



IN OUR KNEES IN HIS HANDS

November 2017

PRAYERS FOR SOULS IN PURGATORY

**Eternal Father, I offer Thee
the Most Precious Blood of
Thy Divine Son, Jesus, in
union with the masses said
throughout the world today, for
all the holy souls in purgatory,
for sinners everywhere, for
sinners in the universal church,
those in my own home and
within my family. Amen.**

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November 2017

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“Rejoice and be glad...thus they persecuted the prophets
who were before you Matthew 5: 12

Rev 7:2-4, 9-14

Ps 24:1-6

1 Jn 3: 1-3

Mt: 5:1-12a

Today is All Saints day. It is said that the church was built on the blood of the martyrs. We know that there are Canonized Saints and there are thousands of other Saints who faced martyrdom. Today is the day dedicated to celebrate their commitment to the Lord, their love and faith.

All Saints Day is a feast, which was a part of the Christian tradition of celebrating the martyrdom of Saints on the anniversary of their martyrdom. With the increase of the martyrdom during the latter period of the Roman Empire, this was celebrated as a common feast day at the dioceses level. Pope Gregory III (731-741) instituted November 1st as the feast of the All Saints when he consecrated a chapel to all the martyrs in Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome and extended this feast to the entire Church.

In the book of Revelation the final destination of the faithful ones of God is revealed. What matters in life is faithfulness towards God even difficult times. The Book of Revelation was written during the Roman persecution. The seal is the blood of Christ. When we are sealed with the blood of Christ we can run the race assigned to us without fear. In St. John's letter it is said that we are children of God but our final destination is not yet revealed to us. What we know is finally when we complete our race faithfully, we will be face to face with HIM and we will become like HIM. Therefore when we live our present life with this hope we can live with purity for HIM.

In today's Gospel proclamation we are told how to live a life of purity. We need to be simple and humble people. The most powerful weapon in the world is humility. A life well lived is a life lived according to the beatitudes. The love of the Lord Jesus makes us meek, humble and gentle. These are powerful weapons to gain grounds to the Kingdom of God. Retorting, reacting and harboring anger are vices which lead to our failure. It is a paradox to live the values of God's Kingdom in this world. When the world tells us to be powerful, first and rich, God says otherwise. Those who did not compromise Kingdom values and their faith actually washed themselves with the blood of Christ. They have become victorious and true saints.

Prayer: Abba Father, may fear be taken away from me. May I run my race with confidence in you. For from you are all things, and to you are all things, because you deserve the glory. Amen.

But the souls of the just are in the hand of God, and the torment of death shall not touch them. Wisdom 3: 1

Wisdom 3:1-9

Psalms 23: 1-6

Romans 6: 3-9

Today's first reading speaks about death and the suffering of the good. Despite how great these sufferings are, they are incomparable with the peace that comes after death. "They seemed in the eyes of the foolish, to be dead, and their passing away was thought an affliction... but they are in peace."

In the eyes of the living, they may have been seen to experience great suffering but their hopes were in a future life that could not be taken from them. Their sufferings are unimportant compared to the blessings that await them.

Psalms 23 is probably one of the best known passages in the Bible, but sometimes we can become so familiar with the words that we may forget the meaning behind them. The Psalmist says that when the Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. We live in a consumer culture where most of society desires everything.

A countless number of people are trapped in a 'prison of want' - always wanting something better - a new car, a new job, a new house, a new relationship and they assume that getting that one thing will give them fulfilment and yet if they do get it, they end up just wanting more! It could be thought easily that happiness comes from getting everything you want instead of recognizing and wanting what you already have. So often, we are more aware of what we don't have and can become consumed by what we lack instead of grateful for our many blessings - driven to get more instead of content to celebrate enough.

In the book of Romans the apostle is preaching to a living audience, not about a dead one. "Death with Christ" is the symbol for baptism. This reading seems less about a human death than the believer's death to sin.

The hopeful part of this passage is a reminder that Jesus as suffered and died and we will follow. Jesus, raised from the dead, rules in triumph. Death cannot touch him. It is the Christian hope that we follow.

Prayer: Abba Father, we firmly believe that true contentment isn't found in having an abundance of wealth but rather it is found in knowing you already have a wealth of abundance. Lord you are our satisfaction, you exceed whatever we may think we desire. Amen.

The Lord of Compassion

Romans 9:1-5

Ps 147: 12-15, 19-20

Luke 14: 1-6

St. Paul had a great compassion for his kinsman. He was well aware of where he was and where the Lord in His mercy took him to. He knew the struggle of every Jew who was trying to comprehend the life of the Lord Jesus. How could this man from Nazareth be the promised Messiah? Though the Lord Jesus was a Jew, the Jewish people had trouble accepting Him as King of Kings because He seemed to come from too humble circumstances. St. Paul was so aware of this problem and He knew that only an insight from God could change this way of thinking. It even led him to have a deep anguish for the people of his race since they were not joined to Christ but wished to be cut off from salvation.

The Lord Jesus had the same compassion for the suffering, sick and marginalised. When he was at a meal with a leading Pharisee, he was being watched very closely. But He in turn was looking at a man who was suffering with dropsy. What is Dropsy? Dropsy is an illness. Its symptoms are a swollen body, especially the abdomen, due to a build-up of fluid in the tissues. The cause is usually environmental, or it can be organ failure. There is no real treatment for it. The Lord's heart reached out to this man. The day being the Sabbath day was not important. It was anyway the Lord's day. In His unlimited compassion the Lord Jesus healed the man. He asks them a pertinent question "What happens if your lamb or ox falls into a well on a Sabbath Day will you not save it."

What is the Lord telling us? The people were more concerned with what suited them. The man's illness had no impact on their lives. As we reflect on their coldness of heart let us look into our lives. We may be having meals or celebrating the Eucharist with the Lord but have no compassion in our hearts once we leave the gates of the Church. We find fault with the beggars asking why they cannot find employment. We fail to show mercy and love. Similarly if we have really tasted the salvation of the Lord, we will be dying to share it with others. Often we are saved and satisfied. It is about me and my life. All my prayers have been answered and so I find no need to pray for and minister to others. Let us not turn a blind eye to the suffering of the world but show the Lord's compassion as He would have.

Prayer: Abba Father, I pray for a heart of mercy and the compassion of Your Son. May I reach out as He reached out to the less privileged in the world. Amen

For Gods gifts and his call are irrevocable”**Romans 11: 29**Rom 11: 1-2, 11,12,
25-29

Ps 94: 12-18

Luke 14: 1, 7-11

Today we celebrate the feast of Saint Charles Borromeo. At the age of 12, the young Count Charles Borromeo dedicated himself to a life of service to the Church. His uncle gave him the family income. Even in his youth, his integrity was obvious. He was explicit in telling his father that he should only keep the money required for his education and to prepare him for service to the

Church. Excess funds belonged to the poor of the Church and were to be passed on to them.

The young count suffered from a speech impediment that made him appear slow to those who did not know him. Despite this challenge, he performed well and impressed his teachers. He attended the University of Pavia and learned Latin. He was praised because he was hardworking and thorough. He was made a cardinal at a young age. He fought to drive out corruption from the Church. The Protestant Reformation was spreading throughout northern Europe and constantly threatened to move south. Archbishop Borromeo saw this clearly and he made this his mission.

St Paul in his letter to the Romans explains the purpose God had when he favored the Gentiles. He clearly affirms that finally Israel will be reconciled with Christ and the Jews and Christians will recognise that their separate histories are one. He willed this emulation between Jews and Christians for a purpose. As with Saint Borromeo who fought against many obstacles which were permitted so that God was glorified in him. In humility he accepted the challenges given to him despite many setbacks.

Today's Gospel proclamation speaks of the humility God expects from us. The Lords acceptance of his passion resulted in the turmoil of rejection pain and suffering, physical, mental and emotional. There was no shortcut- no hope without suffering – without feeling it .A specific lesson to be learnt was that He did not foster bitterness & resentment. This is the call of every Christian. But like the Lord promises- the gifts and his call are irrevocable. He will see you through every crisis in your life and be glorified in you. As the psalmist confirms – The Lord will not reject his people nor forsake his heritage.

Prayer: Abba Father open our hearts to receive your love,through the intercession of our Blessed Mother. Amen

“Do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach.”

Matthew 23: 3

Mal 1: 14, 2: 2, 8-10

Psalms, 130: 1-3

1 Thes 2: 7-9, 13

Mt 23: 1-12

In today's First Reading from Malachi we read about how the people tried to deceive God by promising to make an offering to the Lord, but instead offered something of less value. These were the people who had strayed away from the Lord and His commands. They fool others into believing their ways are right. These people lead others astray. The religious leaders of this time were not role models to the people. Instead, they were only concerned about their selfish desires.

The Second Reading from St. Paul's letter to the Thessalonians is the exact opposite of the first reading. St. Paul has guided the people of Thessalonica to follow Christ. He has made himself an example for people to look up to and emulate. He cares for people as a mother cares for her baby. He wants to lead them to a relationship with the Lord and He gives all the glory to God for all that has taken place in the lives of these people.

In today's Gospel proclamation the Lord Jesus is telling His disciples to do as the teachers of the law and Pharisees say but not to do as they do. This is because their words do not match their actions. They tell people one thing, but do the complete opposite. This is because they did not actually know their God or His Son. What is clear from their behaviour is that they were only concerned about their positions in society and lording over people rather than knowing God.

Today the Lord is asking each of us this same thing. Are we more concerned about how people see us? My answer to this question would have to be 'yes'. I found myself thinking 'Is my prayer better than theirs?' 'Are they listening to my ideas?' 'Do they think of me as a 'holy' person?' I found myself using my spirituality as a measure against others. I wanted to tell people how to pray, how to be good, and what hymns to sing. But inside I did not have a relationship with God. I did not know my Father, until He spoke to me through Matthew 23:8 onwards, "But you are not to be called 'Rabbi,' for you have one Teacher, and you are all brothers. And do not call anyone on earth 'father,' for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one Instructor, the Messiah." I heard Him say, "My daughter do not be like the Pharisees who want to be leaders. Right now that is what you are doing. You are trying

to be someone instead of just doing my will. Your ambition is leading you and not my Spirit. Stop trying to be a leader. I am the teacher. I am the leader. Humble yourself and worship me.” I realised then and there that God was calling me to more than earthy appreciation and acceptance. He wanted to free me from my insecurities and sinful nature. He wanted me to really know Him instead of pretending to know Him.

Today, the Lord is calling each of us to a relationship with Him. He wants us to know Him more and more. For when we do, we will be able to let go of wanting appreciation from the world and focus on spreading His Kingdom on earth. We can use Nehemiah’s prayer to help us move from this world into a relationship with God. In the first step we are called to remember who God is. He is more than just a spiritual being in the heavens. He is more than just a means to receiving love and appreciation. He is our Father. Revelations 22:13 tells us that He is the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. Psalm 48:14 tells us “For this God is our God forever and ever; he will be our guide even to the end.” The Bible is full of passages about who God is. Ask the Lord to reveal them to you one by one. In the second step of Nehemiah’s prayer, the Lord asks us to remember to repent. We can repent of our selfish thoughts and ambitions. The Lord is waiting with open arms as we come to Him in repentance. In the third step of Nehemiah’s prayer the Lord calls us to remember His promises to us. One promise I held on to was from Isaiah 41:9 “I have chosen you and will not throw you away.” As we sit at the feet of the Lord in prayer He will speak to us and give us a promise that we can hold on to. The first three steps of Nehemiah’s prayer teach us to let go of what we are holding on to and to look at God.

As we finish we will find that our focus has changed from ourselves and our selfish ambitions, to God and His love for us. In the fourth step, the Lord calls us to intercede. It is in this step that the Lord is giving us a mission—to pray for others who fight the same battles we are fighting. To pray that just as God spoke to us and pulled us out of the pit, that He would do the same for them. This is what we are called for. We are not called to project ourselves or our talents and greatness as the Pharisees did but instead to bring others to God as St. Paul did.

Prayer: Abba Father, I come to You with my worldly goals and desires and place them at Your feet. Lord, give me a new heart and mind, that my focus will change from myself to You. Amen.

For God will save Zion and rebuild the cities of Judah

Ps 69:36

Rom 11: 29-36

Ps 69: 30-36

Luke 14: 12-14

At first St. Paul grapples with the incomprehensible ways of God, who permitted His chosen people to reject His Son whom he sent to redeem the world. But in his heart he knew that Isaiah's prophecy - 'My spirit which I have poured on you, will never leave you (Is 44:3) - will come true and this rejection was so that some day ' every knee shall bow, every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, when the Gospel is taken to the Gentiles. So he ceases his intellectual exercise, and freely submits to His sovereign ways and turns in adoration of the heart. His theology ends in poetry - lost in wonder of the depth of the riches and the wisdom of the knowledge of God. Truly his ways are Holy, radical and the 'other'.

God made humans in His own image and likeness. Being a Spirit He expected people to reflect Him. Alas people failed miserably. But in His infinite mercy, He did not leave us to flounder in our own frustration. He sent His Son a Man in His full humanity, reflecting the glory of the Creator. But He was also Holy like His Father, totally the 'other' when He calls us to follow Him, He seems to make impossible demands on us. How helpless we are! Can we live up to the attitudes of the Beatitudes? - or do what He asks us to do in the readings of today? Most certainly We cannot - But thanks be to God! He has opened up a way for us. When we believe in our hearts that the Lord Jesus rose from the dead and is the Lord of all lives, salvation is ours. We come to Him experiencing His love by recalling the 10 Rememberances. We admit our sinfulness and inadequacy, we surrender our mind, heart and spirit, washed in His precious blood and invite the Holy Spirit to come into us. what we cannot do in our humanness we permit the Lord Jesus to do in us. It is a daily process since the sin principle in us makes us prone to fall again and again. But the good news is that we are asked to come just as we are to be forgiven and made whole once again.

For many years, I depended on my own intelligence and thought I was a holy person - fulfilling obligations and 'saying' prayers. But I knew something was missing in my life - the joy of the Lord that I thought I should experience. Thanks be to the Baptism of the renewal and the baptism of the Holy Spirit, I learnt to fall at the Lord's feet and be changed.

Prayer: Abba Father, I believe You are above all my needs and expectations. Amen

Blessed is the man who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God**Luke 15: 15**

Romans 12:5-16

Psalm 131: 1-3

Luke 14- 15-24

Today's Gospel proclamation talks about the parable of the great banquet. In this parable the Lord Jesus talks about a man who had prepared a great banquet. He had given an invitation to his guests prior to the day of the banquet, so that they could make the necessary arrangements, keep the day free and be well prepared. But when he sent his servant to inform them that the banquet is ready, to his amusement, all to whom he extended an invitation gave various excuses to not make it there.

Then the man instructed his servant to quickly go out and invite the crippled, poor, blind, lame and further tells him to go to far places and invite more people.

Now as I read this I noticed that all the people who finally came to the banquet were people who had not been given prior notice and even some from far away places which would have taken them long hours of travelling. These people did not take a moment to think twice whether to attend it or not, but as humble and simple they were, they instantly responded to the call. The Lord Jesus tells us, this is how the kingdom of God is. Most of us are like the people who received the initial invitation and rejected it when the banquet was ready. Why do I say that is, if you ask 10 Christians individually the question "where will you go as soon as you die?". Majority would say Heaven for sure. But if you look at their life they have not done anything much to attain that. They think since they are Christians they have a free pass to Heaven no matter if they responded to the call of God or not. I am telling you this because I use to think the same way till I had a divine experience that changed my life.

I spoke to a few Christians about this question and majority were convinced they will surely go to Heaven. When I look at their life style they have not done much about it. I am no one to judge others but my point is that we take God for granted and tend not to respond to the invitation. His intention is that we live a holy life. If we do not respond to His call, God will invite someone else in order to establish His kingdom. The Lord Jesus is reminding us to look at life in a deeper sense and not limit it to this world alone. Let God to show us.

Prayer: Abba Father, we pray that you give us the grace to grow spiritually and prepare ourselves for life after death. Amen

**Any of you who does not give up everything
he has cannot be my disciple."**

Luke 14: 33

Romans 13: 8-10

Psalm 112: 1-9

Luke 14: 25-33

The Gospel says that every disciple that the Lord Jesus called left everything and followed Him. In Luke 5,11 it is said about Simon Peter, James and John, 'so they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed Him.' When He called Levi sitting at his tax booth, he left everything and followed Him. (Luke5, 28)

What belonged to them externally they left and followed the Lord Jesus. But they did not let go of the way they thought and lived. Internally little or nothing changed. They depended on their own strength and might. They even followed the Lord Jesus by their effort. This discipleship ended at Gethsemane. They were shattered and ran away.

Then in the Acts of the Apostles, on the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit enters into these fallen, weak and fearful men. It created in them a new power, a new spiritual journey and vision. They change from within and in complete surrender to the Lord Jesus later even embrace death for His sake. We who are baptized are disciples of Him. But our lives reflect the disciples who were with Him up to Gethsemane. We live by our own strength and power influenced by worldly ambitions. When we face a crisis, challenges or painful issues of life we forget God and seek our own solutions. We forget the promises taught by the Lord Jesus. In John 8:31 He says, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples....." Today many Catholics fail to live in His Word. Thus it is necessary for us enter into the baptism of the Holy Spirit again & again through the 4 steps. Then we too will receive the power that was given to the disciples on the day of Pentecost.

A person who worked with us for years faced a huge crisis. Suddenly his wife left him and his child. After a few months she came back and he forgave her and accepted her. Then she repeated this and he was not willing to accept her. One of us told him, the Lord Jesus said to forgive 77x7 and to do that ask for the power of the Holy Spirit. He sat at the feet of the Lord continuously. Who can forgive such a person? After several months she came. By that time the Holy Spirit had given him a heart to forgive and accept her. Today that family lives together. Today let us ask Him to give us the power for that discipleship.

Prayer: Abba Father, we lift up to you our weak lives, entangled in the ways of this world. Give us the power to live in you. Amen.

I am the temple of the Holy Spirit, God's very own presence dwells within me and I take the presence of God with me into the world.

Ezk 47: 1-2, 8-9, 12
Psalm: 46: 2-9
1 Cor 3: 9-11, 16-17
John 2: 13-22

In this story of the Lord Jesus casting the money changers out of the temple, could there be such a thing as righteous anger? We see the Lord lose his temper. The Lord Jesus became violent because the temple, the house of the Lord was being misused by the people.

When reflecting on this word, this scenario stands out as righteous anger. Therefore I have justified my own anger at things that I see as wrong in the world and say after all its ok to get angry as Jesus too got angry. But as I have matured in my faith, with the help of the CRL and getting deeper into reflections and writing, I see this scripture that I have missed the point about what Jesus was doing in the temple.

We discover that the Lord was not acting just out of a moment of anger instead "He was cleansing the temple making it clean and pure casting sin out of God's house. Something He is able to do in us as well. In today's Gospel, the Lord specially identifies His own body with the temple. The people ask Him with what authority He cleanses out the temple. They ask Him how they can know He's speaking for God. And He responds with a mysterious answer. He tells them if the temple is destroyed He will raise it again in three days, the Lord Jesus is not talking about the Jerusalem temple, rather He is talking about His body, He is talking about the fact that people will destroy His body and God will raise it three days.

Our bodies are the temple of God, and we are to honor God with our bodies. Does the Lord Jesus need to cleanse out our temple? Does He need to come in and cast our sinfulness so that our bodies are holier again? Not only our bodies, but we together as the people of God are also the temple when we gather together as family and children of God or as followers of God; a holy thing is happening and a sacred space is being created within us.

Prayer: Abba Father, I have sin in my life and I'm not strong enough to deal with. I try to be a better Catholic, a better person but I continue to fail. Help me to turn my sins over to you, fill me with your Spirit Lord, You have the power to change me and forgive me. Amen.

Children of this world and Children of light

Romans 15: 14-21

Psalm 98: 1-4

Luke 16: 1-8

In today's Gospel proclamation, the Lord Jesus tells His disciples the parable of the dishonest steward. According to the short commentary in 'the New American Answer Bible' the dishonest steward forgoes his exorbitant commission on the business transaction and writes new notes to the debtors that reflected only the real amount owed to the master. (i.e minus the stewards profit) He acts this way expecting the debtors to look after him later. Though it seems as if the Lord Jesus is praising the dishonest steward, 'the parable teaches the prudent use of one's material goods in light of an imminent crisis.' (The New American Study Bible)

In Luke 16,8b the Lord Jesus says that the people/children of this world are more prudent in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light. By sharing this parable and then this statement in Luke 16,8b what is the Lord Jesus telling us today?

The dishonest steward, when he faced the crisis, did not give up thoughts about his future and in a worldly sense acted wisely to protect his future in this world and to live a prosperous life. As baptized Christians we are children of the light. Loved and forgiven by God and filled with His Holy Spirit, we no longer live in darkness but are children of the light. Our ultimate goal is to see our God face to face in the kingdom of God.

In our journey when faced with a crisis, we become depressed and sad whilst some others completely lose their way. Many do not have the courage and the wisdom to take up weapons of the Kingdom of God. That is the shield of faith with which we can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one, the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit which is the word of God. St. Paul, faced many hardships for the sake of the Gospel. They are mentioned in 2 Corinthians Chapter 6 – beatings, imprisonments, riots, hard work, sleepless nights and hunger. Yet he never gave up proclaiming the Gospel. Today let us not be discouraged, whatever the crisis, let us fall at the feet of the Lord Jesus, give the truth of our heart and surrender our lives to Him and once again be empowered by the Holy Spirit. For we are the children of light.

Prayer: Abba Father, whatever life may throw at us give us the power to respond with a life of faith, guided by your Holy Spirit and your light. Amen.

“Whoever can be trusted in the little things can be trusted in great ones”

Luke 16:10

Rom 16: 3-9, 16,
22-27

Ps 145: 2-5, 10-11

Luke 16: 9-15

St. Paul tells us today to recognize and appreciate those around us who have helped us grow in faith and those who have helped us in our journey. We may speak to some every day; we may be in touch with others through social media. We may have drifted away from others and with some; we may have had disputes and misunderstandings. But God sent people into our lives to minister to us and help us to journey and grow spiritually.

There are those who have worked hard be it at sharing the message, leading praise, serving others or simply by being there to assist someone in need. I remember those who were around to help me the very first time I walked into a meeting. Their warm smile, concern over a new face at the meeting helped me to decide to come back the following week. Those who were around when I needed to talk and those who led me to walk deeper with the Lord, all of them were on a mission God had given them to win another for his kingdom. The Lord is reminding us to go beyond ourselves and our interests to be a friend to others.

In the Gospel proclamation, the Lord speaks to us about being faithful in the little things and how it will lead us to be faithful in greater things. I can testify about experiencing the power and truth in this teaching. There are times the Lord has led me to let go of a little temptation like sacrificing even something as small as a sweet to let the other enjoy it or I have been led to offer a greater sacrifice, He expects us to let go and that little letting go gives the strength to do bigger things.

When we commit ourselves to be trustworthy & faithful to ourselves, families, friends, the community, the environment and to the Lord, we too will be commended by the Lord. He recognises the prudence we show with the resources given to us and the way we use them to bring his people to his kingdom. The greatest lesson here is that we cannot love sin and righteousness at the same time. We must sacrifice the sin to grow in righteousness.

Therefore, today is a renewed calling from our Master and Lord to live a life of faithfulness, committed to serving others.

Prayer: Abba Father, give me the grace to remember and appreciate those whom you sent to guide me and help me journey and keep me ever faithful to You. Amen.

“Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.”

Matthew 25:13

Wis 6: 12-16

Psalms 63: 2-8

1 Thess 4: 13-18

Mt 25: 1-13

The Oxford English Dictionary defines ‘wisdom’ as “capacity of judging rightly in matters relating to life and conduct, soundness of judgment in the choices; sometimes less strictly, sound sense especially in practical affairs.” Charles Spurgeon, a famous preacher, defined ‘wisdom’ as “the right use of knowledge”. Yet over the past several decades and centuries the true meaning of ‘wisdom’

has been lost and it has merely become equivalent to accumulating knowledge or degrees.

Today’s liturgy speaks about the wisdom that needs to be developed and nurtured in God’s children; for true wisdom comes from God alone, and we receive His Wisdom mainly through His Word. The Holy Bible describes Wisdom as God’s own power at work in the world. It also personifies Wisdom as God’s agent in the world, yet sharing intimately in His nature. The ground is prepared for the understanding of the Lord Jesus as the Incarnate Wisdom of God.

The Book of Wisdom gives a beautiful revelation. “She hastens to make herself known to those who desire her. One who rises early to seek her will have no difficulty, for she will be found sitting at the gate.” (Wisdom 12:13,14) This is the start of a personal journey into the Heart of Our Father, The Eternal Wisdom. Like a mother who teaches the alphabet to her little child using a pictorial book, the Lord teaches those who choose to rise up early in the morning and begin each day at His Feet. The book He uses is His own Word where God speaks to us through the Psalms and Readings chosen by the Church for daily Mass, and imparts His Wisdom more willingly than we are to receive. Gently He reveals to us our own folly... our worldly plans and decisions made in flesh. He gives us the grace to repent and surrender our lives to Him in absolute trust. He fills our hearts with joy, peace and love. Thus one little word in the Scripture opens a clear path before us to walk on through numerous challenges that each day brings us. That Word becomes our rock and fortress until the end of the day, we sit at His Feet again and tell Him how the day had been. As this goes on day after day, our capacity to judge rightly in matters relating to life and conduct and to make right choices and our ability for the right use of knowledge develops; we grow in God’s Wisdom.

Today's Gospel proclamation is a parable used by the Lord Jesus, to teach us the importance of Divine Wisdom. Throughout His life, the Lord Jesus prepared Himself for the ultimate purpose of His coming into the world. It is said in Luke 2:52, "And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." The Lord Jesus' wise parents who themselves were living in obedience to God, would have taught Him to spend time with the Heavenly Father, learning the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms. This was proven when the 12-year-old Boy Jesus "was found in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers." (Luke 2:46,47) As He began His public ministry, His prayer life intensified to the point that He spent entire nights on a mountain, in conversation with The Father, collecting oil for His 'lamp'.

The whole world saw how brightly that 'lamp' kept burning, when in Gethsemane He submitted to the Father's will. Pilate and Herod were left confused. On the cross, the Lord forgave those who were responsible for His suffering and death. Death could not snuff out that 'lamp' as the Father raised Him from the dead. That 'lamp' still keeps burning as bright through the release and the outpouring of The Holy Spirit upon all those who believe in the Risen Christ. We receive a new outlook, a new reality and attitude. Even death is swallowed up in victory and nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus (cf. Romans 8:39) The Catholic Church is very with the saints and martyrs who possessed the Wisdom of God and witnessed to this truth. Blessed Chiara Luce Badano, a 19-year-old teenager from Italy, proved that this is possible in our present times too. She suffered for three years and died of bone cancer in 1990. Having become a member of Focolare movement, she started to focus on loving those around her with the love of Christ and doing little acts of self-denial. Been a typical 20th century teenager, she loved to hang out with friends, playing tennis and swim. Her life changed when she was diagnosed with bone cancer, which she accepted as "arrived just at the right moment as she was going in the wrong direction." She embraced her pain as a wonderful plan that little by little revealed itself to her (from her diary). She was quoted saying, "It's for You, Jesus; if You want it, I want it too." Her inner response changed her doctor who was an atheist to say, "Everything about Christianity makes sense to me." As suffering increased she refused morphine, as she wanted to offer her suffering to Jesus because she wanted to share in His suffering on the cross. Her beatification took place in 2010, as an example of sanctity from Generation X.

Prayer: Abba Father, I pray for the grace to seek You above all else in this world. You alone can quench the thirst in my soul. Amen

The wisdom of God

Wis 1: 1-7

Ps 139: 1-10

Luke 17: 1-6

In 1 Kings 3:5 the Lord appears to King Solomon and tells him He will give him anything he wants. King Solomon asks God to give him wisdom to guide and rule the people of Israel. King Solomon knew that no material goods would help him rule the Israelites. Instead he asks God for wisdom, "So give me the wisdom I need to rule your people with justice and to know the difference between good and evil" (1 Kings 3:9).

Today's First Reading also speaks of wisdom. "Wisdom is a spirit, a friend to man, and will not leave the blasphemous unpunished, because God knows his innermost feelings, truly sees his thoughts and hears what he says" (v. 6). Wisdom is neither something that we can generate from within or receive from the world. The Bible tells us that wisdom is given from God; namely through the Holy Spirit. Therefore to receive wisdom, we must be baptized in the Holy Spirit.

There is a Sinhala hymn we sing with the words, "Obagen kohedo athata yanne, obagen kohedo sangavanne", meaning Lord, how far can I go away from you? Where can I hide from you? These words are taken from Psalm 139. The Lord's presence is everywhere. There is no where we can go that God cannot find us. The Psalmist says that those who are under the arm of the Lord are being watched by Him. He will always take care of them. The knowledge and wisdom of the Lord is so vast that we will never be able to fully understand it (v.6).

In today's Gospel proclamation, the Lord speaks to those who have done wrong to others, asking them to repent and seek forgiveness. He also speaks to those offended and asks them to forgive their enemies. This is the mighty wisdom of God. His wisdom is for those who receive injustice and those who may fall down the wrong path. He wants to save us. The Lord also speaks of the faith we need. He says that if we have faith the size of a mustard seed there is nothing we cannot do. Little faith can accomplish big things. Today, the Lord is calling us to ask and receive His wisdom. This wisdom is not something we can understand through our intellect or through knowledge, but only through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Prayer: *Abba Father, I pray for wisdom and faith. For Your wisdom to guide me throughout my life and for faith to move mountains and experience Your supernatural power. Amen.*

We are spiritual beings and natural beings

Wisdom 2:23-3:9
 Psalm 34:2-3, 16-19
 Luke 17:7-10

The first reading tells us in verse 2:23, "For God created man to be immortal, and made him to be an image of his own eternity." Genesis 1:27 tells us this same thing, "So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them." What does it mean to be created in the image of God? Does God have a body and mind like us? Does

He look like us? The Bible tells us that God is not like human beings with flesh and bones, but He is a spiritual being. Human beings are unique. We are made in the image of God and created to reflect God. We reflect Him through our Spirit. We have a Spirit just as God does. This is how we are made in the image of God. We can hear God in the Spirit and experience God in the spirit and see God in the Spirit. But for any of this to take place within us we must first be awakened in the Spirit.

The Gospel proclamation gives us human beings another characteristic. Other than being a Spiritual being, the Lord Jesus says we are also servants of God. As servants of God we are called upon to complete a task to bring down the Kingdom of God to earth. As human beings, we are created as Spirit, soul, body and mind. We can use all these in the service of God.

God created us to be able to connect with the spiritual realm through our Spirit and connect to natural realm through our soul, body and mind. When we connect to God through our Spirit, He will tell us how to use our body and mind to accomplish the will of God. John 1:51 says, He then added, "Very truly I tell you, you will see 'heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on' the Son of Man." The mission of the Lord Jesus was to open the spiritual dimension to the flesh. The Lord Jesus wants to open this spiritual dimension to all who believe in Him. He wants to open the eyes heart and ears of our Spirit to be able to walk with Him while here on earth. This is our call as servants of God. To be led wherever God wants us to go, and to be able to do what He wants us to do. However, we have got this all confused. We were created to be servants of the Lord most high. We should only receive our reward from Christ and not from the world.

Prayer: Abba Father, awake my Spirit to be able to see You and hear You. I pray for the grace to be a true servant of God and to be able to respond to Your mission. Amen.

“Rescue the lowly and poor; deliver them from the hand of the wicked”**Psalm 82:4**

Wis 6: 1-11

Psalm 82: 3-7

Luke 17: 11-19

Divine wisdom surpasses every knowledge, understanding and intellect in the world. The invitation rendered by the Divine one to us, is that we live in divine wisdom which is freely given to us. We are called to live and have our being in God while we live in the world, because the Scripture says that we are made in the image and likeness of God.

We should be mindful we are responsible for every person who comes under our leadership, to lead them to live according to God's precepts, share mercy and love. Before the incarnation of the Son of God, people lived by the Mosaic Law but the teachings and counsel of Christ Jesus surpasses the Mosaic Law. The Lord Jesus summed up the Ten Commandments into two by saying to love God with all our heart, mind and strength and love our neighbor as we love ourselves. This explains the extent of love we should have. According to Jewish culture lepers were outcasts. But in the reign of our Lord Jesus a leper was highly favoured. The Lord Jesus broadened the boundaries of His reign by healing a non Jew leper. The mercy of God is the wisdom of God. The mercy of God is showered upon the most undeserving person. The grace of God is showered upon the least person. If we carefully look at the works of God we will understand a little about His unfathomable wisdom. Therefore we need to be mindful of the presence of God in our life and everywhere around us especially when we are called to directly serve Him and His people.

True leadership is not a position nor prestige but a responsibility. Unfortunately the leaders of this world both religious and secular wish to be exalted over God. We as Catholics are called by the nature of our infant baptism to be priests, prophets and kings. This means we are called to leadership. Are we living and conducting our life accordingly? St. Albert the Great was a highly educated priest who refused to remain as a bishop. He is a doctor of the church. He was a great teacher, mediator and a true leader. His body was incorrupt after three years of burial. St. Thomas Aquinas who is also a doctor of the Church was a student of St. Albert the great.

Prayer: Abba Father, may we adhere to the saying of St. Albert the great; “The greater and more persistent your confidence in God, the more abundantly you will receive all that you ask”. Amen.

“...The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding
to the simple.”

Psalm 119: 130

Wis 7: 22 - 8:1

Ps 119: 89-91m
130, 135, 175

Luke 17: 20-25

Today's Gospel proclamation speaks about the Kingdom of God. What we need to know about the Kingdom is who is the King and where does He reign? The Pharisees asked Jesus when the Kingdom of God would come. They thought that it was about the particular time of the arrival of a triumphant Messiah-King. The kingdom of God cannot be discovered by empirical observation.

The Kingdom cannot be found by looking outside, it is within in us. What is the Kingdom of God? The kingdom is present in the person of Christ. It's the very indwelling place of most high God where we have and carry His eternal joy, love and everlasting peace. Therefore, when God lives inside our hearts, we become a host for His presence; our hearts become a dwelling place for Him and thereby it becomes His Kingdom. Entering into the Kingdom of God is an inner journey. It is to grow deeper and deeper in the experience of the Lord through which we enter His Kingdom.

St. Gertrude the Great whose feast the Church celebrates today entered the Kingdom of God through her inner journey with the Lord. She found the Lord and His intimacy in her personal prayer. She was born on January 6, 1256 in Germany. She eventually chose to follow the Lord by pursuing a vocation as a Benedictine Nun. It was her deep relationship with the Lord in her personal prayer time led to her being called a mystic. Additionally, he was also regarded as a great theologian. It is said that in 1281, 25-year-old Gertrude experienced her first series of visions that continued until the day she passed away. Her visions changed her life and she saw this moment as her new birth. As a result her priorities turned away from secular teaching and focussed more on studying Scripture and theology. Her life became full with this awakening and she was an enthusiastic student, writing for the spiritual benefit of others. She says “until the age of 25, I was a blind and insane woman... but you, Jesus, deigned to grant me the priceless familiarity of your friendship by opening to me in every way that most noble casket of your divinity, which is your divine Heart, and offering me in great abundance all your treasures contained in it”. St. Gertrude the Great is the Patroness of the West Indies and she is often invoked for souls in purgatory.

Prayer: *Abba Father, grant me the desire to grow deeper in a personal experience with you so that my heart will become an indwelling place for you. Amen!*

For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain'

Philippians 1:21

Wis 13: 1-9

Psalm 19:2-3, 4-5

Luke 17:26-37

In today's Gospel reading, the Lord Jesus reminds us of the consequences experienced by the people in time of Noah and Lot, due to the way they lived. They were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. When Noah went into the ark, the flood came and destroyed them. When Lot left Sodom, fire rained and destroyed them. Just like in the days of Noah and Lot, we live a life driven by the flesh, satisfying the needs of the world. We are ready to do anything to live; to preserve our life and find happiness. In the end, we are tired, hopeless and get restless and depressed.

There was a father who worked for a reputed organization and earned a good salary. He built luxurious houses for his children and provided for them. Their weddings were arranged in a beautiful way. He spent his entire life for these things. At the age of sixty, he decided to retire from his job and spend the rest of his life in happiness and peace; using the savings he made. Unexpectedly, a week after his retirement, he died. Within a few months of his death, his children sold everything their father earned and treasured and went abroad.

The Word of God beautifully explained (Wisdom 13:1) that "anyone who does not know God is simply foolish. Such people look at the good things around them and still fail to see the living God. They have studied the things he made, but they have not recognized the one who made them". Jesus says, 'anyone who tries to preserve his life will lose it; anyone who loses it will keep it safe' (Luke 17:33).

Therefore, it is clear that we should climb the mountain - the relationship with the Lord. We should open our hearts to his love and surrender our lives; for the purpose of the Lord. He will show us the meaning of our life. Francis Xavier was drawn away by his personal ambition. He was young, handsome, wealthy, educated and talented. Ignatius of Loyola famously challenged Xavier with Jesus' words from the Gospel of Mark. He asked him "what good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?" (Mark 8:36) Later he joined Ignatius in the founding of the Society of Jesus. Francis Xavier was eventually sent as a missionary to Asia. Xavier was canonized in 1622. A famed missionary himself, he is now the patron saint of missionaries.

Prayer: *Abba Father, I am set apart for you. I pray for that clarity. Amen*

“When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?”

Luke 18:8

Wis 18: 14-16, 19: 6-9

Ps 105: 2-3, 36-37, 42-43

Luke 18: 1-8

Does God really answer prayers? Recently we were on our knees for a 9 year old boy whose arm had to be amputated. We prayed persistently. Yet, our prayer was not answered. After the surgery someone messaged me; “He always had his arm in a sling. Today I saw him for the first time without the sling, and he was enjoying the freedom! God had taken away the bondage and replaced with a

bandage. Non-Christian family members are challenged by the way the little boy and his parents are facing the crisis”. So did God answer our prayers? Yes and No. He didn’t give what we asked, but He has started something so far more than what we expected in this family.

Today the Lord is teaching us about persistent prayer. He uses an elaborate parable about the widow who wanted justice and the judge whose heart was hardened. He ends the story with an unexpected turn of events; the judge irritated by the woman’s nagging grants her wish. The Lord asks; “And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?” The question directly hits a nerve. In trouble, I pray to God and ask for Him to intervene. When He does, there is no one more surprised than me! My prayer has become a habit! I pray without expecting much. My fears and insecurities get in the way of my breakthroughs! The Gospel says, the reason for the Lord’s parable was to teach the need “to pray always and not to loose heart”

Today’s first reading connects us with the mighty power of God as He delivered the Hebrews from the Egyptian superpower. The Hebrew people prayed to God for generations for a savior, yet on their way to the Promised Land, they doubted and protested. They ate the manna from heaven, drank water from the rocks, crossed the Red Sea that parted before them, but they built a golden cow to worship! Am I any different? I pray, but I also worship at the altar of doubts and fears... I believe the Lord is leading, but I worry about the Amalekites, Hittites and the Jebusites. The battle with the Amalekites was won not in the battlefields, but on the mountain top where Moses stood with his arms lifted up. Persistent prayer is to stand where God wants us to stand, with arms and eyes lifted up to Him. With arms and eyes raised, there is nothing much I can really do... I can’t call or text, I don’t have the perfect view of the battle... but I am in the perfect place of victory.

Prayer: Abba Father, strengthen my faith today so that I can pull down the vic-tories from heaven to where you have placed me. Amen

Blessed are you who fear the LORD, who walk in his ways!

Psalm 128: 1-2

Pro 31: 10-13, 19-20,

30-31

Ps 128: 1-5

1Thes 5: 1-6

Mt 25: 14-30

Today's first reading talks about the attributes of a good wife. The responsorial psalm talks about the attributes of a good husband. What makes a Wife a good Wife, and what makes a Husband a good Husband? "Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised." The first reading implies that all the attributes that it extolled are the natural result of

one who has something called the fear of God. The fear of God is identified as the singular most important characteristic in a marriage, and also serves as a tip for the unmarried, indicating what characteristic to look for in a partner.

What exactly is the fear of God? The Internet says that the fear of a God is synonymous with the reverence of God. To me, it is something more. If I compromise on my values in order to be cool with my peers, the fear of man has become greater than the fear of God. It is the fear of God that governs my choices when no one else is looking. The fear of God is manifested by the inner responses I give. The first reading and the responsorial psalm reveal that those who fear the Lord become a blessing to those around them. If I fear the Lord, the world becomes a better place because I walked this earth.

The second reading brings out another concept, a special day that is referred to as the "Day of the Lord". As per the second reading, it looks like this day is a day where something terrible happens. The day of the Lord is often assumed to be the end of history. Yet I think it could mean the day that I lost my job. It could mean the day I was diagnosed with cancer. It could be the day that I discovered that my spouse was cheating on me. It is a day when the things that I depended on and built my life on suddenly change. Isn't it funny that this day is called "the Day of the Lord" when it could just as well as be called "that cursed day"?

The reading talks about another concept called light/day and darkness/night. St. Paul addresses the church of Thessalonica and tells them that they are citizens of the light, and hence, the day of the Lord will not catch them with their off guard. On the other hand, for those who are citizens of darkness the Day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night, unexpected and with sad results. Who is a citizen of the light? To me, a citizen of the light is one for whom God is alive,

and lives in the fear of the Lord. For a citizen of the light, the day of disaster is the Day of the Lord, because it is the day that the Lord comes to them. A citizen of the darkness is one for whom God does not exist. They live with no help or guidance from above, and are at the mercy of the laws of cause and effect. For them the day of the disaster is “that cursed day”.

Today’s Gospel reading is about the parable of the talents. The master gives his servants the talents and disappears. The “Day of the Lord” in this parable is the day that the master returns. It is what the servants do during the absence of the master that sets them apart from each other.

To me, this story reminds me of the time that I received the Baptism in the Holy Spirit, and God, who had hitherto only been an object of reverence and veneration, suddenly came alive to me. After a while the emotional impact of the experience started to wear out. For me, this is akin to the master leaving the servants and going abroad. But, before he leaves, he entrusts his property to them. To me, the “property” was the initial experience of God coming alive. Some who received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, had dramatic experiences of healings, restoration of marriages, liberation from smoking and drinking. I, on the other hand, was always a well-behaved, church going young teenager, and did not have a dramatic life conversion to boast of. All I could say was that God came alive to me. I was like the servants who received the two and one talents. The investment of the talents was the time I invested daily in personal prayer and reading scripture to make that experience grow. This would help me to give “inner responses”, in “fear of the lord”, while making choices. Participating in prayer meetings and retreats would give me a leg up and revive me when I grow weary. Then the day of the Lord comes, something unexpected happens, which would shake my world. Some would find the grace to witness the transformation of the curse into a blessing. They grow during the crisis and come out stronger than they were before. Others lose what faith they had in despair, much like the servant who buried his talent. The reading says that the way we face the day of the Lord depends on how we invested our talents when the going was good. For those who did not grow the talent, there is darkness weeping and gnashing of teeth. For those who invested their talents, joy and an increase in the experience of God.

Prayer: Abba Father, in your mercy restore those of us who are outside in the darkness with weeping and gnashing of teeth. For those of us who are in crisis, give us the grace to trust in your faithfulness. For those of us who are waiting for the master to come, grant us the grace to live in the fear of God. - Amen

“What do you want Me to do for you”

Luke 18:41

1 Mac 1: 10-15, 41-43,
54-57, 62-63
Psalm 118:53,
61, 134, 150, 155, 158
Lk 18: 35-43

In the Gospel proclamation today we hear of a blind beggar by the roadside of Jericho who receives sight through the mercy of God. The Lord Jesus is going to Jericho and there is a loud crowd preceding Him. The poor blind man is bemused by the noise of the crowd, he who has always been left alone, left neglected due to his impairment, has to ask to be told about what the others are aware of. But then he hears that Jesus of Nazareth is passing by. Perhaps he did not know who the Lord was, he likely has never heard a sermon of Jesus, but he had heard enough to know that the Lord Jesus could do the impossible. So he yells, he makes a noise, the only thing he is capable of doing, to attract the attention of the Lord. And the Lord does a funny thing. He comes in front of this poor beggar, obviously blind and broken and then asks what the beggar wants Him to do. Should it not be obvious to the Lord what this man needs? Would it not have been apparent to the God who can ‘plumb the depths of a man’s soul’, what this man was asking for?

But the Lord Jesus does not assume. As always, He is always so respectful of the freewill He gave man. He waits for the man to state His need. And this beggar who could have asked for anything – for shelter, for love, for riches, asks for the one basic thing he lacks. He asks for the one thing human power cannot give him – Lord I want to see. And what he asks for, he received for the Lord Jesus says, “receive your sight – your faith has healed you”

I am challenged by the simple faith of this blind man. I still struggle to ask the impossible of God. Often when I am facing a similar situation, where human power is helpless, I often find myself too hesitant to voice out what it is that I truly want of God. I word it as such asking for God to take over, to have His way, to take over – basically politely asking Him to do my miracle without having the boldness to ask the impossible of Him out right. Perhaps my intellectual mind is scared that God will let me down, perhaps my worldly wisdom is too loud for my faith to assert itself but whatever it is, I wonder how often I stand the block to receiving my healing from God. That man’s faith healed me, is mine hindering me? The blind man made a noise, am I too quiet before God?

Prayer: *Abba Father, today I pray for the faith of that blind man, that as I stand before me, You will give me the grace to ask the impossible of You today. Amen*

"I call out to the Lord, and he answers me from his holy mountain. I lie
down and sleep... the Lord sustains me." Psalm 3:4-5

2 Mac 6:18-31

Ps 3: 2-7

Luke 19: 1-10

Today's Gospel proclamation brings us the good news that the Son of man has come to seek out and save what was lost (Luke 19:10). I can personally relate myself with this verse as my entire journey with the Lord began when Jesus came in search of me when I was living in my own brokenness and lifted me from the pit I was in. The passage speaks about a tax collector Zacchaeus who was a sinner, reaching out to Jesus. Like Zacchaeus, we too may be living in addictions, sin, and weaknesses. It may be a constant battle draining us out. The Good news is Jesus, the Son of Man has come for a sinner like you and me. Do we make an effort to reach out to the Lord Jesus as Zacchaeus did or do we tend to withdraw ourselves from the Lord because we are not worthy in His sight?

The Gospel reads like this "He kept trying to see which Jesus was, but he was too short and could not see him for the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to catch a glimpse of Jesus who was to pass that way (Luke 19:3-4)." Like Zacchaeus, we too may be having obstacles, on our way to reach out to Jesus. But when we make a step in faith with perseverance, the Lord draws us close to Him. In fact He comes and lives inside us as He told Zacchaeus, "Come down. Hurry, because I am to stay at your house today (Luke 19"5)". Therefore, we become the Holy indwelling place for His presence. Isn't amazing? It's huge when you realize that the Son of Man who is the Holy of Holies decides to come and live inside us. And we receive salvation only through Him who died on the cross for us. Therefore, with perseverance, let us continue to run to Jesus in whom we shall be saved.

Today the Catholic Church celebrates the feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Our Lady's parents brought her to the Temple at the age of three and handed her over to live there as a consecrated virgin where she might exclusively contemplate God. This feast highlights the fact that Our Lady was chosen to carry the Son of God in her womb even before time began. Likewise, we are chosen by the Lord for His purpose before we were born. Therefore, let us ask Our Lady to intercede for us in living a life according to the Call and purpose God has for us.

Prayer: Abba Father, I thank you for coming in search of me. It's only through You, I'm saved and made whole today. Amen!

I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at
my right hand, I will not be shaken.

Psalm 16:8

2Mac 7: 1, 20-31

Ps 17: 1,5,6, 8 & 15

Luke 19:11-28

The Lord once again invites us, to keep our eyes on Him alone and He promises us with His security and delightful inheritance. With all these beautiful promises why do we fail to keep our eyes on Him? Is it because the threats of the world seems more real to us than the love of God and His presence in our life? Let us make today the first day of the rest of our life and reflect on our relationship with God and the people around us.

Do we testify the love of God to the people around us like the Jewish Mother we see in the first reading? Her relationship with God is so real to her than the things happening in front of her, so tangible. She even encourages her sons and reminds them of all the good things God has done for them and that nothing is impossible for God as He created everything out of nothing. God is truly the King in Her life. How true is it in our lives today?

The Lord promises to keep them safe who take refuge in Him; we may have experienced the same but may fail in another situation bought to us where things may seem worse and big. If we keep our eyes on our King and Lord we may not feel that anything is small or big for our God. With our relationship with Him we tend to take everything life throws at us to His feet.

The Gospel proclamation too reminds us of what we are given by the Lord; our family, friends, talents He has blessed us with. He wants us to be trustworthy of what He has given us so that He could bless us more. We often tend to think of the things we do not have and we always forget to be thankful for what we have. We may have thousand things in our wanting list but God knows exactly what we need to do His mission on this earth. Are we open enough to see His presence in our lives? Is He the King of our lives today? Our financial problems, broken relationships, addictions, etc may have become the king of our lives today. God invites us today to come back to His feet and be trustworthy of whatever He has given us. He wants us to be encouraging and motivating others like the Jewish mother in moments of hardship. He expects us to be diligent and responsible as disciples of Him and we do not want Him to reject us.

Prayer: Abba Father, thank you for the opportunity given to us each day to start all over, get back on our feet and try again. Amen.

How precious are worldly rewards to you?

1 Mac 2: 15-29

Ps 50: 1-2, 5-6, 14-15

Luke 19: 41-44

In today's first reading the king's officers suggest to Mattathias to do what the king commands. He is commanded to give up worshipping the true God and instead to worship a false God. They further state that everyone else has already done this, so Mattathias and his family only have to follow suit and do the norm that everyone did. As a reward, he is promised almost anything a person could

desire on a human level.

Some of us also may have experienced similar situations in life. Very rarely would someone ask us to give up our religion, but many times we may have been challenged to follow kingdom principals. Some examples are discussing with friends the bad things another friend always does, turning a blind eye to a person who's having an extra-marital relationship and not advising or praying for that person, or thinking it is none of our business if someone in office is always misusing facilities or resources and not trying to show that person the correct way. Our 'worldly reward' for this is that everyone would like us because we do not trample any toes, we would be everybody's friend and liked by all. But is it worth to give up eternal life, love, joy and peace for a temporary worldly reward? Though it is difficult, we are called to be righteous in God's sight and not the world's. However, most times we justify things and say to ourselves 'just this once, I'll let it slip by', or 'I'm sure God won't mind, I'm sure He understands'. Mattathias knew that if he didn't obey the king he would lose everything he had; his leadership, honor and being regarded as a respected and great person in his town. But he chose to 'let go' of the world and 'let God' take over his life.

Recently the Lord gave me a mission where I had to move away from almost everything I was familiar with. Though I was scared of the unknown, I reminded myself how the Lord called Abraham to leave almost everything he was familiar with and put his complete trust in the Lord. During this mission there were many challenges, rejection and loneliness, and sometimes when I sought a familiar shoulder to cry on, that was the very thing that was not available. Instead, the Lord taught me to completely rely on Him, and He provided for my needs. Like Mattathias, when we 'let go' of the world and 'let God' He does things that are far greater than we can imagine.

Prayer: Abba Father, help me to let go of everything that is not from you. Amen

Restore your temple

<p>1 Mac 4:23-37,52-59</p> <p>1 Chr 29: 10-12</p> <p>Luke 19:45-48</p>
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Since so many readings are being taken from the Book of Maccabee let us be clear about this book. According to online sources the name Maccabee, probably meaning “hammer,” is actually applied in the Books of Maccabees to only one man, Judas, third son of the priest Mattathias and first leader of the revolt against the Seleucid kings who persecuted the Jews (1 Mc 2:4, 66; 2 Mc 8:5, 16; 10:1, 16). Traditionally the name has come to be extended to the brothers of Judas, his supporters, and even to other Jewish heroes of the period, such as the seven brothers (2 Mc 7).

The two Books of Maccabees contain the attempted suppression of Judaism in Palestine in the second century B.C. The vigorous reaction to this attempt established for a time the religious and political independence of the Jews. The purpose of writing this book was to record the deliverance of Israel that God worked through the family of Mattathias (5:62)—especially through his three sons, Judas, Jonathan, and Simon, and his grandson.

Just as the Jewish temple and faith was under attack, the temple’s of our body and spirit are constantly under attack. We may be giving in or we may be safeguarding the temple of the Holy Spirit within us. Sometimes we are not even aware that we are under attack. Such was the religious life when the Lord Jesus walked the streets of Jerusalem and entered the Temple of Solomon.

People had made the holy ground a place of unfair transactions. Though the Holies of Holies was supposed to be worshiped, money, trade and profit held sway over the people. The Lord Jesus had to make a dramatic response to the way of life that came to be accepted by one and all even in the courtyard of the temple.

The same is with us. When we live without a relationship with God we begin to lose our grip of the reality of the Spirit world and we give into a way of life that is not acceptable to God. Through confession we have a chance to return to the feet of the Lord and be restored to our Baptismal purity. Let us not wait for a breakdown in our lives to begin our journey back to the heart of the Father and allow God to restore His presence in the temple of our bodies.

Prayer: Abba Father, have mercy on my spiritual blindness and restore me. Amen

“They are sons and daughters of God because they are born
of the resurrection”.

Luke 20:36b

1 Mac 6: 1-13

Ps 9: 2,3,8,6,16 & 19

Luke 20:27-40

In the first reading today we see the cause of anxiety and stress in our lives. The story tells us of the King Antiochus who made all his plans on his own. He fails, loses his battle and has to return a defeated person. This drives him into deep anxiety. The reading shows the telltale signs of such anxiety. He was terrified, deeply upset, fell sick and became greatly depressed.

This is the same predicament we will fall into when we try to live our life on our own strength. We experience a dead status in all areas of our lives when we strive to live on our own strength. The Gospel proclamation today gives us the key to overcome this death situation on our life. The Lord teaches us the hope of a life beyond this world through resurrection. Our Lord Jesus gave us the gift of eternal life when He overcame death by Resurrection. He showed the conniving Sadducees that the arguments of law and righteousness were futile in the presence of an everlasting life. It was clear that every worry and anxiety that we have in this world about money, status and possession were a waste of our time and energy. For, in eternity all that will count is that every being is a heavenly being submitted in love, to the Lord and not the spouse or child of any earthly being.

Today is the feast of St. Catherine of Alexandria. Christian tradition states she was of noble birth and was educated and an avid scholar. Around the age of fourteen, she experienced a moving vision of Mary and the infant Jesus, and she decided to become a Christian. Although she was a teenager, she was very intelligent and gifted. When the emperor began persecuting Christians, Catherine visited him to denounce his cruelty. Rather than order her execution, the emperor summoned fifty orators and philosophers to debate her. However, Catherine was moved by the power of the Holy Spirit and spoke eloquently in defense of her faith. Her words were so moving that several of the pagans converted to Christianity and were immediately executed. Unable to defeat her rhetorically or to intimidate her into giving up her belief, the emperor ordered her to be tortured. Though tried, failing to torture her to death, the emperor finally ordered her beheaded on a day like today. It is noted that she was martyred a virgin, claiming she would be a spouse only to the Lord in this and eternal life.

Prayer: Abba Father, keep me close to your heart and never leave my side. Amen!

“Jesus is not a King according to earthly ways: for him, to reign is not to command but to obey the Father... Pope Francis

Ezk 34: 11-12, 15-17

Ps 23: 1-6

1 Cor 15: 20-26, 28

Mt 25: 31-46

Throughout the scripture we find that people who were chosen by God to lead/ rule His people had a specific role. They were to shepherd His people. A little background to today's first reading shows God's disappointment with the "shepherds". Instead of caring for their flocks the shepherds had started exploiting them. As a result, the sheep were scattered, wounded and exposed to the enemy. God promised to intervene: "I myself will tend my sheep, and have them lie down, declares the Sovereign Lord. I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak". This promise was fulfilled in the Lord Jesus. He came to seek and save the lost. He ministered to those who were forgotten, rejected and even those on "death row". In Him they discovered the heart of the Father and a life of freedom from fears, sin and oppression.

The Church year ends today with the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe. The Gospel gives us a vision into the end times. The Son of Man will come in His glory with angels, and He will take His place on His glorious throne. All the nations will bow before Him. On that day, the Gospel says the Lord will separate sheep from the goats; sheep to His right and goats to His left. Apparently, even though sheep and goats look somewhat similar, they are very different to each other. Where sheep are considered intelligent, quiet and submissive, Goats are considered stubborn and destructive animals if left unattended. Jews hated the symbol of the goat, for it represented a disobedient, undisciplined lifestyle. The question is, am I a sheep (submissive to God) or a goat (stubborn and destructive)?

The Lord calls the sheep to His right side and says: 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world'. To the goats on His left the Lord would say: "Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels". The Gospel explains the sheep are those who in turn were "shepherds" to others. They are the ones who reached out to the broken and ministered. They went the extra mile, were inconvenienced and sacrificed much for the sake of others. The goats are the ones who left a trail of destruction behind them and were oblivious to it.

I am challenged by the comparison of the goats and the sheep. It horrifies me to realize that there is a very high chance that I could be a “goat”! When I am oblivious to the needs of others but obsessed with meeting my needs I can be a goat! It can be as simple as giving up a seat in the bus / train to someone who may really need it. Or it can be as complicated as how I deal with my family members, those who may be working under me... When I refuse to be “sent” I am destructive to the mission of God. His Holiness Pope Francis once said: “It would mean very little, however, if we believed Jesus was King of the universe, but did not make him Lord of our lives”.

So what do I do if I am stubborn and destructive like a goat? How do I become submissive to God? The Lord is reminding me today, that He can work through me if I say yes to Him. Humanely it was not possible for the Blessed Mother to conceive a child by herself, but she said “yes” to God. Timing was all wrong, she was not married... yet she did not say “wait till timing is better – and I am married”. She just said “I am your maid-servant; let your will be done”. I can’t even imagine myself giving the responses to God that the Blessed Mother gave. Yet, I don’t want to continue to live the way I have always lived. I will say “Yes” to God today, and I know my God will transform my sinful nature with every little “yes” to Him.

I have always felt that the “goat” nature in me is dominant than the “sheep”. In his letter to the Corinthians, St Paul says “For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive”. The power of the resurrected Christ is made available to me when I say Yes to be sent by God. When I receive the Lord into my life in the Holy Eucharist, He comes to live inside of me. The Kingdom of God comes within me.

In the different areas of our lives, we switch between giving a goat’s response and a sheep’s response. Let us take the truth of our lives to God and give Him those areas where we are stubborn and are unrelenting. His grace will flow into our lives and turn the stony patches into fertile ground to receive His leading and way forward.

In our struggle we can pray this verse - “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” (Romans 12:2)

Prayer: Abba Father, today I choose to say Yes to you. Transform me, empower me, and anoint me as you send me into the world, to fulfil your mission through me. Amen

“Truly I tell you,” he said, “this poor widow has put in more
than all the others.”

Luke 21: 3

Dn 1: 1-6, 8-20

Dn 3: 52-56

Luke 21: 1-4

In today's first reading we see the narrative of how the unthinkable happened. The city that hosted the temple of the Lord, and the temple of the Lord fell into the hands of the Babylonians, and they went on to desecrate it. “The holy place where the Most High dwells. God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day.” (Psalm 46:4b-5) . For those Jews trusted this word, must

have faced a huge crisis of faith.

Often when things go wrong, which we could never imagine that God will allow, we too can go into a crisis of faith. Things appear to be out of control, and those who oppose the desire of God seem to have triumphed. This must have been how the disciples felt when Jesus was captured by the authorities and sent to the cross. This must have been the way they felt when the persecution of the early church happened and they had to flee their homes. But as we look back today, we see that God was never out of control, He used the deeds of wicked men as stepping stones to fulfil his eternal plan. God continues to sit on the throne, and He cannot be defeated by men.

Despite the big picture appearing to be glum, it seems that the Lord is working under the radar with Daniel and his friends. God is placing them strategically in influential positions Daniel and his friends, could have easily enjoyed the perks. Instead, they chose to give inner responses – do things that pleased God, in the secret places of their heart. God on his part, blessed them and made them flourish, not for their prosperity, but to contribute towards the great plan of God.

In our crisis and darkness, if we continue to hold on to God's promises, although it may seem that God has let us down, He performs small acts of kindness to provide evidence that He is still with us. As we give inner responses, He places us strategically, so that we become contributors towards a greater plan and work of God. Today's Gospel gives us an insight into how God sees us and our actions. It reveals what is valuable to God. An inner response made with difficulty, which may appear insignificant, is of more value in the kingdom than many visible great acts. These inner responses bring the intervention of God into our situations.

Prayer: *Abba Father, increase our faith so that we may give inner responses in dark times and pull heaven down to earth. Amen*

Remain faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life”

Revelations 2:10c

Daniel 2:31-45

Daniel 3:57-61

Luke: 21:5-11

In the first reading we are presented with an instance of Daniel understanding dreams, which soon made him famous in Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar’s dream is interpreted by Daniel, speaking of the destruction and the coming of the Messiah who is the only true God. The psalm sings of the glory of the almighty God.

In the Gospel proclamation today we have a prediction of the future events of what will happen toward the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ - false Christ’s will arise, wars, famine, plagues, persecution of Christ’s followers and great signs from heaven. What is God trying to speak to us today? It is of the destruction, sin, pain and suffering of the world today and the many who claim to be preaching the Gospel of the Lord but even more that God needs us in order for Him to save these people. How do I recognize the true Jesus and be faithful to Him?

I realised it is not for me to be distracted with the many disasters and destructions happening all over the world. These take place because there is no channel/medium for God to act in these places. God is in search of a person even though He is omnipotent He needs someone to operate on earth, this person who He is searching also needs God so bad that he is ready to do the impossible with God’s help and then where ever this person goes God goes and people remain faithful Catholics. Just like the saints of the Catholic Church. We venerate saints because they have taught us by their life example how to carry God to where they are lead by God. To do so I should not get caught up in what is happening around me instead humble myself, repent and pray while getting lost in the presence of the Lord, so that God could act in our midst.

When this happens we take the fragrance of God to where we go. ‘When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realised that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus’ Acts 4:13 Courage under persecution and suffering is the aroma of Jesus Christ. Courage in the face of rejection is the fragrance of Jesus Christ. When we have absolutely no answer to what is happening – Go and be with Jesus.

Prayer: Abba Father, we believe that you are using us to spread the aroma of God so that the aroma of the world will be defused. Amen

Keep your temple free from deceit but rich in love

Dan 5: 1-6, 13-14,
16-17, 23-38

Daniel 3: 63-67

Luke 21: 12-19

In the Gospel proclamation today, the Lord Jesus is referring mainly to the destruction of the Jerusalem temple by the Roman Empire which took over Israel. There was a great persecution, with hundreds or thousands being martyred before the conversion of Emperor Constantine in 312 AD. In any event some Catholic Bible scholars raise questions as to whether the Church converted the Emperor or whether he converted the Church because after that the church of the poor became largely the Church of the rich, the powerful and the privileged.

To build the temple in Jerusalem King Solomon is known to have re-introduced slavery from which God had freed the Jews who had been slaves of the Egyptian empire for hundreds of years. The Babylonians destroyed the temple but King Herod rebuilt it in the years before the Lord Jesus. But the Lord seldom visited the temple, not even for the Passover. The well-known event is when he went to the temple and drew out the traders who were doing business there on behalf of the religious leaders and giving huge bribes to them. The Lord told them "You have turned my Father's house into a den of robbers." After the Romans destroyed the temple in 72 AD, the Jews were dispersed and the temple was never rebuilt. Even after the nation of Israel was recreated in 1948, they have not rebuilt the temple but go and weep near the wailing wall of the temple destroyed in 72 AD.

In today's Gospel proclamation, the Lord Jesus also refers to the end times and the second coming. He warns there will be similar persecution during those end times. But tells us, just as he told his followers then—that we should not be fearful or anxious, even if it means martyrdom. Because beyond this life is the Resurrection and the eternal life that the Lord Jesus won for us through his suffering and crucifixion.

So whatever happens the Lord tells us to remain faithful to the single command He gave us, "Love one another as I love you" (John 15:12). God has given us many gifts and the fruit of the Holy Spirit but the greatest is love because it is the only virtue that will last forever in the eternal kingdom.

Prayer: Abba Father may we be filled with the Holy Spirit to experience not only your unconditional love but even have the power to give our lives for you. Amen.

Called out of darkness into light

Rom 10: 9-18

Psalm 19:8-11

Mt 4: 18-22

Have you received a special call? Mother Teresa often called her religious life, “a call within a call”. Though she was happy in the “Sisters of Loreto” congregation, she was deeply disturbed by the surrounding poverty just outside the walls of her convent. Once when she was travelling from Calcutta to Loreto convent in Darjeeling, she was moved deeply looking at the misery of her people. She felt that God was calling her to serve the poor. Hence she decided to leave her reputed job in the Loreto School. She felt that if she would refuse that call, she would have broken her faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

This same call was heard by St. Joseph Vaz when he heard the sermon of a priest in Goa. He was so moved by the plight of the starved faithful in Sri Lanka that he resolved to leave India and travel to Sri Lanka despite the threat of suffering and death.

We might not have received such bold calls but everyday we hear the call of God to respond as He would do to a poor person pleading with us for help. Or we feel deep within the need to testify to someone about the love of the Lord or we are called to tame our ego and forgive the wrong doing of another person.

But what if we cannot or have not heard any call. Let us pray Romans 10 : 9 . 13 which says If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. As Scripture says, “Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.” For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

We have been taught that we can call on the name of the Lord no matter how far or close we may be to Him. His open invitation says ‘Come as you are, I love you anyway.’ When we grab this opportunity like the woman who grabbed the edge of the Lord Jesus’ garment, the power is drawn out of the body of the Lord and He is forced to turn around and address the cry of our hearts. That’s when we hear Him.

Prayer: Abba Father, give me the grace to respond as you call my name. Amen

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