“Little things done out of love are those that charm the Heart of Christ… On the contrary, the most brilliant deeds, when done without love, are but nothingness.”

St Therese of Lisieux

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On Our Knees In His Hands

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The pictures of childhood depicted in today’s readings are both beautiful and challenging. In the first reading we - the New Jerusalem - are invited to accept the glorious invitation to rest in the arms of our Creator and be fed by Him/Her. Our Lord Jesus in the Gospel proclamation challenges us to change our attitudes and become like little children. We who hold values such as power, prestige, wealth and status to be pursued, are urged to imitate little children, who in their innocent simplicity are empty of such values. Being vulnerable and dependant they are open and truthful (sometimes embarrassingly so!) Children are born with a tabular personality-a blank slate on which society through parents, teachers, peers and worldly norms - write. The Lord Jesus was the example par excellence of dependence and submission. He entered deeply into the experience of sonship that He allowed himself to be carried on the wings of the Holy Spirit even up to the cross.

Today we celebrate the feast of St. Therese called the ‘little flower of Jesus’ It was she who said “Lord if I am a play thing as a ball is to a child, you can hug me when it pleases you or throw me into the drain.” Under this seemingly childish statement lies a depth and profundity which we would do well to ponder on. She is known as the Patron Saint of missionaries. It is a mistake to think of the mission field as a geographical state. It could be our house, our workplace, society and the world itself. Parents have a large part to play in inculcating Christian values in children. Encouraging unhealthy competition, stressing the need to take one’s identity and value from one’s caste, wealth, status or other worldly norms can rob the child of innocence and unsophistication. Schools should stress values of honesty, integrity and the need to live beyond one’s selfish goals.

Till I encountered the Lord Jesus in a personal relationship through the renewal movement, I too regarded some as belonging to the lower classes. But I recognised a depth of spirituality in them that exceeded mine. Let us run towards our Creator who is waiting for us with open arms to clasp us to His bosom and change us.

Prayer: Abba Father, teach me to return to your unconditional love and share it will all whom I encounter with your strength and ability. Amen
Tuesday 2nd October

Ask the intercession of your Guardian Angel because it is your best friend.

Exodus 23: 20-23
Psalm 91: 2-6, 10-11
Matthew 18: 1-5, 10

In today’s Gospel proclamation the Lord Jesus Christ reminds us how we should live to enter the kingdom of God. “I tell you the truth unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven (Mt 18:3).

The Lord Jesus was sinless and every word that came out of him was the absolute truth, therefore he does not emphasise saying that what he says is the truth. But in this verse He emphasises saying “I tell you the truth”. This means that He is reaffirming His statement and giving us an indication that if we do not believe what He is saying and act on it, we will surely not spend your eternity in the Kingdom of God once you die.

Now what does it mean to be like little children? As we grow up, we move from dependency to independency. God wants us to be dependent on Him always. Children always have a intimate relationship with their parents. They do not know how to lie; they do not get anxious, frustrated and angry with others as elders do. They are not worried about what they will have to eat and drink tomorrow. They live for that moment because they know that their parents will take care of everything. Children are perfect examples how we should live.

Once a great man said that if you want to live a stress free life and enjoy every moment, when you wake up each morning touch your body and first thank God that He has given you one more day to live since 151,000 people would have not survived the next day. Again in the evening thank God that you made it through the day without been included in to the death count of the day. He also says take a minute and smile at God and ask yourself what would happen if you died today. Do this every day and you will also realize you will be efficient in what you do. In the Gospel Jesus reminds us that a guardian angel is appointed for us from the very beginning that sees the face of God the Father in Heaven every single day. St. Padre Pio regarding guardian angels says “Never say that you are alone in the battle against your enemies; never say that you have no one to whom you can open your heart and confide. It would be a grave injustice to this heavenly messenger.

Prayer: Abba Father, we pray to give us the grace to live the life you want us to live without becoming anxious about anything that comes our way. Amen
Today’s first reading teaches us the attitude we should have towards God. Often we forget God is the Supreme Being and we, the creation, are His subjects. We act and live as if we are superior and God is at our service. Job’s second reply to his friends explains to us clearly the attitude we need to have towards God.

Seldom have we given attention to this fact of life. Unless we live a life of surrender to God we will never be at peace. In the case of Job, he lost everything. He was tested to a great extent, but his faith in God and his faithfulness to God never shifted. Isn’t what he said true? Who are we to question God? Is not God the Supreme Being? Isn’t it God’s plan and will that should take place in our lives and in the world?

We need to be aware of the power of God. This Supreme Being has given us the opportunity to be instruments in His hands. When we are called to follow God’s path and live in surrender to Him, we are not doing God a favour but one to ourselves. There is no other way but only God’s way that can bring contentment and peace to our lives. That is what Job experienced and that is what the Lord Jesus explained in the Gospel proclamation; the fullness of life.

The answers given in the Gospel proclamation are threefold. Firstly He discouraged. Secondly He invited. Thirdly He demanded. Why?

His invitation to live a surrendered life is also the call to be a disciple. If we opt to follow Him for the wrong reasons, we could be the dropoffs on the way. Therefore the Lord showed that our comfort zones will be disturbed in the mission we have to carry. To those who are engrossed in their personal interests, the Lord Jesus invited and demanded their attention. Why? Could it be that they have lost their purpose in life and that the Lord had to bring them to true awareness? Those who are totally dead towards the mystery of God will not understand the ways of God.

The answer to those who have stepped out to live a surrendered life and become disciples is the most severe. When we say ‘YES’ to God, there is no turning back.

Prayer: Abba Father, make me an authentic instrument in your hands. Let me be faithful to you until the end of time. Amen.
In today’s first reading Job teaches us how even his own friends did not help him in his tragic suffering and losses. They remind us of how to endure our pain and suffering and to put up with the little things that hurt or irk us. No one escapes these chapters of life. We have to go through every line, meet every character and we will enjoy it all.

Sometimes even our friends let us down. As the scripture says Job’s friends were quite judgmental and this becomes an added burden for Job but instead of fighting back he yearns to see God’s face, live and not die. In previous verses in the book of Job the Israelites were afraid to see the face of God and if they had any visit from a messenger of God they thought they would surely die. Job did not think so. He says, “I shall see God; my inmost being is consumed with longing!” This is the cry of a holy or righteous person not an angry or vindictive one. Job resists the temptation to blast his friends because he sees more profoundly and deeply than they do when it comes to communicating with God.

In today’s Gospel proclamation the Lord Jesus appointed seventy-two other disciples whom he sent ahead of him in pairs to every town and place he intended to visit. He said to them, “The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest. Go on your way...” What an awesome responsibility and privilege the Lord has bestowed on us to carry, together with others, the message of God’s love and mercy to the world.

St. Teresa of Avila reminds us why we should carry on his ministry to the world:- ‘Christ has no body on earth but yours; no hands but yours; no feet but yours. Yours are the eyes through which the compassion of Christ looks out to the world. Yours are the feet with which he is to go about doing good. Yours are the hands with which he is to bless others now.’

Prayer: Abba Father, as I savour this marvelous affirmation, I pray for all those in despair, who feel their future destroyed and see no hope. May they too know that their Redeemer lives, and that they will see God. Amen.
Friday 5th October

Trust in the Lord with all your heart.

Job 38: 1, 12-21; 40: 3-5
Psalm 139: 1-3, 7-10, 13-14
Luke 10:13-16

How often do we face situations in our life that seem downright unfair? There comes a time in every one of us when we will begin to doubt God’s intention; we doubt His presence; we doubt His provision – in other words, we just do not understand what’s going on or how what we are facing can possibly be for our good. How can a loving God; an all powerful God; and an all knowing God just stand aside and watch us suffer? Why doesn’t God do something about it right now? Job is in such a situation in today’s first reading. Job had been hoping for an audience with God. He wanted some direct answers from the Almighty. If Job is innocent, God should acquit him. If he is guilty, God should tell him what the offense is so that he can confess, change, and maybe end the suffering.

God finally spoke but when He did, He did not explain to Job why these bad things were happening. Instead, God began to question Job about the world that He created. Job had been trying to justify himself and say that it was God who is unfair. The questions that God asks Job are meant to remind him that he is not the one who can stand in judgment over God. Just because we love the Lord and we are doing our best to serve Him, does not guarantee that we will go through life without facing some really tough times. The only thing that we are guaranteed is that the Lord Jesus is there all the time and that He has already put the plans into action to deliver us from those tough times. God’s knowledge about everything is limitless. He sees decades into our future. He sees the bigger picture. How can we as mere created beings even begin to comprehend or question the way the Lord orchestrates things? We must simply learn to trust in Him.

The Lord is inviting all of us today to learn how to quieten ourselves in trust as we journey through various crises in our lives. In Psalm 121:2, King David says, “But I have calmed and quieted myself, I am like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child I am content.” King David had a personal relationship with the Lord. He invested time in seeking the Lord. Therefore, it was easy for Him to trust the Lord through all the unfair situations he faced. The call to us is to do the same. We will all face trying times. But we can each of us choose whether we will journey through those times overwhelmed with anxiety and doubt or whether we will sail through them surrounded by the able Arms of a Father who works in all things for our good. (Romans 8:28)

Prayer: Abba Father, I will be still and know that you are God! Amen
Saturday 6th October  

"However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."  

In the first reading Job has been brought to his knees by the wonder and majesty of his Creator, and his own smallness in the face of an infinite God. Now he knows from the core of his being, that God is truly sovereign, powerful and gracious. God does not need to justify Himself to anyone, for His ways and thoughts are beyond human comprehension. In St. Paul’s letter to the Romans he considered a perfect summary of what Job learned. As we follow Paul’s thinking we quickly recognise that the only possible response to such a glorious God is to present ourselves to Him as a living sacrifice. Job’s attitude was so pleasing to God that He blessed him not a 100-fold but a 1000-fold and more.

In the Gospel proclamation, we see the power of God demonstrated in a tangible way. Like lightning falling from heaven, Satan falls before the power of Christ. Now the disciples too have that power over Satan’s minions in Jesus’ name. They carry out a ministry of miracles proving the power of God reigns supremely above all. But the Lord reminds them that causing spirits to submit is futile in the glorious light of their names being written in heaven. It is clear that the things of this world are limited and successes achieved in every sphere of one’s life is not the purpose of our lives. Our aim should be eternal life and heaven, where we will spend our days in the glorious presence of the Almighty Triune God, in the heavenly courts praising and worshipping with the nine hosts of angels, and all the saints led by Mary our blessed mother.

Today we are blessed to see these miracles happening in our midst. But we do not seem to be able to hold on to this power. Satan comes in more sophisticated forms now, and we are easily diverted and our focus changes to wealth, power, education, social acceptance - destabilizing us completely that we lose the very thing we were searching for in the first place.

St Philip Neri, a great saint who founded a society of secular clergy called the Congregation of Oratory, when offered the position of Bishop, said beautifully, ‘I’d rather have Heaven.’ Each time we are faced with temptation, may we be able to choose Heaven.

Prayer: Abba Father, give us the grace through the powerful intercession of Mary our Mother, to keep our eyes on heaven. Amen
Blessed are all who fear the Lord, who walk in obedience to Him.

Psalm 128: 1

It is the Lord God Himself who decided it was not good for man to remain alone. Hence, He created woman - out of the rib of man - and united them as one. God desired in His heart for man and woman to rule over the earth together, as one entity.

However, with the Fall, disruption overtook the desire of God’s heart. What was meant to be a beautiful, pure union between man and woman was distorted by the lies and deceit of the serpent.

Today’s Psalm speaks of a blessing that could have belonged to Adam and Eve, had they not disobeyed the law of the Lord. The Psalmist says, if we walk in obedience to the Lord, we will eat the fruit of our labour, blessings and prosperity will be ours to possess. The Lord’s blessings will also extend to our spouse and children. This is available to us today, if we fear the Lord and walk in obedience.

The obedience that God required in the Garden of Eden was shattered when Adam and Eve deliberately went against the plan of God and did what God asked them not to do. This same disobedience has passed on from generation to generation, causing us to fall into the same sins and temptations that our first father and mother did.

However, we have a hope that we can hold on to. The letter to the Hebrews reminds us today that we have a God who left heaven to suffer on earth, for the sake of our souls. He “tasted death for everyone.” (Hebrews 2:9)

Because He suffered death on the cross for us, we have been called into the family of God. Through His suffering and passion, we have been made sons and daughters of the Almighty Father and brothers and sisters of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the Lord Jesus who makes us holy. We cannot strive for holiness by our own merits, for it will be an endless struggle within ourselves.

This is why the Lord Jesus revealed His greatest gift - the precious Holy Spirit, who is our Comforter and Counselor, who is able to take our greatest weaknesses and turn them into a testimony, who is able to take our sinfulness and turn it into glory. It is the Holy Spirit who will place obedience in our hearts and align our will with the will of our Father in heaven.
Today’s Gospel Proclamation addresses a rampant issue in today’s society. Divorce has steamrolled through the world. In the United States alone, statistics tell us that every 13 seconds, one divorce takes place. That would equate to 6,646 divorces a day.

The reason for divorce is subjective, however, the root cause stems back to the first Fall. The serpent convinced Adam and Eve that they needed more, that the place where they were at was not good enough, that it could be better. The root cause was dissatisfaction. The serpent made Adam and Eve dissatisfied with their current condition, and so, Eve took the bait and searched for something more.

Isn’t this the base reason for divorce? Husbands and wives who are dissatisfied in their marriages seek answers elsewhere, instead of turning to the One who has all the answers - God our Heavenly Father.

The Lord Jesus is clear. He reminds the Pharisees who questioned him of the Old Testament, specifically the first reading of today. The law is unchanging and it is important to remember that what God has joined together in holy matrimony, no one has the right to separate - not the individuals who are joined together, nor the people or circumstances around them.

It is no coincidence that the next segment of today’s Gospel Proclamation focuses on little children. The primary reason for marriage is procreation, and bringing new life into the world. The parents who bear these children have a responsibility for the souls of these children. It is the duty of the parents to ensure that the children are given an experience of God from their youngest days.

The best way for that to take place is for the children to witness God in the lives of their parents. If a home is filled with quarrel and strife, no child will be able to find the peace of the Holy Spirit in the midst of it. If a home is filled with sorrow and tears, no child will experience the joy that the Holy Spirit yearns to pour out.

It is easy to get caught up in the storms of life and forget that the Lord Jesus has called us to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. We are called to be witnesses to the love of the Lord in all aspects of our life.

The Lord longs for the little children to come to Him, and He strongly warns that unless we view the Kingdom of God as through the eyes of a little child, we have no hope of entering it. To view the Kingdom of God as a child is to accept the law of the Lord without question. It is to understand that His ways are higher than ours and there is no need to rebel against Him. Finally, we are to relate to people without judgment and condemnation in our hearts.

Prayer: Abba Father, help me see you in every person I meet and remind me that you live inside my own heart. Amen.
Today the Gospel proclamation once again reminds us of the very famous parable of the Good Samaritan. This is story of the traveller who travelled from Jerusalem to Jericho who rescued the man who fell in to the hands of brigands, lying on the road half dead. It speaks of the power of love, mercy and compassion that can break through the barriers of the human heart, nature, culture and community. It is a power that urges us to go and do likewise.

This brings to my mind the words of our Pope Francis to his general audience in August 2017, ‘the Church is to be a field hospital; a place of healing, mercy and forgiveness and to be the source of hope for all the suffering, the desperate, the poor, the sinners and the discarded.’ It leads to today’s Gospel Acclamation “I give you a new commandment: love one another as I have loved you” (Jn13:34).

As the Lord Jesus speaks to us through His Word, inviting us to look into the world we live in. Today we see almost every human life has become a victim of selfishness, greed, pride, lust and glamour of this world and lying on the road of life half dead with no meaning for it’s existence. It is none other than the Lord Jesus who suffers in every human heart that longs for love mercy and compassion. Lord Jesus is the Good Samaritan par excellence who came to this earth to heal and renew and to transform this world as He gave His life on the cross. He says to you and me- “I desire mercy not the law or sacrifice.” Today He is inviting us to come out of our comfort zone, our own agendas and attitudes, even to risk our good name and to be a part of this field hospital as He brings people from different walks of life into our midst including our very own family and community.

Looking into my own personal life I see my Master and Saviour, my Lord Jesus the Good Samaritan walking down my road of life. I met Him at a moment where I had lost all what I had, beaten and abandoned, left to die half way through because of my own choices, situations and circumstances of life, while I was living as an enemy of His though I knew the law and rituals. It was He who stopped and stooped down and lifted me up, bandaged my wounds, rescued me and poured the oil of love and compassion and saved me.

Prayer: Abba Father, thank you for sending Your Son for me. With Him and through the power of the Holy Spirit, I can do everything. Amen.
These readings can be an eye opener to us who tend to get stuck in our own ways of thinking and understanding. One such prime example was St. Paul. As a Jewish believer he was so convinced of his understanding of God from that perspective that he took to violence to safeguard his beliefs. But then the unthinkable happens. In His great love, our Lord Jesus called him out of his darkness and life perspective. Let’s pause. Am I convinced that I am on the right track and everything is fine with me. Or have I humbled myself to let God search my heart and indicate to me, where I really stand. Do I safeguard my ways of understanding and teaching or am I open to the Holy Spirit’s leading and insight.

Once St. Paul was knocked off his high horse as his testimony says, he had a radical transformation. It did not concern him to make friends and be accepted by the Church hierarchy. Though he submitted to them he kept a healthy distance and yet engaged with St. Peter when the opportunity arose. He was not following the ways of the world and the wise but heeding the voice of the Lord Jesus deep within. He went to places which were in need and had to fight off his old reputation as one who could be a spy in sheep’s clothing. He had chosen the better part.

In the Gospel proclamation, we hear of the tussle between Martha and Mary. The Lord Jesus sees though Martha is shouldering many a responsibility, she is in fact not resting at His feet and in His love. The Lord comments that Mary has chosen the better part.

Today we are called to start our day with the better part. We can worry all day and then try to pray before going to bed. Or we can sit at the feet of the Lord every morning and then spend the day in His presence. The word tells us that early each morning, wisdom is seated on our doorstep waiting to enter our lives. Let us choose the better part of submission to the Lord and seeing things in and through Him.

Prayer: Abba Father, I submit to your hand over my life. St. Paul and Mary followed a different bidding. May it become my way of life as well. Amen
Temptation means our attraction and the persuasion within to sin. No one teaches us to be attracted to sin. There are no classes to teach us how to drink alcohol or how to cheat and steal. However, we all have an attraction towards these unholy, vulgar and wrong actions.

When God created us, He created us as flesh and as Spirit. We are bound to God in the Spirit and bound to the things of the earth in the flesh. In Hebrew 4:24, the Lord Jesus says that God is Spirit. Therefore, God gave us a spirit for the purpose of deeply communing with Him and to hear His voice, to know Him and to live a life of abundance according to His plan with no problems. This was the original plan of God. But, someone planted a virus in this plan and that someone is Satan.

In Genesis we see how Adam and Eve were tempted by Satan, succumbed to the flesh and lost everything. We also see in the New Testament how the Lord Jesus, while in the wilderness, overcomes the temptations of Satan. How did the Lord Jesus achieve victory? In all three temptations the Lord Jesus answers Satan saying “It is written…” In the midst of the temptations what He remembered and claimed is the word of God that was written through the love of God. The light that flowed through the Word of God became larger than the lies of Satan. Even in the events of our lives that lead to temptation, the Word of God gives us one light and Satan gives another light. Satan will take the same incident and show us something totally opposed to the Word of God. Those who live in the Spirit will be bathed in the light of the Word of God. Those who live in the flesh get trapped in the temptations of Satan and fall into sin.

Judas and Peter were caught in the temptation of Satan. The Lord Jesus knew this was to happen and in Luke 22-32 says “But I have prayed for you, Simon that your faith may not fail” The Lord said, even when you were falling into sin, I will still love you and will pray for you. Judas could not accept or believe in this love and Judas perished. Peter accepted the love of Jesus in His failing. He believed that in Jesus there is forgiveness for his sin. When we place our sinfulness at the feet of the Lord, the Lord will redeem us from every temptation.

Prayer: Abba Father, I thank you from the depths, for your unfailing love and faithfulness, Amen.
Thursday 11th October

You must learn to be giver and not a taker.

Society teaches us to look out for number one. “What is in it for me? I will help you, but what will I get in return?” And this attitude spills into our relationship with God, our families and one another.

Many people nowadays are blatantly living for themselves. They are not interested in other people. They do not have time to help others in need. It is all about themselves, this selfish attitude makes them live shallow, unrewarding lives. No matter how much they acquire for themselves, they are never satisfied.

My dear friends, if we want to experience God’s providence and if we want Him to pour out His blessings and favor into our lives, then we must get our mind off ourselves. We have to learn to be a giver and not a taker and stop thinking of what others can do for us but what we can do for others. God created us to be givers and we will never be truly fulfilled until we learn the simple secret of how to give our life away.

Without realizing this, we go around dwelling on our own problems, what we want and what we need and hardly noticing the many needs of others around us. Helping somebody else’s situation will be the best way to solve your situation, so God helps you to see through it. When we sow the seed, God can bring us the harvest. When we meet others needs, God always meets our needs.

I read this life changing testimony in a foreign publication. It was about a man disappointed with God and himself. He had once been successful at one time, but now he was basically living out of his car. He visited a church and the pastor gave him some practical advice. “Listen Sir, you’ve got to get your mind off your problems”, he told him, change your focus and go out and help somebody else’s in need. The man took the pastors advice and connected with some people who needed help to overcome addictions. He returned to the church a few weeks later happy, smiling, beaming with joy. He said, “I spent my whole life living for myself, building my carrier, doing what I wanted to do, whatever I thought would bring me happiness. But now I see what really matters.”

Prayer: Abba Father, Let us realise that we were created to give and not to simply please ourselves. Amen.
In today’s Gospel proclamation the Lord Jesus establishes His position saying that He drives out demons by the finger of God and He is stronger than all powers of darkness. He came into this world to overcome the darkness and to establish the Kingdom of God - to set us free, by casting out devils, by healing the sick, by forgiving sins and to fulfill all our spiritual, emotional and material needs. By His life, death and resurrection and the outpouring of the promised Holy Spirit the Lord Jesus has already established the Kingdom of God on earth.

We have experienced the love of God in our lives, mercy, forgiveness, healing, material gains, restoration of relationships and many more blessings - freedom in Christ. But are we living in the Kingdom of God, where love, peace, joy, righteousness, security, fulfillment reigns or do we still belong to the Kingdom of Beelzubel where division, hatred, sadness, fears, insecurity and addictions reign? Though we have had an experience in Christ, after some time, hidden in us, is so much of sadness, insecurities, secret addictions, fears and jealousy causing division within families, friends, community, parish, office etc. Sadly though we profess from our mouths we are ‘born again’ we in reality live in the kingdom of the devil.

How can we avoid falling back again and again to the kingdom of darkness? Is it by trying to obey the commandments by self effort? We have to make the choice - are we for Him or against Him. Are we ready to remain in Him? Then we have to choose a life inspired by mercy, not a life driven by fear. In Galatians 3, 11, St. Paul says, “It is plainly written that no one becomes righteous in God’s way by the law: by faith the righteous shall live.”

The Lord Jesus says, in Luke 11, 23, “whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me, scatters.” Trusting Him and belonging to Him, is the key. The new life the Lord Jesus has given us in Him, has to be actively filled with the Spirit of Jesus daily. Otherwise even without our knowledge the vices of the world and the schemes of the devil will take control of our lives.

Prayer, Abba Father, give us a heart of single mindedness, to believe in the ultimate price that the Lord Jesus paid for us and to know, that in Him we have life - life to the fullest. Amen
The first reading today is clear of who we are. We are all prisoners of sin. We only have to look around the world events today and we will realize how true this statement is. Sin is rampant in the world today because we are all embroiled in the evil of this world.

We do not have to be a criminal to be called a sinner. In our own little homes, churches, communities and societies we do little evil things that culminates in the evil doing of another. The biggest sinners we are, we often become instrumental for the sin of others. When we lose our temper with a loved one at home and say a harsh word, we create hurt in the heart of another which will lead to resentment and hatred over time. This is how sin escalates, through a seemingly harmless evil thought.

I was listening to a local comedian at an interview recently and though a Buddhist, his philosophy of life made perfect Christian sense to me. He mentioned that how cancer in this world is not created by life style or smoking or any such thing but due to anxiety of people about various issues of their life. As we all know, cancer, in the human understanding, is a terminal illness and brings the life of a person to an abrupt end. If we take a moment to reflect upon our life right now, we would see how much of anxiety we go through about our future, finances, sicknesses and children.

This brings us to a deeper teaching of the first reading today. “Now, in Christ Jesus, all of you are sons and daughters of God, through faith” (Galatians 3:26). What is faith? “Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see” (Hebrews 11:1). The Lord Jesus also speaks to us about not been anxious of anything. “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. (Philippians 4:6)

Is this not the answer to all our anxieties? To see in the eyes of faith that all will be well since we are sons and daughters of God? We are all prisoners of this biggest sin that we are unable to believe in faith that we are fully taken care of by an almighty and ever loving God.

Prayer: Abba Father, break into our sin of lack of faith and make us prisoners of your eternal love. Amen.
Sunday 14th October 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time

“..and I prayed, and the Spirit of wisdom came to me;”

Wisdom 7:7

Today’s society is more reward-driven than any time in history. The media are full of quick ways to become rich and how to gain more from less effort and expense. We have tried these hints at some point or another, because they seemed so straightforward, tried and tested. In today’s liturgy, we receive the instructions from our Maker’s instructions, for the surest and only way to perfect happiness.

The First Reading tells us that Divine wisdom is better than any riches or power. God offers us His own wisdom - The Holy Spirit. We who are more than willing to try quick ways to get more rewards on the advice of another human beings, how much more should we heed, the advice of the Creator of heaven and earth!

The Gospel proclamation is challenging and encouraging too. As I reflected on it, I realised I too had said the same words spoken by the rich man… “all these I have kept since I was a boy (girl).” (Mark 10:20). I too was brought up in a strictly Catholic environment, both at home and school. The earliest memories of my childhood include the family prayers with the Holy Rosary and the Litany according to the respective date, daily Mass during school holidays, carrying platters of food for the Parish Priest and nuns. As I grew up and moved to the world at large, I tried to keep all those do’s and don’ts, but my desires and dreams were fashioned by society and not by the Scripture. I also became a self-righteous person, judging others. I used the Lord to reach my goals, but I had an emptiness within, yearning for a deeper relationship with the Lord Jesus. Yet I was frightened that He might ask me to give up everything, like He did of the rich man. I too gave a lot of excuses, avoiding Him in the depth of my being, until I received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit several years ago. What the rich man could not do, and what I could not do by myself, was made possible gradually over the past few years, by the Power of the Holy Spirit.

Without His Power we continue to be selfish and greedy, blind to our own brokenness and live a life of pretence. As we choose to accept the Lord Jesus as the Lord of our lives and surrender our lives to Him, He fills us with the Holy Spirit as promised in John 14:17. This Spirit of God who lives in us, reveals the love of the Father to us. We must experience His awesome love to be empowered to love others.
unconditionally. The law of the Spirit gives us life, freeing us from the law of sin and death. The Holy Spirit also reveals to us the truth. He lets us see as the Father and the Son see, changing our values and priorities from deep within. Then we no longer act to be seen as good Christians but are transformed into those who belong to Christ, as the word ‘Christian’ implies.

What could the Lord be asking us to “sell” today? Who are “the poor” in our life right now? Let us take a few minutes to allow the Holy Spirit, the Revealer of truth, to enlighten us. In my life the Lord has revealed to me that I have to let go of the need to maintain strict orderliness and tidiness at all times, even at the expense of causing hurt to others around me. The Lord has also challenged me to be poor in time, “selling” my time, to those who need me. I also am invited to surrender my natural tendency to plan way ahead and submit to His promptings each moment of the day, putting others’ wishes before mine.

This is not humanly possible. I could force myself to do His will for a day or two, but sooner or later my nature fights back. Hence the Lord Jesus told His disciples, that “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” (Mark 10:25). Yet He soon followed, “With man this is not possible, but not with God; all things are possible.” (Mark 10:27). It is none other than the Holy Spirit who empowers us to surrender our nature and submit to His will joyfully, and as the Lord promised, in Mark 10:29-30, the reward is hundredfold. In my own little way, I have experienced personally what that means and also for my family.

The Second Reading explains how this happens inside us. As we come as we are, to the Lord morning after morning, give the truth of our heart and surrender our lives to Him, He fills us anew with His Spirit. He speaks to us through His Word, that is alive and active, exposing all hidden motives and the wounded nature of our being. Our hidden attitudes are revealed.

We are made to understand why we behave or react the way we do, justify and even spiritualise our actions. In short, the eye which was focused on others’ faults is now turned towards our own selves. What better way than to have the Divine Advocate, prompting the will of God and convicting us, bringing us to repentance and being right with Him straightaway! A continuous cleansing and remoulding process goes on inside of us when we allow the Holy Spirit to lead us.

*Prayer: Abba Father, We pray that You teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom. Amen.*
Monday 15th October

St. Teresa of Avila, virgin &
doctor

“Now you, brothers and sisters, like Isaac, are children of promise”

Galatians 4: 28

“Because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband” In the book of Isaiah, God invites the barren woman to sing aloud in joy, to enlarge her tent and prepare for children, prepare for the blessing whilst she is still in the middle of the barrenness and impossibility. St Paul quotes this in his letter to the Galatians, encouraging them to do the same.

When we sing to God in thanksgiving, when we offer up a sacrifice of praise in the middle of our lack and crisis, God puts into motion the spiritual process that produces more fruit than the natural process. The barren woman will have more children by the spiritual process than the fertile woman by the natural process. The spiritual process can get us far more than we can ever achieve by our own natural resources. So we are asked to enlarge the tent, to prepare ourselves for the answer whilst we are still in the middle of our crises, in anticipation of the goodness of the Lord. As St Paul states, we are children of The Promise. So no matter our physical circumstances, our current sufferings, we are called to prepare ourselves for that which is promised to us.

In the Gospel proclamation, we see the Jewish leaders asking the Lord Jesus for a sign and are denied. Which is interesting because wherever the Lord Jesus went, signs and miracles followed him. They wanted a sign for the sake of a sign, to elevate them not a sign to point them towards repentance, towards the love of God. Often I find myself looking for a sign from God and repeatedly finding none. This is because I look for a sign for the sake of a sign, having my eyes and ears closed to His redemptive love all around me. I ask for a sign of His Presence ignoring His word that has already promised what I seek. I run around looking healing instead of choosing to believe that I am already healed through His blood shed for me. The words of St Paul, remind me today of who I really am. I am a child of The Promise. What God has spoken over my life, is true and real despite what my mind and my circumstances say. God’s word is not dependant on my emotions or my feelings to be true over my life. I just need to hold on to it and declare it over my life, trusting in the faithfulness of the One who speaks His promise over me.

Prayer: Abba Father, I want to declare over myself that I am a child of Your Promise. What You have promised me will come true in my life. So in advance, I rejoice and glorify Your name. May You be glorified in my life always. Amen
In the Gospel of Luke the Lord Jesus Christ sends 72 of his disciples to every town and place where he was to go. He Says “The harvest is plenty, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest (Lk10:1-2) The Lord had to send them to prepare the hearts and minds of the people, so they would be ready to accept Christ into their lives. He also sent them so that it would be a training ground where they could put into practice what they were taught. Another significant reason is that since there were many who still had not heard the good news yet and the Lord Jesus would have known that his death is nearing and had limited time might have wanted to spread the good news fast as possible.

As we read the scriptures it is visible that the Lord’s target audience was the people of Israel during this time. The Roman historian Tacitus says during the 1st century the Jewish population was only 600,000 in total. 72 evangelists were sent so that they could take the word of God to a maximum of 600,000 people. Today there are 7.6 billion people but few are concerned with supporting or spreading the kingdom of God. Each of us has been assigned a number of people by God that we need to share the good news with. I am sure Jesus Christ would have individually asked each of the 72 how the task go and with how many they had shared the good news. If He did that with His disciples I’m sure He will ask us the same questions. This is because we too are called to be His disciples on earth and that is the very reason He sent us.

We should remind ourselves of the contribution and commitment St Luke the evangelist, made to spread the good news to the entire world. Being a disciple of St. Paul he tirelessly worked throughout his life for the Gospel to be spread. A Greek physician by profession St.Luke contributed to the New Testament by giving us the Gospel according to Luke and the Acts of the Apostles which consist 27% of the entire New Testament just second to St.Paul who contributed 13 books. 2 Timothy 4:11 says during the last few days of St. Paul it was only Luke who was with him in Rome. St Luke died at the age of 84.

Prayer: Abba Father we pray for dedication and a deep love to care for and spread your kingdom to the people who are thirsting. Amen
Wednesday 17th October  

St. Ignatius of Antioch, bishop & martyr

“Who may go up the mountain of the Lord?
Who can stand in the holy place?” (Ps24:3).
The answers to these questions are given in the
first proclamation today. St. Paul made the clear
distinction between living in the Spirit and flesh.
We need not have any confusion because the
two lifestyles are mentioned clearly.

Galatians 5: 18-25
Psalm 1: 1-4, 6
Luke 11: 42-46

There are questions that rise up. How could one move from such
obvious and aggressive behavior into solemn and peaceful behav-
ior? Could it be only an outward behavioral pattern? No! One can
move into the Spirit from the flesh by the power of the Holy Spirit. We
should become humble to accept that this conversion of heart and
transformation of mind is the power of God working in our lives. No
individual can come to this state of life by one’s own ability or capac-
ity, because the human ability and capacity is insufficient to convert
and transform the inner being of him/herself.

The Gospel proclamation brings further clarity to the first proclamation.
Christ Jesus was critical of the those in leadership. The Lord Jesus
highlighted the fact that more external actions were emphasized
without authentic inner conversion. The authenticity of the conversion
lies on the shift from being with God to being in God.

We are complex beings. Often we cannot understand our deepest
feelings and emotions. We always end up messing up ourselves to
the extent that we become unable to accept ourselves. What is the
answer to this miserable life situation? The answer is God. The high-
est form of the revelation of God is Christ Jesus and therefore the
answer to our deepest miserable situation is Christ Jesus, because
the mercy of God has the power over our sins. We no longer become
slaves of sin and law. St. Ignatius of Antioch was the second Bishop
of Antioch, consecrated Bishop around the year 69 by the Apostle
Peter, the first Pope. He was taken to Rome for his execution under
the reign of Emperor Trajan in 107 AD. On his way to his execution
he wrote seven important letters to the fellow Christians to encour-
age and edify them. He is the person who used the word “Catholic”
for the first time to describe the whole church in these letters. He
considered his execution as highest form of worship to Christ Jesus.

Prayer: Abba Father, I need an authentic inner life. May you do the shift within
me to live in the Spirit. Amen.
Thursday 18th October  

Feast of St. Luke, Evangelist

“The Lord is righteous in all his ways and faithful in all he does.

Psalm 145: 17

Today the Church marks the feast of St. Luke, Evangelist. Luke was a doctor and he traveled with Saint Paul on his second missionary journey. In fact, Paul calls Luke his “beloved physician” (Colossians 4:14). Because he cared for the bodily needs of others, Luke is the patron saint of doctors. Also in today’s first reading, Paul's second letter to Timothy, he mentions about Luke that he was with him in his mission. Besides, Paul also speaks about God’s faithfulness in which he says “At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them. But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength.” (2 Tim 4:16-17). He not only speaks about how God was faithful till the end; in and through every trial and circumstances, he also portrays something very beautiful which all of us should learn and ponder in our hearts. Even when everyone left him and he was at no help, he says “May it not be held against them. But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength.” Through this he shows that he didn’t hold anything against those who left him but he trusted God to give him the strength and to save him. When we read this passage it may look insignificant, but if we pause for a moment and reflect on this verse, we discover something. Because this is what the inner response is. He did not curse or hold any anger towards those who abandoned him, instead he trusted God. This is the place we need to grow towards, As the Church commemorates St.Luke today, it is appropriate for us to know more about him. Luke was an Evangelist, the writer of the third Gospel. He never met Christ in person, but in his Gospel he says that he came to know about Jesus by talking to eyewitnesses to the events of Jesus’ life, death, and Resurrection. In his Gospel, Luke helps us to know how concerned Jesus was for the sick, the poor, and anyone in need of help, mercy, and forgiveness. Luke tells us that the Lord Jesus came to save all people. Through Luke’s Gospel, we learn how compassionate and caring Jesus was. Some of the most famous stories Jesus told are found in Luke’s Gospel: The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37) and the Lost Son (Luke 15:11-42). His Gospel continues to help us know and love Jesus. Luke’s Gospel also reminds us to look for ways to imitate Jesus by reaching out to help our brothers and sisters in need.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, may I grow more and more in You to imitate and reflect Your love for those who are in need, Amen!
We notice that in the earthly ministry of Jesus, He used to speak in private with His disciples. He taught deeper realities and plain truths to them. He did not often use parables when He spoke to the disciples. Discipleship is one of the main purpose of our life as believers. We were created by God to become like Christ. So God uses the state of discipleship to make us more like His Son Jesus. God’s ultimate goal for our lives on earth is not comfort, but character development. Therefore, Jesus wanted his disciples to grow up spiritually and become like Christ.

In the Gospel proclamation today, when many thousands of people were gathered around the Lord Jesus, He spoke first to His disciples. He warned them, saying “‘Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy”. Hypocrisy is when someone pretends to have certain beliefs, attitudes or feelings when they really do not. The cause of hypocrisy stems from insecurity or selfishness. This happens when we do not believe that we can live our best being generous and honest.

We live in a time when the yeast of the Pharisees has spread in every part of the society. The world teaches the ways we can live pretending something which we are really not. And people hardly deal with their brokenness. They continue to live with insecurity and selfishness. The Lord Jesus reminds us that there is no reason for us to remain as hypocrites. We are called to deal with it. The word of God gives an answer to insecurities and selfish nature within us. We are a chosen people in him according to the predestined plan of God. He works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will. (Ephesians 1.11) We are, as disciples, called to deal with the truth, by hearing the Gospel and believing it in the heart. Then the power of the Holy Spirit transforms us into the likeness of Jesus. We shall no longer need to live a double life. When we realise that we are of much value and worth to Lord Jesus, all our insecurities and fears shall no longer be valid. The Lord said “Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows”.

Prayer: Abba Father, as I open my heart before you, I place all my insecurities and broken selfish nature before you, deal with them and transform my heart. Amen!
What are the top three prayers on your prayer list right now? For many of us perhaps there’s a prayer for God’s provision or one for a loved one’s healing. Maybe there’s a prayer for a friend’s or family member’s salvation or for someone whose marriage is struggling. When it comes to my own prayers, most of them are centered on the things I want God to do for me. I tend to ask God to make my life easier and to take away all my problems. I also pray for friends and family, that God would provide for them and help them through their own struggles and trials.

The Apostle Paul shared some of his prayer list. This passage in Ephesians is one such prayer. It is a prayer that shows Paul’s deep love and concern for the spiritual growth and well-being of the Ephesian church. It is also a prayer that we can learn much from. “I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe” (v. 17-19). In verse 17, Paul prays that the Ephesians would know God better. This prayer is applicable to us and God delights to answer it. We are drawn into deeper levels of intimacy and knowledge of who God is and what he has done for us. The more we know of God, the more we trust and believe him. The second thing this passage tells us we can pray for is to know the riches of God’s glorious inheritance (v. 18). What is our inheritance? It is the promise of salvation and eternity with God. This inheritance comes to us through our new birth in Christ. Paul tells us elsewhere that as God’s adopted children, we are co-heirs with Christ (Romans 8:16), this inheritance is one that can never perish. Lastly, we can pray to know God’s power (v.19). It was this power that raised Jesus from the grave and placed him at his right hand, “far above all rule and authority, power and dominion” (v. 20). In this prayer, Paul wants the Ephesians and us to know God’s resurrection power, the power that saves, sanctifies, and sustains us. And when we know this power, it moves us to deeper trust, awe, and wonder.

Prayer: Abba Father, I ask you to pour out your Holy Spirit upon us to know the width, the length, the height and the depth of the love of Christ that surpass all knowledge. Amen.
The Lord was pleased to crush him in infirmity.

Isaiah 53: 10

Today’s first reading is taken from one of the four “servant songs” that Isaiah records. Today, we regard the servant songs as prophesies about our Lord Jesus. As I reflect on this word, I feel that it is more than a prophecy. I believe that the servant songs reveal what God desires of and how He deals with anyone who is called by Him. This includes us. When we discover the principles behind God’s desires, we can lend ourselves more readily to Him. Heaven can then invade the earth and expand the territory of the Kingdom, wherever we are.

The first revelation is that it pleased God to crush His servant in infirmity. This is contrary to how I would have done things. I would have armed my servant with credentials and strength. As I look at the Lord, I see that he was not born into a family where he had the right credentials to preach. He was not born into a priestly family, he was the son of a carpenter, he was in fact relative to what he was called for, he was neither rich or influential. Even the influential ones like Nicodemus came to see him at night, implying that he did not want to be seen with the Lord in public.

It is as though the Lord is telling us “When I call you for a mission, it is not your strengths or your education that matter. It is my capability and my strength that matters. If you had to depend on your own strengths, you would be limited to the natural. When you depend on my capabilities, your source becomes supernatural. I crush you with infirmity so that you will learn to harness my strength.” My affliction is the means that God uses to arm me for His mission. The seemingly oxymoron “If he gives his life as an offering for sin, he shall see his descendants in a long life, and the will of the LORD shall be accomplished through him” begins to make sense.

In today’s Gospel proclamation we meet James and John acting out an episode that is oft quoted in the Four Steps Retreat. When James and John saw how the favour of God rested on the Lord, and how the people responded to Him, they must have been convinced that the Lord was the next King David. He seemed destined to go places. Their desire for human recognition, and the perks associated with a position of power seemed to have got the better of them. How often we see this scene enacted among us. We start following the Lord because we are drawn to Him and desire the life of Heaven that we
experience. But as time goes on, we begin to live for the recognition we get by playing a religious role. I am constantly tempted to find meaning and fulfilment in the human acceptance I receive in the ministry I perform. What began in the spirit slowly descends into the flesh. We could do the right things for the wrong reasons. Yet, the Lord seeks people who would play a visible role in expanding the territories of His kingdom. How do such people protect themselves from the trap of covertly serving their flesh while playing a religious role? This is where the blessing of infirmity plays a significant role.

Our Lord Jesus looks at James and John and asks them if they are ready to pay the price to be in the position they desire to be in. A part of the price was to watch helplessly as the silence of God loomed larger than life when our Lord Jesus was taken into custody by the authorities. Their own plans and dreams for the future crumbled with that singular event. Later, they would learn that even though plans fail, it does not mean God’s plans have failed. A part of the price was to be misunderstood and shunned by religious authorities. This would ultimately lead to their persecution. They had to flee leaving all that they had built over a life time; their homes, their careers, their means to support them in their old age, and so on. Who knows, if the persecution would not have happened, may be Christianity would have remained confined to the Middle East. It is only because the disciples were infirm, and not able to stand up to the power of the Jews and Rome, God was able to expand the territory of His Kingdom far and wide.

When James and John told Our Lord Jesus that they were ready to pay the price, He tells them that pay the price, they surely will. But the position of visibility and recognition they sought may not materialise, because that depends on the dream that God has for us and for his Kingdom. The Lord tells us the same thing. Not all of us will be called to play visible roles, but that we will surely be called to pay the price of infirmity.

The second reading urges us to approach the throne of grace when thwarted by our infirmities. Since He too was infirm, He has been where we are. At His feet is mercy and a breakthrough will come in due time.

Prayer: Abba Father, when I am discouraged by my own infirmities, give me the grace to harness your strength to expand the territory of your kingdom and find meaning for my existence.
Monday 22nd October

"Be on your guard and avoid every kind of greed" Luke 12:15

In today’s Gospel proclamation we meet a man who wants our Lord Jesus to intervene and get his brother to share his inheritance with him. His brother must surely have been a follower of our Lord Jesus, and present in the crowd. It is also fair to assume that the man was rightfully entitled to the share of the inheritance. If so, he was right in asking our Lord to intervene. However, our Lord Jesus does not seem to be interested in settling the dispute. He takes the opportunity to drive home the point that our journey on earth is temporary, and that there are things way more important to focus on.

As I look within myself, I find that most of my petitions are like the one that the man made to our Lord. To right the injustice done to me, to help me get what is rightfully mine and so on. If I am focussed on something other than the most important thing in life, the Lord may not heed my request. On the other hand, if my need brings me to discover Jesus, my lack becomes my blessing. As I came to His feet when my source of income was drying up, I discovered that the Lord was more than just a provider. My life has never been the same thereafter.

In today’s first reading St. Paul tells us that our sinfulness makes us blind to anything other than the physical world we live in. Therefore, we get sucked into living in ways that satisfy our senses and worldly desires. Even though seeking such will give us only momentary pleasure, and lead to complications and issues thereafter, we do not know any other way. Then there is death, the greatest spoilsport of all, who puts a full stop to all our future plans. St. Paul tells us that God found us in this trap, intervened and shared an experience from above, even though we did not deserve it. St. Paul explains this experience in terms like “saved”, “heaven”, and “extraordinary richness His of grace”. When we have a glimpse of this glory, we thirst for more, and the old way will never satisfy us again. Saints like St. Francis of Assisi gave up a life that many of us would consider the greatest dream, when he discovered this experience. We pray that this becomes true in our lives as well.

Prayer: Abba Father even though we have experienced your touch, we still find the world attractive, and get sucked into it. Reveal into my heart the experience that St. Paul talks about. Save me from this life to know the eternal. Amen
Peace! How much we long for it in our lives! We want peace in our lives, families, countries etc. St. Paul tells the Ephesian community that peace is not an abstract thing. It is in fact, personified in the Lord Jesus: “He is our peace.” As much as we want peace, there is also a part of us that is divisive. Sometimes these divisions become so important that we forget God’s invitation to live in harmony. The Lord Jesus has broken down all walls of division. Just as He united the Jews and the Gentiles and created one human family, one people of God, so we are invited to work for unity.

Today, let us acknowledge the times when we do not act accordingly. Let us repent for the times that we have caused or encouraged divisions. The Lord is ready to forgive us. He not only forgives us but gives us graces to change our patterns and behaviors. Let us allow the Lord to open our eyes to see beyond ourselves and our ways of thinking.

As we await the Second coming of Jesus, let us live in peace and also be alert. This is the Good News today: be alert, stay awake. This does not mean living in constant fear, but an invitation to be ready to meet Jesus. We can come to Him as we are, recognising the deepest truths of ourselves, accepting our need for His mercy, then we will be ready to meet Him. We recognise that any sort of division rises from the flesh and not from the Spirit. In our prayer time today, let us ask for the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit and to to live in the Spirit. In the Holy Mass, we pray for peace which was the Lord Jesus’ parting gift to us. The peace that Jesus gives, is not a mere absence of war. It is rather a deeper gift, reaching beyond our human understanding. The gift is ready, we just have to receive it. To live in peace, surrender is really important. Unless we surrender our lives and situations to Him every day, we will continue to be worried and worry others. It does not matter how big or small the details or situations are. Let us lay our sicknesses and addictions at the feet of the Lord Jesus, He will surely transform our lives. It may not happen instantly, but it will take place. As we surrender, God’s peace comes to dwell in us, and then we will become a people of peace.

*Prayer: Abba Father, let your peace come into our hearts and let us become instruments of your peace. Amen.*
Wednesday 24th October  St. Anthony Mary Claret, bishop

Much will be required of the one who is given much

Luke 12:48

Our perception of life is most often flawed. We always assume that receiving more of something is always a blessing, but often it leads us to a state of blindness. We say that we worked hard and God has blessed our efforts and doubled our returns. With time and experience we have come to learn that what we perceive as a blessing can become our biggest curse. Later on in life we recognise that the biggest collapse in our life turned out to be the real blessing.

So what is the real blessing. The best blessing is when we experience the grace and mercy of God and our eyes are opened to the hand of God in our lives. Like St. Paul says in the letter to the Ephesians - the grace was given to him to announce to the Gentiles the immeasureable riches of Christ. Authentic blessings given to us are always meant to be given away or shared without reserve.

St. Paul declares that he has become a minister by a gift of God and a grace that is power at work within him. Our calling is always a gift accompanied by grace and not a result of our efforts and prayer. Many people have been fulfilling the commands of the church for years but never had a power at work within them.

In the Gospel proclamation the Lord reminds us that the real gifts are not what we accumulate but what we deposit in our heavenly account. He will come at any time, like a thief and how will we respond if we are not prepared. I remember a month after my Father made his retreat at the Divine Retreat Centre, on a Monday morning while watching the morning news on TV, he suffered a heart attack and within an hour he was in the arms of the Lord Jesus.

Often we when nothing seems to happen around us and we believe God is not a work give in to our earthly attractions. Our flesh and attraction to sin leads us to turn luke warm and we begin to look in the wrong places for satisfaction and comfort. We are reminded by the Lord that much has been given to us - we have been forgiven and loved by the Lord - hence we are called to become ministers of the word and are called to share the love and hope we have received to a starving world because much is required of us.

Prayer: Abba Father, in your mercy we have been preserved in a God fearing and believing society. We appreciate your grace and hand over our lives. Amen
Thursday 25th October  

29th Week in Ordinary Time

“I have come to bring fire upon the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled”  
Luke 12: 49

Every family on earth receives its name from the Father. God our Father is a unique example of family love. It is He who designed family life. It’s not about getting, its all about giving of oneself. In the Word, we see the Father giving glory to the Son, the Son giving glory to the Father and the Spirit, each one complimenting each other. Sadly, this does not happen in most families today. Families cannot achieve this standard due to the reason their roots are not embedded in the heart of God.

The Lord Jesus in the Gospel predicts such divisions, the battle between making the choice, to give up the self and live for Christ. We cannot stick to traditions to have a fruitful life on earth. Even the Lord Jesus had to make a choice, by leaving his Mother and family, his comfort zone, which he would have got so accustomed to for 30 years. The zeal and fire within him would not let him rest. The rest he sought was to do the Father’s will. And so, chose to become the bridegroom for the whole church (the bride), making us his own family.

The Lord Jesus talks about the fire which he himself was enjoying. It is the fire of the Holy Spirit, which he badly wanted us all to experience. The Lord did not mind going to the extreme of giving up his life so that we could have this fire. The Holy Fire, when experienced changes a person to such an extent that life in the flesh is of no importance. That is why Paul in his letter to the Philippians Chap 3 vs 7 states “but whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.

It is fire that consumed St. Joseph Vaz that he left India and walked the length and breath of Sri Lanka taking the message of salvation with untiring zeal. He considered everything else as a loss including the title the Church wanted to confer on him for his work. His singleness of purpose ultimately consumed him and his mission bore fruit.

Prayer: Abba Father, I am so consumed by the things of this world. I pray for a deeper awakening and a deeper love for you and your kingdom. Amen
As I was going through today’s readings, I remembered a reflection shared in the 40 days this year which truly changed how I looked at my life. Our life is twofold—external life and internal life. We are mostly concerned about our external life—family, marriage, children, work, school etc. We are so focused on these worldly aspects of our lives, that we cannot see anything beyond our physical selves. But we also have an internal life—this is what our Almighty Father is most concerned about. He is preparing everything we face and experience in this life, for the greater life to come where we will live with Him for eternity.

The first reading invites us to be completely humble and gentle; to be patient, bearing with one another in love. If we understand our sinfulness in the light of our Lord, this may not be as difficult as it sounds. We will be able to accept people in our life with more love and respect.

We are also called to make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit. We are all one in Christ’s body and we are called to one hope. Let us not let anyone down even by a word that’s spoken from our mouth. He is inviting us today to become one with Him in Spirit. We nurture our external life and looks after our health so much. But what do we do about our Spirit? Do we nourish our Spirit daily? Many of us would say ‘NO’. The Lord is inviting us to concentrate more on our relationship with Him rather than be anxious about the other things He will provide anyway. We have heard this verse a thousand times: But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. (Mt 6:33)

St. Francis de Sales says, “If the heart wanders or is distracted, bring it back to the point quite gently and replace it tenderly in its Master’s presence. And even if you did nothing during the whole of your hour but bring your heart back and place it again in our Lord’s presence, though it went away every time you brought it back, your hour would be very well employed.” The Lord expects very little from us - faith the size of a mustard seed as He waits to do greater miracles in our lives today.

Prayer: Abba Father, Help us to see each person in light of the love and grace you have shown us in Christ. Amen.
Saturday 27th October  

Prayer: Abba Father, let the word of God be so rooted in our hearts that it may become fertilizer for us to bear fruit according to your Holy Will, Amen.

29th Week in Ordinary Time

“I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.” Luke 13:5

The Gospel proclamation today speaks of a harsh truth which for the serious Christian is hope beyond words. There are many lukewarm Christians today who will surely perish just as the Lord Jesus has spoken in the word of God.

The hope for the Christian who strives to live according to the word of God is in the parable of the fig tree. It is a parable of Repentance and Grace.

In the first reading St. Paul speaks of the measure of a divine grace given to those who belong to Lord Jesus, according to the measure of His gift. Here we see the purpose of the death of Lord Jesus and His descending into the lower depths before ascending into heaven. In the lower depths He defeated sin and death and ascended above all heavens in glory. In His fullness of Glory, the Lord Jesus gifted His people to be apostles, prophets, evangelizers, preachers and teachers for the sole purpose of building up the body of Christ. This is the ultimate calling of every Christian, to preach the good news and build up the kingdom of God in the capacity that God has gifted us with.

We can look deeper into the gospel proclamation today in the context of the first reading. The Lord Jesus speaks through a parable. There is the Vine Dresser, the Owner of the vineyard and the fig tree. The Vine Dresser signifies the great confidence the Lord has in each of His people. The Owner signifies the deep love and trust and the relationship between God and Christ. The fig tree signifies the potential of each Christian to bear fruit according to the grace and gifts given by God. Therefore, our calling on earth is to bear fruit as a teacher, preacher, prophet or disciple, in spreading the good news and evangelising. The Lord shows His abundant grace for His people to repent and come back every time we fail our calling. We are not required to live our gifts as powerful leaders but in our everyday living. If we do not repent there would come a time that the Owner of our lives would see us bearing no fruit and we will be dealt with accordingly. Let us examine our lives and seek to live in God’s love and mercy.

Prayer: Abba Father, let the word of God be so routed in our hearts that it may become fertilizer for us to bear fruit according to your Holy Will, Amen.
I remember the Non-Aligned Summit that took place in Sri Lanka. The entire city of Colombo was given a facelift. The roads were widened, flowering plants were planted along the road, buildings were freshly painted, flags of the representative countries were erected in prominent places. While everything was made beautiful, the beggars and the homeless were moved to an area where they were not seen or heard by the foreign visitors. As I read today’s first reading, it struck me that God was promising to do the exact opposite.

God promises Israel’s remnant who had survived in exile, a “joyful homecoming”. Israel’s remnant are the leftovers and not the best. The joyful homecoming therefore was for the blind, the lame, the pregnant women and women who are in labour. He is going to the ends of the earth to bring back the ones who cannot make it back on their own. He is bringing back people who are homeless, who have nothing of their own, who need assistance not just to rebuild their lives, but also for the rest of their lives. The reason behind God’s promise: “because I am Israel’s father, and Ephraim is my firstborn son”. To Him, it is not even a close call, He is the Father looking for His children who are weak, abandoned and forgotten.

We too may be in exile, caught up in a self-destructive lifestyle because we were damaged by others. We may deserve to be forgotten in the land of exile because we have no one else to blame but ourselves. Our sorry state is the singular reason that God is attracted to us. God sees us for who we are; broken, damaged and drawn to sin. Unless He intervenes, the vicious cycle will continue. Jeremiah 31:9 continues: “They will come with weeping; they will pray as I bring them back”. The “remnant of Israel” is not just moving from one geographical location to another. God is ministering to them and they are going through a conversion of heart. The sin is broken, shame is taken away, the wounds are bound, and lives are transformed. The celebration is for the broken who are made new in the power of God.

In today’s Gospel proclamation we meet blind Bartimaeus who puts most of us to shame. When he picked up a change in the environment
he went into immediate action. He did everything he could do to get the attention of the Lord, he shouted at the top of his voice: “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” The more the others tried to quieten him down, the louder he shouted: “Son of David, have mercy on me!”

Most of us, unlike Bartimaeus, believe our circumstances are beyond God’s intervention. We “resign to our fate”. We sit by the roadside begging. We beg for love, we beg for attention, we wait for someone to give us something just to get by each day. We lie, cheat and manipulate because of our blindness to God. Bartimaeus must have done all this, but he also knew that the solution to his problem was not begging from others who could not really meet his deepest needs. I believe that is why when the opportunity came, he did not ask for money, for a home, for someone to take care of him but he wanted a miracle! Bartimaeus wanted to see again.

The Lord gave him sight not just to see the world around Him, but to see the things of God. The greatest miracle happened not in his eyes but in his heart. Bartimaeus started following the Lord Jesus. The remnant of Israel had started to return “home”.

In the letter to the Hebrews the author is comparing the priesthood in the Old Testament and the priesthood of the Lord Jesus. In the Old Testament, the priesthood was established by God Himself. It is a birth right that came down the line of Levi. The High Priest's primary job was to offer gifts and sacrifices for the atonement of sins. The priesthood of the Lord Jesus was different. He was not a high priest, he was not from the lineage of Aaron, he did not have a ministry in the temple. Yet, He is the Son of God, and a priest forever. He was both the priest and the sacrifice that was offered for the atonement of the sin of all humanity.

What does this mean for us today? The Lord Jesus is the fulfilment of God’s promise in the first reading. He has come to bring us home from where we have been exiled. He has paid the price, and broken the vicious cycle so that we need not beg in the wrong places. Just like to Bartimaeus, the Lord has thrown us a life-line. We need to grab the life line and start walking with Him in complete surrender. Then the miracle will happen in our hearts too. We too will see more than what our physical eyes can see and live a victorious life in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Prayer: Abba Father, I want to see again your hand that is upon my life, so that I can stop begging and start walking in righteousness. Amen
Monday 29th October  

Feast of Sts. Simon and Jude, Apostles

And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you. 

Ephesians 4:32

The above verse always challenges me. By nature, I am not an unkind person, but being kind and tenderhearted to everyone is quite something else. Of course if everyone I knew was good, fair and just, did not do unkind things to me or others, and lived a life in the way I thought was right, then it would not be so difficult. But when someone hurts, rejects or is unfair to me, it is extremely difficult to be kind to that person. But one thing I have learned in this journey is that I cannot live my life based on other peoples’ reactions, or give excuses for losing my spirit just because of another person’s reaction or not being in the spirit, however difficult or justified the situation may be.

Verse 5:1 is equally challenging .... to live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God … Even the person who loves us the most, or whom we love the most has hurt us many times in our lives – be it our parents, spouse, children or close friend. So, living in love, giving love despite receiving hurt and rejection is not easy. Further, the Lord not only calls us to live in love but even to give up ourselves as a sacrifice for love.

In today’s Gospel proclamation the Lord Jesus heals a woman who was crippled for eighteen years. One thing that struck me was that this woman did not ask the Lord to be healed – like many others did. The Lord did not even ask her what she wanted or whether she wanted to be healed, He merely saw her, had compassion for her and healed her. Most probably he would have known that the leaders of the synagogue were waiting to judge and find fault with him. But for the Lord, other people’s opinions, judgement, un-kindness, anger and reaction did not matter. What mattered to the Lord was doing the will of His Father in heaven, and that is what each of us are called to do.

Today we celebrate the feasts of saints Simon and Jude, the Lord’s apostles. For them too, only the will of the Lord mattered. Saint Jude is considered the patron saint of desperate situations, and saint Simon the patron saint for sawmen and tanners.

Prayer: Abba Father, help me to be kind to others and live in love, despite difficult situations. Lord Holy Spirit, help me to the will of Abba Father. Amen
St. Paul associates the Church as a whole as Christ’s body and that is the mindset we ought to have as well. The Church is suffering blow after blow in this present age, and it should be considered a personal attack on our lives for we ourselves are the body of Christ, we ourselves are the Church.

However, most of us do not consider ourselves co-labourers with Christ. Instead, we see our inheritance as obligation and as a duty that has to be fulfilled in order to gain merit from the Lord. The time to change is now. St. Paul teaches us in today’s first reading that Christ and the Church are one entity. He is the head and we are its members. Therefore, what is required of us is submission to the lordship and rule of our Saviour, in order to enhance the spreading of the Kingdom of God on this earth.

The Lord Jesus speaks of the Kingdom of God in today’s Gospel Proclamation. This Kingdom is compared to two seemingly unassuming items – a mustard seed and yeast. However, these two basic, simple items give way to large provision when nourished. The mustard seed turns into a tree that offers shade and shelter to helpless birds of the air and animals of the field, and the yeast, although small in measure, does not fail to permeate every area of the dough.

At the end of the process, it is not those items that shine – in fact, they are crushed and disappear into the surface – but it is the positive consequence of their act of being crushed that brings about a benefit for something other than itself. The Lord invites us to be like this – not looking for individual gain, but seeking to disappear into the surface that others may experience Christ, the head of the Church – His very own body. This is how the Kingdom of God will reach the ends of the earth. We were sent here with a mission from above. It should be our heart’s desire to fulfill that mission, no matter what the cost. Sometimes the mission could ask us to step out of our comfort zones, to be a servant instead of an heir and to suffer for the cause of the Gospel. Our promise is “You will enjoy the fruit of your labour.

Prayer: Abba Father, I want to be crushed for the enhancing of Your Kingdom on earth. Amen.
In today’s Gospel proclamation, the Lord Jesus turns the world’s ways and values upside down. He says the last shall be first and those who wish to be the first shall be the last. We need to reflect on this in the light of what he told John and James when their mother asked the Lord Jesus that they be given a prominent place in the kingdom. The Lord Jesus virtually rebuked her by saying “Anyone who wishes to be a leader among you, must be ready to be the servant of all.”

This principle of servant leadership is one of the outstanding features of Christianity. No other religion or ideology has anything similar. The Lord Jesus tells us that if we wish to be his followers, we need to deny ourselves take up our cross and follow Him. That is the only way we could reach the spirituality that St. Paul achieved when he said “I have been crucified with Christ, it is no longer I who live but it is Christ Jesus who lives in me.”

From day to day, from hour to hour or moment to moment, we need to be filled and refilled with the Holy Spirit till all can see Christ only living in us. It would be good to remind ourselves, of what St. Francis of Assisi said - “Preach all the time, but use words only when necessary.” That means our lives must be the sermons we give to others. As we freely experience the unconditional love, mercy and compassion of God, we need to freely give it to others.

To err is human, to forgive divine. Everytime we forgive, we become more divine. That is why the Lord Jesus has told us that we need to be empowered to forgive, not just seven times but even seventy time seven. The more we forgive, the more we become like God. This approach may seem foolish in a selfish and wicked world but it is God’s wisdom. In my own life, I met the Lord and began a deep and growing relationship. After joining the Catholic Revivial movement, the Lord gave me the power to forgive a close colleague who had deprived me of all my life’s savings and virtually put me on the streets and close to suicide.

Prayer: Abba Father, forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Amen
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