



# IN OUR KNEES IN HIS HANDS

November 2016

**'Compassion, my dear Brother, is preferable to cleanliness. Reflect that with a little soap I can easily clean my bed covers, but even with a torrent of tears I would never wash from my soul the stain that my harshness toward the unfortunate would create.'**

**St. Martin de Porres,**

*St. Martin said these words when his bed was given to a poor person to sleep in. Let us have compassion for the poor and for lost souls!*

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# On Our Knees In His Hands

*November 2016*

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*"Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of God..."*

*Mathew 5:2*

Revelation 7:2-4,  
9-14

Psalm 24:1b-4b, 5-6

1 John 3:1-3

Matthew 5:1-12a

All Saints Day is a feast day on which Catholics celebrate the lives of saints, known and unknown. It arose out of the Christian tradition of celebrating the martyrdom of saints on the anniversary of their martyrdom. When martyrdoms increased during the persecutions of the Roman Empire, local dioceses instituted a common feast day to ensure that all martyrs, known and unknown, were properly honoured.

The current date of November 1 was instituted by Pope Gregory III, when he consecrated a chapel to all the martyrs in St. Peter's Basilica in Rome and ordered an annual celebration. This celebration was originally confined to the diocese of Rome, but Pope Gregory IV extended the feast to the entire Church and ordered it to be celebrated on November 1. Like all Christians, Catholics believe in life after death, but the Church also teaches us that our relationship with other Christians does not end with death. Those who have died and are in Heaven in the presence of God can intercede with Him for us, just as our fellow Christians do here on earth when they pray for us. Catholic prayer to saints is a form of communication with those holy men and women who have gone before us, and a recognition of the "Communion of Saints", living and dead.

The Doctors of the Church are great saints known for their defense and explanation of the truths of the Catholic Faith. Thirty-five saints, including four female saints, have been named Doctors of the Church, covering all eras in Church history. We know the numerous saints that have passed through this life and touched our own lives who remain unnamed and unrecognized. This feast is a celebration of all such saints as well. In fact, we are called to this same holiness.

The Readings today so beautifully portray the heavenly realm where the saints reign with the Lord himself. The number 144,000 symbolizes an infinite number and the Lamb is the Lord Himself. St. John has a vision of the great tribulation that is to come. The faithful are to be sealed and not to be exempt from it but transported safely through it. Those who endure the trials will experience, perfect peace in the presence of God. Let us learn from the saints and emulate their lives.

**Prayer:** *Abba Father as your children, let us put on your attitude and be purified as you are. Amen*

***“For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life” John 6:40***

Wisdom 3:1-9

Romans 5:5-11

John 6:37-40

We celebrate All Souls Day today. Yes, we celebrate this day and are not mourning for the dearly departed, because we are reminded that death is not the end. Therefore we truly commemorate all the faithful who have passed on from this earth, and we recognize the great hope we have of resurrection and living in the presence of the Almighty through all eternity.

Today’s first reading reminds us that the souls of the just are in the hand of God, and they are in peace. Those who live a righteous life can, in fact, have immortality and abide with God, in love forever. Today, we remember this reality and have hope for our loved ones who have passed away in faith.

We also are reminded that heaven is the goal of our lives. We are called to live a righteous life through trusting and obeying God. If we remain in friendship with God, we can abide with Him forever in heaven. Death is not the end, but truly a beginning. God desires for all of us to be in union with Him for all of eternity. Our Lord Jesus, in His lifetime on earth, taught and offered us everything we need to do to get to heaven, but how well have we responded to the teachings of the Lord? Today’s first reading calls us to ponder and correct our course in the hope of an eternal life one day.

In the second reading the apostle St. Paul reminds us of another great truth. The purpose of God the Father in sending His only beloved Son to this earth was that we would have eternal life. One of the greatest acts of love was that the Lord out of love for us died on the Cross. He shows us how we can find hope in Jesus Christ for He has freed us from sin and slavery and is continually offering us reconciliation with Him, to sin no more and live a life of righteousness and holiness. This is the pathway to an eternal life with Him in heaven. In today’s Gospel proclamation, we hear from the lips of the Lord Jesus Himself the promise of eternal life for those who come to Him. His purpose was to call all people to Himself and not to lose anyone whom the Father wishes to be saved. Therefore, today, let us be reminded of the reality of heaven and hold on to this great hope.

***Prayer: Abba Father, I thank you for your promise of Hope in eternal life through Christ Jesus. Help me live my life on earth in a way pleasing to you, that I may live in your embrace in heaven one day. Amen!***

*“The supreme good of knowing Christ Jesus My Lord ”*

*Phil 3:8*

Philippians 3:3–8a

Psalms 105:2–7

Luke 15:1–10

There was a time, as a good Catholic, I would involve myself in religious activities. From serving at the altar, to walking in devotional processions and other activities. Even now I may be doing some of it and even studying Theology and Psychology. Yet I have learnt from the grounding received in the Pubudu Charismatic movement, these can become meaningless unless and until I have had an ongoing encounter and relationship with the Risen Lord.

In the first reading St. Paul writes consequent to having had an encounter with the Risen Lord on the road to Damascus. Later spending time in the desert, the Lord revealed to St. Paul most of what is written in the New Testament. He says because of the supreme good of knowing the Lord, he counts as loss and rubbish his proud ancestry and blindly following the laws and customs of the Old Testament.

St. Paul invites the Philippians to worship through the Spirit of God (V.3). There is always the danger that the externals of worship could be bereft of the Spirit of God and more bordering on our flesh. Such worship does not please God nor does it satisfy the deepest longing of our soul to be united to God. Probably many are not told how to connect into the deeper recesses of our spirit, to take advantage of inward grace that is freely available. We need to contemplate or ponder on the Word of God and be familiar with it, in our depths. Without reaching the depths, our external manifestations are devoid of the energy of inward grace. This may be one reason why many leave the church in search of a personal encounter with the Spirit of God to worship and follow the Lord.

In the Gospel proclamation sinful people are joyfully seeking the Lord for a personal encounter. Mercy and love willingly welcomes them, restoration and healing take place. The Lord promises true peace and happiness. Today is the feast of St. Martin De Porres who was an illegitimate child. He was probably frowned upon by society but loved by the Lord. He became a Dominican. Blessed with tremendous healing powers but wanting no glory for himself, he chose to sweep and clean toilets. Let us exalt ourselves by being humble in Christ Jesus.

**Prayer:** *Abba Father, may I walk with you and listen to you; tell me I am your own. Amen*

*"But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ..."* Philipians 3:20

Philippians 3:17-4:1

Psalms 122:1-5

Luke 16:1-8

Today's readings reflect on our citizenship in heaven. It is given to us through our Lord Jesus. How we set our mind on earthly things, matters a lot in eternity. We should understand the purpose of our lives. This is the time to pause for a while and ask ourselves a question; 'Where have I fixed my mind or focus?' When we become more focused on temporary, earthly things, we tend to

be driven off the path to eternal life which our Lord Jesus has set for us. We should remember that we are mere stewards of the earthly possessions. How do we come to this realisation? St. Paul says, that 'our citizenship is in heaven'. What does he mean? The Bible makes it clear in Ephesians 1:4-5; "For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will". It means, our lives are with Him. God made us to be a part of His family. He made us to have a relationship with Him, to love Him and to be loved by Him. Ephesians 1:10 says, "This was his purpose: that when the time is ripe he will gather us all together... to be with him in Christ forever." God's purpose is first that we become a part of his family, that we get to know him and then spend all of eternity with Him. But how can we become part of God's family? It's only through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. We are here on this earth for a short time. As Lalith Perera reflected, it is just a time of preparation for a million of years we have in eternity. God is more interested in preparing us for eternity than in making us happy here and now. Of course He loves us and wants us to be happy. But He also permits dark seasons that test our faith; seasons of no answers to draw us near to Him; hard situations that help us grow in character with Him, because He wants to grow our character that will matter in eternity. In today's Gospel proclamation, the Lord Jesus says "For the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light" (Luke 16:8). The Lord is drawing a contrast between the "sons of the world" (unbelievers) and the "sons of light" (believers). If the steward, one of the 'people of this world,' can exercise this quality (Luke 16:8, the master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly), how much more should disciples or believers, the 'people of the light,' be able to do so.

**Prayer: Abba Father, thank you for giving us your Son and gifting us with abundant faith in Him so that we may have eternal life through Him! Amen**

***And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches  
of his glory in Christ Jesus.***

***Philippians 4:19***

Philippians  
4:10-19

Psalms 112:1b-2,  
5-6, 8a, 9

Luke 16:9-15

In today's Gospel proclamation our Lord Jesus uses the term dishonest wealth, which seems to have sparked many debates in theological circles. To me, the Lord is telling me how to use my wealth, without qualifying how I earn it. In the parable of Lazarus and the rich man, riches seem to keep people away from heaven. At another time He tells us it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter heaven. In today's Gospel reading the Lord explicitly says that wealth will fail us at one time or the other. Instead, we should use wealth to do things that will help us enter eternal life.

In the second reading we see an example of how the Philippians used wealth to gain eternal life. They financially supported the spread of the Gospel. In this case, they supported the mission of St. Paul. St. Paul tells them "My God will fully supply whatever you need, in accord with his glorious riches in Christ Jesus." The Philippians will be provided for, not according to the amount they gifted St. Paul, but according to the glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

In the Gospel Our Lord wants us to be trustworthy in little things. To me being trustworthy is being honest before God. In our parlance, we refer to this as inner responses, where we do things in response to God so that no one else but God can see. To me this true wealth is the favour of God that pulls heaven down to earth when we minister to others. True wealth is what St. Paul describes when he says he remains self-sufficient whether in abundance or in lack. True wealth is when our family members find meaning in a relationship with God and commit their lives to it. True wealth is when the Lord himself meets our needs.

Our Lord Jesus says that we cannot serve two masters, God and mammon. Mammon is often described as the love for material wealth and possessions which is earthly security. The oft quoted "I can do all things in Him who strengthens me" is not a statement to boost one's self-confidence. It is a testimony that only the strength from above can protect us from being drawn to mammon in times of abundance, and to despair in times of lack.

***Prayer: Abba Father, as I walk the thin line between living for you and living in this world, lead me to give you inner responses. Amen.***

“...For to Him all are alive.”

Luke 20:38

2 Mac 7:1-2, 9-14

Psalm 17:1, 5-6,  
8, 15

2 Thess 2:16-3:5

Luke 20:27-38

Today the Church reminds us that our spiritual journey through life is a matter of making choices. This is true not only for spiritual life but for all aspects of human living. A child, when checked by parents, makes a choice to obey or throw a tantrum. A teenager or a young adult, when faced with exams, makes a choice to spend time studying or waste time with friends for temporary pleasure. We make these choices depending on our beliefs, values, understanding and experience. The ease with which we can make a choice also depends on the consequences that each choice may bring upon us. If the short term consequence seems appealing, many would be tempted to throw their beliefs and values away, making a wrong choice, even though there are long term destructive consequences. On the other hand, when we are firm in our beliefs and values, and long term results are good and fruitful, we receive strength to make the choice accordingly, even if it involves short term suffering. This is the lesson from today's First Reading.

The Gospel proclamation takes us to a totally different reality, that neither science nor philosophy has so far been able to figure out. A question faced by every human being is “Who am I, after all? What happens after death?” Even we, Christians who believe in life after death and resurrection are often inclined to imagine that our present life status as a spouse or a parent/child will continue to be the same even in heaven.

Today the Lord Jesus explains that we who are redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb and delivered from the clutches of sin, re-claimed to the sonship/daughterhood of the Heavenly Father, and the Lordship of the Son of God, receive our true identity as God's own children. Once all the outer layers of other identities of this world are peeled off, the central truth comes to light and remains forever... “I am God's child, and that is who I have always been, though I could not fathom that truth all these years”.

I had been a person extremely committed to my roles I have been assigned to in life. When I was made the class prefect in the primary school, I took it so seriously, that not a single instruction of the teacher went without being taken seriously and obeyed. As a member of school choir it was the same story. Later on, when it came to univer-

sity and career too, it was just the same. All my life, I had made my temporary roles, become my life. Thus I had been living so many roles, which defined who I was, although deep within I was just me. At the same time this nature of mine made it rather difficult for me to let go of those identities when it was time for me to move on. The worst part was that those around me also saw my role and not the real me, thus resulting in a lot of disappointment and heartache for everyone. This went on until the Lord gradually started to teach me my true identity, which again is a yet another choice. When I choose my true identity of being the beloved child of the Almighty God, I look at all my life situations and both good and bad events through that reality. I need not wait until I die to claim and live this truth.

How do we make our true identity rise above all other identities that we put on, or allow the world to put on us? There is only one way and that is through our personal prayer life. Everyday we choose to give God the best time of the day. For me, it is as soon as I wake up in the morning. Through the Ten Rememberings, I choose to leave the flesh into the reality of the Father's Kingdom. Though the Four steps, I choose to move from my own broken identities to that of the Lord's for me, believing that, "Neither height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:39). I look at the wounds of Christ and choose to forgive and love those who hate me and I choose to intercede for them like the Master did on the Cross. I choose to use the 'Five Keys' taken from Philippians 4:4-7, each time when I go through a crisis or a struggle. I choose to praise God at all times, be kind and gentle, because the Lord is near, I refuse to be anxious, instead I choose to pray and intercede, and give thanks for all that the Lord is going to do in and through this crisis. When I choose to use these keys, the Peace of God that transcends all understanding begins to guard my heart and mind in Christ Jesus. All these tools help me to re-affirm to my own heart, more than to others, my true identity.

Through a personal prayer life we also experience what St Paul says to Thessalonians in the Second Reading, that the Father and the Son encourage our hearts and strengthen us as we spend time in their presence. Often we lament about the lack of faith in others. Even here, we have a choice, as St. Paul teaches us. The Lord is faithful and He has the power to strengthen us and protect us from all evil. For everything is possible with God and in Him all are alive.

***Prayer: Abba Father, I call on You, knowing that You answer me, as I am Your child. Amen.***

Titus 1:1-9  
Psalm 24:1-6  
Luke 17:1-6

As we go through today's first reading, we notice that there were two types of servers in the early church. Why do we call them servers instead of leaders? Flowing from the attitude of St. Paul, he compares himself to a slave, which means that he is not there to wield authority, but rather, he is there to serve.

The first type of server we come across is the itinerant preacher and the support team. We see St. Paul and Titus in this group. Their job is to work with "God's elect" and grow them in faith and knowledge based not on intellectual understanding, but in the hope of another way of living, which is eternal life. The second type of server is the one who is planted among "God's elect". Today, St. Paul instructs Titus how to identify people to appoint these "servers on the ground". While specifying the attributes of the servers, St. Paul does not mention that they should be powerful preachers or miracle workers or manifest any other spiritual gift. But rather he asks Titus to look for qualities that seem to resonate with the fruits of the spirit in Galatians 5. He instructs Titus to look carefully at how they live and treat their family, the place where people let their hair down, and exhibit their true nature. They must also hold fast on to the teachings. It looks like the role of the servers on the ground is to hold fast to the teaching, and in their personal lives, give inner responses based on the teachings, and model the teaching in practical terms to inspire others.

For example, recently those associated with CRL were introduced to a teaching based on Philippians 4:4-6, which we called the 5 keys for handling a crisis. The preachers went all over sharing this revelation. The servers on the ground were to model the teaching by using the keys to handle their own crises. It was not for them to go about preaching the revelation, but to model it; a different form of preaching to inspire those around them. In today's Gospel proclamation, our Lord Jesus teaches us how to live with each other. He accedes that acts of sinfulness are inevitable. Instead, he teaches the disciples how to deal with sinners. The main tool he recommends is forgiveness. The disciples respond by asking how to grow in faith. To the Lord the size of faith is immaterial. What matters is the presence of faith, even the size of a mustard seed.

**Prayer:** *Abba Father, increase our faith so that we may give inner responses and model your word in our lives. Amen*

*'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty'*

**Luke 17:10**

Titus 2:1-8, 11-14

Psalms 37:2, 18,  
23, 27, 29

Luke 17:7-10

As soon as we say slave or servant it reminds us of submitting to someone. To be an honest and humble servant we need to have an amazing inner freedom. To come to the stage of not accepting gratitude for the service we do, requires a tremendous grace of God.

In Matthew 20:26-27, the Lord Jesus says, "...whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave". When I look at these words as I understand the Lord Jesus calls us to commit our lives for the sake of others instead of giving orders to them. Instead of ruling the life of someone else He calls us to spend our lives for others. Thus in Matthew 20:28 the Lord Jesus says, "...just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." This is not the will of the Lord Jesus. This is the will of God the Father. Throughout His life he bowed his head to the will of the Father, drawing the power of the Holy Spirit and through the grace of God the Father. Whether we deserved it or not the Lord Jesus became the servant of servants and offered Himself on the cross, to pay the ransom for all of us. God the Father expressed His gratitude by raising the Lord Jesus from death, for this commitment of Him.

Today the Lord Jesus is calling us to this way of life. Through the Sacrament of Baptism not only do we become a child of God, we are also called to be a servant of God submitting to His will. We are then called to be a leader, a servant in our marriages, in our work places, in the society and in the Church. Today, how many of us truly answer this calling? Many of us have failed to be honest servants of God because for all our works, we expect human acceptance, human response and human gratitude.

The apostles, Church Fathers and Saints proclaimed the Good News to the whole world by being servant of servants. Today as Catholics who have embraced that Good News the Lord Jesus calls us to be a servant, to our wife, husband, mother, father, children, brothers, sisters, in our work places to be a servant to those who work above us and below us; in Church and in the society. When we commit ourselves to this way of life, God will revive our faith experience.

***Prayer: Abba Father, we ask you to bless us today, to be honest, strong servants who will always commit ourselves to fulfilling your will. Amen.***

Do you not know that you are the temple of God,  
and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

1 Cor 3:16

Ezekiel 47:1-2, 8-9, 12

Psalms 46:2-3, 5-6, 8-9

1 Corinthians 3:9c-11,  
16-17

John 2:13-22

Today we celebrate the feast of the dedication of the Lateran Basilica, the official ecclesiastical seat of the Holy Father. The website CatholicCulture refers to this church as the mother head of all the churches in the world. Today the scripture readings refer to the temple of Jerusalem, implying the similarities between the material building of a church and the temple of Jerusalem. The Jews

believed that God was present in the temple of Jerusalem. We believe that God is present in the Blessed Sacrament in the Holy Tabernacle.

In today's Gospel proclamation we see how Our Lord Jesus Himself valued the temple of God. It was a place of encounter, it was His Father's house and He was irked by those who did not treat it so. The first reading tells us about God's dream for the temple. Ezekiel sees water flowing from the temple, which grows into a river. In a desert land, water had special significance. It was scarce and a precious life giving source. The river from the temple would not dry up in the heat of the desert, but would flow all the way to the Dead Sea (Arabah). When the river reaches the Dead Sea, the unimaginable happens, the Dead Sea would be made fresh. Life would flourish wherever the river flowed.

The Gospel proclamation tells us that Our Lord Jesus referred to his own body as the Temple of God. Notice how Ezekiel's vision became true in Our Lord Jesus. Like the river that flowed through the desert, He walked among sinful men and women. Wherever he went life flourished. The sick were healed, the dead were brought back to life and demons were exorcised. Like the Dead Sea being made fresh, He would break the word to them, and people who lived sinful worldly lives would repent and follow Him. From His crucified body, blood and water flowed bringing healing and forgiveness.

The second reading goes one step further and tells us that because the Holy Spirit lives in us, we are now the Temples of God. In the Gospel, the vendors supplied things required for temple rituals. I do not think they seriously believed that God was present there. They were there to make a livelihood. This made Our Lord Jesus angry. Do I seriously believe that my body is the Temple of God? Do I believe in the presence of the Lord in the Eucharist. It is time to revive our faith.

**Prayer:** *Abba Father, grant me the grace to truly believe in your presence in me and to be a blessing to those around me. Amen*

Philemon 7–20

Psalm 146:7–10

Luke 17:20–25

Today we celebrate the feast of St. Pope Leo the Great, Bishop and Doctor. This is a special title accorded by the Church to certain saints. This title indicates that the writings and preaching of such a person are useful to Christians “in any age of the Church”. Such men and women are also particularly known for the depth of understanding and the orthodoxy of their theological teachings.

Therefore we as Catholics are privileged to have access to such teachings and be strengthened in our faith through them.

St Pope Leo the Great was born in Tuscany. As deacon, he was dispatched to Gaul as a mediator by Emperor Valentinian III. He reigned as Pope between 440 and 461. He persuaded Emperor Valentinian to recognize the primacy of the Bishop of Rome in an edict in 445. The doctrine of the Incarnation was formed by him in a letter to the Patriarch of Constantinople, which had been already condemned before and this same letter was confirmed as the expression of Catholic Faith concerning the Person of Christ.

His encounter with Attila the Hun, at the gates of Rome persuading him to turn back, remains a historical memorial to his great eloquence and ability to mediate and this same great skill was used to persuade the invaders to desist from pillaging the city and harming its inhabitants. He died in 461, leaving many letters and writings of great historical value. His feast day is celebrated on November 10th.

Today’s first reading is a beautiful account of great intercession and mediation by St. Paul now an old man. Grown in age and wisdom and a total prisoner for Christ, St Paul teaches us a beautiful lesson. We should seek consensus and reconciliation in the face of discord and disharmony between people. Just as Saint Leo was known for his eloquence to persuade people to avoid great catastrophe, so does St. Paul exhibit the same gift in his efforts of bringing Philemon and his departed slave together in reconciliation. Throughout the reading of the letter we can tangibly experience the love of Christ in St. Paul bringing harmony between fractured souls. Let us strive for the same gift in promoting harmony and love between people and races.

***Prayer: Abba Father, convert my heart from sin to your love and let me see the Kingdom of God. Amen!***

With all my heart I seek you; let me not stray from your commands.

Psalm 119:2

2 John 4–9

Psalm 119:1–2,  
10–11, 17–18

Luke 17:26–37

In today's Gospel proclamation Our Lord speaks of a certain day. He calls it the day when the Son of man will be revealed. It implies that until that day comes we will not fully know Him.

While this day can be interpreted in terms of the second coming, it can also be interpreted as a moment that He breaks through into our lives.

Sometimes it could be that divine encounter that changes our lives completely. At another time it could be a breakthrough in a financial crisis or an incurable sickness or in the life of a child gone astray or in a broken marriage gone beyond the point of no return. The Lord encounters us and reveals himself as the one above all circumstances and all men. He reveals himself as the one who has not stepped down from the throne, the one who is able to turn curses into blessings, and as the one who can give true meaning and purpose to our lives.

Our Lord explains to His disciples that this day will look like any other day, where people are pre-occupied with their usual mundane lives. If we are waiting for a breakthrough, this is good news. Even though it looks like nothing special is going to happen today, it could be the very day that the Son of man will be revealed.

A few years ago, a person attending a four-steps retreat was critical of how the retreat was being conducted and was scolding all and sundry under his breath. His friend was seated next to him. Suddenly the friend was healed instantly of a leg disorder. The friend began jumping and shouting "I can run, I can dance" and so on. Just like in the Gospel, two people were in identical circumstances. One witnesses the son of man being revealed, the other does not.

Today's first reading appears to be an excerpt from a casual letter from St. John to a friend, to warn the friend about false teaching. He uses the words "antichrist" and "deceivers" to describe those who propagate false teaching. What was this false teaching? To them our Lord Jesus had not appeared in the flesh. For them, our Lord Jesus was only a concept and a philosophy. They had not had a living encounter with the Lord. Those who operate with their intellect, as opposed to operating out of an encounter, "do not have God". They are missing the fullness of life that God can bring them.

*Prayer: Abba Father, carry me beyond my intellect to a true encounter with Our Lord Jesus. Amen*

**And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones,  
who cry out to him day and night? Luke 18:7**

3 John 5-8

Psalms 112:1-6

Luke 18:1-8

John Kunsevich was born in Ukraine at a time when there was a formal split between the Eastern Church and Western church. The church issues included disagreements on married clergy, use of the Byzantine rite and the disagreement on whether the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father and the Son. John became a priest, taking the name Josephat and was eventually made the Bishop of Vitebsk and Polotsk. The church of that area was in utter ruins when he first took up his pastoral care and he spent three long years rebuilding the church, repairing fallen buildings and helping the needy. Despite his faithfulness to the people, when the orthodox separatists established their own bishops in the area, his Catholic flock rebelled against Him as they did not want to join with the Roman church. They were looking for violence and a chance to discredit their own Bishop. Having found a reason finally, they killed their Bishop in a bloody riot. It was the surrounding Jews who came to the aid of his supporters and mourned the death of Josephat. As always violence did not have its way and good was produced. The Catholics were horrified at their own behavior and eventually the church, including Josephat's rival Archbishop were reconciled with Rome. St. Josephat became the first saint of the Eastern Church to be formally canonized by Rome.

Despite the fact that his own people, whom he labored for, abandoned him and eventually killed him, St Josephat responded to them only with love and forbearance. To the end he called them his friends and children, even as they rushed to murder him. The Psalmist says that even in darkness the light dawns for the upright, for those who are gracious and compassionate. St John, in his letter encourages us to be faithful to strangers so that we may all work together for the unity of the church.

In a similar way, in the Gospel proclamation today, the Lord Jesus encourages us to be persistent, even in the face of opposition and obstacles. God loves a persistent child who refuses to give up hope in God. "Will not God bring about justice for His chosen ones, who cry out to Him day and night?" He asks us for us to live generously, love freely and to be an instrument of His love for His people.

***Prayer: Abba Father, we ask you to give us the grace to love as you do, selflessly and unconditionally and to trust your unfailing goodness towards us. Amen***

**Live with fear of the Lord****Malachi 3:19–20a**

Psalm 98:5–9

**2 Thessalonians  
3:7–12**

Luke 21:5–19

This Sunday's readings begin with an alarming prophesy of the future. It will be a day where a furnace will be blazing for the proud to be devoured and burnt like stubble. My first reaction is Lord, that's definitely not for me. Instead, my reaction should be Father remember on that day, cleanse me of my secret, unknown sins and keep me in the shadow of your love.

My heart must be moved to pray for those who have no one to pray for. That is where the Divine Mercy chaplet is such a beautiful way to pray where I ask for mercy for my sins and the sins of the whole world. This is the beauty of Christianity where we are called to be other centered. The salvation of others should matter to me. This example comes directly from the Lord Jesus. He was not saving Himself. He gave up His life for our salvation. Let us say Hallelujah and Amen.

Malachi then goes on to say - 'But for you who fear my name, the Son of justice will rise with healing in his rays.' Another word from the Bible says 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom'. Why do I commit sin and why do I go against my beliefs? It is simply because at times I fail to feel the presence of the Lord and assuming that He is not around I choose to sin. If I was aware of the constant presence of the Lord I would never have sinned. Because I do not spend enough time with God, I fail to see or appreciate His greatness. It is only when we are faced with a huge tribulation that we fall on our knees and cry out to God. I remember once there was an argument with the neighbours and my father. The argument was over water in a tank. I was so afraid that my father would be pushed into the tank and that he would be injured. In my fear I fell on my knees and cried out to God and prayed for my father's protection. The situation eased and the crowd melted away. It is good to have moments when we fear people or the circumstances and then we begin to appreciate God and are moved into prayer.

St. Paul speaks about people among the believers who lived with no fear of God and the authority. They were found to live without discipline and were interfering with other people's lives. Among godly people we find a lot of nosy people. People who have been journeying for years, yet still live in the flesh and are not even aware of it. Once after an anointed healing session, we gathered for lunch and one lady was

so keen to know what message of healing the other lady in her party was claiming. She could not enjoy the meal without having the full picture. St. Paul cautions such people to go on working quietly and to earn their living and be independent.

In the Gospel proclamation from St. Luke, the Lord Jesus delivers another fiery sermon about the end times. The end times are a pet subject to many people but we can focus on some learning that the Lord Jesus offers us.

Be assured that nothing will remain standing - No matter how tall, big or beautiful you build, that structure will not remain. It also refers to our human body. No matter how fair, beautiful, well built and elegant we may strive to keep ourselves, one day this temple will be destroyed and the spirit will rise to a different kind of life.

Be assured that terrifying things will happen- but we are cautioned not to be terrified. We are forewarned that wars, tribulations and suffering will unfold but we are told to fix our gaze on the Lord.

Be assured that though we are all looking to God for love, joy and peace in this life, we may not have it. Eternal love, joy and peace are to be had in the future. If we face heartache, pain and misunderstanding, we should not be surprised. It is what the Lord Jesus went through and it will be part of our future. We cannot avoid it. Often we use God to avoid the bitterness and suffering. However we are called by the Father to embrace the cross like the Lord and learn from it.

Be assured that you will face injustice. As you journey with God we are so proud to say that the Lord will fight our battles and keep us safe and be with us. But there will be moments when we may feel abandoned and may have no one to turn to but the invisible Lord.

Be assured that you will have to explain your standing and beliefs but do not prepare your defense. When we have a misunderstanding human nature dictates that we replay the fight and prepare our defense. But the Lord is saying when you are called to defend your faith, do not prepare but remain open to His inspiration.

Be assured that you will be hated. We will be hated by bad people and by good people. We yearn for peace, tranquility and order but the very people we reach out to for love may choose to hate us. The Lord's advice is simple, perseverance will win you your lives and nothing will be lost no matter what happens. Praise the Lord!

***Prayer: Abba Father, we pray for the grace to be reminded of your ways of thinking and working. We pray for a fear of your name and perseverance. Amen***

“Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

Luke 18:38

Revelation 1:1-4,  
2:1-5

Psalm 1:1-4, 6

Luke 18:35-43

Many times in our personal prayer we would have asked the Lord to have mercy on us. For the times we fell into sin, the times we gave into lust, the times we judged others, the times we gossiped about others, the list is endless. And I am sure for each of those times, for every one of us, the Lord would have granted His mercy, if we sincerely repented. Yet can I be equally merciful when someone does something wrong or unjust to me? To the person who I know speaks badly behind my back, to the person who tries to score with my supervisor while putting me down, to the family member who continues to give me hate when I try to give love?

In today's Gospel proclamation, first the blind man asks the Lord for mercy. He does not ask for his obvious physical need of sight, but instead he pleads for mercy. He also addresses the Lord by the name of 'Son of David'. This indicates that he would have known scripture to call the Lord by that name. It also implies that he believed that the Lord was the chosen Messiah. So he would have known the Lord could heal him. Yet first, he asks for mercy.

He could have been asking the Lord mercy for his sins, or for his lack of spiritual sight where he would have been blind to God's ways in the past.

Yet the Lord does not question anything about his past, any rhyme or reason but simply asks him what he wants, and restores his sight. The Lord could see directly into his heart, He could see his immense faith, so He healed him. There is another striking thing this man did. He did not simply thank the Lord and go on his way after he received his sight - he followed Him and kept on thanking and praising God.

What would I do if I were like this blind man and received from the Lord something I was asking for? Would I continue to follow the Lord every day of my life? Or would I be grateful to the Lord for sometime, then go back to my old ways and get on with my usual life? Will I take the chance to tell everyone I meet what the Lord has done for me so that they too can give glory to God? I am called to give my testimony to help build the faith of others?

**Prayer:** *Abba Father, when I look within, I find myself wanting in so many areas. Lord I am weak, strengthen me in your mercy. Amen*

**"For the Son of Man has come to seek and save what was lost"**

**Luke 19:10**

Revelation 3:1-6,  
14-22

Psalm 15:2-5

Luke 19:1-10

During the Christian persecution St. John was given a revelation which is relevant to us today. In our context we are blessed, because we do not face persecution similar to the early church. Christianity grew on the blood of many witnesses who were martyred. Early Christians were familiar with the events in the Lord's life. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus was alive to everyone who accepted the Lord Jesus as the Lord of their life.

accepted the Lord Jesus as the Lord of their life.

When we go through the scripture we can see an invitation extended to us. God is inviting us to a genuine relationship with Him. The Sardis community was probably active in serving God, but the sincerity of their intention was a question. The few who must have been sincere are chosen by God to walk with His angel.

The community in Laodicea must have taken a middle path, which is an abomination to God. Living a lukewarm journey is living out of God's favour. God will spit us out. The invitation is to repent. God is knocking at our hearts, are we ready to open the door of our heart to Him?

The crafty liar has built an attitude in the minds of Christians. We do not need to be perfect to have a relationship with God. It is the idea of the ancient serpent, who is the deceiver. If we human persons could achieve perfection by ourselves, why would we be in need of a Saviour? We become perfect as our Heavenly Father, only when we accept God as our heavenly Father, and live in the sonship and daughterhood of God.

The perfect plan of God took place in Zacchaeus' life. It was a moment of grace. The imperfect Zacchaeus climbed the tree out of curiosity. The mercy of God knew the inner most need of his heart. God offered him sonship. Zacchaeus grabbed it and Lord Jesus said that salvation had entered his house. The mercy of God is offered to us every moment in life to accept or reject. Some of us accept it for a while and leave God due to hardship. Due to hurt caused by others we prefer the pit hole we live in rather than living in the mansion prepared by God. Let us cling to the mercy and grace from God.

**Prayer: Abba Father, cause me to have a repentant heart and to live in your favour. Amen.**

**“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God almighty, who was, and is,  
and is to come ....”**

**Revelation 4:8**

Revelation 4:1–11

Psalm 150:1b–6

Luke 19:11–28

In today's first reading, St. John paints a picture of heaven and heavenly praise and worship. St. John describes the majesty, power and glory of our Sovereign God. He says; “Day and night they never stop saying: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God almighty, who was, and is, and is to come’ (Rev 4:8). Heaven is the only place where continuous praise and worship is going on. Therefore, when we praise and worship the Lord, we are making a connection between earth and heaven. God rends the heavens to come down. It is in the middle of worship that God Himself begins to move powerfully. We see this in Acts 16. When St. Paul and Silas began to worship God in the middle of prison, that God shook the earth and the chains were broken. Opened in worship to God; their spirits were opened.

Praise and worship is a relational expression. We tend to default to old behaviour when we are in situations we do not understand. But if we can praise God in the prisons of life, we will be reveal our confidence and trust in Him. I love this saying; “the whole point of lamentation is you don't use your pain as an excuse not to worship; you actually take your pain and you bring it with you before the altar and you stand there with your pain and you say, ‘though all this is true, yet I will rejoice in You’. It is the highest form of worship that exists.” When we worship Him in the prison of our lives, when we do not have answers to our prayer, we are acknowledging His sovereignty over our lives. In that offering, in that relational expression He begins to move and brings down His Kingdom, His will into our lives. This can only be experienced when we become worshippers before Him.

The Parable of the ten pounds (Luke 19:11-27) is told by the Lord Jesus just before He enters Jerusalem for the last time. The Lord Jesus relates Himself with the noble man and the servants with disciples. It means, the Lord Jesus will leave His disciples for some time and He will return to consummate His Kingdom. Upon His return, the disciples of Jesus who are good stewards in His absence will receive incredible rewards and the poor stewards in His absence will have their rewards taken away and given to the disciples who are good stewards. Those who reject Him will face judgment. Let us cling to the Lord in moments when we fail to see His presence and we will be blessed.

***Prayer: Abba Father, we praise and worship you with our whole heart, mind and soul trusting in your goodness and faithfulness. Amen.***

If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—  
but now it is hidden from your eyes Luke 19:42

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Revelation 5:1–10

Psalm 149:1b–6a, 9b

Luke 19:41–44

Today's Gospel proclamation tells us about how our Lord Jesus wept over Jerusalem. In St. Luke's Gospel narrative, this incident occurs soon after our Lord Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem. The Pharisees take offence at the Kingly perception the disciples have of our Lord Jesus and instruct our Lord to silence them. "If only you had known on this day..." What is so special about this

day? This is the day that He is depicted as the King, as the anointed one of God and as the one the Jews have been waiting for. Their moment of decision, their Kairos had come, and they did not know it. Their eyes were sealed. They were blind to the world of the spirit.

Since they did not know what makes for peace, our Lord Jesus prophesies that the Jews and the city of Jerusalem would suffer great tragedy. This prophecy came true around 70 AD, when the Romans overran Jerusalem, destroyed the temple, and killed, maimed and exiled the Jews. The Jews were without a country until as recently as 1947. Our Lord Jesus implies that if they accepted what would bring them peace, their fate would have been different. Often, the eyes of our spirit are sealed and we miss those moments that can reveal what makes for peace. When we miss such moments, we wait until we hit a crisis, then go to His feet and return to His ways. If only our spirits were awakened, we would know what would bring us peace.

In the first reading there is a sealed scroll which no one can open. A mighty angel asks who can open the seals. The words Mighty Angel imply that neither heavenly or earthly might is able to open the seals. It is very like how we are unable to remove the seals on our eyes to see what would bring us peace.

When the situation seems hopeless, the Lion of Judah, the strong King who has prevailed, is revealed as the one who is able to open the seals. But St. John sees Him as the Lamb that was slain. And the seven spirits, the seven-fold ministry of the Holy Spirit, is upon the Lamb. The heavenly hosts rejoice and worship, because He is able to open the seals, because He was slain, because His blood purchased salvation for men from God.

**Prayer:** *Abba Father, help me behold our Lord Jesus as the Lion of Judah (as the strong one), also as the Lamb (the one who has paid for my sins), and worship him, as I wait for him to unseal the eyes of my spirit. Amen.*

Revelation 10:8–11

Psalms 119:14, 24,  
72, 103, 111, 131

Luke 19:45–48

In the current era we experience broken promises. People backtrack on their words and break their promises and we have become accustomed and immune to this bitter behaviour.

In contrast, our Lord Jesus Christ is different. Every word spoken by Lord Jesus was fulfilled. His word has become the foundation of our lives.

We can trust our Lord Jesus because He is faithful to His promises and Word.

The Book of Revelations spoke of a scroll and a command to consume the scroll. The scroll contains the Word of God. We receive clarity of this scroll with the Angel's prediction of the sweetness of the Word in the mouth and the bitterness in the stomach. The promises of God elevate us and transform us from our fallen identity. Our sinful nature begins to change and our internal transformation causes us to share the goodness of God with the world. The angel said that the scroll would be sweet in the mouth and bitter in the stomach. The sweetness of the Word of God is the conversation and the transformation within us. Our depths are soaked in the love of God and the fire of the Holy Spirit. It causes us to speak of the goodness of God. Therefore anyone of us who have experienced the love of God through the living word of God will never be able to stop evangelizing.

Our Lord Jesus acted radically at the Jerusalem Temple. Upon entering the Holy city, our Lord Jesus portrayed His authority over God's house, which was Himself. In and through the Paschal mystery, passion, death and resurrection of Lord Jesus Christ and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, every baptized person has become God's temple where God dwells. St. Paul said that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Today we celebrate the dedication of the Basilica of St. Peter & St. Paul. These two Apostles dedicated their lives towards the building of the Kingdom of God. They were so consumed with zeal that they could not stop building the Church. This celebration today is a result of their unceasing evangelizing. They built the Kingdom by uttering the good news of God that our Messiah is risen and alive.

**Prayer:** *Abba Father, may our lives be true temples of the Lord Jesus, where the Holy Trinity dwells and may it be a storehouse for Your living Word. Amen.*

So they went up to heaven in the midst of clouds.

Rev. 4:12

Revelation 11:4-12

Psalms 144:1-2, 9-10

Luke 20:27-40

On reading the Gospel I was amazed that after the Lord Jesus performed the most astounding miracles, proclaimed the glorious coming of the Kingdom, revealed the Good News of God as Father coming in search of the worst sinners - the foolish Sadducees were preoccupied with the trivial question that had no bearing on the life one is called to live.

But the Lord convicted me. Do I myself not pit my puny, finite intellect and rationalize and question the workings of the sovereign, infinite Almighty God? Instead of being enraptured and soaking myself in the Good News of God's unconditional love, which the Lord Jesus came to proclaim, I tend to occupy myself with questions that do little or nothing to enable me to experience God's love. My faith which is a gift lavished on me suffers from the consequences of my doubts..

The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection. Filled with hatred, envy and desire to trap and trick the Lord Jesus, they pose a question on the Mosaic Law (Deut.25:5). The Lord Jesus calmly meets them on their own ground quoting Moses (Exodus3:6) – to say that He is the God of the living and not the dead. The Sadducees, the rich influential section of the society, felt threatened by the Lord Jesus. Unfazed by their folly, He silences them saying, 'for those who are considered worthy of the world to come' and of resurrection of the dead...they are Children of God, for He raised them.

In the Book of Revelation, St. John refers to the Christian churches founded on the Apostles and Martyrs. He praises and celebrates the Apostles who were sent two by two to proclaim the Kingdom and the Lord Jesus coming in glory. There is a subtle reference to Elijah and Moses in the olive trees and the two lamps, who appeared with the Lord Jesus at the transfiguration. But appointed missionaries met with violent death. Is God telling us something? Is He asking us to look beyond the immediate evidence of the senses to a transcendental experience of the resurrection? Though missionaries were killed because God permitted it, the result of their resurrection was explosive – people were touched and converted. Let us not cling to temporary dreams of earthly fame and success. Instead in faith let us cling to His promises.

**Prayer:** *Abba Father, Help me to look beyond my senses and live in the vision of eternal life. Amen.*

Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

Luke 23:42

2 Samuel 5:1-3

Psalms 122:1-5

Colossians 1:12-20

Luke 23:35-43

Today's first reading describes how David was anointed King over all Israel. The elders come to David and remind him of a promise of the Lord. I trust they were referring to the incident that happened long before that, which is described in 1 Samuel 16, where Samuel anointed David as king of Israel.

When Samuel anointed David, his kingship was decreed in heaven. It was many years later that the anointing that was decreed in heaven was manifested on the earth. In between, the anointing was only a promise, and day to day life was another matter.

In between the two anointings David acts very differently to a person with aspirations to the throne. When he had the opportunity to kill Saul and establish himself as King, he refrains from doing so. He is more concerned about what God will think of his actions. He says "who am I to touch the anointed of the Lord?" He mourns the death of King Saul and punishes the one who killed him. He even punishes the one who kills King Saul's successor. Unlike Abraham, who was impatient and tried to give God a helping hand in the form of Ishmael, David waits for the Lord to fulfil his promise. And what a King, David turns out to be. No other King is revered as much as David. Heaven desires men and women who claim the promises of God and see with the eyes of faith and wait for him to act rather than those who see only with their naked eyes and probably obstruct what God has in store.

Today is the feast of the Solemnity of Christ the King. I would have expected a reading similar to our Lord's triumphant entry into Jerusalem, where He is welcomed as a King amidst cries of Hosanna. However, the Church takes today's Gospel from the scene of the crucifixion. To the naked eye there is nothing to indicate royalty. He is more like the victim of shrewd and scheming people, who were able to get the better of Him. The Church invites us to look upon Christ the King, just like how Samuel looked upon the young shepherd boy David and proclaimed the decree of heaven. In the fulfilment of time, that which is decreed in heaven will be manifested on Earth.

The soldiers and the leaders articulated the decrees of heaven in unbelief, "If you are the Christ of God, the chosen one..." they sneered. "If you are the King of the Jews..." they asked. They chose to believe

their naked eyes and used the decrees of heaven to humiliate and ridicule. Yet one person recognized the King. He was the thief who said “remember me when you come into your kingdom.” He chose to believe that Our Lord Jesus was indeed a King of a kingdom. He gave the truth of his heart. “We have been condemned justly” he confessed. The thief whose wrong choices had led him to a tragic end received an unexpected breakthrough.

You could argue that nothing really happened, and that the thief died on the cross as was expected. Had the thief got down from the cross, although a mighty miracle, he would have died again, like Lazarus. What happened was far greater. A man who had made wrong choices all his life, a man who had messed up his life, in one moment the laws of cause and effect are defied, and he shares the glory of eternal life, never to die again, and becomes the first saint to enter heaven with our Lord Jesus.

Today if we are in a situation where our lives are messed up, if the circumstances are beyond us, if men and women more powerful than us are controlling our destiny, pray the prayer of the thief. In his prayer he accepted his contribution to the whole mess. In faith he chose to believe that the Lord Jesus had not stepped down from the throne. Then came the breakthrough.

Today’s second reading talks about darkness and light. Darkness is the state where we only see through our naked eyes and we are blind to the things of heaven and the Spirit. In the kingdom of light we see the truths of heaven. The reading tells us that God delivered us from the power of darkness and transferred us in to the kingdom where His son is the king.

In the kingdom of darkness, it may appear that circumstances, men and women have dominion and power over us. The reality of the kingdom of light is revealed by the word of God, which says “whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things were created through him and for him.”

As we look upon the cross we see that the very thing the rulers, powers and principalities used to ridicule, humiliate and defeat the King, became the revered emblem of victory for those who believe in him. The King cannot be defeated. The obstacles placed by the kingdom of darkness become the very stepping stones of the King’s victory march. Curses are turned into blessings. He has not stepped down from the throne.

***Prayer: Abba Father, often I only see my circumstances and they overwhelm me. Open the eyes of my heart that I may recognise your sovereignty. Amen***

**“Whoever does the will of My Father in heaven  
is my brother and sister and mother.”**

**Matthew 12:50**

Zec 2:14-17

Ps.Luke 1: 46-55

Matthew 12:46-50

Today the Church celebrates the joyful occasion of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the temple. Devout Jewish parents offered their children at tender age to God, to be brought up in the apartments belonging to the temple. They surrender their children to God, to be taught the Holy Scriptures, and be nurtured and trained in serving in the temple.

The “Mystical City of God”, written by Ven. Mother Mary of Jesus, of Agreda in Spain, gives a beautiful description of this important event of the life of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It is said that the holy child Mary conveyed to her parents, her ardent desire of being in the temple. She reminded them of the benefits they had received from God and how much they should seek to please God. She urged them that she would be more their daughter, should she be dedicated to God, rather than be kept at home. The book elaborates how St. Anne and Joachim, each heard the voice of God in their personal prayer, re-affirming their child’s desire. Thus soon after her third birthday they presented their little daughter to the temple.

This whole occasion highlights just one important feature in the lives of this family, namely the joyful submission to the will of the Heavenly Father in all things. St. Anne and Joachim spent 20 years of their marriage without a child, facing ridicule from neighbours and acquaintances, as Jews considered this to be the greatest misfortune and disgrace. Given the same situation, I would have given excuses that surely God would wish such a precious child to remain with her parents.

The Lord’s voice is clear in today’s Gospel proclamation. Doing the will of God alone makes one worthy of His relationship. We are asked to let go of our children to the Lord. We are reminded of our priorities; to give God the first place in everything at all times, and to teach our children to do the same. The God of all Creation decided to rouse Himself from His Holy dwelling and come to live among us, His people. Yet that was made possible, only through the humble submission of one girl, who from her tender years, was open to seeking God’s will and saying ‘yes’ to Him in all things.

***Prayer: Abba Father, grant us the grace to bring up our children in the Spirit, so that their spirit will be awakened before they acquire worldly wisdom. Amen.***

Let all creation rejoice before the LORD,

Revelation 14:14–19

Psalm 96:10–13

Luke 21:5–11

The Lord Jesus in today's Gospel proclamation says, "When you hear of war and insurrections do not be terrified for such things must happen first but it will immediately not be the end. Nations will rise against nations and kingdom against kingdom. There will be powerful earthquakes, famines and plagues from place to place and awesome sites and mighty signs will come from the sky."

Have we not experienced many of these situations at some stage or another in our lives? Think about when you got married. Was that day beautiful and challenging? Think of the moment when you gave birth to your first child and how your heart was filled with apprehension and joy? What is it about life that makes it not only so remarkable but also challenging?

Why is it that we must go through uncertainties while taking first steps in our lives? I believe there is a sublime law that governs every living creature on earth; it is a law that goes way beyond our instinct to survive. It is the law of trust. To survive we must trust, to thrive and grow we must *trust*, without this *trust* we can never move forward or back.

We can never make a point, a dent, a plan or a decision. Just like our flesh and bone lived between earth and sky our hearts and mind live between fear and trust. But as the body favours the earth more than the sky so too our hearts and minds must favor trust over fear. The Lord invites us today to trust in Him to not be deceived, for many will come in my name saying I am He and the time has come. Do not follow them. Christ is with us. He is physically and spiritually present through the Eucharist. The Father decided long ago that between heaven and earth, between trust and fear we could bring His peace down to earth. We have nothing to fear for Christ's peace is forever here.

Today is the day of memorial for the Patron saint of Church Music and the Blind. St. Cecilia, the Virgin and Martyr. She was a model of purity and holiness and died as a martyr. Her body was found to be incorrupt.

**Prayer:** *Abba Father, we are pleasure seekers and lacking in faith. Teach us Lord, to profess our faith courageously and be willing to sacrifice ourselves in leading others closer to You. Amen.*

## We are His sanctuary

Revelation 15:1-4

Psalm 98:1-3b, 7-9

Luke 21:12-19

In the first reading and the Gospel passage today, the emphasis is on the end times with lots of imagery and symbolism that should not be taken literally. In the Gospel passage the Lord Jesus is apparently referring to the Jerusalem temple's destruction which took place around 72 AD. As the Lord said not one stone will be left on another and even today we see Jews in Jerusalem praying near the Wailing Wall. In any event the Lord Jesus had accused the religious leaders of turning the temple into a den of robbers.

In the Acts of the Apostles, St Stephen, the first martyr tells the religious leaders, "You stiff-necked heathens, don't you know that God does not live in buildings made by human hands." Today Catholic charismatic revival movements specially bring people to an awareness that the Risen Lord is living in us. We are His sanctuary. The more we are aware that Christ Jesus is alive and living in us the more we will be able to rejoice always, pray constantly and give thanks in also circumstances. The Lord within reassures us that when we sincerely do God's will he will carry us through raging waters and blazing fires. Even if we stand before the fires of hell and death, He is at our side, assuring us "know that I am with you and in you through it all." The Lord also says nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be great earthquakes, famines and pestilences in various places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven.

We see this happening today mainly in Syria and Iraq with the ISIS unleashing the worst terror ever seen in history. But the Lord tells us not to worry when we face persecution from terrorists like ISIS who have threatened to kill the Pope and destroy the church. The Lord tells us whatever might happen we are to continue our mission to take the good news to the poor with the power of the Holy Spirit. We are to tell prisoners that they are prisoners no more, tell blind people that they can see, set the down trodden free and go tell everyone the news that the kingdom of God has come. When we are hauled up or persecuted the Lord reassures us that He will tell us what to say through the power of the Spirit.

**Prayer: Abba Father, we thank you for giving us the Lord Jesus who lives in us and the power of the Holy Spirit to face any and every situation with prophetic courage. Amen**

**Thursday 24th November** *SS Andrew Dung, priest & companions, martyrs*  
*Blessed are those who have been called to the wedding feast of the Lamb.* **Rev 19:9**

Revelation 18:1–2,  
21–23, 19:1–3, 9a

Psalms 100:1b–5

Luke 21:20–28

Today's first reading speaks of the destruction of Babylon. In my reflection the city of Babylon suggests a word picture of the seductive power of materialism and luxury. The reading also uses the word "harlot" to describe Babylon. A harlot is one who performs the act of love with no love. To me this implies that Babylon is a promise of great happiness and contentment, but a lie and an empty promise nevertheless.

As I look within myself, I find that I too am lured and seduced by Babylon. Deep in my unconscious mind I believe that the formula for greater happiness is more money, better career progression, and winning greater admiration and respect.

The reading also refers to an angel. To me an angel is one who brings direct divine intervention. This particular angel lights up the earth with his splendour. He declares that Babylon is no longer the attractive place it used to be. It is exposed for what it truly is, a haunt for demons and unclean spirits. The multitude in the heavens cry "Salvation, glory, and might belong to our God". The lure and seductive power of Babylon is overcome by the saving power of the Lamb. This is good news to me, because the saving power of the Lamb is able to break the hold and power that Babylon has over me.

Some say that the first part of the Gospel refers to the fall of Jerusalem, while others say that this is an end time prophecy. In February this year, when I lost my job, in many ways it seemed to me that the end of the world had come. Fears, uncertainty and the hope that God had a plan would flood my soul all at once and they would compete with each other for dominance.

When it looks like the bottom of our world is falling off, the Lord asks us to stand erect and hold our heads high, because redemption is near. He will come riding on the clouds, in power and great glory. He will come in unexpected creative ways, beyond what we can visualize, with power that dwarfs our affliction. When I lost my job, my employer compensated me. Barely weeks later there was a serious sickness in my family. If I had not lost my job, I would not have been able to afford the treatment. The Lord turned my curse into a blessing.

**Prayer:** *Abba Father, help me discover the truths of heaven during good times, so that I can fall back on your promises when my world comes crashing down. Amen*

**Are we living a life worthy of our calling?**

Revelation 20:1–4,  
11–21:2

Psalm 84:3–6a, 8a

Luke 21:29–33

The first reading speaks of the fall of satan, the new heaven and the new earth. The earth as we know it will not last forever. But after God's great judgement, He will create a new earth. We would not know how the new earth will look like or where it will be, but God and His followers, those whose names are written in the book of life, will be united to live there forever. Will we be there?

As we celebrate the feast of St. Catherine of Alexandria, we recall the courageous life she lived to her calling. Saint Catherine of Alexandria, also known as Saint Catherine of the Wheel and The Great Martyr Saint Catherine is, according to tradition, a Christian saint and virgin, who was martyred in the early 4th century at the hands of the pagan emperor Maxentius. According to her hagiography, she was both a princess and a noted scholar, who became a Christian around the age of fourteen, and converted hundreds of people to Christianity. She was martyred around the age of 18. Her life was a journey to ensure her name was written in the book of life so when God creates the new earth, she will be united forever with Him. Growing strong in God's presence is often preceded by a journey through barren places in our lives.

This is the same longing in the heart of the Psalmist. To be with God and live a life worthy of His calling. Just like St. Catherine of Alexandria passed through all obstacles and tears, it is a necessity to be moulded through pain and struggles to meet God, who comforts us by not holding back anything good from us.

In today's Gospel proclamation the Lord Jesus assures that heaven and earth will pass away but His words will last forever. It is a choice we are to make between the world that passes away and the world that lasts forever. Are we living a life worthy of our calling, ensuring that we will dwell in the presence of the Lord and unite with Him and His believers in the new earth that will not be shaken? Let us strive for that!

***Prayer: Abba Father, we thank You for Your revelation of the kingdom that matters and the life we are ought to live in order to be chosen to inherit that Kingdom. We thank You for the examples set for us to follow. Give us the power of the Holy Spirit to choose between light and darkness and dwell in Your presence for ever more, In Jesus' name. Amen.***

'Be always on the watch..'

Luke 21:36

Revelation 22:1-7

Psalms 95:1-7b

Luke 21:34-36

In the Holy Scriptures wherever it is mentioned about the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, the phrase 'be watchful' is mentioned. Previously this phrase was a big puzzle for me. In today's Gospel proclamation it is said, "Be always on the watch and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man" (Luke 21:36).

Only God knows of this day. The Holy Spirit reveals the mind of God to us. The Holy Spirit speaks to our spirit. Therefore if we keep our spirit awakened, we will be able to know the mind of God always. When we give the first place of our lives to the desires of the flesh our spirit is suppressed. That is when we are weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life. In such bondage we will only hear the voice of the world and flesh. Our only concern will be to find ways of satisfying the body, mind and heart. We will not see God. We will not hear the voice of God.

When we remain in union with God in prayer, in thanksgiving and praise, reading the Word of God, our spirit awakens; we experience the love of God in our depths; His presence becomes real and we begin to hear His voice. When a people enter into this way of life, they will begin realise what is going to happen in the future. The Holy Spirit will reveal the mind of God to them. Therefore we have to be always on the watch.

Today the book of Revelation mentions the tree of life. It is a place where there will not be any curse. It is the place where the throne of God is. It is the place where His servants worship Him; the place where they will see His face. Who can reach this place? The ones who can enter into this blessedness are those who wash their own garments in the blood of Christ. Therefore let us give the truth of our hearts to the Lord Jesus and be cleansed by His precious blood on a daily basis. The sacrament of reconciliation is great gift given to us. However big our sin is, through this sacrament we receive the grace to start an entirely new life. We receive the forgiveness of God and start afresh. Let us begin this new life in Christ today.

**Prayer: Abba Father, give me the strength to pray, to be filled by the Holy Spirit. Give me the grace to seek You always, to remain at your feet and to love you with all my heart, with all my soul and with my entire being. Amen.**

**So you also must be ready****Matthew 24:44**

Isaiah 2:1-5

Ps.122:1-9

Romans 13:11-14

Mat.24:37-44

Today we begin the season of Advent. This is the time when we prepare for the celebration of our Lord Jesus Christ's birth. If we have not already, then it is a time when we can reflect on our spirituality and make changes in our lives. Once I remember a few years ago I decided that I would attend daily morning mass during Advent. However, once the Christmas season finished, I went back to sleeping in. Today I realise that just changing for a limited time is not enough. The Lord has set aside each season for us to start afresh and make a lasting change in our hearts and lives. Today, the Lord is not asking us to make a sacrifice for just a season or a couple of weeks, but to make this the beginning of the rest of our lives.

The First Reading from Isaiah gives hope to the people of that day and is a prophecy of what is yet to come. Isaiah is saying that a day will come when Christians will strengthen one another and support one another. In those days it will be God who teaches His people; by His word and Spirit. Isaiah goes on to say that if all were real Christians, there would be no war. This reading of Isaiah can also be a hope to us today. He is saying that there can be a world where true religion flourishes; people delight in going up to the house of the Lord and urge others to accompany them. In this world there will be no wars or disputes because God will settle everything; between people, families, communities and nations. This is the hope we have that one day our world will be changed.

The Second Reading from St. Paul's Letter to the Romans is a warning to leave our sinful ways and to come back to the Lord and follow Him. St. Paul likens our sinful deeds and nature to that of being asleep. We are not conscious of the truth that surrounds us every day of our lives. That is – we are here in this world for just a short time and one day we will have to come face to face with God and give an account of our lives- the good, the bad and the ugly. Therefore, St. Paul is calling us to come out of our sleepy state, to become aware of the sinfulness within us and around us, put an end to our sinful ways and return to the Lord.

St. Paul urges us “put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in ca-

rousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy” (vs. 12-13). How can we do this? We cannot turn from our sinfulness by our own strength. If we do this by our own effort, we will end up going back to it one day. St. Paul says in verse 14, “Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.” We do not have the strength; but Christ does. It is when we bathe ourselves with the blood of our Lord Jesus that we will be able totally overcome the sin in our lives and walk towards holiness.

In today’s Gospel proclamation our Lord Jesus is telling us to always be on guard and ready for the coming of Christ. The Lord compares His second coming to the days of Noah. There was a great man of faith called Noah. Noah lived in a time of great turmoil and much confusion. The people of that time did not know God or care to abide by His law. Instead they lived for themselves and indulged in many sinful acts. Without any warning God swept them up in a flood and destroyed sin on the earth.

The Lord Jesus says that just as the flood came without any warning, so will it be at the end of our lives. At the end of our lives, we will come face to face with our Lord and God and will have to give him an account of our lives. The Lord Jesus is telling us that we should turn to Him today. He is asking us not to wait till tomorrow to change. The time does not matter. It is irrelevant whether we will leave this earth tomorrow or next week or in 20 years. God is asking us to turn to Him and have an encounter with Him no matter where we are in our lives.

I recently watched a video of a testimony of a man who had a heart attack and died. The doctor who pronounced him dead received a leading from God to pray over the dead man’s body. A few minutes later the dead body became warm and his heart started beating again. Later, when the man was asked what had happened to him when he died he said that he felt alone and scared in the darkness of death. When he died, he realized that he would be alone for eternity because he did not know God and that scared him. Hell is a place where God is absent.

Today, God is calling out to each of us and asking us to make a change in our lives this season. He is asking us not to change just for a season, but instead to make a real change in our lives and open our hearts and lives to God this Christmas and for the rest of our lives. When we take one step God will do the balance and make the change in our lives permanent.

***Prayer: Abba Father, I pray that each day I may make a change in my life that will bring me closer and closer to You. Amen.***

**“Truly I say to you, I have not found such  
great faith with anyone in Israel.”**

**Matthew 8:10**

Isaiah 4:2-6

Ps.122:1-9

Mat.8:5-11

In today's Gospel reading we read about the Lord Jesus and the Roman centurion. This incident is so special that we recount the words spoken by this centurion every time we celebrate the Holy Eucharist. "Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, just say the word.." (Matt 8:8). It is probably the only place in the Gospels where the Lord Jesus was awed and amazed at the faith response of a person. He even publicly praises it. What is more amazing is that this one person was neither 'spiritual' nor for that matter even a Jew. But he managed to impress the Lord. If something stirs the Lord's affection to this extent, is not it really worth exploring?

There are three things, as per this passage, which God really values in this passage. They are humility, love and faith. The Lord Jesus is moved by these three characteristics in people.

The Roman centurion had heard and witnessed enough about the Lord Jesus to recognise that the Lord Jesus was special. He had real authority. Sicknesses and demons obeyed Him and the religious leaders were speechless when challenged by Him. Even though he was a man used to issuing commands, he allowed all these things to influence his heart and break down the ego and prejudices and differences. In humility he pleads with the Lord. Here is a Roman admitting his worthlessness to a Jew.

The next thing, love. It was the love he had for his servant that prompted him to approach the Lord and ask Him to intervene. It pleases the Lord when our hearts are sensitive to the needs of others. Sometimes we have double standards. We proclaim our love for the Lord, but we treat our brother and sisters with indifference. It is beautiful how allowing our ideas to be changed and prejudices to be shattered by who the Lord is, automatically softens our hearts and frees us to love those around us.

Then comes what this passage is most famous for, faith. "Just say the word and my servant will be healed", says the centurion. Such faith of using just one word comes from getting to know the Lord personally and intimately. It comes from hearing about what He has done and experiencing for ourselves. Let us trust Him today to work for us.

***Prayer: Abba Father, help us grow in humility, love and faith. Amen***

**A shoot will spring from the stock of Jesse; a new shoot  
will grow from his roots, Isaiah 11:1**

Isaiah 11:1-10

Ps.72:1-2,7-8,12-  
13,17

Luke 10:21-24

In the Gospel proclamation we find the Lord Jesus full of the spirit and highly excited about the events that took place. The tenth chapter of the Gospel of Luke begins with the sending of the seventy two. The Lord Jesus was joyful on account of the deeds that took place when he sent the seventy two.

The Lord Jesus has commissioned his disciples to create an atmosphere of miracles, to set the captives free, liberate the demon possessed. He was over joyed that Kingdom truths have been given to them. This sentence establishes something and that is that Lord Jesus is happy to reveal the Kingdom truths, He is surely willing to give us His power to defeat darkness. One might wonder isn't this something we already know, well it should be so.

However let us look at ourselves today and see how many times we have believed in this truth. When we are baptized in the Spirit the truths of God become so clear that they create a hunger deep within us to do something for God to try and shift the atmosphere, but as time goes by we call ourselves mature which is of course good but underneath this quality of maturity also lies defeated life and an inner person who chooses to believe in truths that the Lord Jesus never taught nor with the teachings of the Church.

Just as in the presence of the Lord sin cannot flourish and is confronted in the presence of the Lord, most of the things we have considered normal is actually not so in the presence of the Lord. The promises for us today are given both in the first reading and the psalm and the fulfillment of them is seen in the Gospel. As the advent season begins and Christmas is a month away the world tells you that it is a season to be merry. Pause, it is actually the season to be joyful for us who believe in Him because we remember how God has fulfilled His promise. The promise of a Savior has been fulfilled.

Today let us open our hearts and repent for moments that we have settled for something less because we were afraid to believe in the promise of God. Let us not forget that this could also be the power to love and forgive as well. The Lord is joyful in revealing to us His riches.

***Prayer: Abba Father, change my heart and mind and rejuvenate me with your spirit. Fill me anew I pray. Amen.***

The same Lord is Lord of all, enriching all who call upon him.

**Romans 10:12**

Romans 10:9-18

Ps.19:1-4

Mat.4:18-22

One day at our Young Adults meeting, I had the blessed opportunity of listening to this wonderful insight about the parable of the Sower. The preacher said, "In this parable, there is nothing wrong with the seed. The problem was actually with the ground. Fix yourself first; be more open to the word that is preached to you. Stop collecting seeds from all over the place". This insight can

be applied to today's readings.

As we celebrate the feast of St. Andrew, let us pause and reflect about his life. He, like his brother Simon Peter, was a fisherman. But his life took a radical turn after he met the Lord Jesus. The words the Lord Jesus spoke pierced his heart, so much so, that he left the one thing he knew too well, and followed the Lord Jesus into the unknown.

Isn't this our biggest fear? Too often we are afraid to leave the known and allow the Lord to lead us to the unknown. That is why even though we "call on Him and yet cannot believe". And sometimes we go from one prayer meeting to another, one priest to another, one saint to another, until we receive the answer that is right by our terms and conditions. We need to remember this, nothing is wrong with the seed. It was the ground that had the problem. As long as our hearts are filled with prejudices and bitterness, as long as we hold on to our ways of doing things, and as long as we are selective of the word of God, we will not be able to fully grasp the fullness of His Glory.

The Lord Jesus promises that whoever calls on His name will be saved. If we like St. Andrew place our fullest confidence in the word that is spoken to us, we will always come out glorious.

It is believed that after our Lord ascended into heaven, St. Andrew went to Greece to preach the Gospel. He is said to have been put to death on a cross, to which he was tied, not nailed. He lived two days in that state of suffering, still preaching to the people who gathered around their beloved apostle. Imagine that kind of a conviction. Surely the word of God was real to him - much more real than his earthly suffering.

***Prayer: Abba Father, today I ask of you to give me the grace to let go of my prejudices and fears, and accept wholeheartedly the promises that you have revealed to me. Amen.***

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