The devil is afraid of us when we pray and make sacrifices. He is also afraid when we are humble and good. He is especially afraid when we love Jesus very much. He runs away when we make the Sign of the Cross.

St. Anthony of Padua

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On Our Knees In His Hands

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Friday 1st June  
St. Justin, Martyr

What evidence do we have of our relationship with Christ?

Firstly, it’s necessary to remind ourselves that “the end. is near” (1 Peter 4:7). We live in a culture that is spoiled. Many people “put in” their time at work so they can live it up on the weekend and do all the things they want to do and we Christians, sometimes fall into the same trap.

How do I spend my time? What is the quality of my life? What impact do I make with my life? What are the things I do that don’t really matter much in light of eternity? The truth is we make time for the things that really matter to us, the things that are priorities in our lives.

Secondly, St. Peter tells us to “..be alert and sober of mind that we may pray.” To be sober is to have a clear and sound mind. It is all too easy to get out of touch with what is real nowadays with the huge influence of the mass media and the entertainment industry. Many of us are glued to our TV sets during our free time. Our kids are exposed to cartoons that are disturbing and inappropriate. Our youth are addicted to social media sites and games. In one game called Carmaggedon, the player is supposed to drive a virtual car to knock down virtual people. By the time they reach the highest level of the game, they would have run over and killed 33,000 pedestrians!

Prayer is the last thing on our minds. Can we bear fruit without prayer? The fruit of the fig tree generally appears before the leaves. Therefore, when Jesus and His disciples saw from a distance that the tree had leaves, they would have expected it to also have fruit on it. Symbolically, the fig tree represents God’s people. Outwardly, many of us have the appearance of Christians. We are religious in the sense that we observe all the external rites and rituals. But internally, we are spiritually barren and dead. What fruit do we have to show in our lives? We are as addicted and lukewarm as non believers. The Lord denounces unfruitful “Christians”, those who profess to be Christian but have no evidence of a relationship with Christ.

St. James later confirms this truth, that “faith without works is dead” (James 2:26). The lesson of the fig tree is that we should bear spiritual fruit (Galatians 5:22-23) and not just give an appearance of religiosity.

Prayer: Abba Father, give us the grace to do away with that which clutters our life in order that we may invest in building our relationship with You. Amen.
The letter of Jude is a beautiful instruction about keeping people focused on the right beliefs free from false teachings. It is believed that this work of the Holy Spirit would help us to appreciate the Gospels and other writings of the apostles better. This is a passionate warning to the believers whose faith is under attack. It is a call to persevere - we are called to be a people of mercy. But that mercy is mixed with wisdom, so that tenderness, truthfulness and humility mark our ministry to those struggling with their faith and those who still do not believe. There is a strong call to persevere in the integral faith of the apostles.

This is the same call we have today as well. Looking back, our lives are filled with so much worldliness that the Holy Spirit is far removed and has no space to operate. We live our lives totally governed and controlled by our minds- doing things we want to do and arranging it always for our own personal comfort and satisfaction. Justifying everything we do whether it is right or wrong and living self-centered lives with Jesus tucked in a corner. We are unable to experience the freedom the Holy Spirit can bring into our lives and the ultimate love, peace and joy.

In the Gospel proclamation likewise we see Jesus’s authority being questioned by the religious leadership of that time. They were not ready to recognise that Jesus had come from God. They only thought of defending what was acceptable to them. And before even listening to him, held him to be subversive. This is why the Lord asks them about John the Baptist. The preaching of John the Baptist was the most important happening in the previous two years and the Priests should have taken a stand against John. They had not done it nor were they ready to do it. How could they make demands on Jesus if they spoke out only when it suited them? Jesus’s attitude obliges Religious Leaders of all times to see if they deserve to have others respect their declaration and condemnation. Only a surrendered life can have the Holy Spirit living within - like the psalmist’s cry from deep within. ‘My soul thirsts for you and my whole being longs for you because your love is better than life my lips will glorify you’. This is the thirst that only he can satisfy.

Prayer: Lord Jesus give us the grace to love and be loved so that we will make a difference in this world we live, through the power of your Holy Spirit. Amen.
Today the Church celebrates the feast of the most holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a day where we reflect on the sacrifice Christ made for us in giving up His body and blood. Not only did He sacrifice Himself for us, but this same body and blood is given to us as food and drink so that we may have communion with Him and He may live inside us.

In Genesis 15:10 onwards God makes a covenant with Abraham. Abraham is asked to bring some animals to God to be sacrificed. Abraham cuts each animal in two, except the birds and arranges the halves opposite each other. Then as the sun was settling God put Abraham to sleep. Verse 17-18 says, “When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces. On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram and said, “To your descendants I give this land.” God gave Abraham a promise and signed it with the sacrifice of the blood from the animals. Within this covenant, God was telling Abraham that even if he broke the covenant, God would never break it. Abraham did nothing at the signing of this covenant—he was asleep! God is telling Abraham that even when he is sleeping and weak and helpless, God will see that the covenant is fulfilled.

In today’s first reading, from the book of Exodus, the Israelites listen to all the commands and laws God has set for them and their response is “Everything the Lord has said we will do.” Moses builds an altar to the Lord and makes a covenant between God and the people through the blood of the sacrificed animals on the altar. Moses takes the blood of the animals, sprinkles it on the people and says, “This is the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words” (Ex. 24:8). He renews God’s covenant once again.

However, we know that throughout the centuries, the descendants of Abraham failed the Lord many times. Repeatedly they left the Lord and worshipped other gods. They could not keep their side of the deal and would flirt with sin. When things went wrong, they would come running back to the Lord and cry out to Him. Each time they called to the Lord in despair, He would answer them and save them. This kept happening over and again. God kept His promise to Abraham even though the people could not fulfill their end of the deal.
God’s solution to this never-ending problem was to sign a new covenant. This covenant was not signed by mere men, but by the blood of the Son of God Himself. If you listen to the words of the mass it says, “The blood of the covenant…” This covenant was not made with animal blood but through the blood of Christ. Through His sacrifice on the cross, God’s promise to us is fulfilled.

What do we receive from this covenant made through the blood of Christ? We first receive forgiveness of sins. Many of us may find it difficult to fathom that our sins can be forgiven by God. Secondly, through the blood of Christ we receive communion with God. We receive His presence within us and we are guided by Him.

In St. Paul’s letter to the Hebrews, he says that Christ is the High Priest who has passed through a sanctuary more noble and perfect than the sanctuary in the temple made by human hands. He did not use the blood of animals but entered this sanctuary through His own blood once and for all. We do not need another blood sacrifice or covenant to be made again, because the sacrifice Christ made on the cross is the ultimate sacrifice. By His body and blood, we are set free from sin and death and united to Him. St. Paul goes on to say in verse 13, “The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctifies them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!” If God could have cleansed the Israelites through the sacrifice of animals as burnt offerings, how much more will the blood of Christ cleanse us? When we are cleansed through the partaking of the body and blood of Christ at mass, we are also separated from acts that may bring us death. Hence, can serve God better.

How can we make this experience real in our lives? How can the mass change us? It is through faith which connects us with this act of bread becoming the body of Christ and wine becoming the blood of Christ made at each mass. When we believe what the scriptures say in today’s Gospel proclamation about the Lord Jesus changing the bread into His body and wine into His blood, this experience becomes real within us. When we receive the body and blood of Christ, it will no longer just be a piece of bread or a sip of wine for us. It will be the body that was nailed on the cross from the forgiveness of our sins. It will be the blood that flowed from the chest of our Saviour that makes us whiter than snow once again.

Prayer: Abba Father, I pray for the faith to believe that when I receive your Son’s precious body and blood, all my sins are forgiven, and You live within me. Amen.
Monday 4th June

9th Week in Ordinary Time

*His divine power has given us everything we need for life*  
2 Peter 1:3

If there is one passage of Scripture that should be treasured in our hearts, to be recalled not only in moments of crisis, physical, mental or spiritual, but right throughout our lives - it is this passage from St. Peter’s letter “His Divine power” has given us Everything we need - “the extraordinary promises” sharing in his divine nature - What more could we ask for? It is a mind-boggling passage, difficult to believe in. But the Holy Spirit will surely enable us to hold fast to the truths it presents. The knowledge of Christ has been described as the Master Sign which brings the grace we need and the peace that every human heart longs for. It is not knowledge from books or people, but received as a gift from God Himself, revealed in a personal intimate relationship with Him. What power, what generosity and most of all, what a loving gift of sharing in His Divine nature!

In the Gospel proclamation we see ‘the Everything’ that God has done for his chosen people. He has entrusted the kingdom to us and expects us to be examples. God represents the owner of the vineyard. The cultivators were the rulers, the prophets were the servants and the Lord Jesus Himself was the Son. We see the generosity of God, His trust in His people. His patience in giving us chances to respond to His love. What is our response to a God who has said “Let me sing to my beloved a love song about his vineyard” (Ish 5:1-4)? We struck and killed the servants, even his own son. This parable refers to the Lord Jesus who became the keystone, even the kingdom itself. Those who reject Him will have to face the terrible justice of God. Praise be to God “we are recipients - the others - who are given the vineyard.”

Does the latter part of St. Peter’s letter seem too onerous to be performed? The good news is that what we cannot achieve by self effort, the Holy Spirit will do. Since His chose people failed to obey His commandments He sent our Lord Jesus who became the perfect fulfilment of the commandments. The Lord’s command was that we love as does. When we accept Him as the Lord of our lives and experience His unconditional love we will be able to climb this ladder of perfection and touch God’s love. Our mission is to establish an intimate relationship with Him.

*Prayer: Abba Father, let me be filled with the Holy Spirit every moment, so that I can live in your love. Amen*
Today’s first reading is taken from the second letter of St. Peter. In his second letter he writes about Christian growth, warns about false prophets and gives the assurance about the second coming of the Lord Jesus. Chapter 3 deals with Jesus’ second advent where he instructs the believers how we should conduct ourselves, and what our attitude should be, in view of the second coming of Christ. 2 Peter 3:14 says “Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish;” a call for repentance, to turn away from our wicked ways to run to Him where He is waiting to embrace us with His mercy and grace. Henri Nouwen writes “to turn to God means to return to God with all that I am and all that I have. As the story of the prodigal son, I tried to experience myself in the embrace of the Father, I suddenly felt a certain resistance to being embraced so fully and totally. I experienced not only a desire to be embraced, but also a fear of losing independence. But I realised that God’s love is a jealous love. He wants not just a part of me, but all of me. Only when I surrender myself completely to God’s parental love can I expect to be free from endless distractions, ready to hear the voice of love, and able to recognise my own call.”

It is to know that every time we decide to return to Him and surrender ourselves fully into His hands; we are made whole once again. He heals our brokenness, weaknesses and fills us with His love and joy. There is a saying “I’m glad Jesus never says, “This is the last time I’ll put you back together.” This is the hope we have. Despite our sinfulness He still loves us. He never gives up on us. As the famous song “Amazing grace” says we are broken and scattered into pieces but in His mercy He gathers and puts us together and in Him we are free from our bondages and sinfulness. “Our sins are many, but His mercy is more.” Let us hold onto this amazing truth and return to Him with a heart of repentance knowing, in Him we find redemption Saint Boniface, Bishop and Martyr has been called “Apostle to the Germans.” He was born in England and until his forties he was a Benedictine monk. Afterwards he was sent to Germany as a missionary. Christianity was under threat. Pope George 11 appointed him an archbishop. He worked towards restoring the religion.

Prayer: Abba Father, I come to you with a heart of repentance and I surrender myself into your hands to be loved by you. Amen!
These words of St. Paul spoken to Timothy are words spoken to us today. God has not chosen us to be cowards. God has not given us a spirit of cowardice but power, love and self-control. Our existence in this world today is because God had desired us to live. God’s desire is for us to live in power and love.

Our Lord Jesus paid a huge price for us to live in power and love. God has called us into holiness and this was God’s initial plan for the human race. Sin came in between God and creation. With the passion, death and resurrection (Paschal Mystery) this gap between God and creation was bridged. Therefore we are called by name into a holy life by the power of the Paschal Mystery of our Lord Jesus. If we think that we are called into mission or holy life according to our life conduct, we should get our mind in order by accepting the free gift of Salvation by the power of the Paschal Mystery. This is what St. Paul said to Timothy. According to St. Paul, Timothy was called by God even before the time began and those words apply to us today.

There is a misconception among a certain group of people even today about what happens to a person or his/her soul after death. At the time of our Lord Jesus those who had a question about the resurrection included the Sadducees. They came to inquire about this and the answer the Lord Jesus gave is relevant to the group of people today also. Though we think that we know it all in actual sense we do not know much. The danger is to have little knowledge of anything and behave as if we know it all. The question regarding the resurrection and what happens to a person or the soul of a person after death is nothing complex because when the mortal remains are displayed the person’s spirit continues to live. The question is not what happens to the spirit or soul but where would it go to?

St. Norbert, Bishop, was called by God into Sainthood. Coming from a wealthy family he was subjected to the vices of this world. But after a powerful encounter with Christ Jesus his lifestyle changed completely and he lived the life that he was called to. This is what St. Paul said to Timothy too. We need to live in the awareness that our life here on earth is the stepping stone for us to go back to the heart of God.

*Prayer: Abba Father, grant me grace to live in power, love and self-control to portray you on earth and enter eternal life. Amen*
Thursday 7th June

Love the Lord your God!

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’[c] There is no commandment greater than these.” Mark 12:30-31.

In today’s Gospel proclamation the Lord Jesus says that the greatest commandment is to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength; and that the second is to love our neighbour as our self. Upon reading this we should be asking ourselves, “is this how I love?” Are these commandments the ones with which I am living my life?

This first commandment deals with how we relate to God. Are we really giving all that we have to Him? What does it even mean to love Him with all our heart, soul, mind and strength? Well, since we are human, we have four main areas that make us precisely human; physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual. Jesus, being both fully God and fully human, understood these four dimensions all too well. By having four areas that make us up, this commandment is telling us to love God with everything that we have. We are to hold nothing back, we are to give our lives totally to God. We are to love Him with our bodies, with our intellect, with our heart and our feelings, and our own soul. God is the one who created us, He knows how we are and how we work, and He does n’o want us to hold anything back from Him. God wants us to be alive and prosperous in all aspects of our lives, and the only way to do that is to give all of ourselves to Him and surrender all that we have and all that we are.

We have to also remember that we are not simply called to love God, but we are also called to love our neighbor as ourselves. This means that no matter what those close to us may do or say, we are still called to love them as ourselves. It is these two commandments which our Lord says are the greatest, we would do well to listen and follow both of them. While it is certainly not easy, following both of these commandments can lead to a freedom on this earth and an eternity in heaven with our Father.

Prayer: Abba Father, you have shown us that love for you and love for people are at the heart of your kingdom. Help me to walk in the way of love today. Amen.
Not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. 

Ishaiah 12: 2-6
Eph 3: 8-12, 14-19
John 19: 31-37

Friday 8th June

Heart of Jesus, Heart of Jesus, burning with love for me. Inflame my heart, inflame my heart, with love, with love for thee.’ As it is sung in this hymn of old, author unknown and composer unknown, the Sacred Heart of Jesus is still burning with love for us. Let us cry out to the Holy Spirit today to inflame our hearts with the love of God to reciprocate to His unfathomable love for us.

The loving heart of God is beautifully described by Hosea in today’s first reading. As I meditate through the lines in Hosea, I remember it is God who drew me out of sin, out of my Egypt, He loved me and called me, His child out of Egypt. He took me in His arms and raised me as an infant to His cheeks and taught me to walk according to His word and His ways. In Hosea 11,4 God says, ‘Yet, though I stooped to feed my child, they did not know that I was their healer.’ As the people of Israel, I too have, again and again forgotten that God was my healer and turned away from His love.

But God did not turn away from the world. The New Testament says He sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Today by the suffering, death, resurrection of the Lord Jesus and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, we can live a victorious life. Yet, we behave like the people of Israel. Again and again we forget that it is God who healed us, restored us and gave us a new life and yet we turn away from the love of God. He has blessed us abundantly. We hide from God thinking that God will take away from us our puny pleasures and we live defeated lives even though all what we are and all what we have is from God.

Romans 5, 5 says, God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom He has given us. In today’s second reading St. Paul says, that it is through the Spirit that we can grasp, how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ and know this love that surpasses knowledge and be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. It is only when we are filled by the Holy Spirit that we can love God and people. “Lord, we come as we are, we repent for following our own ways and the ways of the world....today we lift up our lives to you in total surrender. Fill us Lord with your Holy Spirit.”

Prayer, Abba Father, You are my savior. I am confident and unafraid. My strength and courage is from you. Amen.
Saturday 9th June

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race,
I have kept the faith.”

2 Timothy 4:7

In the first reading today St. Paul speaks of the end of his lifetime here on earth as he looks forward to be adorned with the crown of righteousness. How many of us today could look back in life and say the same words that St. Paul tells Timothy? “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.”

St. Paul in his teaching gives us a clue on what we need to do to fight this good fight and lay claim to the crown of righteousness. He urges us to preach the word, boldly, in season and out of season and whether reproving, rebuking or advising, do it with patience.

He further warns us of what is to come, which is valid even for today. People will not endure sound doctrine but will follow their own passions and abandon the truth. Then, St. Paul says “Be prudent and do not mind your labour, and fulfill your ministry”

In the Gospel proclamation today we see the Child Jesus who is only 12 years of age, understanding the importance of carrying out His ministry. When the Blessed mother’s immaculate heart was pierced in sorrow at the loss of her beloved Son for three days, and she asks the Lord why He did this to them, the Lord Jesus tells her “Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?” The Lord knew His ministry from the beginning and fulfilled it to perfection when He redeemed the world from sin and condemnation.

What is your Ministry? What have you been called to do for the glory of the Kingdom of God? Let us ponder deep today and follow the example of the Lord Jesus and the instructions of St. Paul.

In order to fulfill our ministry calling and run the race we are called to, let us look to the graces through the Immaculate Heart of Mary whose feast we celebrate today. Her heart and body was sinless and she was prevented from committing sin. We can be assured that when we ask for her intercession to keep us away from every sin that blocks our path to carry out our ministry calling, she will surely come to our aid.

Prayer: Abba Father, give us the grace to win your crown of righteousness in heaven and the courage to live our calling in boldness, here on earth, Amen!
Today’s First Reading proves the unchanged nature of human beings since Creation. Adam blamed Eve for his fault and indirectly put the blame on God too, when he said, “The woman You put here with me…” (Genesis 3:12); and Eve blamed the serpent. Don’t we do the same even now? Whenever things go wrong, it’s often the other person’s fault, it may be at home, work or church. Our built-in self defense mechanism springs up into action, defending ourselves, putting the blame on another.

This lack of right discernment, which led the first humans to commit the grave sin of pride and disobedience, is evident again in today’s Gospel Reading. Even the Lord Jesus’ family members failed to understand Him. They thought He was out of His mind and went to take charge of Him. The teachers of the Law who had come from Jerusalem had a terribly wrong understanding too, giving an evil undertone to the wonderful healing and deliverance ministry of our Lord Jesus. In short, those who had lived and associated with Lord Jesus since His childhood actually did not know Him. The learned and wise men of the world had no clue of who He was. They would have known what the Scripture said about the long awaited Messiah, but when the Messiah actually came, they could not recognise Him. They gave an identity to the Lord as they themselves understood with their stiff minds and hearts. As we ponder over these Readings, allowing the Holy Spirit to enlighten our minds and hearts, we need to realise that we are not much different to those people. We tend to think we know and understand everything and if we do not understand something, it is non-existent. It is not rare even today, to hear negative remark about the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, especially the Gift of Tongues and also Words of Knowledge. I personally know of many who had been in that category until by the grace of God, they themselves received the Gift of Tongues and received a healing through a Word of Knowledge. The Words of the Lord are clear, as He says, “whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven” (cf Mark 3:29)

The Lord makes another very strange remark as He says “Whoever does God’s will is my brother and sister and mother.” (Mark 3:35) One may ask what has obedience got to do with relationships. Yet, the Church stresses the vital importance of ‘obedience’ in the life of a Christian. The first parents, Adam and Eve refused to obey God, and
listened to the lie of satan and desired to become equal with God who created them and gave them a life of abundance. By the time they realised that they were deceived, it was too late. They had to face the consequences of their decision and action and move out of the “garden of Eden” to toil and suffer. Yet at the appointed time, the Son of God willingly came to the earth as a human baby, born in a family who had the Grace to obey the will of God. Throughout His earthly life the Lord Jesus sought and obeyed the will of the Father, until the ultimate sacrifice of His life on a cursed cross as the price to be paid for the disobedience of humanity from the beginning of Creation till the end of time. In John 15:10, The Lord tells us the simple way to have a relationship with Him. “If you keep My commands, you will remain in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commands and remain in His love.” Hence it makes sense when the Lord tells the crowd that the one who obeys the will of God is His family.

As followers of Christ, it is important that we take a little time today to ask ourselves if we belong to His family or not. For we could be ‘doing’ a lot of ‘work’ for the Lord, but may not be considered as a member of His family if we do not seek and obey the will of the Heavenly Father in our day to day life. What is the Lord’s command for us? To love God above all else, and to love one another as Christ loves us. How did He love? He loved by washing the feet of those who were going to betray, deny and desert Him, and becoming ‘the sin’ for all of us. He loved by giving up His life for us, in obedience to the Father’s will.

Yet, the truth is that this is impossible by our self-effort or will, and will be just a wish unless the Holy Spirit empowers us to do so. In the Second Reading St Paul presents to us a profound truth in a simple manner. “Because we know that the One who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you to Himself” (2 Cor 4:14) It is this Power that we depend on, to be able to love others as the Lord Jesus loves us. We who have received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, and experience the indwelling of the Spirit in our hearts, receive the capacity to do the impossible, through faith in His Word. Therefore our lives will be free as we receive the peace and joy of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will open our inner eyes to see what is unseen, open our inner ears to hear the voice of God, and awaken our spirit to the truths of the Kingdom of God. Adam and Eve fixed their eyes on what was seen (the forbidden fruit) and fell into sin, but we, the People of Resurrection fix our eyes on eternal life, unseen by the world but made real by the Holy Spirit.

Prayer: Abba Father, You asked Adam and Eve, “Where are you”. You are The Father who comes after me too calling out my name and lifting me out of the mud, cleansing me and restoring me to the divine sonship. I thank You and praise You. Amen.
Monday 11th June

We are all called by the Lord

Today’s readings are all about taking the Good News of God to others. This is the mission each of us has been given. When I was first baptised by the Holy Spirit, I found that I wanted to tell everyone about my experience and the love of Christ. I would go for each youth meeting and every prayer meeting to soak up all I could and give this Good News to others I met. When I look back, I see that it flowed effortlessly from me, not because I was doing something from my strength or effort, but because the Lord was working within me through the Holy Spirit. Today He wants to work through you in the same way.

The first reading from the book of Acts tells us how the Holy Spirit spoke to the believers at Antioch and asked them to set apart Barnabas and St. Paul for Him. Luke 16:10 says, “Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much.” Both Barnabas and St. Paul were faithful to God in small things and therefore, the Lord had set them apart for something much greater.

In our lives, once we have met the Lord, He calls us to do small things for Him. When we see someone in need, the Lord calls us to share His love with them. When we see someone shunned or rejected, the Lord calls us to accept or befriend that person and love them. With each small act of love and kindness, we are fulfilling the mission of the Kingdom of God. The Gospel proclamation from St. Matthew tells us about the rules the Lord Jesus gives His disciples before sending them out. He says in verse 9-10, “Do not get any gold or silver or copper to take with you in your belts— no bag for the journey or extra shirt or sandals or a staff, for the worker is worth his keep.” When we do the mission of God, the Lord will start taking care of everything else. The Lord asks them not to take an extra shirt or sandals or staff because they will not have to meet their basic needs. For God will take care of their clothes, food and lodging. He asks them not to take a bag; for they do not need to store stuff up for the future. He asks them not to take gold or silver or copper because they need not depend on themselves. For God will provide everything they need.

Prayer: Abba Father, thank you for calling me to be Your disciple to the world. I pray for the grace to be able to spread Your Good News to all I meet today. Amen.
In today’s Gospel Proclamation the Lord is calling each of us to be the salt of the earth—to bring a Christian flavour to a bland world, running to meet the demands of life. To be salt is to be like Christ and live out His life. The Lord asks, “But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? (v. 13). As God’s people we are the salt of the earth. We are not told to become salty; we are challenged to stay salty. No matter what the problem or struggle, we are called to trust in God and keep believing in Him.

He also calls us to be the light of the world—to bring the light of Christ to a world in sin and darkness. The world is lost and without any direction. The Lord Jesus is the light and we are to reflect Him. As a Christian it is not enough to have private personal holiness; we must shine the holiness of God on others we meet.

In the first reading from the book of Kings, God calls the prophet Elijah to go to a village ravaged by famine and stay with a widow living there. This woman was preparing for the inevitable—the death of her son and herself. She had only a little flour and oil to make a final meal for them to eat before they died. But the Lord in His mercy chose her from all the people in her village to give a miracle to. As I read this miracle, I realised she would have been the salt of earth or the light in the darkness of the village and that is why the Lord sent the prophet directly to her. To bless her for her faithfulness to God. Logically she should not have agreed to give the last morsel of food she had left to the prophet for she had to think of her son and herself. But selflessly, she gives what she has, prepared to die without a last meal. The Lord rewards her faithfulness and obedience by performing a great miracle—an endless amount of flour and oil until the day rains returned to the village. Today the Lord is calling us to become like this widow. To trust that God will meet every need of our lives, even when logic tells us otherwise. This is how we can become the salt of the earth and the light to the world. To trust God is to praise Him in every circumstance. Psalm 148:5 says, “Let them praise the name of the Lord, for at his command they were created.” The Psalmist is even asking the sun, moon, skies, earth, angels and heavenly hosts to praise the Lord - the God of the impossible.

Prayer: Abba Father: I pray for the grace to trust You in everything; for when I do I shine Your light on a dark world. Amen.
Wednesday 13th June  

St. Anthony of Padua

“How long will you follow two ways at the same time?”

In the first reading from the first book of Kings today, we see the bondage of four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal living a life divided not recognising the true God. This narration brings us all a question today. Who are the false gods in our lives? Are we also divided in our love and serving of God.

We may be followers of the Lord Jesus and committed servers serving for many years in the community or parish councils and holding leadership positions in religious institutions but do we have our undivided loyalty in serving God? Do we live the word of God in which we are to “seek first the Kingdom of God and His Righteousness?”

As we reflect on the Gospel proclamation today, we see that what prevailed over the people of God in the times of the Old Testament still holds true. The Lord Jesus makes it known to the people in the New Testament era that He did not come to abolish the law and the prophets. What does it speaks to us today through the first reading? Even today, if any one of us will perish if knowing the truth we choose to believe and worship a false god. We may not necessarily die physically as the four hundred and fifty prophets but our souls will surely die a slow death and despite material comfort and worldly prosperity we will find ourselves with no true joy or satisfaction in life and no peace of mind.

Today is the feast of St. Anthony of Padua. Though he is known as the patron saint for lost articles and this has been a great consolation to many, he was a Saint with much greater purpose for the Kingdom of God. He was a renowned preacher. It is known that he was canonised just one year after his death and his body was found to be corrupt but his tongue was not, depicting how perfect the teachings that were formed through it. Once, when he attempted to preach the true Gospel to heretics who would not listen to him, he went out and preached his message to the fish for the glory of God. When the critics saw the fish begin to gather, they realized they should also listen to what he had to say. The Lord is calling all of us to boldness today like Prophet Elijah and St. Anthony of Padua to proclaim the Good News.

Prayer: Abba Father, Give me a boldness to follow and share the truth of your Kingdom at all times. Amen!
In the Gospel passage, Jesus speaks to us about “how love is to be among us”, the Pope explained. Jesus declared, “we must be just, we must love our neighbour, which is a problem these days”, Pope Francis indicated. However, he continued, “the legal experts”, who consider themselves “intelligent” and “good”, tell us “everything one has to do” but then they don’t do it themselves. This is why, in regard to those individuals, “Jesus says: do as they say, not as they do”. He says this “because they were inconsistent”.

They were people who “knew the first commandment was to love God; they knew the second was to love thy neighbour.” However, “they had many shades of meaning behind their ideas, because they were ideologues.” And “they worked out a series of distinctions on what it means to ‘love thy neighbour’.” In the end, they adopted a manner not of love but rather of “indifference toward thy neighbour.” So this is why Jesus urged the disciples to overcome this manner, which “isn’t justice but social equilibrium.” To do this, the Pope stated, Jesus advocated “three criteria”. The first is a “criterion of healthy realism.” Jesus said, “if you have something against another person, and you cannot resolve it”, it is important to “seek a solution”, find a way “to at least make an agreement. Make an agreement with an adversary while you’re on the move.” It may not be ideal, but “agreement is a good thing: it’s realism!” This is “life’s realism”, such that Jesus expressly suggested that we reach “an agreement while on the move, precisely to put a stop to the conflict and hate between us.” The second criterion from Jesus is “the criterion of truth”, the Pontiff explained. There is, in fact, the commandment not to kill; but bad-mouthing someone is also killing, because it’s rooted in hatred: you don’t have the courage to kill him or you think that would be too much, so you kill him in another manner, with gossip, slander, defamation.” The third of Jesus’ criteria is “kinship”. “We must not kill our brother”, the Pope stated, precisely because he is our brother: “we have the same father.” And, the Gospel instructs that “I cannot go to the father if I am not at peace with my brother.” Jesus says, in fact: “first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift”. Thus, the Lord recommends, “don’t talk with the father if you aren’t at peace with your brother” or you “at least have an agreement.

**Prayer:** Abba Father, Grant us the serenity and trust in you to accept things we cannot change and be open to their changing us. Amen
Friday 15th June

"After the fire a sound of sheer silence".

Over the past few months I was praying and discerning a major decision. In the beginning, guidance and leadings were received quickly. Doors were opened. The decision clearly appeared before us. In fact everything was set for the next step. But that next step is yet to be revealed. However, thereafter started a period of great silence. Things became calm and quiet. Sometimes, I wondered why God was so silent. First, there were many questions arising inside. It was not easy to live in this situation. Little by little, I realised that it is not that God was silent, but in this silence God was speaking to me. Things began to be clear. My previous understanding of the matter became more clear. The delay was not a delay anymore. It was God who was waiting on me.

It was not the wind, the earthquake, or the fire that drew Elijah out of his cave, it was that “sound of sheer silence.” He entered it, and it was then that God could have a true dialogue with this burnt-out prophet. There God encouraged Elijah to return to Israel and begin the second phase of his ministry. There are two things here. First is ‘you can hear silence’. The second is ‘silence is a voice that God uses to speak his word to people’. It may be nothing, utter and complete silence. Every one of us must have gone through this experience of silence. Things are getting delayed. Nothing is moving. Is God not answering your prayers? Wait…..do not conclude here. The Good Lord is inviting you to take a deep breath and hear the silence. God is speaking his word in the silence. Let us understand the quiet move of the Holy Spirit. Once Pope Benedict XVI said “silence can carve out an inner space in our very depths to enable God to dwell there, so that his word will remain within us and love for him take root in our minds and hearts and inspire our life”. St. Teresa of Calcutta said, “Souls of prayer are souls of great silence.” St. Adelaide was born in Schaerbeek, Belgium. She was placed in Cistercian convent from the age of seven. She contracted leprosy and was forced to live in isolation. In this period of silence and agonies she discovered that she was not alone. She found the Risen Christ within her. She received many graces, including visions, ecstasies and many miracles took place through her intercession.

Prayer: Abba Father, I am waiting to hear your word in this silent passage of my life. Grant me the grace to hear silence and your word. Thank you Jesus! Praise the Lord! Amen!
Elijah was directed by God to where his successor Elisha was. Elisha was not found praying, or secluded but he was plowing the field with his oxen. From the description given in the reading, Elisha appears to be from a wealthy family that owned lands, fields and oxen. Here God’s call was on a person who had everything in life and was well set for a domesticated future.

Elijah goes up to Elisha and casts his hairy coat on the back of Elijah thus transferring his anointing, call and blessing on Elisha. Elisha accepts it willingly. In a way, his heart was immediately touched. His only request was to bid his parents adieu and then proceed with his mentor.

But Elisha does something strange if not definite. He slaughters his oxen and offers the people around a grand feast of the cooked meat. Even the plow is not spared and provides the wood for the fire. What Elisha did is a lesson for us. When he recognised the call of God over his life, he makes a definite way forward and closes the door back to his old life. He joyfully destroys the tools of his trade making it impossible for a return to his old life. Just imagine if Peter and his other mates burnt the boats and nets when they accepted the call of the Lord Jesus.

Today, the Gospel proclamation asks us about the vows and promises we make. We are encouraged not to make empty promises and not to swear by the powers of Heaven. Instead, we must be able to say a definite ‘yes’ or a ‘no’ in answer to what we can do or not do.

If the Lord has called you out of an old life and placed a call in the depths of your heart, this is the day to burn the past or any tools that make it possible to return to the old life. If we search our lives we may have to burn old books, DVDs, destroy telephone numbers, ways of living, methods of doing business and behaviour patterns. Let us allow the Holy Spirit to search our hearts and reveal to us if we are wavering in our loyalty and love for the Lord. We have experienced that this commitment is sealed by the Baptism of the Holy Spirit which makes our commitment complete and seals us in the love of God.

Prayer: Abba Father, you have called us by name and taken us forward to live in love with your Son Jesus. We pray for the determination of Elisha. Amen
Cedar Trees were majestic trees and were the pride of Lebanon. So much so that even today the flag of Lebanon proudly sports a Cedar Tree at its center. Cedar trees were used in the construction of the Temple by Solomon. However, during ancient times these majestic trees grew only on the mountains of Lebanon and not in Israel. In today’s first reading, the Lord is proclaiming, that He will take a shoot from a Cedar tree and plant it on a high mountain in Israel. He says that this tree will grow to become the largest of trees, and many birds of the air would come to nest and rest on its branches.

Israel is not a natural habitat for Cedar trees. By right, when planted on a mountain in Israel, they should wither and die. With luck and care, they may grow to a reasonable size, but never to the heights as described in the word picture of today’s first reading. The Lord speaks to me. When the Lord does something, natural resources, or the lack of it, is not an obstacle. He will supernaturally provide. Not only will the work of the Lord (the Cedar Tree) be blessed, but those around (the birds of the air) will also reap blessings.

As I look into my heart, I see a Cedar Tree planted within. When I was 15 years old, I went through an experience, which I can only call a conversion experience. God came alive to me that day and a flame was ignited in my heart. Growing up as a teenager with raging hormones I grew up looking up to worldly role models. Being in a University surrounded by intellectuals who took pride in being rational thinkers made me feel small because I believed in God, just like an adult sees a kid who believes in Santa Claus. The Cedar of Lebanon was surely planted in the non-hospitable environment of a mountain in Israel. I am sure that you too live among people who act as though God does not exist; a Cedar planted on a mountain in Israel. A Cedar that God tends to, and promises to bless, so that it will thrive and be a source of blessing to the weary who need rest and support. Something that seems unlikely, but something that God promises us.

As I read today’s Gospel proclamation, I realise that the flame that God ignited in my heart when I was 15, was the Kingdom of God. All too often my heart is ruled by fear; fear of the future, fear of mean people in authority, fear of adverse circumstances, fear of pain, sickness and death. During such times I live in the Kingdom of Fear. At
other times, I live in the Kingdom of Desire, the Kingdom of Addiction, and the Kingdom of Regret. It is into this mess that the Kingdom of God enters and competes for territory within my heart.

Today’s Gospel reading paints two beautiful word pictures illustrating how the territory of His Kingdom expands. Using the parable of the seed that is sown, He reveals that the Kingdom of God has a life of its own. We may not have power over the kingdoms of fear, desire, addiction, and regret.

The good news is that the Kingdom of God has the propensity and power to expand. It is a characteristic of the seed, not of the ground. Using the parable of the mustard seed, the Lord reveals that at first, the kingdom appears to be too small to be of any significance. However, it will grow, so much so, that others will find solace and rest.

To the laborers of the Kingdom, the story reveals that their job is to sow the seed and leave the rest to the Lord. I have heard so many testimonies of people coming for our prayer meetings, and once they go back home, a word that they heard starts haunting them. Sometimes the word is echoed in their dreams, bringing about conversions and breakthroughs that would not be possible by mere human words.

As the Kingdom of God expands its territory within our heart, we swing from one kingdom to another.

Today’s second reading describes the struggle within us as each kingdom battles for supremacy. At times it may appear that the Kingdom of God is in the vane, that it is powerless against the Kingdom of the Flesh. But St. Paul exhorts us not to believe what we see, perceive or feel, but walk in faith rather than sight, believing that the Kingdom of God has the power to conquer and overcome.

What should we do while each kingdom competes for our heart? Today’s responsorial psalm gives us the key. Every time we succumb to the Kingdom of the flesh we return to the Kingdom of God; coming to Him as we are and giving Him the truth of our hearts. We then claim that his promises are true and that He is faithful to what He promised. As an act of faith, we thank him and praise him. As we keep our eyes on him, away from our weaknesses and circumstances, the Kingdom of God dawns upon us.

Prayer: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done in my life and circumstances as it is in heaven. Amen
Monday 18th June

11th Week in Ordinary Time

“Give when asked and do not turn your back on anyone”

In the first reading today, we see King Ahab making a scene because he was not given what he asked for. In fairness he did offer Naboth a good deal – he was willing to give a better vineyard or pay for its worth – a very fair offer. But Naboth had every right to say no – King Ahab just was not used to being denied anything. So he sulked and complained and ultimately gained what he wanted through cruel and dishonest means. One could argue that it was not him who did the evil, that it was all Jezebel’s doing but the truth is that his inability to accept denial, his grossly inflated sense of his self worth and rights led to the death of an innocent man and incurred the wrath of God on his descendants.

It is so easy to judge Jezebel and Ahab for being cruel people but when I look closer into the ways of my own heart and mind, the truth is that I am no different from them. How often do I make the lives of those around me miserable simply because someone refused me something I wanted or because I did not get my way? How often do I bad mouth those who serve alongside me simply because they do not seem to appreciate me the way I think I should be appreciated? Not only that but how often do I react quickly or jump to conclusions in the righteous defence of those that I love and get myself and them into a hard place instead of waiting on God for justice? Time and time again, I and my big mouth have been a Jezebel in the lives of those that I cherish, risking the hand of God moving against their lives simply because I did not have the patience to wait on God.

In the Gospel proclamation today, the Lord Jesus gives the solution to this. It is not an eye for an eye. It is not logical or sensible but rather, Jesus teaches us about mercy and grace. It is not about what I deserve, my self-worth or even indeed what the other person deserves but it is simply doing good regardless of the circumstances. We get a glimpse of the Father’s heart through this teaching – of the completely extravagant, illogical and outrageous way He loves us. The hard part is that He then invites us to behave in a similar way towards our brothers and sisters.

Prayer: Abba Father, help me today to imitate Your mercy and Your grace in my every day life and relationships. May I decrease today and You increase in me so that Your goodness and Your light shine out of my life. Amen
In today’s reading we see how God tells Elijah to go and tell Ahab the king what the Lord is going to do for the many sinful acts he had committed due to the influence of his wife. We read that Ahab had murdered Naboth an owner of a vineyard and taken possession of his land. “Have you killed and taken possession at the same time” (1 Kings 21:19).

As soon as the king hears and realises that a great disaster is going to come upon him he immediately repents by tearing his clothes and putting on sack cloth and moves around despondently. Due to this the Lord spares his life but not his wife and descendants to come. As we read the scripture we see how Ahab fell into sin and was judged by God. The reason for him to fall into these sinful acts were due to the influence of Jezebel his wife who was a worshiper of Baal. “There was never a man like Ahab who sold himself to do evil in the eyes of the Lord” (1 Kings 21:25).

The reading teaches us that we need to be very careful with whom we associate with on a daily basis because all of us are human and we can be easily influenced. It is scientifically proven that you become an average of the five closest people you associate with. The 1st reading is a perfect example on how you should not choose your life partner. The person who you are going to spend the rest of your life has a role to play whether you will end up in Heaven or Hell. You cannot afford to lose your soul due to worldly infatuations that will last only for a few years. It is not only you who will suffer the consequences but your children and everyone around you. I know a friend of mine who married this girl who did not believe in God. My friend strongly believed that after marriage he would somehow convince her and make her a believer of Christ and later get the children baptized. But once they got married little by little he too drifted away and now both of them are on the “No God boat”. The word of God in Psalms 14:1 says, the fool says to himself that there is no God. But personally I believe anyone who marries someone who does not believe in God is also a fool because he is risking eternity for just one person even though he/she will only live with the person for a maximum of 70 – 80 years.

Prayer: Abba Father, give us the grace to discern the people you want us to have in our life. Amen.
Elijah passed on the prophetic mission of the Israelites to Elisha. God calls different people to different purposes according to His plan and Will. We see the end of Elijah’s prophetic mission and the beginning of Elisha’s mission. Who is a prophet? A prophet is a person who speaks and acts on behalf of the Divine. Therefore when a person is selected and called by God to be a prophet for Him, that person should hear the voice of God. A prophet called by Divine will speak and act on behalf of God.

Normal ordinary people are handpicked by God for different purposes. In the mission of God on earth certainly all human persons need gifts from above. The Spirit which was upon Elijah was given in twofold to Elisha for the continuation of the mission of God. Though the accurate prophecies are spoken and acted by human persons they are certainly not superior to God who is the controller and giver of all gifts; something to grasp and be mindful of.

There are two worlds operating in the system of human beings. They are the five senses and the tangible world alongside the sixth sense and intangible world. When we are called to be in the mission of God, unknowingly we come across that these two worlds which are at work powerfully and forcefully.

In the Gospel proclamation the Lord Jesus spoke of this difference with clarity. The world inside us is the boardroom where we have the conference with the Divine. In the conference room within us our God guides us on say what to speak/act and what we shouldn’t. The problem is what is said in the privacy of our heart is acted or spoken by us to the outside world. The outside world does not know the interior boardroom within us and what God has spoken to us. But they only see what God’s chosen man/woman does or says in the outside and come to the conclusion that God’s chosen people are powerful people. Hence they give unnecessary attention, which actually destroy God’s chosen people. In their human weakness God’s chosen people sometimes treasure the outside glory. The Lord Jesus invited us to carefully move into the inner boardroom and forget about the outward glory. God will exalt us in due time.

Prayer: Abba Father, may the Holy Spirit become tangible to us, so that we can cherish our intimacy with you. Amen.
Today’s first reading is taken from the Book of Sirach, also known as Ecclesiasticus where the author writes about two great prophets in the Old Testament; Elijah and Elisha. What can we learn from the life of Elijah? Elijah was used by God during an important time in Israel’s history to stand against a wicked king and bring revival to the land. One of his greatest remarkable works includes the end of Baal worship in Israel. The name ‘Elijah’ means “my God is the Lord,” came from Tishbe in Gilead, but details about his family or birth are not known. 1 Kings chapter 17 introduces Elijah to us where he stands before king Ahab and makes a prophesy about the drought that was about to come as a results of Ahab’s evil works. From there God told him to go to a brook and stay. When the drought deepened He was directed to go to a city where he met a widow where God provides food for Elijah, the woman and her son. Miraculously, the widow’s barrel of flour and jar of oil never run out (1 Kings 17:8–16). Here we learn that if we walk in fellowship with the Lord and obey Him, we’re open to His will where He fulfills all of our needs, and His mercy to us never runs short. On the other hand, we also see Elijah’s human nature. Despite the great victory over Baal and all the false prophets Elijah entered a period of wavering faith and depression when he heard that Jezebel; wife of King Ahab vowed to kill him. We experience the same in our lives. At times we are bold and decisive, and at other times fearful and tentative. But a continuous inner journey with the Lord conquers our weaknesses, brokenness and opens us up to His Kingdom.

In today’s Gospel proclamation, the Lord teaches us His prayer. It is the prayer of intimacy with the Father, revealing that the Father knows everything before we even ask and He provides us with His riches. It’s the prayer about the confidence, and trust we place in our Father. St. Aloysius Gonzaga, religious, patron saint of youth who was born in Italy. It is said that first words he spoke were the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary. He was destined for military life by his father however, at the age of 18 he joined religious life. It is also marked that he made a vow of perpetual virginity and he did not look on the faces of woman. Though illness prevented him from full social life he spent much time in prayer and died at the age of 23.

Prayer: Abba Father, I want to thank you for Your constant love and presence in my life. Amen!
Friday 22nd June

“Prayer: Abba Father, I desire to do your will alone. I am free only in your will.
Give me the grace and love I need to do your will today. Amen.”

Psalm 132:14

We may have come across the Gospel proclamation of today so many times in our lives. We may also know it by heart and when things go wrong in the worldly sense and out of our control we may be repeating it to ourselves: “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.” - Matthew 6: 19-20

Psalm 132: 11-18

We may have come across the Gospel proclamation of today so many times in our lives. We may also know it by heart and when things go wrong in the worldly sense and out of our control we may be repeating it to ourselves: “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.” - Matthew 6: 19-20

It is sometimes easy to fall into God’s way when things do not seem to go our way. This is because we actually do not have any other choice other than to rely on God’s providence. But what is really hard to do is to store up treasures of heaven when we are surrounded with the treasures of earth. Treasures of earth may seem more real to us than the treasures of the heaven. Why do we accumulate things? Is it for our comfort, security, pleasure, status or desire? At some point we realise that earthly treasures do not give us love nor security. Only God can give us true security. Our greatest need is love: love from God.

The Lord Jesus addresses our problem when we go behind worldly things: “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also”. -Matthew 6: 21. By doing so, we may loose the love we have had for God as we cannot serve both God and money at the same time. We encounter this struggle everyday in our lives. It is a decision we are called to make daily. To choose between earthly and heavenly treasures? What seems more closer to us today? Let us decide to choose God. Jesus Christ is our Saviour and He alone suffices. If we have Him, we will have everything we need. Can we make His word alive in our hearts today? In the 1st Reading and Psalms today we see how our God is faithful to the end. “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 55:11 If we hold on to His promises and seek Him daily, we can be sure He will be with us and in us. Only a relationship with God can bring us to this understanding and awareness of His presence in our day-to-day lives.

Prayer: Abba Father, I desire to do your will alone. I am free only in your will.
Give me the grace and love I need to do your will today. Amen.
In the first reading today from the book of 2 Chronicles we see the sin of the Judaeans. They abandon the House of Yahweh, the God of their ancestors and starts worshiping idols. The word of God here speaks of the anger of God with His people. He makes known to His people that they cannot prosper while being disobedient to God and His commandments.

In the Gospel proclamation today the Lord Jesus reiterates when it is proclaimed that no one can serve two masters for he will either hate one and love the other, or he will be loyal to the first and look down on the second.

The Lord specifically speaks of the follies of serving two masters. God and money. We become slaves to money due to our own insecurities about the future. Recently I was led to take a decision to take time off from work from a high position and a good income. I asked the Lord what am I to do if I leave work and either I or a family member falls seriously ill and has to be hospitalized for now I will have no insurance cover? And immediately the Lord reminds me – have you not lived more than half your life now? Have I ever let you be hospitalized? Have I not taken care of your needs always? I repented immediately for doubting the providence that comes from the Father above and depending on my own abilities.

For some, money is the only god as their whole life and time is spent on earning and acquiring material comforts. We know money in itself is not evil and there is no harm in living a comfortable life but the love of money is the root of all evil. (1 Timothy 6:10) The word of God further says that in their greed, some have wandered away from their faith bringing them many sorrows.

Therefore we clearly understand the teachings of the Lord on being slaves to money. It causes us daily anxieties that bring mental and physical strain. Instead we are to at all time to seek the Kingdom of God first and His Righteousness. And the Lord gives us an everlasting promise that when we seek Him first everything else will be added unto us.

Prayer: Abba Father, today remove from my heart the sin of greed that I may crave not for material things but the love and intimacy of God, Amen!
With the population of the world exploding across all boundaries, almost every person is faced with a crisis. Very easily we feel insignificant and next to nothing. The massive mingling crowds airports and public spaces make us feel like a nobody.

If we take a cross section of the population of a place at this moment, we may have pregnant mothers with babies yet to be born, we have children vying for attention, we have young people discovering their adulthood, we have parents of budding families trying to stand out in society and we have older people still trying to feel important and not be forgotten.

It is in this context that God is reminding us of our identity in Him. In Isaiah 49: 1 he says that He (Yahweh) as called us out of our Mother’s womb and pronounced our name before we were born.

Stop, imagine yourself still in your mother’s womb before your birth. In your mind’s eye you may imagine the doctors and nurses around your mother as you were being born, but the Lord presents a different or refreshing picture. He was present there, like the Lord Jesus outside the tomb of Lazarus. Even before you emerged, He spelt out your name in love and invited you for your mission here on earth. It was indeed a warm welcome which most of us are not even aware of. After seeing our features our parents would have decided to call us suddu or kallu (fair or dark skinned) but the Lord himself dropped that name into their hearts.

The Lord did not just call us out but presented us with a mission. In the case of St. John the Baptist, he was truly given a mouth like a sharpened sword to draw people to repentance and bring them back into a relationship with God.

While he was being prepared for this role he was hid in the shadow of the Father’s hand.

The birth of St. John the Baptist was a miracle in itself. John’s parents were advanced in age and there seemed to be no hope of a child. Elizabeth has borne years of shame as a barren woman and yet she and her husband served the Lord in obedience and love.

The beauty of their relationship was that they had a deep intimacy
with the Father that allowed them to listen to the name the Father had reserved for their son. The name was unique and it broke tradition and hence there was no way that it was imagined in the spirits of the boy’s parents but wholly inspired by God himself.

We encounter the problem of identity in the world today. We have seen a section a people who live and dress like living corpses with heavy black makeup, false streaks of blood and black clothing. There are others we encounter with skimpy clothing, while a worldwide fad is to tattoo one’s body with art and images as a statement.

What is the Lord reminding us of today? We are reminded that God has always had a mission for us and He named us. When we encounter His love the mission and our purpose in life become clearer and more definite.

Recently, a person name Auto Raja or T Raja was featured receiving an award from a leading industrialist. It was there that the man shared his experience. He said that he was a petty criminal, living a life in and out of jails. Even his parents cursed his existence and purpose in life. One day in jail, he was struck by the fact that Mother Teresa was now dead and he wondered who would continue her work. Inspired by the love of the Lord Jesus he began the mission of rescuing dying people from the street and began offering them a dignified way to die. He fulfilled their wishes of having an ice cream or a soft drink which they had longed for years to touch or sip. Thousands of destitute people have thus passed through the confines of his home and into eternity with a touch of love and care. Who would believe that a petty criminal had such a call on his life.

Let us look into our hearts and begin to appreciate the call and love the Lord has had for us. Are we convinced that the Lord has called us by name and been there to welcome us when we made our entry into the world? Have we been able to see the mission God has for us in all its clarity. We have to realise that the scope of the mission changes from time to time. While some people may have a world impacting glorious and recognised mission, most people have a small scope and yet God important mission to sow love and hope in their workplaces or bless other’s lives with their achievements. Most importantly, all our missions like St. John the Baptist are for the purpose of the Lord Jesus’ mission. Ultimately we must decrease and He must increase.

Prayer: Abba Father, thank you for calling me by name into the world and setting me off on my mission. Give me the clarity to see the mission and accept it from your hands. May your Son’s name be glorified in all I do. Amen
Monday 25th June  

Why do you notice the splinter in your brother’s eye, but do not perceive the wooden beam in your own eye?  

Matthew 7:3

In today’s first reading we see an enemy king lay siege on the Israelites, conquer Samaria, and deport them. It started as a siege of three long years and culminated in defeat and deportation. The reading says that this was because of their disobedience and refusal to listen to the voice of God.

The Israelites lived in the promised land. It was the place where God’s promises were fulfilled. On their journey from Egypt, God came alive to them in unexpected ways. They saw the parting of the Red Sea. When they were hungry God provided Manna. Their clothes did not wear off. After reaching the promised land, things became different. No more Manna from heaven. No more supernaturally durable clothes. From being a supernatural provider of all things, God evolved into being a partner who blessed the work of their hands. However, the Israelites were found lacking. As a result they had to leave the land of the fulfilment of promises.

Most of us have had a conversion experience. The promises of God began to be fulfilled in our lives and God came alive to us. Some of us were delivered from addictions such as smoking and drinking. But then as time passed, our spiritual journey changed. God no longer seemed as proactive as before. Prayers went unanswered. God seemed distant. Like the children of Israel, during such times we fall back to the solutions we were accustomed to before we encountered the Lord. We become influenced by those who live around us, who are often rational thinkers. This is put beautifully in the first reading “They worshiped other gods and followed the practices of the nations the Lord had driven out before them”

When God seems distant, He invites us to trust in His word more than those around us, more than what we feel or understand. The Gospel tells us, maybe we are suffering because of the selfishness of another. Yet our plight maybe the result of not taking the Lord at his word and trying to handle issues like those who do not believe in the existence of God. He invites us to accept our situation from His hands and look at the situation through His eyes and His word. When we do that, we will return to the promised land.

Prayer: Abba Father, your Son did not accept the cross from the hands of Pilot or your enemies, but from you. May we too have the wisdom to handle our life this way. Amen
In the first reading we see Jerusalem to be conquered by the Assyrian army but is delivered not by a fight but by prayer, prophecy and the help of an angel. Like Hezekiah we too are faced with threats in life of different nature, but unlike Hezekiah we turn to our friends, influence, connections and power to try and handle or overcome them. Instead of waiting to seek God only when all else fails we should turn to Him at every moment of our life. This comes from having a personal relationship with God and knowing that He is with us always. When we cry to our Father in heaven, he sends angels to help us, this did not just happen in the olden days but even today. In the Psalm we see the favour upon us as God’s children.

The Gospel proclamation concludes our Lord Jesus’ sermon on the mountain. He speaks to us about our relationship with our neighbour, our purpose on earth and that its course is not always a bed of roses. Only a few of us choose to take the narrow gate leading down the difficult road. I used to think why should we be unnecessarily troubled if we can have a happy life choosing the wide gate and the comfortable path? It’s a waste of our life. It is later in prayer that I realised our life on earth is very temporary and we have come from God only to return back to him after we die. This brought me to search for my meaning in life. It is then in prayer through the four steps that I discovered a deeper relationship with God – who is beyond time, space and our five senses. If we are connected to God then we begin to find deeper purpose in our lives and are directed in the course we have to take by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is then that we feel a true sense of happiness and peace.

However, if we do not have a relationship with God, we DO NOT know Him, so we fail to turn to Him in surrender of our lives. If we want to experience God’s living presence upon our lives we should start spending some time on a daily basis with him through prayer and the word. It is only then that you start relying on him/her for our needs. Having such a loving Father waiting to enter our lives, to guide and protect us –let us make time each day to get to know Him at a deeper level, so that we may never walk in darkness but experience the light of life who is our Lord Jesus Christ.

Prayer: Abba father, grant us the grace to enter into your presence daily as we grow in a deep relationship with you. Amen
Wednesday 27th June

St. Cyril of Alexandria

Beware of false prophets

Matt 7: 15

When we think of false prophets, we immediately think of the flamboyant preachers we have heard and seen on the media. Occasionally, they are accused of something or the other and we eagerly watch the YouTube videos to get all the details.

We come across many articles where our own dear Pope and the previous popes have been accused of being false prophets by various sects.

But before we look at others as being false prophets, let us look at ourselves if we have been switching from being abiding believers to false prophets. This happens often in our own lives because on one day we are in all boldness and eloquence pushing the Gospel and then at home going into fits of rage when our siblings or children let us down.

The test to expose a false prophet is with regard to the fruit they bear. If we are prone to anger, greed, lust, power struggles then we are false prophets ourselves.

On the other hand, false prophets are those who in their lack of heavenly wisdom tear down the fact and belief we hold that the Lord Jesus’ is present in the Eucharist. There are those who invalidate the Mass and the role of the Blessed Mother in the salvation of the world as Co-Redeemer.

The Lord in His mercy has been touching the lives of countless people through direct encounters or through various people or churches. When these people including Catholics encounter the Lord they immediately assume that they have all the answers and that the word of God is everything. But they fail to see the progression of Church History and its strong tradition that has evolved along time. The result is they dig holes in the teachings of the Church and look for answers in the wrong places. In doing that they shift from grace filled believers to false prophets and rabble rousing talkers. St. Cyril was an Archbishop who fought off many heretics and maintained the teachings of the Church. We are called to pray for our enemies and those who tear down the teachings without regard to the full revelation of the experience of God.

Prayer: Abba Father, we humble ourselves aware that often we bear the wrong fruit in our ignorance and humanness. Amen
The plan of God is always the best plan for his people. He was happy to have prophets to act as guides to lead the people in a straight way. The Prophets consulted Yahweh to advise and lead the people. Yet the people were never satisfied and they wanted to be ruled by a king. In 1 Sam, when the people were asking for a king, God spoke to Samuel and said it is not him that the people were rejecting, it was God who is their king that they were rejecting. From the first king to the end of the line of kings, they faltered by worshiping other gods and not coming under the commands of Yahweh. They could not resist the greed for earthly wealth and human happiness. In the 1st reading, King Jehoiachin, was only able to rule for 3 months where he continued the bad ways of his father. Yahweh’s wrath is clearly seen when the king of Babylon took over the city and carried away king Jehoiachin, his household, his army and all his belongings. What happened to king Jehoiachin is so much related to the warning Jesus gives in the gospel passage. Anyone who fails to adhere to God’s teaching is like a fool who built his house on sand.

Man cannot serve two masters, which is, the world and God. He needs to choose one. Serving two masters at the same time will make us like the hypocrites in the temple who could not recognize when the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords was in their midst. The greed for prestige and wealth blocked out the true vision of the Lord in their midst. Because of this, they saw Jesus only as a carpenter’s son. They were on a different length wave, though being Priests, they could not accept the word that Jesus spoke which was the life giving waters coming directly from the Father’s heart. They may have casted out demons, worked miracles but would have done them with motives of their own, and robbing the glory which was due to the Lord for themselves. Without the knowledge of the Word in our life, we will be building our house on sand and not on firm foundation. That is why with the slightest change of weather that house could collapse unlike the house built on a firm foundation.

Prayer: Abba Father, you have the words of life. We open our hearts to you today to receive you fully, to make your word and promises a stronghold in our life so that even in the most difficult situation we may hold on and enjoy the fruit of our labour. Amen
Friday 29th June  

**Sts. Peter & Paul**

Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness...

2 Tim 4:8

Don’t we love to be able to say the theme verse is true for ourselves? Saint Paul was a murderer, he persecuted Christians and did everything possible to stop the good news being preached. He had no compassion for women or children and even rejoiced when Saint Stephen was stoned to death! Yet when he encountered the Risen Lord he was transformed, he gave up everything he had for the Lord and was confident that he would receive the crown of righteousness from God the Father.

Today we celebrate the feast of two great men of God; Saints Peter and Paul. Because they loved the Lord so much and were filled with the Holy Spirit, they feared nothing; be it persecution, hardships or even losing their lives. The Lord did not prevent difficulties in their lives. They had an intimate and strong relationship with the Lord and because of their strong faith they were able to carry out the Lord’s mission. Seeing angels, being delivered many times from near-death and experiencing the impossible were commonplace for them. The invisible God was more real for them than the visible external situations or people around them.

In today’s Gospel proclamation, the Lord Jesus asks “Who do you say I am?” Even though Saint Peter had not yet received the Holy Spirit, he was able to say “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” So today the Lord is asking us “Who do you say I am?” During a prayer meeting, when we are lost in worship and on a ‘high’ we can easily say ‘Yes, Lord you are my everything, you are my savior, I’ll give up anything for you’. Yet when we face an impossible and unfair situation in office, when we go through a sickness where the doctors say there is no hope, or if we have to daily go through rejection and indifference from our spouse, do we truly believe that the Lord can change this situation? The Lord promises in Matthew 16:19 ‘I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.’ So the Lord has already given us authority and taught us how to fight ‘seemingly’ impossible situations. Let us not behave like beggars, but claim our heritage; that we are chosen children of the King of the universe.

**Prayer:** Abba Father, help me to always remember that you have already supplied my every need through your Word. Amen
Saturday 30th June

I was blind but now I see

Tens of thousands of Holy Masses are celebrated in almost every country each day. At every one of these masses, we devotedly repeat the Roman Centurion’s words, “Lord I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word and my soul will be healed.”

The Lord Jesus was amazed by the faith of this Centurion and told the people “In all of Israel have I seen faith such as this.” Hebrews 11 is known as the faith chapter in the Bible. The first verse says, “Faith is the assurance of what we hope for, and the certainty of what we cannot see.” The chapter goes on to speak about the faith of the Patriarchs, Prophets, and other great personalities such as Moses. We are told that without faith, it is impossible to journey with God.

Essentially, faith is a gift from God, a current of grace, but we need to grow in faith from day to day, even from moment to moment and from event to event. Before I joined the Catholic Charismatic Renewal movement, I did have faith but it was just at head level and I was just a Sunday Mass Catholic. In the Catholic Renewal Movement, I was brought to a deep awareness that Christ Jesus is alive and that I need to meet Him and have a relationship with Him. I came to the awareness that Christianity is essentially the Risen Lord and goes beyond doctrines and dogmas. I became aware that a Christian is a person who has a growing faith relationship with the Risen Lord.

In this journey I became aware that one of the ways in which we meet the Lord is by positing acts of unity. The Lord is present in unity. Every Christian has the power to make the Lord present by positing acts of unity - love and care forgiveness, mercy and compassion to other as the Lord has said, “Love one another as I have loved you.” As I journeyed with the Lord through faith and by the power of the Holy Spirit, I obeyed His commandments to “Rejoice always, pray constantly and give thanks in all circumstances.” Through this, the Lord gave me the power to face any crisis in life - even the loss of my eyesight. He opened for me a third eye through which I saw much more than I had seen ever before. God gave me a new vision and goals to cooperate with Him in building the kingdom. I am now working towards Poverty alleviation and the battle against global warming.

Prayer: Abba Father, thank you for the gift of faith and grace. I was blind earlier but now I see. Amen
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