



IN OUR KNEES IN HIS HANDS

September 2017

**The Kingdom of God is peace
in the Holy Spirit; He will reign
in you if your heart is at peace.**

**So, be at peace, and you will
honour in a sovereign way the
God of peace and love.**

**When we receive with an entire
and perfect resignation the
afflictions which God sends us
they become for us favors and
benefits; because conformity
to the will of God is a gain
far superior to all temporal
advantages**

St. Vincent de Paul

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September 2017

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“God has called us to live, not in impurity, but in holiness”

1 Thessalonians 4:7

1Thes 4: 1-8

Ps 97: 1,2,5-6,
10-12

Matthew 25: 1-13

The basic meaning of the word “holiness” is to be set apart, dedicated to or belong to God. This means that the Lord desires for us to dedicate our lives to Him, have a relationship with Him, and to set ourselves apart for Him. He wants us to get to know Him in a personal and intimate way and when we know Him in such a way, we will learn what pleases Him and grieves Him. In the

first reading, St. Paul urges the church “to live in a way that pleases God.” (1 Thes 4:1)

I read this story about a young mother who was having a particularly rough day. Nothing seemed to be going right. To cap it all, her children were ill and she had to go to church that evening for a service. On the way to church with her husband and father, she was mumbling under her breath, “Mommy Hat off, Worship Hat on.” Her father leaned over to her and said, “The problem is, the Worship Hat should never have come off.” That statement changed her life. She realized that what we do is not worship but who you are is worship.

In the time of the Lord Jesus, the Jews did not compartmentalize their religious faith and their daily lives as we do now. We see this in the lives of the disciples. As believers, this is also what is expected of us. He wants us to worship Him with our whole lives. He wants our worship of Him to extend into every area of our lives and not be limited to church or our times of personal prayer.

If I am in my office, I do my job unto Him. If I am at home changing diapers, making dinner, doing the laundry and the dishes and running after my children, I do it unto Him. If I am a husband or a wife, I love and serve my spouse unto Him. If I am driving on the road and I am not swearing at the person who cuts me off in the middle of traffic, I do it unto Him. This is the secret to holiness.

If we worship God with our lives, we will never be at risk of ever being caught off guard or unprepared with no oil for our lamps when our bridegroom arrives, unlike the four foolish maidens in today’s Gospel proclamation. Our lamps will be trimmed and ready to be lit, with oil to spare, to joyfully welcome the bridegroom when He arrives at our doorstep.

Prayer: Abba Father, help us to live in holiness. Then everything we do will be done as an act of worship to You. Amen.

“For all those who have, more will be given, but the one who has not what they have will be taken away from them” Matthew 25:29

1 Thes 4:9-11

Ps 98:1,7-8, 9

Matthew 25: 14-30

Have you realised that one sure way to lose a friendship, whether in family relationships or else where, is to try to hang on to it tightly. It can be possessed only as far as it is constantly received as a gift which is always kept new and alive. We have to learn from the Lord.

In St. Paul's letter to the Thessalonians we have him advising and admonishing them in a sense, as to how to live a fruitful life, highlighting that God has already taught us how to love one another. The greatest example is His son on the cross. He continues to explain, 'Live quietly without bothering others and work with your hands.' We need to live in confidence and in trust doing our best with what we have been given. But our very own self becomes the greatest obstacle to reaching the goal the Lord has set for us.

We do not possess the strength it takes to accept the cross which is the way leading to Him. Weakness, fear and doubt easily overwhelm us. Only the grace and love of Christ makes it possible. He embraced the depths of human suffering, and lifted it up to the Father, taking on Himself the cross and carrying it to the end. Everything borne for the sake of Christ and by His grace binds us closely to Him, upheld in our pain and weakness, by His promise of infinite fidelity. 'I will be with you always until the end of time' (Matt. 28:20). 'The Lord our God carried you as a man carries his child, all along the journey.' Deut 1:31.

In the passage from St. Matthew's Gospel we have the Lord Jesus relating the parable of the talents which also emphasizes the ability to trust oneself. The talents referred to are the abilities God has given each of us. God sees the way we use these talents and the sin is to have kept to oneself the gifts received. The Lord calls us to the poverty of being always ready to let go of everything that is given to us, so that it can be given to us enhanced and multiplied. Unless we are prepared to do this and risk losing everything, even what we thought we had will be taken away from us sooner or later. To try to possess in that way is in fact to possess nothing. 'Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.' Ultimately, the only thing worth possessing is utterly beyond all possession.

Prayer: Abba Father give us the grace to overcome the world and sanctify us for Your service that we may be truly fruitful on this earth and we may follow the path of Your Son to reach the ultimate goal. Amen.

**What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world,
yet forfeit their soul? Matthew 16:26**

Jeremiah 20:7-9

Psalms 63: 2-9

Matthew 16: 21-27

In the Old Testament there has never been a prophet who complained more than the prophet Jeremiah. He was called by God at a young age to serve the Lord and give His Word to the people of that time. The Lord had much to tell the people about their destruction and against their way of life and He had chosen Jeremiah to give this message to the king and the people of Israel. Jeremiah recalls the Lord calling him even before his birth in 1:5 – “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart, I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.” God had given Jeremiah a mission even before his birth.

Although Jeremiah spoke the Word of God, he soon realised that his prophecies were about doom and devastation to the people. The prophet had many enemies and many wanted him to stop prophesying. They beat him and tried to silence him. But the Lord within him continued to prompt him to prophecy. It is after Pashhur, the son of the chief officer in the temple, beat the prophet and had him put in the stocks, that the prophet Jeremiah complained to God. He says in verse 7, “O Lord, you deceived me and I was deceived, you overpowered me and prevailed.” He was fighting with God. He did not want to be the prophet of doom. He was ready to give up his mission and return to his life. However, in verse 9 the prophet realises he is unable to stop because the fire of the Lord burns within him – “but if I say ‘I will not mention him or speak any more in his name’ his word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up my bones. I am weary of holding it in, indeed I cannot.” Jeremiah comes to the realisation that even though he may not like to be the prophet of doom, he cannot stop. The Lord has called him and he cannot go against the fire within him to do the will of God.

In the same way, the Lord has called us to a mission in life. We were called to this mission even before our birth. The Lord has called us to cooperate with Him in building His Kingdom on earth. We need to pray and discern what the Lord wants us to do. Once we have met the Lord, like the prophet Jeremiah, the fire of the Lord will burn within us to do His will. No matter where we go, the Lord calling will be on us because His fire lives within us.

St. Paul speaks of the response we must give to this mission of God.

Even though we are sinners, God has mercy on us and has given us a mission in His Kingdom. St. Paul says in Romans 12:1, “Offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God.” In other words he is telling us to surrender our lives to God in service to Him. Surrender our lives to do this mission of God. This in itself is an act of worship. Can we do this?

Jeremiah could not continue to prophecy for God by his own strength. It was the fire of God inside him that pushed him forward and did not allowed him to stop. Jeremiah 20:9 says, “I try so hard to hold it in, but I cannot do it”. He tried to hold onto the Word without prophesying but the fire inside him was greater than the world around him. We must pray for this grace in our own lives—that the fire of God, the burning power of the Holy Spirit’s fire within us will be greater than the threats and pressures from the world. St. Paul says in Romans 12:2 “Do not let yourselves be shaped by the world where you live, but rather be transformed through the renewal of your mind.” We can only overcome the world through the renewal of our minds. We can renew our minds through prayer and a relationship with God. When we truly know the one living within us, His power and knowledge will help us overcome the world and fulfill His mission for our lives.

In Today’s Gospel proclamation St. Peter is like Jeremiah. He wants the Lord to give up His mission on earth and escape the crucifixion. However, the Lord was not swayed by St. Peter’s protests. Instead He was filled with the fire of the Holy Spirit and was focused on fulfilling the will of God in His life. The Lord also uses this moment to teach the other apostles what it means to be a disciple of God.

The Lord says in Matthew 16:25-26 “For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?” The prophet Jeremiah and St. Paul both knew this truth. They knew gaining the world would be useless if they lost God. In the same way, the Lord is teaching us to look to Him when we cannot face the pressures of this world. For in Him is all the power and strength we will need to overcome anything thrown at us.

Today, the Lord is calling us to a relationship with Him. In this relationship we will find strength, the fire of God and the power to complete the mission God has given us. When we have this fire within us, we can do the impossible.

Prayer: Abba Father, I pray for the grace to be able to surrender my life to You in service of the Kingdom of God. I pray that Your mission for my life may be revealed to me through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

He has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor**Luke 4:18**

1 Thes 4: 13-18

Ps 96: 1-5,11-13

Luke 4: 16-30

Following the leading of the Holy Spirit, St. Paul responds to a vision and sets sail for Thessalonica, a gateway to Europe. He was thus breaking all barriers of paganism and commercialisation winning a world for Christ. St. Paul, chosen to preach to the Gentiles, addresses a group who were concerned about the fate of those who had died earlier. St. Paul reassures them that all who died in Christ would live forever. Here he speaks in poetic terms of the indescribable events beyond the natural, which would occur in the end times. To take these words literally would be a ridiculous exercise.

The Gospels point again and again to the universality of Christ's salvation whereas St. Paul was sent to the Gentiles. The Lord Jesus was sent to proclaim salvation to all people. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, the Lord Jesus came to the synagogue as His work was to continue the Father's mission of liberation. Boldness, power and authority were His hallmarks. To a stunned congregation this itinerant homeless carpenter dares to proclaim His Messianic role derived from Isaiah's prophecy (Isaiah 61:1), having the temerity to apply it to Himself.

He throws a gauntlet to the stupefied congregation by quoting examples of Gentiles who received God's favour. The Jews believed that God's anointing was for them alone and that Gentiles were fuel for the fires of hell. They preferred to hold on to 'their' God as being a private possession, sole heirs of His benevolence. The crowd was amazed at the Lord Jesus' grace filled words. But familiarity with His background blocked their belief in Him. The Jews passionate hatred of the Gentiles drove them to try and hurl Him from the mountain top, but His time had not yet come and he passed unharmed among them. Christ preached a radically different religion from that which was diligently practiced. The poor, the blind and the oppressed were presented as God's main concern. All of humanity was to come under the blanket of His love and favour.

We as disciples are called to continue this mission. We have to abandon our idea that God is our personal possession and share Him with the world. He is not there only to provide for our needs.

Prayer: Abba Father, set me free from the captivity of my own understanding and let me be open to Your Spirit. Amen.

God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation
through our Lord Jesus Christ

1 Thes 5:9

1 Thes 5: 1-6, 9-11

Ps 27: 1-4, 13-14

Luke 4: 31-37

St. Paul writes to the church of Thessalonica and reminds them on how the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night when everything seems to be going good (1Thes 5:2). He reminds them not to be like the others who are asleep but to be alert and self controlled.

This reminded me about a question that I asked myself a few months ago. Am I living in the spirit or am I living in the flesh? I received the answer for this when I attended a retreat recently. The priest spoke about the symptoms which tell us that we are no longer in the spirit.

Symptom 1 - Lack of Spiritual appetite. We have no time and desire to read the Word of God like we did when we had a God experience for the 1st time. Earlier we spent hours in personal prayer but now we hardly have time. 2 - The Holy Spirit does not talk to us through the Word of God as He did before. 3 - People are not coming to us for spiritual advice like before but for worldly things. 4 - Our friends and others will lose the respect for us and talk on various other topics to us and crack dirty jokes on us as well. 5 - We begin to receive communion in a sinful state because people are watching us. We are worried about the priest who listens to our confession. 6 - Lack of compassion for the poor and others. Earlier we did not judge the poor who asked for help, but now instead of helping them we pass judgment on them. 7 - Prayer becomes a duty and a mouth exercise. We do not feel the prayer touching our hearts like before, we pray for the sake of praying. 8 - We have no pain for the lost souls. Earlier we wanted to speak of God to others specially the ones who have not experienced His love and pray for them. But now we are least concerned about them. 9 - If we have lost the anointing we will stop praising God. We fall asleep while praying. 10 - We get attracted to our mobile phones, social media and internet rather than the Word of God.

After pondering on these few points we need to remind ourselves of how we have slowly drifted away from God. We need to repent of our sins and turn back to Him. We must ask ourselves what will happen to us if we remain the same when the day of the Lord comes like a thief?

Prayer: Abba Father, we pray that You give us the grace to realise our sinful nature, repent and turn back to You. Amen.

I will praise you always for what you have done.

Psalm 52:11

Colossians 1:1-8

Psalm 52: 10-11

Luke 4:38-44

St. Paul was normally overwhelmed with joy. His hard work bore fruit in Colossae. St. Paul carried out his mission, chosen by God and appointed an apostle according to God's will. Each verse is a thanksgiving note to God for blessing his endeavor of carrying the Gospel among the Gentiles. The world is bearing fruit by hearing and accepting the Gospel. This encouraged the Colossians to continue to adhere to the Word of God. The Gospel message we hear these days was preached in the early church by the apostle. "Believe in your heart that Jesus is Risen, proclaim what you believe in your heart with your words and experience salvation".

Was the apostle's message good news, that the Lord Jesus Christ is risen and alive? According to this letter of St. Paul to the Colossians it is proven by then that the Gospel had been preached throughout the world and the whole world had accepted the truth. At present we are called to carry the baton. Have we experienced God's salvation? Are we saved? Yes we are. In the unseen realm we are saved by our baptism. The name of the 'owner' of our soul is imprinted on our soul to indicate that we are the property of our Lord Jesus. For the Lord Jesus Christ is the owner of our souls.

When we accept the Gospel truth, we receive an awareness that we did not have before, a freedom that we had not experienced and a joy and peace that we did not enjoy before. They become the essence of our life which is to be saved. We are empowered to love the unlovable and pray for our persecutors. Instead of reacting, peace and joy overwhelm us. That is what is meant to be saved.

In today's Gospel proclamation, the author of life and our salvation who actually laid the foundation to this great mission, proved a point. The missionary command of our Lord Jesus was to go to the ends of the world and proclaim the Gospel and signs and wonders would follow. This is exactly what took place in Capernaum. The Lord Jesus with others interceded in that place and He stood up and healed St. Peter's mother-in-law. Other healings and exorcisms followed too. The Lord Jesus moved to other places after consulting the Father in prayer. We should follow this model.

Prayer: *Abba Father, let me be like an olive tree in the house of God and trust in God's faithful love forever. Amen.*

“...they left everything and followed him.”

Luke 5:11

Colossians 1:9-14

Psalm 98:2-6

Luke 5: 1-11

In today's Gospel proclamation we see Simon Peter's obedience to the Lord Jesus. St. Peter who was a fisherman by profession, listened in obedience to the Lord Jesus when He asked him to throw the net into the deep water. He had worked all night long but caught nothing and as far as his understanding he already knew that there was nothing he could catch if he threw the net there. Yet, with doubts and unbelief puzzling his mind, he said to the Lord, "Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets." It shows his total obedience to the Lord Jesus even when he did not understand what was going on.

Likewise, in our lives, there are so many instances when we may not understand what is happening and we may ask the Lord for an answer. It is true that God reveals His answer to us when we are persistent in prayer and wait upon Him. However, most often He does not tell us everything. He purposely withholds the details of our life journey because He is being very kind to us and He wants us to obey Him in trust and faith not based on understanding. So often (myself included) we believe that peace comes when we know what is next. We rationalize that it would help us to be prepared. But know this; peace that comes from knowing all the details will fail. Imagine what would have happened to St. Peter if the Lord Jesus told him everything when He first met him? St. Peter would not have been able to handle anything and he would have run away because he was not prepared to understand God's will in His life and what the Lord had in store for him. If St. Peter knew everything back then he would have easily given up, not following the Lord Jesus and God would have had to find somebody else to accomplish His mission.

God's ways are beyond our understanding and comprehension. Therefore, God in His mercy gives us time to experience Him and grow in Him to know that He can be trusted always. That is the best preparation of all. Faith and trust come from knowing who He is. When God asks us to trust Him with the details, He is actually inviting us to an intimate relationship with Him to know His unchanging nature. All we have to do is respond with a simple act of trust in obedience to Him.

Prayer: *Abba Father, though I do not understand, I have decided to follow You whole heartedly because knowing You is the greatest treasure of my life. In living a life of trust I will have everlasting joy and peace. Amen.*

We are children of God

Rom 8:28-30
or Mic 5: 1-4

Psalm 13: 6abc

Matt 1:1-16, 18-23

Today is the feast of the birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary. We celebrate her central role in the redemption of the world as the Mother of God. Scripture does not give us an account of Mother Mary's birth. According to tradition Mother Mary's parents, St. Anna & St. Joachim were infertile. Through prayer they received Mother Mary through whom God paved the way for the salva-

tion of the world.

On the date the Church celebrates Mother Mary's birth the Gospel reading is the genealogy of the Lord Jesus, which begins from Abraham and moves through 42 generations of the line of David, of which the Messiah was born. When we read through the names in the genealogy of the Lord, many of these men and women were far from being perfect and holy. In fact many of them were sinners who made glaring mistakes. God's ways are not our ways and He used imperfect, sinful people to bring forth His perfect Son into this world. In the genealogy of the Lord, God shows us that He can take the lives of broken people and allow good to come forth.

In today's first reading St. Paul says, 'We know that in everything God works for the good of those who love Him, whom He has called according to His plan' (Rom.8:28). We might have walked away from God, followed our own sinful ways and messed up our lives. We may be at a point that we feel everything is lost and our lives are useless. But let us remember in baptism we became a child of God. God has a beautiful plan for us and for the whole of humanity. Each life is necessary to fulfill the plan of God. We are not perfect, but God will never give up on us. He is patient and He can work with our mistakes.

St. Paul says, in Romans 8:30, 'And so, those whom God predestined, He called; and those whom He called, He makes righteous...' Through self effort we cannot obey God and walk according to His ways. It is He who makes us righteous, it is He who turns our curses into blessings, our defeat into victory and a sinner into a holy man or woman of God. Today, let us believe in the Lord Jesus, fall at His feet with our brokenness, limitations and imperfections and allow Him to touch our depths and heal us enabling us to fit into God's eternal plan.

Prayer: *Abba Father, we pray and ask our Blessed Mother, on her feast day, to pray for us that we may always be open to co-operate with the will of God. Amen.*

I Paul, became the servant of this gospel

Colossians 1:23

Colossians 1:21-23

Psalms 54:3-4, 6&8

Luke 6:1-5

The first reading today poses a mighty challenge to us, in that, St. Paul professes that he became the servant of the gospel. Are we such servants?

Who is a true servant for the Lord? It is someone who lives a life submissive to his or her master. A servant portrayed in our minds is someone who is obedient, meek and humble and someone who pleases the master. It is also a person who has earned the love, respect and favour of the master.

In contrast to the first reading, we see in the Gospel proclamation the opposite of a servant. We see the Pharisees who are self righteous, full of pride and judging others. They are questioning the Lord Jesus about the lawlessness of His disciples concerning the Sabbath. The Lord Jesus Himself has demonstrated to us during His lifetime on this earth how to have an attitude of servanthood. We should not align our thinking in a general sense to a domestic servant, one who is submissive out of fear and discipline rather than love and a sense of duty. An attitude of servanthood carries utmost honour and dignity.

St. Paul's life gives us a great example of this servanthood. He could not contain his zeal to witness to Christ because of the love of the Lord in his heart.

In our lives, we may have been like St. Paul before his encounter with the Lord. We too may have been estranged and hostile in our mindset as the Colossians were while proclaiming the Word of God. Before coming into the journey we too did not hesitate to ridicule or scorn those who actively evangelized. St. Paul also shows us how to be holy, blameless and irreproachable before God. He teaches that one needs to be established and steadfast in faith. St. Paul showed this in his lifetime as he became a servant of the Gospel. How do we establish the kind of faith that St. Paul is talking of? It is only by being a slave to the Word of God.

The Word of God itself says that faith comes from hearing the Word. Today we must ask ourselves a question: are we rooted in the world or in the Gospel of the Lord Jesus our Saviour and Master? If we are not He is calling us to read His Word and fall in love with Him again. **Prayer: Abba Father, give us the grace today to bury our lives in the Word of God, that it may sustain our faith. Amen.**

“Love does no harm to a neighbour”**Romans 13:10**

Exodus 33:7-9

Psalm 95:1-9

Romans 13:8-10

Matt 18: 15-20

It is not an overstatement to say that the Holy Bible is the manufacturer's manual to the people. Today's liturgy tells us how we Christians ought to live in a community, be it the family, parish, prayer community or civil society.

The First Reading tells us about the responsibility we are entrusted with, through our baptism, as we have been anointed as priest, prophet and prince or princess in the Kingdom of God. God makes us watchers for His people, to hear Him speak and convey to them (cf Ezekiel 33:7). This can be done in many ways and not necessarily through words alone. Yet the basis of any advice or correction should be love and a genuine desire to uplift the other and not to condemn. The aim should be to bring glory to God in and through the return of a child to the Heavenly Father, and not our self-glory. As we reflect on this little passage it becomes clear, how important our baptismal commitment is. The Almighty God chooses insignificant people like us, to be His spokespersons. How lightly do we take our baptism at times and often what little difference is seen between us, His chosen children and others who are yet to accept the Lord Jesus as their Saviour? Let us repent, for the times we conveniently forgot our responsibilities as children or messengers.

The Gospel proclamation supports the first reading but goes beyond it. The Lord Jesus clearly states the power given to His disciples, either to bind others or make them free. Do we set others free from their own errors, mistakes and failures, through our love, forgiveness and intercession for them? Or do we bind others for years on end, remembering how they hurt us? Do we continue to brand them and judge them and be opinionated against them? Let us delve into our mind and heart, to discover someone whom we may have not unbound from our own judgment. The Lord tells us that we have been given the power from on high to change the world we live in through prayer, as He highlights the power of prayer in agreement, done as a group (cf Matthew 18:19). The Lord also reminds us that He who is raised from the dead is alive and is among us when we gather in His Holy Name (cf Matthew 18:20).

St. Paul puts both the readings into the correct perspective. Love is the only thing, a Christian owes another human being, Christian or otherwise. Love fulfills all duty and obligation. Even so, we all

know how hard it is to love a person who talks behind our back. We struggle to love the person who hurts us and tries to destroy us. Yet St. Paul reiterates that we, as disciples of Christ, are expected to love everyone the Lord has placed in our lives. "Love does no harm to a neighbor" (Romans 13:10), even if the neighbor hates us. This is Christianity-- revealing Christ the Lord to a world that is largely ignorant and incapable of love.

The Christians number about 2.2 billion in the world, the Catholics consisting about 1.2 billion. Have we paused to think what a force we would be, if we used the power of love, like our Master did in the three short years of His public life? Hatred and injustice, murder and destruction stare at us as a monster, especially as the social media portray it to be. Yet we who carry the name of our Risen Christ forget that we have a powerful weapon in our possession – Love. Not the love that loves those who love us back, but the love that loves when we are hated, persecuted and killed.

We belong to a Church which is rich with hundreds or thousands of saints and martyrs who manifested the love of our Lord Jesus. It was on a day like today, September 10, 1946 during a train ride from Calcutta to Darjeeling for her annual retreat, that St Teresa of Calcutta, lovingly known as Mother Teresa received her inspiration, "her call within a call." It was on this day the Lord Jesus' thirst for love and for souls took hold of her heart. The desire to satiate His thirst became the driving force of her life. It is said that by means of interior locutions and visions, the Lord Jesus revealed to her the desire of His heart for "victims of love" who would "radiate His love on souls". "Come, be my light," He begged her. It is the same Lord who invites us today to be His light to His suffering world. What is our response?

We may not be asked to go to slums. The place we might be asked to go to could be our own home or workplace, where we are confronted by indifference, absence of love and kindness or harsh words. They are "the poor" whom the Lord longs to love through us. It could be the 'slum' of a public place where we are discriminated or ridiculed and laughed at. There the Lord invites us to be His light when we give an inner response to the Lord, by not reacting with sharp words, and instead, showing kindness and patience. One by one, these little acts of love collect and build up to a huge mountain of love, peace and joy in our homes, workplaces and wherever we go. Finally we hear the words of the Psalmist, saying, "Today, if only you would hear His voice, do not harden your hearts..." (Psalm 95:7c,8a). Are we ready?

Prayer: Abba Father, we thank You for revealing who You are through your Son, who taught us to love, the way You love us. Make us Your face on earth. Amen..

Know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. **Colossians 2:2-3**

Colossians 1:24-2:3

Psalms 62:6-7,9

Luke 6: 6-11

The Bible often gives us the analogy of the love between a bride and groom to depict the love Christ has for His people, the Church. Christ is always the faithful bridegroom, who loves His bride and supports her no matter what. St. Paul is using this analogy when He writes to the people of the city of Colosse. He tells them that He rejoices in suffering for them because he is following in the footsteps of Christ, who suffers for His bride. This suffering is part of the responsibilities St. Paul was entrusted with when Christ gave Him a mission. His mission is to proclaim a message that was once hidden from all people. However, after the death and resurrection of Christ this secret has been revealed to us—that Christ lives within us. The bridegroom lives inside His bride. St. Paul says when Christ lives inside us we not only share in His sufferings but also in His glory.

In the same way, when Christ entrusted us with a mission, He knew we would face joy and happiness as well as trials and temptations. Today, St. Paul is telling us to be ready for both; for the mission of Christ is fulfilled through our triumphs as well as our struggles. How can we go through these times of good and bad without losing our faith and direction? It is through our Lord Jesus Christ. Colossians 2:3 tells us “In him lie hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” This means that when we are rooted in Christ and have given Him the first place in our lives, He will give us the wisdom and knowledge we need to get through anything—either good or bad. When we see things through the light of Christ, all is changed. We do not need to rely on our limited understanding and knowledge, but instead we can receive all knowledge and understanding from Christ. This will give us the strength to face anything in life.

The Gospel proclamation shows us the wisdom of the Lord Jesus. He is the Lord and creator of the world. He knew that the Pharisees were planning to attack Him for what He was about to do. The Word says the Lord is compassionate. He felt the pain of the man with the deformed hand and therefore He was going to heal him. Today the Lord is calling us to focus on Him, so that we may understand things beyond this world- that we may have the understanding of Christ.

Prayer: Abba Father, I long to gaze on You. Give me the grace and strength to focus on Christ and not on the world. Amen.

Tuesday 12th September

*Holy Name of the
Blessed Virgin Mary*

You have been buried with him by your baptism; by which you have been raised up with him through your belief

Col 2:12

Colossians 2:6-15

Psalms 145:1-2,8-11

Luke 6: 12-19

Today's first reading takes us through a Christian belief. It is a summary of our faith and instruction on how our lives should be carried forward. Once we receive Christ as our Lord we are called to build up the faith by standing firm and in thanksgiving.

As the reading unravels there is a clear warning about holding onto human principles and philosophies, which is quite appropriate in today's context. As we are aware human principles and philosophies change according to time. Something that was a norm 50 years ago is seen as irrational today. Something that seemed irrational has become a norm and these changes are found in all aspects of life. The reading calls us to hold to our faith in this constantly changing world. In a world of confusion and calamity we are called to stand firm in faith and gaze on the Saviour. The Word of God is an instrument that makes us stay focused on our faith. Whenever we are confused, drawn to lies and human rules let us take a moment to hold on to the faith in our Lord Jesus. It is important to know and have the mind of Christ at all times.

Today's Gospel proclamation sheds light into the lifestyle of our Lord Jesus. It shows us how He prayed before He made a decision. One of the aspects in having the mind of Christ is to pray before we make a decision. However today's human principles might tell you if you prayed and you did not succeed, then the equation is prayer is useless. So there is no need to pray. If we look at the Gospel proclamation today, the Word of God says that the Lord Jesus prayed the whole night and handpicked every disciple. As you know, He also picked Judas, the one who betrayed Him. Does this then mean that the whole time spent in prayer by our Lord Jesus was useless or absurd? Certainly not. Through it all God unveils a greater plan -- the resurrection.

In our lives we too may have prayed before a job, marriage or whatever it may be and it felt like God let us down by sending us a betrayer. If we have prayed and discerned the mind of God and made a decision we know there is a greater glory. We should bear in mind that there is no resurrection without death.

Prayer: *Abba father, I have often held resentment and asked You "why me?" But today I want to surrender my life to You, for I believe in You. Amen.*

“Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.”

Luke 6: 20

Colossians 3:1-11

Psalms 145: 2-3,10-13

Luke 6: 20-26

The Lord Jesus is giving a promise to the people who are suffering from poverty. He promises one day He will take them out of poverty. As soon as we say ‘poverty’ we think of the suffering people who go through life without proper food, clothing and shelter. At the outlook of this statement we think God is promising to fulfill the basic human needs. We also think that if these necessities are fulfilled, we can live happily. But we see many who have everything that they need externally, yet are internally unhappy caught up in secret sins or addictions. Therefore there is no point in seeking solutions for external poverty without an internal life transformation.

James 2:5 says, ‘Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised to those who love him?’ St. James says that God chose the poor in the world to be rich in faith. Generally a rich person is one who can live without lacking anything externally. Such a person can live the way he or she likes; eat or dress the way he or she likes; go anywhere he or she likes and can live in their own worlds enslaved to their desires. Therefore many who are rich and powerful do not depend on God. There is no necessity for them to depend either. Thus they do not have a deep relationship with God. They do not experience the love, protection and providence of God in their lives. They think they can find the answers for anything in their lives.

St. James says, here is an opportunity to the ones who cannot look after them by themselves, to get an answer from God through faith. ‘You who are poor’ are the people who can say - I do not have an answer now; I cannot look after myself; I do not have any protection; I am enslaved; I am addicted; I have fallen to sin. With this poverty when I fall at His feet in faith, He will open to me a world that I do not know. He will open ways that I do not know. Therefore the Lord Jesus is calling us to this faith; all of us who are fallen into this poverty and are suffering. He is calling us to have a relationship with Him and to know Him more and more. When we respond to this calling, He will turn all the problems of our lives into a blessing. He will give us the grace to enter into a life of complete dependence on Him and through that gift a prosperous life that is filled with His presence.

Prayer: Abba Father, give us this day, the power to walk in faith and fall at Your feet bringing all our limitations and poverty to You. Amen.

**We honour the cross not only because a Saviour died on it
but because the Son of God forgave all.**

Numbers 21: 4-9

Psalms 78:1-2,34-38

Phil 2:6-11

John 3:13-17

It is hard to forgive. We sometimes meet examples of forgiveness in our lives and people we know near and dear to us who have let things go - especially in the family. The Lord Jesus Himself was the example of forgiveness on the cross. It is a tough call to forgive injustice and we often cannot. The cross is exalted as the sign of the Lord Jesus' forgiveness. A big challenge in our ordinary day to day existence is dealing with hurts and bitterness. What helped me to forgive was gratitude in my own life.

After my separation from my husband in 2016, there were weeks and months that passed. The resentment, guilt and anger drained the life out of everything I did. I blamed myself but I went for counselling sessions. I spoke to anyone who would listen. I use to cry into my pillow at night. I prayed. I did everything I knew to get through this. I was journeying with the Lord through the CRL and my church obligations. Soon came the 40 days Lenten Program of the CRL this year. I attended it with dedication, making a sacrifice and asking God to help me forgive and asking Him to forgive me also. I attended all 40 days and during this time the Lord spoke to my heart and asked me whether or not I would be willing to forgive my husband? I was battling my feelings. How could I forgive him when he has not only hurt me but also my children? Then a voice within gently asked: Are you ready to let go of this? To release him? To forgive yourself too?

I was trembling. Yes I was willing, I could not hold on to my anger and hate any longer, it was killing me. In that moment an incredible shift occurred within me. I simply let go. I cannot describe it. I do not know what happened to me at that moment, but I was able to do something I have resisted for so long.

All I knew was that for the first time in all my life I had surrendered to God and the Holy Spirit. I let go of the rage and resentment in a moment. Within seconds energy rushed through my body, my mind became alert, my heart lightened and I realized that even though I prayed daily I had separated myself from God. Through this miracle I was able to find Him once again. Today, He wants to give you this same encounter. All you need to do is come to Him.

Prayer: Abba Father, help me realise that to forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner is me. Amen.

“You are my rock and my fortress; for your name’s sake
lead and guide me”

Psalm 31: 4

Hebrews 5:7-9

Ps 31: 1-5, 14-19

Luke 2:33-35

or John 19: 25-27

The sovereign God became man. This truth is so difficult for the human mind to grasp. God becoming man in a womb of an ordinary woman is not actually a philosophy or any other study. But this is an act of God out of love. We are called to live in this love and love one another in this love.

This is what the author of the letter to the Hebrew’s was trying to say. The beautiful explanation about the Lord Jesus given here is that though He was the Son, yet He obeyed God. When we further reflect on the scriptures today it explains that He learned obedience from the suffering He had to go through.

This is certainly something that God speaks to us today. All of us go through suffering one way or the other. Some people go through innocent suffering whilst others go through suffering due to giving into temptation and pride. Both these sufferings we go through are for the pruning of our inner being. We human beings have complexes and our driving force within us is selfishness. We cannot help it. We are born that way. But what we cannot ignore is that the Lord Jesus Christ calls us to live in a different way, which is to go beyond our complexes.

The world’s Saviour, whilst still was on the cross gave away what was precious to Him. The person so dear and near to Him, the Blessed Mother, was given away to St. John, His beloved disciple. The scripture clearly says that St. John took the Blessed Mother into his home from that moment. Does it not denote that St. John accepted the Mother of Lord Jesus as his own mother? We can have that close relationship with the Lord Jesus only if we are ‘a beloved disciple’. We will do anything for a person we love. This is how St. John responded when he accepted the Blessed Mother.

We hold on to our ‘last will’ preciously. We want people to do exactly as it says. Here is the last will of our Lord Jesus on the cross-- to accept His mother as our mother. Are we ready to fulfill His last will? Can we accept His mother as our mother? Can we obey? Because of our pride we do not want to surrender to God. Today our invitation is clear to say ‘yes Lord’.

Prayer: Abba Father, I do not understand Your ways, but grant me the grace to trust You in obedience to do Your will. Amen.

“Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say”?

Luke 6:46

1 Tim 1:15-17

Psalm 113: 2-7

Luke 6: 43-49

We had a papaya tree in our garden. It produced the most beautiful fruits but they were tasteless. We never used these in a fruit salad, nor offered a slice to a guest. We were a little embarrassed to serve it together with the tasty fruits the rest of the trees in our garden produced.

Today the Lord is speaking to us about the quality of the fruit that we bear. “A good person brings good things out of the good stored up in the heart, and an evil person brings evil things out of the evil stored up in the heart. Today, at the click of a button we have access to brilliant sermons and almost all the versions of the Bible teachings of the church. We can follow the daily Eucharistic celebration or most programs happening at the Vatican itself. Yet, we struggle to produce good fruit when we face challenges. Our hearts go to the darkest places when we are threatened.

The Lord is asking us, “Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say”? The fruit that we produce do not reflect the Lord Jesus as the Lord of our lives. It is obvious that when the Lord asked that question He was not expecting a reply, because He continued, “Everyone who hears my words and puts them into practice, is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it.” Sometimes we feel most of the Lord’s commands are unrealistic or impossible. We feel threatened when “obey God” is mentioned. Our sinfulness prevents us from seeing that God’s ways build a firm foundation for our lives. Yet we choose to build our lives around what we feel is good for us, only to find it does not help us to withstand the challenges we face.

St. Paul reminds us, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners”. No human being can obey the commands of the Lord by their strength. The Lord has come to give me a heart of flesh that yields to God. He has poured out His spirit upon me so that obeying God becomes effortless. The Psalmist leaves us with a tool, “From the rising of the sun to its setting the name of the Lord is to be praised”. lifestyle of worship of God allows us to live under an open heaven.

Prayer: Abba Father, I thank You for the heart of flesh You have given me, Your Holy Spirit upon me and the grace to obey Your commands with all my life. Amen.

**This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you
unless you forgive... from your heart. Matthew 18:35**

Sirach 27: 30 - 28:7

Ps 103: 1-12

Rom 14: 7-9

Matthew 18:21-35

Today's first reading is disturbing. "If a person bears resentment against another, how can he or she ask for God's healing? If the person has no compassion on others, how can he or she pray for forgiveness of sins?" It reveals that if I carry a grudge, if I harbour anger and resentment, I block the power of heaven from acting in my life.

In today's Gospel proclamation, our Lord Jesus goes one step further. The servant who received mercy, lost the blessing when he did not forgive the one who had wronged him. We stand to lose whatever blessing we have had on our lives when unforgiveness reigns in our hearts.

I remember a testimony that Fr. Augustine Vallooran once shared at the Divine Retreat Center, Potta. He had just preached a talk about forgiveness. A man walked up to him and told him that forgiveness was impossible for him and that had Fr. Vallooran been through what he had been through, he too would not be able to forgive.

He went on to tell his story. His wife died while giving birth to their only child, a daughter. He brought up his daughter as a single parent under difficult circumstances and she was the apple of his eye. He was a poor man, yet from his daughter's youngest days, he would put away something for her dowry. In India, dowry is a big deal. Marriages are made or ruined based on the dowry. There have been incidents of brides being killed or mistreated because of the dowry. The man did not want this fate to befall his daughter. So, he diligently saved money for her dowry.

The daughter was now of a marriageable age and a prospective bridegroom was visiting them. The man went to the bank and brought home the dowry, which had now grown into a considerable sum. A neighbour, on hearing that the man had some money with him, approached him and asked him for a loan, promising to return the money before the prospective bridegroom arrived the next day. The kind-hearted man obliged.

The following day, when he went to collect the money, the neighbour shouted at him and said "Old man, I never took any money from you. You must be crazy." There was nothing more the man could do. His family was humiliated and the marriage did not materialise. He was

angry; very angry. He was so angry and bitter that he was not able to sleep. A friend, seeing his state, sent him to the Divine Retreat Centre for a retreat.

The man asked Father Vallooran, "What would you do if you were in my shoes?" Father Vallooran replied, "I do not know my Son, but the Bible tells us that we must forgive." The man went back home, his problem unresolved. As he continued to struggle with insomnia, he thought to himself, "what have I got to lose", and walked to his neighbour's house and knocked on the door. The neighbour on seeing the man, started shouting "Old man if you do not have money to marry off your daughter, do not take it out on us." The man stopped him mid-sentence and said "You know the truth. I know the truth. I came here today to tell you that I forgive you", and he walked back home.

The first thing that happened was that after a long time the man had a good night's sleep. The following morning, he woke to the sound of violent banging on his door. His neighbour was there with all the money he had taken. He was shouting "Take this, Take this! It is burning me, It is burning me!"

When the man forgave, supernatural power was released into his circumstances. God started working in his problem and heaven invaded earth.

Sometimes we just cannot forgive, especially in cases of marital unfaithfulness. We may find it difficult to move past our hurts and wounds to forgive another. It is then that we can use the gift of the four steps. In the first step, we come as we are, in our anger and bitterness. In the second step, we give the Lord the truth about our inability to forgive, just like our Lord gave the truth about how He felt at the garden of Gethsemane. In the third step, we surrender our lives to Him, becoming His own. Today's second reading confirms this, that He came to make us His own and to be the Lord. As we do that, just as an angel from heaven comforted our Lord in the garden of Gethsemane, there will be divine intervention in our circumstances. The Lord will meet our innermost needs, and release us from our dependency on others. At some point, we will be released to forgive and the Lord will intervene in our circumstances, just like He did with the man in the testimony and do the unexpected and improbable.

Prayer: Abba Father, I was bitter and my heart was closed to You because I was holding on to my expectations of others. Today I release them by asking You to forgive them. Bless them and do good to them. As I open myself to You, I am assured of Your intervention; that You will meet my needs in a miraculous way. Thank You Lord. Amen.

“Therefore I want the men everywhere to pray,
lifting up holy hands without anger or disputing” 1 Timothy 2:8

1 Timothy 2:1-8

Psalm 28:2. 7-9

Luke 7: 1-10

Today we live in a world where every time we read or watch the news we are faced with some new horror. Hundreds of thousands are dying in Africa, thousands tortured and killed in the Middle east and in our beloved mother land, we are told of innumerable stories of injustice, malice and cruelty. Where is God we ask? How do we face these issues? We blame the politicians, we

speculate on their many wrongs and we talk ourselves to death over the solutions that we think need to be implemented.

In the letter to the early Christians, St. Timothy urges the people of those days to pray for all the peoples – especially for those in authority. The times of the early Christians were not times of peace – people were tortured, murdered and crucified – all at the whim of some man in authority. The rich lived in comfort while the poor suffered until death. But instead of complaining about those in authority or condemning them, St. Timothy tells the Christians that they should all, as one, lift up holy hands in prayer without anger or dispute and pray for those in authority that peace may reign over their lives.

In the Gospel proclamation today we are reminded of the faith of the centurion, a man in authority whose amazing faith enabled his servant to be healed. We are not told anything more about this man except that he had a faith that surprised the Son of Man. The Lord Jesus praises this man of authority and his faith is honoured by all of us every time we repeat his words during mass.

Timothy reminds us that there is only one God. Only one mediator between man and God and that is Jesus Christ. He who gave His life for all of us – the good and bad alike. As hard as it is to understand, God loves all people equally – even those that we deem cruel, unjust and in places of power they do not deserve. Our God, who is all loving and who is unfathomable in His mercy and wisdom calls us to love all these people too. God is the one and true judge – He will look after His people, in His own ways and in His own time. All we have to do is stop talking and start praying for them.

Prayer: Abba Father, I lift up my hands to You today, along with all my brothers and sisters and I offer our world to You. God, this world is broken and hurting and there is no solution other than Your love. Save Your people O Lord, be our shepherd and carry us forever. Amen.

Then He went and touched the coffin and those carrying it stood still. He said "Young man, I say to you get up!" **Luke 7:13**

1 Tim 3: 1-13

Psalms 101: 1-6

Luke 7:11-17

As the Lord Jesus went to a town called Nain, He sees a large crowd and notices that a widow of that town has lost her only son, who is now carried in a coffin. "When the Lord saw her, His heart went out to her and said, "do not cry". Then He went and touched the coffin and those carrying it stood still. He said "Young man, I say to you get up!" (Luke 7:13-14)

We identify 3 commands that the Lord Jesus gave to activate the miracle. First, he told the mother of the boy to stop crying. This is out of the ordinary. The Lord knew that this woman had lost her only son whom she thought of as her only hope and purpose of life. Anyone with a healthy mind would not say such a thing. But the Lord's thoughts were not limited to worldly standards and every word that He spoke had power. As we read the Gospel proclamation we can imagine that the widow immediately stopped crying and that is when the Lord Jesus takes the 2nd step on the road to the miracle that He is to perform.

Secondly, as He touched the coffin the ones carrying it stood still. These men stood still for two reasons. One is because as soon as the Lord Jesus commanded the mother to stop crying she did and after that He came near them and touched the coffin. They knew that the Lord Jesus was in charge of the situation from that point onwards. But for the Lord to perform the miracle He had to speak to the dead. Most of us will not speak to a dead body with the conviction and attitude that the dead body is alive and can listen to us. The Lord quietened the mother because if she was silenced everyone else would become silent. He wanted everyone to become still so that the dead could hear the voice of God in the stillness and quietness of this world. The dead boy heard the voice of God and that is when he sat up and began to talk. For God to speak to us we need to stop worrying about the problem in front of us and focus on the promise of God and then be still and believe that He is in control.

Finally when we take the 1st two steps- when we will hear Him speak to us and instruct us- thirdly, we will see the hand of God in our problem just as the widow witnessed the hand of God is her problem.

Prayer: Abba Father, we pray to give us the grace to see Your hand and hold onto Your promise when we go through troubled waters in life. Amen.

Wednesday 20th September

St. Andrew KimTae-gon

St. Paul Chong Ho-sang

**“You showed powerful deeds to your people,
giving them the lands of the nations”**

Psalm 111:6

1 Tim 3: 14-16

Psalm 111:1-6

Luke 7: 31-35

St. Paul's missionary activity has blossomed. St. Paul went out to the Gentiles and had gained grounds for the Kingdom of God. The unseen omnipotent and omnipresent God became a tangible experience to human kind. This is the mystery which St. Paul proclaimed to Timothy in this passage. It is a message to us in the present era.

This God who is Spirit is also flesh. This is a contrast, but actual. This God who had been seen by angels has now been proclaimed to the Gentiles, which is complementing. The proclamation of God by His chosen people has gained grounds for Him in the world by believing and seeing the glory of God, which means the unseen God who was in Spirit alone became an experience to the sensory beings by coming to the world in the form of matter. Is this not a mystery? Are we not dealing with the mysteries of God?

The Gospel proclamation is mysterious. St. John the Baptist was judged and persecuted. He is a great character who lived the will of God to the utmost. People judged him and persecuted him because they could not understand him and fathom his outward appearance and actions. This is what happens to those who are touched by God and called by Him for a mission. The outside world will never know the internal journey of a person. The outside world will always judge the person by the outward appearance.

The Lord Jesus was also judged and persecuted in the same manner. No matter what God offers us, our inability to touch the realm of the Spirit makes us blind. When a person's inner being is lit and touched by the Holy Spirit, that person is converted intellectually, morally, psychologically, religiously and spiritually. This conversion in all these aspects is necessary. We human beings cannot do so but the Holy Spirit can do it in us. St. Andrew Kim Taegon (Priest & martyr) and Paul Chong Hasang & companions were martyred for being witnesses during the evangelization in Korea. They were touched by the love of God, encountered the Risen Lord and proclaimed with their mouth that the Lord Jesus is the Lord. They lived their calling and were indeed saved. They were martyred in the 19th century during the terrible persecution in Korea.

Prayer: Abba Father, call me to be a fearless evangelizer of Your great love to continue the mission of Christ. Amen.

Thursday 21st September

*St. Matthew
Apostle & Evangelist*

“I desire mercy, not sacrifice. For I have come to call
not the righteous but sinners.”

Matthew 9:13

Eph 4: 1-7, 11-13

Ps 19: 2-3, 4-5

Matt 9:9-13

In the letter to the Ephesians, St. Paul writes that of all gifts of God to the Church, the apostles have the task of spreading the faith. It is not only for the apostles, every Christian who accepts Christ as Lord has this mission. I believe as a Christian, one of the primary ways to draw people close to Christ and to plant a seed of faith in their hearts is through our words, behavior, responses and communication. We are here to reflect the Lord Jesus' nature. Yet, it is not easy. We as human beings are far from His nature. But the good news is we can start by having a relationship with the Lord. We become like the one whom we spend more time with.

Today's Gospel proclamation speaks on the call of the tax-collector whose feast the Church celebrates today. St. Matthew, a tax collector and a sinner was called by the Son of God who is perfect in nature. It amazes me to know the love of God that relentlessly seeks after sinners. In fact, it was the greatest accusation the Lord Jesus had from the religious leaders. In this world we are attracted to the rich, beautiful, strong and the powerful people and things because we wish to be like them and we also think that the Lord Jesus is also attracted to the holy, righteous and perfect people. But when we read the Gospels we know that the Lord was attracted to the broken, poor and the lost. That is why the Gospel of Luke says “The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10). If you truly understand this truth, it will sweep you away. It is huge. I myself know the worth of His calling. It is the Lord Jesus who came seeking me and saved me from the pit I was in. I was lost, broken, rejected and caught up in my own broken nature. But God found me, made me whole, set me free, accepted me, adopted me, healed me and lifted my face to look upon the Lord Jesus. Now He lets me go everywhere and shout His praise from the rooftops. I do not know why He chose me or how this happened. All I know is that my eyes are forever on Him.

St. Matthew's life was changed when he decided to follow the Lord Jesus. Transformation came from within that set him on fire for the Lord. He proclaimed the Good News and gave up his life for Christ. It started with a simple decision to follow the Lord Jesus. Let us never think we are too weak to follow the Lord Jesus. He came for us.

Prayer: *Abba Father, I have decided to follow Your Son whole heartedly because it is in having a relationship with Him that I am saved. Amen.*

Learn to be content with what you have

1 Tim 6: 2-12

Psalms 49: 6-10, 17-20

Luke 8: 1-3

There are many words of wisdom in the Word for today. Most of them are concerned with dealing with riches and being content with what we have. In today's world our role models and the people we hold up with esteem are those who have accumulated wealth and made a name for themselves.

Articles and news features on the rich and successful carry pictures of smiling and seemingly satisfied people. But let us ask ourselves if this is the reality. Most business people or corporate leaders are hard pressed for time. Every passing whim and fancy becomes an opportunity to make money and earn a lucrative return. While it may not be wrong, striking the right balance is where the real challenge lies.

It is not only the super rich who are at fault. If we look into our lives, accumulation and consumerism have begun to play a major role. If we look at the contents of our home, our clothes cupboards and storerooms we will find so much that we thought would be useful and are now lying unused. With the arrival of online shopping things are a click away and delivered home. We have unwittingly stepped into the world of greed and selfishness.

In this context, let us review what St. Paul tells us. He says - We brought nothing into the world and we will leave with nothing. He adds those who strive to be rich fall into temptation and traps. The love of money is the root of every evil. Simply said, if we live to accumulate more and more of anything, we will ruin our lives. The principle of life is that we must have balance and as much as we have an inflow we must have an outflow. Many families, friends and relationships have been shattered due to the love for money, property and wealth.

In the Gospel proclamation we see a beautiful and yet simple example of women who supported the Lord Jesus out of their own resources and took care of Him as He built the Kingdom of God. Our call is not to identify people who have failed but to respond to the example of the holy women in the Lord Jesus' time and give our best to building the Kingdom of God. If we truly believe in looking after the Lord's needs, we will be looked after by the Lord. Let us become rich in generosity and quick to let go.

Prayer: Abba Father, release us from the love of money and the flesh. Amen.

“To you it had been given to know the secrets of the Kingdom of God”

Luke 8:10

1 Tim 6: 13-16

Psalms 100:1-5

Luke 8: 4-15

The Gospel proclamation today speaks of the different kinds of hearts that we carry as ground for the seeds of the Word of God to be planted. The Lord Jesus warns us of what happens the moment when the seed is planted in our hearts. Just as quickly, the devil comes to steal the seed. For this reason it is important that we have a heart prepared to receive the seed. A heart that is hard, shallow or thorny will not produce a harvest.

In my own life I have experienced the power of the spoken Word. It has come through scripture itself or by way of a word of knowledge. The moment I claimed it the next moment a doubt would creep in negating the Word already spoken. Therefore we need to digest the words of affirmation that we receive, meditate on them and let them seep deep into the Spirit where the devil can neither reach or steal.

The Lord Jesus tells the disciples they have been given the secrets of the Kingdom of God. Do we not all crave to know these secrets? Do we not want to know the mind of God concerning every area of our lives-- be it finances, career or marriage? We need to have a good and honest heart that is well prepared and open to hear the instructions of the Holy Spirit.

The life of St. Padre Pio, whose feast we celebrate today, is the perfect example of a man with such an honest and good heart. The saintly life of St. Padre Pio has fascinated me. My interest in him grew further when a few months ago, I visited his native place in Italy. I was able to see his incorruptible body. He was famous for his powerful confession hearings and intercession power. At his shrine I placed all the requests and suddenly experienced a strong tobacco fragrance although nobody was smoking in the area.

Upon my return, I located the one and only shrine dedicated to Padre Pio in Athurugiriya. The parish priest says that people who come there experience the fragrance of tobacco-- a sign that he is interceding for us. The fragrance of tobacco or roses also emanated from his stigmata. It is very likely that St. Padre Pio chewed on every scripture word and let it seep deep into his spirit.

Prayer: Abba Father, give us the love for Your Word and the freedom to meditate on it on a daily basis and apply it to our lives. Amen.

**Seek the Lord while he may be found;
call on him while he is near.**

Isaiah 55:6

Isaiah 55: 6-9

Ps 145: 2-3, 8-9, 17-18

Phil 1: 20-27

Matt 20: 1-16

When we are disappointed, a quick trip to Egypt seems a good getaway. Instead of going to God, seeking human answers to our problems seems more attractive. In today's first reading God says, "Seek the Lord while he may be found, call on him while he is near". When we feel threatened, we act on impulse. So God says "let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts". In the heart of a crisis, we stop listening to God, we turn wicked and unrighteous. God gives us a direction to handle a crisis, seek Him before our understanding and perceptions blind us to God's leading.

Recently, right before my wicked and unrighteous thoughts took control of my actions, I remembered something one of our elders told us, "Guard your hearts against your own perceptions that makes you deaf to the voice of God". Guarding my heart slowly became effortless as I held on to Romans 10:9 "If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved". Soon, I started to see the whole situation in a new light. When my focus shifted to God I realized it was God's plan all along, for spiritual maturity, purification and holiness.

God can prevent bad things from happening to us, yet most of the time we feel He does not. He allows us to walk through the valley of death and to be thrown into the fiery furnace. He allows a Judas into our inner-circle and a Goliath to abuse and create doubts in the armies of the living God. God is reminding us today, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways". In the heart of the crisis, when we abandon our ways and seek God, we begin to hear His voice and understand His ways. He reminds us, without the terrible crucifixion, there could not have been a glorious resurrection.

The Parable of the Workers in the vineyard speaks to us about the heart of God. Early in the morning he goes out and hires the best workers. He keeps going back until the 11th hour and keeps hiring, even the workers no one else wanted. Then He pays them all equally.

The Lord compares the Kingdom of God to a vineyard. He speaks to us about the mercy of God which is available equally to the sinner and the saint. He speaks to us about the God who never stops going

after the broken, the weak, the abandoned and the sinners.

Then what about the workers who have been working from early in the morning? Why were they not paid extra? After all, they worked longer and harder. As servers there are moments that we too feel like the servants who were hired in the morning. When those who came last are made first, the little green monster in us raises its head.

When our hearts are unguarded we get discouraged easily. A little rejection or difficulty discourages us. Just like the workers who came first, if we too have been looking for human appreciation as payment for our work in His vineyard, we are equally as lost as those who were in the streets. The Lord is reminding us today, that we need His mercy to return to Him and we need His favour to remain in Him.

In his letter to the Philippians St. Paul is equally excited about the two choices he has before him-- to live in the mission of Christ or die and be united with Him forever. There is a huge gap between the way I think and St. Paul's excitement. The gap is created by my sinful nature. I have brought the attitudes and expectations of the world into the places where I serve.

Unlike St. Paul, I am excited when I am appreciated, discouraged when I am not. Yet, here I am up to this moment, thinking that I was better than the workers who were hired in the morning. It frightens me to think that I am not even close to the attitude of St. Paul, glorifying the Lord in life and in death.

St. Paul was living Romans 10:9. He believed in His heart the Lord is risen and alive and it made Him bold and fearless. He proclaimed Jesus is Lord at the cost of his life and heaven opened for him. He was persecuted, tortured and imprisoned, yet he could not be broken. It was as though the more he was persecuted the more he became aware of the risen Christ and less of his persecutors.

The Lord is reminding me today to shift my focus from my enemies to Him. He has conquered death. He is victorious. When I accept Him as the Lord of my life He will give me a heart of flesh and He will put His spirit upon me today. Living under His lordship will become effortless. Heaven will open for me. The Lord Jesus will be exalted in my life and in my death. Then just St. Paul was excited about life or death, I too will be able to rejoice in any season of my life. Be it in good times or bad.

Prayer: Abba Father, thank You for coming looking for me when I was lost in my ways. Give me the grace to exalt You throughout this day; in everything I say and in everything I do. Amen.

God can do mighty things by allowing the light within us to influence the world around us

Ezra 1:1-6

Ps 126: 1-6

Luke 8: 16-18

Through an unexpected instrument, Cyrus, the King of Persia issues a proclamation throughout his kingdom, inspiring the chosen people of God to rebuild the Temple of Jerusalem. I find it hard to believe that such inspirational words could come from a gentile king. I started wondering how he could have the insight to speak such powerful words. Later, I discovered that Daniel had served in the courts of King Cyrus. Could it be that Daniel had influenced the king?

In today's Gospel proclamation, our Lord Jesus says, "No one who lights a lamp conceals it with a vessel or sets it under a bed". As I reflect, I think the Lord is telling us, that God can do mighty things by allowing the light within us to influence the world around us.

Fr. Oscar Abayaratne, the spiritual father of the Pubuduwa, once shared how it all began. It was 1971 and he was going through a traumatic experience in the aftermath of the armed insurrection. The Cardinal had sent him abroad, hoping that he would find a way to deal with the crisis through retreats, reflection and prayer. It was there that he met Fr. Valerian Godet, a giant in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. When none of the retreats seemed to help, Fr. Godet, invited Fr. Oscar to spend a few days with a family involved in Charismatic Renewal. One day during breakfast, the family was debating whether to go for a party or not. The father of the family, I think his name was Bob Balkan, said "Let us ask the Lord what he wants us to do". Fr. Oscar was taken aback. "Will the Lord come in person and speak to him?" he thought to himself. The next day at breakfast, as they were checking the mail, Bob declared that the Lord wanted them to go for the party. A business associate had sent him a letter and had wanted to meet him at the party to discuss an important matter. This incident was the catalyst that made God come alive to Fr. Oscar. Bob Balkan was neither a preacher nor a widely known leader. Yet, by simply living under the lordship of our Lord Jesus, he allowed God to do much more than all those retreats ever did, pull down power from heaven to inspire and touch a person in crisis. Fr. Oscar in turn gave birth to a revival movement that swept throughout our country.

Prayer: Abba Father, I never realised that You impacted others when I give You inner responses. Help me to be surrendered to You in the secret places of my life. Amen.

“Blessed are those who hear the word of God and obey it.”

Luke11:28

Ezra 6: 7-8, 12,14-20

Psalm 122: 1-5

Luke 8: 19-21

We have here, the ruling of Cyrus for the building of the temple enforced by a new order from Darius for the perfecting of that work. The solemn dedication of it when it was built and the inauguration of it with the celebration of the Passover. We see here that God’s work is perfect and even though it may be slow at times it will be the best outcome.

David penned this Psalm for the people of Israel, who came up to Jerusalem to worship at the three solemn feasts. It describes the joy with which they would go up to Jerusalem with and the great esteem they were to have of Jerusalem.

In the Gospel we see that our Lord Jesus has no preference over His own blood relations in comparison to all who hear and obey the Word of God. “My mother and brothers are those who hear God’s word and put it into practice.”

If we look close at what our Lord Jesus is saying He is not interested in worldly relationships but the relationship we have with the Word of God and our obedience to it. How many a times would I have listened to the Word of God? Do I remember even what I heard in one such instance? And why is that? Often when we listen or hear the Word of God we do so with our physical ears and do not open our inner ears of faith. So the Word just passes us by. It has no meaning, power or purpose in our lives.

Today, God is inviting us to a deeper relationship with Him. To do this we should obey the Word of God. How do I do that? Our first thought is, it is not practical. Yes, it is so if we try to obey the Word of God by our own efforts. That is why we need to start having a personal relationship with God through the 4 steps – by coming to God as we are and giving Him the truth of our lives in surrender to His will. We are then filled by the Holy Spirit. We then are able to open our ears of faith and listen to the Word of God. We are able to follow His Word and live as He wants us to live. The more we are able to live each minute of our day in the Spirit- getting back to God when we fall through the 4 steps – then obeying God’s Word becomes our way of life.

Prayer: Abba Father, we pray for Your blessing of a close relationship with the Holy Spirit through our personal prayer so that we will be able to live our lives according to Your word. Amen.

*“Arise, shine for your light has come”**Isaiah 60:1- 3*

Ezra 9: 5-9

Tb 13: 24, 7-8

Luke 9: 1-6

In today's Gospel proclamation we reflect on the event of the Lord Jesus sending out the twelve disciples together. It is significant to see that the Lord does not send them empty handed, but instead sends them out with power and authority to drive out demons and cure diseases (Luke 9:1).

The Lord Jesus proclaims in Luke 10:19 that, “I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy”. The Lord confirms that he has given us, all power and authority to overcome the darkness wherever we go. Therefore, just as the disciples, we too are called to not live in the natural tendency of the human nature of being self dependent, but instead to be surrendered and live through the power of the Holy Spirit in this journey. It is amazing to see that the Lord Jesus sends us out today to proclaim the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick (Luke 9:2). The authority to carry God's Kingdom and to heal the sick come from the Lord and both are given hand in hand to us.

This Gospel proclamation is said to be the very model of the community and ministry lived out by St. Francis of Assisi. The very heart of St. Francis was that the answer to the world's problems was for people to simply start living the Gospel. The advice of St. Francis was to “preach the Gospel at all times and, if necessary, use words”. Being a layman all his life, he carried the zeal and mission to shed light on the world without having restrictions and constraints.

“Arise, shine for your light has come, and the Glory of the Lord rises upon you” (Is 60:1). We were not created to strive on our own, to live and die for our selves, but instead we were born to carry God's presence into the very heart of the world where we are placed and to live to transform the world. Darkness and hopelessness cannot co-exist and survive where the light of the Lord is moving. Today we are called to host the presence of God, to live in an awareness of Him and centered on His presence living in us. There His presence begins to move into the lives of those whom we encounter, day in and day out. This is what it means to live the Gospel. To touch people with the presence of God through the way we live our lives.

Prayer: *Abba Father, let Your Kingdom come and Your will be done on earth today as it is in Heaven. Amen.*

“Give careful thought to your ways”...

Haggai 1:5

Hg 1:1-8

Psalms 149: 1-6, 8-9

Luke 9: 7-9

The first reading gives us an instance where the Lord spoke to His people through the prophet Haggai. Through this, He is also speaking to us today. Most often in our daily life, our first priority is to fulfill our physical and emotional needs. These could be basic needs such as hunger and shelter, but for most of us it would be our physical comforts. Even our emotional needs would be similar, such as being loved, receiving recognition and being accepted. But what about fulfilling our spiritual needs? Our reply may be that we pray first thing in the morning. But what about during the rest of the day? Is prayer and our connection with the Lord our main focus or does our focus shift back to our comforts?

The present times focus extensively on everyone's rights. There are even instances where animal rights and the right to same gender marriages take precedence compared to basic human rights. Such issues receive high publicity. Sadly there is little emphasis on each one's obligations. The Lord reminds us today in Haggai 1:5 “Give careful thought to your ways”. Are my ways pleasing to God? Am I pleasing God in the way I relate to my family and those around me? Do I spend most of my time fulfilling my wants and needs or do I seek the will of the Lord and what He wants me to do?

In the first reading the Lord called the people to build the temple of the Lord, so that they could spend time in prayer and worship. In the temple of the Lord, the Lord Jesus comes looking for us, to love, forgive and call us into His presence. The Lord knows our weaknesses and strengths. We can please Him only through the power of the Holy Spirit. The Lord reminds in Luke 24:49 “I am going to send you what my Father has promised, but remain in the city till you have been clothed with power from on high.”

Saint Wenceslaus was born probably in 903 and died in 935. He received a Christian education. After the death of his Christian father, his mother, a heathen, opposed Christianity. He was a virtuous ruler but at the instigation of his mother, he was hacked to death by his brother. Years later his brother repented of his deed, and ordered Wenceslaus' remains to be moved to the Church of St. Vitus in Prague.

Prayer: *Abba Father, help me to see everything as You see it and not from my limited, worldly sight. Give me the grace to change my ways to Your ways. Amen.*

Friday 29th September

*Archangels Michael,
Gabriel, Raphael*

Knowing God and loving Him with the help of the Archangels

Dn 7:9-10, 13-14
or Rev 12:7-12

Psalm 138:1-5

John 1:47-51

God knows us personally. He knows our joys and sorrows, our successes and failures, our strengths and weaknesses, our faith, our plans, needs, hopes and dreams.

Today, in St. John's Gospel proclamation, Nathanael was amazed that the Lord Jesus knew that he was a true Israelite. Nathanael told the Lord, "How do you know me?" The Lord Jesus said, "Before Philip called you, I saw you under the fig tree." God does not only know each of us personally but He also loves us unconditionally despite everything. The first reading from the Book of Daniel speaks of a vision of the Son of Man, the One in whom and through whom the salvation of God's people came to be recognized. The Book of Daniel writes, "His rule is an everlasting rule which will never pass away, and his kingship will never come to an end." Visualize that. Our salvation is happening in the present time, as long as we keep on giving God a "yes" and participate in His plan of salvation. How everlasting, how enormous and great is God's love for us. We are undeniably blessed by God, especially through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Do we know God? How much do we love Him? We most often know and love God through prayer, in our religious lives, through our ministries, and in our relationships with other individuals. We know and love God through our partaking in the Sacraments, through the Word of God and reflection and through our studies of theology. We know God through the life, death and resurrection of His Son Jesus Christ. So we have countless ways of knowing and loving God. St. Augustine says in the book Confessions, "Lord, let me know myself, let me know You."

But how about knowing and loving God with the support of the Archangels Michael, Gabriel and Raphael, whose feast we celebrate today? Michael, in Jewish meaning "who is like God," appears twice in the Old Testament and twice in the New Testament. He is the guardian of the chosen people, both Christians and Jews, lead of the Heavenly Host against Satan and defender of Christians at the hour of death. We can learn from each of these angels.

Prayer: Abba Father, we pray that we may know You more. In times of afflictions that we may become closer to You. That we may learn more about You through Your Archangels. Amen.

The mountain tops are glorious, but it is in the valleys that we grow.

Zec 2: 5-9, 14-15

Jer 31: 10, 11-13

Luke 9: 43-45

In today's Gospel proclamation we are told that the people were awestruck by the signs and wonders of the Lord Jesus. He told them, "Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you. The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men." The Lord Jesus was referring to His crucifixion. To show mankind the magnitude of God's love for all, it was necessary for the Lord Jesus to go through the agony of Gethsemane and Calvary. The vision was to show that God is love. Even if we betray, deny, desert Him, whip and strip Him and hang Him on a cross like a criminal God still loves us.

When we experience this amazing grace, unconditional love and the infinite mercy of God, we need to give it to others. What we freely received must also be freely given. Otherwise our God experience may not be genuine.

In the sermon on the Mount the Lord Jesus tells us, "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in Heaven. If you love only those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mathew 5: 43-48).

Many people have different opinions of what perfection means. But in these verses the Author of Life tells us what perfection means. He says that when we are filled and refilled by the power of His Holy Spirit we will be able to forgive as the Lord forgives. We will have the power to love our enemies, bless those who curse us, help those who hurt us and pray for those who persecute us. That is the meaning of perfection.

The Lord's words are a command. When we obey the command, God enters the situation however bad it may be. He settles the crisis in a manner we cannot understand or imagine and it will be for the common good of all. As we obey this command the Lord gradually liberates us from self-interest and we become 'other centred'. We realise that we will be happy only when we make others happy.

Prayer: *Abba Father, give us the power to forgive just as You forgive us. Amen.*

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