we are waiting to be called to turn away from our ways of life, from a sinful state to a new beginning, a new and better life which is chosen and anointed by God, for His mission and purpose. Young Saul was chosen by God to be the first king of Israel. He followed the calling of God and his acceptance in obedience to God paved the way for other kings from whose line St. Joseph and the Blessed Mother came from. Today's psalm too tells us what awaits us when we accept the calling of Jesus to follow him. It goes on to tell us that the desires of our hearts are going to be met, a life of abundance and finally a crown of pure gold that will await us as we meet Jesus Christ and God the Father face to face in heaven.

Prayer: Abba Father, as Your call to follow You is renewed every moment of every day, help us believe and give us the confidence to take your word and follow you daily. Amen!

“Come, ...and you will see.”

John 1:39

1 Sam 3: 3-10, 19

Ps 40: 2, 4, 7-10

1 Cor 6: 13-15, 17-20

Jn 1: 35-42

Today's readings are all about the ongoing interaction between God and us. God comes to meet us each moment. This living God speaks to us and expects us to respond to His voice. Our intimacy with God depends on how much we see and hear Him and mostly, how much we respond to His calling at every given moment.

I feel that we can relate to the experience of Samuel in the First Reading. “Samuel did not yet know the Lord. The Word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him.” (1Sam 3:7) There was a period in my life too, when I did not know The Lord though I knew about Him. That was the time I was living “with Christ”, fulfilling obligations, ‘saying’ prayers like a parrot, and thinking that I owned God, as I was a ‘good Christian’. The Word of God had not yet come alive in me. The Sacraments were a habit or a ritual, and the Eucharist was to tick the box. “Then Eli realised that the Lord was calling the boy. So Eli told Samuel, ‘... if He calls you, say, ‘Speak, Lord, Your servant is listening.’” (1Sam 3:8c-9) In my life, I too received the Grace to receive the Baptism of the Holy Spirit through the Four Steps Retreat in 2008, and the journey that started from then onwards has taught me to recognise the voice of God. He speaks to me each morning as I sit at His Feet in prayer, and as I face different situations during the day.

Samuel ran to Eli, not realizing that the Lord was calling him, and he did not hear anything more. The Lord seemed to go quiet when Samuel did not recognize His voice. The Lord proceeded to speak to Samuel only when he replied, “Speak, for your servant is listening.” (1 Samuel 3:10) Isn't this true in our lives too? For as long as we choose to run to the world seeking answers, we will not be hearing the Voice of God. God seems quiet in our lives. Just like the Lord judged Eli for been silent when his sons were behaving in a way not pleasing to God, we too are instructed by the Lord to “walk the talk”... to put our house in order. Eli was a prophet who served God faithfully but he failed to challenge his sons who were living in sin, the result was that Eli's whole family was destroyed. Similarly Samuel was rewarded for his obedience and attentive listening and God Himself made sure that none of Samuel's words would fall to the ground, for those were God's own words. “As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the

eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.” (Isaiah 55:10-11) The Lord Jesus also confirmed the above truth when He said, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will never pass away.” (Luke 21:33)

In the Gospel proclamation, we are told about having our inner eyes open to see God and His action in the events of our day-to-day life. When St John the Baptist saw Lord Jesus passing by, he said, “Look, the Lamb of God!” (cf. John 1:36) While others saw the Lord Jesus as an ordinary young Jew who came to John to be baptized like everyone else, St John the Baptist saw in Him, The Lamb of God who came to take the sin away.

St Andrew was one of the two disciples of St John the Baptist, who followed the Lord Jesus and spent the day with Him. Thereafter the first thing he did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, “We have found the Messiah”. He brought Simon to the Lord. This is yet another gift we receive through the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Our inner eyes are opened to see God’s realities more than what we see with our physical eyes. The Lord invites us to bring another brother or sister to Him, to be loved and to have a personal encounter and start an intimate journey with Him. When I reflect on the Gospel passage, I am reminded that it was Andrew’s brother, Simon (turned Peter), who was handpicked by the Lord to lead His Church, though it was Andrew who first came to the Lord. Similarly I am reminded that I aywould never know what great plans the Lord may be having for the brother or sister whom I am asked to bring to the Lord.

Notwithstanding speaking to us and visiting us each day in different moments, the Lord has gone to the extent of buying us over out of our slavery in to His freedom. “He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.” (1Peter 2:24) The Lord reminds us that our whole being belongs to Him, since we have been saved from our sins.

These words are often mere words until we receive the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, as the Holy Spirit alone, can make the Word of God come alive in our minds and hearts. A Christian cannot live in any way he or she chooses. The yardstick our for lifestyle is none other than our Lord Jesus Christ.

Prayer: Abba Father, You invite me to a live with an awakened spirit. As I say, ‘Yes’ to You, empower me to surrender my life to the Holy Spirit to lead me and guide me each day. Amen.

*"Sacrifice thank offerings to God...I will deliver you,
and you will honor me."*

Psalm 50: 14

1 Sam 15: 16-23
Ps 50: 8-9, 16-17,
21 & 23
Mk 2: 18-22

Today's readings reiterate the teachings of the Lord Jesus who He taught us that obedience was more important than sacrifice. For many of us, Christianity becomes a mere religion with rules that need to be followed, traditions that need to be kept and obligations that need to be met. So we go to church every Sunday only to sit there with our minds elsewhere, we recite prayers mechanically without giving a moment to consider the words that pass our lips and we pat our selves on the back thinking that we are doing pretty well. Even while being on a journey and after getting to know this amazing God on a personal level, it is easy for us to fall into a routine of duty. I know that in my life, I often fall into this trap. I rush through my prayers because I feel guilty if I have not said them often not realising that this God I pray to has been pushed away by myself simply because I do not have the patience to seek His presence, to await His replies and to seek His discernment.

God tells us in the psalm today that He does not need our sacrifices, they are always before Him yes, but it is the heart behind the sacrifice that He seeks. My sacrifice is a litany of prayers, my praise the words of habit that escape my mouth with no thought behind them. Does God need my mindless words? Does His sovereignty decrease just because I have not done my part? No. He is God. He has no need of prayer or praise. I am human. And I have every need of Him. But how often do I, in my utter foolishness, forget this fact?

If today I meet my King and His accusations are before me, what answer can I give Him? I can try and answer back like Saul did, trying to justify that I did obey His commandments but just like for Saul, my answers will ring hollow. In the presence of His majesty, the duty and the obligation will fade away. And the fact will remain that while I did my duty, my heart was heard. That underneath the duty there was little or no love, humility, or obedience. Will He then reject me, just like He rejected Saul? But God is merciful. In His great love for me, He keeps calling me back. In the readings today, He nudges me back to a conversation with Him. He invites me to forget everything else and to just focus on my relationship with Him,.

Prayer: *Abba Father, today I pray for the grace to love You and to obey You. Cast me not away from Your presence. Instead in mercy and love, draw me ever closer to You. Amen*

Go out to the whole world and proclaim the good news to all creation.

Mark 16:15

Is 52: 7-10
Psalm 96: 1-3, 6-8, 10
Acts 20: 17-18,
28-32, 36
Mk 16: 15-20

Today's word of God states "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, happiness and salvation (Is 52:7)

In our own lives, how often do we carry good news to others? The bitter truth in my own life is that even though I really want to be optimistic about everything and everyone around me I end up talking negatively about them. As I read Isaiah 52:7, the Lord once again reminded me to be like the person who carries the good news to everyone around me.

The Lord has called us to carry this good news and proclaim salvation to the people in our life. As we do this the good news will be spread throughout the world. What is the point of talking negatively and mouthing necessary words, no one gains anything out of them. Have you not realised that it is a waste of time and effort. It is only the good news of salvation that needs to be uttered from our mouth. That does not mean we should talk only of God, but we should speak of everything in a positive manner which will please the Lord.

As we celebrate the life of St Joseph Vaz, we can see that he was a perfect example on how we should live our lives. He use to walk bare foot for days, from one destination to another, with the sole purpose of carrying the good news of salvation to the people of our country. It is said that it would take him only hours to walk from one place to another whereas that same distance would take days for another person to cover. I can imagine how beautiful his feet might have been in the spiritual context. St Joseph Vaz was so confident that if he played his part well according to Gods plan that this nation would see a great revival and that is what all of us our experiencing today even after 300 years.It was one man who made a difference in our nation. He made a shift in the atmosphere.

The Lord Jesus reminds us in today's Gospel proclamation "Go out to the whole world and proclaim the good news to all creation". That is exactly what St Joseph Vaz did during his life on earth. We too have been called for that very same mission and nothing less. Are we ready to fulfill what God has created us for? This is the purpose of our lives

Prayer: Abba Father, give us the grace to be attentive to your word and fulfil our mission in our lives on earth according to your will. Amen.

For the battle is the Lord's and he shall deliver you into our hands

1 Samuel 17: 47

1 Sam 17: 32-33, 37,
40-51
Ps 144: 1,2,9-10
Mk3: 1-6

The shepherd boy David's battle with the Philistine giant is commonly fought in our day to day life. The battle fought by the Israelites against the Philistines was not a historical event alone but recorded to be a victory brought forth to them by the living God of Israel.

We are living in the world but called not to be of the world. This is our constant battle which we are fighting daily. This battle is not being seen by people because the war is in our depths. If David took the stance of the world he would not have defeated the giant. The Philistine giant Goliath fought the battle with worldly strength. He had his bodily strength, his weapons were powerful and he set out to destroy David and the Israelites with confidence in himself and in his weapons.

David did not go to battle with his strength but with the strength of the Lord God. David knew the power of his God because he had many experiences in the field while he was looking after his flock. David had a close relationship with the Lord God of Israel. His explanation to King Saul makes it clear to us too.

The same battle continues in the Gospel too. The Lord Jesus was challenged by the rulers of the time. What's amazing is that we find people with the same attitude present today. They have been watching the Lord Jesus closely to see him and others people breaking the standards of 'their' norms.

Are we living the life the Lord Jesus has called us to live or are we pleasing others and our flesh? Having self confidence is good but having confidence in the Lord is the best way to live. We celebrate the memorial of St. Anthony Abbot, who was a Saint in the 3rd century. He wanted to live a perfect life and was highly influenced by the Scripture "If you wish to be perfect, go, sell what you have, and give it to the poor" (Matt. 19:21). He laid the foundations of community life, and gave his disciples that profound broad and sane instruction, the mature result of solitude and prayer, which forms the surest basis of Christian simplicity. The saint suffered repeatedly from diabolical attacks but these made him more steadfast in virtue.

Prayer: Abba Father, may we be aware of the Holy Spirit in us and be conscious of our virtuous life here and life eternal. May we become victors of our battle in this world. Amen.

“In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I am not afraid;
what can flesh do to me?”

Psalm 56:10-11

1 Sam 18: 6-9, 10-13

Ps 56: 3, 9-13

Mk 3: 7-12

In today's first reading Saul's behaviour displays our faulty human nature. When Saul heard people praising David more than him for the victory he has won, he became jealous and plotted to kill him. Saul could not accept David's victory with an open heart. Perhaps we need to pause for a moment and examine our hearts now. We see this happening especially in the corporate world.

We are unable to accept when another person who works under us climbs the ladder faster than us. Why? As we examine our hearts we can see that we react with this faulty attitude because of our fears and insecurities. We still have not tasted God's perfect love, security and intimacy in our hearts. We have lost our way to worldly things and have forgotten there is a better place to go. When we truly experience God's perfect love which drives away all fears and when we find security in Him, we become content and our hearts become internally free. When we walk in internal freedom, other people's success will not challenge us instead we can embrace them and their successes. But we are never content and satisfied. Where are we looking for our security? Let us come before the Lord as we are; with these fears and insecurities and give the truth of our hearts to Him; admit and accept the fact that we are struggling with these insecurities as we are unable to find fulfillment in the Lord. And as we quietly surrender our hearts to Him, and lift these fears and insecurities to the Lord, the Holy Spirit will come and fill our hearts. Then we will begin to experience the perfect love of God and we find security in Him alone. That is why a daily walk with the Lord and spending quiet time with the Lord have to be the breath of our lives. If not we will fall and remain there.

In today's Gospel proclamation we see a large crowd rushing to the Lord Jesus for healing because they see a 'miracle-worker'. The crowd came to Lord Jesus not to listen to his teaching or to become disciples. They came primarily to have their needs met. Even today, how many of us still do the same? We run to God when a need arises, yet we remain the same; never intend to grow deeper with the Lord. The purpose of being a Christian is to follow the Lord Jesus wholeheartedly and to become His disciple.

Prayer: *Abba Father, I come before You as I am and I surrender my life to you. Grant me the grace to walk with you and grow with you deeper so that I will be your witness to the whole world, Amen*

He appointed twelve- designating them apostles-

Mark 3:14-15

1 Sam 24: 3-21

Ps 57: 24, 6 & 11

Mk 3: 13-19

According to today's Gospel the Lord Jesus expects three special tasks from the first disciples. 1) to be with him 2) to preach the Good News 3) to have authority to drive out demons. He is the Kingdom of God. Anyone has the freedom to live in the world or live in the Kingdom of God. The one who lives in the world will live trying to please it and according to the ways of the world. But the one who lives in the Kingdom of God always pleases God. The Lord Jesus always did this. He did not seek a good place or good name in the world. He was in a relationship with the Father and always, obeyed Him. This is what God expects from us also. When we live this way the reign of the Father comes into our lives. In one place the Lord Jesus tells His disciples not to take a purse or bag and that everything that is needed will be provided by the Father. This is a great blessing.

Peter was a fisherman. But when he said 'yes' to the calling of God and surrendered his life to the Lord Jesus an amazing thing happened. When Peter spoke, thousands of lives were transformed. Finally he was able to influence the whole world. This is what happens when we surrender our lives to the Lord and allow Him to act. Rivers of living water will flow through us to others. No one can stop it this and through us people will start to turn back to God.

The Lord Jesus gave His disciples the authority to drive out demons. Wherever He went the demons were cast out. People were liberated. When we live surrendering our lives to Him He gives this same power and authority to us. On the earth is the kingdom of darkness. Unknowingly, even Christians live under the influence of the powers of darkness. One day I had to preach at a service. Later while praying over the people, one woman was staring at me. Without thinking much of it I prayed over her. Suddenly she hit my hand, turned back and went. After everything was over I was seated by myself. She came to me and said, " I am burning. I cannot wait." I realised that she was wearing a black cord around her neck with a round cross. She said it was given to her from the devil. I told her to remove it and willingly she did so. At once the burning sensation vanished and immediately her countenance on her face changed.

Prayer: *Abba Father, during this year lead us to a blessed life through obedience to you. Amen*

“Hear us, Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock.”

Psalm 80: 1

2 Sam 1: 1-4, 11-12, 19,
23-27

Ps 80: 2-3, 5-7

Mk 3: 20-21

She put her very life on the line to become His mother. He was her pride and joy, the son of the promise. Suddenly there is a shift in Him. He was preaching like someone with authority, healing the sick, delivering the demon possessed. People were following Him everywhere He went, and now they are in her dining room! She could not have been prouder of Him, until the family members started to think He had lost His mind. He was making a lot of people uncomfortable, especially those who taught them the ways of God.

As I read today's Gospel proclamation, I was drawn to reflect on what may have been going through the Blessed Mother's mind. For us parents, there is no one more precious than our children. For those in the journey, the greatest dream we have for our children is for them to be on fire for God. So, we pray for them claiming the promises of God over their lives. We claim them for the Kingdom. Sometimes, to our horror, we find that our children have thoughts of their own, that destroy our dreams for them, and we begin to fall apart spiritually!

A few days ago, I was in a similar situation. I was angry and upset, first and foremost with myself, for I had not done my part as a parent. Second, I looked for someone else to blame, but there was none. I cried out to God in repentance and helplessness. Suddenly my phone beeped, and a scripture text appeared on the screen; “in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose”. Next, a reflection appeared on the screen: “God may change your direction but never His Promises – your current giant is about to introduce you to the greatest testimony ever”.

In the first reading, we find David weeping and mourning over the death of King Saul and his son Jonathan. We would expect David to celebrate the death of his nemesis, but to David, Saul was the anointed one of God, the King of Israel. God always builds up from Ground Zero. With the King and the heir to the throne deceased, David was anointed the King of Judah. God changes the direction, never the plan. In all things God works for the good of those who love Him. Lalith Thatha's words during a recent message sums it all; between the promise and its fulfilment there is a storm.

Prayer: *Abba Father, give me the grace to trust in your promises during the storms I have to face today. May I rest in your promises. Amen*

Teach me your ways, O Lord**Psalm 25:4**

Jan 3: 1-5, 10

Ps 25: 4-9

1 Cor 7: 29-31

Mk 1: 14-20

In today's first reading we meet Jonah, to whom God is speaking for the second time. The Lord wants him to go to Nineveh and speak a word of prophesy. Jonah is reluctant to go in the name of the Lord, which is why the Lord had to speak to him a second time. Once again, we see the principle "God needs a person to partner with" at work. Had Jonah refused to go, the people of

Nineveh would have perished, even though it was the Lord's desire to rescue them.

In many places the hand of God is absent, despite God wanting to extend his saving hand, simply because God has no one to partner with. Because Jonah partnered with the Lord, the destiny of the people of Nineveh changed. There was a breakthrough, and the laws of cause and effect were superseded.

Why did the Lord go to extreme lengths to pursue Jonah? Perhaps there was no one else listening to the Lord. Yet God loved the people of Nineveh so much, that he kept on pursuing a vessel who was less than ideal. Why is it that God showed such mercy and favour to Jonah, which made Him pursue Jonah even when Jonah ran away? It was not because of something Jonah had done that made him deserve special treatment. It was because God loved and cared for the people of Nineveh. He loved them so much, that even if the one partnering with God was less than perfect, God was willing to use him. If I am experiencing a special favour of God, it could very well be for the sake of another. What's more, if I want the favour of God in my life, perhaps I should be making myself available for serving those he cares for.

The words that Jonah spoke evoked a response that was spectacular. Hordes of people started repenting. I do not attribute this to Jonah's eloquence, but rather to the principle that when the person chosen by God acts, God also acts. When the words of Jonah fell on the ears of the people, God performed an operation in their heart. As a result, the people of Nineveh did not get defensive and act how people normally act when confronted with their wrong doing. Instead they responded in a manner that would pull supernatural power down from heaven, and their destiny would change.

In today's Gospel proclamation we see the calling of the first disciples.

They, like Jonah, are called for a purpose bigger than themselves. Like how Our Lord Jesus started ministering in the void left by the arrest of St. John the Baptist, these disciples would step in to fill the void that was left when Our Lord Jesus ascended into heaven. However, from today's encounter with the Lord Jesus and to the day they stepped into his shoes, they spent time in preparation. They heard the words He preached. They saw the miracles He performed. They observed how he reacted to different types of people and situations. They had a vantage point and view that few others had. More importantly, they had a personal relationship with Him. It is this characteristic that set them apart from those who came to listen, experience miracles, and go back home.

Today, if we have encountered the Lord and are enjoying a closer walk with him, it could be for the sake of others and not for our own. Like the disciples, some of us could be in a state of preparation, while others may be already at work expanding the territory of the kingdom. More importantly, to partner with Him, we must invest time in cultivating a relationship with Him.

St. John's Gospel proclamation tells us that Andrew was a disciple of St. John the Baptist, and that he, after being introduced to our Lord Jesus as the Lamb of God, brings his Brother Simon (who we know today as St. Peter) to Our Lord Jesus. So, when our Lord Jesus called them to be "fishers of men", they already had some background with Him. Sometimes we may not be aware what our calling is when we begin to follow Him. However, he will reveal it personally. Like how our Lord used a vocabulary customized to the context of the fishermen (I will make you fishers of men), he will call you and me by name. When He does that, our lives, our values, and our priorities will change, just like it did for the first disciples.

We see this change reflected in today's second reading as well. St. Paul urges the Corinthians to disengage from the world. He notes that the world is perishing. When our purpose and reasons for living are limited to earthly things, we too are perishing. When I live for a purpose that perishes, I am destined to be sad. When we live for a purpose that is bigger than us, like Jonah and the early disciples were called, we are rescued from living for a world that is perishing. So, we take today's responsorial psalm and pray with it. "Teach me your ways Lord".

Prayer: Show me your ways, Lord, teach me your paths. Guide me in your truth and teach me. Amen

The enemy shall not outwit him

2 Sam 5: 1-7, 10

Ps 89: 20, 21-22, 25-26

Mk 3: 22-30

Demons are evil or unclean spirits. There is the devil or Satan and many or myriads of demons. A demoniac (Mk 5:1-20) is a person whose personality has been invaded by one or more demons, who at will can speak and act through their human victim, deranging both his mind and body.

In our ministry we know that during times of powerful praise and deep worship, the demons are unearthed and begin to manifest in the presence of the Lord. Most often they call it a fire. In the ministry and life of the Lord Jesus, we are aware that often the demon possessed would be ministered to by the Lord. The demon spirits in the people would straight away confess that Jesus was Lord and they would ask Him why He has come to torment them before their time. They could not outwit the Lord.

The Pharisees unable to understand the ministry and power of the Lord Jesus began to relate His power to that of Satan's. The fact is that the opposite of Satan's power is the life giving, creative power of the Holy Spirit. While the Holy Spirit brings new life, energy, strength and remarkable changes into our life, the demon unclean spirits come in to steal, kill and destroy. One comes to give life while another comes to destroy it forever. Alas the Pharisees in their utter blindness related the power of the Lord to that of Satan's. It only indicated the extent of their blindness. When we witness something that we do not understand, the best would be to seek the face of God and have His wisdom in judging that power at work. We have a lot of confusion because the Lord in His mercy does miracles and wonders in many different churches which leaves us confused. We are called not to judge but to offer praise and thanksgiving to God.

When the Lord is with us and is leading us, we become greater and greater in the Lord. This was manifested in the life of King David who rose from being a young shepherd boy to the status of the King over Israel. He marched on relentlessly and took hold of the strongholds and named it the City of David. Let us seek the power of the Holy Spirit every day in our time of personal prayer. We will have a greater deal of the Lord's leading and guidance over our lives. The Lord's presence will be with us and our inner journey will be victorious

Prayer: *Abba Father, I offer up my spirit to you that it will be renewed by your Holy Spirit and brought to new life every morning. Amen*

"Who are my mother and my brothers?"

Mark 3: 33

2 Sam 6: 12-15, 17-19

Ps 24: 7-10

Mk 3: 31-35

In the first reading, King David decides he must bring the Ark of the Lord to his city. The Ark of the Covenant has been returned to the Hebrew people. David was afraid to bring the Ark into Jerusalem because of what happened to a man named Uzzah. As they were bringing the Ark to Jerusalem on a cart, the cart nearly tipped over and Uzzah touched the Ark in an effort to keep it from falling.

Uzzah was instantly struck dead. After this the Ark was kept in the house of a man named Obed Edom. While the Ark was there, the Bible says this man and all his household were blessed. David hears about this blessing of the Lord so he decides to bring the Ark into Jerusalem. As they are bringing the Ark, David dances joyfully in front of the Ark. David praised the Lord with all his body. He wanted to give God everything he had and praised God even through his dance.

In our lives, can we say that we praise the Lord with everything we have? Can we say that we will praise God even in the face of looking foolish and crazy in front of others? If we read further into 1 Samuel we will find that as King David danced, his wife sees this and thinks he is acting foolishly. We must ask ourselves if we are like David or his wife. In the Bible there are several stories about people who looked foolish. Noah looked foolish building an ark. The Israelites looked foolish marching around Jericho blowing trumpets. Peter looked foolish stepping out of the boat onto the water in the middle of the night. In all these incidents each person was trying to glorify the Lord through their faith and actions. Can we do the same?

The Lord Jesus explains, "Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother." How can we be called brothers or sisters of Christ if we do not know how to glorify God in everything we do and say? The Lord Jesus is raising the bar of the kind of person He can call His brother or sister. It is someone who is not ashamed to call themselves believers of Christ. It is someone who is willing to talk about their faith with others. It is a person who is willing to do whatever the Lord asks to spread the Good News to those who do not know. Today the Lord is calling each of us to become like King David, to praise and glorify God in everything we do and say and then we will be called brothers and sisters of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Prayer: *Abba Father, I pray for the grace to be able to glorify You in everything I do and say. Amen.*

Hear the word, accept the word and bear a hundred fold!

2Sam 7: 4-17

Ps 89: 4-5, 27-30

Mk 4: 1-20

St. Francis de Sales is the patron saint of writers, journalists and users of media. He is known as the gentleman saint. He came from a noble background and his father has plans for him to become a magistrate. At a certain point in his life he attended a sermon on damnation and for two years was convinced that he was going to die and go to hell. Ultimately he prayed the 'Memorare' and after his consecration to the Blessed Mother his life took a new turn. He provided a great support to the church during the time of the popular Protestant Reformation and hence was instrumental in securing and strengthening the faith with his eloquent preaching and writings.

The word he received though a sermon found a fertile patch of soil in his being which gave rise to his conversion and a fruitful life. In the Gospel proclamation we read of different kinds of areas where the seed fell. There was the pathway, the rocky ground, thorns and good soil. We can be the ones linked with the path where Satan comes in and steals the word. We can be the ones like the rock ground, who receive the word with great joy but when faced with trouble or persecution give up easily. We can be the ones lost in the cares of the world who receive the word like a bouquet of thorns or we can be the ones like fertile soil who hear the word, accept it and bear a hundred fold.

Even for the ones with the good soil, they have to hear the word, accept it and then bear a hundred fold. King David heard a cry in his heart to build a dwelling place for the Lord but that was not the wish of the Living God. The God of all questioned his intent and then made it clear that the Temple was to be built by King Solomon. We are called to hear God's word. To accept His word is to humble ourselves to God's way forward. We may want to preach and proclaim and do powerful things but God may have a different way ahead. St. Francis de Sales wanted to die a martyr but St. Francis of Assisi appeared to him and told him that it would not be so. God's plan was that he should preach, write and proclaim the word of God. Ultimately, St. Francis de Sales died on a stroke just before a Christmas programme. Let us be open to God's way and word.

Prayer: Abba Father, I offer up the hardness of my heart. Make it fertile soil for the glory of your name and your kingdom. Amen

The true light of the Risen Lord!

Acts 22: 3-16 or

Acts 9: 1-22

Ps 117: 1-2

Mk 16: 5-18

How true and faithful is our God. Paul is testifying to his conversion, the second coming of Christ in to his own life. What came to my mind is the true love of God who knows the deep secrets in our innermost being. The Word of God in Jer. 1/5 before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart, I appointed you as a prophet to the nations..." Here is the confirmation of God working in the life of Paul. God is not looking at the mistakes of what Paul did, God first looked into the heart of this young man, to see if he really loved him and saw that it was there. Saul who became Paul, was persecuting the people at that time, because he was angry that they were following a different teaching from a person called Jesus who is not God, and thought that by getting rid of them he was doing God a favour. Although he had the privilege of a very good education, yet he lacked knowing the truth, because the blood of the Saviour had not been poured into the world. The light that Paul saw was the Risen Christ working in par with the Spirit, that at once all the worldly knowledge was erased and the truth was revealed. Although, the light blinded Paul's human eyes, the eyes of the Spirit was opened. The Psalms 117/1-2 the shortest chapter in the word of God is a confirmation of his love that endures forever. God's love for each and every one of us is matchless. The Gospel proclamation is the revelation of the Risen Lord to the Mary Magdalene and the apostles on the road to Emmaus.

In my life, these teaching are not something new, how often I have drifted into the pagan life of an unbeliever, refusing the calling he has for me, simply because I thought what I was doing is right. Often at every chance He offered me help I would justify it by finding a way out. I would do it in my own understanding without getting help from the Lord whose ways are much higher than mine. He works everything for the good of us all. Lord I am no better than Mary Magdalene, and your dearly loved Apostles who simply refused to let go of their old understanding and receive the new vision you were pouring into their lives. Lord I believe help me in my unbelief that I could embrace your calling with both hands and just like Paul after his conversion be transformed into the real me whom you had prepared before I was formed.

Prayer: Abba Father, keep my walk blameless and my Spirit willing. Amen

Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name;
bring an offering and come into his courts.

2 Sam 11: 1-10, 13-17

Ps 96: 1-3, 7-10

Mk 4: 26-34

We are regularly engaged in a battle between the flesh and spirit. In today's first reading we see how David consented to temptation without refusing it. If we are in a situation of temptation today, we should petition to the Lord with a sincere heart for a spirit of discernment and strength. The Holy Spirit then helps us to discern between trials, which are necessary for the growth of our inner self and temptation which leads to sin and death. Discernment will help us unmask the lie of temptation.

Even if we have already fallen into temptation today, God gives us hope through David; God can turn our curses into blessings when we sincerely come back to His heart. He never refuses His children and nothing is impossible for Him. We see later in this story that God establishes the throne of David through the second son of Bathseba who is Solomon.

Sometimes it is easy for us to see how other people are tempted to identify the curses others may be going through. And as we read this too, our mind may bring forward examples of others lives. Let us rebuke this temptation and truly discern with God the temptations of life that we are going through today; the trials and tribulations we need to bring to the feet of the Lord Jesus.

Today's Gospel proclamation speaks about what the Kingdom of God is like. The Lord Jesus compares the Kingdom of God to the smallest seed in the world. Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds can perch in its shade. (Mk 4:31, 32) Let us truly reflect on the seeds we plant among our family and friends. Are we sowing fruitful seeds or thorns among our neighbours? We can take two decisions today; we can either sow virtues like faith, hope and love which will bring fruitfulness or thorns which is hate, pride and anger which will only make things worse. Let us come to the Lord Jesus and spend time with him today. Some may think that working is their prayer or sometimes even serving. These are in fact great ways to take part in His Mission. But we are called in a special way to come and spend time with Him alone so that He can explain things to us and surrender to Him.

Prayer: *Abba Father, Forgive us when we pick and choose situations to bring to your feet. Help us to discern your will in everything we do. Amen.*

“My sacrifice O God is a broken Spirit; A broken and contrite heart”

Psalm 51:17

2Sam 12: 1-7, 10-17

Ps51: 12-17

Mk 4: 35-41

The first reading today is a lesson for our everyday life. God sends Prophet Nathan to David. By this time David had already fallen into deep sin by lusting after another man's wife and also conniving and having him killed in order to marry the woman. David however, went on in life with no guilt though he loved God and God Himself considered David as a man after His own heart.

It is at this point that the Lord sends Prophet Nathan to David with the instructions to point out his grave sin. In Samuel 11 we see that the Lord was displeased with David for what he had done. It is through a story that the Prophet brings King David to the repentance and realisation of His own sin.

We may be committing various sin and the nature of sin is such that it is always attractive to the flesh. We may not realise that we are in fact sinning or even if we do realize the addiction and the attraction is too great for us to come out of it on our own. We need a supernatural intervention to come out of deep sin. This is what happened with King David as Prophet Nathan spoke to him and showed him his sin, and suddenly the heart of Kind David was enkindled to understand the magnitude of his sin. Today's psalm is one of the most insightful and heart bending psalms as far as true repentance is concerned. Personally for me, whenever I am in a situation that I cannot help but fall into sin, this psalm has always come to my aid to truly repent. You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings (psalm 51:16) The next verse in the psalm teaches us what truly pleases God. My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise. (psalm 51:17) As we go along in life, we will surely fall into sin for though we are fully redeemed by the death on the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, our sinful nature remains as a consequence of the original sin. But today, we are offered a great hope in this teaching that if we truly repent of our sins, there is forgiveness for us and we can become pleasing to God. On the feast of Saint Angela Merici, Virgin. we have a role model though beautiful never gave into any carnal desires or sin but dedicated her whole life to the Lord Jesus.

Prayer: Abba Father, kindle in me a light always to return to you with true repentance. Amen

“If today you hear His voice, harden not your heart”

Psalm 95: 8

Dt 18: 15-20

Ps 95: 1-9

1 Cor 7: 32-35

Mk 1: 21-28

What did God mean when He told Moses; “I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their fellow Israelites”. What was so special about Moses? We have been reflecting on the three pillars of wisdom; 1) God is in search of a person to carry out His purpose in this world, (2) that person needs God to empower him or her to carry out His purpose, (3) when that person acts,

God acts. We saw how God called Moses to carry out His mission to rescue the Hebrew slaves from the Pharaoh. We saw how God empowered Moses to carry out that mission, and then when he obeyed, how God acted with a mighty and outstretched arm. Then we saw something that Moses always did; wherever he went, he first pitched the Tent of Meeting.

The Tent of Meeting was the place where Moses sat at the feet of God. As he spent time at the feet of God, he came to know the God of Israel intimately. The result of the encounter left Moses radiant with the glory of God. He learnt the heart of God, received directions, battle plans that gave them victory after victory, logistics plans that sustained them in the desert, and even instructions on leadership to guide the people. Behind every miracle, every enemy that was defeated, every victory they received was the Tent of Meeting. He was empowered to carry out every instruction that God gave him. In short, Moses learnt the secret of operating from the Tent of Meeting.

In today’s Gospel proclamation we see that the people were amazed at the Lord’s teaching in the synagogue. They said he spoke as one who has authority. He must have preached under anointing and the supernatural power of God must have moved in that place. His words must have pierced their hearts, convicted them of their sin and drawn them into repentance. The atmosphere in that place would have changed as the Lord began to teach. Even evil spirits in that place started to recognise the Lord as the Holy one of God.

Right before this incident was the Lord’s baptism at the Jordan, and the 40 days of fasting and prayer in the wilderness. The Lord Himself had started His public ministry from the Tent of Meeting! Throughout His life on earth, it is recorded He climbed a mountain or went to a quiet place early in the morning to spend time with the Father. It would have been in those moments that He was empowered to

complete His mission on earth. The secret behind His ministry, the miracles, the journey to the cross, the resurrection and changing the world was the Tent of Meeting.

The three pillars of wisdom had pierced my heart. I was reflecting on it, praying with it, sharing on social media about it. One day I was caught off guard! I had to choose between a servers meeting and an important family event. I started giving excuses to escape from the servers meeting, or to do the bare minimum. I knew I was wrong, but I was caught up. I convinced myself that it is was too difficult and too late to change the plans of the family event. Then I heard His voice; “what are you doing?” and I was convicted! There was nothing I could do, except give Him the truth of my heart; Lord, it was too difficult to organize this event, and now I do not want to take the risk of it falling apart... Finally, I cried out to Him; “please help me, I am too caught up to say yes to you”. Immediately, something shifted, and I received the grace to say yes to the Lord. The Lord showed me that I had been operating outside the Tent of Meeting. Instead of going to God in my weakness, I had been avoiding Him. As a result, I had become powerless to say yes to Him. I would like to think that God in His mercy, convicted me and dragged me back to the Tent of Meeting where I was empowered once again!

In his letter to the Corinthians St Paul says it is better to be single than to be married. He says “I am saying this for your own good, not to restrict you, but that you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord”. The challenge to serve, to live in the mission of Christ is unquestionably greater for a married couple. As we reflected on the Three Pillars of Wisdom, we also reflected on the role of married couples; to raise each other into holiness and to raise children to be saints. If a person discovers the secret and the joy of sitting at the feet of God, he/she will be empowered to go where the Lord sends him or her to do the impossible.

When we do not sit at the feet of the Lord, the voice of God grows faint. Then the mission of God becomes a burden. Our hearts become hardened, deceiving and manipulative. Today the Psalmist is inviting us back to return to the Tent of Meeting; “Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker, for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care”.

Prayer: Abba Father, give me the grace to return to with all my heart, to sit at your feet where I will be empowered to say yes to you. Amen.

Lord shake off our shackles!

2 Sam 15: 13-14, 30;
16: 5-13

Ps 32:7

Mk 5: 1-20

This is the cry of the world and the deep belief of the world. Most people believe that even if God is alive they still have to strive and push themselves hard to be successful.

But as we journey with God, we realise that it is only to a point that we can go but after that we need the saving love and deliverance of the Lord Jesus. Though we have faith in God often when we come across people who have failed and fallen we are not able to believe that there is hope for them. Neither can we give them hope nor are we able to inspire hope in them.

One such hopeless case was the demoniac of Geresenes. The people had given up on him and they accepted him the way he was and wanted him to remain the way he was. No shackles could restrain him nor would he live a proper life. The legion of demons would drive him to the graves and dark places in that city.

In the encounter between the Lord and the possessed man, the demoniac spirit in the man recognised the Royalty and authority of the Lord Jesus and the fact that Jesus is the Son of the Father. With all our prayer and years of Christian education we are so blind to the power of the name of the Lord Jesus and his place in the Heavenly places. We treat the Lord like any other. We use Him for our needs and pleasures and when we have received what we want we forget Him completely.

We may seem to be free when seen with the naked eye but many of us are carrying shackles unknown to us. Often the shackles seems to offer so much pleasure and joy that we do not mind wearing them and living life. We play with these shackles in the corners of our homes, outposts of the internet and quiet places where no one can see us and accuse us. But when the Lord Jesus comes into our lives, He alone shows us that the gleaming shackles were actually legions of unclean spirits serving us with lust, power, wealth, immorality and distancing us from the Kingdom of God. If we have been really saved we will be telling our friends and family how much the Lord has done for us, what mercy He has shown us. Let us begin today!

Prayer: Abba Father, thank you for the deliverance we experience through the shed blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen

Do not fear - only believe

Mark 5: 36

2 Sam 18: 9-10,14,
24-25, 30 - 19: 3
Ps 86: 1-6
Mk 5: 21-43

The experiences from today's readings are like opposites. In one, a young person meets with disaster and his life is ended with spears, while in another instance a life ends in sickness but is restored through the authority and word of the Lord Jesus.

The Psalmist echoes a prayer of despair and then confidence imploring the Lord to give ear to his cry and yet in the end he says 'you will answer me'

We are asked to have confidence in the Lord. This was the confidence displayed by the people who approached the Lord Jesus for healing in their lives. They believed that in Him rested the power to give or take life. Do you believe that for everything that we face, the answer lies in the choice that our Saviour Jesus makes or in the people of this world, luck, chance and good times.

The leader of the synagogue Jairus, when faced with the approaching death of his daughter fell at the feet of the Lord Jesus begging him to intervene. Brokenness and hopelessness is good for us. It brings us to our feet. More importantly it should bring us to the feet of the Lord Jesus. The brokenness brings out an unparalleled beauty when channeled in the right way. Just an evening ago we were at the Cancer Hospital and for the first time I saw the ultramodern new wing. The person who built it Mr Ahmad had commissioned this magnificent edifice in memory of his only son who died of cancer. That deep brokenness led to the construction of such a beautiful well planned hospital which will serve the cancer patients of this country for years to come.

To have confidence in the Lord Jesus is to shut our ears to the cacophony of the outside world, sometimes the voices of our relatives and open our heart to the word of the Lord. The Lord Jesus told Jairus, 'Do not fear - only believe.' The Lord insisted that the place where the dead girl was, had to be cleared of all who were unbelieving and hostile to His word. He took only those who trusted in His word and then spoke life into the body of the dead girl. Today let's choose our friends and prayer partners from among those who only believe and do not fear the raging waves around we will begin to see miracles.

Prayer: Abba Father, I choose to believe, I believe in your mighty word. Amen

God's vision is one of equality!

2Sam 24: 2, 9-17

Ps 32: 1-7

Mk 6: 1-6

In today's Gospel proclamation we see how the self-centred world divides and ranks people not only on the basis of their race or religion, it also ranks them on the basis of how rich or poverty stricken they are, from what sort of family they come from, what work they do and similar criteria. This is totally against God's vision that all people are equal and the same to him, the only difference being he makes a preferential option or takes the side of the poverty stricken people because a wicked world has put them into a poverty trap. That is why Christ Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount compared God's love to the Sun. Similarly God's love is equally available to all people but how much of it we get depends on how much we cooperate with Him by seeking and doing His will. More than 90 percent of the power comes from God to all people but 10 percent of our journey with Him and our experience of His positive energy and power depend on how much we obey His word and act according to His will.

In John 15 the Lord Jesus says we are the branches and He is the Vine. The Father is the vinedresser. When we live in Him or remain in Him as the Lord remains in us, we bear much fruit for the kingdom. How do we do that? How do we remain in Him? The Lord Jesus Himself gives the answer by saying, "You will remain in me as I remain in you when you love one another as I love you," John 15:12.

In the era of the Lord Jesus there were essentially nine classes in society. The rich and ruling class, the rich class who tragically included religious leaders, the middle class to whom the family of the Lord Jesus belonged, the farmers, the shepherds and the widows and orphans and at the bottom the itinerants. The Lord Jesus, when He began His mission, willingly and voluntarily declassified Himself from number three to the last. That is why He said, "foxes have holes and birds have nests but the son of man has no place to rest His head,". He had no house, no wallet or travelling bag but even today more than 2300 million people believe Him, follow Him and do what He tells us to do. Let us also pray for the power of the Holy Spirit to see all people in the same way and not measure them according to their social status. That is a grave sin in eyes of God.

Prayer: Abba Father may we allow you to unite us so that we will all be one, just as the Holy Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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