“Everything, even sweeping, scraping vegetables, weeding a garden and waiting on the sick could be a prayer, if it were offered to God.”

St. Martin de Porres

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On Our Knees In His Hands

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From the start, the Church has honored and revered its martyrs, heroes or heroines. What began on a popular and local level gradually became woven into the liturgy. A day celebrating the lives and deaths of the saints is actually a day of greatness of the Lord and hoping in His love. The triumph that we see in the saints confirm to the Lord Himself. It was not just their own endeavour that produced such holiness, but the work of the Lord, who is waiting to pour the fullness of the life into our hearts. This has been the hope and joy of all holy women and men and it is our hope and joy as well.

In the First reading, the book of Revelation speaks of a vision of the redeemed Lord, gathered around the throne of God. “They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Revelation 7:14 RSV). The victory of the redemption came through the blood of our Lord Jesus, which washed them, purified them, and sealed them with the promise of eternal life.

Today’s Gospel proclamation speaks of the beatitudes, What is the good life, and the ultimate end or purpose of life? Is it not joy? Our Lord Jesus speaks about this question in his sermon on the mount. The word beatitude literally means “blessedness”. What is the importance of the Lord Jesus’ beatitudes, and why are they so central to his teaching?

The beatitudes are a sign of contradiction to the world’s perception of happiness and joy. How can one possibly find happiness in poverty, hunger, mourning, and persecution? A poverty of spirit finds adequate space and joy in possessing God as the greatest treasure possible. A hunger of the spirit finds nourishment and strength in God’s word and Spirit. Mourning over a wasted life and sin leads to joyful freedom from the burden of guilt and spiritual oppression. God unveils to the humble of heart the true origin of abundant life and joy. We are promised the joys of heaven which will more than compensate for the troubles and hardships in this world. St. Thomas Aquinas said: No one can live without joy. That is why St. Paul said the joy of the Lord is our strength.

Prayer: Abba Father, increase my hunger for you and show me the way that leads to everlasting peace and joy. May I desire you above all else and find perfect joy in doing your will. Amen.
Friday 2nd November

All Souls’ Day

“‘The world’s thy ship and not thy home.’”

St. Therese of Lisieux

Today most of us remember someone who has passed away. One thing is as clear as day today more than on any other day of the year - Life on earth is transient or impermanent. Most of us are filled with dread at the thought of dying. This is because we have a wrong or limited understanding of death.

For those of us who are Christians, death is not the end, but the beginning of a life that is more beautiful and complete than the life that we are now living. The famous singer Jim Reeves sings, “This world is not my home, I’m just passing through. My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue. The angels beckon me from Heaven’s open door. And I can’t feel at home in this world anymore.” We are all pilgrims who are passing through this world.

In today’s first reading prophet Isaiah prophesies of the coming of the Messiah who will “destroy the shroud that covers all nations and swallow up death forever” (Isaiah 25: 7, 8). The most amazing thing though is that, in the Gospel reading of today, we see the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy. As the three holy women visited the tomb of the Lord Jesus when the Sabbath was over, they see the stone had been rolled away. A young man sitting inside the tomb gives them the best news any human ear has ever heard or shall ever hear, “He has been raised” (Mark 16: 6). In the resurrection of Jesus Christ we have the answer to the great question of the ages: “If mortals die, can they live again?” The Bible teaches that because Christ lives, we also shall live (John 14:19).

St. Therese of Lisieux says, “It is not Death that will come to fetch me, it is the good God. Death is no phantom, no horrible specter, as presented in pictures. In the catechism it is stated that death is the separation of soul and body, that is all! Well, I am not afraid of a separation which will unite me to the good God forever.” St. Teresa of Avila spoke the following words on her deathbed, “After all I die as a child of the Church. My Lord, it is time to move on. Well then, may Your will be done. O my Lord and my Spouse, the hour that I have longed for has come. It is time for us to meet one another.” Let us hope in the gift of eternal life that the Lord has promised us.

Prayer: Abba Father, We thank you for in Your Mercy you sent Your Son and made a way for us to come and live with you forever. Amen.
“Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled. and he who humbles himself will be exalted”

Luke 7:11

To follow Christ Jesus is to accept a new set of standards, far beyond our reach. We cannot hope to reach the pinnacle of God’s calling, without his power and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. We are called to conduct ourselves in a manner that is “worthy of the gospel of Christ.” What a high calling!

What does this look like in the life of a follower and disciple of Christ? St. Paul’s prayer in his letter to the Philippians gives us a window through which we can see what such a life looks like. A heart full of love, a mind filled with God’s knowledge and deep insight, a spirit so discerning that it leads to purity and selflessness, and a life overflowing with the fruit of righteousness. We can gain none of these things on our own. Only as we surrender our lives totally to him giving the truth of our hearts, believing in his unconditional love, can we make way for the Holy Spirit to come in and take over our lives. Only then can we bring true glory and praise to our God.

In today’s parable, our Lord Jesus spoke these words in Luke 7:11 as he taught the way of discipleship. These words seem straightforward enough. When we look more closely, however we hear our Lord speak to us from the heart with love. The Lord learned obedience to the Father. When we find him speaking to people of the attitudes of the heart, we know he is not reciting some dry doctrine from an elevated level, rather he was explaining with compassion what he himself had learned from experience. Even though we may be pious, sometimes we operate out of a pride which prevents us from a deeper union with God. Without even noticing it we count ourselves great in the kingdom of God. Our cry with the psalmist – my soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God? This should be our cry.

Saint Martin de Pores was a great saint of God. Being an illegitimate child of a freed slave woman, he could have grown to be a bitter man, but he did not. Even as a child he gave his heart and goods to the poor and despised. He served in a medical apostolate of the Dominicans. His example of prayer, penance, charity and humility led the community to request him to make full religious profession. He treated all people alike irrespective of colour, race or status.

Prayer: Abba Father, we have no works worthy of you. Help us to be humble as we await your work in us. Amen
Moses was given the daunting task by the Lord of establishing the law among the people of Israel. The idea of law was foreign to them, and they spent years living as they pleased, sacrificing to scores of false gods, worshipping idols and living as though a law did not exist. Thus, the Lord God sent the Ten Commandments to the people of Israel to guide them into the path of righteousness. Of these Ten Commandments, today’s first reading deals with the first commandment – ‘I am the Lord your God, you shall not have other gods besides me.’

In today’s age, many believing Christians do not physically worship other gods, and thus we falsely assume that we are not breaking this first commandment. However, a false god need not be another deity, but it can be defined as any person or thing that takes the place of God in our hearts. Moses asks the people to write this law – the Lord is God, the Lord alone – on their own hearts! God wanted it inscribed into the core of their being, and that is what He asks of us today.

What are the false gods that so commonly accompany us in our walk of life? Money, prestige, power, relationships, sex, pride in beauty, talents or education and finally, ours own selves. We do not intend for such things to take the place of God in our hearts, but once we are exposed to such situations, we find ourselves desiring for more. We wish we earned more money, we wish people would give us more recognition and we yearn for a powerful position in life so that people may acknowledge us.

We do not realise that the biggest false god in our lives today is our own self. Most things center on us and we measure the value of a day according to how good we feel at the end of it. If something negative has taken place, it is a bad day, for we are centered on our feelings and emotions. I struggle with this in my own life. I find it difficult to disengage from my own feelings, my desires and my opinions. I base reality on how I see it, not on how God tells me to see it. As a result, I get caught up in my ideas and they take the place of God in my heart.

The reason why this happens is because I have not completely obeyed the first commandment. I may be aware of what the commandment is, however, I have not inscribed it in my heart as the people of Israel were asked to do.
The Psalmist of today seems to have understood the reality of worshipping only one God, for he boldly professes that the Lord alone is his strength. He is safe not because of his ability or his own protection but because the Lord is his shield and fortress. Therefore, he has no need to rely on himself that he may be kept safe from his enemies. He trusts and believes that the God of Israel will keep him out of harm’s way.

The fact that we rely on ourselves to get through our day means we do not see our Lord as the one God. We hold on to our prowess and believe we can do it, and God will help us along the way. This understanding is another type of false god that we so often worship. Our mind convinces us we are capable of doing things by ourselves, whereas the word of God says even youth grow tired and weary, but those who hope in the Lord renew their strength. (Isaiah 40: 30-31)

The people of Israel were unfortunate as they had nobody to turn to, other than the prophets to get direction and assistance from God. However, the people of our time have a great gift - the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. The second reading beautifully reminds us that we have an eternal high priest. The levitical priests of the Old Testament lived for a time and age, and they too were human. The sacrifices they made to God on the altar were made for the sins the people committed, as well as for their own sins. However, our eternal high priest, Lord Jesus, need not sacrifice for the sake of our sins day after day, for He paid the ultimate price when He gave His own life on the cross that we may receive salvation.

When the scribe questions the Lord Jesus in today’s gospel proclamation about the first commandment, the Lord quotes from the Old Testament and in addition to the first commandment, also mentions the second - ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ This commandment was not distinctly written in the Old Testament law but these two commandments sum up the Ten Commandments. It is only when you can love your neighbour that the true extent of God’s love can be shown.

Obeying the law out of fear will not bear much fruit for we will only be fulfilling an obligation. However, when we follow the law out of love for our Lord, loving our neighbour in return will be just as simple. None of this can be achieved by our own strength, but only through the mediation of our eternal high priest and our intercessor, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Prayer: Abba Father, I long to worship only you. Help me be rid of all false gods in my life through the power of your Son. Amen.
Monday 5th November  31st Week in Ordinary Time

Have one hope, one spirit, one feeling.

He belonged to the working class. His compatriots called him a glutton & wine bibber. Authorities secular and religious considered him fit to be eliminated. His companions were sinners and outcasts. He was a trouble shooter - a homeless vagrant with revolutionary ideas challenging halLOWED traditions & social norms. Would we invite this man to one of our feasts? I hear a resounding ‘No’ But this is our Lord Jesus we are talking about!

How helpless I felt when I read this passage! On my own I am incapable of acting according to the Gospel demand. But thanks be to the Lord Jesus dwelling in me. He enables me in the power of the Holy Spirit to work towards this expectation He has of me. God does not discriminate against anyone. His passionate desire is unity for the whole human race. As sinners we are all invited to His banquet of love. It was His reckless, unconditional love that compelled Him to die for all humanity.

St. Paul writing from prison, confronted with disunity in the Church at Philippi advises them to be “in full agreement, discarding ambition and empty glory and being concerned with self advancement, all of which we are guilty of when we invite people to our feasts. Our sights are fixed on the gods of fostering relationships which will be rewarding. If we consider we are “In Christ and it is Christ that should lead us to deal with our fellow beings. Be perfect – was the Lord Jesus’ command. As we come in our helplessness to obey, fall at His feet and give Him the truth of our hearts, the Spirit will lead us to do, what we cannot, by self effort.

We can start, by showing the true meaning of our experience by spending time in His presence and dwelling in His word. We cannot help but let His love flow out in response. To be IN Christ, is to be in unity with all beings. Like little children we should not be prejudiced or discriminate against anybody but accept them with the love of the Lord Jesus.

Prayer: Abba Father, I am incapable of being as passionate as your Son Jesus was while on earth. But with the infilling of your Holy Spirit, I know that I will be transformed into the person you want to be, always seeking your face. Amen
Philippians 2: 5-11
Psalm 22: 26b-32
Luke 14: 15-24

In the parable of the great banquet the Lord Jesus Christ beautifully explains who will enter the Kingdom. In the parable when the man tells his servants to call the guest who had already been invited for the great banquet the invited guest gave the servants many excuses. Through this parable we understand that the man mentioned here is God. His servants are the priests, religious, lay evangelists and those who have committed the time and resources to grow the Kingdom of God and carry the news of the banquet.

According to this parable, the first person said “I have just bought a field and I must go and see it (Lk14:18). This shows that he was a wealthy man and was too attached to it that he could not let it go for anything else. He was wasting his time and effort to find ways and means to increase his wealth. Little did he know that the wealth he was attached to was provided by the Lord who is inviting him now to give him something much greater and everlasting. He was blinded by that tiny piece of land and missed the opportunity of inheriting the kingdom of God.

Subsequently, the second person said “I have just bought five yoke of oxen and I am on my way to try them out (Lk 14:19). A yoke is a wooden beam normally used between a pair of oxen or other animals which enables them to pull together a load. Little did he know that the yoke that he was going to try out was pulling him short from the ultimate objective of his life which is to enter the kingdom of God. What we understand here is that people did not understand the value and worth of the invitation they had got in their hands rather they were focusing on temporary things. Most of us can relate ourselves with this parable. We strive so hard to achieve things in the world where we fail to build the Kingdom of God. We are so focused on building what gives us temporary pleasure and satisfaction and fail to grow towards entering His Kingdom. But the Lord is reminding us of our purpose. If we do not respond to that call, we indeed have missed the bus. We are to give Him the first place. Today’s message given in the parable Matthew 16:24-25 is “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”

Prayer: Abba Father, may I never get lost in the worldly attachments and lose sight of you. May I follow You whole-heartedly forever. Amen!
One thing I ask of the Lord; this I seek; to dwell in the Lord’s house,

Psalm 27:4

In the first proclamation St. Paul speaks of the basic and fundamental two qualities of a servant of the Lord Jesus. These are obedience and service in the world without murmuring. Everyone baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity is a member of the family of God and is a server of the Lord.

Those of us who have consciously made a choice of serving God need to be aware of these truths which St. Paul mentions. Our God, creates the desire within us to serve Him and carry out the work towards His Kingdom. Therefore we should be free of unnecessary burdens and attachments when we work through our salvation. God chose people and worked through them from generation after generation and age to age over the last two millennia and the Kingdom of God gained grounds. At present we carry the baton.

Our attitude should be to glorify God through our lives. We are God’s dwelling place and symbols of His love. God is love and we are loved by God to love others in return. Are we living in that attitude? Our focus should be to glorify God in whatever we do. We need to pray for this shift. Then our minds will be transformed and our hearts converted. Then eventually God becomes first in our lives. This does not mean that we neglect our daily responsibilities. But we will be able to be better human persons and carry out our responsibilities better when we have this attitude. Then we too will become children of God without blemish in this crooked and perverse generation.

In the Gospel proclamation, Christ Jesus demarcates the frontiers of discipleship. Whoever sets out to be a worker of the Kingdom of God needs to have a deep-rooted principle; God first! This principle cannot be compromised. Anyone coming to the Lord Jesus with other agendas will find it difficult to give this commitment. Christ Jesus has clearly stated it. What is this Cross that we will have to carry? When we encounter the Living Christ Jesus, we experience an internal conversion. But our inbuilt nature does not change overnight. Addictions and sinful habits will be lifted off but the sinfulness in us will not change overnight, but it is a life time journey. It is in this process when we are called to do the “Will” of God that we let go our “Will” which is carrying the Cross.

Prayer: Abba Father, baptize me over and again in the Holy Spirit to continue this journey which I began in you towards holiness by carrying my cross. Amen.
Thursday 8th November  

“For we are the circumcision, we who worship through the Spirit of God...”  

There is a constant battle within our beings. There are three forces working within a human person. Every human being is a spiritual being because in every human being there is a spirit within. Therefore the human spirit works in accordance to either the self, which is called ‘the flesh’ by St. Paul, or the Spirit of God. The third force which could have an impact on a human person is the evil force which could enter through the selfishness or the egoistic attitude of a human person. The flesh is always at work and flesh could give way to the evil force. The Spirit of God works within a person when the person surrenders to God, which is a deliberate and conscious act of a human being.

St. Paul spoke of his self. But the good news is when he encountered the Risen Lord Christ Jesus, his whole being changed. He moved in to God by been with God. Therefore he considered all his education, fame and the social status which he actually lost as rubbish when he compares to what he gained by encountering Christ Jesus. What did he gain? In the human point of view St. Paul lost everything he had in the society when he embraced Christ Jesus. St. Paul gained the Master of the universe as his companion and Saviour. The good news is when we meet the Master of the universe we also enter into the Spirit of God and become heirs of the Kingdom of God. We enter into eternal life!

The Gospel according to St. Luke is called the Gospel of Mercy because the mercy of God is beautifully portrayed and declared in the proclamation today. The parables are addressed to those who were in charge of spreading God’s love with the ordinary people. When the ordinary men/women were attracted to the Lord Jesus the ‘zealous of the time, the Pharisees and the scribes’ could not tolerate it. But the Lamb of God always attracts the downtrodden and the sinful heart even to date.

When we are weak the mercy of God rushes into such a heart. But a proud and arrogant heart shuns off mercy of God. Thanks be to God for Christ Jesus ‘Mercy’ came chasing after us. Christ Jesus who knows us well comes and carries us into the life in the Spirit.

Prayer: Abba Father, may your mercy flood into our lives so we may be instruments of mercy in a hurting and broken world. Amen.
Friday 9th November  

Dedication of the Lateran Basilica in Rome

‘You are God’s building’

1 Corinthians 3: 9c

Every bishop has a cathedral church, which has the official chair or seat of that bishop. The chair signifies the teaching authority of the bishop. The Lateran Basilica holds the chair of the bishop of Rome, the Pope. Thus, the Lateran Basilica is the Pope’s Cathedral. We celebrate this feast today to re-unite ourselves with the successor of St. Peter. We also celebrate the dedication of this Cathedral because the day of dedication signifies the day that an ordinary building was set apart for God. For ourselves, the date of our Baptism is similar to this. The day that we were baptized, anointed and set apart as children of God, is the day of our dedication. On this day, let us remind ourselves of this commitment.

The first reading portrays the beautiful imagery of the Temple of God. This is God’s intention for our lives, that we should become like the temple, from which streams of living water flow out bringing healing and life to those around us. Ez. 47,8, He said to me, “This water goes to the east, down to the Arabah, and when it flows into the sea of foul-smelling water, the water will become wholesome.”

Our actions and words are the streams that should bring healing and life to broken and wounded people.

The importance of this feast has to be understood also in a spiritual sense. In the Second reading today, St. Paul tells us that we are God’s building. Each one of us is a temple, a church, a place where God lives. Therefore it is necessary to keep ourselves pure and holy. It is not something that we can do with our own self effort. But as we open our hearts to the Lord, he restores us. We are the temple of the Holy Spirit. Many of us like to keep our surroundings clean, our offices and churches tidy. Then, how much more should we focus on keeping the temple of the Lord pure? Today, in the Gospel proclamation, our Lord Jesus reminds us that the dwelling place of God must be kept holy and set apart for the work that it was intended for. There are many times when we misuse our bodies and destroy the beautiful dwelling place of God. Through the Sacrament of Reconciliation let us do a periodical clean up of our lives. May we seek God’s grace, to be cleansed within our hearts, so that those who meet us will encounter the Holy Spirit living within us.

Prayer: Abba Father, may I be a worthy dwelling place for you and may I become a channel of life for those around me. Amen.
St. Paul addresses the Philippians in the first reading and teaches us a lesson on being content with what has been given to us. St. Paul was a man who was persecuted much for the sake of Christ. He underwent many trials, was beaten, flogged and imprisoned; yet, he was not one to complain. He profoundly states that he has never been in need, for he has learnt to be content with what he has.

We are in need today because we are often on the lookout for more. We want to accumulate more wealth, more fame, and more glory for ourselves. St. Paul knew the secret - everything he had, he attributed to God above. He boldly proclaims: “I can do all things through Christ Jesus who strengthens me.” His ability to achieve anything is not dependent on his own skill, but solely on the power of God. It is when we forget this reality that we rely on ourselves and ultimately get discontented with our lives. Today, have we forgotten that the Lord Jesus is our strength and there is nothing we shall lack if we are rooted in Him? If we have, it is a good time to repent and return to the feet of the Lord, reminding ourselves once again of our incapability of surviving this journey by our own efforts.

The Lord Jesus further expands this concept in the gospel proclamation. We have been given worldly treasures, or money, to allow us to pass through this world. The Lord Jesus reminds us; our worldly resources are to be used to benefit the lives of those around us. This will make way for our eternal home someday. It is when we use these worldly treasures to better our own lives that the problems arise. Money is likened to a false god in the eyes of the Lord Jesus and He even goes to say that you cannot serve God and money. We know that money in itself is not a vice, for God would not provide it for us. However, the love and greed for money can turn it into a deadly trap that blinds us to the reality that it is God alone who supplies all we need. Let us learn today from St. Paul to be content with the little we have been given; for when we are faithful with the little we have, in due time, we will be trusted with a treasure far more valuable than this world can offer – eternal life.

Prayer: Abba Father, I pray for the grace to be dependent on you, for I know you are my Provider. Amen.
Sunday 11th November  32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

“The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry...”  1Kings17: 14

Week after week, the Church presents to us yet another way to fashion our lives as Christians. Today’s liturgy is a challenge to all of us who claim to have faith in God, as it challenges us to put that faith into action.

The First Reading tells us about the widow of Zarephath whom the prophet Elijah at the height of the drought approached when people had run out of even the basic food to sustain them. When she had worked out the best possible plan in her mind to barely relieve the hunger of her and her son, just once more before succumbing to death by starvation, she was being asked to share the morsel of food they had, with a stranger who too was hungry. Understandably she politely refused to oblige, giving very valid reasons, but the prophet gave her the promise received from God. “For this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: ‘The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the Lord sends rain on the land.’” (1 Kings 17:14 NIV). We all know the rest of the story, when she trusted God’s promise though seemed impossible. “She went away and did as Elijah had told her. So there was food every day for Elijah and for the woman and her family. For the jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry, in keeping with the word of the Lord spoken by Elijah.” (1 Kings 17:15-16 NIV).

The Gospel Reading tells us how Lord Jesus teaches His disciples, the same profound truth in the Kingdom of God. His teaching is for us living in the 21st century too. The words of the Lord confirm that the Kingdom values are very different from the values of this world. “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others.” (Mark 12:43 NIV). How could that be, for St. Mark says, “that many rich people threw in large amounts.” (Cf. Mark 12:41). Obviously the Kingdom currency is different to ours. It is faith! “They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on.” (Mark 12:44 NIV). How could the poor widow offer all she had to live on, without keeping anything for her sustenance? She could do that only because she trusted that her Heavenly Father would provide what she needed to live.

I am challenged by the actions of these two women, who had all the reasons in the world to justify their behaviour if they acted differently.
Living in the 21st century, I hear all the time about financial planning and retirement planning, based on income and expenses. Though in a worldly sense it is reasonable to plan the expenses according to the income and is the right thing to do, unfortunately most of us apply this law more for the heavenly matters, especially when presented with an opportunity to give of our money, talents and time for Kingdom work. We become very stingy and try to find reasons to justify our actions too. The bottom line is we simply cannot trust God to provide for us or take care of our needs, and we need to do it ourselves. We know very well that our future is very uncertain and that anything could happen any time, making our best plans and hopes turn into an absolute disaster. Yet, we struggle so much to trust the One Person who never changes, who knows each day of your life till eternity, and to whom nothing is impossible. If only we choose to trust Him and obey His will, we too will enjoy His Providence abundantly. One can never out give God, and anyone who has received the grace to give without measuring, would know that the reward is manifold, always. What initially seems like a ‘death’ experience, letting go of what we hold back for our own future, leads to abundant joy as the Lord takes our little offering into His Hands, and turns it into a huge blessing for us as well as those around us.

In our own prayer community we have heard so many testimonies to the faithfulness of God who chose to go beyond their comfort zones and gave the Lord. These people dared to give all of their time and energy, and not just their free time. They continued giving to Lord more than the one tenth of their monthly income as their tithes even when their income dropped, and during jobless periods of their lives. They experienced that their bank balances did not run dry and all their regular needs were still met in the best manner. It proved to them and all who witnessed their testimony that we have an almighty and unimaginably rich God who is utterly faithful to His Word.

The Second Reading asserts to us that we have been redeemed by none other than God who became man, and now we are free indeed. The spirit of sonship has replaced the spirit of slavery. Furthermore, we have the Risen Christ, who appears for us before God. A human body glorified and raised from dead, has entered the Holy Trinity, (cf. Hebrews 9:24) and God the Holy Spirit has come into our hearts to live with us and in us forever (cf. John14:16,17)! How awesome is this truth and how much should this knowledge change our lives and this is what Lord Jesus won for us by His Cross. Hallelujah!

Prayer: Abba Father, You created me for You, to be loved by You and to love You in return. Thank You for opening my eyes to this truth. Amen
King David in the old testament praised God and acknowledged “The Lord’s is the earth and its fullness, the world and all its people” (Ps 24:1) as he pondered on the beauty and wonder of his creation he had the question of who could enter his holy mountain. The Lord Jesus the creator and author of life who came among his own creation in today’s Gospel proclamation speaks to his disciples on how to handle the three most important factors of life Sin, Forgiveness, and Faith.

Our Lord Jesus said to his disciples ‘Obstacles are sure to come, but alas for the one who provides them!” (Lk17:1) The Lord is reminding us that temptations are bound to come and our vulnerability towards it regardless of how mature, prayerful, holy we are the evil one will keep coming and tempting us because of the natural resistance we have within us towards holiness. We see in our own personal life as well as the world we live in today how the sin has enticed us, drifting us away from the truth and the reality. The Lord is warning us to be vigilant and take extreme care not to cause temptation to the other by our ways of living and with our own choices we make as He reminds us the seriousness of the punishment that awaits.

‘If your brother does something wrong, reprove him and, if he is sorry, forgive him. (Lk 17:3) The Lord Jesus is showing us the importance of forgiveness and kindness towards each other. As the Lord sees our hidden nature to judge and condemn the other he invites us to friendly reproof and to be people who are willing to seek the spiritual well- being of one another. We often find it impossible to meet the demand the Lord. He is inviting us to fix our eyes on him and to trust in his unfathomable mercy poured out on the cross of Calvary. The apostles said to the Lord, ‘Increase our faith.’ Hearing this teaching the apostles must have felt powerless. And they realised they need to have a greater reliance and trust in God to do the impossible. Often we may question how we may inherit that nature of total purity and surrender to be a gentle corrector and a faithful forgiver. The Lord is teaching us today that having a little bit of faith as little as mustard seed can accomplish a great deal if we desire to grow in faith through perseverance and submission to his will.

Prayer: Abba Father I thank you for the obstacles that are yet to come. Increase my faith Lord that I may grow from a seed into a tree. Amen
Tuesday 13th November

St. Francis Xavier Cabrini, virgin

Serving with the right heart.

As I reflect on today’s readings I am reminded of how we are called to ‘discipleship’. It is to serve God in ‘faith’ and ‘maturity’ and inspire others to Christ. In the first reading we see how faith and maturity is required of Titus. St Paul instructs him to become accustomed with the Cretans and learn to deal with their deficiencies and guide them well into right conduct. Those of us too who encounter people from various backgrounds in life should learn to deal with their differences and inspire them. Not just by word but also through our lifestyle as sound doctrine demands right conduct regardless of age, sex or position.

King David reminds us in Psalm 37:3 that in our everyday challenges and the unknown we face, what is required above all is to “Trust in the Lord and do good.” In the midst of our own crisis if we continue to believe in God and go about doing good, representing Jesus to those we encounter, we position ourselves to receive God’s best. He comes to our aid, fulfils our needs and brings supernatural favour into our lives. God has no need of our acts of faith or maturity, yet they help us grow in grace in Him and leads many others to godliness and holiness.

In the Gospel proclamation our Lord Jesus narrates a parable, seen exclusively in Luke’s Gospel, of a servant who was neither afforded privileges nor given an expression of gratitude for the work he did. After all he was only doing what was expected of him. During Jesus’ time the Pharisees felt God owed them because they perfectly observed of the laws. At times I have assumed the same. My prayers and service ought to make God jump to my attention. Herein Jesus teaches a valuable lesson, can I trust God enough to the extent I am free to serve God for God alone, void of any expectations of my own? Can I continue to love when I am misunderstood and serve those that reject me? My service to God ought to be an act of love and duty, in response to all that He is and all that He has given me; Salvation, Peace and Joy immeasurably received through Jesus Christ! Therefore my giving is only partial and I understand that for all eternity I will not be able to outgive God!

Prayer: Abba Father, help me carry a heart of discipleship that trusts you and responds well to your call, so that many others may encounter you. Amen
Wednesday 14th November 32nd Week in Ordinary Time

“...to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient and to be ready for every good work” Titus 3:1

The first reading today reminds us of the greatest sin against God committed by our first parents Adam and Eve. It was not the sin of eating an apple or a fruit from a tree. The sin was disobedience. It was disobedience that caused all generations from then onwards to strive and toil in life. The Catholic Church is founded on the principle of obedience and submission. Our Lord Jesus Himself was obedient to the Father who sent Him. We can make a mind picture of the Lord Jesus in heaven in all His glory, with God the Father and all the heavenly beings. Then One day, the Holy Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit decide that the Lord Jesus will leave heaven and become a human being on earth to save people from their sin. The Lord Jesus says yes in obedience.

Then the angel of God appeared to the Blessed Mother and announced that she has been chosen to be the mother of the Messiah. Though she was in a quandary, as being with child out of wedlock could mean even death for her. Yet, she was obedient and said yes to carry the Messiah into the world for the salvation of mankind. We see the Lord Jesus in the wilderness, tempted by Satan, but continuing to be obedient to the mission for which He was sent to this earth, and not falling into sin. Lastly, we see the Lord in the garden of Gethsemane, sweating blood in anguish as it was hard to be obedient to the Father’s call and yet He conquers and in obedience goes to the cross. The first reading is full of instructions and the underlying theme is submission and obedience, the most powerful virtue that all Christians must strive to possess. The Gospel proclamation today is of a Samaritan who understood the power of submission and obedience in a different way. He recognised the power of the Lord Jesus when he was healed from leprosy and showed his gratitude and loyalty by immediately thanking and praising the Lord and paying homage to Him by prostrating before Him. He had a heart of gratitude, to turn back and praise our Lord while the other nine lepers went their own way. Since coming into the journey, many are the times when the Lord has tested my obedience to his will. It was something that I was led to do where the rest of the world would see it as bizarre or out of the ordinary. I often had to go against the grain and obey and what seemed like meaningless, once obeyed, made perfect sense.

Prayer: Abba Father, one thing we ask today, give us the gift of obedience and submission to do your will, for all Your glory, Amen!
In today’s Gospel proclamation, the Lord Jesus speaks about the Kingdom of God. 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. But the Lord Jesus said that it was not going to be like what they thought or imagined. The kingdom of God cannot be discovered by empirical observation. It cannot be found by looking outside, rather it is within us. What is the Kingdom? It is a place where a king reigns. The kingdom of God is present in the person of Jesus Christ. It is the indwelling place of most high God. We carry the Kingdom of God, by allowing Him to come and live inside us, St. Paul writes to Romans in 14:17; “For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.” Therefore, St. Paul clearly says what the kingdom of God is. To receive the Kingdom of God is to prepare ourselves/ our hearts for the Lord to dwell within us. When we host His presence in us, we experience His eternal joy, love and everlasting peace. Therefore, when the Lord lives inside us, we become the host for His presence; our hearts become a dwelling place for Him and thereby it becomes the Kingdom for the King, Christ Jesus to dwell. Hosting the Kingdom within us is the inner journey with the Lord. It is to grow deeper and deeper in the experience of the Lord, to mature and to reflect the Lord Jesus in and through us.

St. Albert the Great was a Dominican bishop, Doctor of the Church, and is the patron saint of scientists. He was an outstanding figure of the Middle Ages and in the history of the church because of His wisdom and knowledge. He has been referred to as Albert the Great, and many other titles. In view of his genius, immense learning and wisdom, he has been honored under the scholastic titles of Doctor universalis and Doctor expertus. He was proficient in every branch of learning of his era. He was able to combine his knowledge of the natural sciences with his knowledge of theology and philosophy in unique ways. He is perhaps best known for being the teacher of the “Angellic Doctor”, St. Thomas Aquinas.

Prayer: Abba Father, grant me the desire to grow deeper and deeper in a personal experience with you so that my heart will become an indwelling place for you. Amen!
Friday 16th November

St. Margaret of Scotland, queen
St. Gertrude the Great, virgin

Remember Lot’s wife

Luke 17: 32)

Today in the Scripture reading, our Lord Jesus reminds us to remember what was happened to ‘Lot’s wife’ in history of salvation. In His words, Jesus said, “Remember Lot’s wife! Whoever tries to keep their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life will preserve it”. These words of Jesus teaches us an important lesson to us. That’s why her example is recorded in both New Testament and Old Testament. Even though the pillar of salt may have vanished from the shore of Dead Sea, it is standing on the field of sacred history, giving warning to all others.

God guided Lot and his family with the help of Angels to leave Sodom before He sent the fires from heaven to destroy the city. The Angels advised them not to look back because of which they were almost saved. However, Lot’s wife looked back and as a result she perished. In the same way, God spoke to Noah who was righteous. He instructed him to make an ark. He said to him that He was going to destroy all the creatures on the earth through flood. Noah had faith in God to do what God commanded him to do. He followed God’s instructions even without seeing a drop of rain. After Noah got into the ark as God instructed, the flood came and destroyed the earth. Both Lot and Noah did what God commanded them and they were saved. The one who did not obey God was destroyed. She did not believe the words of the Lord. It cost her, her life.

Our Lord Jesus teaches us today that, once we begin to follow Him, we should not look back but forward to Jesus. We should not look back and desire our old sinful ways. Our past is to be put behind us as we put off the old and put on the new. It is written Luke 9:62 “No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.” Are we looking to save our lives through the ways of the world? Are we finding fulfiment through the wicked ways? Are we depending on the standards and the methods presented by this world instead of trusting Divine intervention? Whether our need is material, emotional, spiritual or physical, we are called to lift everything up to God and trust in him. How much better it is to obey God the first time and not argue with Him. We need to learn to be childlike, humble, and submissive before God’s Word without arguing.

Prayer: Abba Father, grant us more of your grace so that we may always be remembered that we are saved. Amen
Saturday 17th November

“Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up”

The Lord Jesus instructs his disciples with a parable, a story to make a spiritual point and it is one of the few parables in which he interprets for us lest we miss the point “that they should always pray and not give up”.

Life is filled with challenges and in this present day and age everything is a struggle and we live in a time where peoples’ heart’s have become callous and they are insensitive to the pain of others as we are more focused on ourselves at the cost of harming our fellow human beings.

The widow in today’s Gospel proclamation represents someone who is weak in the world’s estimation, as she has no one to fight her case and she is persistent on getting justice from a judge, who as the word of God says “who neither feared God nor cared what people thought”, he was a worldly man who lacked compassion and mercy for people, but the widow won the victory because she did not give up hope, she does not give up her plea, and that finally that got her justice.

When we reflect upon our own lives, we also face unjust situations in our families, homes and work place and we cry to God for intervention, but when the answers to our prayers do not come, we sometimes become so worn down and discouraged by our lives that we stop praying, stop hoping, stop expecting God to intervene.

Every problem or crisis becomes stepping stone for a deeper trusting relation with the Heavenly Father. The reason God asks us to pray and not give up hope is because, this continuous communion with God reshapes our hearts to God’s original design. If we ponder deeply into our past life’s challenging situation, we realize that those were grace filled moments that God was using to shape us and mold us into image and likeness.

Our Gospel lesson continues to address the issues of faith in difficult times, and reassures the disciples that God hears their prayers. It calls us to maintain hope through the darkest of days. It tells us that discipleship is not an easy road, but reminds us that God will vindicate his faithful.

Prayer: Abba Father, I ask you to give me the grace to completely trust you and look up to you in all my challenges, with a hope that you will vindicate me. Amen.
Today’s readings call us to reflect on the end times that we will have to face one day. The first reading from the book of Daniel is believed to have been written somewhere around 600 BC. The thought of the end times had not even been considered at that time, but Daniel was receiving prophetic revelation of a time vastly beyond his own years.

When I reflect on the end times, there are instances I fail to acknowledge its reality. It is in these moments that the Gospel proclamation of today reveals the truth – the Son of Man will come in all His glory one day, and we need to prepare for this. External preparations will prove to be futile, for what we truly need to do is prepare our hearts. Internal conversion needs to take place, day after day. At every waking moment we need to allow the divine exchange to happen – for our will to be overcome by God’s will, for our broken nature to be transformed into God’s nature of holiness.

The end times will be a time of glory for those who faithfully run the race with the goal of attaining eternal life. However, it will not only be a time of joy, for the reality is, according to the prophet Daniel, that “some shall live forever; others shall be an everlasting horror and disgrace.” It is time to ask ourselves the difficult question – where do we want to spend our eternity? What steps are we following to ensure ourselves as well as our families are heading towards heaven?

Recently at a prayer meeting, it was said: We have raised our children to be accomplished, to be go-getters, to be ambitious CEOs and businesspeople – but have we steered them towards heaven? What would you do if when you reach heaven someday, you find that your children were too busy achieving in the world that they failed to make it to heaven? All the accomplishments, all the fame, all the accumulations would be of no value when the fate of our lives is being decided. All that will matter is what we did to establish the kingdom of God here on earth.

The Lord Jesus says in the Gospel proclamation of today: “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.” All the wealth we have ever earned, every degree and qualification we have acquired over our lifetime, our marriages, our families, the house we live in, the job we slave at – even the very ground we stand on will pass away. But there is one thing that will last and has lasted from
the beginning of time and that is the word of God. In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. (John 1:1)

The word of God has to serve as a light and a pathway to eternal life, for the entire manual of our life has been intricately written into the Holy Scriptures. We are ignoring the manual that has been freely provided for us and instead, we are living life according to how we see fit. This will only lead to ‘everlasting horror and disgrace’.

The Lord continues to remind us through the readings of today of beautiful realities that have been provided for us. We are all sinful beings and we have been sinful from the time in the Garden of Eden. We lost our right to paradise and eternal life became something we needed to strive for – that is, until the Lord Jesus came to this earth as a man and suffered under the hands of mere mortals. This suffering brought about a sacrifice that was offered for the sake of the whole world.

The author of the letter to the Hebrews tells us, “For by one offering he has made perfect forever those who are being consecrated.” The Lord Jesus paid the ultimate price for the sake of our eternity, and made one offering for the forgiveness of all. Thus, we do not need to strive for eternal life any longer, but all we need to do is surrender to the will of God for our lives – accepting what He has in store for us, and trusting that even when we don’t understand, the God who raised Jesus Christ from the dead is faithful and will not let us down.

When I consider eternity, I focus not on my own limited understanding but on the truths that have been revealed in the word of God: I have come from the heart of God and I am immensely loved by Him, I am His child and I am forgiven by Him, I have a purpose for my existence and thus I need to surrender to God for that purpose to be revealed, and one day, when I complete my mission and purpose on this earth, I will have to return to the heart of the Father.

Reminding myself of this daily in my prayer time helps me prepare internally for the Day of Judgment where I will see my Maker face to face.

Prayer: Abba Father, help me not to hold on to the things of this world, for they are fleeting, but help me to hold on to you, the only One who is Eternal. Amen.
Monday 19th November

“What do you want me to do?”

Luke 18: 35-43

A poor blind beggar sitting on the edge of the road, listening to the crowds passing by. He hears that Jesus of Nazareth is coming and starts to shout out. He most likely has never heard the Lord preach nor has he followed a theology class. He had heard that the Lord Jesus healed. So out of desperate hope he cries out and gets the attention of Jesus. I have so much respect for this beggar who did not care at all about what the crowds were saying. He did not care that they told him to shut up, he did not care that he was a beggar and Jesus a teacher. He shouted all the more louder. The Lord comes to him and asks him “What do you want me to do?” The beggar does not ask the Lord to bless him, or to bring him close to God, or to let his spiritual eyes be opened. “Lord let me see”. He was not awed by the impossibility of what he was asking of Jesus. He was not intimidated by the truth of his illness that he was known for so long. He asked for healing and he received it. And he received so much more than what he asked for because the Gospel proclamation says that when he received his healing he followed Jesus, praising God. And one can only imagine the blessings he would have received, the grace to walk behind Jesus, to sit with Him, to talk with Him, to eat with Him.

This incident from the Gospel resonates so strongly with me, perhaps because I am currently facing a similar ailment. But unlike the beggar who shouted all the more for the attention of Jesus, I tend to slink away, thinking perhaps healing is not for me, not at this time after praying and not receiving. Because it is so easy to think that it is not the will of God to bless me than to pursue after a blessing earnestly. But God speaks to me today through this and I am reminded that it is always the will of God to heal, to deliver, to bless. The Lord Jesus never refused anyone who came to Him. It is easy to theologise, to come up with reasons why God did not do something but so much harder to fight for a miracle. The psalmist states today that the one who delights in the Lord, is like a person planted by streams of water that yields in fruit in due season, whose leaves do not withers and prospers in whatever they do. Imagine the power and freedom we would have if we take this word to heart.

Prayer: Abba Father, give me the grace to see. To see and believe and hold on to You knowing that You never withhold mercy from anyone who calls out to You. Amen
Tuesday 20th November  33rd Week in Ordinary Time

The Son of Man has come to seek and save the lost.  

Prayer: Abba Father, I open the door of my heart to you this day. Come and live inside of me through the power of your precious Spirit. Amen.

Revelation 3: 1-6, 14-22
Psalm 15: 2-5
Luke 19: 1-10

The first reading and the Gospel proclamation of today are beautifully linked. The first reading reminds us that a time will come when we will be judged for what we have done on this earth. There are many lessons to be learnt from this reading. Something that stirs my heart is God says if we are lukewarm - neither hot nor cold - He has no place for us and will spit us out of His mouth. It serves as a reminder to me to always be on fire for the Lord and the mission He has entrusted to me.

The reading goes on to one of the most beloved texts of scripture: “Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.” (Rev 3:20)

The Gospel proclamation speaks of a well-known character - Zacchaeus, the chief tax collector of Jericho who was stealing from the people. Zacchaeus heard the Lord was visiting his town and his heart was set on fire to go and see him. However, due to the disadvantage of his height he was not able to see the Lord. Therefore, he climbed a sycamore tree. The act of climbing the tree may seem insignificant, but it is important to ponder on this a moment. There is a quote that says: “Long before Zacchaeus couldn’t see Jesus, the tree was planted to meet his need.” The Lord knew Zacchaeus’ heart and so made a provision in what seemed to be an impossible situation.

What happened next could only be described as a miracle. Zacchaeus, the man hated by all, was called by name by the Lord! Not only was he called by name but the Lord Jesus went a step further and said He was coming to eat in his house. This fulfills the word in Revelation 3: 20. Zacchaeus heard the voice of the Lord and opened the door of his heart to the Lord. Thus he made way for the Lord to come and eat with him in his home.

If our hearts are closed to the voice of God today, let us ask the Holy Spirit to set us on fire for His word that the Lord may come and eat with us as well. For if we continue to live with a closed heart, the Lord’s word will come to pass and we will be spat out on the day of judgment due to our lukewarm nature.

Prayer: Abba Father, I open the door of my heart to you this day. Come and live inside of me through the power of your precious Spirit. Amen.
The Church celebrates the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary today. The roots of a promise given go to the postexilic time of the Israelites. With their return to Jerusalem, the Israelites encountered many formidable obstacles in their efforts to re-establish their Jewish life in Judah. In this desperate situation God sent His chosen prophets to utter God’s message to His people. Zechariah prophesied in the first proclamation. The beautiful promise of the Lord’s dwelling amongst His people was uttered. How is the Lord coming to dwell among His people and who is the daughter Zion?

There are no direct accounts of the presentation or of the birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Canonical Gospels. The Canonical Gospels and writings are purely on the Lord Jesus. Therefore there is no necessity for the life story of the Mother of Christ Jesus to be written in these Gospels or writings. In the early 2nd Century the early Church held a document in very high regard. This is the Protoevangelium of James. From this document we learn about the parents of the Blessed Virgin Mary and about her own birth. According to these writings the Blessed Virgin Mary was dedicated and taken to the Temple of Jerusalem and she was kept in the Temple to live there. She lived in the Temple from the age of three years until she was twelve years old. The promise which was given to a shattered nation was that their God will come to dwell amongst them. At a time that they were struggling to get their identity back, God gave this promise. Isn’t it an awesome promise? This daughter Zion could be the Blessed Virgin Mary because it is in her that the Sovereign God of Israel took His dwelling. God came among us as a human through a human being and that is through the Blessed Virgin Mary. The Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Temple denotes the truth of the Mother of God. Mary lived in the Temple as a three years old child to a twelve years old young girl and received her formation to be the God Bearer. (Theotokos) The Lord Jesus favored His Mother in a beautiful and simple way in the Gospel proclamation. The greatest truth about the Blessed Virgin Mary was spoken by her Son Lord Jesus Christ. The one who accepted the Word of God and submitted to the Will of God was the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Prayer: Abba Father, we are predestined like the Blessed Mother. Therefore I pray, may your grace flow into me to say ‘Yes’ to you till the end of my life. May the intercession of the Blessed Mother be upon us. Amen.
Out of the twelve disciples, tradition reveals that John grew with the fervor of a deep love for the Lord. At the Patmos Island, God revealed His secrets to John which was relevant to that age as well as for the age to come. The scroll which was written on both sides and sealed with seven seals was about the disasters and difficult times humanity was going to face, owing to disobedience and disbelief in God. Because of our Lord Jesus, the Lamb of God, these seals are being broken through His great sacrifice by the shedding of His own blood.

Today the world is facing major turbulences, viz; wars, killings, child abuse, rape, drugs, same sex marriage, incurable sicknesses, plane crashes, natural disasters, earth quakes, Tsunami’s, landslides and so on. In Lk 21:10, Jesus predicted the present times “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earth quakes, famines, and pestilences in various places, and fearful events and great signs in the heavens”. In and through all these, because of His great sacrifice we are assured of the peace of Christ, to be still and continue to believe in Him. To those who continue to believe and take His message of salvation to the world, greater miracles are taking place, powers greater than the dark side of the world. To an unbeliever, it is very challenging, to accept all this. For us believers we have a great task to accomplish.

St. Luke tells us that Jesus wept when He came in sight of the city of Jerusalem. These are His chosen people and He came to reveal the truth to them. Instead they chose to not recognize Him and His warnings of what their fate would lead them to.

Jesus, my Lord and Master, how often have I acted and chosen to do the same as the people of that time. I have failed to adhere to your teachings, promptings of the Holy Spirit, and even give a deaf ear to those whom You have been using to guide me in my life situations. Due to this, I would have lost the greater blessings and therefore lost my peace and fallen into disasters. Teach me Jesus as I want to recognise your voice and the signs of revelation, to be fruitful in my mission as a true follower of the Almighty.

Prayer: Abba Father, my daily prayer is to be attentive to your voice and teachings. For you alone are my guide and my fortress. Amen
In today’s Gospel proclamation, we can see The Lord Jesus’ dramatic expulsion of Temple merchants, which both prophesises and pre-enacts this sanctuary’s imminent downfall. He is appalled that God’s house of prayer has been desecrated like a den of robbers. We do not see Jesus in this mood anywhere else. Therefore, we will have to see closely as to why the Lord Jesus acted this way. The merchants sold sacrificial animals in the Temple as a service to pilgrims celebrating the Passover. However, the rates of monetary exchange and inflated prices made selling a profitable enterprise. It became a business more than a help at the end of it. Citing Is 56:7 (these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations.”) The Lord indicts the merchants for profaning the Temple. The Temple is not a common marketplace but a sanctuary for worship.

We have heard in 1 Corinthians 6:19 - Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit? Are we profaning our body, soul and minds with worldly things as well? The Creator of Heaven and Earth, the Lord Almighty dwells in us. We welcome Jesus Christ into our hearts every time we receive the Holy Eucharist. Do we respect His presence in our Body, Soul and Spirit? There may be powers of darkness and spiritual forces of evil that’s against us every time we want to realise that God is in us. As we come to this realisation, we become Children of God and we are called to be Holy and Perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect. We may think if this is even possible? But Jesus invites us and gives us a hope to thrive for. He is our role model. We need to have a desire to be like Him.

In a reflection, Pope Francis said, “Jesus, who conquered death and has risen in body and soul, makes us understand that we must have a positive idea of our body. The body is a wonderful gift from God, destined, in union with the soul, to fully express the image and likeness of Him. Therefore, we are called to have great respect and take care of our body and that of others.”

Prayer: Abba Father, thank You for giving me my life. Thank You for revealing to my heart your love, your commands and your purposes, and for helping me to see that You desire that all of my decisions regarding my body, your temple, start with my relationship with you. Amen.
Today’s the first reading is taken from the book of Revelation and many Christians find it difficult to understand these verses. The reading brings a fear to us as it is supposedly meant to reveal the end times and the evil events that will take place. Far from being so, today’s reading is of great hope for the true witnesses of Jesus Christ. It speaks of the revelation of God confirming life after death and the resurrection of sincere people who will be taken up to heaven to live in the glory of God for eternity.

The Gospel proclaimation speaks of the Sadducees who did not believe in life after death or resurrection and their eternal quest to pose tricky question to the Lord Jesus that they may trap him and have him killed. The question was about a woman married to seven brothers, one at a time without producing children. They ask the Lord to which brother this woman would be a wife in the resurrection.

One could imagine the scorn and chuckles of the Sadducees as they asked this question for they did not believe in the resurrection and intended the Lord Jesus to be ridiculed by it. Instead, the Lord simply replies how vastly different it is to live in this world and in eternal life. What applies as norms and rules made by humans was not going to be the criteria to live in the world to come. A world that is heaven as described in the book of Revelation.

The Lord Jesus explains how once we are resurrected we are no longer attached to what or who we were attached to in this world. We will not be a mother, father, daughter, son, husband, wife or sister or a brother to anyone. We will not be the Chairman or the owner of any company neither will we be the owners we were of the most luxurious vehicle, house or pet. Having all the luxuries in the world, if we yet lived a humble and obedient life to Christ, we would be assured of being raised from the dead and taken up to heaven as our fore fathers. We will become only one being in heaven, a son or a daughter of one God, an angel born of the resurrection. Hence, we should live our life on earth with eternal living in heaven as our only goal.

Prayer: Abba Father, give us the courage of Saint Andrew Dung-Lac so that we may live and die for you, to be resurrected on the last day to live for eternity with You. Amen.
Today we celebrate the Solemnity of Christ the King, a feast that the church celebrates since 1925 on the last Sunday of the Liturgical year. When Pope Pius XI instituted the feast of Christ the King, the church intended to make a strong statement: that Christ is the King of the universe and He is a King like no other. The scripture texts proclaimed on the feast of Christ the King reminds us what His Kingship means to us as believers.

Even though a monarch does not mean much to us today, we meet self-appointed kings in our day-to-day lives. We meet them among politicians, in our offices, establishments, church ministries, and even among our own relatives. They use their position of influence to their advantage. They manipulate their authority to get what they want. Unless we have an equal amount of influence, we become the pawns in their games.

In the vision of Daniel, the Son of Man has been given authority, glory and sovereign power by the Ancient of Days. The vision assures readers that His Kingdom is the ultimate super power. All nations bow before Him and His kingdom is indestructible.

In today’s Gospel proclamation, this almighty, all powerful King destroys our perceptions of “authority, glory and sovereign power”. He is before Pilate, as a man captured and arrested, awaiting his sentence. The King of the universe appears to be weak and powerless before a powerful man. It appears His life is hanging in the balance and Pilate has the power to decide his future. When the Lord Jesus hung on the cross it seemed like He needed a saviour more than the world He came to save. How we wish He took charge, showed everyone His authority, glory and power and brought them to their knees. How we wish He takes charge and put the fear of God into those who are a stumbling block when we go out in the mission to serve Him.

Through today’s Gospel proclamation, the Lord Jesus is teaching us that there is another way to deal with people who push their personal agendas. He is teaching us that there is a better way to handle a crisis. Unfortunately, we get stuck with people: we either see them as an answer or as a threat to the mission or to the needs of our lives. We too begin to run our own agendas. We either trust them too quickly or reject them hastily. We call it going with our “gut feeling” and we
take pride in the decisions we make.

According to the wisdom of the world, if the Lord Jesus had a plan for His ministry it was flawed. He did not acquire the much-needed credentials, qualifications, or even associations for a “successful” ministry. Every decision, every choice He made took Him one step closer to the cross. He made no attempt to work with Pilate who was looking for a reason to release Him. Instead, He said: “the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth.”

His truth came from the heart of God. His truth told Him that He is the Son of God, and that God’s favour was upon Him. He spoke His truth when He said He came to seek and save the lost. His truth carried power to transform lives, raise the dead, heal the sick and to set free those who were under oppression. The result of His truth was an open heaven wherever He went. His truth brought those who came to Him to live as Sons and Daughters of God Himself.

His truth also exposed to Him that human power and authority is a deception. Therefore, when He was before Pilate, He knew it was His Father who was the decision maker and not Pilate. His entire being rebelled against the will of the Father, but His truth over-powered the deception of the world. His truth told Him it is better to live in complete surrender to the Father than pleasing Pilate or the authorities to get a lighter sentence.

Today, we see those who thought they could put an end to the “Galilean’s ministry” fail in their effort. We see that Pilate in fact did not have the power to release or sentence the Lord to death. I almost feel sorry for the Roman Soldiers who tortured the Lord and thought they were humiliating Him; if only they knew that one day the entire Roman Empire would convert itself to Christianity. If only, we could look at our circumstances and those who work against us with the truth of the Lord, it would spare us so much heartache and humiliation!

Today, the Lord is inviting us to convert to His truth that will be revealed to us as we spend time at His feet. He is reminding us today that His Kingdom is waiting for us to make the connection through our complete surrender to the Father’s will. He is reminding us there is a heaven waiting to open above us as we go out in His name

*Prayer:* Abba Father, save me from the lies of the world that I believe in, and give me the grace to live by the truth of the Lord Jesus, in every choice, in every decision I make. Amen
The Gospel proclamation presents us with the widow in the temple. The Lord Jesus witnessed her giving all she had. Her ‘giving all she had’ were the two coins she possessed. How would she get the next meal? How would she even reach her dwelling? She seemed a little foolish and had not thought of the next step. But here she was giving all she had.

When I reflect on myself and my attitude - I sense the opposite cry. Often this is what I hear myself saying. “This is all I have.” We may possess a car, house, and many more things - but yet we see them as the only things we have. In the poor widow’s case the passage reveals to us that the coins were all she had.

Just this morning, as we shared the word in a meeting we were discussing our backgrounds. Many shared that they came from households where the family lived for many years in a one roomed home. How thankful we were when we realised that we have come a long way and God has blessed us in the journey.

Today, God is not looking about the fact that we give, He is more concerned about our attitude when we give. Are we giving with pride? Are we giving to fulfil our needs? Are we giving to get? Are we giving for the world to recognise our goodness? And we are not called only to give in monetary terms, we are called to give what we cherish most. We are called to give our time. Often we want to have extended leisure times, but when we give that time to bring souls to the Lord, we can hear him sing over us - “How lovely are the feet of him or her who bring good news”

What does the word tell us about giving - the word says in Luke 6:38 - Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”

To give without having is to step out in faith. Faith is not to see and yet go ahead. If not it is not faith. Let us step out in faith and give not comfortably but till it hurts and watch the Lord smile over us.

Prayer: Abba Father, we thank you for always providing for us. We pray for the grace to be able to give without counting the cost. Amen
Tuesday 27th November **34th Week in Ordinary Time**

“**Remain faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life**” Revelation 2:10

In the first reading we have the vision of the harvest. The psalms speak of the Lord’s judgment of his people of righteousness and faithfulness. The Gospel proclamation speaks of the end times and the coming of Jesus.

The Lord Jesus is reminding us of what is the one truth ‘we come from the heart of God and are returning back to the heart of God’. We are born to this world with a purpose – a mission God has planned for each and every one of us. As we grow and mature we lose sight of God and communion with Him. We get caught up with the pleasures and ways of the world and begin to live in the world the way we think is right and that brings us the greatest level of fame, wealth and power. We forget that our time here is only from our birth to our death.

Today we are called to repent and turn back to the Lord. To make time for God in our busy lives and more importantly to give our Lord Jesus the first place in our lives. It is when we do this that we start a relationship with God. The stronger and closer the relationship we have with God the more we are able to trust God for our lives and families. When we do not have a relationship with God is when we get drawn to any and every alternate that comes along our way as a means of finding solutions and answers to our fears, worries, financials, emotional and physical needs. This kind of problem fixing is just temporary. It may seem that our financial need, fears and worries, relationship crisis is all sorted out but we still carry the burden within we are relying on another person or source and are obligated to their terms and conditions.

We have a Father in heaven who is our creator of Heaven and Earth, who simply wants His children – us to turn to Him so that He could meet all our needs and guide us in the path that He has designed for us. Let us learn to rely on Him so that we may remain faithful to him always.

*Prayer: Abba Father, I have gone away from you and sort my own way. I believe that today you are drawing me near so that I your son/daughter may remain in you and you in me always. Amen*
By patient endurance you will save yourselves

St. Joseph Vaz is well known for his piety, miracles and pioneering work in ressurecting the Catholic faith and church in Sri Lanka. But often we forget the suffering he endured to reach those levels of holiness and sanctity.

Once St. Joseph Vaz requested the help of a Portuguese descendant named Antonio Sottomayar to have an audience with the King of Kandy. The man hurried off to Kandy positive that he would obtain that favour. In the meantime the saint ministered to people in Puttalam and the Seven Korales, till he made it to Veuda, a place at the entrance to the route to Kandy. Sottomayar requested a Frenchman named Huguenot to gain the King’s favour but alas the man was violently opposed to Catholicism and poisoned the King’s ear that both Antonio and St Jospeh Vaz were hardcore terrorists. Hence, the King’s soldiers swooped on both the men and they were made to walk to the kingdom of Kandy in chains. What a royal welcome for St. Joseph Vaz! Just imagine if St Joseph Vaz fought for his rights and swore as he walked from Veuda to Kandy, our faith would be non-existent.

This is what the Gospel proclamation warns us of, that as lovers of the Lord Jesus, often persecution and pain will await us. It may be from members of our own family, neighbours, colleagues, class mates, prayer group members, church associations or political parties. We cannot give the same subdued response that St. Joseph Vaz gave unless we are lost in the love of the Lord Jesus. Only when we know as in the first reading that God will and ultimately win and have the last word, will we be able to respond as God wants us to. It is often a thin line, because sometimes we are called to fight for justice and at other times we are called to endure patiently. Only the Holy Spirit can prompt us to respond in the right way.

Let us read and pray over these verses as in James 1:12 - “Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.” As has been said, we are blessed when we suffer for the Kingdom. Secondly, we cannot imagine the real gift that awaits us which is the Crown of life. If only the Holy Spirit will reveal to us this gift, we will willingly take up our cross and thank the Lord.

Prayer: Abba Father, we pray for the strength and endurance to bear any suffering which may come our way due to our faith in you. Amen
Thursday 29th November

...Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb....

Revelations 19:9

Today’s first reading and the Gospel proclamation paint gruesome pictures of terror, desolation and fear. The initial impression given is that this seems unfair to the people in these cities, and also to us, because the Lord speaks, guides and warns us through scripture. However, it states in Revelation 19:2 “for his judgments are true and just...” So in other words, the terrifying acts that will take place are the consequences of the peoples’ disobedience to the Lord. Right throughout the Bible from the Old Testament we see how much our Abba Father lovingly guides His people and how many times He rescues them from slavery, enemies and many other calamities. Yet every loving act from the Father towards the people is not reciprocated. People are faithful only for a very short time, and after that the Loving Father is only forgotten, rejected and false gods are worshiped instead.

How does this relate to our lives? Did we also come to the Lord as a result of a crisis we could not handle? What was our relationship with the Lord and how close is our relationship now? Are we as dependent on the Lord now as we used to be? Of course we may have progressed in our journey, we may know and understand more things of the spirit now and may also be serving much more.

I went through a crisis recently and I wanted the problem to be sorted out. Yet through the many teachings of Bro Lalith I also knew that the Lord was allowing me to go through this for a reason, to draw me into a deeper relationship with him and also to prune me into what He wants me to be. The process was painful and my problem was not getting resolved. Like the Lord Jesus went through death which was the will of the Father for him, I too will have to go through death experiences in life. But like the Father resurrected the Son, I also will be resurrected through this. In this resurrection, as in Revelation 19:9 I will be invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb. I only need to trust the Lord that He has something better planned.

Prayer: Abba Father, I echo the words of psalmist - For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations. Amen
In today’s Gospel proclamation, we read about how the fishermen, Simon and his brother Andrew were casting a net into the lake of Galilee. He said, “Come follow me and I will make you fishers of people.” Later the Lord saw two other fishermen, James and his brother John, the sons of Zebedee. There were in their father’s boat, mending their nets. To them also he said, Come follow me. They immediately left their nets and their father to follow the Lord Jesus.

Other Gospels given a different version of this call. One of the Gospels say it was Andrew who went and brought Simon to the Lord. That is why, some churches refer to their evangelism moments as Andrew operations. Another Gospel tell us that Simon had been fishing all night in his boat and caught nothing. After the Lord Jesus, sought his permission to preach from his boat, He told Simon to cast his net on the other side of the boat. When Simon saw the catch, he fell at the feet of the Lord Jesus and said, “Leave me Lord, for I am a sinful man and not worthy to be in your presence.” But the Lord having been in prayer and communication with the Father, the whole of the night before, would have heard the Father’s voice within Him saying , Simon should be the first and main disciple. So he told Simon, “Come follow me and I will make you fish for people.”

There were ups and downs in their journey, and at one time when Simon now remained Peter, told the Lord Jesus he should not suffer the Lord reprimanded him saying, :“Get thee behind me Satan.” The lesson for us also is that like the Lord Jesus did, like the Blessed Mother did and the apostles did, we need to be ready to let go or our right to life, our right to a good reputation and any other rights or positions to obey the Lord and follow the Lord Jesus. This is because the Bibile tells us that just as the sky is above the earth God’s plan for us is much higher than our plans for ourselves and God’s plan is beyond our expectations, imagination or understanding. So the best thing we could do for ourselves and others, is to let go of our will and plans and do God’s will.

*Prayer: Abba Father, holy be your name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as in Heaven. Amen*
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