



# IN OUR KNEES IN HIS HANDS

May 2016

**Peace be with you!  
John 20:21**

Keep repeating this blessing of the Lord Jesus and your life will be filled with inner peace. We are told to read the word slowly, attentively and repeatedly. The word will then invade our hearts and remain with us. The Risen Lord will come alive within us!

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# **On Our Knees In His Hands**

*May 2016*

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**Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives  
do I give it to you.**

**John 14:27**

Acts 15:1-2, 22-29

Psalms 67:2-3, 5-6, 8

Revelation 21:10-14,  
22-23

John 14:23-29

Peace of mind and inner peace are something we are constantly searching for. Where can we find this peace? I like to think of them as those peaceful moments in life, when all seems right with the world; when a sense of calm fills our heart and mind. We feel it when we are not stressed about what we have to do or what is going on in our lives. However, peaceful moments like these are few or far between.

In reality the stress and demands of life shatter our inner peace and it is overwhelming at times. It can find us lying awake at night and stressed out during the day. So where can we go to get away from it? Too often we go to the wrong places. We go to a bottle or the pills on a shelf or a shopping spree. However, these things leave us feeling more empty and worthless. The only way we could find true peace is in the Lord Jesus Christ. The peace that the Lord Jesus promises us is not only in good times but in the bitter days of our life.

The words of today's Gospel were spoken on the night before the Lord Jesus' death on the cross, probably the most terrifying day of His life. Yet He talks about peace. We may wonder if this is even humanly possible, to be at peace in the face of an undeserved brutal death. Not only is He overflowing with peace He wants to pass it onto those around Him. How would we react if we were in the same situation as the Lord Jesus? We react in different ways but one thing is for sure we will never be at peace. Today we have good news.

The Lord Jesus is offering us this peace. "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid." (John 14:27) The peace the Lord Jesus gives us is more than just wishes to have a nice day. His peace transcends human understanding. This peace can flood our hearts and give us immense joy in the worst storms of our lives. It is because of this peace that St. Paul, St. Peter and the other Apostles were able to rejoice when they were persecuted and imprisoned. How did the Lord Jesus find so much peace in the worst days of His life? He found it in obedience to the Father.

The Lord Jesus loved the Father so much that His sole desire was to please Him and do His will; even death on a cross. He was obedient to God because He loved God the Father. That is why the Lord Jesus tells us today "if you love me, you will obey my word"

We as followers of Christ love Him. We show our love for Him with

devotions and service. But how often do we express our love in obedience? Devotions and services are easy and we do it freely but the difficulty with being obedient to God's will in our daily lives is that it requires much more than time and energy. It requires dying to ourselves. It requires total surrender. This means we are no longer in control of our lives. We feel safe and comfortable when we are in control of our lives but the will of God and being obedient to Him takes us out of our comfort zone. Therefore, often we prefer to express our love for the Lord Jesus with devotions and service. But today the Lord Jesus invites us to obey His word which is the true expression of love and the reward we receive in return is God dwelling in our lives.

Can you imagine that? The God of the universe makes His home in us. This is the promise that the Lord Jesus gives us. However, He cannot live in our lives if our hearts are full of anger, hatred, unforgiveness and sin. But sometimes it becomes so hard for us to forgive, love and stay away from sin. But as we sit before the Lord every day, give Him the truth in our heart and surrender our lives to Him, we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit which the Lord Jesus promised.

The Holy Spirit has many characteristics. He is an advocate, comforter, counselor and He fills us with the very characteristics of God. It is the power of the Holy Spirit that makes the impossible possible. The Holy Spirit cannot be earned. It is a gift from God that He freely wants to give all His creation. The Lord Jesus tells us "if you earthly fathers know how to give good things to your children how much more will your Father in Heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask for it." To receive the Holy Spirit one thing is needed; a heart that desires it. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit we become a reflection of God Himself. And God is love.

When love lives in us we become an expression of true love to those around us. And the Holy Spirit that lives in us gives us peace and joy that surpasses all understanding. This peace enables us to go through any storm without falling or breaking into pieces and we are able to face death with complete peace in our hearts.

In the afterglow of Easter we are reminded of the Lord's words each time He appeared to his disciples. He began with, 'Peace be with you.' He knew the struggles and thoughts of us and today wishes us that peace that passes all understanding. May that peace flow into our being right now. On May Day, we remember St. Joseph the worker and hundreds of millions of workers. We also remember the immortal words of Longfellow - The heights reached by noble people, reached and kept, were not attained by sudden flight; but they, while their colleagues slept, were toiling upward in the night.

***Prayer: Abba Father, we thank You for the gift of peace you give us so freely through the power of the Holy Spirit. Help us love You in obedience to Your Word. Amen***

## You too will be my witnesses

John 15:27

Acts 16:11-15

Psalm 149:1b-6a,  
9b

John 15:26 - 16:4

The Acts of the Apostles could well be renamed the Acts of the Holy Spirit. The leading and move of the Spirit was powerfully felt (Acts 16:6) preventing St. Paul from going where he wished to go and pushing and pulling him to where the Lord wished St. Paul to go. In response to a vision that St. Paul had, he and his companions went to Macedonia. We see the Lord beckoning them, beside them and behind them with a driving

power. They went; to continue their work of turning the world upside down in the name of the Lord Jesus. Nothing could stop St. Paul from preaching the Good News once he was assured of the Holy Spirit's leading. There was no Synagogue there but he was content to sit by the bank of a river and preach to the women gathered there. Something extraordinary happened here. Surely it was the prompting of the Holy Spirit that made Lydia, obviously a person of high rank, to invite St. Paul and his companions to her house. She is described as being a dealer in purple cloth, extremely rich and powerful. When the Spirit moves He opens doors that would otherwise be closed to accomplish His mission. Lydia and her family were the first fruits of St. Paul's labour.

The promise made by the Lord Jesus in the Gospel reading is actualised in the Apostles. St. Paul having had an inner conviction of the truth of who the Lord Jesus was could not help but communicate this truth wherever He went. The Lord promised the Holy Spirit - the Spirit of truth- who would testify about him and the witness for Him and they in turn are called to witness for Him. The word 'witness' is closely associated with the word 'Martyr'. To be prepared to die for one's own faith is the calling of the Lord Jesus's disciples. No curse could be greater for the Jews than to be ostracized, from Jewish society.

But the Lord Jesus offers no sugar coated pill. Suffering and persecution would come in the wake of proclaiming the Good News. The Lord, aware of man's weakness, warns them not to abandon the mission entrusted to them. Today's readings challenge me. How far am I prepared to go to witness for Him? I may not have to face death, but I am asked to act in such a way that others will be attracted to the kingdom. Every time I react in anger, selfish ways, refuse to forgive or love others, I realise I fail to live up to my calling. But if I spend time with the Holy Spirit, he will cleanse my soul and redeem me.

**Prayer: Abba Father, cleanse, heal me and redeem me through the power of your spirit. Amen**

## Tuesday 3rd May

SS. Philip & James, Apostles, Feast

“Jesus answered, I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the father except through me.”

John 14:6

1 Corinthians  
15:1-8

Psalm 19:2-5

John 14:6-14

Today the Church celebrates the feast of the Saints Philip and James, Apostles of Jesus. The James spoken of here is not known except that he was an Apostle of Jesus. As in the case of other apostles, we see in James and Philip, men who became the foundation stones of the church. We are reminded that holiness and its consequent apostolate are entirely a gift from God and not a matter of human achievement. Without Him we

are nothing but with him we can be everything. We are all called to this mission- it is how responsive we are to the voice of God that our journey is established.

All power is God's power, even the power of human freedom to accept His gifts... In the Acts of the Apostles, the Lord Jesus told Philip and the others you will be clothed with power from on high. The first commission had been to expel unclean spirits, heal diseases, announce the Kingdom. They learnt gradually that these externals were sacraments of an even greater miracle inside their beings - the divine transformation of receiving the grace to love like God with an unconditional love.

This is what the Resurrection is about. As we die to ourselves as He did, we become a new creation with a tremendous capacity to love humanity. Moreover we receive the grace to accomplish the difficult task of loving our very own families with their imperfections. Furthermore we can reach beyond our own limitations, as the barriers within us built over the years are broken down when we experience the feet washing love of the Father through Jesus.

The Lord says to Philip after all the years I have been with you, you still ask me who the Father is? The Father and I are one. He goes on to say “I am the way, the truth and the life” He is the only way we have, the answer to every crisis, the answer to every question, the reason we live and the purpose and end of our existence in this world and beyond.

God has made the most supreme sacrifice that any Father would make by sacrificing His only beloved Son on that cross so that we may live life to the fullest on this earth and forever in eternity.

**Prayer: Abba Father, open my heart and mind to receive your wisdom and love that I may know you and may share your love with the world around me. Amen**

**“But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes,  
he will guide you into all the truth.”**

**John 16:13**

Acts 17:15, 22 –  
18:1  
Psalm 148:1–2,  
11–14  
John 16:12–15

In the Gospel reading today, we see the Lord revealing a beautiful truth that the Holy Spirit is indeed the voice of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Himself. At the time that the Lord Jesus was speaking to His disciples they could not comprehend in their rational mind the meaning of what the Lord was saying. That is why the Lord told them that certain things He was to reveal

would be too hard for them to bear or understand. But then, the Lord assures us, when the Comforter comes, the Holy Spirit of God, He shall make everything clear with no confusion, for He is the Spirit of Truth that will guide us to all Truth.

What is this truth of all truths? There may be many scholarly understandings to it from the leading of the Holy Spirit of the early church, to the mystery of the Holy Trinity, to the passion, death and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

However, in the account of the first reading today, we see that this Truth may not be clear to many. There were many who scoffed at what St. Paul was preaching about the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. The word tells us that St. Paul left such unbelievers alone but there were others who believed him and followed him.

The first reading today is also a beautiful account of the tireless accompaniment that Apostle Paul was carrying out in Greece, a foreign country. This shows how the power of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter that the Lord Jesus promised, had fired up the inner being of St. Paul that he went wherever the Spirit blew, to preach the good news. The Gospel accounts show us how far and wide he travelled in his life time carrying the good news.

The readings today are asking me a direct question. Am I open to the words of the Holy Spirit through a messenger that God is sending my way in the guise of another human being or the Word of God itself? Or am I like the many who are closed to the Holy Spirit, and unable to grasp the truth that is been spoken? Do I want my name to be written in the heart of God like that of Dionysius and Damaris or do I want I live and die fruitless one day. Do I also follow the footsteps of Apostle St. Paul and let the Holy Spirit bear fruit through me for the greater purpose of God? Today I am called to be sensitive to the voice of the Holy Spirit.

***Prayer: Abba Father, open the eyes of my heart, I want to see You and live for You through the power of Your Holy Spirit. Amen.***

“The Lord has made his victory known; has revealed  
his triumph for the nations to see”

**Psalm 98:2**

Acts 18:1–8

Psalm 98:1–4

John 16:16–20

In the first reading today we see how the will of God works in our life. Aquila’s and Priscilla’s return to Corinth from Rome is not an accident. God even used Claudius the Emperor. When Paul left Athens and came to Corinth, God had already organised a place for Paul to stay and found companions for his mission to Corinth. It could be that this couple had already accepted and come to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

According to the historian Suetonius it is explained that Emperor Claudius expelled the Jews due to a dispute among the Jews ‘at the instigation of Chrestos’, probably meaning disputes about the Messiahship of Lord Jesus. Aquila and Priscilla were tentmakers, being in the same trade as St. Paul, was it an accident or the hand of God?

What we need to understand is that God is in control of everything in the world. We may assess situations according to our human understanding; perceive events around us in the human level, which is not wrong. But in every situation, ultimately, it is God’s hand at work. Every evil act performed by the devil and his agents, using human beings who give in to the evil of this world and to their selfishness can be turned into a blessing by the power of God’s love towards His people. We are given the freewill to choose God or evil. If we choose God we become His people. Therefore every evil act done against us will surely be turned into blessings by the power of God’s love for us.

St. Paul dusted his garments and said to the Jews who didn’t accept the Lord Jesus as the Messiah that the responsibility was not his and that he was going to the Gentiles. At that time he could not fathom the misunderstanding of the Jews, but the reality was that he was chosen to take the Good news to the Gentiles. God’s will in St. Paul’s life was taking place.

The Lord Jesus brings clarity to this confusion. In a little while you will not see me, but in a little while you will see me. The Lord Jesus went to the Father to send us the Holy Spirit. When we are in the Holy Spirit we will see the most tragic situations through the eyes of God. But if we are not in the Holy Spirit we lose sight of God. This is the darkness that we fight within us every moment. But through the Holy Spirit we see the marvelous deeds of God in the universe.

**Prayer: Abba Father, let me remain in the Holy Spirit to see your marvelous deeds in my life. Amen.**

## Be not afraid, I am with you

Acts 18:10

Acts 18:9–18

Psalm 47:2–7

John 16:20–23

Though St Paul was not among the 12 apostles and was one of the main persecutors of Christians, he met the Risen Lord on the road to Damascus and was transformed. The greatest persecutor became the greatest propagator of the Christian faith so much so that he left behind 13 New Testament books which inspire millions of people all over the world even today.

In today's episode we see St Paul in Corinth where he stayed for one and half years though the Jewish religious leaders tried to whip up the people against him. Just as they brought the Lord Jesus before the governor Pilot they brought St Paul before the Roman Proconsul Gallio and accused him of spreading wrong religious teachings. Just as Pilate told the Jewish leaders to settle their religious conflict among themselves, Gallio also tells them to do the same.

Amid the turmoil and turbulence, St Paul has a revelation in a dream. The Lord tells him "Be not afraid I'm with you". Bible scholars say these words of reassurance are given more than 360 times in the New Testament. So whenever we hear an inner voice saying, "Be not afraid I'm with you" we need to believe it is a reassurance and revelation from the Lord specially in times of crisis.

What happened on Easter Sunday—the resurrection of the Lord—is the most important event in Christianity. It is much more important than Christmas or our church feasts which we celebrate with a bang and dash. But as St Paul says in the letter to the Corinthians, if Christ had not being raised from the dead, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain". (1 Corinthians 15: 13,14)

Jesus Christ is alive and we need to experience His full Resurrection power. Even more as St Paul tells us in the letter to the Colossians the mystery of all mysteries and the truth of all truths, hidden for generations and ages but now revealed to us is that Christ is alive and living in us as a blessed assurance of God's amazing grace, unconditional love and mercy for us.

When we believe this and experience it we must pass it on. As we sing in that beautiful song "It only takes a spark, to get a fire going, and soon all those around, can warm up in its glowing, that's how it is with God's love, once we've experienced it, we spread His love to everyone, we want to pass it on".

**Prayer: Abba Father thank you for this amazing grace and love. Give us the power to pass it on. Amen**

“...Bringing strength to all the disciples”

**Acts 18:23**

Acts 18:23–28

Psalm 47:2–3,  
8–10

John 16:23–28

St. Paul travels through Galatia and Phrygia bringing strength to all the disciples. This opens our understanding of how the Holy Spirit works. It uses one person to uphold and strengthen the other. It does not strengthen one so that they could receive glory for themselves and have others following them. That is the worldly way, where we want to be more clever and powerful than others, thus, having them look up to us and give adulation and recognition our ego seeks.

Apollos was an eloquent speaker. He was considered to be an authority on the scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord with ardent spirit. He spoke and taught accurately about the Lord. In the early church he was considered a charismatic and powerful elder. Priscilla and Aquila however, were ordinary disciples who explained things more intimately, in the way they understood the Christian journey. We see in Apollos's humility when he chose to learn from these two.

In the early church we experience the strength in unity and support of the whole church. When Apollos was to go into another area, the disciples there were told to use their hospitality and resources to welcome him. In his turn he gave of himself completely to that community. How wonderful to see each upholding the other. Here lies the action of the Holy Spirit.

In the Gospel reading the intimacy between the Heavenly Father and ourselves is emphasized. The Lord reiterates that whatever we ask the Father he will give us. What graciousness we see here. What can a weak one like me, mean to the Almighty, that He loves me so? Is there something really precious in me He seeks so desperately? This Father takes the tremendous risk of giving us his Holy Spirit. What humility we see of the Father who shares his divinity with us. The Lord tells us mere mortals that because of him we too can have intimacy with the Father.

When the Holy Spirit awakens our spirit, we receive strength to have humility to learn from those around us. May we see our self-importance as nothing compared to those we consider unimportant. Through this strength comes to all the disciples in Christ Jesus.

**Prayer: Abba Father, I love You for giving us the Lord Jesus who shows us how to love You. Amen**

“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you.”

**Acts 1:8**

Acts 1:1–11  
Ps 47:2–3, 6–9  
Hebrews 9:24–  
28, 10:19–23  
Luke 24:46–53

The Four Steps Retreat was too important to him; he did not trust anyone with the organizing. Eventually, he was burnt-out and expressed his frustrations; “I have to even do the things that God should be doing!”

We are a people of action. When we are caught up with what matters to us most, we even try to do what God should be doing. We see a similar event unfolding in the first reading. The Lord was preparing the apostles for a world changing mission, but they had another agenda. He spoke to them about the baptism of the Holy Spirit; they were not interested. They had matters closer to their hearts; would He hurry up and restore the Kingdom of Israel?

They could not get past the restoration of the Kingdom of Israel. They were not interested in changing the world; they wanted a political and a religious change for themselves. Doesn't that hit close to home? How much time and energy we spend on debating, praying and working on our situations so that the spouse will change, the children will turn to God, the sickness will be healed, and there will be a breakthrough for the financial problem. Our human nature keeps us anxious, preventing us from going to the ends of the earth as the Lord commanded.

However, the truth was, the apostles did go to the ends of the earth. Their personal, individual goals did change, and they carried out the command of the Lord. It was not an easy command; their wives would have complained, their children would have thrown tantrums, and their finances... I'd rather not even go there! There were so many loose ends. In addition to that, they knew anyone with the right mind would not have considered them world changing material! They fought for the big places. Half the time, they could not understand what the Lord said, and when it mattered most, they abandoned Him! Yet, the Lord was saying; “you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth”. The Lord had known it all along...

The disciples had been on a roller-coaster ride with the crucifixion and the resurrection. Just as they were about to catch their breath, they are in for another surprise; the Ascension of the Lord! The Gospel says the Lord led them as far as Bethany. It was as though He wanted them to witness His ascension. The Lord probably didn't want a repetition of the pandemonium at the empty tomb; rumours of

His body being stolen, looking for Him among the dead, the weeping, the fears and even doubts that would have eventually hampered the mission entrusted to them. This time, however, it was different. He ascended to heaven right before their eyes.

As He was ascending, there was a shift in the personalities of the apostles. St Luke says they worshiped Him and returned to Jerusalem full of joy! Their encounter with the Risen Christ had turned them into worshipers. They were calm, they were hopeful and they were full of joy. They were no longer in hurry, but patiently waiting for the promised Holy Spirit!

Just like the apostles, we are also called to be His witnesses to the ends of the earth. Just like the apostles, we know we are not world changing material. Yet the words of the Lord are clear; “you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth”. I feel the Lord is certain about it, just as He was certain about the apostles.

“Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful”.

The Four Steps teaches us to “draw near to God with a sincere heart”. Come as you are and give the truth of your heart to the Lord. Simon Peter loved the Lord so much that he kept following him even after he denied the Lord. He could not look at himself after what he had done, and he found the Lord looking at him with compassion and love! The truth about himself and the magnitude of the Lord’s love hit St. Peter at the same time. When we give Him the truth of our hearts, that same love becomes our experience.

Today’s second reading explains the result of “giving the truth of our hearts to the Lord”; “Our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and our bodies washed with pure water”. A miracle takes place in those who draw near to Him with a sincere heart; they are cleansed physically, mentally and emotionally.

“Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful”. The miracle happens in us despite us, because the one who promises it is faithful.

***Prayer: Abba Father, may the magnitude of your love become our experience today, and transform us to go to the ends of the earth carrying the message of forgiveness of sin and salvation. Amen***

**Did you receive the Holy Spirit?****Acts 19: 1-8**

Acts 19:1-8

Psalm 68:2-7

John 16:29-33

John's preaching was a threat, but the Lord Jesus' preaching was Good News. One was to convict us of sinfulness and the need to repent and the other to realise the grace and mercy of God. When we accept that because of the death and Resurrection of Jesus our Saviour and their consequences are taken away we become free, of course there are conditions attached. We need

to repent coming to Him with the truth in our hearts, surrendering our mind, soul & spirit to receive the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

In the Gospel reading the Apostles reached the first step - total belief in the Lord Jesus. As a man He had received the fullness of the Spirit. At His Baptism He was able to read their minds and know that they wanted to question Him (v.19) But He knew their weakness and failures, and yet loved and forgave them. He offered them peace instead of guilt and shows that He still trusts them. He also teaches them that one can ever be alone because God is faithful and never abandons His own and He gives them the greatest gift of all, courage and a share in His victory.

The question in Acts 19:8 can be asked of anyone. We can profess Christianity and not be aware that we need a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit to lead a committed Christian life. Sometimes institutionalised religion can stifle the Holy Spirit. It is only in recent times that our spirit has been awakened to the power of the Holy Spirit. For too long He has been a 'ghost' to us. What happened to the people when St. Paul laid hands on them must happen to everyone who calls themselves followers of Christ.

There is an invitation by John Ogilvie to join the Holy Order of those for who religion is not enough. We are asked to make religion less of a theory and more of a love affair. This is only possible if we permit the Holy Spirit to become a real presence in our lives. The unlimited power of the Holy Spirit as reported in the Acts needs to be released in our life, our country and world, if we are to experience the peace and love promised by our Lord Jesus.

The feast of Pentecost is a few days away. Let us long to venture deeper into the revitalising experience of the Holy Spirit.

**Prayer: Abba Father, satisfy the hunger in the hearts of all who experience the New Pentecost. Amen**

## Tuesday 10th May *Feast of St. Damien Joseph de Veuster, Priest*

**“Now this is eternal life, that they should know you, the only true God, and the one whom you sent, Jesus Christ”** **John 17:3**

Acts 20:17–27

Psalms 68:10–11,  
20–21

John 17:1–11

As St. Paul bid farewell to the presbyters he requested them to carry out the work of the Kingdom of God with humility. He shared with them that through tears and trials he had faithfully accomplished the work.

We are invited to be like St. Paul. When he moved from one city to the other, he was sensitive to the Holy Spirit. He felt that the Holy Spirit was leading him to Jerusalem. He accepted that leading from the hands of the Lord Jesus. He felt imprisonment awaited him yet he obeyed. He knew the Father and eternal life.

We may be called to the work of the Kingdom of God indoors or outdoors. We need to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit. St. Paul showed it beautifully, to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit and live accordingly. At certain times we may be called to ‘do’, and at other times to ‘be’. Our duty is to be open to both these calls.

The Lord Jesus bid farewell making few requests to the Father and praying the High Priest’s prayer. He had almost finished His earthly mission and was to return to His actual status at the right hand of the Father.

We are secured in God because the Father always answers the prayer of the Son. The Lord Jesus requested the Father to protect everyone who was sent to the Lord. The question is, are we aware of the Saviour in our life? Are we open to the Holy Spirit? Our Spirit needs to be awakened to the Holy Spirit. Do we desire and long for that experience? Have we taken eternal life seriously?

We celebrate the feast of St. Damien Joseph de Veuster who was a priest. He accepted a difficult mission from the hands of God. He tended to leprosy patients, who were required to live under a government-sanctioned medical quarantine on the island of Molokai in Hawaii. After sixteen years caring for the physical, spiritual, and emotional needs of those in the leper colony, Father Damien died of leprosy. He has been described as a martyr of charity. His Spirit was awakened to the Holy Spirit. He knew the Father and eternal life.

***Prayer: Abba Father, I need to know you and I need you. I need eternal life. Grant me my request. Amen.***

**Keep watch over yourselves.....****Acts 20:28**

Acts 20:28–38

Psalm 68:29–30,  
33–36b

John 17:11–19

St. Paul advises us to keep watch over ourselves first, and then over the flock the Lord entrusts to us. However, most often we watch over what others do and judge, gossip about them, instead of being mindful that what we do should please the Father. The human nature of trying to change others instead of ourselves takes precedence.

Recently, to deal with a particular situation, a close family member was telling me what I should do and how I should do it. However much I tried, it seemed as if, what I did and the way I did it was wrong. Also, even though this person meant well and was advising me, the way and tone it was conveyed in, were hurtful and made me feel a real failure and as if there was just no point in trying to do better. Then suddenly during a Wednesday prayer meeting the Lord reminded me that this person is not my God. The Lord is my God and only what He says and wants me to do matters. He has placed many people in my life who will love, hurt, help and reject me, and those people are a stepping-stone for me to journey deeper with the Lord - irrespective of whether that person is my parent, spouse, child, friend or colleague. I was looking for acceptance, encouragement, understanding, patience and love from a human being. But in God's grace, He allowed me to experience the opposite, so that I would be reminded to watch myself - that only God can meet my every need.

In the Gospel reading, the Lord Jesus speaks of the same experience when He says "I will remain in the world no longer". Though His physical being was in this world, His mind, spirit and focus were on God the Father. He knew that it was only God who could fulfill Him and not any human being. The Lord Jesus wanted the apostles to experience that full measure of joy within them, and He knew that this could only be experienced through a deep connection with the Father. One essential factor for this deep connection is scripture, which is the Word of God which is also the Lord Jesus. John 1:1 says In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

***Prayer: Abba Father, help me to experience that deep love-relationship with you. Though I may fall many times a day, lose that connection, feel lost, alone, hopeless and helpless, draw me back into your loving arms, which is the only place where I can find true love, peace and rest. Amen***

**I pray not only for them but also for those who believe in me because of their message. I pray that they may all be one. John 17:20**

Acts 22:30,  
23:6-11

Psalm 16:1-2a, 5,  
7-11

John 17:20-26

Before our Lord Jesus was betrayed, He made his final and all important prayer, "I pray not only for them but also for those who believe in me because of their message. I pray that they may all be one..."

Through his sermons and miracles God's love became a real experience to people. The Lord Jesus interceded for those who loved God and believed in his word, for them to experience the love of God and for mercy to flow through all their inner being.

Those who believe and surrender to God are blessed and that promise is lasts forever. We struggle day and night, mentally and physically when we undergo a crisis, and pray to God for a speedy answer. What does the Lord Jesus do? He who resides on right hand side of God, intercedes for those who believe in Him and God's plan is revealed through the Holy Spirit. This is the greatest blessing that one can have. God provides what we need, protects us and guides us to fearless and stress free life. We will face problems but have the strength and grace to face them with a smile.

It is mentioned on the Acts of the Apostles about a challenge St. Paul had to face. His sermon resulted in a division between the Pharisees and Sadducees. In this crisis St. Paul heard God's voice "Do not be afraid! You have given your witness for me here in Jerusalem and do the same in Rome." The one who surrenders to God in a crisis hears his voice and is blessed.

This was a real life experience. I received a call from a friend who informed me of a bicycle which was up for sale. He also mentioned I had to act fast. As soon as I received the message I started to discern the mind of God on this bicycle. In an instant the name of a priest came to my mind. He recommended a nun who runs a care home. The nun called me and said that she was in desperate need of a bicycle to transport goods for a care home. The bicycle was handed over to the nun. The divine invention that the Lord Jesus had with the Father became a reality. We will hear his voice, once we belong to him.

***Prayer: Abba Father, I leave my free will at the foot your Son's cross and I completely surrender to your will. Let me be the blessed to hear your voice in my crisis. Amen***

.....do you truly love me?

John 2: 15

Acts 25:13–21

Psalm 103:1–2,  
11–12, 19–20b

John 21:15–19

The Risen Lord asks St. Peter a question three times, "Peter, do you love me?" Peter gives the same answer, three times, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you."

Peter truly loved the Lord. But it was with his strength. Peter had confidence in himself, his personality, his capability and his courage. The Lord permitted Satan to tempt Peter, to break him and make him (Luke 22: 31) and he falls into the trap of denying the Lord Jesus, three times.

When the Lord Jesus met Peter for the first time He said, "Peter I will make you catch men." Then He said, "Peter you are the rock and on that rock I will built my Church." What Peter did not know was that it was not possible, by his strength. Therefore the Lord Jesus allows Peter to fall and makes him realise his limitations. Finally, Peter realises that he cannot go any further with his strength. Broken and shattered internally, he comes to Galilee and goes back to his old job.

Once again, the Risen Lord comes looking for Peter near the Sea of Tiberias. He ministers to him and asks Peter three times, "Peter, do you love me?" Peter would have remembered how much the Lord Jesus loved him, even when he denied him. Peter replies to Him, "Yes Lord, you know that I love you." The Lord Jesus says feed my sheep; be a shepherd. Though he does not express it in words, Peter's thoughts would have been, "I don't have the power and strength to be a rock or to be a shepherd and tend men." In John 21: 18, he receives his reply.

The way I see it, the younger you are, the greater will be your strength, power and capability. Old age is a time when you lose all of it. Peter has passed that young age and was now old. The Lord Jesus says, "...but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." (John 21:18) As I understand this someone else is the Holy Spirit. The Risen Lord is telling Peter, "Do not be afraid. The Holy Spirit will make you a rock and make you the shepherd who will tend His flock." Today the Lord Jesus Christ will give us the experience of His love and the strength to love and forgive.

**Prayer: Abba Father, for us to be a shepherd, grant to us the gift of the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

If you keep my commandments you will remain in my love

**John 15:10**

Acts 1:15–17,  
20–26

Psalms 113:1–8

John 15:9–17

In today's Gospel reading the Lord Jesus is telling us that "As the Father has loved me so have I loved you, Now remain in my love" (John 15:9). The Lord is the revelation of who God is. He is the revelation of the Father, and God is love (1 John 4:8). So the first thing that the Lord Jesus reveals to us is His love. This is why the first step in the Four Steps is 'Come as you are, I love you.'

We come to Him in and through His love. St. Paul tells us that God loved us while we were still sinners (Romans 5:8). We must do it to believe that God loves us. No matter what the situations may tell us, no matter what our feelings and emotions may tell us, we are loved by God. We accept this love into our hearts. We believe it. We believe in the promises of God that nothing can separate us from this love (Romans 8:35)

As we give the truth of our hearts and as we surrender our lives to him with the power of the Holy Spirit this love starts to become more and more real in our hearts. The Christian life is not just for us to have spiritual highs and to experience emotions. In today's Gospel reading the Lord Jesus is inviting us to do something, the fact is, He is not just inviting us but he is commanding us "My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you"(John 15:12). The Lord loved us by dying for us on the Cross.

How can we love like this? The cross was the symbol of self denial and total surrender to God. As we give our lives to God and experience His love. All earthly things and humane ways of trying to love ourselves will not seem to matter anymore. We go into a death experience so that we can love others as the Lord Jesus has loved us. This has to start with our own family members. We can be willing to love and die for criminals on the streets and sinners lost in the world, but it is difficult to accept our own family members and love them for who they are. Today, the Lord Jesus is inviting us to love them as he has loved us and forgive them as he has forgiven us.

**Prayer: Abba Father, as we come as we are and believe in your love we give the truth of our hearts. It is impossible for us to love like this. We are weak humane beings caught up in our own nature and sinfulness. Father in and through the power of your Holy Spirit give us the grace to love as you have loved us. Thank you for doing that in and through our lives. Amen**

**He breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit"**

Acts 2:1-11  
Psalm 104:1, 24,  
29-31, 34  
Romans 8:8-17  
John 20:19-23

In the Gospel of St. John and in the world of the Spirit, the Holy Spirit was granted on Easter Sunday. However, in the world of time and space, the event occurred 50 days later, at the feast of Pentecost. There always seems to be a gap between proclamation and materialization; in between, a gestation period, a time of darkness, and a time of trust. Just like the time between the appearance of lightning and the sound of thunder, both manifestations are part of one and the same phenomenon, yet in the world of time and space, manifested at two different times.

The Gospel reading describes the events that took place on Easter Sunday. With the body of Our Lord Jesus going missing, the authorities must have been in a mad frenzy, probably doing house to house searches. It's no wonder the disciples were behind locked doors, trembling in fear, not knowing what to do. And who comes into the locked room?

The Lord reminds me that he can enter locked rooms. This locked room may be my closed up heart, locked because of past regrets, circumstances or like the disciples, because of fear. The Lord can enter this place that no one else can enter. The gift he brings with him is peace. The Lord reminds me that locked doors are no obstacle for Him.

Our Lord Jesus enters the locked room and shows them his wounds. The wounds were the result of the shrewd manipulation of the system by people with influence and authority, who were far more capable and cunning than the disciples who came from Galilee. After the resurrection the same wounds were the sign that implied that no matter how shrewd, astute and powerful one is, no one can defeat God. God uses acts of selfishness and manipulation as His stepping stones. God cannot be defeated.

Then Our Lord gives them a mission. They are to take his place in the world. For this purpose, he breathes on them and says "Receive the Holy Spirit". In Genesis, breathing on to the clay figure made the body and soul come alive. In the Gospel of John, breathing on the disciples made their spirits come alive.

The second reading says that those in the flesh, those who are work-

ing from the body and soul paradigm, no matter how virtuous they may be, cannot please God. St. Paul claims that if the Spirit of God lives in us, we are carried beyond the life of the body and soul, into the life of the Spirit. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit was an act initiated by Our Lord Jesus. He had to breathe on His disciples.

The disciples are to go out into the world and forgive sins. Sin has blinded men to the world of God. In the gospel of John, sin is not just breaking a law. Sin is unbelief. For example, unbelief that God can provide joy and pleasure, and substituting that with the belief that the greatest joy and pleasure come from indulging in sexual or other desires. By granting the power to forgive sin, Our Lord Jesus is granting the power to breakthrough into this world of unbelief. Breakthroughs that bring people caught up in the deceit of sinful pleasure to faith. Haven't we seen this happening time and again in the Four Steps retreats and at our prayer meetings? People caught up in the rational world, coming into faith in a moment, when years and years of arguments had failed. Our Lord Jesus also warns us that whoever we do not forgive are condemned to live within the limitations of the rational world. In a way, do we not we carry the responsibility of the world of unbelief that exists around us?

The gentle breath of Our Lord Jesus described in the Gospel has become a mighty wind in the first reading. The disciples are endowed with the gift of tongues and they are praying under the leading of the Holy Spirit. Since the Jews gathered in Jerusalem understood the discourse, we know the content of this Spirit led prayer. The prayer is a proclamation of the mighty deeds of God. The prayer is a remembering of who God is and what He is capable of. This is what creates the environment for signs and wonders.

The Jews are in awe. "How can these uneducated Galileans speak our language?" Don't we witness this time and again at our Retreats and Prayer Meetings? People come up and claim "it was as though the word was spoken directly to me". Words declared under the leading and anointing of the Holy Spirit don't simply tickle the intellect. The Holy Spirit himself takes the word and teaches it within the heart of the listeners. They hear it in their own language.

Pentecost is not just about the empowerment to ministry. The second reading says that Pentecost results in a deep intimacy with God. "The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God". The experience of Our Lord Jesus at the Jordan, a deep revelation in our hearts that God is our Father happens to us.

***Prayer: Breathe on me breath of God, breathe on me. I come alive, I am alive when you breathe on me. Awake, awake my Spirit, Lord resurrect these bones. From death to life for you alone, awake my Spirit. Amen***

“I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!”

Mark 9:24

James 3:13–18

Psalms 19:8–10, 15

Mark 9:14–29

When everything is going our way, it is easy for us to declare that we have faith. How does our faith grow? We may say, “Oh Lord, I have great faith in You!” but it is only when we cannot see the answer, when there is uncertainty that we find out what our faith is actually made of. It is in those times, when things are beyond our own abilities and control that we can measure our faith.

Looking back at my life, there have been many a time when I assumed I had got it all together. I thought I would never have to doubt or question the Lord’s loving presence in my life. Maybe others would fall into sin but not me. Just then, along would come a crisis or a temptation that would completely rock my boat. This is when I realized that I do not really believe in the Lord Jesus. I do not believe that He is able to give me an answer so I frantically search for my own solutions. I do not believe that He is able to fulfill every need I have in my heart, for love, security, worth and value, so I desperately try to get other people and things to fill those empty spaces.

Eventually, all of these answers I have found for myself and things that I had lined up to get my needs fulfilled fail me and let me down. This has motivated me to search and explore, pray, read and at times have forced me to trust when I just cannot see the answer or things do not make sense. I have come away from the crisis with a little more faith than before.

What is very important is not to feel ashamed about our lack of faith and condemn ourselves but to be honest before the Lord about our doubts. It is only when we stop faking and start facing them that we can grow in deeper faith. The good news is that when we face up to our faltering faith and admit it that is when we give God room to do only what He can do. The Lord Jesus did not say to the father of the epileptic boy “Sorry, you don’t have enough faith. He went ahead and healed him. God is not threatened by our doubts. He openly embraces those with honest doubts that are seeking answers. God delights in increasing the faith of His children. Let us say, “I believe, I don’t understand it all, but I’m willing to learn and hang in there until I do.

**Prayer:** *Abba Father, I come to you with the state of my faith. Sometimes I am fully in love with you and at other time relying on my strength and abilities. Today I come to you as I am. Renew my faith and restore my inner sight. Amen*

**“So submit yourselves to God. Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you”  
James 4:7**

James 4:1–10

Psalms 55:7–11a, 23

Mark 9:30–37

The first reading today is an account of the epistles of St. James. It is full of tough advice on how to live a true Christian life. The writing gives the reader a sense of condemnation but with love to help the early Christians deal with trials and temptations with patience and perseverance.

The reading today has the same loving but strong message to all of us. It is asking us to denounce sin, repent and return to God. St. James speaks strongly on various sins including pride, hypocrisy, favouritism and slander among many. He says boldly that to be a lover of the world means enmity with God! Over 2000 years, the world still revolves around these same sinful situations where nations rise against nation and people against people. Today, we are still struggling with the same sins that plagued the early Christians.

St. James gives us the answer to a true Christian life in this same teaching. “So submit yourselves to God. Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you” – James 4:7. Unfortunately, our sinful nature does not allow us to resist the devil easily for we are consumed by what is around our natural environment and what the world’s standards expect us to be. We are drawn by the false promises of the world to be accepted and adulated.

In the same way, in the Gospel reading today, the Lord Jesus also gives us an answer to a holy Christian life. The Lord reads the minds of his disciples as they have been arguing among themselves as to who would be the greatest among them. The Lord speaks to them through the example of a little child. This is the lesson for us today. What are the characteristics of a little child? They are innocent, truthful, trusting obedient and devastatingly honest. The Lord Jesus is inviting us to humble ourselves to accept and even learn from a little child. This is true humility.

St. James says, “God gives grace to the humble; humble yourselves before God and He will exalt you” When God exalts us, there is no room for the devil to create sin in our lives. Therefore, here is the way in which we can resist the devil. Let us die to ourselves and be resurrected with humility and become little children in the eyes of God.

***Prayer: Abba Father, give me a heart of true humility so that sin will have no place in me. Amen***

**Let the Lord be our guide**

James 4:13-17

Psalm 49:2-3, 6-11

Mark 9:38-40

The Bible tells us in Mark 7:15 "It is not what goes into your body that defiles you; you are defiled by what comes from within your heart." Your heart's condition depends on the things you allow into your heart. It is what comes from inside you that forms your thoughts, attitudes and shape the deepest part of your being. No matter what your circumstances are on the outside, if your heart is

right, then you are pleasing to God.

The Lord speaks to us in the first reading by saying "What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. We ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that" (James 4:14-15). We are reminded of how short our lives are. Lalith Thaththa spoke about a man who heard God asking him what the purpose of his life was. This man did not have a relationship with the living God and therefore had no idea what the purpose of his life was. The Lord revealed to him that his life here on earth could be a mere 70-80 years, whilst he had to spend eternity with God. The present life was just a preparation for his eternal life with God. The Lord is telling us the same thing today. Our lives are just a preparation for eternal life. We must seek the will of God for our lives, instead of filling our hearts with the things of this world. All we have to ask God is "what is your will for me?"

The first reading continues, "When a man knows the right thing to do and does not do it, he sins." (James 4:17). Sins are not just what we commit but also what we omit. God not only sees the things we do and say but what we don't say or do not do. Before we were created, the Lord prepared a life of good deeds for each of us to do (Eph 2:10). He holds us accountable to do all of these deeds. If you are sinning by omission it is not pleasing to God.

Today, God is calling you to seek His mind in everything. Be it about what you do and what you do not do; about your family or your career; about your finances or even your holidays and time off. God has a plan for everything in your life. Even about the minute decisions in your life. Ask Him and He will lead you. For Proverbs 3:6 tells us "Seek God's will in all you do, and He will show you the path to take."

**Prayer:** *Abba Father, I place my life in Your hands. Prepare me for my eternal life with You by guiding me through the big and minute moments of my life. Amen.*

**“Keep salt in yourself for peace with one another”**

James 5:1–6

Psalm 49:14–20

Mark 9:41–50

Salt, in food we eat tickles the taste buds. The meal then becomes delicious and enjoyable. Saltless food on the other hand makes eating an unsavoury experience. This simile of salt in the Gospel reading is to reveal a truth with regard to human relationships. Is it not wonderful to come home to a family where each becomes a source of delight to the other? A smile and laughter in a family brings well-being and joy to our soul and healing to our psyche.

In our neighbourhood too, would not things be better than what they are right now? In today's society there is little or no communication or interaction. The privacy we seek has led us to exist behind high walls, high apartment blocks and CCTV cameras, making us prisoners of the environment we have created. Those were the days when neighbourhood boys and girls played cricket with uncles and aunties joining in to cheer. Where has it all gone? Today most people do not care what is happening next door. The result is restlessness within. Fear and suspicion follow soon after.

Today's Gospel is therefore about relationships. God is concerned about it. There is even talk of cutting off or losing a limb in any part of us. Be it a habit, an attitude or way of life it has to be severed if it distorts the command to love and be concerned about others. Anything that goes against God's command can create distortion of life and death results. Giving a cup of water as mentioned, is not about giving the easiest or least costly item but it is about being concerned about the other's thirst, predicament or need.

In today's reading, St. James gives a warning to the rich. He makes us take a hard look at the things we have taken for granted. We measure people's worth by the things they possess. The Gospel cautions us that it is not to be so. I am reminded of three persons who reached the pinnacle in the corporate world. This is what they told me. "It can be scary at times up there. The competition and subterfuge take their toll on one's health and state of mind. The warning of the conscience is generally ignored to play the charade of monopoly. Fear rules their lives. Thankfully, they realized they had to operate out of the box. They began to reach out for the truth.

**Prayer: Abba Father, open my heart to this new spirituality of sharing what I have been given with those in need. Amen**

## The two will become one flesh

Mark 10:8

James 5:9-12

Psalm 103:1-4,  
8-9, 11-12

Mark 10:1-12

One day a younger brother cried and told the elder brother "our parents are going to divorce. The elder brother said "Don't cry most of my friends' parents are divorced. It's normal for parents to divorce.

When the Pharisees questioned the Lord Jesus "Is it lawful to divorce? The Lord goes back beyond the Pharisees beyond Moses, beyond the law and takes us right back to the dawn of creation, the very beginning of the human race and he shows how God Himself initiated marriage. Before God established nations, kingdoms, governments, or before He instituted the church He initiated marriage. God being the designer, He has a purpose and a plan for marriage. Many marriages fail because people are not aware of God's plan and purpose. This plan is revealed to us in today's readings.

God created man in His image. Deuteronomy 6:4 "Here O Israel, the Lord your God says the Lord is one". Three persons are one God. The Lord Jesus says "for this reason a man will unite with his wife that the two will become one flesh so that they are no longer two but one. How does this happen? In the sacrament of matrimony the Lord Jesus enters into their lives as the third person. They are no longer two but three. The book of James says 'Don't grumble against each other, be truthful in communication and be faithful to one another until death parts you'. Be patient in suffering. This can be done only if we experience the Lord Jesus as the third person in our marriages. When a person is misunderstood, rejected and goes through pain and suffering there is a third person the Lord Jesus to whom we can turn. Then we can cast all our burdens on Him and He will sustain us, love us, understand us, comfort us and forgive us. Then we will experience the love, peace and joy that come from the Lord who lives in us. That in turn leads to oneness between spouses. It is a new life spurred by forgiving, loving and accepting each other from the hands of the Lord. It is not knowledge; it is not skills but the Lord who partners together.

Marriage and celibacy are both callings from God to live a consecrated life. That is to live as married couples or as singles who belong not to each other but to God.

**Prayer: Abba Father make us one as You are one. Amen.**

**Dedicate yourself to the poorest of the poor**

James 5:13–20

Psalm 141:1–3, 8

Mark 10:13–16

We celebrate today the feast of St Eugene de Mazenod, Bishop and founder of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI) whose missionaries have been doing wonderful work in Sri Lanka for several decades. We remember specially the martyr Fr. Michael Rodrigo who worked among the poorest of the poor in Mooneragala to bring about interreligious dialogue and unity. We also remember Fr. Tissa Balasuriya who founded the Centre for Society and Religion and left behind for the congregation a 60 acre land at Andiambalama. We also remember Fr. Marcelline Jayakody who is revered not only by Christians but also by Buddhists who see him as a Priest in the temple because of his amazing contribution to the country's traditional music, culture, and literature.

Charles-Joseph-Eugène de Mazenod was born in August 1782 in France. Eugene's schooling was interrupted by the French Revolution, which forced the family to flee to Italy. There and later Eugene lived like a nobleman with luxuries and extravagance looking for money, pleasure and a rich wife. But he found his life was empty so he began to search for meaning in more regular church involvement, reading and personal study, and charitable work among prisoners. His journey came to a climax on a Good Friday, when he was 25. He was ordained as a priest in December 1811. As a member of the Seminary, notwithstanding personal risk, Eugene committed himself to serve and assist Pope Pius VII, who at this time was a prisoner of emperor Napoleon I at Fontainebleau.

Significantly, as Pope Francis is telling the clergy today, Father de Mazenod asked not to be assigned to a parish but to dedicate himself fully to evangelizing those who were not being touched by the structures of the local church: the poor, prisoners, youth, the inhabitants of poor villages. His constant message was to invite people to enter into the same experience of Jesus the Saviour that he had at his conversion. Looking at everyone through the eyes of the Saviour, he showed the poor the human and spiritual dignity that was theirs.

**Prayer:** *Abba Father instead of just celebrating the feasts of saints may we learn from their selfless and sacrificial lives dedicated totally to You. May we cooperate with you and with Pope Francis in the New Pentecost of building the church of the poor. Amen.*

**“But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes,  
He will guide you into all the truth.”**

**John 16:13**

Proverbs 8:22–31

Psalms 8:4–9

Romans 5:1–5

John 16:12–15

The truth and mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is the fundamental dogma on which everything in Christianity is based. Every Christian is baptised in the Name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, the Three Divine Persons but One and the same eternal, incomprehensible God. This is a mystery that cannot be fully grasped with intellect alone. It is only through faith that we accept, understand and celebrate the Most Holy Trinity, to whom we have received access through Baptism. We shall be able to properly understand this mystery only in heaven, when we share the life of God, in union with Christ Jesus.

This Feast is celebrated on the Sunday after Pentecost. The placement of this Feast at this particular time of the liturgical calendar makes it seem as a finale to all preceding Feasts, namely Christmas, Epiphany, Easter, Ascension and Pentecost. All three Persons who form the Holy Trinity shared the work of Redemption. The Father, the First Divine Person sent His son, the Second Divine Person, begotten from the nature of the Father from eternity, to earth. The Third Divine Person, the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. The human mind, however super-intelligent or philosophical, cannot fully fathom this sublime truth except in faith.

Today's First Reading is about Divine Wisdom. This Wisdom was personified in the life of the Lord Jesus, who became equal to us in every way except sin. The unfailing union the Lord Jesus had with His Father, was because He lived in the reality of Divine Wisdom explained in the First Reading and not in what was happening around Him, nor in His own feelings. The very same Wisdom became the love and understanding that existed between the Father and the Son, namely the Holy Spirit.

In the Gospel reading the Lord Jesus speaks to His disciples who are confused and troubled by the news of the impending end to their Master's life. The Lord understood that their minds could not grasp the divine truths at that moment. So He informed about the Spirit of truth that was to fill them after He was glorified through His death and Resurrection.

This is true for all of us. We can go on reading the Bible from cover

to cover several times and memorise its contents, but the words will not mean much to us unless the Holy Spirit opens our mind and heart, by first awakening our spirit. How does this happen? We must accept the love of the Father as said in Romans 8:39, that “neither height nor depth, not anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Then we believe that He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight, in love (cf. Ephesians 1:4). We accept that we have redemption through the blood of the Son whom the Father loves and was sent to the world, and that we have forgiveness of sin not because of our good works but through faith in Him who gave His life for us and was raised up to life, defeating sin and death forever.

When we believe in this Gospel of our salvation, we are included and marked in Christ, with a seal, promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance of eternal glory (cf. Ephesians 1:13). It is only through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us, that the Scripture comes alive for us and we are empowered to see a different reality in life. The Holy Spirit is the counsellor who reveals the mind of our Lord Jesus, who is one with the Father. We will still be able to trust in God's goodness in suffering, rejection, poverty and loss of our loved ones. We receive this amazing grace to have hope that does not put us to shame because we have had a divine encounter and continue to have a relationship with the Risen Christ, and are being enriched daily by the wealth of God's promises in the Scripture. We realise that we have been created to live millions of years with the Holy Trinity and we are called to holiness in this life as a preparation for eternity.

Let us choose to believe in the eternal unfailing goodness of God the Father who created and maintains this whole universe, who asks us to trust Him like He invited the Son to trust Him even unto death on a cross. Let us choose to accept forgiveness of sin won for us by the Precious Blood of God the Son, who has proven to us through His glorious resurrection and ascension to heaven, that the joyful submission to the Father's will is the best way for us, even when we cannot understand His ways. Let us long for God the Holy Spirit into our lives. He gives us Divine Wisdom to face each moment of our life just the way the Lord Jesus did, during His earthly life. This is the best way we can bear witness to the Gospel that we believe. This is the best tribute we can offer the Most Holy Trinity.

***Prayer: Abba Father, we pray today, fill us with your Holy Spirit, that we have an awakened spirit to hear Your voice, feel Your love and be led by You alone. Amen***

He has given us a living HOPE through the resurrection.

1 Peter 1:3-9

Psalms 111:1-2, 5-6,  
9-10c

Mark 10:17-27

In the first reading today, the inheritance of Christians brought to my mind the word preached by Lalith Thaththa on Holy Saturday during our morning programme in the 40 days of lent. The message awakened me to this one word "HOPE".

From the beginning of history we have been given this proclamation that 'God is good.' The

Bible says that when God created Adam and Eve He looked at everything and said it was good. So the Goodness of God is a divine revelation. But we face impossible situations on a daily basis. Someone in some form is dealing with a severe crisis, death, terminal illness, divorce, disappointment, injustice, shame, rejection, judgment, financial crisis or addiction. How do we deal with it?

We suppress these problems, ignore them and pretend that bad things do not happen to us. We try to find reason to protect and insulate ourselves. We begin to question why bad things are happening if God is good. How do we reconcile this with our own understanding? That is Holy Saturday for all of us. God is calling for us to sit at the feet of the Lord in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament.

In the book of Corinthians St. Paul says that the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength. We are called to open the eyes of our spirit to see and be made aware of what God is doing in our lives.

Often we go to God in search of inner peace and happiness. We become just like the young man who had everything and did all that was right with God. He knew the Abba Father was a good Father. But when the Lord asked him to sell off all his wealth and give it to the poor, he walked away as he was clinging on to material things just like all of us do. How often do we look for the coin in our purse, to drop it in the collection time at mass, while all the big notes make a bundle in our purses? Do we not spend these notes on people who have plenty and on our likeness to be in par with them? But when the crisis hits we run to God. The Lord Himself is the greatest treasure we can have. Let us choose to give up everything else, to have the Lord as our treasure.

**Prayer:** *Abba Father, you have captured my heart and opened me to the treasures of heaven and may nothing else keep me from giving you my all. Amen.*

## "Be holy because I am holy"

1 Peter 1:16

1 Peter 1:10–16

Psalm 98:1–4

Mark 10:28–31

Today's first reading invites us to a life of holiness; "Be holy in all that you do just as God who called you is holy." We find this in Matthew 5:48 too; "You must be perfect just as your Father in heaven is perfect". As I read this, I asked the Lord; "Isn't this standard too high for me? How is it possible for me to be as perfect as you Lord?" But the Lord spoke to me; "I know you and the struggles in your heart. I know you cannot do this on your own. If you try, you will fail. But "remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me" (John 15:4). Let my holiness be poured out into your heart by the power of the Holy Spirit."

When the Lord revealed this, my doubts and struggles of trying to be holy disappeared. A beautiful way to remain in Him is to enter into His presence through the four steps. When we go to Him as we are and give the truths of our hearts, He forgives us, cleanses us and makes us right with Him. The words says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness"- 1 John 1:9. Once we are made right with Him, we surrender ourselves completely into the hands of the Lord and remain in Him to be filled by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will bring His holiness into our lives and will make it shine in us and through us.

The Gospel reading tells us that to follow Jesus whole heartedly, we must leave behind everything; that is to let go of our own will and plans and surrender ourselves completely into His hands seeking His will; so that we will inherit the treasures in heaven. We find this in the Gospel of St. Matthew Chapter 6:33 "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." However, following Jesus also involves persecution and rejection because of the world we live in. "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world"- John 16:33. But the very life of Jesus shows that if there is no suffering and no death then there will be no resurrection. So let us seek and follow Him wholeheartedly even if we are to suffer, accepting that from the hands of the Lord knowing He is with us and He will take us through towards the end result of victory the Lord Jesus won on the cross.

**Prayer:** *Abba Father, give us the grace to come before you every day and to remain holy by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen*

**To be a true disciple of the Lord Jesus**

1 Peter 1:18–25

Psalm 147:12–15,  
19–20

Mark 10:32–45

A few days ago we celebrated the feast of Pentecost. The disciples who were together were filled with the Holy Spirit and as they spoke thousands began to believe in the Lord Jesus. They were not hesitant even to give up their lives for the sake of their Master. All the apostles became martyrs except St. John. Then in today's Gospel, why are we once again reminded of the betrayal, death and resurrection of Jesus and that whoever wants to be first must be slave of all? Let us look into our lives.

The Lord Jesus loved us while we were still sinners and called us by name while we were totally lost in this world. His merciful love saved us and we were filled by His Holy Spirit. We who were 'with Christ', experienced the beautiful experience of being 'in Christ'. Our hearts were filled with His love, peace and joy. We started to serve the Lord Jesus with so much of freedom, love and joy in our hearts. There was always a song of praise in our hearts and we were ready to do anything for the Lord, even a minute thing. We were ready to be little, insignificant for the sake of the Lord Jesus.

Yet, after some time, even without our knowledge, did not what was hidden for years in our unconscious and sub conscious minds surface? Did we not seek recognition and acceptance from others? Did not our thoughts, imaginations deceive us and we fell into the trap of thinking that we are superior or better than the others and deserve a better place, just as the apostles of the Lord Jesus, James and John thought in today's Gospel? Quietly did we not once again move from 'in Christ' to 'with Christ'? The Lord Jesus is speaking to us through the Gospel today. He tells us to be His true disciples. We need to be little, simple and that whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. (Mk.10: 44)

How can we be a true disciple of Christ? The answer is in today's first reading. St. Peter reminds us that we were redeemed by the empty way of life of sin that was handed down to us from generation to generation by the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. (Pet. 1, 18-19) Thus, daily we need to approach the throne of grace, the Lord Jesus and let Him cleanse us by His Precious blood. **Prayer: We sing praises to your name. Lead us this day to trust you, believe in you and continue to hold on to your Word that stands forever. Amen.**

**“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood...”**

**1 Peter 2: 9**

1 Peter 2:2-5, 9-12

Psalms 100:2-5

Mark 10:46-52

Today is the feast day of Saint Philip Neri and the church celebrates the memorial of his life. Saint Philip Neri a priest was a sign of contradiction, combining piety with popularity against a corrupt Rome and a disinterested clergy. It was wrongly felt by many that such an attractive, jocular personality as Saint Philip could not be combined with an intense spirituality. Philip always wanted

his followers to become not less, but more human through their striving for holiness. Happily, Philip's life melts our rigid, narrow views of piety. .

The first Reading from the first letter of Saint Peter too gives us clear advice of striving for that purity of heart, ridding ourselves of an evil nature coming from the world.. Be that living stone that God intended you to be, a holy nation a people set apart, as he has called us out of darkness into His wonderful light. These saints are Gods people who responded to that call.

Every dream is fulfilled after an encounter with Him. In my life, looking back ,I did not how blind I was until I searched for him and encountered Him at a Retreat I attended some 30 years ago which changed me completely. I was liberated from the burden I seemed to have been carrying inside me. Suddenly my life had a deep purpose and a meaning. It is this transformation from darkness to light that continues to empower me to meet the challenges in every sphere of my life, be it my professional career, my family or my community.

Building that relationship with God after an encounter with him renews us in the very depths of our beings. The high pressure of living in this world is taken away. It is said that the planet Jupiter has a continuous raging storm beneath its surface and therefore no life can exist there. Our own lives are like till the Holy Spirit liberates us. In the Gospel of St Mark the blind man Bartimaeus craved to meet Jesus , nothing could stop him from shouting out , asking for mercy, and the Lord's immediate response, ' your faith has healed you'. Immediately he received his sight he followed Jesus along the road. We too have this opportunity to see God clearly and experience transformation in our lives as we cry out to Him and receive a touch of His love.

***Prayer: Lord I thank you for your merciful love that brings transformation in my life and enables me to live my life to the fullest. Amen***

**We can do everything through the strength God provides**

1 Peter 4:7-13

Psalm 96:10-13

Mark 11:11-25

Today's first reading from St. Peter tells us to offer hospitality to people without grumbling, use our gifts and talents to serve others and to only speak the words of God. The question is; how can we do this when our internal nature screams at us to hurt those who hurt us and to use the talents He has given us to pursue glory and happiness for ourselves? The answer is "through the strength

God provides" (v. 11).

God is asking us to live a 24 hours in the Spirit, connected to Him and when we do this He will give us the strength to do what we cannot do by ourselves. The secret to living like this is prayer. It sustains us throughout the day and enables us to live the rest of the day in His presence. Then what we could not do by our own strength becomes effortless because of the strength of God; we will be able to offer hospitality without grumbling, use our gifts to serve others and speak the very words of God. When we live in the Spirit, God will be praised and glorified.

There have been many a time during my journey that I served others with my strength, sang hymns and even proclaimed the Word of God with my strength. I relied solely on myself. But when small mishaps and disagreements took place, I would fall. When I was rejected it would be the end of my world. I would crumble internally and question God. It is then that God taught me that I could not do anything by my own strength. He had not created me to do things on my own. When I turned to Him; loving others even when they hurt and rejected me was easy because I now did it by His strength and grace. When we live in the Spirit, God will turn everything around for His glory.

The Gospel reading gives us a glance into the Lord Jesus' faith in God. He wants us to have that same faith. 2 Corinthians 3:18 tells us that when we gaze on the Lord we will become like Him. Then with His faith and without any doubt in our hearts we will be able to tell a mountain to move and it will be done. God is offering each of us a life of strength through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. All we have to do is sit at His feet and gaze upon Him.

***Prayer: Abba Father, a thousand times I've failed, still Your mercy remains. My heart yearns to live 24 hours of the day with You. Please give me the grace to sit at Your feet and only gaze upon Your face. Amen.***

So they answered Jesus, "We don't know."

Mark 11:33

Jude 17, 20–25

Psalm 63:2–6

Mark 11:27–33

Today's Gospel proves that the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom. (cf 1 Cor 1:25). The Lord Jesus who lived His whole life in the Spirit, confronts the chief priests and elders, who banded together to defeat this carpenter, uneducated in the world's standards and unqualified in their eyes. The simple question asked by the Lord caused much discomfort and confusion

in their minds, acting as a double-edged sword, making them give a cowardly answer, totally unworthy of their status.

In the First Reading St Jude appeals to the believers to build their faith and pray in the Holy Spirit. This is what made the Lord Jesus differ from the religious authorities. The Lord had an intimate relationship with His Father and an unwavering trust in the Father. Each morning He "climbed the mountain", to commune with the Father, and then came down to the "valley", filled with the Holy Spirit, to interact with the world, the truths of the Father's Kingdom fully alive in His Heart. So the words He spoke were the Father's words, revealed to Him by the Holy Spirit. Those who live totally in the worldly realm can only see, hear, think and perceive as they are led by the flesh and ego. Hence the Jewish elders and religious authorities felt threatened by the Lord Jesus and His words, which caused confusion rather than clarity in their minds.

The Risen Lord invites us today to make this transition at least now, to a life in the Spirit. Have we failed the Lord and run away, sunk deep in sin and addictions, and feel that God will not accept sinners like us who repeatedly fall into the same pit? If so, let us choose to believe in His words that invite those who are weary and burdened, to receive His rest (cf Matthew 11:28). He assures us further, saying, "For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." (Matthew 9:13) When we feel ashamed to confess in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, let us desire the life in the Spirit and confess all our sins, and receive inner peace and the joy of being forgiven and accepted by the Father. When we feel reluctant to tithe truthfully, as advised in Malachi 3:10, let us choose the Kingdom values and truths as against those of the world. Our reward will be the same as that of the Lord Jesus, being led by the Holy Spirit in our day to day lives.

**Prayer:** *Abba Father, I long to be filled with Your Spirit in a new way, so that I will imitate Your Son. Amen*

**Celebrate the Real Presence of the Lord Jesus**

Genesis 14:18–20

Psalms 110:1–4

1 Corinthians

11:23–26

Luke 9:11–17

It happened a few years ago, a little girl and her family attended one of our Server's programmes. Though from a different faith background, she had heard many testimonies about our Lord Jesus and in faith said, 'Lord I've heard that you are real and alive. If so, show yourself to me.'

As the Blessed Sacrament was exposed, the girl suddenly saw the figure of the Lord Jesus emerging from within the consecrated host. During that time she was also suffering from a medical condition and she was cured of that ailment. She invited her family to join her at the prayer meetings and each of them saw the presence of the Lord Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Ultimately they gave their lives to the Lord Jesus.

The Feast of Corpus Christi (Latin for Body of Christ), also known as Corpus Domini, is a Latin Rite liturgical solemnity celebrating the tradition and belief in the body and blood of Jesus Christ and his Real Presence in the Eucharist. It emphasizes the joy of the institution of the Eucharist, which was observed on Maundy Thursday in the seriousness of Good Friday. So while the institution of the Eucharist happened on Maundy Thursday, the Real Presence of Jesus is celebrated on the Feast of Corpus Christi.

We are reminded of the mystery figure named Melchizedek, King of Salem or King of Jerusalem who appeared before Abram. He brought with him bread and wine which he offered Abram and then pronounced a blessing on him. It was then that Abram gave him a tenth of everything he owned. Melchizedek has been likened to the Lord Jesus and was also called the King of Peace. Our Lord Jesus is the Prince of Peace.

In the second reading taken from Corinthians, St. Paul speaks of the tradition which he hands over to the church where he shares the account of what the Lord Jesus did at the Last Supper, when the Lord Jesus took the bread and wine in His hands. He first looked up and gave thanks to God, and then he broke the bread and shared it with those around Him. The Lord Jesus always put God the Father first, acknowledged His presence giving thanks to Him and then shared the broken bread.

Before that we have the miracle of the multiplication of Bread and

fish which is featured in the reading from the Gospel of St. Luke. This particular incident is mentioned in all four Gospels and the details tally about the five loaves and two fish.

As we look at this miracle we wonder how such a tiny offering could impact the lives of five thousand people. One little boy was willing to offer up his home made meal to the Lord Jesus to be made use of. The little boy had no doubt that his offering would make a difference and in child like faith offered it up. Similarly how could the death of one man save and impact the lives of the world? Through the miracle the Lord Jesus first gave thanks to the Father and then offered the food to the people around him. When the Lord was on the cross he looked to the Heavenly Father, offered up his spirit to Him and His passion and death impacted the whole world. The hunger of the world for the Father's love, mercy and forgiveness was met as one person, humiliated, broken and rejected gave up His love in submission and out of love for humanity.

Today, we see encased in the Blessed Sacrament a tiny piece of wafer like bread, which is the real presence of the Lord Jesus. This insignificant presence brings us healing, forgiveness and mercy. When we spend a few minutes before this miracle, exercising our faith and believing in the presence of the Lord Jesus, our lives are impacted and a beautiful exchange takes place where the Lord Jesus takes our imperfections, weaknesses, inabilities, pains and questions and replaces them with His love, peace and joy.

We also have the chance of receiving the Body and Blood of the Lord Jesus at Holy Mass. Many of us choose to quickly swallow the body of Jesus on our tongues but if we spend time worshipping Him and exercise our faith, we will definitely feel a difference in our lives. When the body and blood of the Lord Jesus is worshipped and adored, oppression is broken and a greater anointing breaks forth. We are also the extended body of the Lord Jesus and the church, therefore when we worship the Lord in His body, the spirit of unity begins to spread, we begin to have true fellowship with the Lord and we are made one with Him.

The Lord said, "Do this in memory of me." It's like a loved one saying if you love me continue to do this even when I have gone. It is with this love that we are invited to attend Mass, believing that we are doing this out of love for our Saviour and not to fulfil an obligation. The Real Presence of the Lord Jesus will come alive in our hearts and we will begin to carry the presence of the Lord wherever we go.

***Prayer: Abba Father, open my inner eyes to experience the Real Presence of your Son in the Holy Eucharist. Amen***

“His divine power has given us everything we need for a Godly life...”

2 Peter 1:3

2 Peter 1:2-7

Psalm 91:1-2, 14-16

Mark 12:1-12

Today we reflect upon the sharing of the Lord Jesus on the parable of the tenants. We can see of how carefully and lovingly the man plants the vineyard, puts up a wall around it, digs a pit for the winepress and builds the watchtower for the tenants, before handing it over to them (Mark 12:1). So much of time, concern and care were put in by the man to build and have everything ready for the tenants. Similarly, God has with so much of love for each and every one of us in the world, already sent His one and only Son that none should perish but have eternal life (John 3:16); the Lord Jesus laid down His life for us (1 John 3:16); and each one of us has been clothed with power from on High through the power of the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49).

No matter how deep our crisis maybe or even how badly we have messed up our lives today, this is the Salvation and the new life that has been won for every one of us, in Christ Jesus. In 2015, Pope Francis celebrated the Maundy Thursday, Holy Mass at Rome's Rebibbia prison. At this Mass the Pope washed the feet of 12 prison inmates and in His homily shared with all the inmates there that the “Lord Jesus never tires of loving us”. The Pope shared that the “Lord Jesus loves each one of us, to the point that He gave His life for us”. So this gift of Salvation and the new life in Christ is freely given to all of us today.

However, just as the tenants did in today's Gospel, the temptation many of us face daily is that while having this gift of Salvation and a new life in Christ, we still keep the ownership of our lives and behave in the way that we know is best. When it comes to crucial decisions which affect our future, when we are being rejected and humiliated, or when we handle our own finances, we could be holding onto our own ways. But today the Lord is reminding us that just as the tenants did not own the vineyard, we do not have ownership of our lives; “For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again!” (2 Corinthians 5: 14 – 15)

**Prayer:** *Abba Father, I thank you that as I surrender the ownership of my life to you, your divine power and precious promises shall give me everything I need! Amen.*

Zephaniah 3:14–18a  
or Romans 12:9–16

Isaiah 12:2–6

Luke 1:39–56

The readings reveal to us two women who were having a deep relationship with their creator. In an era and society where women were not given any prominence and where most prophets and leaders were male, here we have two women shocking us with their revelations and intimate love for God.

From the Gospel readings we assume that Mother Mary was living alone when she had an encounter with Angel Gabriel and though she loved God, would have been feeling vulnerable, ignored and lowly. If her parents were alive she would definitely have chosen them to share her experience of the angel, instead she chose to rush and meet Elizabeth her cousin. However, both these women were having a similar experience and were able to relate to each other and believe the fact that they had had heavenly visitations.

Elizabeth reveals to the Blessed Mother that of all women she is the most Blessed and the blessing is also upon her womb. Further, she talks about Mother Mary's faith journey when she says, "Blessed is she who believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled." Between the visitation and the actual visible sign of God's presence in her womb, Mother Mary would have faced doubts, spiritual warfare and questions but through them, she believed the message given to her. Let us pray for that gift to hold on to promises given to us even when it seems that nothing is happening.

In the Blessed Mother's reply we discover the impact of God on her life. She says, "My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour." The depth of her awe towards God is so beautiful in a time when people had not known the Father God as Abba Father. Here was a woman on an entirely different wave length in love with the Father. And already she calls God her Saviour much before the Lord Jesus has come alive and made His eternal sacrifice. Here was a lady with no access to the sacred writings talking of the promises made to Israel and of her ancestors namely Abraham, and his descendants. Let us always be open to such enlightened servants of God with no theological backgrounds and yet blessed with revelations of God. In a world of titles and power, God chooses the lowly, poor and simple.

**Prayer: Hail Mary, full of grace the Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb Jesus. Amen**

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