

A photograph of a priest in green vestments with white ermine-trimmed sleeves, with his hands clasped over a silver chalice containing red wine. The background is a dark green textured surface.

Springs of Living Water

Daily Spiritual Reflections

**Body of Christ,
save me**

**Blood of Christ,
inebriate me.**

JUNE - JULY 2013

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No. 4

Springs of
Living Water

Daily Spiritual Reflections

JUNE - 2013



MONTHLY INTENTION

GENERAL INTENTION:

Mutual Respect. That a culture of dialogue, listening, and mutual respect may prevail among peoples.

MISSIONARY INTENTION:

New Evangelization. That where secularization is strongest, Christian communities may effectively promote a new evangelization.

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Eucharistic Wonder

In the gift of the Holy Eucharist, Jesus has given us what may be considered in a sense the greatest of miracles. The Eucharist is a divine marvel by which Christ, through the ministry of the priest, makes present His saving death and Resurrection for our salvation and participation in divine life.

Unlike most miracles, which are unique, one-time events, the Holy Eucharist is a divine treasure available to us in a daily liturgical celebration and through the reserved presence of Christ in the tabernacle. It remains a profound mystery of faith. While the Eucharist makes Jesus present to the Church, it is not a repetition of the Cross and Resurrection. We do not crucify Jesus again, nor does He rise once more from the grave. Jesus suffered, died, and rose only once. Pope John Paul II reminds us that there is a 'oneness in time' among the events that happened at the Last Supper, on Calvary, and at the Empty Tomb - and a "oneness in time" between those events and today's Mass.

The Last Supper was more than a sacred meal; it was also a sacrificial event. The sacrificed Passover lamb symbolized this truth. But more importantly, Christ's words of institution teach us the sacrificial meaning of the Eucharist. He said that the bread, now become His Body, would be '*given up*' for us, meaning that He would lay down His life for our salvation. In consecrating the wine to become His Blood, He noted that His Blood would be '*poured out*' for us, meaning that He would shed His Blood to save us.

"Jesus did not simply state that what he was giving them to eat and drink was His Body and Blood; He also expressed *its sacrificial meaning* and made sacramentally present His sacrifice which would soon be offered on the Cross for the salvation of all" (Ecclesia de Eucharistia, no. 12).

The miracles of Jesus caused amazement and radical wonder in those who witnessed them: "*... the throng wondered, when they saw the dumb speaking, the maimed whole, the lame walking, and the blind*

seeing; and they glorified the God of Israel” (Mt 15:31). When Jesus healed the paralytic who had been lowered into a house through the roof, the onlookers “were all amazed and glorified God, saying, ‘We never saw anything like this!’” (Mk 2:12).

Wonder and amazement are ordinary reactions to extraordinary events, whether feats of strength, demonstrations of remarkable intelligence, or outstanding achievements in various fields. But in Scripture the reactions to miracles often move people to glorify God, to sense the presence of the divine, to be filled with awe before the mystery of God’s mighty deeds. In these cases, wonder and awe are preludes to faith for many people. When the miracles are seen to be revelations of God’s power and mercy, they are also perceived to be invitations to a faith relationship with the Lord.

Since we celebrate the Holy Mass very often, it becomes routine and dry. Pope John Paul II invites us to rediscover the sense of wonder and awe each time we celebrate the Eucharist: *“This amazement should always fill the Church assembled for the celebration of the Eucharist. But in a special way it should fill the minister of the Eucharist. For it is he who, by the authority given him in the sacrament of priestly ordination, effects the consecration. I would like to rekindle this Eucharistic ‘amazement’” (Ecclesia de Eucharistia, nos. 5-6).*

We will be celebrating the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ this month. May it be an occasion for us all to gaze at the Eucharist with the eyes of a child filled with amazement for what is happening before our eyes. The mystery of the Eucharist should come alive to us in celebration (Holy Mass) and prayer (adoration). Fr. Pius James D’Souza in this issue explains the significance of Melchizedek, King of Salem who is presented to us in the first reading on the feast of Corpus Christi.

At the end we should be moved to say, *“Not unto us, dear Lord, but to you alone be the glory” (Ps 115:1).*

Fr Silvestre D’Souza, OCD
Editor

June 1

Saturday

Memorial of St Justin, Martyr

Sir 51: 12-20; Ps 18: 8-11; Mk 11: 27-33

The gift of wisdom

In the Old Testament there is a special place for wisdom. It is not just knowledge, rather it is a synonym to the second person of the Trinity - Jesus Christ! God was pleased that Solomon more than anything asked for this Wisdom.

We can conclude on the following from today's first reading:

1. Wisdom has to be sought - in prayer. For God is the author of wisdom. He will give it/Him to anyone who seeks.
2. It doesn't mean that wisdom will be granted only to intellectuals. No, it will be granted to anyone who is ready to be taught.
3. *With her help I made progress... when I put this wisdom into practice... I progressed.* However much we may read the Bible, until we put it into practice what we have read, it will not benefit us, we will not progress.

In today's Gospel we have the Chief priests, teachers of the law and elders questioning Jesus. However, they didn't want to be taught, instructed, and corrected. They were only concerned about their worldly life and privileges. Jesus' life and his teaching were a threat to their status and power. They wanted to put Jesus to shame in public. That's why Jesus refuses to answer them.

What is your search? You will find only that what you search. Let our search be divine. *"Do not work for food that perishes..."* (Jn 6: 27), rather *"first search for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and everything will be given to you"* (Mt 6: 33)

Today we celebrate the memory of St Justin, the martyr. He was a passionate seeker of truth. Initially he was attracted by the philosophy of Plato. Later, he found that Christianity answered the great questions about life and existence better than any philosophies. He is considered as the first Christian Philosopher. He combined Christianity with the best elements in Greek Philosophy. Justine was beheaded in Rome in 165 for his staunch adherence to Christianity.

Prayer: Lord, help me to seek wisdom and be taught by You. Amen.

June 2

Sunday

**Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ
(Corpus Christi)**

Gen 14: 18-20; Ps 109: 1-4; 1 Cor 11: 23-26; Lk 9: 11-17

Eucharist: gift and responsibility

While the institution of the Eucharist is celebrated on Holy (Maundy) Thursday, the liturgy on that day also commemorates Christ's New Commandment (John 13: 34) - the washing of the disciples' feet, the institution of the priesthood and the agony in the Garden of Gethsemane.



For this reason, the Feast of Corpus Christi was established to create a feast focused solely on the Holy Eucharist. In many parts of the world, there will be a solemn and joyful procession of the Blessed Sacrament through the parish grounds or even through the public streets.

Tradition: It is worth stressing that it is not a contemporary invention but has a long history in Christian tradition. Knowing that He must leave this earth and return to His Father as soon as He had accomplished the work of our redemption by His death, Jesus would not leave us alone in this valley of tears. He instituted the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist, in which He left us His whole self as our food in the Holy Eucharist. He instituted this Sacrament of love in order to be with us to the end of the world. People feel great tenderness and devotion when they go to Jerusalem and visit the cave where the Incarnate Word was born, the hall where He was scourged, the hill of Calvary on which He died, and the tomb where He was buried. How much greater should our tenderness be when we visit an altar on which Jesus remains in the Most Holy Sacrament! Jesus Christ has concealed His majesty in the Sacrament, under the appearance of bread, in order to give us more confidence, and to take away our fear

of approaching Him. He remains day and night on our altars so that He may be found by all and so that He may grant favors to all. The word 'Eucharist' (eucharistia) comes from a Greek word meaning 'thanksgiving'. We remember and we give thanks. This is reinforced as we bear in mind everything that God has done for us in Jesus Christ through His life, His teaching, His suffering, death and resurrection. We also remember and give thanks for our own personal experiences of being touched by God's love in our lives. It is a time to count our blessings.

A sacrament: The Mass is a sacrament. That means it is a sign pointing to something bigger than itself. That is why the Mass is a measure of the quality of our fellowship and community. Where there is no real community there can be no real Eucharist, even though the church building is beautiful, the vestments are gorgeous and the choir sings the most heavenly music. To suggest that one can pray at home instead of coming to Mass, is to undervalue the sacramental quality of the Mass and the Christian belief that the gospels are a privileged context for encountering the living, risen Jesus. Undoubtedly Mass is not just a time for praying. One has to distinguish carefully between those of us who are drawn to pray at home and celebrating community. That cannot be done at home; we can only do that together at Mass as a living, vibrant community.

How we celebrate: Undoubtedly some people treat Mass like a meal at McDonald's, eating alone in a corner; when it should really be like an elaborate Chinese banquet, everybody sitting in a circle and dipping into the same dishes. We don't just receive Jesus in Communion; we share together the broken Body of Christ. Because there is one bread, *"we who are many are one body, for we all partake (share in) one bread."* Unfortunately, the process of simplification by using small hosts at communion undermines that central meaning of the Eucharist. It makes receiving Communion look like an individual, private experience - (Jesus is coming to

me). At the last supper Jesus broke one loaf and shared it with his disciples to emphasize the unity and communion among his disciples. Hence let us remember that it is a shared experience. We begin the Communion liturgy by praying together the Lord's Prayer, where we speak to God as 'our' not 'my' Father, we ask Him for our daily bread, for mutual forgiveness and reconciliation. This is followed by the greeting of peace: a gesture of friendship, reconciliation, and forgiveness for all those around us before we approach the table of unity and togetherness. The words of Jesus in Mathew 5:23-24 underlines, with great clarity, some of the more important elements of mutual forgiveness and reconciliation.

Community making community: This involves a necessary process of already being nurtured and growing in relationship with the Lord and fellow brothers and sisters before we enter the church. If a parish consists only of providing Mass without further growth naturally emerging outside of Mass, then that is basically a dead parish, and its Eucharist will be dead. The Eucharist is truly a sign which is manifest in deeper attitudes about God, self and the world and about how these interconnect with a deeply united community as its foundation. The more we become aware of Christ living and acting in and through us as His Body, the more meaningful will be our gathering around His table.

Prayer: O Mary, my Mother, obtain for me the grace to belong entirely to Jesus and to love Him alone! Amen

"If angels could be jealous of men, they would be so for one reason: Holy Communion"

(St Maximilian Kolbe).

"Do you realize that Jesus is there in the tabernacle expressly for you - for you alone?"

(St Thérèse of the Child Jesus).

June 3

Monday

Memorial of Sts Charles Lwanga and Companions, Martyrs

Tob 1: 3, 2: 1-8; Ps 111: 1-6; Mk 12: 1-12

God's Choice

Today's Gospel parable, like many of the parables, leads the mind of the audience from the known to the unknown, from affairs human to divine truths, from natural understanding to supernatural insights. How delicately and gently Jesus attempts to sensitize the consciences of the leaders of the chosen people.

God is the great Lord, the great landowner, who is presented as having a vineyard, furnished with a large winepress, well equipped with all the facilities conducive to its functioning and its productivity and its successful running. He leases out this vineyard to tenants who agreed to pay their dues as natural justice requires.

He appears to have gone abroad, because He is invisible, and the leaders have put Him out of their minds, in their preoccupation with their own interests and ambitions. But the Lord sends them reminders of what they owe Him. The messengers and the servants of God, are the prophets, many of whom were ill-treated and murdered by the kings, the rulers, and other powerful leaders who were given positions of power by God. But - as Lord Acton, the historian put it - in 1887: *"Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men."* Here 'great men' means powerful people, for whom might is right.

Notwithstanding the wickedness of these people, the landowner thinks of sending His own son. At this juncture in the story, there is a leap from the natural to the supernatural. Which human father would have sacrificed his son to those greedy and omnivorous tenants?

Jesus Himself is the Son Who has come to claim His inheritance, the loyalty and love of His people. And Jesus knows what they are going to do to Him. They are going to use their power to murder the truth.

Let Church leaders never forget that God's choices may not always fit in with their own calculations.

Prayer: Holy Spirit of God, enlighten the leaders of Your Church. Amen.

June 4

Tuesday

9th Week in the Ordinary Time

Tob 2: 9-14; Ps 111: 1-2, 7-9; Mk 12: 13-17

You have been stamped with God's image

What do we owe God and what's our obligation towards others? Paul the Apostle tells us that we must give each what is their due (Rom 13: 6-8). The Jewish authorities sought to trap Jesus in a religious-state dispute over the issue of taxes. The Jews resented their foreign rulers and despised paying taxes to Caesar. They posed a dilemma to test Jesus to see if he would make a statement they could use against him.

Jesus avoided their trap by confronting them with the image of a coin. The coin was regarded as the king's personal property. Where the coin was valid the ruler held political sway over the people. Since the Jews used the Roman currency, Jesus explained that what belonged to Caesar must be given to Caesar.

There are many people with ulterior intentions. And there are also those who pretend to be Godly but in reality are not. How would we know this kind of people? Very simple: always be close to Jesus because Jesus Himself will give us the discernment to know the real intentions of those around us.

This story has another deeper meaning as well. We, too, have been stamped with God's image since we are created in his own likeness (Gen 1: 26-27). Coins are made and distributed by Caesar, thus give Caesar back the unimportant things, while remembering God made you, and that you must give yourself to Him. We rightfully belong, not to ourselves, but to God who created us and redeemed us in the precious blood of his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor 6: 19-20). Paul the Apostle says that we are to present our bodies as a living sacrifice to God (Rom 12: 1). Do you acknowledge that your life belongs to God and not to yourself? And do you give to God what rightfully belongs to Him?

Prayer: Draw me to You, Lord in the fullness of love. I am wholly Yours by creation; make me all Yours, too, in love. Amen.

June 5

Wednesday

Memorial of St Boniface, Bishop and Martyr

Tob 3: 1-11, 16-17; Ps 24: 2-9; Mk 12: 18-27

Be firm in your faith

Crying to God for help especially in times of distress is instinctive and innate in every human being. Some people go before the Holy Tabernacle or the statue of Infant Jesus, Mother Mary or of saints, falling on their knees and at times prostrating. Others sob bitterly and pray to them.

In the first reading we have the story of Sara and also of Tobit who was a Jew exiled to Assyria. Although he was appointed as king's administrator, he did not look down on others. Being faithful to God and doing good to people brought him no blessings but rather misfortune. At a time when he found himself poor, blind and even insulted by his wife Anna, he presented his problem to God without complaining about anyone, not even about his wife. Distressed, he wept and prayed and expressed his sorrow. God responded to his plea by sending Archangel Raphael to heal him. Our God is compassionate and generous. Place your trust in Him.

In the Gospel reading we have the question of the resurrection of the dead. To have no children in the Old Testament was a curse. As to the way of life after death, Jesus unravels a secret which is hidden from us saying that all will be like angels in heaven. There will be no more marriages. The living God makes us his friends. With this revelation Jesus wants to assure us that human life continues even after death but with a different form and a different activity. What we need to do now is live continuously in the presence of the living God and begin experiencing the life of resurrection right now here on earth.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to remain firm in my faith in You and experience Your living presence here on earth. Amen.

June 6

9th Week in the Ordinary time

Thursday

Tob 6: 10-11, 7: 1, 9-17, 8: 4-9; Ps 127: 1-5; Mk 12: 28-34

The Christian identity

Who is a Christian? The word 'Christian' in some of our local languages means Christ-like. By reading the Gospel we can summarize the personality of Jesus in a single word i.e., LOVE. So Christian is one who loves everyone. But before this we need to understand that the word Love in the Greek language has three different meanings, Eros, Philia, and Agape. 'Eros' which means sensual or erotic love, 'Philia' which means, love of the desirable, the admiration or devotion we have for a worthy person or thing; such as love for a hero, love for parents, teachers or love for art etc. and 'Agape', which means, self-sacrificing and unconditional love; even a person may not deserve it, but we love that person and are ready to sacrifice anything just because of love. So here Jesus' love is 'Agape' which is unconditional and self-sacrificing.

The Lord points out that the whole law can be condensed into two commandments: the first and more important consists in unconditional love of God; the second is a consequence and result of the first, because when man is loved, God is loved, for man is the image of God.

It is very easier to practice Eros love and Philia love, but as for Agape love it is challenging because it is unconditional and includes lots of sacrifices. It is the love lived by Jesus: a love that moved him to lift the downtrodden, befriend the outcasts, heal the wounded, set the prisoners free and sacrifice His life on the cross to redeem us from the slavery of sin. So God's love is Agape, it is unconditional. Jesus by His words and deeds encourages us to practice this 'Agape love' for our salvation and also for the salvation of this world. And this is the Christian identity that should be lived by all who sincerely follow Jesus. Then only we become true Christians - in other words 'Christ-like'.

Prayer: Lord, help me to be a true Christian by practicing unconditional love. Amen.

June 7

Friday

Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

Ez 34: 11-16; Rom 5: 5-11; Lk 15: 3-7

Love - a game two people play and both win

Today along with the entire Church we celebrate the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The first feast of the Sacred Heart was celebrated on August 31, 1670, in Rennes, France, through the efforts of Fr Jean Eudes (1602-1680). From Rennes, the devotion spread, but it took the visions of St Margaret Mary Alacoque (1647-1690) for the devotion to become universal. Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is not a peripheral devotion, but it is to honour and love God which is the heart of our faith, and is centered on the heart of Jesus as the emblem of Divine love.



At the center of this feast is the heart of Jesus, full of love for the world. Iain Matthew in his writing about St John of the Cross, says "Love is God's activity" even if I think I am doing the loving, and this is very true because GOD alone is absolute LOVE. St Paul reminds us "Love has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit" (Rom 5: 5).

Never before has the unconditional love of the Sacred Heart been as relevant as it is today. We live in the information-centered society of the World Wide Web and the Internet. There is a lust for knowledge. This "info-mania" has produced an unbelievable amount of information and data, all of which can be stored on a small silicon chips and called forth at will. The sheer volume of all of this information has made this, the age of the digest, the logo and the symbol. Theologians are saying that amid the chaos it is necessary to capture the transcendent in a symbol that is

relevant for us; in other words to capture the unconditional love of God in a symbol that is relevant for me. Jesus has already done this for us in his Sacred Heart.

The Sacred Heart of Jesus is most relevant today because our society is not only an information-centered society, but it is also an age of anxiety, fear, insecurity and despair. True and genuine love today, has become a rare commodity, sometimes hardly available and mostly out of stock. Love is considered as an investment - You put your time, attention, energy and emotion into it, hoping someday to receive back with interest. Because love has been considered as an economic commodity, the sacredness of love has vanished. The steady erosion of our sense of purity is something we probably don't recognize today as clearly as we might, because we are living in the midst of it all the time. This has led considerably to a huge dearth of pure and true love.

While we celebrate the Sacred Heart of Jesus I wonder if we should also celebrate the sacredness of the human heart, of our own hearts which contain such treasure (*capax Dei*).

We are of the **religion of humility** - we have seen Jesus washing the feet of His Apostles and showing them a child as the model of humility. We are of the **religion of meekness and forgiveness**, as we pray in the Our Father. We are the **religion of the empty tomb** - Christ won, He is alive. But all that is said above, can be summarised by saying that we are of the **religion of love**, the **religion of the Sacred Heart of Jesus**. Because we can find all of these characteristics in the Sacred Heart of Jesus - His infinite Love for us. The Sacred Heart of Jesus therefore is the summary, the condensation of the entire Gospel.

The person of Christ and His work can be summarized in love and this love is the reason for our existence. Those outstretched arms on the cross invite us:

- **to come to him** - to be refreshed and sustained; in entering into the heart of Jesus we enter into the heart of God;
- **to share his yoke** - to be for the heart of the world, the heart of God as we accompany others, share their lives, in ministry and prayer,
- **to learn from him** - enter into his designs, learn of his longings and of his love for the world, as well as for ourselves.

The devotion to the Sacred Heart does not remove the cross from our souls but it gives us more strength to carry it. The devotion to the Sacred Heart does not suppress temptations in our lives but it gives us more courage to overcome them. This devotion forms us and makes our hearts conform to the Heart of Jesus which in turn brings humility and sweetness in our personal lives. A heart totally devoted to the Heart of Jesus is meek, humble and sweet.

We are really happy being Catholics! Every day, in our Churches, it is Christmas, because Jesus is born on the altar; everyday it is Good Friday, because Jesus renews his passion on the altar; every day it is Easter, because Jesus, on the altar, is alive, resurrected. In the celebration of the Eucharist, the entire episode of Jesus' love for humanity is made tangible, substantial and concrete. As the Eucharist is the summit and the center of the Church, and the greatest demonstration of the love of God, the Sacred Heart of Jesus present in the Eucharist, must be the summit, the center of our lives forever.

Prayer: Lord, teach me true and genuine love - the only language the deaf hear and the blind see. Amen.

*May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be loved in every place.
Sweet Heart of my Jesus, grant that
I may ever love Thee more.
Heart of Jesus, I put my trust in Thee!*

June 8

Saturday

Memorial of the Immaculate Heart of the Bl. Virgin Mary
Is 61: 9-11; 1 Sam 2: 1, 4-8; Lk 2: 41-51

Everything finds meaning in the light of God's will!

Today we celebrate the feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. This feast so meaningfully follows the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, as it portrays how the true disciple followed her Master and Lord. Love and all graces overflow from the Sacred Heart, and the Immaculate Heart remains patiently beneath, purifying herself in this outpouring. This is the mark of a true disciple, lived concretely by Mary. The loss of her only son caused so great a suffering to Mary that for three days she relentlessly searched for him. On finding Him, she placed her burden of suffering at his feet, begging Him for a consoling word. But Jesus instead, placed before her what was of much greater importance, the will of God; and suddenly her suffering took on a whole new meaning. She understood that what really mattered was that God's will be accomplished even if it be through her suffering.

How was Mary able to accept the will of God as spoken through the mouth of her 12 year old son? She had already created a habit of keeping her heart ready to receive the word and treasure it, for, as Scripture tells us twice that, *"She treasured all these things in her heart."* What do we learn from Mary, the true disciple? Strive always to be open to receive the Word of God into our heart and treasure it, so that our heart may be purified and we may live through every moment, good and bad, with our gaze fixed on Him, ready to do His will. Mary remained immaculate, because she kept her promise: *"I am the handmaid of the Lord, let it be done to me according to Your word"* and hence became the model disciple. This is the same promise we make at Baptism and renew at every Eucharist. Mary urges us to keep it faithfully.

Prayer: Immaculate Heart of Mary, make our hearts according to the Heart of Jesus. Amen.

June 9	10th Sunday of the Ordinary Time 1 Kgs 17: 17-24; Ps 29: 2, 4, 5-6, 11-13; Gal 1: 11-19; Lk 7: 11-17
Sunday	

Compassion - active love of neighbour

Don't we believe in miracles? Yes we do. The Bible is a book of miracles from first to last. Miracles are not merely a random display of God's power. Every miracle has a purpose. And the Old Testament makes this clear. This is how God acts.

God is preparing Elijah to stand for Him in very powerful way. Up until this point, Elijah hasn't had to do much. He moved when God said move. He stayed when God said stay. He ate when God provided. All Elijah has done is basically watch God do the impossible time and time again. However, he is placed in a position where he must get personally involved in what the Lord is doing. He is brought to a place where he must trust God for that which has never happened before!

The boy who had been so miraculously fed by divine providence is suddenly cut off and dies. It must have seemed like a great contradiction to the widow and to the prophet. Evidently, this is the only son this poor widow woman had. Certainly she had pinned all of her hopes for the future on him. No doubt she was looking to the day when he would arrive at manhood and would provide for her upkeep. However, now her dreams are shattered and she is devastated and grief stricken. Her heart is broken and her world is shattered. You see, she knew the drought was coming (v. 9), but she did not know death was coming (v. 17).

What an effect this must have had on Elijah! Elijah's heart has been touched by the pain this widow is experiencing. He has watched her grow in her faith. He has experienced her generosity. He has enjoyed her hospitality, and his heart is moved at her need. His compassion for this widow and her son is seen in three ways.

- **In his prayer** (v. 20) - He petitions the Lord on behalf of the widow.
- **In his position** (v. 21) - He humbled himself and stretched his own body on top of the body of this dead child. Elijah knew that Law that touching a dead body would defile him (Num 19: 10).
- **In his petition** (v. 21) - Elijah asks God to do something that had never been done before! There is absolutely no record of any dead person ever being brought back to life before this day.

Today's Gospel passage shows us Jesus' compassion triumphing over death, and it is one of the three gospel accounts where He was seen to raise a dead person. The other two accounts involved the raising of the daughter of Jairus, and the raising of Lazarus. In each of the three cases it seems that it is the compassion that Jesus felt for the sorrowing relatives which was the foremost cause of the miracle.

We note that Jesus did not even ask the widow to express her faith - as He had done before performing other miracles - but merely acted in response to her grief. It is also notable that our attention is drawn, not to the young man who is brought back to life, but to his mother: Jesus is "*moved with pity on seeing her*;" and the climax of the miracle is not the man's receiving back his life, but the mother's receiving her son. Luke is not interested in the miraculous restoration of life, but in Jesus' feeling and acting in solidarity with the suffering of the woman. It is not a momentary escape from death which is significant (for all must die to be with God); it is rather the lesson about living which is important. Jesus preaches a life of active love of neighbor; here he puts it into practice.

There are many people even today, when they see a funeral procession, pull the car over on the side of the road out of respect for the mourners. Even if it is a complete stranger, they sit for a few

moments in silence. Perhaps they are reminded of the death of a loved one or they reflect on their own upcoming funeral.

We tend to forget the necessity of suffering with the many reasons for suffering that we find set forth in the Scripture. The Lord knows that it is simply not good for us to float along without times of testing because so often we can't seem to stand prosperity. We so easily become independent and self-centered. With prosperity comes the temptation to forget the Lord. We live to see the miracle or to be comfortable, rather than to know God and grow in His character.

In a way, the two women represent us all. All of us are going to be hurt by the loss death brings. All of us hang dangerously on the edge of being alone with no one to care. What are we to do when such things come our way? Are we to cry, scream, or throw a fit? Do these things help? No, they do not. However, what we can know is that Jesus has made a promise. He will come to us. He will go with us. He makes a difference in our lives. He brings life, and in his Word there is hope no matter what our situation.

**Prayer: Jesus, when I am down, defeated, depressed,
in times of trouble, come and raise me up. Amen.**

"Let us not believe that we can love without suffering, and without suffering a great deal. It is our human nature that suffers, our poor God-given human nature which, however, is so precious, that Jesus came on purpose to our earth to clothe Himself with it. Let us suffer without bitterness, that is, without feeling courage. Jesus suffered with sadness. Could we say that a soul was suffering if it did not experience sadness? And could we then claim that we are suffering generously, nobly... Celine... what an illusion that would be!"

- St Thérèse of the Child Jesus

June 10

Monday

10th Week in the Ordinary Time

2 Cor 1: 1-7; Ps 33: 2-9; Mt 5: 1-12

Blessed are you!

Who could image that one day a rich young boy named Francis of Assisi would embrace earthly poverty? What made a young girl like Maria Goretti courageous, risking her life rather than submitting to the unwanted sexual advances of Alessandro Serenelli? What made Catherine of Sienna put all out efforts to bring peace to the Church and to the world? What made Maximillian Kolbe offer his life for the fellow prisoner and die as a martyr? These men and women lived the beatitudes in word and spirit.

The Beatitudes are wisdom sayings with a deep meaning. The Beatitudes speak loud, clear and succinctly of the cost of discipleship. The Beatitudes of Jesus Christ are embedded with glorious hope and reward not only now but also in eternity.

Blessed in Greek is '*makarios*' and in Latin '*beatus*'. Greek '*makarios*' corresponds to Hebrew '*asher*' which means happy, fortunate and blissful. This is the compliment Jesus offers to those who cultivate the authentic attitude of Christian living. In the Old Testament one finds these words of praise being offered to virtuous people. "*Blessed are those who do not follow the counsel of the wicked,*" (Ps 1: 1). So also in the New Testament, "*Blessed is the man who endures temptation. Such a one has stood the test and will receive the crown of life...*" (Jas 1: 12). Jesus congratulates Peter, "*Blessed are you Simon Bar Jona*" (Mt 16: 17). Mary is also complimented, "*Blessed are you Mary...*" (Lk 1: 42).

The Beatitudes pin our hope on the kingdom of God that will bring eschatological comforts, a stable inheritance, authentic satisfaction, vision of God, and a deeper intimacy with God. When these Beatitudes promise us such invaluable blessings why is that we are bombarded by mass-media with the opposite beatitudes and values. We are told: "Be millionaires! Be powerful! Be popular! Take revenge! " Why is it? Discover the answer in the light of the Beatitudes.

**Prayer: Lord Jesus, help me to imbibe Gospel values in my life.
Help me to get rooted in You alone. Amen.**

June 11

Tuesday

Memorial of St Barnabas, Apostle

Acts 11: 21-26, 13: 1-3; Ps 97: 1-6; Mt 5: 13-16

The light of Christ

Today we are celebrating the feast of St Barnabas. Although he was not one of the original twelve Apostles, he was called an apostle by St Luke in the book of the Acts of the Apostles. This is just because, like St. Paul the great apostle, Barnabas also received a special mission from God.

By birth Barnabas was a Jew, he was born on an island of Cyprus. His original name was Joseph, but the other Apostles changed his name to Barnabas which means 'son of consolation'.

In today's Gospel our Lord Jesus outlines the role of every Christians in the world. *"You are the salt of the earth and light of the world."* The task of Christians is to be the salt of the society, preserving, reconciling, adding flavor, giving meaning where there is no meaning and giving hope where there is no hope.

At the same time every Christian is called to reflect the light that we received from Jesus who is the light of the world and radiate the same light in the form of love peace, mercy, forgiveness and humble service to the brothers and sisters who are around us.

Our short lives should add meaning to the lives of others and enrich them. Just a little salt transforms everything. It only takes a sprinkling of salt to transform dull and tasteless food. Similarly just a little light empties the world of darkness. With a little faith and love we can light up the lives of many. Does that encourage us? It should. We may think we are insignificant, and in a way we are, but, with a little bit of Jesus we can become a lighthouse illuminating so many people on our way. This light of Jesus removes the darkness caused by hatred and a spirit of jealousy. Our words and deeds can reflect the light of Jesus, just as St Barnabas did.

Prayer: Lord, may Your light shine through me and may my life brighten the lives of many. Amen.

June 12

Wednesday

10th Week in the Ordinary Time

2 Cor 3: 4-11; Ps 98: 5-9; Mt 5: 17-19

Doing everything in a spirit of love and willingness

The only difference between the scribes and Pharisees and Jesus is that the scribes and Pharisees were faithfully and meticulously following the law. They were devout, religious and good people. But they lacked prudence and generosity in following the law whereas Jesus on the other hand added flavor to the law by acting upon it doing God's will and giving God's love to the people. Didn't he say *"not everyone who calls me Lord will enter the kingdom of God but those who do the will of my Father in heaven will enter his kingdom?"*

Jesus did not come to remove the law but to fulfill them in a spirit of love and willingness. The scribes and the Pharisees added many more things to the law than God intended. They went on multiplying and it added burdens on the people which God had not intended. Jesus was trying to keep it simple and practical that is to say to love God with all your heart, soul and might and as one loves oneself he/she must love his neighbor. One writer puts it this way, Jesus taught reverence for God's law - reverence for God himself, for the Lord's Day, reverence or respect for parents, respect for life, for another person's good name, respect for oneself and for one's neighbor lest wrong or hurtful desires master us. Reverence and respect for God's commandments teach us the way of love - love of God and love of neighbor. Laws are needed to live a dignified life as human beings who are endowed by God with intellect and will. It should help us to lead a good life in the society giving due respect to one another and live as children of God.

Let us each take a few moments to think about ways that we can enter more fully into God's kingdom. Are we following God's commandments only because we have to?

Prayer: Lord, fill us with Your Spirit to follow Your commandments. Amen.

June 13

Thursday

Memorial of St Anthony of Padua

2 Cor 3: 15- 4: 1, 3-6; Ps 84: 9-14; Mt 5: 20-26

The miracle of reconciliation

There are various ways in which we Christians can interpret the scriptures. Many passages are historical and should be seen in their context. Other parts make use of various literary styles and should be interpreted allegorically. Then there is the deeper moral and spiritual message. There are so many approaches, aren't there?

How should we to interpret today's Gospel passage? Literally? Allegorically? I have met people who try to water down the teachings of Jesus by giving their own explanations. In the light of today's passage it could go somewhat like this: It's OK to get angry if... It's OK to be angry when... Righteous anger is appropriate if...

When we find the demands of Jesus too hard to be taken literally, we are experts in finding excuses and producing our own version.

Actually what Jesus asks us in the Gospel is to perform a miracle-to reconcile ourselves to our brothers, sisters and opponents before we bring our gifts to the altar. Jesus does not ask us to request forgiveness for what we have done but to forgive our families for what they have against us. This is a tall request.

Well, many of us may not confront our opponents directly or show our anger through our words and actions. We just find another way out: simply avoid people we dislike or those we may likely get into conflict. This is not exactly what Jesus commanded.

I believe that Jesus would prefer even feeble attempts at reconciliation.

- Understand their perspectives and discover their good qualities
- Speak cordially when I see one of them.
- Maybe we can drop a conciliatory note or email just to see what happens.

Let us believe that even major breaches can be healed if we let God's grace take over. When this happens, it feels like a miracle but we have to accept the invitation to healing first. May we all take our first steps to such miracles!

Prayer: Lord, by Your death You have reconciled us to Your Father. Help us to be merciful too. Amen.

June 14

Friday

10th Week in the Ordinary Time

2 Cor 4: 7-15; Ps 115: 10-11, 15-18; Mt 5: 27-32

Man sees the actions, God the attitudes

An individual act can be called as whole when an action corresponds to the intention. An act that is done without a proper disposition is half done. That is why in Deuteronomy we are asked to *"Love God with all your heart, soul and might"* (Deut 6: 4). Love is manifested with kind deeds, but if the deeds do not correspond to the intentions of the mind, they do not become whole in the sight of God, rather pharisaic, 'that others may see and praise me'.

Life is a free gift of God. Jesus has shown us a beautiful way to live this gift of life, so that our life may become our gift to the living God. In Baptism, we have made a choice for Jesus and we have promised our fidelity to Him. We have received a special grace to be the children of our loving Father. St Paul tells us in the first reading of today that, *"we carry this treasure in vessels of clay"*. This vessel could be our body.

At times it happens with us, that we want to do good, but we end up doing something that we do not desire. And experience tells us, though the spirit is willing, the body is weak. Because of the weak flesh, we are prone to do acts that are contrary to the spirit. Therefore in the Gospel of today Jesus reminds us of the extreme care we need to take. Even to that extent, that we eliminate certain parts of our body, we should strive to remain faithful to the treasure we have received.

The purification of the senses is very much required. A pure mind generates pure thoughts, which in turn gives rise to pure actions, and repeated actions become our attitude. When our actions correspond to the attitudes, there is peace and harmony.

**Prayer: Jesus, fill my heart and mind with Your presence.
Having You in my whole being,
may I act as You want me to act. Amen.**

June 15

Saturday

10th Week in the Ordinary Time

2 Cor 5: 14-21; Ps 102: 1-4, 8-9, 11-12; Mt 5: 33-37

Integrity of life

Jesus continues commenting on the Commandments. The Israelites had a great respect for the name of God, a fearful veneration, for they knew that names refer to persons, and God deserves all respect, all honour and all glory, by thought, word and deed. He invites us to conform our thinking, our words and our deeds to the truth. In Sermon on the Mount we have a series of "Challenging Lifestyles" through which Jesus has shown us how uncontrolled anger, how unbridled sexual fantasy and easy divorce so easily destroy relationships. Now Jesus turns his attention to what is probably the most destructive force on earth - the tongue. The traditional teaching Jesus quotes here is based on the Mosaic Law (Ex 20: 7, Lev 19: 12, Num 30: 2, and Deut 23: 21). He brings together two words. The first "false vows" means to perjure oneself, to swear falsely, to make false vows. The second "fulfil your vows" literally means to enclose, as with a fence, or to bind together. The truth of an oath or vow is enclosed, bound, and therefore strengthened by that which is invoked on its behalf.

In this connection the life of integrity is so important because it affects our relationship with God. God is a holy God and calls us to be holy. God desires from us all "*truth in the innermost being*" (Ps 51: 6). Among the things He especially hates is "*a lying tongue*" (Prov 6: 16-17). Indeed the destiny of liars is the lake of fire (Rev 21:8). So if we care about our eternal destiny, let our words be, 'Yes' or 'No'. Because it impacts our relationship with God and it also affects our relationship with one another.

How do we grow in integrity? In three ways:

1. Acknowledge the struggle to integrate words and actions
2. Admit wrong doing and swiftly ask forgiveness
3. Commit yourself to truth telling

Prayer: Lord, make me an instrument to proclaim the Gospel truth. Amen.

June 16	11th Sunday in the Ordinary Time
Sunday	2 Sam 12: 7-10, 13; Ps 31: 1-2, 5, 7, 11; Gal 2: 16, 19-21; Lk 7: 36 - 8: 3

An experience of forgiveness increases love in the heart

Today we reflect on the importance of the experience of forgiveness and its effect manifested in one's life through love. In the Gospel we find Simon the Pharisee inviting Jesus to dine with him. He desired to eat with Jesus. When Jesus was at the table, there comes a woman who experiences God's forgiveness with a gesture of love and respect. We concentrate on these two persons for our reflection.

Desire to dine with Jesus

Simon the Pharisee desired to dine with Jesus. Therefore, he invited Him to his house. Jesus willingly went to Simon's house. A disciple longs to meet his or her master, to listen to him, to dine with him. Simon is not known as a follower of Jesus, but as a Pharisee. A follower of Jesus should have a deep desire to dine with Jesus, i.e., to be at His last supper and for us it is to have a strong desire to participate in the Eucharistic meal. Jesus' last supper is completed with His sacrifice on the Cross, similarly, the desire of the disciple of Jesus to dine with Him reaches its climax in carrying one's own Cross and imitating the Master in His ultimate and complete sacrifice on the Cross.

Jesus does not miss a single opportunity to communicate His love and forgiveness. He knew who Simon was and he accepts his invitation and goes to his house. The one who receives Jesus is really fortunate and blessed. During the holy Eucharist we say, 'we are not worthy to receive Jesus under our roof'. When invited with willing heart Jesus comes to our house, to our life, to our families. Jesus comes to my house with a new life, with a new message and it is for my conversion.

A gesture of love and respect

A woman comes to the house of Simon where Jesus was dining. She was not invited to dine at the Pharisee's house. 'Sinners' were not allowed to participate in public functions. But the woman comes straight to Jesus. A disciple of Jesus does not need an invitation to go to meet Jesus. The woman only heard that Jesus was dining at the Pharisee's house. A sinner who experiences the love of Jesus does not wait for an invitation. He or she goes spontaneously, without waiting for the invitation, to any place. The complete attention and concentration is only on the one who saves/one who can save.

We can highlight two important qualities of this woman of the Gospel. She was humble and loved Jesus.

Gestures of love and humility

1) The woman stood behind Jesus, by his feet. If a disciple is behind Jesus, he or she sees everything that the Lord does and teaches. We should stand behind Him when he walks towards Jerusalem, and then when He walks to the Calvary with the Cross. 2) The woman was crying and wetting the feet of Jesus with her tears. The woman is known to be a 'sinner' in public. Her meeting with Jesus is a moment of her conversion. A disciple thinks of one's own life and cries for one's own sins. There are tears of repentance and asking forgiveness. In the same way there are tears of having met Jesus and getting converted. One who meets Jesus gets converted; his or her life becomes a new beginning. 3) She kissed the feet of Jesus. Thus she showed her love for Jesus. Unlike Judas who kissed Jesus to hand Him over to the soldiers, this woman kissed the feet of Jesus, as a sign of her repentance and the love of her new found Master of her life. 4) The woman poured the perfume that she had brought with her on the feet of Jesus. She experienced the love of Jesus who touched her and healed her. And, then with great love she offered what she had brought with her to Jesus.

**Prayer: Lord, I have sinned, have mercy on me,
forgive me and fill me with Your love. Amen.**

June 17

Monday

11th Week in the Ordinary Time

2 Cor 6: 1-10; Ps 98: 1-4; Mt 5: 38-42

Let us use God's blessings

Let's focus on the first reading. St Paul concludes his long defense of his apostolic ministry by saying that he has always tried to act as a worthy servant of God. St Paul exhorts the faithful not to accept the grace of God in vain - which would happen if they did not cultivate the faith and initial grace they received in Baptism and if they neglected the graces which God continues to send them.

"We receive the grace of God in vain," St Francis de Sales points out, "when we receive it at the gate of our heart, without allowing it to enter: we receive it without receiving it; we receive it without fruit, since there is no use in feeling the inspiration if one does not consent unto it. And just as the sick man who has the medicine in his hands, if he takes only part of it, will only partially benefit from it, so too, when God sends a great and mighty inspiration to move us to embrace his love, if we do not avail of it in its entirety, we shall benefit from it only partially."

Hence to live a faithful life in Christ, one needs to be very patient. Patience is a virtue necessary for the Christian's life, which helps one to endure physical or moral pain with resilience, peace and serenity. St Teresa of Avila says, *"Let nothing disturb thee; let nothing dismay thee; all things pass; God never changes; patience attains all that it strives for. He who has God finds he lacks nothing: God alone suffices"*. This is the true life in Christ, *"As having nothing, yet possessing everything."*

Keeping this in mind St Alphonsus says, *"They have nothing and possess everything who are the lovers of God, for when they lack earthly things, they are content to say, 'My Lord, you alone are enough for me', and that leaves them fully Satisfied."*

**Prayer: Help us O Lord, to accept all Your graces
and be fully satisfied. Amen.**

June 18

Tuesday

11th Week in the Ordinary Time

2 Cor 8: 1-9; Ps 145: 2, 5-9; Mt 5: 43-48

Be perfect

The Sermon on the Mount is the essence of the whole Gospel. After the beatitudes, we had a number of instructions on our relationship with the neighbour. Now concluding the chapter 5, Jesus tells us: *be you perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect*. He places before us a very high ideal. It is something that is not achievable by us, but this great goal - to be like God- is to be always before our eyes. We can never be like God, but that is what we look at, so that we may arrive at some degree of perfection.

Our faith is intrinsically related to the love of neighbour. It consists positively doing good to our neighbour, as a mark of our goodness. Our being good does not merely mean that we do not do evil. We do not want to respond with evil for anything evil done to us. We want to overcome evil of others by our goodness. We look at others beyond their evil actions and habits. It is true it hurts us when others do something offensive; however, we do not allow their evil to take control of us and we pay them back by the same bad coin.

In today's Gospel, the enemy referred to may not be someone who hates you, but someone whom you hate. The moment we recognize that God our Father looks after all - good and bad - equally, we do not have any other way out than to decide to do good to anyone who is not good to us.

If we go on doing good, show love and concern to those who hurt us, then we will be like our heavenly Father - perfect. The harder we feel to show this goodness to others, the more we will be divine. Love is free; so we go on loving and go on giving, thereby realizing the image of God within us and sharing in his perfection.

Prayer: Lord, make me like You; please make me like You. Amen.

June 19

Wednesday

11th Week in the Ordinary Time

2 Cor 9: 6-11; Ps 111: 1-4, 9; Mt 6: 1-6, 16-18

Blessed in the sight of God

Almsgiving, fasting and prayer were the traditional acts of piety among the Jews (Tob 12: 8). Jesus emphasizes on the kind of spirit in which we should do acts of personal piety.

The personal and communal prayer nourish our spiritual life and strengthen our relationship with the Creator God. Jesus, who gives us this teaching about prayer, himself practiced it during his life on earth. At times he spent the whole night in an intimate conversation with His Father. Hence, our life of prayer should also be based on some moments that are dedicated exclusively to our conversation with God - moments of silent dialogue.

While speaking about fasting Jesus makes us aware of the spirit in which we should exercise mortification of our senses. We should do so without ostentation, avoiding praise, discreetly. The world admires only spectacular sacrifice, because it does not realize the value of sacrifice that is hidden and silent.

Almsgiving should be done out of genuine love for our neighbour and not for receiving praise from the human beings. Whatever material riches we have should be considered as God's gift to us. We are invited to follow the example of the Early Christian community which was model of sharing and fellowship. Hence, our joy should be more in giving rather than in receiving.

St Basil says: *"Let us fly from vain glory, the insinuating spoiler of good works, the pleasant enemy of our souls, the moth of virtues, the flattering ruin of our good things, who colours the poison with the honeyed mixture of her deceit, and who holds out to the souls of men her deadly cup. And I think she does this that men may the more greedily drink her down, and never be satisfied with her. How sweet a thing is human glory to those who have not had experience of it!"*

Prayer: Lord, may I do the acts of piety with a humble and pure heart. Amen.

June 20

Thursday

11th Week in the Ordinary Time
2 Cor 11: 1-11; Ps 110: 1-4,7-8; Mt 6: 7-15

The pattern of all prayers

Jesus teaches His disciples to pray. Humanity had forgotten to pray properly after Adam and Eve, believing in the devil, slipped and fell, and suffered multiple fractures, and became fragmented in vision, in action and in intention. Individualism, communalism, casteism and nationalism kept on tearing humanity apart.

Now, here comes Jesus: ***"Our Father,"*** He says. His disciples must remember they are all, *one family*.

"Hallowed be Thy Name." God is supreme. We must maintain and uphold the primacy of God in our interests and concerns; in our thoughts, words and deeds. We adore Him, we thank Him we praise Him.

"Thy kingdom come." God's is a kingdom of truth and love. Where there is truth and love, justice and peace will follow. The children of God are invited to work for truth and love, justice and peace, in their hearts; in their families; in the society and among the people around them.

"Thy will be done." The children of God must all become like Jesus. *"He who does the will of My Father in heaven, is My brother and sister and mother."* The will of God is expressed in the ten commandments. These are summarized in the two-fold commandment of love.

Jesus accepted also as the will of His Father, the chalice that the treachery of Judas, the plotting of the chief-priests, the injustice of Pilate had prepared for Him. *"Father, not My will, Thy will be done."* The sisters and brothers of Jesus, may also have to drink a bitter chalice, due to the maligning and plotting of people. Let them remain close to Jesus.

"Give us today our daily bread." Our Father gives us our daily bread; and also our daily breath, moment by moment. He keeps us functioning day after day.

"Forgive us, as we have forgiven those who are in debt to us." We are sisters and brothers of Jesus, if we forgive those who injure us.

**Prayer: Father, send forth Your Spirit, so that we may pray like
Your Son Jesus. Amen.**

June 21

Friday

Memorial of St Aloysius Gonzaga
2 Cor 11: 18, 21-30; Ps 33: 2-7; Mt 6: 19-23

Real riches

Whereas some people set their hearts on pleasures, others set their hearts on treasures. In today's Gospel passage, Jesus speaks about wealth, riches and treasures. There are, however, different kinds of treasures. Some types of wealth, such as money, land, property, are external and material, while there are kinds of wealth, such as virtue, peace, grace, that are internal and add to the beauty of the soul.

The wealth that is outside oneself, is often out of, or beyond one's control; and consequently they are uncertain and insecure. There are thieves everywhere to break in and steal. Money, houses, lands, properties and even reputation are all things that can be stolen and destroyed.

Jesus strongly recommends that we set our hearts on *spiritual riches* and spiritual wealth. This type of wealth cannot be moth-eaten, cannot be stolen by ordinary thieves. This kind of riches sometimes cannot even be seen, except by God. But God Himself has to guarantee its security. The credit goes to God.

Our greatest treasure, our greatest wealth, is the state of grace, which St Aloysius so treasured. *"The good of grace of one person,"* says St Thomas Aquinas, *"is more valuable than the natural goodness of the whole of creation."* Just imagine! All the gold in the world is but a pinch of dust, compared to the wisdom that comes from grace. This is because sanctifying grace is a participation in the Divine nature.

A person who makes this grace his treasure can do and undergo a great deal. Today's first reading illustrates the achievements of a man who has grown spiritually rich:

"...I have worked harder, been sent to prison more often, whipped many times more often ...I have been beaten with sticks, once I was stoned, three times shipwrecked... in dangers from rivers, ...from my own people,... from brigands, ...from so-called brothers..." What weight of gold and silver can compare with the merits amassed by these achievements of St Paul?

Prayer: Holy Spirit, give us the wisdom and understanding that will make us truly rich. Amen.

June 22

Saturday

11th Week in the Ordinary Time
2 Cor 12: 1-10; Ps 33: 8-13; Mt 6: 24-34

Let us put first things first in our lives

Today's Gospel presents two themes of diverse importance: our relationship with money (Mt 6: 24) and our relationship with Divine Providence (Mt 6: 25-34).

What does 'serving two masters' and 'anxiety' have in common? They both have the same root problem - being divided within oneself. The root word for 'anxiety' literally means 'being of two minds'. An anxious person is often 'tossed to and fro' and paralyzed by indecision. Fear of some bad outcome usually cripples those afflicted with anxiety. It's also the case with someone who wants to submit to God but also lives according to the world's standards of success and fulfillment. Who is the master in charge of your life? Our 'master' is that which governs our thought-life, shapes our ideals, controls the desires of the heart and the values we choose to live by. We can be ruled by many different things - the love of money or possessions, the power of position, the glamour of wealth and prestige, the driving force of unruly passions and addictions. There is one Master alone who has the power to set us free from the slavery of sin and fear. That Master is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus uses an illustration from nature to prove that God is utterly reliable. In the Lord's Prayer we are reminded that God is our provider when we pray: Give us this day our daily bread. What is bread, but the very staple of life and symbol of all that we need to live and grow. Anxiety is neither helpful nor necessary. It robs us of faith and confidence in God's help and it saps our energy for doing good. Many people today are learning about 'stress-management'. The Lord wants to do better than that. He teaches us 'stress-banishment'. Jesus admonishes his followers to put away anxiety and preoccupation with material things and instead to seek first the things of God - his kingdom and righteousness.

Who is your master - God or mammon?

Prayer: Lord, You are my everything. Amen.

June 23

12th Sunday in the Ordinary Time

Sunday

Zec 12: 10-11, 13:1; Ps 62: 2-6, 8-9; Gal 3: 26-29; Lk 9: 18-24

The cross

Today's first reading is taken from the Book of the Prophet Zechariah. He speaks of a crime of which everyone in Jerusalem was guilty, the piercing of an innocent person, and of the deep sorrow that the people would feel on realizing their crime.

In the verses that follow today's passage, Zechariah foretells that at the death of that innocent person, a fountain of water would spring for the benefit of everyone, and that only by washing in its water would people be cleansed of their sins.

In his Gospel, John sees Zechariah's prophecy fulfilled when the soldier pierced Jesus' side with the lance (Jn 19: 37).

The Church has taken Zechariah's announcement as background to the passage of today's Gospel in which Jesus announces not only his passion and death but our own sharing in it as well.

Today's second reading is taken from the letter of Paul to the Christians of a region called Galatia. Throughout his letter, Paul insists that what saves a person is Faith in the Risen Christ and love for neighbor. Nothing else is needed and nothing else can save.

In today's passage, Paul tells us that by making us God's children at Baptism, Christ pulled down all the dividing barriers that man's pride had raised in the past and keeps on raising back all the time. Every person on earth is my brother or my sister proclaims Paul. I may refuse accepting them as such, but only at the risk of losing my own son ship in God's family. The Sunday Eucharist is an invitation to pull down the barriers we

might have raised at the individual or community level during the past week.

The lesson intended for us in the Gospel passage of Luke is most likely in the last few lines. A true follower of Christ if he values eternal life must be ready to carry his cross and, if necessary, must be ready to be nailed to it, as Christ was. We are Christians because we sincerely want to have the everlasting life he came on earth to give us. He went through the excruciating death by crucifixion, the most painful and the most humiliating form of execution then known. He did so in order to enable us to merit heaven. He was the Son of God. He had no sins or faults of any kind to atone for. His sufferings were all willingly undertaken for our sakes.

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that we should be expected to imitate him for our own sakes and in so far as God will demand it of us, by carrying our daily crosses. Down through the nineteen and a half centuries of the Church's history, there have been heroic examples of men and women who have undergone torture and martyrdom rather than deny Christ or risk their eternal life. We respect them and we honor them. Most of us may feel we would be unable to face such a test of our faith. But God will see to that. When he sends a heavy cross, he strengthens the shoulder that has to bear it.

What the vast majority of us is called on and expected to do, is to bear our own relatively little daily crosses cheerfully and gladly - keeping God's commandments when temptations to break them are strong around us. Bearing patiently with one's state in life when others seem to have the best of everything, putting up with a nagging wife or husband, often is a slow and private martyrdom. Forgiving those who injure us and not seeking revenge is a heavy cross, too. Bearing ill-health patiently,

instead of perpetually grumbling against God and against those around us, is another form of Christian martyrdom.

These are but a sample of the many crosses that all men have to bear. Those unfortunate ones who have never heard of God or of a future life, or who refuse to believe in anything beyond the grave, have nothing to hold on to and can easily give in to despair. We have the marvelous help of our faith. We know that there is an eternal life awaiting us, if we live our Christian life as Christ told us to live it. This surely lightens our crosses, whereas the atheist has nothing to lighten his load of sorrow, no future to look forward to, and the present life is a misery until the grave puts an end to it.

“When we journey without the Cross, when we build without the Cross, when we profess Christ without the Cross, we are not disciples of the Lord, we are worldly” (Pope Francis).

Prayer: Thank You, God, for the gift of faith. Thank you, Christ, for having made eternal life available to me, and for showing me how to reach it. Please give me the grace and the strength to show myself worth of my heavenly calling by carrying cheerfully ever day the crosses You wish to send me. Amen.

“Remember that you have only one soul; that you have only one death to die; that you have only one life, which is short and has to be lived by you alone; and there is only one Glory, which is eternal. If you do this, there will be many things about which you care nothing.”

- St Teresa of Avila

June 24

Solemnity of the Nativity of St John the Baptist

Monday

Is 49: 1-6; Ps 138: 1-3, 13-15; Acts 13: 22-26; Lk 1: 57-66, 80

Give the world Jesus!

Today the church celebrates the birth of John the Baptist. History shows that great people have always lived humble lives. The lives of those people are remembered much longer and have much impact on human lives.

The life of John the Baptist is part of such a story. His story is one of giving witness to the awaiting crowd of God's Kingdom that would be established by Jesus.

John was born of the priestly clan of Aaron. Like Zachariah he was to render service in the temple offering sacrifices and other rituals. His job was to intercede with God on behalf of the people. He was supposed to lead the priestly life just like his father. However, nothing is known of his priestly service in the temple. John spent much of his life in the desert away from society. He committed himself to prayer and reflection. At an early age he realized that he was to give witness to the eternal priest namely Jesus. The priestly clan was trained to find out true and blameless animals for sacrifices. Here is John, preparing himself to find out that true blameless Lamb that would substitute all the sacrifices in the temple forever.

John's greatness lies in his humility. He was the forerunner to the Messiah and yet he never claimed special privilege for himself. He was eager to be led by God and be directed by God.

The first reading speaks of the hand of the Lord in the life of Prophet. God chooses the persons well in advance. He consecrates them for his service. The prophet has realised the plan of God from his own experience. After painful experience with the people and the authority during Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah he claims that his prophetic mission was not his own. God had created and anointed him. The prophet uses the allegory of a sharp sword and

arrow. The sword cuts everything that comes under it. It does not distinguish between friends and foes. Likewise the arrow pierces anything and would bring the desired result to the user. Both the sword and arrow were offensive weapons, the former used at short range and the latter at longer range. The mission of the prophet is compared to sword and arrow. The prophet must use his tongue to declare the truth. The words of the prophet are supposed to be much sharper than a sword or an arrow piercing human hearts.

The ministry of the prophet is not proclamation alone. As soon as the prophet begins his ministry he becomes the symbol of God's presence among the people. The darkness is dispelled as soon as the lamp is lit. So also the prophet becomes the burning lamp in the midst of the people. This will be all the more true in the life of Jesus.

The second reading presents the acute problem of the time. The preaching of Paul included the witness of John the Baptist. At this time some of the believers put him on par with Jesus. The apostle Paul used the words of John the Baptist to prove the greatness and supremacy of Jesus: *'I am not worthy to untie the thong of the sandals on his feet.'* St Paul laid strong emphasis on John's role as merely the herald of the Messiah.

The birth of John the Baptist tells us the pleasantness of God's Blessings. The child was the centre of attraction for many reasons. The priest Zachariah had remained dumb for nine months. Meantime, his wife Elizabeth conceived and bore him the child. Throughout all these days people were wondering about the mystery of Zachariah's silence. The birth of the child changed the destiny of the barren parents. As Zachariah spent nine months in prayer and reflection so also his son John would spend major portions of his life in the desert.

Prayer: O Father, you have called us even before we were formed in our mother's womb. Like St John the Baptist, may we be heralds of the Good News and help others receive the Eternal Word, Christ our Lord. Amen.

June 25

Tuesday

12th Week in the Ordinary Time

Gen 13: 2, 5-18; Ps 14: 2-5; Mt 7: 6, 12-14

The narrow gate to eternal life

There are two gates in life: the narrow gate and the wide gate. Many choose to enter through the wide gate because it is easy to do so. One would think that people would choose a gate based on what's behind it rather than on how easy it is to get through it. For example, does a person go on a road just because the road is wide, or because it leads to his destination? If we choose the wide gate, we are ignorant both of where the road behind this gate leads and where the road behind the narrow gate leads.

Jesus is the Gate. He is *"the Way, and the Truth, and the Life"*. Jesus is the Truth about Life. He alone can reveal to us where the roads behind the gates of life go. Whoever enters through Jesus will be safe and saved. Those who try to make their own way of life will destroy themselves. It takes the Gate to know the gates.

What is this narrow gate? Narrow gate is always challenging and demanding. Therefore the narrow gate that Jesus speaks involves carrying the cross. The narrow gate is not to be narrow-minded. It is rather to be very clearly focused on certain very specific ways of thinking and acting, having one's life guided by a clear set of truths, principles and values - those truths, principles and values which form the core of the Gospel's teaching. In other words, the Way of Christ. It is a way that leads to life.

Entering the narrow gate also entails hard work. This is human experience. If only hard work gives us success and reward in ordinary life, how much more in the spiritual?

Those who find the narrow gate and enter or pass through it are few but these few have a reward reserved for them by Jesus himself.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, through the narrow gate help me to experience You in my daily life. Amen.

June 26

Wednesday

12th Week in the Ordinary Weekday

Gen 15: 1-12, 17-18; Ps 104: 1-4, 6-9; Mt 7: 15-20

**Expect great things from God;
attempt great things for God**

The initial verse of the first reading today contains the ESSENTIAL ATTITUDES to fulfill God's dream or God's will. The verse reads *"Afterward the LORD spoke to Abram in a vision and said to him, 'Do not be afraid, Abram, for I will protect you, and your reward will be great.'"*

The first essential attitude is the realization that our dreams will be tested. The verse begins with the word *"afterward"*. Well, *"afterward"* refers to all the past events, that is to say: After Abram stepped out by faith and left his homeland. After he'd been through the famine. After he'd had the dissension with his family member, Lot. After he'd fought and won the battle with the Babylonian kings. AFTER THOSE TESTS...God appeared to him in a vision. After the storms of life. Abram passed the tests so God gave him the vision.

The second attitude is knowing that God always reassures. *"The Lord spoke to Abram in a vision."* No matter what happens, good or bad, pain or gain, we are not alone, there is always God beside us.

The third attitude is substituting anxiety, distress with faith, confidence. God tells Abram *"Do not be afraid, Abram, I will protect you."* What might Abram be afraid of at this point in his life? The retribution of the Babylonian kings he had defeated in battle? The wrath of the King of Egypt for lying about his wife? No, Abram had already survived those tests. The greatest of Abram's tests was the test of his faith. God had promised to make him great and make him the head of a great nation. The problem was Abram and Sara were old and childless. How could God fulfill His promise to Abram now?

And the final attitude is to recognize the reward that God offers us. God said to Abram *"your reward will be great."*

**Prayer: Lord, through these essential attitudes, help me to
fulfill Your dream and Your will. Amen.**

June 27

Thursday

12th Week in the Ordinary Time

Gen 16: 1-12, 15-16; Ps 105: 1-5; Mt 7: 21-29

Building on the foundation of Christ

Today's Gospel presents the last part of the Sermon on the Mount. It presents some contradictions which exist even in our time.

- Persons who continually speak of God, but who do not do God's will; they use the name of Jesus, but do not have an intimate relationship with the Lord
- Persons who live in the illusion of working for the Lord, but on the day of the definitive encounter with Him, they will discover, tragically, that they have never known Him

By means of the image of the houses built on rock and sand, Jesus denounces and, at the same time, tries to correct the separation between faith and life, between speaking and doing, between teaching and practicing.

What is important is not to speak of God in a beautiful way or to know how to explain the Bible well to others, but rather to do the will of the Father and, in this way be a revelation of his face and of his presence in the world.

Some only profess but do not possess. A person is a professing Christian and not a possessor of Christ if he is pretending to have what he never possessed - faith in Christ.

As *Porta Fidei* (No.14) indicates: "Faith without charity bears no fruit, while charity without faith would be a sentiment constantly at the mercy of doubt. Faith and charity each require the other, in such a way that each allows the other to set out along its respective path. Indeed, many Christians dedicate their lives with love to those who are lonely, marginalized or excluded... because it is in them that the reflection of Christ's own face is seen. Through faith, we can recognize the face of the risen Lord in those who ask for our love. "As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" (Mt 25:40).

Prayer: Lord, change me so that I live up to my name as Christian. Amen.

June 28

Friday

Memorial of St Irenaeus, Bishop and Martyr

Gen 17: 1, 9-10, 15-22; Ps 127: 1-5; Mt 8: 1-4

Being Christ like in love and compassion

In the Gospel, Jesus did the unthinkable. He touched the untouchable. Lepers were outcasts of society. Their physical condition was terrible as they slowly lost their limbs which withered away. They were not only shunned but regarded as “already dead” even by their relatives. The Jewish law forbade anyone from touching or approaching a leper, lest ritual defilement occur. The leper did something quite remarkable. He approached Jesus confidently and humbly, expecting that Jesus could and would heal him. Normally a leper would be stoned or at least warded off if he tried to come near a rabbi. Jesus not only grants the man his request, but he demonstrates the personal love, compassion, and tenderness of God in his physical touch. Jesus met the man’s misery with compassion and tender kindness. He communicated the love and mercy of God in a sign that spoke more eloquently than words. He touched the man and made him clean - not only physically but spiritually as well.

Some eleven centuries later, another man, named Francis, met a leper on the road as he journeyed towards Assisi. “Though the leper caused him no small disgust and horror, he nonetheless, got off the horse and prepared to kiss the leper. But when the leper put out his hand as though to receive something, he received money along with a kiss” (from the Life of St Francis by Thomas of Celano). Francis did what seemed humanly impossible because he was filled with the love and compassion of Christ. The Holy Spirit inflames our hearts with the love of Christ that we may reach out to others with compassionate care, especially to those who have been rejected and mistreated. Do you allow the Holy Spirit to fill your heart with the love and compassion of Christ for others?

**Prayer: Grant that we may be ready to die for love of Your love,
as You died for love of our love. Amen.**

June 29

Solemnity of Sts Peter and Paul, Apostles

Saturday

Acts 12: 1-11; Ps 33: 2-9; 2 Tim 4: 6-8, 17-18; Mt 16: 13-19

The faith of the Apostles

Today we celebrate the feast of the two pillars of the church, Sts Peter and Paul. Peter as the first pope and Paul as a learned missionary, proclaimed Christ with great fervor and dedication. Both could courageously say, *"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. From now on there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness..."* (2 Tim 4: 7-8) They laid down their lives during the reign of Emperor Nero and at around 268 AD, June 29th the bodies of these martyrs were brought together at St Sebastian's catacomb. Hence their feast is jointly celebrated on 29th June.

In the Gospel the confession of Peter *"You are Christ, son of the living God"* lays the foundation for the church. Peter probably did not understand all that was involved in Christ's being son of God. Faith need not seek any explanation. And there is no guarantee that faith finds an answer to all explanation it seeks for.

Faith indeed is a gift of God. Peter's confession was revealed by God alone (Jn 16: 8-11). The complimentary words of Jesus, *"You are 'Peter' and on this 'rock' I will build my Church"* could mean the rock is Peter himself and his confession, not simply Peter or not just his confession. Peter was the first person to fully grasp who Jesus really was. Others had made similar confession before (read Jn 1: 41, 45, 49, 6: 69). Their confession was merely earthly, not revealed by the Spirit. Church can never be independent, it is always built on the faith of the Apostles guided by the successors of Peter (Pope), through the direction of the Holy Spirit. Thus anyone who claims to proclaim other than the universal (Catholic) church, will only spread false teaching. Let us not drift away from this One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

Prayer: Lord, through the intercession of Sts Peter and Paul, gives us courage to proclaim our faith. Amen.

June 30	13th Sunday in the Ordinary Time
Sunday	1 Kings 19: 16b, 19-21; Ps 15: 1-2, 5, 7-11; Gal 5: 1, 13-18; Lk 9: 51-62

Liberty - the mother of all victories

We all have an idea of what liberty is. Liberty is freedom from control and from restriction in thought, speech, and action. We do not appreciate at all anyone who tries to take away even one of our freedoms. We try to keep ourselves prepared not only to defend our own freedoms from those who might try to deprive us of them, but to defend the freedoms of people all over the world. Though we aren't always successful, though we don't always go about it in good ways, we value freedom. So does Jesus Christ. So does God. That's why the Son of God became Man.

God the Father sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to win for the human race the most fundamental and important freedom of all freedoms. Jesus Christ came to free us from sin, from the effects of sin. He came to free us from the powers of hell itself, to win back for us a liberty the human race threw away soon after it came into existence. We humans seem to more often be concerned with our physical freedoms - with freedom of speech, freedom of movement, freedom of living as we wish. Jesus was more concerned with spiritual and moral freedom - with the freedom of our souls, the freedom to know and believe what is true, the freedom to live according to the truth, the freedom to reject evil of all kinds. We can very rightly say that Jesus Christ came to fight a war for us, to win a war for us against tyranny and the enslavement of our souls. He came to invite us to join him in this war. He came to free the world from the control of Satan and all evil spirits.

Jesus did not come primarily to obtain for the Jewish people, nor for any people, the physical and governmental freedoms they might have been praying for. Jesus never tried to overthrow the tyranny of the Roman Empire. He didn't even encourage others to do so. He surprised everybody when he said, "*Pray for your enemies.*" It was spiritual, moral freedom that was his focus of interest. He knew that if he could take care of the spiritual and moral problem that was deeply entrenched in the human race everything else would work out for itself. There would then be good people, good societies, honest and just governments. Jesus Christ came to break the hold and eradicate the influence of the forces of hell over people. Was he successful? Did Jesus accomplish what he set out to do?

Evil still runs rampant. It appears that Jesus lost his battle against the forces of hell, doesn't it? But I only say 'seems.' He really didn't lose. The resurrection of Jesus is the sign of that. The resurrection of Jesus is the visible sign for all people to see that Jesus won his battle against evil. By rising from the dead Jesus can claim total victory over evil of all kinds, over even the worst of all evils - over Death itself. All the powers of hell that led to the death of Jesus were defeated when Jesus rose from the dead. Evil can no longer do anything to him. There is nothing left for it to do. Evil has tried it all - and lost. Jesus proved that he is invincible, that he is always the Victor. And he did it for us. His resurrection was the 'Mother of all Victories.' His resurrection from the dead won for us eternal, everlasting, spiritual freedom.

But here is the rub. No one is forced to share the victory of Christ. Spiritual and moral freedom is offered to us by his victory, not forced down our throats. We must want it, we must show we want it by fighting off all evil influences in our lives. We must do all we can to reject any type of evil when it invites itself into our lives. That is what St. Paul meant in his letter to the Galatians when he wrote: *"It was for liberty that Christ freed us. So stand firm, and do not take on yourselves the yoke of slavery a second time!"*

Jesus won the decisive battle against the forces of hell. His victory decided the outcome of the war against evil. The resurrection of Jesus was the successful act that decided the victorious outcome of the war against the forces of hell. It was the decisive, deciding battle. But many difficult, personal battles remain for each of us to fight, both individually and together, before we can enjoy the final victory. It is a victory we can't lose if we each just do our part. Read St. Paul's exhortation in the second reading.

If we allow ourselves to live under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, we will share forever in his victory over evil. If we allow ourselves to give into temptations to evil, and make a habit of it, we can expect to find ourselves left out of the final victory celebration. Jesus has freed you. With his help do your utmost to preserve your freedom.

Prayer: Lord! Help us to value our freedom both 'individual' as well as 'communal.' Make us aware that 'communal' freedom is the most important one because it makes us live like a family; which in turn promotes peace among peoples and the nations of the world. Amen!

Who is Melchizedek?



This Biblical figure appears in three passages of the Bible: in the Old Testament (Gen 14: 14, 16-18 & Ps 110: 1-4) and in the New Testament (Heb 5-7). Literally Melchizedek means 'my king is righteousness'. He is introduced as the king of Salem [i.e., Jerusalem, cf. Ps

76:2], and a 'priest of God Most High'. We have also some information in the Qumran Scrolls (11Q13) according to which Melchizedek is a divine being and he will proclaim the 'Day of atonement' and he will atone for the people who are predestined to him. Melchizedek is one of the most enigmatic figures in the Biblical History particularly because of the profound statements found in the letter to the Hebrews.

When Abraham returned from rescuing his nephew Lot from four kings who had carried him off, Melchizedek offered Abraham a meal of bread and wine while Abraham gave him a tenth of the spoil (tithe). What we notice in this episode is that Melchizedek a non-Hebrew priest occupies a greater role than Abraham, a Hebrew and the ancestor of the levitical priests occupies a lower place.

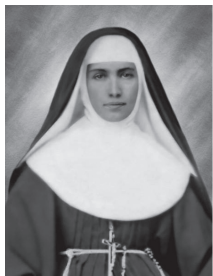
Ps 110 portrays the Israelite king as carrying on the role of the illustrious Melchizedek as we read in the Psalm, Yahweh has sworn to his anointed, "You are a priest for ever like Melchizedek". This expression indeed is hyperbolic with regard to the Israelite kings, but it becomes true of the Messiah for whom the people were waiting after the exile.

According to the author of the letter to the Hebrews, Jesus is the perfect priest and his priesthood is not connected with the priesthood of Levi but fulfils the royal priesthood of the Davidic Messiah, the successor of Melchizedek (cf. Ps 110). Moreover, the character, name and titles of Melchizedek, in some way foreshadow the characteristics of Jesus and fulfil all the messianic themes of the Old Testament. Christ is like Melchizedek in having no human father, for no genealogy is given of Melchizedek. Basing on this external similarity, the letter to the Hebrews while pointing out the superiority of the Melchizedek priesthood over the levitical priesthood (Heb 7: 10), emphasizes that Christ, unlike priests of the line of Aaron, is priest by divine appointment and not by descent.

Answered by:

Rev. (Dr) Pius James D'Souza OCD

St María of Mt Carmen Sallés y Barangueras (Mother Carmen)



The foundress of the Missionary Teaching Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, Mother Carmen lived from 1848 to 1911.

She was born on April 9, 1848, at Vich near Barcelona, Catalonia, Spain and died on July 25, 1911, in Madrid, Spain.

The daughter of José Sallés and Francisca Rosa Barangueras, Carmen studied pedagogy at La Enseñanza school run by the Company of

Mary and began teaching young woman following her graduation.

She was beatified by John Paul II on March 15, 1998.

"Various experiences of religious life led her to discover that her mission in the Church was to sow goodness in children and young people, to protect them from the evils that threaten them and to provide women with learning and professional training that would enable them to take a worthy place in society," John Paul II commented in his homily during the beatification ceremony.

"Dedicated in this way to women's education, she overcame many difficulties, seeing herself as a useless instrument in the hands of Mary Immaculate; she took on daring projects which were the fruit of prayer and the advice of well trained persons, repeating with firm confidence: 'Onwards, ever onwards. God will provide,'" John Paul II added.

"A valiant woman, Mother Carmen based her life and work on a Christocentric and Marian spirituality nourished by solid and sensible piety," the pope commented.

"Her Conceptionist charism, a sign of the Lord's love for his people, lives on today in the witness of her daughters who, as missionaries in schools and colleges, enthusiastically evangelize through their teaching," he said.

(Taken from the website: www.zenit.org)



CHRISTIAN PRAYER

Hilary told me once that he had been to *Vipassana* course at Nasik centre and he found that course very interesting and helpful. Moreover, he also told me that the practise of *Vipassana* has made him pray better and lead a tension free life. I appreciated Mr Hilary for making genuine efforts at learning to pray and to live a life of less tension.

Many people today have a keen desire to learn how to experience deeper and authentic prayer despite various and considerable difficulties offered by modern culture. There is a felt need for silence, recollection and meditation. A lot of people have come to understand the worth of prayer leading them to serenity, silence and tranquillity. Can these methods be called Christian? I feel a bit uneasy to call them Christian in the strict sense of prayer that we experience through our Baptismal grace.

Christian Dimensions of Prayer

Christian Prayer is uniquely **Trinitarian, Christological, Ecclesial and Soteriological** in nature. We cannot identify Christian prayer with any other type of prayer because of its richness, tradition, both mystical and spiritual and its source in the life and teaching of Jesus Christ. St Paul says that we do not know how to pray. It is the Spirit of God who helps us to pray (Rom 8: 26).

Trinitarian Dimension

This dimension is fundamental to Christian prayer, as it spells out the most important ingredient of prayer. After his resurrection, he revealed the doctrine in explicit terms, bidding them “*go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit*” (Mt 28: 18). The supernatural appearance at the baptism of Christ is often cited as an explicit revelation of the Trinitarian doctrine, given at the very commencement of the ministry.

St John in his Gospel establishes the Divinity of Jesus Christ (Jn 20: 31). In the prologue he identifies him with the Word, the only begotten of the Father, Who from all eternity exists with God, Who is God (John 1: 1-18). The immanence of the Son in the Father and of the Father in the Son is declared in Christ’s words to St Philip: “*Do you not believe, that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me?*” (14: 10), and in other passages

no less explicit (14: 7; 16: 15; 17: 21). The oneness of their power and their action is affirmed: “*Whatever he [the Father] does, the Son also does in like manner*” (5: 19, cf. 10: 38); and to the Son no less than to the Father belongs the Divine attribute of conferring life on whom He will (5: 21). In 10:29, Christ expressly teaches His unity of essence with the Father: “*That which my Father hath given me, is greater than all... I and the Father are one.*” The words, “*That which my Father hath given me,*” can, having regard to the context, have no other meaning than the Divine Name, possessed in its fullness by the Son as by the Father.

We are privileged to call God our Father. No other religions have this privilege. This is the uniqueness of Christian prayer. Various texts of the Gospels will certify this dimension:

Christ, the Son of the Eternal Father, showed us the face of the Father, through his own life. The one who has seen him has seen the Father. Spirit: proceeds from the love of the Father and the Son. It is through the Spirit that we are capable of calling God Abba Father. “*If you love me keep my commandments. I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, who will stay with you forever. He is the Spirit who reveals the truth about God*” (Jn 14: 15-16).

Why does God seek man out? Because man has turned away from him, hiding himself as Adam did among the trees of the Garden of Eden (cf. Gn 3: 8-10). Man allowed himself to be led astray by the enemy of God (cf. Gn 3: 13). Satan deceived man, persuading him that he too was a god and that he, like God, was capable of knowing good and evil, ruling the world according to his own will without having to take into account the divine will (cf. Gn 3: 5). Going in search of man through his Son, God wishes to persuade man to abandon the paths of evil, which lead him farther and farther. ‘Making him abandon’ those paths means making man understand that he is taking the wrong path; it means overcoming the evil which is everywhere found in human history. Overcoming evil: This is the meaning of the redemption. This is brought about in the sacrifice of Christ, by which man redeems the debt of sin and is reconciled to God. The Son of God became man, taking a body and soul in the womb of the Virgin, precisely for this reason: to become the perfect redeeming sacrifice. Accepting death on the cross, Christ at the same time reveals and gives life because he rises again and death no longer has power over him.

Rev. (Dr) Rudolf V. D’Souza OCD

Springs of **Living Water**

Daily Spiritual Reflections

JULY - 2013



MONTHLY INTENTION

GENERAL INTENTION:

World Youth Day. That World Youth Day in Brazil may encourage all young Christians to become disciples and missionaries of the Gospel.

MISSIONARY INTENTION:

Asia. That throughout Asia doors may be open to messengers of the Gospel.

July 1	13th Week in the Ordinary Time
Monday	Gen 18: 16-33; Ps 102: 1-4, 8-11; Mt 8: 18-22

Intercessory prayer

Today's first reading presents to us in a wonderful way the dialogue between Abraham and Yahweh.

Some of the things that we hear in today's reading might confuse us. For example, God says, *"I must go down and see whether or not they have done all that is alleged in the outcry against them that has come up to me. I am determined to know"* (Gen 18: 21). Does it mean that He is not all knowing? Does he require to go to the spot, inspect and then pass a judgement? Didn't God know that there were not even ten righteous people... why should he spend his precious time in futile dialogue/bargain with Abraham? According to the Scripture scholars, there are at least four traditions/sources at work in the Old Testament. This part of the scripture comes from the Yahwistic tradition which pictures God in an anthropomorphic way - God being pictured as a man.

What is important in this passage is Abraham's intercessory prayer: whatever the person might deserve, it is our duty to pray for God's mercy.

In spite of Abraham's best efforts Sodom and Gomorrah are destroyed. Then, what is the use of intercessory prayer? God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, for they had reached a dead end, a point of no return. The only option left was to destroy – so that they may sin no more! St Paul writing to Corinthians says regarding the man who lived an immoral life, *"you are to hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord."* (1 Cor 5: 5). Even Jesus said, *"Truly I tell you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town"* (Mt 10: 15).

It is our duty to pray, and intercede for ourselves and for others. It is God's right to answer the way he likes.

Prayer: Lord, have mercy on us, sinners. Amen.

July 2

Tuesday

13th Week in the Ordinary Time

Gen 19: 15-29; Ps 25: 2-3, 9-12; Mt 8: 23-27

I will fear no evil, for You are with me (Ps 23: 4)

What is stronger than fear, even fear of death? Scripture gives an answer: *"There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear"* (1 Jn 4: 8). The Wisdom of Solomon tells us that *"love is stronger than death."*

Jesus' sleeping presence on the storm-tossed sea reveals the sleeping faith of his disciples. They were asleep to Christ while He was present to them in their hour of need.

Life has an element of unpredictability. The suddenness of change is difficult to understand and accept. One moment all is placid, in the next moment there is a sudden and unexpected change. Our familiar world turns topsy-turvy. Our once soaring spirits take a sharp nosedive. These are the experiences of the Apostles in today's Gospel as they find themselves helplessly trapped in the wind and the waves.

When this happens to us, we must always remember that in the thick of the crisis, somewhere in our boat of life, there is a God who cares. He is neither asleep nor deaf to our cries. He is waiting to be called. And when we do call upon Him, as the apostles in the Gospel did, He reveals himself as the Master of the wind and the waves.

The Lord is ever present to us. Amidst the tests we face in life, He asks the same question: Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?

Do you recognize the Lord's presence with you, especially when you meet the storms of adversity, sorrow, or temptations? Whenever we encounter trouble, the Lord is there with the same reassuring message: *"It is I, do not be afraid."*

Prayer: Lord, may I always recognize Your abiding presence with me. Amen.

When upon life's billows you are tempest tossed,
When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost,
Count your many blessings name them one by one,
And it will surprise you what the Lord hath done.

July 3

Solemnity of St Thomas, Apostle of India

Wednesday

Acts 10: 24-35; Ps 41: 2-5; Heb 1: 2-3 or 1 Pet 1: 3-9; Jn 20: 24-29

Happy those who have believed

Thomas, the apostle, was apparently a rationalist. Possibly Jesus wanted, among His apostles, also a man like Judas, to represent the business world; also, a man like Matthew, to represent the world of white-collar jobs; also someone to represent the rationalists and skeptics. Of course, these terms have many shades of meaning. Rationalists and some skeptics would like to be called *intellectuals*. And Thomas could well have been an honest intellectual.

Our all-wise heavenly Father sent His Son to deal with all kinds and strata of human society, not only the fisher-folk, whom it is rather easy to convince. Women, too, are inclined sometimes to credulity. But intellectuals are frequently endowed with a scientific turn of mind. Specially so far as religion is concerned, they emphasized the importance of the principle of verification. That was exactly the demand of Thomas the Apostle. He wanted and required sufficient reason and explanation.

Unless he inserted his finger into the wounds made by the nails, and put his hand into the hole made by the spear, he refused to believe. Jesus showed Himself to Thomas, providing all the data required, and overcoming every reason for unhealthy skepticism.

"My Lord and my God!" exclaimed Thomas. *"Because you have seen me, you have believed,"* said the Lord. When one sees, what is there to believe?

Thomas believed much more than he saw. What he experienced is one thing; what he believed was entirely beyond spatial and temporal experience - the divinity of Jesus. His mind, which had been closed, if not locked, till then, opened to the realization that he had been living for months together, with God, in human form. Tradition has it that St Thomas came to South India after the Resurrection of Jesus, and brought to our people the happiness promised to those who did not see Jesus, but yet believe Him to be the Son of God.

**Prayer: St Thomas, Apostle of India,
pray for the peoples of India. Amen.**

July 4

Thursday

13th Week in the Ordinary Time

Gen 22: 1-19; Ps 114: 1-6, 8-9; Mt 9: 1-8

How shallow is your faith?

We live in a generation which often prides itself on being skeptical. No one is going to make a fool out of me. I can only trust myself. Even in our relationship with God it can be easy not to trust, to doubt that God really loves us, that God can truly help us.

In this section of the Gospel, Matthew shows us sign after sign of Jesus' power. Jesus calms the storm and the Apostles ask "*What sort of man is this whom even the winds and the sea obey?*" This was followed by the casting out of the demons of the men of Gadarenes. The people do not recognize Jesus but the demons call him the 'Son of God'. Today, after Jesus heals the paralytic, the people rejoice that God had given such authority to human beings. Jesus clearly possesses power that rightfully belongs to God and yet they still doubt, they still have 'little faith'.

In our own lives, Jesus continues to give us sign after sign of his mercy and faithfulness - yet when a new trial enters our lives we wonder "Can we trust God to help us now?" When we hear the words of Jesus spoken by the priest during the sacrament of reconciliation do we truly believe that our sins have been forgiven?

As Douglas Adams said, "If it looks like a duck, and quacks like a duck, we have at least to consider the possibility that we have a small aquatic bird of the family anatidae on our hands." If Jesus continues to show powers that belong solely to God - that he can control storms as only God can, that he casts out demons as only God can, that he heals as only God can - it's a pretty good bet that Jesus is God. And when Jesus forgives sins and has given this power to his Church, should we not believe when the priest says "Your sins are forgiven"?

Prayer: Lord, help my unbelief and increase my faith. Amen.

July 5

Friday

13th Week in the Ordinary Time

Gen 23: 1-4, 19; 24: 1-8, 62-67; Ps 105: 1-5; Mt 9: 9-13

Accepting and understanding others

God does not call the qualified but qualifies the called. He chooses the weak and makes them strong. The economy of God's call in the Scriptures is just opposed to human expectations. The barren, the uneducated, the least and the outcast are chosen to carry on His work. Similarly in the Gospel of today we hear the call of Mathew.

Mathew, a publican or a tax collector, was a Jew who served the Roman powers. He extracted taxes from his fellow Jews for the Roman treasury. Hence patriots considered him as a traitor. He had no respect from his own community. Even beggars looked down upon a publican and refused to receive any alms from him. Now Jesus who knew this very well, does not pass any judgment or condemnation on Mathew, instead, to the amazement of many, invites him to '*follow him*'. Human logic is that sinners should be kept away and despised while the just and righteous are to be respected and honoured. Our God touches the unjust and cheater and makes them just and fair. When the Lord gives us the experience of his love and acceptance we change for good. When we find people in our families and communities who understand our weaknesses and accept us with love we realize our faults and change.

Many a time we find difficult to accept people with imperfections and show compassion and include them in our company. Our Lord teaches us to not go with the ordinary but be different and accept others as they are.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to be like You, who love the sinners and condemn the sin; and who generously provides opportunities to change by accepting persons with love and compassion. Amen.

July 6

Saturday

Memorial of St Maria Goretti, Virgin and Martyr

Gen 27: 1-5, 15-29; Ps 135: 1-6; Mt 9: 14-17

Why should we fast?

Fasting is common to most of the religions. People fast for various reasons: to reduce their weight, to fulfill their oaths or promises, to get rid of bad habits, to get favour from deities etc. For the Christians, fasting is ultimately about fasting from sin. In order for fasting to be effective, then, the spirit must be a part of it. Christian fasting is not concerned with mere abstaining from food but it is a matter of prayer and the spirit.

According to Alexander Schmemmann, Christian tradition can name at least seven reasons for fasting:

1. From the beginning, God commanded some fasting (not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil), and sin entered into the world because Adam and Eve broke the fast.
2. For the Christian, fasting is ultimately about fasting from sin.
3. Fasting reveals our dependence on God and not the resources of this world.
4. Fasting is an ancient way of preparing for the Eucharist - the truest of foods.
5. Fasting is preparation for baptism (and all the sacraments) - for the reception of grace.
6. Fasting is a means of saving resources to give to the poor.
7. Fasting is a means of self-discipline, chastity, and the restraining of the appetites.

Only one fast was commanded in the Mosaic law, on the Day of Atonement. The fasting mentioned in the Gospel was a tradition practiced by the Pharisees, and apparently adopted by the disciples of John. Jesus answers the question wisely. He reveals *what he desires from us* individually, that is, when he invites us to be with him in the most intimate human relationship - bridegroom and bride. He asserts that he does not want them simply to 'patch up' their former relationship with God - patching up old cloth and old wineskins won't do. Jesus invites his disciples to a new relationship. Our fasting should help us in this regard.

**Prayer: Lord, help me to remain close to you by
abstaining from sin. Amen.**

July 7

14th Sunday in the Ordinary Time

Sunday

Is 66: 10-14; Ps 65: 1-7, 16, 20; Gal 6: 14-18; Lk 10: 1-12, 17-20

Appointed and commissioned - to make a difference!

Is winning souls for Christ something reserved only to the big guns, I mean, like renowned charismatic preachers, acclaimed exorcists, noted miracle workers, and distinguished theologians? The widespread, popular and prevailing understanding is YES. But in reality it is not, and it need not be the case every time.

A big prayer convention was arranged and the well-known preacher could not reach on time. Somebody else had to start the convention on the appointed day and the actual preacher was expected on the stage the following day. But the preacher did happen to arrive same evening and he just sat with the people, unnoticed, unidentified. At one point, it was announced that anybody willing to make a commitment to Christ should come forward. This well-known preacher asked the man sitting next to him, "are you not willing to commit yourself to Christ?" to which the poor peasant answered, "I'll wait till tomorrow, let me see what the big gun says." Today's Gospel story, however, shows us that mission is for everyone, big guns and little shots alike, the clergy as well as the laity.

What is your vision of the Lord's mission for today? When Jesus commissioned seventy of his disciples to go on mission, he gave them a vision of a great harvest for the kingdom of God. Jesus frequently used the image of a harvest to convey the coming of God's reign on earth. The harvest is the fruition of labour and growth: beginning with the sowing of seeds, then growth, and finally the fruit. In like manner, the word of God is sown in the hearts of receptive men and women who submit to God and honour him as their Lord and King. The harvest Jesus had in

mind was not only the people of Israel, but all the peoples (or nations) of the world.

Jesus commissioned the seventy to a two-fold task: to speak in his name and to act with his power. He gave them instructions as regards how they were to carry out their ministry. They must go and serve as men without guile, full of charity and peace, and simplicity. They must give their full attention to the proclamation of God's kingdom and not be diverted by other lesser things. They must travel light: only take what was essential and leave behind whatever would distract them, in order to concentrate on the task of speaking the word of the God. Such should be the confidence, the preacher places in God, that even if he is not provided with the necessities of life, he is convinced that they will come his way. This will ensure that worry about providing temporal things for himself does not distract him from providing others with eternal things. The appointed must do their work, not for what they can get out of it, but for what they can give freely to others, without expecting special privileges or reward. 'Poverty of spirit' frees us from greed and preoccupation with possessions and makes ample room for God's provision. The Lord wants his disciples to be dependent on him and not on themselves. In other words, these seventy were sent to make a difference in the world, and the second part of the Gospel reports that they indeed made a difference.

On the one hand it seems somewhat brave, and on the other, even arrogant, to suggest that we personally can make a difference. How can we as individuals do anything about the way things are? How can we bring about a difference that the Lord intends from us? The desire to make a difference is not unique to Christians and this vigour and enthusiasm of bringing variety, newness in the lives of the people, is seen mostly in our youth, but which seems to fade as they grow older. But if our

faith has any meaning it surely should make a difference and will make a difference to the way we lead our lives.

Secondly, the appointed, through their preaching and healing are also supposed to bring peace, peace of God, surpassing all understanding. And every time when we meet God we experience this inner peace and joy and our faith in the Lord is strengthened and deepened. Every time we meet God, we should be uplifted. If we do not have more peace after praying, if our faith is not deepened, if we do not have more enthusiasm, this seems to suggest that we are not meeting God at a deeper level in our life of prayer and we need to reconsider our way of living and meeting God. Jesus wants us to be at peace and become of messengers of peace. If we reject Jesus' offer of peace and love, we certainly will not find peace anywhere in the world. Our only hope for peace is the peace of Jesus. *"Peace I leave you, my own peace I give you, a peace the world cannot give"* (Jn 14: 27).

The commissioned return after a successful expedition, not complaining of the fatigue of their journeys, nor of the opposition and discouragement they met with, but rejoicing in their success, especially in casting out unclean spirits. All the success obtained is only through the power derived from Christ. And they all have to rejoice not in a silly moment of success, but rejoice that their mission is confirmed by God and they are chosen for eternal life.

Prayer: Lord, commission me with Your mission and I will rely on Your presence and intervention. Amen.

It is not the actual physical exertion that counts towards a one's progress, nor the nature of the task, but by the spirit of faith with which it is undertaken.

-St Francis Xavier

July 8

Monday

14th Week in the Ordinary Time

Gen 28: 10-22; Ps 90: 1-4, 14-15; Mt 9: 18-26

Hope in the Lord, hold firm and take heart!

There is one thing that differentiates a Christian from any other person on earth - Hope. Even if there is the slightest trace of faith in the person, he will have hope. That is why it is the saddest thing when a Christian commits suicide, because his faith and consequently his hope had already died before him. And this hope is founded solely on the event of the Resurrection of our Lord and the promise of His constant presence among us: *"I am with you always to the end of the age"* (Mt 28: 20). Today's readings speak about this hope in the promise of God's presence. In the first reading, God appears in a dream to Jacob, promising him that He will make his descendents into a great nation, and Jacob responds by expressing his hope in the constant presence of God by his side. In the Gospel, Jesus' presence itself generates hope. The synagogue official spontaneously came to him, with a firm hope that he could raise his dead daughter. The woman suffering from a haemorrhage, even after having tried all the possible medical remedies, had an unrelenting hope in the power of the Jesus. And they did not hope in vain. What they received was more than what they hoped for. They were saved by hope.

Do we find assurance in our own strength or are resigned to God in everything? How firm and steady is our hope in the Lord? Does it bend and waver with the coming of a storm? What place does this saving hope play in our daily living? Do we live as a pilgrim people filled with hope in the promise of eternal life? As we are weighed down by the burden of our sins, failures, troubles and difficulties, pressures and temptations, let us look upon Him who hangs on the cross as we hear His words today resound within us: *"Courage, my child!"*

Prayer: Lord, in You rests all my hope. Amen.

July 9

Tuesday

14th Week in the Ordinary time
Gen 32: 22-32; Ps 16: 1-3, 6-8, 15; Mt 9: 32-38

What is your name?

In the book of Genesis we face life changing questions from God. Where are you? Who said you were naked? Why are you laughing? Today we are looking at: What is your Name? *"A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and loving favour is better than silver and gold"* (Prov 22: 1).

Names say something about who we are. Jacob's name meant 'trickster (cheater)'. Jacob was forced to look into his character when God asked his name. Jacob started life with a struggle to steal another person's rights. He stole his brother's birth right. As Jacob was on his way home and he was getting ready to see his brother Esau the next day we find him in the middle of a crisis. His brother vowed to kill him and was on his way to meet him and that scared Jacob. He had sent his family on ahead of him and he spent the night alone during which *"a man wrestled with him until daybreak"*. So, who was this man? In verse 30 Jacob says, *"He saw God face to face."*

In asking for the blessing from God, Jacob was compelled by God's question to relive the last time he had asked for a blessing, the one he had stolen from his brother. Because he had been deceiving everyone everywhere he went.

God provokes this crisis to bring Jacob to a point of genuine faith. He is then given the name 'Israel' which means 'He struggles with God' or 'God Prevails'. His new name was a reminder of this encounter and the lesson that we need God.

Saul's name was also changed to Paul. Why? Because his name carried with it a reputation of bad news. Now he was a changed man. A meeting with God can change our character.

Whatever your name, it can be changed to 'Child of God'. Will that title honor or shame him (God)?

Prayer: Bless me Lord, that I may be a genuine 'child of God.' Amen.

July 10

14th Week in the Ordinary Time

Wednesday

Gen 41: 55-57, 42: 5-7, 17-24; Ps 32: 2-3, 10-11, 18-19; Mt 10: 1-7

Door of faith

In his Apostolic Letter, '*Porta Fidei*' Pope emeritus Benedict XVI said, "*The '**door of faith**' (Acts 14: 27) is always open for us, ushering us into the life of communion with God and offering entry into his Church.* In today's Gospel Jesus instructs the apostles to go to the lost sheep of Israel (Mt 10:6). The *door of faith* was first opened to the Israelites and then to the whole world. Israel has a special place in the salvific plan of God. The first reading recounts how God took great care of Jacob and his sons amidst the great famine. In the New Testament, after the resurrection of Jesus, the apostles experienced the power of the Holy Spirit. Strengthened by the Holy Spirit the apostles were to go to Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth opening the *doors of faith* to the entire world (Acts 1: 8).

The **door of faith** is ushering us into the life of communion with God. When the *door of faith* was opened to the Apostles, they left their boats and nets in order to share a life of communion with Christ. During the Christian persecution, martyrs shared their blood in order to share a life of communion with God. Consecrated men and women respond to this *door of faith* by their vows: chastity, poverty and obedience. The lay faithful answer this *door of faith* by the reception of the sacraments, daily prayer and charitable works.

Even today the **door of faith** is kept open for those who wish to come and experience communion with God. Let us be thankful to God for opening the *door of faith* for us and continuing even today to keep the door of faith open to all who would allow God's grace to transform their lives. This is how God will '*make all things new*' (Rev 25: 5).

Prayer: Lord Jesus, You are the door through which I enter into communion with the Heavenly Father. Amen.

July 11

Thursday

Memorial of St Benedict, Abbot

Gen 44: 18-21, 23-29, 45: 1-5; Ps 104: 16-21; Mt 10: 7-15

Our call to mission

According to Vatican II, the church is a missionary by nature, because its founder, Jesus Christ, was the first missionary. This is explicitly stated in the Gospel of John *"God loved the world so much that he sent his only son, so that everyone who believes in him may not die, but have live eternal"* (3: 16). He further clarifies in his letter, *"God sent his son into the world so that we might live through him"* (1 Jn 4: 9).

In today's Gospel Jesus invites to evangelize. All the members of the church have to essentially announce God's love, mercy, and forgiveness. We ought to give what we have freely received from God.

How are we going to accomplish the mission as enunciated by Jesus? Principally in two ways:

1) By living a truly Christian life - that is a life filled with love, mercy, compassion, having a forgiving spirit and having a let go spirit. Mahatma Gandhi used to say 'my life is my message.' He often challenged Christian missionaries to observe the 'apostolate of a rose.' A rose doesn't preach. It simply radiates its beauty and attracts people. This is how early Christians evangelized, and the gentiles used to say "see how these Christians love and share what they have with one another."

2) Through a life of prayer. Jesus said *"without me you can do nothing."* Therefore prayer is necessary for everyone who wishes to accept Jesus as their personal saviour and healer. Bl Pope John Paul II of happy memory said "the Holy Spirit would help us to become witnesses to Christ only in an atmosphere of PRAYER." In this modern world living with Christ and living for Christ is not easy! So we need divine support through prayer which brings healing for oneself and for others.

Let us thank the Lord for the gift of St Benedict to the church, as we celebrate his feast today. He is considered as the founder of Western Monasticism.

Prayer: May we radiate Your love, wherever we go, O Lord. Amen.

July 12

14th Week in the Ordinary Time

Friday

Gen 46: 1-7, 28-30; Ps 36: 3-4, 18-19, 27-28, 39-40; Mt 10: 16-23

Trusting in the words of Jesus

Jesus was conscious that when his appointed time would come he would have to depart to his Father's house. And so he was preparing his apostles to carry on this mission which his Father had entrusted to him. First and foremost he was strengthening them in faith so that they strongly trust and believe in him because only when they experienced him closely they would carry on the mission in love and truth.

In the Gospel Jesus tells his disciples that he is sending them like sheep among wolves. Sheep as we know are helpless animals and they rely upon their shepherd for protection. So if the disciples were the sheep, why was Jesus sending them out helpless to face a hostile world - a world where they would face danger of life and persecution, dragged before courts and authorities? The answer to this is that he wasn't sending them out helpless, they may have been helpless on their own and unable to care for and defend themselves but when Jesus called them he gave them the power to force out evil spirit and to heal every kind of disease and sickness. Yes, Jesus strengthens those whom he calls and chooses, and gives them his spirit so that they are able to work wonders and do the impossible.

Jesus tells us that we need not fear, because although we might be helpless on our own, with him nothing is impossible. He reminds us that we do not need to bow to the expectations and challenges of this world and that we can and are able to take a stand for him and the truth through the Holy Spirit. We will be given the courage and power to speak out. Are we with him and do we find strength in his words? Are we willing to be mocked and ridiculed for the sake of Christ?

Prayer: Here I am Lord, to follow You. Lead and guide me. Amen.

July 13	14th Week in the Ordinary Time
Saturday	Gen 49: 29-32, 50: 15-26; Ps 104: 1-4, 6-7; Mt 10: 24-33

The incredible love of God

Today's readings assure us of God's personal knowledge and care for each one of us. In the first reading Joseph, forgives his brothers telling them, *"Even though you meant harm to me, God meant it for good."* This is an incredible example of how God works in our life even when we falter and commit sin.

Do you know how many hairs are on your head? Parents love their children dearly and love them even before they are born. Yet, none could begin to know how many hairs are on their head.

It seems the average number of hairs is somewhere in the range 450+ hairs per head. In India itself we have a population of 1.27 billion. And, 450×1.27 billion equals... well... an astronomical number!

Yet, the story is not really about numbers. To have God know the number of hairs on my head means that God knows my every thought, my every fear, my every sorrow, and my every joy. No one - even those who know me well - will ever know me that well and love me for who I am. God's presence and attending to life are beyond our comprehension.

Does having God love and know us so mean that we will know only happiness? No - though sometimes we would wish it. Look again at today's scripture. Jesus does not say that God will keep the sparrow from falling; rather, he says that no sparrow will fall without God's knowledge.

God never promised that we would escape suffering. Just like the sparrows, we too will fall. All of us, at one time or another, will know sorrow. However, God does tell us that we will NEVER be alone! No matter how alone, distraught, or frightened we might feel, God is there - God's love for us is greater than anything that can happen to us.

We are loved, - who are we to be afraid of?

Prayer: Lord, help may we open our hearts to feel Your presence and Your love. Amen.

July 14	15th Sunday in the Ordinary Time
Sunday	Deut 30: 10-14; Ps 68: 16, 17, 30-31, 33-34, 36-47; Col 1: 15-20; Lk 10: 25-37

Perfection of Christian life - growth in charity

According to William Barclay the road from Jerusalem to Jericho was a notoriously dangerous one. Jerusalem is 2,300 feet above sea level while Jericho is 1,300 feet below sea level, so in traversing the road between these two cities, the traveller would have to pass through a terrain drop of 3,600 feet. Moreover he would have to navigate narrow, rocky passages, and of sudden turnings. It was a road so notorious that St Jerome even called it 'The red or bloody way'.

Therefore to travel alone on this road was reckless and foolish - but it was exactly what the victim in our Gospel parable today did. Hence this man had no one to blame but himself, he was a victim of his own stupidity. But this adds more gravity to the message of neighborly concern, for stupid people are least likely to attract sympathy from his/her neighbors.

So the stage was set. Who will help this traveler?

The first to pass by was a priest. In Jewish law, anyone who touches a dead man is unclean for seven days (Num 19: 11). He cannot be sure if the victim was already dead and he also cannot risk his turn of duty in the temple by becoming unclean - so he went past the fallen victim.

The second person to pass by was a Levite. Levites are wise and educated Hebrews. By knowledge he knew that bandits were in the habit of using decoys. One of them would act the part of the wounded man and when an unsuspecting traveller stops, the others would rush over him. He could not risk this danger to his own life, so he too simply passed him by.

The third person was a Samaritan. This Samaritan seems to have been a kind of a commercial traveller who was a regular visitor

to the inn. His credit was good since the innkeeper was prepared to trust him. But we know that the Samaritans are not of good standing with the Jews. So the audience of Jesus must have expected him to do worse than the priest and the Levites but alas, he was the hero in this parable. He alone was prepared to help the foolhardy traveller even if he seems to have been very busy himself.

By making the Samaritan the hero of the parable, Jesus was teaching the message of being a true neighbour. In this parable, Jesus was teaching the Jews that all people can be neighbours to each other, even if our neighbours make a fool out of themselves.

Now let us take note of something else in this parable. Why did the priest and the Levite not help the man? If we look at it carefully we will see that they actually have valid reasons for doing so: the priest because of his priestly duties and the Levite for the fear of his own life and this is beside the fact that the victim was suffering from his own stupidity.

The Samaritan too was a very busy man. He was probably a businessman rushing to his appointments. He too had valid reasons to just pass him by. But he did not; he stopped, dressed the man's wounds, brought him to the inn and cared for him for a day before going on to his affairs.

This tells us that we too, at times, put back our acts of fraternal charity for many reasons. Perhaps we excuse ourselves from doing good just for our own convenience. The first reading too reminds us to be totally aware of the law of God (love) and carefully put it into practice. In the second reading St Paul tells us in clear terms, that Jesus is the image of the unseen God (Col 1: 15). The life of Jesus shows us the practical implications of the commandment of God.

Prayer: Lord, teach us today, what it means to be a true neighbour to each other. May we be strengthened through the Eucharist to go out and do the needful. Amen.

July 15

Monday

Memorial of St Bonaventure, Bishop and Doctor

Ex 1:8-14, 22; Ps 123:1-8; Mt 10:34-11:1

Total commitment

Today's readings call for a reach out, from our personal world and the circle of our kith and kin. Jesus bids us to embrace a wider society, the 'Kingdom of God'. Our Lord has not come to bring a false and earthly peace - the sort of tranquillity the self-seeking person yearns for; He wants us to struggle against our own passions and against sin and its effects, to gain this Kingdom. The word of God in fact leads to these divisions mentioned here. It can make us enemies within our families, to those relatives who resist the word of truth. This is why our Lord goes on to say that nothing should come between Him and His disciple - not even father, mother, son or daughter. Following Christ, doing what He asks, means risking this present life to gain eternal life. St Bonaventure whose feast we celebrate today stands out as an example of this kind of discipleship. Every Christian must be, basically, a person for others, a person for the greater cause of the Kingdom values.

A prophet's mission is not essentially one of announcing future events; his main role is that of communicating the Word of God (Jer 11: 2; Is 1: 2). The righteous man, the just man, is he who obeys the Law of God and follows His paths (Gen 6: 9; Is 3: 10). Here Jesus tells us that everyone who humbly listens to and welcomes prophets and righteous men, recognizing God in them, will receive the reward of a prophet and a righteous man. Similarly, we should see God in the least of His disciples (v 42), even if they do not seem very important, for they are important, because they are envoys of God and of His Son. That is why he who gives them a glass of cold water - any alms or any small service - will receive a reward, for he has shown generosity to our Lord Himself.

Prayer: Lord, give me the grace to commit myself totally to Your cause. Amen.

July 16

Tuesday

Memorial of Our Lady of Mount Carmel

Ex 2: 1-15; Ps 68: 3, 14, 30-31, 33-34; Mt 11: 20-24

To be full of faith is to be holy

The Church today celebrates the feast of Lady of Mount Carmel. The Carmelites invoke her not only as 'Queen' but also as 'Sister' as they were called from early times as 'Brothers of our Lady of Mount Carmel.' Her apparition to St Simon Stock, Father General of the Carmelites, giving him the Holy Scapular with the promises of saving each person who wears the Scapular and the promise of saving the Order of the Carmelites, show her love for humanity.

In the Gospel of today Jesus invites the people to conversion. Unless one is converted and lives in grace he or she cannot live in holiness. Jesus performed miracles and signs to inculcate faith in the people, so that they would believe in Him. In some towns where he performed miracles people were not converted. They did not believe in Jesus. One who sees the miracles performed by Jesus with an open heart believes in Jesus, in His power, and the salvation He gives to humanity.

Faith in Jesus is altogether a new way of living. It is to leave the old ways and to live in love. One who believes in Jesus lives according to His will. This is how one lives in holiness.

'Turning from one's own sin' is to realize that one did not give sufficient place to Jesus in one's life. The more we try to give place to Jesus in our life, or make Him our master of life, the more we grow in holiness.

Our heavenly Mother, who is also called our Lady of Mount Carmel, teaches us through her life that to be holy is to be full of faith.

We, the disciples of Jesus Christ are called to live in faith. Faith means to surrender oneself to the will of God manifested to us through Jesus.

**Prayer: Lord, help me to surrender myself to Your holy will;
may I live in faith and grow in holiness. Amen.**

JOHN PAUL II, ANGELUS (Sunday, 16 July 2000)

As I look at these mountains, my thoughts turn today to Mount Carmel, praised in the Bible for its beauty. We are, in fact, celebrating the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. On that mountain, located in Israel near Haifa, the holy prophet Elijah strenuously defended the integrity and purity of the chosen people's faith in the living God. On that same mountain some hermits gathered in the 12th century after Christ and dedicated themselves to contemplation and penance. The Carmelite Order arose from their spiritual experience.

Walking with the Blessed Virgin, the model of complete fidelity to the Lord, we will fear no obstacles or difficulties. Supported by her motherly intercession, like Elijah we will be able to fulfil our vocation as authentic "prophets" of the Gospel in our time.

...May Our Lady of Mount Carmel, whom we call upon today with special devotion, help us tirelessly climb towards the summit of the mountain of holiness; may she help us love nothing more than Christ, who reveals to the world the mystery of divine love and true human dignity (cf. *Opening Prayer*).

PRAYER TO OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL

Gentle Mother, Our Lady of Mount Carmel, you opened your heart to God and brought for our Saviour, Christ the Lord. Holy Mary, help us to be people of faith, who see God's presence within and around us. Inspire us to see the Face of God in our family and friends - and in all people. Virgin Mother, as you embrace us with the mantle of your love, give us the grace to see God's action and will in times of light and darkness, and in the peaks and valleys of our climb to God's holy mountain. Be with us now, in our hour of need, Beautiful Flower of Carmel. Be our Mother! God will not say 'no' to you, because you, Gracious Lady, said 'YES' to Him.

Our Lady of Mount Carmel, pray for us.

July 17

Wednesday

15th Week in the Ordinary Time

Ex 3: 1-6, 9-12; Ps 102: 1-4, 6-7; Mt 11: 25-27

God calls us when we least expect him

This account of the calling of Moses in the first reading is charged with theological content; it gives the features of two protagonists (Moses and God) and the bases of the liberation of the people by means of a wondrous divine intervention. In the dialogue between God and Moses after the theophany of the burning bush, the Lord endows Moses with all the gifts he needs to carry out his mission: he promises him help and protection, he gives him the power to work wonders, and he designates his brother Aaron as his aide, who will be his spokesman.

The mountain of God, Horeb, called in other traditions Sinai, probably lies in the south-east part of the Sinai peninsula. On this same mountain the Law will later be promulgated, in the context of another dramatic theophany. Elijah will come back here to meet God. It is the mountain of God 'par excellence'.

Fire is often a feature of theophanies (cf. Ex 19: 18; 24: 17; Lev 9: 23-24; Ezk 1: 17), perhaps because it is the best symbol to convey the presence of things spiritual and divine transcendence. Some Christian writers have seen in the burning bush an image of the Church which endures despite the persecutions and trials it undergoes.

All the details given in the passage help to bring out the simplicity and at the same time the drama of God's action; the scene is quite ordinary (grazing, a mountain, a bush...), but extraordinary things happen (the angel of the Lord, a flame which does not burn and a voice).

The sign which God gives Moses is linked to his faith, because it involves both a promise and a command: when they come out of Egypt, Moses and the people will worship God on this very mountain. When this actually happens, Moses will acknowledge the supernatural nature of his mission but, meanwhile, he has to obey faithfully the charge given him by God.

Prayer: Help us Lord, to be attentive to Your call everyday. Amen.

July 18

Thursday

15th Week in the Ordinary Time

Ex 3: 13-20; Ps 105: 1, 5, 8-9, 24-25, 26-27; Mt 11: 28-30

The nature of God

We have a tendency to look at God in human terms. A great mystical writer states that we often “describe the transcendental First Cause of all by characteristics drawn from the lowest order of beings, while we deny that it [divinity] is in any way above the images which they fashion after various designs” (Pseudo Dionysius). The maker is somehow presented to us with the category of creatures. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI in reminds us in *Spe Salvi* that “The truth of negative theology was highlighted by the Fourth Lateran Council, which explicitly stated that however great the similarity that may be established between Creator and creature, the dissimilarity between them is always greater” (no. 43). God is simply above our capacity to grasp and much more difficult to describe.

God’s self-revelation to Moses is “*I am who I am*”. When Moses insists that God give himself a name so that the Hebrews would believe him, the name God reluctantly gives, is really not a ‘name’ in the proper sense. In Hebrew the original EHEYEH literally means ‘I AM BEING’ OR ‘I AM EXISTING’, with emphasis on the continuousness or the dynamism of the act of being or existing. It was as if God said, with a little impatience, “all right, tell them that I AM BEING sent you”. But what it really means is, “My name is nameless.” Only idols can have names, because idols are things. But I, the living God, am not a thing.

Thus St Augustine said: “What are we to say, brothers, about God? For if you have fully grasped what you want to say, it isn’t God. If you have been able to comprehend it, you have comprehended something else instead of God. If you think you have been able to comprehend, your thoughts have deceived you”. What is our personal experience of God?

Prayer: Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart, naught be all else to me, save that thou art (Hymn, Office of Reading, Sunday I). Amen.

July 19	15th Week in the Ordinary Time
Friday	Ex 11: 10-12, 14; Ps 115: 12-13, 15-18; Mt 12: 1-8

It is love I desire, not sacrifice

Sabbath was the day the Jews set aside for worshipping God. God Himself is the originator of the Sabbath (Gen 2: 3), who ordered the Jewish people to avoid certain kinds of work on this day to leave them free to give more time to God. As time went by, the rabbis complicated this divine precept. By Jesus' time the list of the types of forbidden works was extended to 39.

The Pharisees accuse Jesus' disciples of breaking the Sabbath. In the casuistry of the scribes and the Pharisees, plucking ears of corn was the same as harvesting, and crushing them was the same as milling - both types of agricultural work forbidden on the Sabbath.

Jesus teaches God's purpose in instituting the Sabbath: God established it for man's good, to help him rest and devote himself to divine worship in joy and peace. The Pharisees, through their interpretation of the Law, had turned this day into a source of anguish and scruple due to all the various prescriptions and prohibitions they introduced.

It is not the Sabbath itself that matters so much as who the Sabbath allows us to be when we let ourselves be transformed by the very observance of it. The Temple and the Law are meant to help us to grow in our love for one another. It should not promote a 'holier than thou' attitude, wherein I feel I am better than the others and have liberty to condemn them.

By proclaiming Himself 'Lord of the Sabbath', Jesus affirms His divinity and His universal authority. The Sabbath had been established not only for man's rest but also to give glory to God. Our faith in God becomes more substantial and effective when translated into deeds of love and mercy towards our neighbour. The bread that feeds people is infinitely more pleasing to God than the bread left at the altar!

Prayer: Lord, let my worship in the Holy Temple help me grow in genuine love for my neighbour. Amen.

July 20

Saturday

15th Week in the Ordinary Time

Ex 12: 37-42; Ps 135: 1, 10-15, 23-24; Mt 12: 14-21

Truth and victory

Jesus began His public ministry through His preaching and His mighty works. Very soon, He was rocketed into the lime-light and began to outshine all the stars in the contemporary Jewish firmament.

In such a situation, clashes and collisions were inevitable. His very life-style was a reproach to the leaders; and He had to reproach them verbally also. The first verse of today's Gospel tells us that the Pharisees were plotting about how they could get rid of him. Jesus, knowing this, withdrew from the district. People in all kinds of need, flocked to Him; and He cured them of various infirmities, while warning them not to make Him known.

How dangerous it was for Him to be popular; how risky to be ever attracting large crowds of people. Could Jesus expect that those crowds would come to His help when the Pharisees finally joined the Sadducees in arresting and condemning Him?

Matthew, in today's Gospel, quotes a messianic prophecy from Isaiah:

"He will not break the bruised reed; nor put out the smouldering wick; till He has brought the truth to victory."

Jesus Himself was bruised and broken, and His life was, humanly speaking, extinguished. But did He bring the truth to victory? Had He Himself not said to Pilate that His kingdom was not of *this* world?

Can the truth expect to have the victory in this world?

In this world, it is frequently *power* that gets the victory. The chief priests had that power; and they defeated the truth. Jesus allowed them to have the victory. He wanted to be the voice of the voiceless, the representative of thousands, whose passion for truth would be silenced apparently forever, by claims of undisputed authority.

Even today, even inside the Church, the truth is being constantly defeated by people in prestigious positions, who don't understand that victory over the truth cannot be a true victory.

Prayer: Thank You Jesus, Eternal Truth, for allowing Yourself for my sake, to be defeated by temporal powers. Amen.

July 21	16th Sunday in the Ordinary Time
Sunday	Gen 18: 1-10; Ps 14: 2-5; Col 1: 24-28; Lk 10: 38-42

The hierarchy of priorities

Jesus seems to have often been a guest in the home of Martha and Mary, and their brother Lazarus. This shows that God has His preferences. He feels more comfortable in some homes than in others. This cannot be called partiality. It is better called mutuality. Some of our homes are very Christian. They make it comfortable for God to be there. We must ask ourselves about this from time to time. Does our family pray together? Does our family stay together? Do we find ourselves comfortable with one another?

There are families and communities where even the members of the family or community are quite uncomfortable with one another. One person's tension, is another one's relief. Or, there may be groups and conflicting parties, living under the same roof.

If Jesus visits such a home, He will either leave immediately, or He will bring harmony among all. Before our family prayers, we should pause for a minute to be reconciled with one another in our minds and hearts, so as to make our home comfortable for Jesus to stay with us.

Take the example of Martha and Mary in today's Gospel: Mary sits there, contemplating Jesus. Martha is busy with serving. After a while, she complains to Jesus: *"Lord, do You not care; my sister has let me alone to do the serving? Please tell her to help me."*

Some children in our families are active; others are more passive. Parents must study and observe them. Younger children may become passive, precisely because older ones want to be more active. Some are more active because they are more talented, or because they want to be in the limelight. They compel siblings to be somewhat withdrawn and passive.

And then... the hyperactive people who compel others to be passive, but blame them for being inactive, for sitting there and

doing nothing. We do not know exactly to what extent Martha's activity was responsible for her sister's passivity. But the Lord knows people through and through. He must have been greatly appreciating Martha, fluttering hither and thither to make Jesus feel at home. That was good enough. But Jesus felt uncomfortable, when Martha says "*Lord, do You not care; my sister has let me alone to do the serving? Please tell her to help me.*"

"Martha, Martha," came the eye-opening reply, *"you fret and worry about many things. Few things are necessary; in fact only one..."*

Jesus is telling Martha and telling us through Martha, that we should have a correct order of priorities in our lives; and a reasonable variety of dishes on our tables; and correct discernment concerning the preferences of our guests. This is a very special Guest Who is coming to visit Martha and Mary. He wishes so much to feed rather than to be fed. Sure, He accepts what Martha has to offer for His corporal sustenance. But He wishes to nourish their minds with His truth, and with the revelation of His glory.

Today's second reading gives us some idea of this revelation: *"... the message which was a mystery hidden for generations and centuries and has now been revealed to His saints.... The message is: Christ among you, your hope of glory."*

Martha seems to have understood little of this mighty revelation of God that had come to be fed at her table. Did Mary understand? Probably not fully! She was charmed; she was mesmerized in some measure. In that measure she would be transformed into an apostle in the days to come. And even in her apostolic activity, feeding and nourishing others with the revelation she received from Christ, she would not cease sitting at His feet and contemplating Him. *"Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken from her."*

**Prayer: Teach me, Lord, to understand Your preferences,
and give up my own. Amen.**

July 22	Memorial of St Mary Magdalene
Monday	2 Cor 5: 14-15; Ps 63: 2-6, 8-9; Jn 20: 1-2, 11-18

**"I found Him Whom my heart loves"
(Song of Songs 3: 4).**

Today we celebrate the feast of St Mary Magdalene - the notorious sinner who became a renowned saint. The Gospel reading, from John, describes the encounter of Mary Magdalen with the Risen Jesus. We are told that Mary went to the tomb early on Sunday morning, *'while it was still dark'*. The darkness not only indicates that it was before sunrise but also expresses the feelings in Mary's heart. She had lost her beloved Master and was in deep mourning for him. After the two disciples left, Mary Magdalen stayed alone outside the tomb, weeping. The word 'weeping' is used three times, indicating the depth of her grief. When Jesus appears, she thinks he must be the gardener. This was not surprising, as we had been told a little earlier (Jn 19: 41) that Jesus' tomb was in a garden. There is some Johannine irony here. At the very beginning, death had come to the human race in a garden, the Garden of Eden, where Adam and his wife and disobeyed Yahweh. Now, life is coming back in another garden. And, of course, Jesus is indeed the Gardener.

It is then that Jesus addresses her: 'Mary'. In speaking of himself as the Good Shepherd, Jesus had said, "He calls his own sheep by name... The sheep follow him because they recognise his voice." So here, Mary immediately recognizes the voice of her Master; she knows that it is Jesus who is calling her. Jesus then tells her to stop clinging to him. She thinks she is clinging to the Jesus she knew before. But this is the Risen Jesus already on the way to be united to his Father. From now on she will have to find him in a very different way, in her brothers and sisters. So, she is told to go and tell the other disciples that Jesus is on his way to the Father, to his God and their God. So Mary goes off to

tell the disciples the exciting news: *"I have seen the Lord!"*

In many ways, Mary Magdalen can be called a Beloved Disciple. No one shows a stronger love for Jesus than this woman who had been liberated from a seriously sinful life. She was there with Jesus' Mother and some other women at the foot of the cross keeping vigil, while not one of the men disciples was to be seen. After Jesus was buried, she kept vigil by his tomb. Early on Sunday morning, she was there again when the tomb was discovered to be empty. After the visit of Peter and the Beloved Disciple, she alone stayed on to mourn. In this Gospel, she is the very first person to whom the Risen Jesus reveals himself. And she is the very first of his followers to announce the Resurrection of the Lord. This gives her a unique place in the Gospel story.

The First Reading is from the Second Letter to the Corinthians. *"The love of Christ drives us forward,"* says Paul. It was this love that drove Mary Magdalen. And it speaks of a new relationship with Christ: *"From now on we regard no one according to the flesh; even if we once knew Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know him so no longer."* This was what Mary Magdalen had to learn. She could no longer cling to the Christ she had known earlier.

The Christ we know now is to be found in every person and in every experience of our life. It is there that he is to love and served. Let us ask Mary Magdalen to help us know Jesus better.

PRAYER TO SAINT MARY MAGDALENE

Saint Mary Magdalene, woman of many sins, who by conversion became the beloved of Jesus, thank you for your witness that Jesus forgives through the miracle of love.

You, who already possess eternal happiness in His glorious presence, please intercede for me, so that some day I may share in the same everlasting joy. Amen.

July 23

Tuesday

16th Week of the Ordinary Time

Ex 14: 21-15:1; Ps. Ex 15: 8-9, 10, 12, 17; Mt 12: 46-50

Plan of man v/s will of God

In the first reading we have the episode of crossing the red sea. The will of God was that his chosen people should be freed from the clutches of the Egyptian King and be brought to the land flowing with milk and honey. In order to do this God chose Moses. But the plan of Moses was to look after the sheep of his father-in-law and be a shepherd. God realized his plan through Moses, because Moses was ready to change his own!

In the Gospel we have Jesus telling his disciples that anyone who does the will of his Father is His mother, sister and brother. Mary is the one who did the will of God in her life hundred percent. Like any other Jewish woman she too wanted to have her own family. But the will of God was that she was to become the Mother of his only begotten son. Mary said 'yes' to the will of God.

Following the will of God involves a lot of courage and risk. This is abundantly clear from the lives of both Moses and Mother Mary. They had faith in the one whom they had 'yes'.

Following the will of God also involves a lot of criticism. Moses faced criticism from his own people whom he had come to free from slavery. In a similar way Mother Mary also might have undergone criticism from her own family members.

Finally, following the will of God involves a lot of sacrifices. We need to say 'no' to many worldly things. But the beauty of following the will of God is that it makes us the members of God's family.

Prayer to Know the Will of God

Lord, what is Your will that I do? I am completely open to Your plan for me. I desire to live only in You and to be guided by You forever.

Grant that Your holy will may be carried out perfectly in me

(St Jane Frances de Chantal).

July 24

Wednesday

16th Week in the Ordinary Time

Ex 16:1-5, 9-15; Ps 77; Mt 13:1-9

Draw near to God

Two important lessons are presented to us in the first reading: 1] Without God our life is empty. Our possessions like money, property, investment etc. do not bring the much needed peace and comfort. As long as these things occupy the space that is meant for God, our life remains empty. 2] Sin and temptations become a barrier on our march towards perfection.

God directed the Israel community to journey in the wilderness. God wanted his people to depend on Yahweh forever. They were to make choice for God. As God hardened the heart of Pharaoh in order to manifest His glory so also God roused the hunger of the Israel community to manifest his provident care. The people craved to eat food and meat. In the wilderness, it was impossible for Moses to provide it to them. As many spiritual thinkers appraise that the temptation to stand separate or against God very strong in the hour of hunger. However, Moses understands the mind of God and invites the people to 'draw near to Yahweh.' As soon as they listened to God, their problem was solved.

St Matthew in the Gospel, tells us that many people gathered around Jesus to listen to him and Jesus told them the parable of the sower. The productivity of the seed on good soil varied: thirty fold, sixty fold and hundredfold. Why the variation? In this case it was not because of the soil. The soil was equally prepared with manure and minerals. The seeds produced according to their potency. The seeds had the capacity to yield thirty fold, sixty fold or hundredfold. The capacity of each seed was fully realized.

Let us rejoice at the fruits produced by the Word of God in each person we encounter. There is no room for jealousy because there is difference in the production. If we have prepared our hearts well, then the seed of God's Word will bear fruit in a right measure.

Prayer: O Father, help me bear fruit in and through Christ. Amen.

July 25

Thursday

Feast of St James, Apostle

2 Cor 4: 7-15; Ps 125: 1-6; Mt 20: 20-28

The lessons of the cross

Today the Holy Mother the Church celebrates the feast of St James who is the second apostle listed by Jesus and one of the first apostles called by him. James was privileged to be one of the three apostles present at the raising from the dead of Jairus' daughter, the Transfiguration, and Jesus' agony in the garden. James was 'greater' in more ways than one.

When James' mother asked Jesus to put her sons at his right and left hands, Jesus did not make James' eminent position official. Instead, he challenged James and his brother to drink the cup of suffering, to take up the cross. This was the pattern of Jesus' relationship with James. Before Jesus raised Jairus' daughter, he displayed to James the cross of being ridiculed. Before and after the Transfiguration, Jesus spoke of the cross. At the agony in the garden, Jesus again showed James 'the way of the cross.' Finally, after Pentecost, James, now called 'the brother of John', got the message, and became the first apostle to be martyred.

Although James and John wanted prosperity and success, Jesus wanted them to take up the cross. Jesus invites us not only to suffer in the pattern of his death, but even to be crucified with Him. Furthermore, He calls us to make the cross not only an occasional moment in our lives but to "*continually...carry about in our bodies the dying of Jesus*" (2 Cor 4: 10) and to 'constantly' be "*delivered to death for Jesus' sake*" (2 Cor 4: 11). We are tempted to make our crosses as rare as possible. But Jesus wants our crosses to be constant.

When we not only take up the daily cross but also continually and constantly live the cross, we paradoxically reveal '*in our bodies the life of Jesus*' (2 Cor 4: 10). As a grain of wheat which falls to the earth and dies, we bear much fruit (Jn 12: 24). We also find joy as we share Christ's sufferings.

Prayer: Jesus, teach me the way of the cross. Amen.

July 26

Friday

**Memorial of Sts Joachim and Ann,
Parents of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Ex 20: 1-17; Ps 18: 8-11; Mt 13: 18-23**

Are you listening?

The story is told that when Napoleon was making plans to invade England, he was told that an American wanted to see him. "I can give him two minutes," Napoleon said. But two minutes were not long enough to understand the revolutionary idea of a ship propelled by steam. Had Napoleon listened longer to Robert Fulton the history of the world might have been altered.

Are you listening? It pays to listen to the right person, at the right time, and for the right length of time. Sometimes it pays to listen for a very long time. Especially, when it comes to listening to God. We should never stop listening to the Word of God.

Are you listening? If so, then you are learning.

In the parable of the sower Jesus speaks of four different kinds of hearers or listeners. The cold listener, the superficial listener, the confused listener and the upright listener. The cold listener is hardened to the Gospel because he can't seem to understand or grasp it. He/She becomes cynical because of a lack of understanding. The superficial listener doesn't have any staying power. He/She is quick to believe, receive and rejoice, but doesn't stay with the program or the person, that is Christ. He/She will not remain faithful. When the going gets tough, he/she gets going in the wrong direction. The confused listener has tangled up his life with the things of this world. He/She has cluttered up his/her life with things instead of seeking to please the Lord. The upright listener sees himself in the mirror of God's Word and doesn't like what he/she sees. Consequently, he/she does something to change that image. He/she believes and obeys the Word of God and allows God's Word to bear fruit in his/her life.

Joachim and Ann, without a doubt were upright listeners of God's Word. The fruit and the proof of their uprightness is the Virgin Mary, our mother.

Prayer: Lord, open my heart and mind to listen to Your Word. Amen.

July 27

Saturday

16th Week in the Ordinary Time

Ex 24: 3-8; Ps 49: 1-2, 5-6, 14-15; Mt 13: 24-30

The struggle between good and evil

In today's first reading we hear the Israelites pledge: *"We will do everything that the LORD has told us."* Later on in the story they again say: *"All that the LORD has said, we will heed and do."* We know from the history of salvation that they would later break this pledge. The history of broken pledges is very often our own personal history as well. We know about the many moments in which, full of zeal, we promised to God and to ourselves beautiful plans that we intended to execute, and later on forgot about.

In the Gospel, the Lord narrates the parable of the wheat and the darnel. The master of the harvest planted good seed, but his enemy planted darnel in his field. God created our hearts good and capable of seeing what is right and doing it. The enemy planted in the same hearts the inclination to evil, due to which we often abandon what is right in spite of the earlier determination and pledges. But our master knows that it is his enemy that did this to him. He also has the patience to let the two grow together, knowing that in spite of the presence of the darnel he can still get fruits from his garden.

When we have failed in our promises to God we need to remember that God understands us better than we understand ourselves. He knows our keen desire to please him. He knows about the alien elements that pool us into the opposite direction. He also has confidence that in spite of our failures, we can still bear good fruit. The danger for us would be to allow the darnel overpower the wheat through discouragement and despair. The right thing is to never give up, but continue with the struggle until some fruit is borne in spite of the ever present discomfort of sin and the inclination to sin in us.

Prayer: Jesus, may Your saving Words break through the stubbornness of my actions. Amen.

July 28

17th Week in the Ordinary Time

Sunday

Gen 18: 20-32; Ps 137: 1-3, 6-8; Col 2: 12-14; Lk 11: 1-13

Praying the 'Our Father' worthily

The Jews were noted for their devotion to prayer. Formal prayer was prescribed daily at three set times. And the rabbis had a prayer for every occasion. It was also a custom for rabbis to teach their disciples a simple prayer they might use on a regular basis. Jesus' disciples ask him for such a prayer. When Jesus taught his disciples to pray he gave them the disciple's prayer, what we call the *Our Father* or *Lord's Prayer*.

St Teresa of Avila says although our aim is to pray, the journey of prayer begins with fraternal love, humility and detachment. Fraternal love, humility and detachment are the prerequisites to prayer life, without which we will make very little advancement in prayer. I am inclined to think that she arrived at this conclusion from the reflections on Our Father. These three aspects stand out in the Lord's Prayer.

Fraternal Love: The concern of the devotee is not individualistic rather communitarian which prompts him to address God as 'our' Father and not 'my' father.

Humility: queue up to procure the daily ration of food asking him to *give us this day our daily bread*. To seek forgiveness from others and be first in turn to forgive the faults of others.

Detachment: The Lord expects that we embrace a common kingdom for which we would have to renounce our will and attachments. *Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done*.

The Gospel promises "*ask and you shall receive, seek and you will find, knock and it will be opened*" does not come true in our lives. It is because of our inner dichotomy that we are unable to understand the meaning and the implication of the deeper prayer 'Abba'. We will understand the deeper implications if we come to realize what it meant to Jesus. For Jesus it meant a constant seeking of the will

of the Father in everything. It was easy for Him to seek the Father's Will and His Kingdom.

On the contrary, we are not ready to let the Father choose what He wishes for us. We prefer to be wiser than the Abba. We make angry demands we would rather wish: MAY MY WILL BE DONE!

Hence to call ABBA means: to seek His interests and not ours, that his name be held Holy and we acknowledge it. We can meaningfully pray the Lord's Prayer to the extent we love our brothers and sisters, detach ourselves from undue attachments and become humble in attitude.

Prayer: Father in heaven, You have given me a mind to know You, a will to serve You, and a heart to love You. Give me today the grace and strength to embrace Your holy will. Amen.

ST TERESA OF JESUS (AVILA) on the Lord's Prayer:

We ought to give great praise to the Lord for the sublime perfection of this evangelical prayer. Each of us, daughters, can apply the prayer to her own needs since it was composed by such a good Master. I marvel to see that in so few words everything about contemplation and perfection is included; it seems we need to study no other book than this one. Up to now the Lord has taught us the whole way of prayer and of high contemplation, from the beginning stages to mental prayer, to the prayer of quiet, and to that of union; so much so that, if I knew how to explain the matter, a large book on prayer could be written based on this genuine foundation. From here on, the Lord begins to teach us about the effects of His favours, as you have seen.

I have wondered why His Majesty did not explain more about these sublime and obscure things that we might all know about them. It has seemed to me that since this prayer was intended for general use so that each one could petition according to his own intention, be consoled, and think that he has a good understanding of the prayer, the Lord left it in this obscure form...

(Way of Perfection 37: 1-2)

July 29

Monday

Memorial of St Martha

1 Jn 4:7-16; Ps 33: 2-11; Jn 11:19-27

Faith in Christ

The church today honors St Martha. Martha was a generous and hard working woman who sought co-operation and collective effort in all type of service. Martha was a woman of faith too. She was a woman of deep faith with unbounded trust in the Lord's divine power- *"If you had been here Lord my brother would have not died! But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask of him"* (Jn 11:21-22). Therefore Jesus declares to Martha: *"I am the Resurrection and the Life. Whoever believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"* Her counter declaration: *"Yes Lord! I do believe that you are the Christ the son of the Living God, the one who was to come into the world"* (Jn 11:25-27), is a classic example of a thriving faith. How can we enjoy such deep faith as Martha came to enjoy?

In the first reading St John invites us to love one another because love is from God and God is love. We can understand and experience this love only when we are intimately related to Christ and to one another. Today we find two kinds of responses in Martha's declaration. Her first reply was concerned with the next world: *I know that he will rise again at the resurrection on the last day.* Her second response was a personal acceptance of and belief in Jesus Christ himself.

Being in the year of faith what is our belief? Do we accept Christ like Martha as Son of the living God who comes to save us? Like Martha (and her family) we must frequently approach Christ in the Word of God, in the community and in our fellow brethren and thus be ceaselessly purified from all undue desires. Enlightened with his grace and filled with his newness of life let us become the light of the world and salt of the earth.

Prayer: Lord, come and stay in my home! Amen.

July 30

Tuesday

17th Week in the Ordinary Time

Ex 33: 7-11; 34: 5-9, 28; Ps 102: 6-13 Mt 13: 36-43

Change for the better!

We are all busy about many things. The most important is the development of ourselves as good people - people who are sincerely concerned about carrying out God's will and helping to make life better for other people. Making life better for other people doesn't mean trying to surround them with all sorts of conveniences and luxuries. It does nobody good to be spoiled, especially children. Oh, maybe once in a while a little spoiling is in order, God spoils us all, but no one should be waited on hand and foot all the time except when sickness or disablement requires it.

Jesus is explaining the parable of the weeds in the midst of the wheat to his disciples. He tells them that bad people at the end of time will be gathered like weeds and burned. *"The Son of Man,"* Jesus said, *"will dispatch his angels to collect all who draw others to apostasy, and all evildoers. The angels will hurl them into the fiery furnace where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth."* We should never envy bad people.

It is not how much money we acquire, nor power, nor popularity, nor even how long we live. It is what kind of people we become that counts. To be honest, to be sincerely interested and caring of others, to be kind when kindness is needed, to be tough when that is best, to become well-disciplined but not hard, that is what is important. When the end comes we will find it really isn't the end, but only the beginning of life in eternity. Let us enter it fully prepared as people of good character who love God.

A lesson in life that I have learnt: to become good it takes a lifetime but to become bad it takes a moment.

Prayer: Lord! Give us the graces to become good people day by day by dispensing forgiveness which is the need of the hour for peace in our world today. Amen!

July 31

Wednesday

Memorial of St Ignatius of Loyola, Priest

Ex 34: 29-35; Ps 98: 5-7, 9; Mt 13: 44-46

In the footsteps of the wise merchants

Let us ponder on the tiny, yet rich parables emerging from the Wisdom Incarnate - Jesus. Today we hear about a one, probably a farmer, who stumbles across a hidden treasure and a merchant in keen search of fine pearls who finally finds one. The Catholic Church is decked with so many such farmers and merchants who found that rare and lasting treasure and pearl and who sold everything happily and having possessed the Kingdom and King have become immortal.

Today we celebrate the feast of St Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Society of Jesus. He was one of such wise and privileged merchants and farmers, the Kingdom parables of the Gospel refer to. A man of noble descent, an ambitious young man who had a fecund career in the military, and an intellectual giant, once he found the real treasure and pearl he never gave it up for anything. Then we have St Francis of Assisi, St Francis Xavier, St Teresa of Avila, St Augustine, St Edith Stein - a Jewish convert German Philosopher-Scholar who later became a cloistered nun and died a brave martyr. The list goes on.

Would you like to be one such blessed farmer and rare wise merchant? The path is not easy because the treasure and the pearl are hidden. "God, then is hidden in the soul, and the individuals who want to find him should leave all things through affection and will, enter within themselves in deepest recollection and let all things be as though not" says St John of the Cross.

Therefore let us not have an illusion that it's an easy path. The demands are many: deep faith in God, intense desire and the single minded seeking, knowledge of God as without knowledge we cannot seek, find and experience God. "If the saints could do this, why not I?" asked St Ignatius and become one. Why not we?

**Prayer: Give me the wisdom that sits by Your throne O Lord,
to seek the real treasure. Amen.**

Congratulations on this new initiative of the Carmelites in this Year of Faith. In the words of the Holy Father, "The 'door of faith' is always open for us, ushering us into the life of communion with God and offering entry into his Church. It is possible to cross that threshold when the Word of God is proclaimed and the heart allows itself to be shaped by transforming grace" (*PortaFidei*, 1).

Please convey my congratulations to all the contributors for the well written and meaningful reflections. I am confident that 'Living Water' will nourish the spiritual lives of the people.

+ Agnelo Gracias

Auxiliary Bishop of Bombay

'Living Water' by the young Carmelites of the Karnataka-Goa province of Discalced Carmelites, attempts to quench the spiritual thirst of Christian believers. The reflections, written in a lucid style, while making the Word of God come alive in the case of a lay person, function as a catalytic resource to the Celebrant of the liturgy. May this magazine receive wide publicity.

Rev. (Dr) Vincent G. Furtado, OFM Cap

Former Minister Provincial, Holy Trinity Capuchin Province, Karnataka

Your profound and well-articulated reflections on the biblical passages help the readers to discover the 'Living Water' within them. I appreciate the way you substantiate your reflections with insights gathered from various sources. May you continue to inspire the readers with your relevant reflections and lead them to apply the truth of the Scriptures to their life in a way that is personal, practical and possible.

Rev. Sr Chris, CSST

Superior General, Carmelite Sisters of St Teresa



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