“The central purpose of Jesus’ mission, which culminated in the gift of the Holy Spirit, was to renew our relationship with the Father, a relationship severed by sin, to take us from our state of being orphaned children and to restore us as his sons and daughters.”

Pope Francis on Pentecost

Published by:

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

Daily Reflections now available on the internet

Visit crlmain.org or crlmain.com

Read the daily reflection from anywhere in the world
On Our Knees In His Hands

May 2018

Editors:

Lalith Perera
Louis Benedict
Gerard Davey

Co-ordinator:

Felicia Adhihetty

Contributors to this Issue:

Anisha Dias
Asela Perera
Ayomi Jansz
Biyanke Rajapakse
Charmaine Peiris
Darshi Egodawatte De Silva
Geetha Fernando
Himaya Perera
Jayanath Perera
Jeya Chelliah
Kamala Fernando
Kauchi Gunasinghe
Louis Benedict
Marie Navamani
Marie Fernando
Natasha Adhihetty
Nidarshi Fernando
Richie Fernando
Rushika Pieris
Sajee Jayasuriya
Shehana Jayatunga
Scalina Ratwatte
Sunimalee Fernando
Yogini Yogarasa

Subscriptions:

To subscribe for “On Our Knees” please fill in the form included in the back of this book.
In today’s first reading we see Paul accompanied by Barnabas preaching the Gospel in Iconium. In the crowd were some Jews who rose against them and therefore they fled to the Lycaonian cities of Lystra and Derbe and there, they continued to preach the Gospel. However, some Jews from Antioch and Iconium came over there, stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city. But the word of God says after the persecution “they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith” (Acts 14:21-22). This means they fearlessly went back to the people who persecuted them and continued to preach the Gospel. From where did they get this kind of courage? Humanly speaking it is impossible and above all, we all know who Paul was. The very person who persecuted Christians; who held the cloak of the first martyr, was now preaching the Gospel with amazing courage.

Going beyond our human imagination St. Paul says “We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God.”. What was the secret behind his fearless courage? Firstly it was his encounter with the Lord where Saul was converted to Paul. When he encountered the Lord Jesus, his inner being was transformed. Secondly he was filled with the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit that gives us the courage and strength to not only withstand but to overcome any persecution. We too must desire the same; a deep encounter with the Lord and the presence of the Holy Spirit.

A life that experiences the touch of God will never remain the same. If we surrender our lives to the Lord, He takes our lives and uses them for His great purpose and glory. In that process, even if there are persecutions or trials, we will be able to overcome them by the power of the Holy Spirit. In today’s Gospel proclamation we see the Lord Jesus promising the Holy Spirit. We have the advocate, counselor who will always remain with us, guide us, strengthen us and overshadow us with His supernatural power. What we think humanly impossible is possible when we are filled with the Holy Spirit. Like in St. Joseph’s life the Spirit not only gives us the strength but also gives us a heart to give inner responses, going beyond our broken human nature, laying ourselves for others just as Christ did for us.

Prayer: Abba Father, as I journey with You, fill me with Your Holy Spirit so that I will grow deeper to be more like Christ in loving and serving others, Amen!

Psalm 145:21
Wednesday 2nd May

“...I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit...” John 15:5

The Church’s first council was the Jerusalem Council. Presently the Church doctrines which are followed, practiced and taught are of the Second Vatican Council. Over the two millennia’s Church Fathers convened councils in times of heresies to determine the Catholic faith and doctrinal issues. By convening councils the faith which was handed down by the Apostles of Christ Jesus was able to be practiced and lived in the Catholic Church. Thus the original faith of the Apostles and the first Disciples of Christ Jesus is lived by the Catholic faithful presently.

There was a burning issue when the ‘Way of life’ was taken to the Gentiles. Christ Jesus is a Jew who practiced Judaism. His first apostles and disciples were also Jews and they too practiced the Mosaic Law. For the Jewish people the Law of God is important. Their faith is based on the Law of God. Therefore the early apostles and the disciples faced this issue when Christ was preached to the Gentile world; should these Gentiles adhere to the Mosaic Law?

According to the Acts of the Apostles it is clearly stated how the Church Fathers (apostles and disciples) gathered together to bring forth an answer to this burning issue and made it a doctrine of the Church. This doctrine is followed to this day. They came to the settlement that the Gentiles who were accepting Christ Jesus did not need to adhere to the Mosaic Law. Thereafter Circumcision and certain other rituals were considered as unimportant. The Lord Jesus explains it in the Gospel today. What is important is to remain in Him. When we give the first place to Christ Jesus and make Him the centre of our life everything else is perfected. It becomes possible to live a submissive life in obedience to Christ Jesus and in the faith which was handed down to us. Our submission and obedience is our pruning. Our lives become fruitful.

St. Athanasius fought against Arianism, a heresy which denied Christ’s divinity. He remained in the faith and was able to stand firm when necessary. He was considered as a hero because as a young deacon at the Council of Nicea (325) he was recognized as “Arius’ ablest enemy” and the foremost defender of the Church’s faith.

Prayer: Abba Father, grant me the grace to remain in Christ Jesus and to stand firm in the universal faith. Amen
Thursday 3rd May

Feasts of Sts Philip & James, Apostles

Choose the way that leads to God

“I am the way, the truth and the life.” Christ is the answer to our problems. Since he is fully God and fully man, His reality unites humanity to God in a way never before hoped. It is in following Christ that we find our way. It is in believing in Christ that we discover truth. It is in accepting Christ that we gain life. Christians do not simply follow a set of rules or believe in some doctrines, we follow a person: Christ.

Today’s Gospel proclamation stresses that if we choose to obey God’s voice and do His will, then we will know and experience that abundant life which comes from God himself. If we choose to follow our own way apart from God and his will, then we will be choosing death – a spiritual death which poisons and kills the heart and soul until there is nothing left but an empty person devoid of love, truth, goodness, purity, peace, and joy. Do our choices lead u towards God or away from God?

Today’s Gospel proclamation speaks deeply to our hearts. St. Philip’s words echo within us, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.” St. Philip expresses the universal desire of humanity: to stand in the presence of holiness, to behold God, and to be satisfied.

St. Philip reminds us, however, that true satisfaction is not found in our accomplishments, acquisitions, or what we do for ourselves. Satisfaction is not about filling a void. It is about stepping into a new life, God’s life. It is only in seeing the Father that we are healed and made whole, our life is made complete, and we are perfected in the image and likeness of God. In that moment of seeing we are satisfied and we know ourselves to be enough. Nothing is lacking.

This experience happens to many people when they have a near death experience or when they have a touch of God’s love. They begin to see life differently and find meaning in God alone.

Prayer: Abba Father, I thank you for the gift of faith. You know that I believe, but I want my faith to grow. In knowing you I find meaning, rest and strength. I need you, Lord. I trust in your loving mercy. You know what I need the most today. Remain at my side throughout this day. That is enough for me. I want to spend this day making you happy, pleasing you with my every thought, word and action. Amen
In the Gospel reading of today, the Lord Jesus is having his last meal with His disciples before He is arrested and crucified. He is giving them his final words and instructions. He is sharing His heart with them. He tells them, “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you” (John 15:12). The Lord didn’t give them a list of Do’s and Don’ts that He wanted them to observe. He just stressed on one thing, “LOVE”. A couple of chapters before this one, in John 13:35 the Lord says, “By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another”.

Often when people hear “Christian” they think of rules, they think of an intolerant group of self-righteous people who judge people for drinking alcohol, for swearing, wearing a short skirt, being gay etc. We make no effort to hide our displeasure and disapproval.

How did we become more like the Pharisees and religious leaders? We are so focused on our hatred and prejudice of certain things that it blinds us and makes us unable to look beyond them and love the person as our Lord asks us to. We sing in church that “they will know we are Christians by our love” and then look down our noses at those whom we consider as dressed immodestly, or whom we know smoke or a drink secretly.

The Lord was the only one righteous and holy enough to judge and still He judged no sinner. He only judged the self righteous, so-called religious; like us. The moment we judge someone, we immediately lose our ability to see them as God sees them, as the children of the Heavenly Father and we lose our freedom to love them. When tempted let us ask ourselves one simple question “What would Jesus do?” He would lay down His life.

Sacrificial love is the only way we can bear fruit that abides (verse 16). It isn’t our place to fix people who we think are broken. It is our duty as the followers of the Lord Jesus, to love people and pray for them. “You are My friends if you do what I command you” (John 15:14) Broken people were attracted to Jesus, not to the self righteous, judgmental Pharisees. Which one of these two am I?

Prayer: Abba Father, break our hearts of stone and give us hearts like Yours that we may lay down our prejudice in loving and serving one another. Amen.
In this 5th week of Easter the Psalmist is inviting the whole earth to cry out to God with joy. (Ps 100) It is truly an invitation for the Easter people, who have received a new life through the one who suffered, died and rose again from the death so that He may lead us to salvation. Therefore St. Paul is reminding us in Colossians 2:12, that we have been buried with Christ in Baptism, through which we also rose again, by faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.” Let us invite the Lord to sow His Word once more in our hearts today; till patiently the soil of our souls; brings forth a rich harvest, so that all may find nourishment for body and spirit through the lives of His people. In a similar manner we can see in the reading taken from the Acts of the Apostles how the early Church grew stronger in faith and increased in number, every day. They gave their lives to expand the territory of God on earth till the Good News reached to the four corners of the earth.

The Lord Jesus chose us to be advertisements. He chose us to go out to bear fruit, and to bear fruit which will stand the test of time. The way to spread Christianity is to be Christian. The way to bring others into the Christian faith is to show them the fruit of the Christian life. The Lord sends us out, not to force people into Christianity, still less to threaten them into it, but to attract them into it; so to live that its fruit may be so wonderful that others will desire them for themselves. The Lord Jesus chose us to be ambassadors. “I have chosen you”, he said, “to send you out”. He did not choose us to live a life retired from the world, but to represent him in the world. Lord Jesus chose us, first to come into him, and then to go out to the world. And that must be the daily pattern and rhythm of our lives.

The world always suspects nonconformity. It likes a pattern; it likes to be able to label a person and to put him in a pigeon-hole. Anyone who does not confirm to the pattern will certainly meet trouble. It is even said that if a hen with different markings is put among hens that are all alike, the others will peck her to death. The basic demand on the Christian is the demand that he should have the courage to be different. To be different will be dangerous, but no person can be Christian unless he accepts that risk, for there must be a difference between the man of the world and the man of Christ.

Prayer: Abba Father, you have called us to be the salt of the earth, help us. Amen
Today’s readings center on the theme of love. What is love? Most people would say love is the feeling between a man and a woman or a parent and child. The bible teaches us that love is much more than just a feeling between human beings trying to fulfill a need within them.

In God’s view of what love is, others are the recipients of this love and not us. 1 John 3:16 says, “By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.” The Lord calls us to have this same sacrificial love for others. How can we do this? It is when we know His love that we will be able to sacrifice ourselves for others. Do we really know the love of God for us? How many times have we heard that God loves us? Even though we may nod our heads in agreement we may have not experienced His love. We may not know the tangible love of God. Today’s readings give us an insight into this mysterious love of God.

In the first reading from the book of Acts, God is showing us that anyone can receive His love. In those days the Jews thought God was only for them. Prior to this reading, through a dream God shows St. Peter that He can save all humankind and not just Jews. God takes St. Peter to the house of Cornelius, a man who believes in God, but is not baptized.

In verse 34-35, St. Peter says, “I now realize how true it is that God does not show favouritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right.” God’s love is not only a sacrificial love, but is for everyone. God’s love is for all of us. He does not have favourites. He loves all people. He does not categorize people as deserving of His love and others who are not. He does not look at our actions or behaviors, our skin colour or race. He loves all people no matter who they are. It is because of this unconditional love that He filled the Gentile Cornelius with the Holy Spirit. He wants to bless all mankind with the Holy Spirit.

In the second reading, St. John reminds us that God’s love is unlike anything we have ever experienced. He says in verses 9-10, “This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning
sacrifice for our sins.” The love of God is greater than the love of a mother to her children or that between lovers. It was because of the love God had for each of us that He sacrificed His one and only Son that we would be saved. When we know this love of God, we will be able to love others in the same way.

In a crisis we may sometimes wonder if the love of God is real. This is because we look at God from our own experiences and understanding. We may see His love for someone through the favours and blessings He pours out on them and feel that God does not care about us as much as another because we have not received a blessing or favour from Him. The Church teaches us that God is beyond our understanding and knowledge. We cannot know God’s love from our point of view. We must learn about Him from the Bible—His love letter to us.

The Lord speaks to us through the prophet Jeremiah in verse 31:3, “I have loved you with an everlasting love.” He is God and therefore, He does not show His love for us in limited human ways. His love for us can be shown through a struggle we are going through. He puts us in the midst of a problem so we will turn to Him and find true strength in Him. This is the love of God for us. St. Paul says in Romans 8:28, “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” Even in the worst of situations, we are able to experience His goodness and love.

Today’s Gospel proclamation says we can experience the love of God through obeying the commands of God. The Lord Jesus says, “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. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (v10, 12-13).

The Lord is calling us today, to experience His love so that we are able to give it to others. This love we receive from God is a sacrificial love and when we truly experience it, we too are able to sacrifice ourselves for others. When people experience the love of God, they are able to love others without expecting anything in return because they first received God’s love. God’s love for them overflows to others. This is real love.

Prayer: Abba Father, open my eyes to see the abundant love You have for me. May I experience it in everything I do and say. Lord, I pray this love will overflow from me to others. Amen.
How casually does St. Luke refers to the personal intervention of the Holy Spirit! He says so as if that had no other option than to obey His leading (Acts 16:17 is another concrete example of His leading) The Apostles were closely attuned to the Holy Spirit and obeyed Him unconditionally at whatever cost. Phillipi known as ‘Little Rome’ was dominated by Roman customs and privileges to those who conformed to them. There was no synagogue but nothing deterred Paul. He used the bank of a river to address some women gathered there. His preaching so moved them that one of them - Lydia - anointed by the same spirit, invited them to be her guests. She and her family were the first fruits of their mission. showing that an anointing was not limited to oneself but meant to reach out and minister to others. Paul, preaching the radical message of the power of Christ crucified and releasing the anointing of the Holy Spirit was persecuted for his efforts.

In the Gospel proclamation, the Lord Jesus promises to send a Helper who would lead His followers to testify to the truth and be His witnesses. He does not promise them a rose garden - a life of ease, but spells out in graphic details what would happen to them. They would be persecuted and expelled from the community and the synagogue and face death itself. But undaunted St. Paul faced his trials and won a world for Christ.

Today the Holy Spirit is moving in a spectacular way. The church has now grown to be a powerful institution. In a shifting world of compromise and eroding values we are grateful that she is immovable in matters of morals and principles. But somehow the Holy Spirit has been relegated to being a ghost and needs to be awakened. In recent times - praise be to the renewal movements in the Church are addressing this need.

I tremble with fear thinking of the brutal deaths of the martyrs. Thanks be to the renewal movement I have been taught how to face challenges. I need to experience the love of God in the depths of my being which will lead me to trust Him implicitly. In surrender my Lord will help me bear the cross that comes my way and fix my eyes on the glory to come.

Prayer: Abba Father, reawaken my spirit for a new anointing. Amen
Today, we may be praying to God for our family members and friends to encounter Christ. St. Paul gives us an insight in how we can introduce them to God. The first reading from the Acts of the Apostles shows us how much St. Paul and Silas trusted the Lord. Their relationship with God was worth more than any physical torture the officials could put them through. Sitting in prison with their feet in chains, they still managed to praise and glorify God. They were singing hymns and praying while the other prisoners listened. I imagine the other prisoners would have protested when St. Paul and Silas first began praying in loud voices. But as they continued the hearts of the prisoners would have been changed. The jailer was converted when St. Paul says none of the prisoners escaped the prison. St. Paul did not preach a word about God or try to convince those around him. Instead, it was his lifestyle of praise and worship that converted these people. When the jailer asks how he can be saved, St. Paul responds “Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, along with everyone in your household” (v. 31).

It is not through vibrant preaching or arguments, but through a lifestyle of praise and worship. When others see how our personalities and sinful natures have been changed by a relationship with God, they will want the same thing. Instead of focusing on others we must focus on the Lord.

In the Gospel proclamation the Lord Jesus explains how we can focus on God. The Lord Jesus says if He does not go to the Father the Holy Spirit, the comforter and counselor, will not come. It is through the power of the Holy Spirit that we are able to find peace in the midst of a problem and are able to praise God through any crisis, just as St. Paul and Silas did in the prison. Today, the Lord is calling us to do small things. Luke 16:10 says, “If you are faithful in little things, you will be faithful in large ones. But if you are dishonest in little things, you won’t be honest with greater responsibilities.” The Lord is looking for people who will be baptized in the Holy Spirit and grow into the life of God. He is calling all of us to be baptized in the Holy Spirit and find the holiness of God in our lives. We should be not afraid to live a life of praise and worship and be baptized in the Holy Spirit.

Prayer: Abba Father, I pray for the grace to be faithful to You in my daily life. That I may be able to live a life of praise and worship to You. Amen.
Wednesday 9th May  

6th Week of Easter

“As we are in this glorious time of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus and in the joyful waiting for the feast of Pentecost, the Gospel proclamation today appeals to the cry of our hearts. The Lord Jesus tells His disciples that they will not be able to understand the many things He wants them to know until the Spirit of truth comes. The Spirit will guide them into the whole truth. One word that speaks deeply to our hearts is the fact that even today there may be truths that we are unable to understand but the power to do so comes only through the Holy Spirit.

In the first reading today we see the marvels wrought in the life of St. Paul as he journeys to Athens to evangelize. We know the conversion of Saul to Paul. Once Ananias laid his hands on Paul he receives the power to spread the good news of the salvation in Greece, Rome and to the ends of the earth.

The words of the Lord Jesus in the Gospel proclamation - “the Spirit will take what is mine and make it known to you” - are fulfilled in the life of St. Paul. He walks among the great and upright Greek philosophers and reveals to them the actual and true nature of the ‘Unknown God’ that they were worshipping. This mighty truth that is revealed brings about the first believers in Athens. The Lord is merciful to mention their names in the scripture as they witness to accepting the truth and the whole truth.

Today, the Lord Jesus is asking us one question. Are we ready to accept the coming of the Holy Spirit in a new and mighty anointing so that we will be able to understand the truth that He reveals? When that promotion we longed for is denied, when the future that looked perfect crashes in front of our eyes, when in the prime of our life our body is wrecked with a terminal illness, when a beloved spouse or child is suddenly called back to the heart of God, will we be able to comprehend the Lord’s purpose in these situations? This is the hope of Pentecost for us today! In the few years that we are on this earth, we will able to accept the truths of life on earth. Thus we will be able to cope with our pain and suffering with love, peace and joy through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Prayer: Abba Father, let me be a channel of your peace through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen!
Do weeping and rejoicing go together? In today’s Gospel, the Lord presents sorrow with the future glory to be revealed to those who put their hope in God. He says, “You will lose sight of me, but soon after you’ll see me again.” Have we lost sight of the Lord? Of course. Whenever we focus on our troubles and tribulations, we take our eyes off the Lord Jesus and we become blind to the reality that He is with us and in us.

With the guidance of the Holy Spirit we can improve our self-control so that we focus on the Lord Jesus no matter what happens around us: but this may be only possible through a Love relationship with the Father. Through such a relationship we build a great Trust in the Lord and we no longer want to do anything our way but His way in Obedience to Him. We then can say YES to the will of the Father regardless of the Cross that may come our way. We can cling on to Him because we know His fragrance of faithfulness as we are one with Him. As we celebrated Easter just a few of weeks back, we know the result of doing this; How God raised the Lord Jesus from the dead and He’s glorified in the highest heavens. We too are assured of His presence when we willingly obey His will. They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. – Psalm 126:5

Sometimes we may feel that keeping our eyes on the Lord means that we ignoring other things. But, it is not so. We have to look at the world and look at others with eyes wide open, viewing it all through the eyes and the vision of Jesus Christ. The Lord tells His disciples two important truths. First, He must leave them to return to His Father and second, He will surely come again at the end of time to usher in the new age of God’s kingdom.

The Lord Jesus’ orientation for the time between His first coming and His return in glory at the end of the world is a reversal of the world’s fortunes. The world says take your joy now in whatever pleasures you can get from this present life. The Lord points to an “other-worldly” joy which transcends anything this world can offer. The Lord contrasts present sorrows with future joy which He will reward us with.

Prayer: Abba Father, help me to hold my blessings with open hands, willing to give them back, to share them, and to use them on behalf of Your glory. Amen.
In today’s Gospel proclamation the Lord Jesus is speaking to His disciples about His passion, death and resurrection, a few hours before He faced it. He says to them while the world rejoices, they will mourn but it will only be for a moment. He compares it to a mother’s anguish turning to joy when her baby is born. He gives them the beautiful promise that He will see them again, and they will rejoice and whatever happens, no one, nothing in this world can take away that joy from them.

Today I heard an elderly lady sharing her testimony. She said, when she was twenty-six and was expecting her first child, her husband left her and a deep sense of abandonment enveloped her. As years went by that sadness, loneliness turned into severe depression and she was hospitalized. She was a nurse by profession but here now she was drugged, to an extent, that she felt that her life was drifting away. But one day a Catholic priest came to pray over her and on the next day the priest brought her the Eucharist. Even today her face bubbles with joy, as she shares her experience. She said, “As I received the Lord Jesus in the Eucharist, suddenly the sadness, emptiness, depression vanished and my heart was filled with joy. I was completely healed. Truly the Lord Jesus in the Eucharist is alive. He is alive.”

She experienced the Risen Lord as a young wife and mother. Since then, she has faced many ups and downs and now she is a grand old lady. But the beautiful thing that attracted me to her was the way she was still witnessing to the love of God. Bubbling with joy, she continues to be attached to a Catholic Charismatic group, sharing her testimony with others, giving hope to the hopeless and joy to the ones who are in despair. Has not today’s Gospel become a reality in her life? Many of us have experienced the love, joy and peace of the Lord Jesus Christ in the darkest, saddest moments of our lives. But are we still trusting God and witnessing to the love and joy that God showered upon our lives as St. Paul did in the first reading and the way this old lady does today? If we have gone back to our selfish life styles, the Lord Jesus is inviting us, to repent and surrender to Him, to be filled with His Holy Spirit’s love, peace and joy.

Prayer: Abba Father, you are the King of all the earth. We thank You, We praise You, We worship You. We exalt You. Amen.
The psalmist today sings the praises of the mightiness of our God. He is the king of all the earth and has subdued all nations. He is the mighty God to whom nothing is impossible!

In the Gospel proclamation today the Lord Jesus is saying “Whatever you ask the Father in my name, He will give you. So far you have not asked anything in my name; ask, and receive that your joy may be full”

In the beginning of this year, due to various reasons, I was experiencing dryness in my spiritual walk. There were many changes in my work demands as well as some family situations. At one point it was so dark. Nothing seemed to be able to lift this dark cloud that was hanging over my head. With regard to my future there were many unknown situations with decisions to be taken. Even my prayer was a struggle. In and through these situations I experienced the power of asking for something in His name (faith).

The Lord being the ever faithful God, even when we are not faithful to Him, in His mercy gave me the grace to attend a 4 step retreat. I chose to serve and at the end when the anointing of the Holy Spirit was over, I still did not feel any change in my heart. The heaviness that I brought in when I came to serve was still present. However, I opened my heart and I told the Lord the truth of my heart. I told Him that I did not feel His presence or His Holy Spirit but I said “I believe with faith, that the Holy Spirit has come inside me and will do His will in my life”

As I read the Gospel proclamation today, I am reminded of this. How I asked in the Lord’s faith which is akin to asking in His Name. What happened was that overnight the dark cloud that surrounded me and my family was lifted completely and we were all filled with such an unspeakable joy and a thirst to serve and be connected to the Lord in such a mighty way. We are still enjoying that unspeakable joy. None of the circumstances have changed, but the Holy Spirit has changed our hardened hearts and turned all circumstances into great joy! This is the fullness of Joy that the Lord Jesus speaks of today. Let us ask for His leading over our lives and decisions.

Prayer: Abba Father, We praise Your Holy Name and we ask that you fill us with your Holy Spirit, never to grieve you again, Amen!
Today, the Church celebrates the day on which the Risen Christ, in the sight of the apostles, ascended bodily into heaven. It is a holy day of obligation for us Catholics.

In the First Reading, it is said, “He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the Kingdom of God.” (Acts 1:3). Throughout that period the Risen Lord gave His disciples enough experiences to prove that He is alive. The Lord ate with them: was it because He was hungry? His glorified body was not under the limitations of the laws of nature. His energy was not coming from the combustion of food He ate. He had divine energy, the power of the Holy Spirit who came to His dead body, energized, revived every cell and organ. Yet the Lord wanted to be identified with His disciples, the friends His Father had chosen for Him. Isn’t it so heartening to know the extent our God goes, to make His friends feel comfortable with this whole new experience of His Resurrection?

The Lord was keen to share His experience and joy with His disciples, hence the instruction for them not to leave Jerusalem. What was wrong in going back to Galilee, their home territory? As I was made to understand in prayer, Jerusalem was where they witnessed the humanity of their Master been cruelly tested and apparently defeated. The earthly mission of Jesus of Nazareth seemed as if it ended on Calvary as He died on a cross and His lifeless body was laid in a tomb and sealed. Jerusalem was where they huddled together in fear, but only for three days. It was in Jerusalem that they witnessed the empty tomb and were visited by their Lord, having defeated death and being raised back to life. They were filled with the joy of having their Master back with them. Yet the Lord knew that their spiritual eyes and ears had to open for them to see and hear Him as they were sent, with the Good News to the ends of the earth. The Lord knew that the same Holy Spirit who moved in Him throughout His earthly life and was now in total control over His glorified body, had to become a living experience to the apostles. If they went back to their own homes before being baptized with the Holy Spirit, they would soon fall back to their old lives.

The minds of the apostles were being governed by worldly values and priorities, though they were having the awesome company of the Risen Lord. They were still thinking of a political kingdom. The Lord
continued to impress on them that, they were to live and serve only by the Power of the Holy Spirit, that they were to soon experience. “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth”. (Acts 1:8). Leaving those last words in the hearts of the apostles, the Lord Jesus ascended and was hidden from their sight by a cloud. (cf. Acts 1:9)

Today’s Gospel Reading gives us the description of our task The Lord entrusted with us, just before He ascended into heaven. “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.” (Mark 16:15). He also gave the signs that will accompany those who believe in Him and go. In the Holy Name of ‘Jesus’, we will drive out demons and speak in new tongues. We will receive courage that is not ours (pick up snakes with our hands) and a supernatural law that exceeds the natural law will apply to us (deadly poison that will not hurt us). The sick people will get well when we pray for them. (Mark 16:17-18). I cannot help asking myself if these things happen in and through me. If not, why? Is it because I don’t believe the Word of God deeply enough? Each time I listen to a great miracle shared at a prayer meeting, my heart cries out, “Lord, increase my faith. Break me and mould me to become the vessel You designed.”

If the Gospel Reading gives the job description, the Second Reading outlines the qualifications for the job. St Paul speaks about a certain level of maturity being paramount if we are to “go into all the world and preach the gospel”. As St Paul himself mentions elsewhere (1 Corinthians 13:1-3), receiving the gifts of the Holy Spirit alone will not make us ready for the work entrusted to us by the Lord. We might do well until we face misunderstanding or rejection by those who serve with us or those who are served by us. The moment that happens, we will fall, react and withdraw. We are called to give the same inner response that the Father asked from His Son, especially during the final stage of His earthly mission. It is to love those who hate us, bless those who curse us, forgive those who do wrong to us and pray for the unlovable. Now this is not something possible for even the most strong-willed person on earth. Hence, it is imperative that we receive the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, and move from ‘with Christ’ to ‘in Christ’ experience. It is The Holy Spirit who dwells in us, that empowers us to give inner responses and helps us change us from selfish to selfless Christians.

Prayer: Abba Father, I stand in awe of Your amazing plan to defeat the power of sin and death. Empower us through the power of the Holy Spirit, to take the Good News of Your love to our families, workplaces, parishes and the whole world. Amen.
In today’s Gospel proclamation, the Lord Jesus tells us about the privileges we will receive from having an intimate relationship with Him. When we know the Lord, He gives us a command: to love each other as He has loved us. It is easy for us to love those that love us back. But the Lord is asking us to love even those we find impossible to love. The only way we can do this is through a relationship with God. When we know the Lord, He will give us His heart—the heart to love everyone; even those we would normally not be able to.

Acts 15:15 tells us that “I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.” Secondly, through a relationship with God we receive the privilege to be called friends of God. When we follow the Lord and obey His commands, we are no longer servants of the Lord, but He calls us His friends. Finally, when we have a relationship with God, He will reveal the Father’s plans for us and for those around us.

The first reading, from the book of Acts gives us two examples of people who have a relationship with God: Barsabbas and Matthias. God would have shown the 11 Apostles to choose someone who was there from the beginning— from John’s baptism to the time when the Lord Jesus was taken up from them. Both nominees, Barsabbas and Matthias, met the requirements. They would have encountered the Lord and their lives would have been changed. They followed the Lord, witnessed His miracles and heard His sermons and teachings. They would have been like the other apostles—had an intimate relationship with the Father through prayer and obeyed His commands. In turn the Lord called them friends and revealed His plans for them.

Today, the Lord is calling us to find an intimate relationship with Him. C.S. Lewis said, “Prayer does not change God, it changes me.” When we sit at the feet of the Lord each day, talking with Him, hearing His voice and reading His word, He will slowly change us to see things around us through His eyes and grow into intimacy with Him.

Prayer: Abba Father, I pray that I may be wakened morning by morning, that my ears may learn to listen like one being instructed and for a well-instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary. Amen.
Tuesday 15th May

In today’s reading we see the Apostle Paul’s mission work on this earth. He was journeying from place to place preaching the Gospel amidst persecution, trials and hardships. He never stopped preaching the Good news because of the hardships he faced because he was filled with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit made him go beyond his human boundaries to preach the Word with courage. But he also humbled Himself in serving the Lord. The name ‘Paul’ means ‘small’ or ‘humble’. When Saul encountered the Lord and was called for a mission, he became Paul. To become great in the eyes of the Lord we will have to become small in serving others. St. Paul is a great example. He says “I served the Lord with great humility and with tears and in the midst of severe testing by the plots of my Jewish opponents -” (Acts 20:19). With humility and perseverance he continued the mission He was called to. He knew the purpose of his life “However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God’s grace” – (Acts 20:24). Like St. Paul, we are called by the Lord for a purpose. We are here on this planet to fulfill the purpose God has for us. If we do not understand this, we will wasting our lives.

In today’s Gospel proclamation we see that the Lord Jesus’ wished to fulfill the purpose and the mission God the Father had for Him. He says “I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do” (John 17:4). The only way to glorify our Father is through our lives; that is when we live according to His purpose and mission. That’s why it’s important to spend quiet times with the Lord. It’s in that quiet time that we hear His voice, we hear His calling. If we do not spend that quiet time, we tend to easily miss out in His calling. All people have a particular purpose for their life but may be living their own purpose. But the truth is God has called us to fulfill His purpose. The short time we spend here on this earth is to fulfill that purpose before we go to eternity. We must realize how temporary our earthly life is. We try to hold onto so many things. We’ are here just as stewards to take care of what God has given us. When we realise this truth everything else is taken care of.

Prayer: Abba Father, may I be guided by Your Holy Spirit to live and fulfill the purpose you have called me to. Amen!
Wednesday 16th May

“Keep watch over yourselves and over the whole flock of which the Holy Spirit has appointed you overseers…” Acts 20:28

Bidding farewell is always a sad moment in everyone’s life. We come across St. Paul’s farewell speech at Miletus. Some interesting advice was given to the church of Miletus in this final speech. These exhortations are applicable to the present day as well. St. Paul’s hard work to build the church of Christ Jesus in Miletus was explained in detail. God acquired the Church for himself through shedding His blood and St. Paul spoke to the Church members of Miletus to keep watch over the flock of God.

The Lord Jesus Christ came to the world and established the Kingdom of God on earth. This mission was accomplished on Golgotha on the Cross. Therefore St. Paul said that God acquired His Church with His own blood. After paying this huge price, our Lord Jesus handed down the baton to His Apostles and disciples. St. Paul warned the Church in Miletus not to get carried away with perverted teachings but to hold fast to the teachings of the Apostles.

Let us be open to the final words of St. Paul to the faithful of Miletus. People from within the group will come forward to pervert the truth and they were warned to be vigilant about it. Isn’t this a warning for us today? Has the Gospel of Christ Jesus been perverted? Can there be Christianity without the Body of Christ? Isn’t the Eucharist the source and the summit of our faith, which is the Body of Christ? If Christianity was established on the Cross at Golgotha, isn’t the Body of Christ the corner stone and the foundation of Christianity? Can we do away with the corner stone?

The final prayer of the Lord Jesus to the Heavenly Father was a lament. He pleaded with the Father that not a single person that Father gave Him should perish. Surely the Lord would have known the perversion of His sacred Gospel would occur. Therefore before it happened He cried out to the Father and asked the Father to keep all these people together even though His Gospel is perverted. The passion, death and resurrection of Christ Jesus changed our status from orphans to children. The outcome of the Paschal mystery is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Everyone who is baptized in the Holy Spirit will experience an inner awakening to the truth.

Prayer: Abba Father, may the whole world be enlightened to the truth that the death of Christ Jesus on the cross is our daily bread at the Eucharist. Amen.
Thursday 17th May

In today’s Gospel proclamation we see Jesus praying for all believers. As I read John 17:20-26, I see it as a beautiful, intimate conversation between the Father and the Son. Because right after this we see in chapter 18 that the Lord Jesus was arrested. The Lord was praying for unity among believers, the same unity He was sharing with the Father. The Lord was sent by His Father to this world to fulfill His Father’s mission which was far beyond His comprehension and understanding. In completing His Father’s mission He had gone through countless trials, persecution, rejection, pain, hurt and in fact he had experienced moments of loneliness and abandonment. Though Jesus is the Son of God, He took the form of a servant to come to this world (“rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness” Phi 2:7). Therefore, when He was going through trials and persecution, because of His union with His Father, He was able to draw strength and grace to not only face it but to give inner responses. The intimacy and union with the Father gave the Lord Jesus the courage to walk to the cross and even unto death. When He was dying on the cross His only prayer was “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” Luke 23:34. How was He able to pray like this on the verge of dying after being tortured, ridiculed, and persecuted? Because the Lord Jesus knew His Father; He experienced the goodness and faithfulness of His Father; He knew that there was a greater purpose behind this death and the Father would turn this curse into a great blessing. He was able to trust His Father because throughout His life He was growing in an intimate relationship with His Father by spending quiet times with Him. Therefore, everything the Lord Jesus was the will of His Father.

The Lord Jesus did not pray to the Father to give us a trouble-free life. He did not pray to the Father to make things easy in our lives. If so, we will never grow to be like Christ. We will never grow to be like matured Christians and we will never be prepared for the life in eternity. But He prayed for one thing; to know His Father and to be in union with His Father. Because the Lord Jesus knew, the secret to this inner joinery is to live in union with the Lord. No matter what this life throws at us, we must grow in intimacy with Him.

*Prayer: Abba Father, may our intimacy with You grow deeper and deeper and may our trust be rooted in Your goodness and faithfulness. Amen!*
Friday 18th May

Do you love me more than these others do?

Many wouldn’t say that they don’t serve the Lord. Actually, many are serving the Lord in different ways, through different ministries, in various capacities. We may serve the Lord individually or as group. Our ministry may be big, may be small or may be growing. May be we spend days and nights to serve the Lord. However, all of us are serving the Lord starting from our own families to the ends of the earth.

The Risen Lord asks us today ‘Do you love me more than these others do?’ He asks us this question twice ‘Do you love me, my child? Do you love me?” Jesus asked this question from St. Peter. Peter was disturbed when Jesus asked this question from him. After making so many commitments, If your wife or husband asks ‘do you love me’, won’t you become disturbed? St. Peter felt the same. He would have thought “what kind of question my master is asking, am I not following him by sacrificing everything and wasn’t I even prepared to die for you?”. For a moment he would have forgot that he denied Jesus three times. Actually we all will say we love the Lord. We all will say that we would sacrifice our lives for Jesus. This is our test. This is my real test. This is my favorite Bible passage. It is beautiful but challenging. Not only St. Peter, not only other disciples or saints this conversation challenges all of us.

Many times, I am stuck in the journey. Life becomes hard and tough. I have gone back to this conversation between my Jesus and St. Peter. I have put myself in the place of St. Peter and quietly let the Lord to speak to me. I realised “Yes, I love Jesus very much. But when I loved him by my own strength, I failed and denied him. I remember his gentle response. He said ‘if you love me, feed my lambs and look after my sheep’. I said to the Lord, ‘Lord, I can love you and serve you, but it is difficult to feed your lambs, I don’t want to look after them’. He said ‘I know you can’t love them by your own strength. Let me love you first. This has always renewed my relationship with Lord. It has overcome my intellect which thinks and sees in the worldly ways.

Prayer: Abba Father speak to our hearts. Let’s us hear the voice of the Risen Lord inside our heart, soul and experience his presence in the depths of our being. Let us hear Him say ‘my love is enough for you’. Praise the Lord! Thank you Jesus! Amen
In the Gospel proclamation today the Apostle John says that the Lord Jesus did many other things. If all were written down, I think the world itself would not be able to contain the books that should be written. This goes to show us the magnitude of the ministry of the Lord Jesus. In the Gospels we find at least thirty seven miracles performed by the Lord Jesus from healing the sick, the blind, the lame, leprosy, the demon possessed, the crippled, feeding the hungry and raising of the dead. All these the Lord did within three years of His ministry. The books in which these miracles were recorded is the Holy Bible which is known to be the best selling book of all times with 273,972 a day, 11,415 an hour, 190 a minute and 3 a second. We cannot even fathom how much more it would have sold if all that the Lord did on the earth was recorded.

The thirty-seven miracles of the Lord and His wisdom of teaching are what deeply attracted the people to Him and the Apostles to the Lord’s ministry. But the true conversion came when the Apostles witnessed the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus and the sending of the Holy Spirit upon them to carry on the Ministry that the Lord started. In John 12 the Lord Jesus rebukes Phillip who wants to see the Father and tells him “At least believe in the evidence of the works (the miracles, signs and wonders) themselves. Very truly I tell you, who ever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these”

In the first reading today we see St. Paul carrying out the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ just as the Lord wished. The travels of St. Paul were vast and wide and he served tirelessly. He too faced persecution for proclaiming the good news. The tradition says that the Apostle Paul was beheaded for preaching the truth about Jesus Christ. In contrast, in the Gospel proclamation we see that St. John was the only Apostle who was not martyred. He lived long enough to fulfill his calling to write down the events of the life of the Lord Jesus. The call of the Lord for u through the Gospel readings is no different. We are on this earth for the mission of loving and living the good news of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Prayer: Abba Father, send forth your Holy Spirit in a mightier way upon us so that we will boldly proclaim the good news of the Lord even to martyrdom. Amen!
Did you know that Pentecost was a feast that was celebrated by the Jews even before the time of our Lord Jesus? It was the feast of the harvest, the time where they celebrated the fruit of their labour. Today, we Christians celebrate the fruit of the labour of Our Lord Jesus. While our Lord Jesus walked this earth as Jesus of Nazareth, he was able to forgive sin, heal the sick, raise the dead, exorcise demons, and perform amazing miracles. Yet, there was one thing that He did not do as Jesus of Nazareth; grant the Holy Spirit. He had to suffer and die and be raised from the dead before the Holy Spirit could be poured out upon the disciples. He paid a great price for this, hence this gift is never to be taken lightly or taken for granted.

In today’s Gospel proclamation, we see Our Lord Jesus coming into the room where the disciples had locked themselves up in, and breathe the Holy Spirit upon them. Many say that this is St. John’s description of Pentecost in his Gospel. I on the other hand, like to treat this incident and Pentecost as two separate incidents, occurring on two different days. I like to see the Gospel narrative as the Lord’s proclamation of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Pentecost is when the actual breakthrough happens. The time between the proclamation and Pentecost is the time between a promise of the Lord and its fulfilment.

I have noticed that there almost always is a gap between a promise and its fulfilment, where we are called to trust in His promise, because it has already been declared in heaven. As I look at the Old Testament, I find many an example of this. For instance, there was a gap between the time that Samuel anointed David as King, and the day he actually ascended to the throne. It took a giant size problem named Goliath to act as a catalyst to turn the tide of events and put David on the path to the throne. What is it that acted as a catalyst for the promise of Pentecost to be fulfilled?

Today’s first reading describes the wonderful breakthrough that occurred at Pentecost. However, in a few verses before today’s first reading, in Acts 1:12-14, St. Luke describes how the disciples waited for the promise of the Holy Spirit. Instead of going back to Galilee, even though they felt unsafe and vulnerable, even though it was
not the logical thing to do, they remain in Jerusalem, because Our Lord asked them to do so. St. Luke says that they were constantly in prayer. He specifically calls out the presence of the Blessed Mother. She was revealed as “she who has believed that the Lord would fulfil his promises to her”, at the time the Holy Spirit opened Elizabeth’s inner eyes. She had a first-hand experience of God defying the laws of nature to fulfil His promises. Prayer in a faith environment, in response to a leading, acted as the catalyst in the fulfilment of the promise of Pentecost.

The experience of Pentecost was indeed dramatic. Rushing wind, tongues of fire; that which was decreed in heavenly realms was breaking through into time and space. Regardless of how it appears to those outside, to those who are experiencing the breakthrough, it is always dramatic. In this instance many who were outside thought that the disciples were drunk with new wine.

Something happened to the way the disciples prayed. Prayer was no longer dull or subdued. It was exciting and noisy, more in line with the enthusiasm and excitement seen at a soccer game or musical show, rather than what we often witness in a church. The visitors who had come from various countries heard God being praised in their own language. Time and again I have witnessed this phenomenon. When someone is preaching under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, many testify “it was as though the preacher was talking directly to me.”

The prayer itself was not pleading with God for His Help. The prayer led by the Holy Spirit, like the first step of Nehemiah’s prayer, was a declaration of God’s greatness by remembering the great things He has done. Besides the things that happened on the external, the greatest miracle happened within the hearts of the disciples. They who we find in the Gospel reading, locked up in a room, paralyzed with fear, suddenly find an inexplicable boldness. The very fact they stayed on in Jerusalem tells us that their heart was willing, but they were weak. Looks like the Lord is looking for a willing heart and not our ability. If our hearts are willing, He knows how to send supernatural strength to fulfil his plans and wishes in our lives. The second reading tells us, that even though the Holy Spirit brings a powerful experience of the divine, He distributes His gifts of service in a way that we need to depend on one another. In that, Pentecost is the beginning of a new journey, empowered from above, but lived in community where we serve Him together with our weaknesses and peculiarities.

Prayer: Come, Holy Spirit, Creator, come from thy bright heavenly throne. Come, take possession of our powerless and defeated souls and make them all thine own. Amen
In the Gospel proclamation today when asked by the father of the demon-possessed child for healing, Jesus says “All things are possible for the one who believes”. And having said this, He proceeds to command the evil spirit to come out of the child and the child is healed. This same child was brought to the disciples to be healed but they were unable to heal the child. When confronted with this sick child, I wonder what went on in their minds. Were they worried if they were spiritually strong enough to work this miracle? Was there any doubt about the power of God in their midst?

When the Lord Jesus says, “all things are possible for the one who believes” I always thought that He was talking about the boy’s father and his faith. But now I think, perhaps He was talking about Himself. The one from whom the miracle was requested. The one who was asked to intercede. It was possible for the Lord to heal the boy, because He simply believed in the power of His Father. The relationship that the Lord had with the Father was stronger than the evidence and the reality of the world before Him. So all He had to do was to command the evil spirit and it had to obey Him for such was the power of God within Him.

I find this reading challenging me today as I journey in this faith and am faced with multiple situations where I am asked to step out in faith on behalf of another. And often my mind says that it’s too hard, that I’m not holy enough and that a miracle cannot be wrought on by someone like me. But the words of Jesus resonate inside me today “everything is possible for the one who believes”. And what am I asked to believe? Not in my power or my holiness because of those I have none, but I am asked to believe in the power and mercy and goodness of the God I profess to believe in. And the Lord reminds us that only prayer, a daily walk with God can do this.

Perhaps there are people in your life and mine who are waiting for a miracle, an encounter with God. And maybe God is waiting for us to intercede and step out in faith so that through us He can bring that miracle into those broken lives He longs to intervene in.

Prayer: Abba Father, grant me the grace today to believe in you and to step out in faith when you prompt me to do so. Let me simply be a channel of grace through whom Your power flows out. Amen
Tuesday 22nd May

I surrender, Lord have your way!

In the first reading we are taught to abandon our attachments of this world and to surrender ourselves entirely to God. In the psalm David prays that God would manifest his favour to him, and lays before God his own sorrow and fear, his displeasure against his enemies. He assures himself that God would, in due time, appear for him against his enemies and encourages us to trust in God. In the Gospel proclamation we have, Christ’s prediction of His own sufferings and death and describing to us who could be first and enter the kingdom of God.

I went into my heart and mind recognizing the many worldly attachments I have. Why is it that I have all of this holding me down and burdening me? I am caught up in the tensions, fears, relationships, resources, comforts, past, present, future, lust, happiness and love of this world. I am trying to work it out at my natural levels with my own limited resources and knowledge. But today’s first reading invites me to humble myself and learn to repent and focus on our Lord Jesus instead of worldly pleasures that satisfy my temporary needs and bring me momentary happiness.

It is much easier said than done! How do I rely on God for all my needs? Can I be a child of my Father in Heaven - trusting Him for my every need? Am I willing to be the last of all and the servant of all in order to be First in the Kingdom of God?

I can only trust God with my life if I have experienced His love for me. This experience of love I receive when I sit to prayer each morning. Praying through the four steps and receive the anointing of the Holy Spirit. At this moment my heart and mind opens to the God and to His voice. It is then that I receive the grace to know that I am loved and safe in the hands of the Father and I begin to hear Him speak. When I have this kind of trust in God then I am able to let go of myself like a child into His hands and begin to seek His voice in every moment of my life. But the moment I close this communication link I fall back into my limited struggle of life. Let us cling to the Lord and be a channel of His grace and mercy to those around us.

*Prayer: Abba Father, you have already opened the door to heaven for me. Held safe in your love, I believe that you are giving me the grace to trust you for my every need* Amen
A few days ago I was at a Lenten Retreat. It so happened that I spent some time with a lady who shared her entire life story of suffering and pain. Her life centered on her daughter’s family and she was involved in looking after her grandchildren. Just today I learnt that her daughter had gone on an office trip and had drowned in a tragic accident. The focal point of this lady’s activity and her life support has now come to a full stop.

This is the mystery of life. What are we to do? The Lord invites us to keep our gaze fixed on Him. Often we get lost in the progress of our lives. Blinded by momentary success we begin to make plans and build on our achievements. We always assume that God has reserved a few more years for us to live and continue life. But the reality is that we slowly begin to take our eyes off what God is calling us to do and find greater satisfaction in following the desires of our heart.

As we follow the desires of our heart we begin to find fault with people around us. This happened in the lives of the Lord Jesus’ disciples. In the Gospel there are many instances when characters appear out of nowhere like the great King Melchizedek and the person who lent his donkey for the Lord to ride triumphantly into Jerusalem. They had their own story with God and we are unaware of these. Can we find fault with them? This was the exact problem which occurred. The disciples found other people casting out spirits in the name of the Lord Jesus and began to find fault with them. However, the Lord was aware that the Father was accomplishing the unleashing of His kingdom through another set of believers unknown to the mainstream disciples. It was then that the Lord declares, “Do not forbid him.... for whoever is not against us is for us.’

We love to tear down other ministeries that do not fit into our pattern of thinking. But when we read the testimonies of various people who have had a touch of the Lord’s love we will be convinced that we do not own the Lord. The Creator is not our personal property nor solely restricted to our faith. He in His love ministers to millions of people, unknown and unseen by us because He loves the poor in Spirit.

Prayer: Abba Father, how can I assume to know the mysteries of your love and your kingdom. Forgive me. Amen
A warning is given by St James about wealth and its deceptive ways. Our Lord Jesus in his words describes the difficulty, the rich will face to enter the kingdom of heaven, when He said to the rich young man in the Gospel of Mark 10:25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Most people desire to be comfortable and rich. To deny that is a lie. Yet how do we earn our riches? Do we earn them in the right way and how do we use them? Do we remember the Giver and make our dues towards building His kingdom? Do we remember those who are less privileged or do we only feed our stomachs, our family, go on pleasure trips, invest for the future etc. Abraham was a rich man too, yet how was it that God considered him to be righteous? I believe that, his riches were no barrier for him to do what God wanted him to do, He trusted and wanted to please God more than trusting in his riches.

The Psalmist clearly describes the fate of the rich. To be rich does not mean to have wealth alone, but it covers the entire material world, i.e. wealth, prestige, power, etc. If we do not use it to please God who gave it to be used for the right purpose, what the Psalmist says in 49:19 will happen “he will join the generation of his fathers who will never see the light of day”.

In the Gospel proclamation, the Lord Jesus assures that, while a person is rewarded for good deeds done, in the name of Christ, so too, we will be cursed when we cause others to sin. The wealth that the Lord wants us to posses is the wealth of the kingdom. He likens it to salt. How essential is salt for every type of food, without this ingredient, food will not be palatable. Can I choose to blend with the rest and produce a pleasant flavor.

In a crisis I faced recently, I was refusing to be the salt. I kept looking at my own plight. The more I held on to my own understanding, the more the crisis kept growing. Only when I chose to ignore my feelings and thoughts, did the situation change. It was like ecstasy for a mother at child birth. No sooner she hears the cry of her new born child, the pain of labor is forgotten.

Prayer: Lord, in difficult situations teach me to be the salt and not be lead by what the world and my flesh would desire. Amen
Friday 25th May

7th Week in Ordinary Time

“... Praise His holy name: who redeems your life from the pit...” Psalm 103:4

Leading a virtuous life may sound like something that is not possible in our day-to-day lives, especially in areas like the business sector etc. Or we may also think that this way of life may be ideal only for the super-religious people. But in reality it is something each one of us can aim for and called for. God gives us gifts of the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love. Plus there are so many of other virtues that we can develop with the help of the Holy Spirit. Today, the Lord is reminding us about the virtues of Patience and Honesty through the first reading.

Patience enables one to endure present evils without sadness or resentment in conformity with the will of God. Patience helps us to bear difficulties without complaint, to use hardships to make progress in virtue, and even to desire the cross and afflictions out of our love for God and accept them with spiritual joy.

“Knowing ourselves as deeply sinful goes hand in hand with knowing Jesus as supremely patient.” This statement sums it all up. It is interesting how we do not have to go far to examine our level of patience with others as we have the greatest Role Model given to us by our Father - our Lord Jesus Christ himself. The Lord Jesus had the perfect patience with the worst of sinners. Let us meditate on the people the Lord had to deal with to have a greater understanding and a change of heart within ourselves towards the people around us.

Peter, had the unique ability of saying the wrong thing at the wrong time and denied the Lord three times even after being His closest friend. But the Lord Jesus’ love for Peter did not change at all. Judas, whom the Lord had chosen to be one His disciples, betrayed Him for 30 pieces of Sliver. Philip, asked “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” Here too, the Lord answers him with compassion and patience. Thomas, he declared that unless he sees His hands and place his finger into the mark of the nails and place his hand into his side that he will never believe. Again, the Lord was patient with him. The patience we see in the Son is the very patience of His Father.

Prayer: Abba Father, forgive my sins, for many times I have gone away from You. Your patience has been enormous! Grant me a droplet of such endurance, that I may be patient towards others, reflecting Your serenity. Amen.
Saturday 26th May

“Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.” Mark 10:14

The teachings today are some of the richest that we are blessed and in grace to receive.

In the first reading St. James speaks of what the Catholic faithful has been under grace to know and practice as a beautiful sacrament which has many graces, the Sacrament of reconciliation or the Sacrament of confession. St. James also speaks of the power of prayer. Personal prayer, as well as praying over others in need. A Christian who has a strong prayer life, who makes a good confession as often as he/she can and who is so selfless and ready to pray and intercede for others need is spoke about in the Gospel message proclamation today.

In the Gospel proclamation, the Lord Jesus rebukes the disciples who prevent little children from coming to Him. Just before this incident, the Lord Jesus tells the disciples that the mystery of the Kingdom of God is entrusted to you. Lord Jesus tells them, “The kingdom of God belongs to such as these.” To know and understand the significance of this statement, we can look at the typical characteristics of a child. A child trusts without thinking. Children cannot survive without trusting those around them. For children, trust is not a virtue but a complete reality. Therefore, to encounter God, the best thing we need to have is the heart of a child that is spontaneously open, and dares to ask in honesty and humility, and wants to be loved and would love back equally.

These are the qualities of those who will inherit the kingdom of God. As we grow up and our childhood is left behind us, we become enveloped in sin around us. The teachings of St. James are the way to keep coming back to our child like ways. To live a prayerful life in humble seeking of forgiveness of sin and selfless giving. Further we are called to serve the Lord in every little thing we do and on all occasions to be praising Him with songs of Joy. St. Phillip Neri had these child like qualities that led him to sainthood. He was always with a joyful heart and he loved the association of children and people. His days were dedicated to helping others, but his nights were set aside for solitude spent praying in the church or in the catacombs.

Prayer: Abba Father, we long to be little children before you, in humility and love to sit at your feet and know you fully. Embrace us Lord and give us your Kingdom. Amen!
Moses led the Israelites for forty years; out of Egypt, through the desert and now they are about to enter the Promised Land. This was the end of the journey for Moses, but the beginning of a new journey for his people. He knew there was a greater danger in the Promised Land than the dangers they faced since they left Egypt. He feared that once they settled down in the land flowing with milk and honey, they would not need God anymore. He knew living separated from God would cost them everything that God had given them. So he gathered them around to give them a tool to live in the Promised land; obedience to God.

"Keep his decrees and commands, which I am giving you today, so that it may go well with you and your children after you, and that you may live long in the land the Lord your God gives you for all time". Unfortunately, they were not capable of a life of obedience to God. As a result, they lost the Promised Land, and were exiled from the land flowing with milk and honey. We see this cycle continuing throughout the Old Testament. They would disobey God, lose the Promised land and be taken away as captives. They would remember God in the land of exile, repent and turn to Him. God rescues them and brings them back, only for them to forget and disobey Him when things get better, taken away as captives again… this cycle continues throughout the Old Testament.

This is our struggle as well. The moment we hear the words “obey God”, the battle between the flesh and the spirit begins. We live independently of God till we are faced with a crisis. We cry out to God, He leads us to the Promised Land; the dream job, the perfect partner, He turns our crisis into a blessing. We begin to enjoy the blessings and freedom from the things that enslaved us. We may even start serving God. Until we enter an inner journey in the power of the Holy Spirit, we fall into a routine and do things externally. We too fall into the same trap that the Hebrew people fell in the Promised Land. We take God for granted. We feel we do not need God as much as we did before. The flesh deceives us into believing that we are spiritually stronger. Before we know it, we are enslaved to sin, to addictions and to our broken nature once again. We fall internally and are taken captives by sin to the land of enslavement.
Just like Moses prepared the Hebrews to live in the promised land, in today’s Gospel proclamation we read the Lord preparing His disciples for the Great Commissioning. “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Unlike the Hebrew people, the disciples obeyed the Lord. They obeyed Him in the midst of persecution, rejection, and by risking their lives. The secret to their obedience was the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. They were liberated from the things that held them back in the past; fear, attachments, and material things. They dealt with every crisis in the power of the Holy Spirit, and did not miss a single moment, even when while marching to their death to sing praises God. They had become more than men and women.

Today’s second reading explains this beautifully: “For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship”. This experience was so real that imprisonment, torture and even death could not stop them.

St Paul is reminding us today a profound truth that we need to open ourselves to: “The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children”. As we sit at His feet long enough, the Holy Spirit begins to reveal to our spirit who we really are. The same internal shift that took place in the disciples begin to happen in us. The very things we desired more than God, or feared that held us back lose its power over us. Just like the Lord, and the disciples after Him, we begin to see the glory of God in the inner responses we give.

Recently, there was a testimony of a doctor who was living as an atheist. To get back at his Christian neighbours he began to read the Bible. In the word, he discovered that the Lord Jesus was alive. Further one night He invited the Lord into his life. This was a quiet experience but His whole life changed from then onwards. Even his wife could not imagine the transformation that happened when the doctor encountered the love of the Risen Lord.

Prayer: Abba Father, as I come before you this morning, give me the grace to sit at your feet till you reveal to my depths that I am your son, your daughter. Empower me to live in obedience to you in the hidden places of my live where I am most vulnerable to sin. Amen
Monday 28th May  

8th Week in Ordinary Time

“What must I do to have eternal life?” Mark 10:28

The Gospel proclamation today is a passage for us to ponder on deeply. We see a pious young man coming running up to Lord Jesus and kneeling down before Him. This gives me a mental picture of a humble young man thirsting to know the truth and eager to enter eternal life one day. His intention was real but the truth he was seeking, once revealed by the Master, became the obstacle that prevented him from taking the path to eternal life. The Lord Jesus showed the young man what he lacked in entering the Eternal Life.

We see the compassionate heart of our Lord Jesus for this young man who was lost. He had been religious from his young days living according to the commandments but in his heart he found it hard to give up his attachments to the poor. The word of God says that Jesus looked at the young man steadily and loved him, yet the young man failed to understand that eternal love of God for the love he had for his wealth was greater. He was too attached to let go.

In our lives too we may outwardly look and actually live seemingly a good religious life but deep inside us could be areas that we still hold onto and cannot let go. We may be holding on to false securities in our jobs, wealth or relationships where we are unable to leave everything and follow Jesus. We must understand that God is not in need of our wealth but He seeks our love for Him above everything else.

The first reading reminds us that today is a good day as any day to make amends and seek deep into our conscience to unearth what we lack which will hinder our entry into Eternal Life. St. Peter tells us that on earth we will go through trials and we will be refined like gold. Unless we go through this refinement we shall never be able to claim the inheritance that is reserved for us in heaven. To the rich young man his refinement was to let go of his wealth and depend totally on the Lord. What is it that we are attached to most today?

Let us ask the Holy Spirit who raised Jesus Christ from the dead to renew our lives too today and give us a new life and hope for Eternal life by showing us at least one thing that might be hindering our path to Eternal life.

Prayer: Abba Father, raise my dead Spirit to know your will for my path to Eternal life with you one day. Help me to say yes and not walk away from it. Amen!
Tuesday 29th May

For it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy”.

I am sure every one of us reading this message longs to be holy! Yet our wanting to be something and actually what we are, are two entirely different things. Holy is defined as being ‘pure, morally blameless, set apart (for God)’, but what percentage of our lives can we say that we have been in this status? 1 Peter 1:15 says … so be holy in all you do…That seems such an impossible task, even to think about.

If we look to the disciples or saints for inspiration becoming a little holy seems to be possible. Most of them were not educated, ignorant, simple people. Even when they were with the Lord Jesus during His ministry years, there were many times that they fell or failed the Lord. Yet after they encountered the risen Christ, their lives had a significant change. They chose to be set apart for God, they chose even to sacrifice their lives.

So, journeying towards holiness is within our reach not by our good works or self-effort, but by the power of the Holy Spirit, in the Lord Jesus. The Lord tells us in Mark 10:29-30 that if we give up our worldly treasures such as our homes, family and possessions for the Him and the Gospel, in other words set ourselves apart for the Lord, we will receive a hundred-fold more. The Lord also cautions us that we will receive persecutions – this is to be expected, because when we set ourselves apart, we chose not to live in the natural and the flesh, but in the spirit. Yet if we go through all this, in the end, he promises us eternal life in the age to come.

We all know that going against our nature, physical and emotional comforts is very difficult. This is where we can draw strength and help from the Lord through the ten rememberings. When we remember and believe that the Lord Jesus came into this world just for us, giving up temporary pleasures is possible. When we remember that God, the creator of the universe is my Father and He loves me, and He will do anything for me, then going beyond ourselves despite rejection and giving an inner response becomes possible. When we remember that the Lord Jesus revealed another way to live, not by our will, but by God’s will, then giving up the right to defend ourselves, trusting in the Lord for His justice becomes possible.

Prayer: Abba Father, every time I fall, help me to remember that this moment is temporary. Give me the grace to truly repent and be with you for eternity. Amen
Wednesday 30th May

“What do you want me to do for you?”

Through today’s Gospel proclamation, our Lord Jesus asks us this unique question. What would your answer be? Is our answer as selfish as James and John’s is? Will you ask for a material thing, more money, more wealth, a happier life, good health, or do we ask for vengeance against our brother, sister or the neighbor?

Perhaps just moments ago our Lord Jesus revealed to them about His passion, death and the resurrection. About the gruesomeness of his suffering and death, but nothing is noted. His presence among them becomes too ordinary and his revelation goes unnoticed. Like us, they too take him for granted. Does his suffering & death matter to us? Hasn’t His passion and death become ordinary to us and seems so small and insignificant in the face of our addiction. While our problems seem bigger. We are caught up in our situations, the people around us and the problems we have as they seem to enslave us. We do not see our Lord Jesus being in that moment with us and telling us that what we see and feel is not real, that we are no longer slaves to anything.

In the 1st reading St. Peter tells us to remember that our inclination to the world, our enslavement and the things of this world which seem to govern us and our desires to the flesh was defeated. We have been saved by the precious blood and the life of the Lamb. We have been redeemed from the “useless way of life”. He knows that we constantly forget the sacrifice God had planned since the first man and woman sinned against Him, and St. Peter tells us to remember this sacrifice.

When we remind our self of this great sacrifice and move beyond what we think, feel and what seemed the only way, our faith grows in God and in return we are strengthened to serve without expectations, to be like Our Lord and savior. We are then lifted up by him irrespective of how many times we lay our self down. Let us ask the Lord for the grace to become a slave for him. The Psalmist gives us the formula to this which is to raise our voice and our hearts to God in Praise. When we do He strengthens us, blesses us and grants peace to our heart and the environment we live in to change the whole situation that we are in. Lets first lay out lives down at the feet of the Lord Jesus so that He may enter into His rest and love

*Prayer: Abba Father, give me the grace to constantly remember that you laid down your life for me willingly to conquer death and enslavement. Amen.*
Thursday 31st May

Let us be like Mary

The Mother church has dedicated two months, May and October to our Blessed Mother Mary. Today we celebrate the feast of the visitation of our Blessed Mother to her cousin Elizabeth. There are many important and inspiring lessons for us in this event.

Foremost we see the humility of our Blessed Mother. She went a long distance to visit Elizabeth though the Gospel does not tell us how she went. Possibly she walked. It was immediately after the angel had declared to her that she would be the mother of the Son of God. Most people would have taken this as a great privilege but Mary who was told by the angel that her cousin Elizabeth was already six months pregnant made a decision to go and be with her cousin. The Blessed Mother would have done the cooking and housekeeping for Elizabeth, washed clothes and even the toilet. She did this for three months.

Pope Paul VI and Catholic theologians have told us that too many devotions to Mary our Blessed Mother have led to a lack of real devotion to her. Real devotion means to be like our Blessed Mother. So like the Lord Jesus was we also need to be meek and humble like our Blessed Mother. Possibly, she would appreciate that more than enthroning a statue on a chariot and going down the streets in procession.

Our Blessed Mother is also known as the New Arch of the new covenant. She carried the Lord Jesus in a womb. That is why St Luke says in today’s Gospel proclamation that, :” When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed: “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear. But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!” Luke 1: 42-45 Elizabeth’s proclamation brings out another important virtue in the Blessed Mother—She had deep and trusting faith in God. As Hebrew’s 11: 1 says, “faith is the assurance of what we hope for and the certainty of what we cannot see. Let us be like Blessed mother, having trusting faith in God.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, give us the grace to be like our Blessed Mother. Amen.
Method of Payment:

1. For Subscribers from Sri Lanka and overseas - Directly deposit the subscription fees being a full one year’s subscription (12 issues) to the account below:

   **Account Details:**
   - **Account Name:** The Community of The Risen Lord
   - **Bank:** Commercial Bank
   - **Branch:** Wellawatte
   - **Account No:** 1100087435
   - **Swift Code:** CCEYLKLX

   **NB:** Please ensure you post us your Bank Deposit Slip as proof of payment together with the above **subscription form duly (mandatory) filled** to the address below.

2. Draw a cheque in favour of “The Community of The Risen Lord” for the subscription fee of Rs.600/- and post the cheque along with the **duly filled above subscription form (mandatory)** to the address given below (within Sri Lanka only):

   **The Community of The Risen Lord,**
   
   **38 Iswari Road, Colombo 06 (Sri Lanka). Telephone:2366264**