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ON OUR KNEES IN HIS HANDS



Ven. Carlo Acutis
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Community of the Risen Lord

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**“Our aim has to be the
infinite and not the finite.
The Infinite is our homeland.
We have always been
expected in Heaven.”**

Venerable Carlo Acutis

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On Our Knees In His Hands

OCTOBER 2020

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Thursday October 01

Solemnity of Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus, Virgin and Doctor

My vocation is love.

Isaiah 66: 10-14

Psalms 44: 11-12, 14-17

1 Corinthians 13: 4-13

Matthew 18: 1-4

The theme is the cry of St. Therese of the Child Jesus. At the age of 13 she had a profound experience of the intimate love of God. At a special audience with Pope Leo XIII she was permitted to join the Carmelite Monastery at the age of 15.

She assumed that because she loved God so much that she should spend her life as a missionary and die as a martyr. But that changed when she received a deeper insight. She writes in her autobiography "Love gave me the key to my vocation. I understood that the Church had a Heart and that this Heart was burning with love. I knew that love drove the members of the Church to action, that if this love were extinguished, the apostles would have proclaimed the Gospel no longer, the martyrs would have shed their blood no more. I understood that Love comprised all vocations, that Love was everything, that it embraced all times and places...in a word, that it was eternal! Then in the excess of my delirious joy, I cried out: O Jesus, my Love...my vocation, at last I have found it...My vocation is Love!"

There are two distinct qualities that we are called to emulate, her child-like approach and trust in God and her love for what she did even in little acts. In the First Reading Israel is comforted with tenderness and love as a mother comforts and feeds her child. Many of us through inner healing must visit these moments in our lives and receive that healing. It will bring us much better self-worth, acceptance and fullness. Only God can renew that experience.

In the Gospel proclamation our Lord calls a little child to him, places the child near him and admonishes us that unless we become like little children we will not enter the kingdom of God. A child is open to the most colourful fantasies and is eager to listen. We are invited to experience the kingdom in this way. St. Thérèse once wrote, "You know well enough that our Lord does not look so much at the greatness of our actions, nor even at their difficulty, but at the love with which we do them."

Prayer: Abba Father, give me a taste of that intimate love that St. Therese experienced and may I have a childlike faith. Amen.

Friday October 02

Memorial of the Holy Guardian Angels

Lord give me the grace to be meek and humble.

Exodus 23: 20- 23

Psalm 90: 1-6, 10-11

Matthew 18: 1-5, 10

God wanted us to have complete mastery and authority over what He had created. However when we decided to usurp authority from God, and operate on our own, most things turned into chaos. Pride went before the fall.

God in His forgiving love, tells His people that He would guide them back to Him. He cautions them to be humble and attentive to what He says. Failure to listen would bring the consequences of their actions. Obedience would open the doors to that harmonious state that existed before the fall.

The psalmist invites us to come under the shelter and authority of God, to do what He says, and not operate on our "I know better" attitude. If we allow God to sit on the throne of our hearts, and give marching orders to the egoistic security guard inside us, - that has been guiding us, telling us what is right and wrong, and making a mess of most things, - things will fall into correct alignment and order. Psalm 91 says that such people need not fear even deadly viruses.

As a child I came under obedience to the authority of my parents. I knew they were capable of supplying my material and spiritual needs. Life was secure. I would dare not have told them that I was capable of taking care of myself. It would have been stupid on my part. Times of painful punishment were also there, that kept me from wrong and disciplined me. The gospel proclamation invites us to the pre-fall condition that Adam enjoyed. That is by being submissive and humble like children, coming under the authority of God.

Let us be humble enough to get up and allow the Lord to take His throne within us. He will reveal our under developed compulsions and drives; our naked subconscious, that says I know things and insights others do not know or have. May He restore us to that perfect alignment and harmony we enjoyed, and thereby share and partake of His Kingdom in Christ Jesus for all eternity.

Prayer: Abba Father, may I learn from your Son to be meek and humble, and thereby share in your glory. Amen.

Job 42: 1-3,5-6,12-17

Psalms 118: 66, 71, 75,
91, 125, 130

Luke 10: 17-24

We may not understand God's work, but we know that his ways are better than our ways. When the Lord Jesus was carrying the cross none knew about the great miracle of the resurrection. It was after the resurrection that the passion and the death of Christ Jesus became a meaningful experience to people.

Similarly, when Job was going through difficult times in his life, he did not know what went wrong. Job lost everything and was waiting to die. These are events that we could ponder on. We need to be aware of God's work. We need to live in the will of God. We can be content when the will of God is fulfilled in us.

Though we face tough times today, our tomorrows can be fruitful when we live in God. The Scripture says that Job's latter days were more blessed than the earlier days. The highlight of this incident is that when Job realised that God has been working behind all the difficulties he faced and that God never let him down, he repented and asked God for forgiveness.

We may be going through difficult times, we may have lost a loved one, lost a job, lost wealth or lost a friendship, yet when we are within God's plan everything we loose will be restored. What is necessary is to recognize God in the events of our lives.

In the Gospel proclamation the Lord Jesus said that the fruit of our labour is not the result of what we see openly but what is happening unseen. That is why St. Paul said that we walk by faith and not by sight. Our names are written in heaven. When we become unassuming and innocent like little children, God is able to work powerfully in us.

The Lord Jesus shares His power with us when we become His disciples. He alone knows the Father and only He can reveal the Father to us. When we cling on to the Lord Jesus we are clinging on to God the Father.

Prayer: Abba Father, in the midst of challenges, help me to know that you are with me and in me. Amen.

Sunday October 04

Twenty Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

You are the vine, we are the branches; keep us abiding in You.

Isaiah 5:1-7

Psalms 79:9, 12-16, 19-20

Philippians 4:6-9

Matthew 21:33-43

Today we reflect on the vineyard of the Lord. God's kingdom can be compared to a vineyard, blossoming and blooming at the time of harvest. However, for a bountiful harvest to take place the vineyard's workers need to be attuned to the needs of the crop – does it need more nutrition? Is it getting enough sunlight and water for growth? Is it being attacked by any pests?

The vineyard's workers are responsible for a bountiful crop, and a failure to bring about good fruit will be blamed on their negligence and ignorance. The prophet Isaiah speaks of a vineyard. The area that the vineyard was located in was fertile, the choicest vines were planted, there was a winepress that was made, and even a watchtower was built to make sure that everything was growing according to season. However, at the time of harvest, only sour grapes were yielded! How would we feel if we owned a vineyard, took great care of it and it yielded fruit that spoiled? There would be disappointment, regret at the money invested, anger at the time wasted, and many other negative emotions felt. Will anyone be satisfied with a bad crop or a bad result, especially when the opposite is expected?

In the Gospel Proclamation, we see the Lord Jesus sharing the parable of the landowner who planted a vineyard. As in the first reading, we see the landowner making great efforts to prepare his vineyard – he puts a fence around it, digs a hole for the winepress, builds a watchtower and then hands over the land to tenants. In this instance, it is not that bad fruit is yielded, but bad stewardship is seen. The tenants want to grab what does not rightfully belong to them, and as a result, rob the inheritance of the landowner. They choose prosperity as their source of happiness and choose it by any means necessary – they beat, stone and kill those who try to take away what they believe is theirs.

As I reflect on this reading, I am reminded of the story of Adam and Eve, who acted quite similarly to the tenants in the parable. They had the freedom to choose from any tree in the garden, but the devil whispered a lie in their ears and they thirsted for more knowledge.

Adam and Eve were the original tenants in the story of creation. What was given to them by the landowner, God Himself, as what was meant to be a beautiful place of union, became a place of sin and ultimately led to their banishment from what was meant to be their home and their life.

However, all is not lost, for we have within us the Redeemer of the world. His death and resurrection has bought back paradise to us, and for that, we have every reason to rejoice. The prosperity of a bountiful harvest belongs to the workers of the vineyard, and the landowner is more than willing to share this great gift.

To make this a reality, St. Paul reminds us of a kingdom principle that is often forgotten. “Do not be anxious about anything.” It seems redundant to tell an owner of a vineyard who has just come across an entire field of sour grapes, not to be anxious – but there is more that we have to do.

Instead of being anxious, we pray about everything. Are our spouses not fulfilling our expectations? Pray. Are our children turning away from the path of righteousness? Pray. Are our jobs demanding that we live a lifestyle contrary to the word of God? Pray! It is then that the peace of God, brought down by the Holy Spirit, will guard our hearts and minds against all storms and battles of life.

Bad fruit is a part of our lives. We are bound to come across people who rub us the wrong way, situations that cause pain, sicknesses that seem like immovable mountains in our lives, debts that continue to rise, loneliness, rejection, anxiety – all of it is a part of our lives, but how we deal with it shows us the final produce of our vineyard. If we pray about everything, the peace of God will descend in the midst of the turbulence. If we pray about nothing, the bad fruit sown into our lives and the lives of our children and their children will continue to spread its seed for years to come.

“The God of peace” is a promise given to us, and we claim it by faith, trusting in the unfailing goodness of God, knowing that it is He who will produce a bountiful harvest in our lives. Let us ask for the grace to become humble workers in His kingdom and one day we will receive the crown of eternal life.

Prayer: Abba Father, let the world know You through me. Amen.

Monday October 05

Monday of the Twenty-seventh Week in Ordinary Time

Children of the same Father.

Galatians 1:6-12

Psalms 110:1-2, 7-10

Luke 10:25-37

St. Paul attacks the Galatians with the same zeal that he had earlier used to attack the Christians whom he thought were preaching a false doctrine. A crisis threatens the Church, so he directs a withering blast against those who were devaluing the good news by insisting that Jewish traditions must be followed by the new Christians. There is no compulsion to follow rigid traditions. Indeed,

the Lord Jesus came to break down barriers between people. In Him there is neither Jew nor Samaritan, slave or free; all are equal.

In the Gospel proclamation we read that the Jewish leaders ignored the dying man, not wanting to get involved. Neither the Jews who were neither priests nor Levites would have complacently settled down to hear that one of their kind stopped and helped the man. When the Lord Jesus chose the Samaritan (a jaw-dropping choice!) to prove His point about loving one's neighbor, the listening Jews would have been astounded and furious. Jews and Samaritans were traditionally enemies and Jews felt contaminated if they touched them. The Lord Jesus deliberately told his parable to demonstrate His mission – to reveal the character of God. We see the Samaritan going the extra mile by not merely sympathising with the fallen man, but ministering to his needs. Similarly, the all-embracing love of the Father includes sinners, untouchables, and those marginalised by society. The Jews had mistakenly replaced the call to love with an outward show of adhering to traditions. Imagine their reaction when the Lord Jesus exploded their ideas of purity by narrating how a hated Samaritan lived up to God's demands to love unconditionally.

This is a challenging parable. We may have replaced the Gospel with rules and traditions. We tend to see our neighbours among our relations, ethnic groups, people of our status and our religion while looking down on those who are not part of these groups. We often hear the phrase "They are servants, and should know how to keep their place," forgetting that we are all made in God's image, children of the same Father.

Prayer: Abba Father, help me to see those who are in need as my neighbours. Give me the courage to love as you love. Amen.

Galatians 1: 13-24

Psalms 139: 1-3, 13-15

Luke 10: 38-42

Today's readings give us a beautiful clue on how much God values intimacy over work or mission.

In the Gospel proclamation Martha is seen caught up in a lot of things and missing out on what was most needed, which was receiving the Word from Jesus Christ. Mary understood that what the Lord had to offer her in terms of spiritual nourishment,

was far greater than what she had to offer Him and so she chose the better part. In the first reading, St. Paul speaks of his life, prior to his encounter with the Lord Jesus, when he used to persecute the church. He was zealous for God yet blind sighted.

Love is built on intimacy with God and without that we would be powerless to love one another. That is why often we find ourselves angry and unfulfilled even while serving God. Sometimes we get caught up in work and slowly neglect our relationship with God. Other times our knowledge and pride come in the way of our journey. We unconsciously slip away from intimacy with God fearing what He may ask of us. The Bible shows us that Jesus Christ always sought a relationship with the Father even in the most terrible of times and demonstrated that He required the same of us, when He asked "Couldn't you keep watch for one hour?" (Mark 14:37)

I am reminded of this inspiring story shared by a priest. A person asked this priest, the secret behind his journey with God. He said that he chose to sit with God every single day of his life. Adding that, there were many days he did not feel like praying and there were many days he felt he was talking to a wall, when God seemed silent. Yet, he never missed a single day sitting with the Lord. The key here was consistency and intimacy. His story inspired my own prayer life. Often we are more concerned about what we ought to tell God. Sometimes all He wants is for us to just sit with Him and enjoy His company. The God of the mountaintop is the same God of the valley. In the midst of the darkest or loneliest of hours we can be sure that He is there, He is near us, calling us to trust in Him.

Prayer: Abba Father, help me to choose to have a relationship with you above work and mission. Amen.

Wednesday October 07

Memorial of Our Lady of the Rosary

God is the father of all, not just of the Christians.

Galatians 2:1-2,7-14

Psalm 117

Luke 11:1-4

Today's Gospel proclamation is one of the most important New Testament passages because it outlines the Lord's mission and our mission in life. It is commonly known as "the Lord's Prayer", millions of people say it many times every day but there are questions as to how often it comes just from the memory or the mind and how often it comes from the heart. As in other cases it will

come from the heart when we live this prayer and not just rattle it off.

Every sentence has deep meaning. For instance the Lord Jesus begins by saying "Our Father, who art in heaven", that means God is the Father of all people irrespective of races or religions, not just the Jews then or the Christians today. The Lord Jesus explains this in the Sermon on the Mount when he says, God "makes his sun rise on the bad and the good, and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust."(Matt 5:45) The Lord also sums it up when he says, "Love one another as I love you."(John 15:12)

South Africa's legendary Archbishop Desmond Tutu - who played a major role in the battle against the White Supremacist Apartheid Regime - wrote a book titled "God is not a Christian". Most people would have been stunned or shocked when they read the title. But in the Introduction, he quotes the famous verse, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son..."(John 3:16)

"Holy be your name". There are many interpretations of holiness. But many Bible scholars say that essentially it means to be "other-centred", instead of being self-centred. The Holy Trinity is the best example. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit live for each other and love each other. The Holy Trinity's love is unending, unending, unlimited, unconditional and unmerited.

So the next time we say this prayer let it come from the heart, from our lives and our lifestyles. Let us live the Kingdom values and eventually Faith, Hope and Love will be manifested in and through us.

Prayer: Abba Father, give us the grace to seek and do your will, that we may hear and see you. Amen.

Galatians 3:1-5

Luke 1:69-73,75

Luke 11:5-13

One word connects today's two readings and that is 'persistence'. It is the key element to be successful in anything. But the question here is what exactly are we pursuing: is it the kingdom of this world or the Kingdom of God? While there is nothing wrong in achieving goals in this life, in fact we should have them but ultimately if our pursuits are leading us away from God and thereby killing

our spirit then we need to ask the question St. Paul is asking us today; are we ending up in the flesh?

St. Anthony of the desert, a monk, took refuge in a cave, to escape the demons that plagued him but the demons attacked him viciously, in the midst of the attack a bright light shone and the demons disappeared, St. Anthony knowing that it was the Lord asked, "where were you before the demons attacked" our Lord replied "I was here but I would see and abide to see you battle". By "battle" our Lord Jesus meant not to just pray, but battle with persistent prayer, which is the weapon of choice. Keep knocking on the door, keep seeking the Kingdom of God above all else and then it is a promise, that the door will be opened.

Perhaps we are seeking solutions from God for our problems insisting that He should give us what we want, but maybe the Lord has already given the answer and that answer is the Holy Spirit. Maybe all this while we have been knocking on the wrong door, the vast riches of God's Kingdom remain hidden to the human perspective, the door is narrow and not very appealing to enter but to those who seek the riches of it above all else will see a glimpse of eternity. Even through our pursuit of materialistic wants, in the end what we seek is; peace, love, joy and happiness. These are the fruits of the Holy Spirit. So who and what are we seeking in the end? Is it not the Holy Spirit? It is in this knowledge that our Lord Jesus is asking us to persist in seeking the Holy Spirit, to ask, seek, and receive the ultimate expression of our Father's love and which was paid for at the cross by the blood of our Lord; the free gift of the Holy Spirit.

Prayer: Abba Father, I thank you for the free gift of the Holy Spirit whom I desire above all else. Amen.

Galatians 3:7-14

Psalms 111:1-6

Luke 11:15-26

The Jews were expected to follow and observe the commandments to the letter. However what was the Lord Jesus' view about the law? He says "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets, I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them" (Matthew 5:17).

Certainly we are to follow the commandments, although often easier said than done. For even with much effort we may fail and fall. Thus, knowing our struggle the Lord Jesus offers assistance to us by bringing the law to perfection, becoming the perfecter of our faith. "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith". (Hebrews 12:2).

Since we believe "there is salvation in no one else and there is no other name under heaven ... by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12) We have faith in the Lord Jesus and rest in the blessed assurance for our salvation. We are also aware that it is faith and grace that lead us to be saved.

Let us rejoice and be thankful for we find grace and are brought to righteousness through the faith in the Lord Jesus. Hence "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ... for the works of the law no flesh shall be justified" (Galatians 2:16). Therefore let us be thankful for the precious blood of the lamb that was slain for the atonement of the sins of all.

In the Gospel proclamation the Lord Jesus faces great opposition driving out a demon. Does this sound familiar in our lives? Sometimes we may be criticized, misjudged, attacked or condemned when we do good. But we should continue without losing heart. For it is to glorify God that we do everything and it does not require the approval of people for us to do so. The Lord Jesus says "whoever is not with me is against me, whoever does not gather with me scatters" (Luke 11:23) reminding us that our prayers and deeds contribute to the gathering of the harvest. Therefore let us be united in one spirit and mind to serve in the Lord's vineyard.

Prayer: Abba Father, empower us by your Holy Spirit to serve in your mission fields united as one. Amen.

Saturday October 10

Saturday of the Twenty-seventh Week in Ordinary Time

Be with us Mary along the way.

Galatians 3:22-29

Psalms 105:2-7

Luke 11:27-28

Pope Francis has said, "Through Mary's faith and obedience, she gave birth on earth to the very Son of the father ...by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit. This was the point that the fathers of the church greatly insisted: Mary first conceived Jesus in faith and then in the flesh when she said 'yes' to the message God gave through the angel. What does this mean? It means God does not want to

become man by ignoring our freedom; he wanted to pass through Mary's free assent, her 'yes'."

But what took place in the Virgin Mary also takes place within us spiritually, when we receive the word of God with a good and sincere heart and put it in to practice. It is as if God takes flesh within us; he comes to dwell in us, for he dwells in all who love him and keep his word.' St. Paul emphasises that the Law of the Old Testament was to lead all humanity to the Lord Jesus himself the Eternal Word. It is to establish an intimate relationship with the Father through faith.

"The word of God is living and active, a double-edged sword which cuts from within and without, separates bone from the marrow and judges the intentions of the heart." (Heb 4:12)

We need to be redeemed, cleansed, justified and purified from our sinfulness. This is what our Lord Jesus did and continues to do in us. God's word confirms this, and we are set free, if we believe it and let it transform our lives.

The Gospel reaffirms this, through the words of our Lord Jesus. He was reconfirming His Mother's status, the one who in all humility accepted God's word and allowed God's power to work within her in the person of the Holy Spirit.

When dying on the cross, our Lord Jesus gave her to us as our Mother when he said to St. John, "Behold your mother." (19:26). She is our role model in faith as we journey through life until we reach His Kingdom and see him face to face.

Prayer: Abba Father, help me to say "Yes" to Your will. Amen.

Sunday October 11

Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

The wedding garment is a free gift from God.

Isaiah 25: 6-10

Psalms 23: 1-6

Phil 4: 12-14, 19-20

Matthew 22: 1-14

Today's readings speak about partying and being satiated to the fullest. Since the beginning of civilisation, humankind has been thriving in companionship, expressing love and friendship in sharing food and provisions. This nature comes directly from our Maker, our Heavenly Father, who is keen to share His joy with His people, His adopted children, by preparing a feast for us.

How do today's readings become relevant to us? We live in the 21st century and more so, in a very crucial period of human history, right in the middle of a pandemic that may not leave us any time soon.

In the First Reading, God gives us a beautiful promise that on His mountain He will remove the covering that had prevented us from seeing His reality and His truth. He promises clarity, peace, joy and freedom, even from the fear of death. While He does all this, He is feeding us with the best food from heaven.

The invitations are being sent to us in various forms. The Word of God, weekly messages we receive at our prayer meetings, and the Holy Eucharist are a few. Yet the Lord Jesus says that the guests are not impressed with the King's invitation.

Why would anyone ignore or reject an invitation to a life overflowing with love, peace, joy and freedom? The answer is given by our Lord Jesus in the parable itself. Those invited, had other priorities.

How about us? Are we also too busy to accept the invitation? Is our work keeping us from attending the banquet? Do our worldly pleasures, family and social commitments make us ignore the invitation? Or is it too challenging or bringing out some ugly truth hidden deep in us that we do not want to wear the wedding garment made available for us?

Are we too arrogant to think that we do not need to change the garment we are wearing at present? In whichever way suggested above, do we try to rebuff the invitation, finding fault with it in one way or another?

What is the feast the Lord Jesus was speaking about? It is the wedding of the Lord with his bride - the Church. Though this seems an event that is to happen after the final judgement, I feel it is also the union that continues to happen constantly between the Lord Jesus and us from the moment we are baptised in the Holy Spirit. Though the same was received at the Sacrament of Baptism, most of us were unconscious of it, being newborns at the time of Baptism. Even the Sacrament of Confirmation, was received when we were young.

It was during my first Four Steps Retreat that I was able to make an honest Confession and receive God's Mercy and forgiveness. When I was baptised in the Holy Spirit, my spirit came alive and I learnt to be led by the Holy Spirit.

We may feel satisfied that we are a part of this banquet. Yet let us take a moment to check if we are properly dressed for the wedding. Are we like the person who had come to the banquet hall in his street clothes? We might argue that he was rushed from the streets and hence did not have time to go home and get dressed in a worthy manner. The fact was that the King had wedding garments ready for each guest and they were expected to change into the garment provided, before entering the banquet hall.

How is this relevant to us? Do we refuse to change into the robe of righteousness that the Father offers us through his grace? Are we stubbornly refusing to remove our garments of seeking our own will and living for our own pleasure, full of self-righteousness while we pray and fulfil our religious obligations and also serve the Lord? This call is for us, then. Let us choose to let go of the lifestyle we might have valued so highly until now, and humbly and gratefully accept the robe of righteousness that was purchased by our Saviour through His Precious Blood. The Holy Spirit is waiting to dress us in the garment of holiness. There is no need for self-striving or self-blame. The wedding garment is a free gift prepared for us.

Everyone is invited to enter the banquet hall and partake in the sumptuous meal prepared for all, but few choose to respond. Let us make the wise decision to enjoy the abundance of heaven, by heeding the leading of the Holy Spirit to make the Lord Jesus the centre, in every area of our life.

Prayer: Abba Father, let me choose to do Your will on earth and then may you welcome me into your divine banquet. Amen.

Monday October 12

Monday of the Twenty-eighth Week in Ordinary Time

Your presence is my sole desire.

Galatians 4: 22-24,
26-27, 31 – 5:1

Psalms 113: 1-7

Luke 11: 29-32

Today's readings remind me of my free will, which is a gift from God. I am also reminded that the Lord Jesus suffered, died and rose, so that I am free from sin. Yet I continue to use my free will to sin. Still in His love, He delivers us from sin - that we get ourselves into.

It is easy to look at the crowds who gathered for a sign or miracle, and think how aloof they were to miss the message and love of the Lord Jesus. Sometimes we too may focus on the external signs and miss the beautiful relationship that we can otherwise have with our loving Father.

The Lord Jesus is the sign of forgiveness, deliverance from sin, unconditional, unending love and eternal life. Through the Holy Spirit, we have continuous fellowship of love with the Holy Trinity. Still are we not like the crowds who gathered around the Lord Jesus – Looking for a sign?

When I look at my life, I still fall into this state - 'the crowds'. We come to God mainly in a crisis, looking for a quick fix. We fail to grow into the awareness that we are partakers of this great love exchange of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

I faced a terrible employment crisis. Lying on a hospital bed I worried about the future, not knowing what was next. The financial responsibility of the household rested on my shoulders. I turned to God searching for a sign. Pleading and asking Him to do something. I prayed like this every day. Gradually I began to realise and became aware of the sign 'The Lord Jesus' and His love for me.

I knew that there is nothing I need to ask of the Lord except for me to become aware of His living presence in my life. I began to praise God even though I did not know my future from that point forward. Doors opened into uncharted territory for me, but with this new found presence of God I knew I can face life and know that He is in control.

Prayer: Abba Father, in your presence is where I belong, seeking your face, touching your grace, in the cleft of the Rock. Amen.

Tuesday October 13

Tuesday of the Twenty-eighth Week in Ordinary Time

Why do we do what we do?

Galatians 5: 1-6

Psalms 119: 41, 43-45,
47-48

Luke 11: 37-41

God needs to be the center of our lives. St. Paul tells us that faith expresses itself through love. We need to be strong in faith, unwavering in hope, and steadfast in love. We speak about these virtues quite often but do we really show them in the way we live? Faith in our works, love in our relationships and hope in the Lord?

By living a life of virtues, we will learn to see God's laws, precepts, commandments, and statutes as positive ways of living a spiritual life as mentioned in the Psalms. We will not see them as a burden or a restriction. When we live in these virtues, our hearts will sing, "I will walk freely in an open space because I cherish your precepts."

Jesus Christ is asking us to look deeply into our hearts. We need to have them cleansed and purified so that we can see what are the important things in life. In our day-to-day lives, we may fall many times, but we need to return to the Lord with the Four Steps. Our life in the Spirit is what is essential and what makes us people of God. The Lord Jesus invites us to look closely at our motivations. Why do we do what we do? Are our choices and actions prompted by our desire to follow the Lord Jesus? Or do we do what is considered right simply because we want to look good in front of others?

In a recent Homily, Pope Francis said, that the Lord asks us "to adjust our priorities and to make room for God to be the centre and axis of our life. It is not part of God's plan for men and women, young people and children to suffer. This is why Jesus urgently calls us to die to our self-centredness, our individualism and our pride. We Christians cannot stand with arms folded in indifference, or with arms outstretched in helplessness. As believers, we must stretch out our hands, as Jesus does with us. The demands that Jesus sets before us cease to be burdensome as soon as we begin to taste the joy of the new life that He Himself sets before us. Let us commit ourselves and let us make the Lord's plans our own".

Prayer: Abba Father, give me faith, hope and love to know, accept and do your will. Amen.

Galatians 5: 18-25

Psalms 1: 1-4, 6

Luke 11: 42-46

Today's Gospel Proclamation reminds me of the famous saying, "Don't judge a book by its cover". The Lord Jesus hits out at the religious leaders because He is not pleased with their lifestyle and how they portray themselves to be. It is clear, that they are not what they seem. Their internal nature, is seeking human glory, appreciation, recognition, and is full of pride, self-righteousness,

and selfishness.

In contrast, the Lord Jesus portrayed to us the Spirit led life that we ought to walk in. The characteristics of this life are given in the First Reading. This may seem impossible for us to live according to, but let us for a moment, picture the Cross. The vertical bar of the Cross represents the link between heaven and earth. The Lord Jesus takes the Holy Spirit from God the Father and pours it down the vertical and the horizontal bars of the Cross. The horizontal bar of the Cross is spread throughout the earth, and as a result the Holy Spirit is freely given to all. We are not called to live by our own strength. Instead the Holy Spirit must become alive in us.

The Psalmist uses the imagery of a tree that is planted by a stream and can stand strong no matter what comes its way. This describes the fruitfulness of people who meditate on God's Word day and night. They invest their time and energy on what is important. This results in blessed lives. In the same way, if we daily spend time connecting with God, then living our calling of a Spirit led life which seemed impossible before, becomes a possibility. We can love those that we would otherwise hate and instead pray for them.

When I come face to face with those who bring harm to me, the easiest response is to hate, judge, condemn, and wish the worst for them. However, over the years God has taught me to see beyond the face of the enemy and given me the freedom to love, be kind, gentle and forgiving. He has given me the courage to intercede for those people who are waiting to bring harm.

Prayer: Abba Father, strengthen our relationship with you to live the calling that has been placed on our lives. Amen.

Thursday October 15

Memorial of Saint Teresa of Jesus, Virgin and Doctor of the Church *"Truth suffers, but never dies." St. Teresa of Avila*

Ephesians 1:1-10

Psalms 98:1-6

Luke 11:47-54

Today we celebrate the Memorial of St. Teresa of Avila. The legacy that this mighty Saint left behind for the Catholic faithful is to live a life in contemplation and to rest in God's love.

St. Paul reminds us of the enormous love of God in bestowing every spiritual blessing from heaven. How often do we remember how much we are blessed daily in and through the love and grace of God? St. Paul says that God chose us, in Christ, before the creation of the world.

As I am reflecting on this word of God, my mind runs back to the birth of my daughter 25 years ago. I was unable to conceive for a couple of years after my marriage. I was in great sadness until one day by the grace of God I was led to a teaching from the Divine Retreat Center through which God gave me a promise that I would conceive and that very month I conceived. None of us is here by accident but by design. I was given this experience of lack and despair through which the Lord Jesus reminded me how great His love was for me by blessing me with a child.

We are never barren of any need in our lives be it a child, work, finances, relationships, spiritual walk, love, joy and hope. The word of God says that in forgiveness of sin through His mighty love He has lavished His grace upon us.

It is this love of God that St. Teresa of Avila is asking us to rest in. This is why it is important that as a Christian, we must spend time in contemplative prayer. The Blessed Mother also pondered on many revelations. At the foot of the cross she may have felt that every promise of God was over, but those revelations may have surfaced to give her strength and hope.

We see in today's gospel proclamation a very strong teaching from the Lord Jesus. It was this truth that St. Teresa of Avila discovered through contemplative prayer. Many have been and are martyred for speaking this truth.

Prayer: Abba Father, strengthen our prayer life so that we will boldly witness to the truth. Amen.

Friday October 16

Friday of the Twenty-eighth Week in Ordinary Time

Say “No” to Hypocrisy.

Ephesians 1: 11 - 14

Psalms 33: 1 - 2, 4 - 5,
12 - 13

Luke 12: 1 - 7

Many Christians assume that the Lord Jesus had an issue with the Pharisees. But it was not the Pharisees that were disliked but the “hypocrisy” that was within their hearts. How about us? Let us examine our conscience. What is my character? Do I say one thing and do another? Do I often see the wrong in another person but not see my own? The Lord Jesus warns us in Luke 12:1 “Beware

of the leaven of the pharisees which is hypocrisy.”

Are we neglecting the inward part of our spiritual life? Do we only observe the outward so that we make ourselves look like devoted Christians? As the Lord Jesus said in Matthew 23:26 “They made clean the outside of the cup and the platter but within they were full of extortion and excess”.

No doubt there are many of us having fine spiritual exteriors but with empty hearts. We go to church, say our prayers, we do what we are obliged to do. But internally we are waiting for someone to fall, carrying hatred against someone who rejected us or even being jealous of someone who has been well accepted in our community. Am I serving the Lord in search of recognition from others? Am I entertaining my ego in my day to day life? Am I pressing others down with my pride? These are some of the questions we can use to evaluate our own conscience.

The Lord loves us for what we are and who we are from inside. The Lord knows what we are capable and incapable of. We may have fallen into the trap of hypocrisy by either pretending to be what we are not or concealing what we are. As human beings we are weak.

We have fallen many times and we will continue to fall. But the invitation is to seek the love of the Father even in our failure. Even in our weakness to seek to strengthen ourselves in him only. The Promised Holy Spirit will be the advocate who will lead us to continuously purify our hearts according to God’s plan.

Prayer: Abba Father, purify me and help me to love my brother and sister with a humble and pure heart. Amen.

Saturday October 17

Memorial of Saint Ignatius of Antioch, Bishop and Martyr

Faith even unto death.

Ephesians 1:15-23

Psalms 8:2-7

Luke 12:8-12

After his conversion to Christianity, Saint Ignatius was consecrated as the second Bishop of Antioch by the Apostle Peter. He was deeply loved by the faithful and was a theologian who defended the faith against the heretics of the time.

Having been unjustly condemned to death to be devoured by wild animals in the Colosseum, Saint Ignatius spent the time during his journey by ship to Rome writing to his congregations, encouraging them to be strong in their faith and expressing his joy in his forthcoming martyrdom, even pleading with them not to try and sway him from his determination to face that death. He wrote: "I prefer death in Christ Jesus to power over the farthest limits of the earth. He who died in place of us is the one object of my quest. He who rose for our sake is my one desire."

In the first reading, we see the intensity of Saint Paul's joy and his unceasing thanks and praise to God, on hearing about the faith of the early Christians and their love for each other. He prays earnestly that the Holy Spirit would grant them the wisdom and revelation of the mind of God, demonstrated in raising our Lord Jesus from the dead. This is available to all those who believe in Him. The psalm praises the power of God expressed in the wonders of his creation.

In the Gospel proclamation, the Lord Jesus tells us that those who deny Him in this world will have no place with Him in the next. To allay our fears, He promises us that the Holy Spirit will inspire us in responding to false allegations against us.

St Ignatius of Antioch and Saint Paul and their joy in the strong faith of the early Christians is a direct connection to the Gospel teaching to openly acknowledge, rather than deny, our Lord Jesus. In case we forget, in a number of countries Christians are persecuted, sometimes even killed. Like Saint Paul, we need to thank God for their faith and pray for their strength in the face of martyrdom, while openly professing our own.

Prayer: Abba Father, give me strength to testify to you openly and fearlessly and to love my neighbour as I love myself. Amen.

Sunday October 18

Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

To God be the glory.

Isaiah 45: 1, 4-6

Psalms 96: 1, 3-5, 7-10

1 Thessalonians 1: 1-5

Matthew 22: 15-21

We talk about over a million people being baptized in the Spirit. A few more millions are religious. But majority are living their lives in their own way and on their own terms.

In the reading from Isaiah we hear the story of King Cyrus. According to internet sources - Cyrus the Great (c. 600 or 576 – 530 BC) figures in the Hebrew Bible as the patron and deliverer of the Jews. He is mentioned 23 times by name and alluded to several times more. According to the Bible, Cyrus the Great, king of Persia, was the monarch under whom the Babylonian captivity ended. In the first year of his reign he was prompted by God to decree that the Temple in Jerusalem should be rebuilt and that Jews could return to their land for this purpose. Moreover, he showed his interest in the project by sending back with them the sacred vessels which had been taken from the First Temple and a considerable sum of money with which to buy building materials.

What does the reading say about him? God anointed him and inspired him to act and make decisions. But Cyrus did not know the God who was behind the scenes. "I have called you although you do not know me."

In these circles of religious minded people, there can be some of us called and anointed but not having an authentic relationship with God. We assume we know Him but we may not know Him in the way He expects us to know Him. The Lord is at work and doing marvelous things which we acknowledge but we may not be having a real intimate relationship with him. God has been alive in my life but have I been just using Him. Do I have a relationship that is alive and open to His moves?

How do we become more open to God and how do we get to know His name. It is by spending time with Him. The more our lives are dedicated to Him, the more we are called to sit alone with Him and allow Him to speak into our hearts. We will begin to receive directions from Him. All along it could have been our wisdom and insight at work and not the hand of the Lord guiding us.

Today through this reading I discovered that even the Pharisees had disciples of their own. These disciples accepted the teachings and leading of their masters and approached our Lord with the cunning question about paying taxes to Caesar.

Our Lord Jesus immediately recognises the evil intent of the doubt and with the wisdom of the Spirit instructs them that since Caesar's image is on the coin due glory must be given to Caesar via taxes.

Our Lord was giving glory to God through his display of wisdom and quick witted thinking.

Even St. Paul admonishes us to give glory to the one who has won over our souls through the display of miracles, signs, wonders and the Holy Spirit in bringing us to an experience of Christ Jesus.

The point is, today is a Sunday to give glory to God for all He has done. We are so caught up with our achievements that we fail to give glory to God for what He has done.

I saw a video of a lady named Shakuntala Devi who was called the Human Computer. She could do any calculation within a few seconds. She holds the Guinness Book of World Records for multiplying two 13 digit numbers in a few seconds almost instantly. As a Hindu she always gave glory to her God for the gift she had.

In fact she had travelled to almost every country on earth to showcase her skill except for China and Russia. When asked why, she shared that since they did not believe in a God in those countries, it would be impossible for her to share her gift from God.

We can become aware of our lack of giving glory to God when our conversation is peppered with 'I' and 'my'. That is why to say "Praise the Lord" is to constantly deflect attention from ourselves to the Lord and maker of the universe.

Though we may be talking, preaching, leading or singing our intent should be to give glory to God. When we do this He takes over from our lack and inability and the impossible is made possible.

Let us strive to know this name of God and give Him the glory.

Prayer: Abba Father may I come to know the deep meaning and the power of your name. Amen.

Monday October 19

Monday of the Twenty-ninth Week in Ordinary Time

Gazing on Jesus' face.

Ephesians 2: 1-10

Psalms 100: 1-5

Luke 12: 13-21

A phone, a car, a career or a house ... is that all we need? Do we get caught in what the Lord gives and discount our mission? The tangible seems to be more real to us. Even though we say out loud that we do not need to see to believe, is that our truth? Ask this question - do I believe?

Do we chew and digest the daily word? Or are we on the surface? These questions often makes us wonder how much it really takes to be a Christian.

We should reflect on our "inside out" and ask ourselves what really matters to us. We allow the possessions and situations of our lives to take control and take a hold of what we believe in way too often than we can imagine.

We believe that the problems in our lives are staring dead in our face, but in reality it is our Lord Jesus who looks directly at us, FACE TO FACE. But we maybe too caught up with life to see who is in front of us.

If we take a second to focus on the Lord Jesus' face, his loving gaze, the intimacy in his smile and experience his presence, we can put aside and surrender everything that comes in between Him and us. Our main focus should be JESUS.

Let us try to get into this experience of prayerful reflection. Let us imagine and envision the Lord Jesus looking at us, face to face, let us smile at him and offer our hearts and our lives as a living sacrifice to him.

In my life, I have realised that whatever I do, if I do it in love, I am doing it for the Lord Jesus. Even if it is the house chores or the meals I cook, if I do it with love, I am living a life of worship to God.

We have our mission, and our mission is to live a life of worship, to glorify Jesus Christ with love and sacrifice. We are called as we are to fulfil this mission.

Prayer: Abba Father, guide us and guard us through challenges and trials and bring us closer to your heart. Amen.

Tuesday October 20

Tuesday of the Twenty-ninth Week in Ordinary Time

We are citizens in God's House.

Ephesians 2: 12-22

Psalms 85: 9-14

Luke 12: 35-38

The word that strikes me the most in today's reading is the word 'citizens.' We are citizens in a particular country by birth but with time, we may decide to seek citizenship elsewhere, in a better, more developed country with greater opportunities.

This was the case with me and the process that led to obtaining citizenship in a different country was anything but easy. There were many requirements, big hurdles and sacrifices to be made in this regard and ultimately, the precious citizenship was obtained.

St. Paul in his letter to the Ephesians is reminding us of our citizenship in God's household. It was obtained through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Just as the line of a famous hymn says, 'I couldn't earn it, I don't deserve it, still you give yourself away'. We do not have to provide evidence of our qualifications, assets, residency status or anything. This is a gift that is freely available to us.

Sadly, many of us live without this understanding and often live as if our lives do not matter beyond this world. We try to do anything and everything to fulfill our dreams in this world. In doing so, we may act selfishly, try to have things to our own advantage, disregarding what ill may befall others in the process. We may have simply forgotten about the one place that we must return to, our eternal home.

We are reminded in a special way through the Gospel proclamation, to be dressed for action and have our lamps lit, waiting for our master's return. For we are on this earth on a temporary mission and our citizenship is in the Father's house. We are to be ready, be alert for the return of our Lord. This realisation should not fill our hearts with fear and anxiety but with cheerful longing, for what we do here on earth is a preparation towards our eternal inheritance.

Let us examine our hearts and look at the many instances where we have failed to live in this realisation and as a result lived in worry and fear. Let us come back to Him in repentance, and surrender ourselves, 'to grow into one holy temple in the Lord'.

Prayer: Abba Father, thank you for the gift of my eternal inheritance, won through the precious blood of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Wednesday October 21

Wednesday of the Twenty-ninth Week in Ordinary Time

Much will be required of the one who has been given much.

Ephesians 3:2-12

Isaiah 12:2-6

Luke 12:39-48

It is a blessing to wake up to a day that we knew nothing about when we went to sleep last night. We may not give much thought to it, but it is a free gift of undeserved grace. This is for the purpose of building an intimate relationship with our maker. We come to understand this purpose and recognize this unconditional love and grace through prayer and quiet dialogue with our Lord.

In today's first reading St. Paul tells us to be aware of the graces we have received. If we are asked to list down what we have received from God, I am certain that unending lists would be made and we will eagerly keep adding to the list. But how often do we testify and acknowledge the hand of God behind it.

When was the last time we spoke about it with someone, testified for what God has done, given all the glory that only He deserves and offered a prayer of gratitude to build the faith of that person with whom we shared.

I remember coming to the CRL meetings years ago and was in awe of the great testimonies that were read out to glorify God. I remember meeting people who were touched by another person's testimony. When I chose to journey with the CRL I joined with great expectation of experiencing the mighty hand of God in my life. We are called to witness to the miracles and healings and to testify to the glory of God.

Why is it that so few are heard now? I remember asking the Lord once and I began to understand that God still works, people are healed, oppressed are set free but we have stopped testifying and witnessing for what He has done. We have taken the great miracles for ordinary things and pushed them aside.

In the Gospel proclamation St. Peter asks the Lord, "Did you tell this to us or everyone?" His answer implies that it is for everyone which includes us. Let us declare what He has given, what He has done and introduce Him to another.

Prayer: Abba Father, give us the grace to change from our ungrateful and selfish ways to be thankful. Amen.

Thursday October 22

Thursday of the Twenty-ninth Week in Ordinary Time

Fire for the Lord.

Ephesians 3:14-21

Psalms 33:1-2, 4-5,
11-12, 18-19

Luke 12:49-53

Today's Gospel proclamation shows how the Lord Jesus was excited about his mission here on earth. He says He has come to bring a fire to the earth. The fire of the Lord, the baptism of the Holy Spirit. A fire that gives us new life. A fire that makes us a new creation. This fire turned an ordinary fisherman to the leader of the church. It turned Christ's ordinary followers into evangelists

who carried the message of salvation to the ends of the earth.

The Lord Jesus came to baptize us with this same fire. But are we aware of this? The Gospel proclamation also indicates, how following Christ can bring about division. Division within one's family. Loving Christ and being surrendered to the will of the Father can cause divisions among our loved ones. Not everyone will be able to understand the love we have for the Lord. Not everyone will agree to or understand how or why we follow the will of the Lord in our lives. This in turn causes divisions and strife. We have been given a mission. Just like how the apostles went to the ends of the earth proclaiming the good news and evangelizing, so we are also called to live for Christ and carry his word in our lives.

Sometimes we are overwhelmed by the society we live in. We give too much attention to what others think and how they perceive us. So most often we live our lives pleasing people instead of pleasing the Father. Often we get caught up in the world and become afraid to surrender to the will of the Father, fearing rejection or humiliation. But it is written in the letter to the Romans that "whoever believes in the Lord will never be put to shame" (Romans 10:11)

When we follow the will of the Father and carry the fire of the Holy Spirit within us, He makes our steps firm (Psalm 37:23) and he becomes our rock and our fortress. He gives us strength filling us with his Spirit to do his will, so that many will know him, and what it means to belong to him. They see this happening in and through our lives. Are we ready to carry this fire for the Lord?

Prayer: Abba Father, here I am. Fill me with your consuming fire. Amen.

Friday October 23

Friday of the Twenty-ninth Week in Ordinary Time

Being united with the Lord and with others.

Ephesians 4:1-6

Psalms 24:1-6

Luke 12:54-59

“There is one body,” says St. Paul. Unity does not just happen, we have to work for it. Often among people differences can lead to division, and this even happens in the church.

Instead of concentrating on what divides us, we should remember what unites us: one body, one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God!

Have we learnt to appreciate people who are different from us? Can we see how their different gifts and viewpoints can help the church as it contributes to the divine mission? Learn to enjoy the way that we as members of Christ's body complement one another.

I was a little worried when I was reading the gospel, these are tough and harsh words for the people from the Lord Jesus, but I realized that every word he says has a deep meaning and is applicable in our lives.

For most of recorded history, the world's principal occupation was farming. The farmer depended directly on the weather for his livelihood. He needed just the right amount of sun and rain—not too much, not too little—to make his living, and he grew skilled at interpreting natural signs.

The Lord Jesus was announcing an earthshaking event that would be much more important than the year's crops—the coming of God's Kingdom.

Just as dark clouds forewarn of a rainstorm, there were signs that the Kingdom would soon arrive. But the Lord Jesus' hearers, though skilled at interpreting weather signs, were intentionally ignoring the signs of the times.

In my journey with the Lord, I have learnt to not live in the past as it will make me bitter. Also to not live in the future as it will ruin my present but to live in the present and enjoy every moment, because if I miss it, I will not get it back.

Prayer: Abba Father, help me to unite with the community of believers in fulfilling our mission. Amen.

Saturday October 24

Saturday of the Twenty-ninth Week in Ordinary Time

Call to repentance and full maturity in Christ.

Ephesians 4:7-16

Psalms 122:1-5

Luke 13:1-9

The busyness of life, with competing demands, career pressures, family responsibilities, may cause us to not use our gifts for building up of the body of Christ – the Church. We each have a gift and are needed for the church to grow into the fullness of the maturity as one body.

Christ is in a place of authority beyond what we could imagine and has divided the gifts and fruits among us the body, the church. St Paul uses the imagery of the victorious king sharing the spoils of victory with his subjects, so those who belong to the body of Christ cannot excuse themselves that they do not have talents or gifts to serve the church.

In the Jewish belief whatever evil befell people meant a punishment for sin. The more a person had to suffer, the greater their sinning must be! The Lord Jesus rejects this notion. Instead he emphasizes repentance, a turning back to God.

The Lord Jesus knew that people are easily distracted by the news from the world around them. Just as in our time, the Covid-19 pandemic has taken the world by storm and the world's economy and the lives of the people around the globe have been impacted, we hear of many deaths and we may consider ourselves better off than others as we are not impacted and we are safe, but the Lord is speaking to his own people, using an image from the prophets: Israel as the Lord's vineyard. He is begging his people to wake up to their opportunity, to bear fruit.

We must live lives of repentance, because we do not know when a tragedy will befall us. Neither did the Galileans who were killed by Pilate nor the eighteen who were crushed by the wall had the opportunity to repent. Their end came swiftly—without warning. So it may be for us. Repentance helps us in life and in death—helps us to live as forgiven people—helps us to face death without fear.

Prayer: Abba Father, may I use my gifts to build the community of faith and to bear fruit worthy of your Kingdom. Amen.

Sunday October 25

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

In whose love do I remain?

Exodus 22: 20-26

Psalms 18: 2-4, 47, 51

1 Thessalonians 1: 5-10

Matthew 22: 34-40

In today's first reading the Lord speaks of how He wants the Jewish people to treat non-Jewish people, and how He wants them to treat the less fortunate. It is not only a code of conduct, but the Lord promises to intervene if they break the law. The reading reveals that even though the Jews were His chosen people, God would take the side of the alien.

The widow and the orphan were the most vulnerable among the people of that time. It is as though the Lord has chosen the Jewish people, not for their own sake, but for the sake of others who need divine intervention in their circumstances. If we have experienced the Lord, the Lord has come alive in us, and we walk in His presence enjoying His intervention in our lives, it maybe that it is for the sake of those who need a leg up in life, and not merely for us to enjoy the goodness and mercy of God.

As seen in today's first reading, for the Jewish people, the law was much more than the 10 commandments. The law defined how the Jewish people dealt with each other. There were laws that taught them how to deal with slaves. There were laws to decide how to resolve grievances. There were laws for almost every situation they would have to deal with. The law was incredibly detailed and spelt out the mind of God on how He wanted His people to live. It was the law that formed their culture and identity. It was the law that set them apart from the nations around them. It was the law that raised them from a bunch of slaves who were forced to live in ways dictated by their masters, to a community that lived by higher principles and values. They revered those laws. So, when the Pharisees and the Teachers of the Law ask our Lord Jesus what the most important law was, they were placing Him in a tricky situation. Here we get to witness our Lord Jesus exercising one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit – the gift of wisdom.

Our Lord Jesus describes the 600+ laws of the Jewish people in terms of a relationship. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind". Now the problem is who can love God like this? For, in reality, we are in love with so many other things.

Self-interest seems to be the driving force in all of creation and perhaps is behind the survival of every species. Our Lord Jesus says that not only must we love the Lord our God, but “You must love your neighbor as yourself”. Our Lord Jesus sets the bar impossibly high. We need a conversion from who we naturally are to a higher life. From obeying laws to a relationship. From worshipping idols to worshipping God.

Many of us claim to have come to an experience that has radically changed the way we live. Where we once lived turning to God only because we had needs, or out of habit, or a sense of duty, we developed a love for God and started yearning to be with him more and more. Yet we also notice that the love for self still exists and is still a potent force within us. It is as though the experience is the beginning of a journey from living for self to living for God. In today’s Gospel proclamation our Lord Jesus reminds us that the acid test of where we are in that journey is not our devotion to the Lord or our knowledge about spiritual things, but the way we treat others.

In today’s second reading we meet a group of people who have converted from worshipping idols to worshipping the true God. The reading mentions a great affliction, implying that they came under persecution as a result of this conversion. Rather than being resentful and abandoning the faith, they are receiving the word with joy from the Holy Spirit. There is a radical shift in their attitude towards the circumstances, and evidence of divine intervention making this possible.

St. Paul reveals that one of the secrets behind the Church of Thessalonica is that they looked up to those who ministered to them as role models. We learn that hearing the voice of the Lord in our own circumstances and walking in surrender to Him is a powerful life changing gift that we give those we minister to. St. Paul also talks about how they had influenced the other churches in their vicinity. So much so, that when St. Paul visited those churches, he had nothing to say to them, for they had already been inspired and encouraged. St. Paul calls out two things that had influenced those churches; their testimonies of conversion and the way they treated St. Paul and the other missionaries. It is as though the Lord did something in the hearts of the onlookers as they expressed their love for God by the way they treated St. Paul.

Prayer: Abba Father, may your love become so real to us that it may tranform us and those around us. Amen.

Monday October 26

Monday of the Thirtieth Week in Ordinary Time

Walking in the Light of Christ.

Ephesians 4:32-5:8

Psalms 1:1-4,6

Luke 13:10-17

In today's Gospel proclamation, the Lord Jesus heals a woman, who a spirit had kept bound and crippled, for eighteen years. The Lord Jesus called her, laid His hands on her and immediately she was healed, straightened up and praised God.

This healing took place at the synagogue on a Sabbath. Yet, this loving act of healing is interpreted by the synagogue leader as breaking the Sabbath law. The law took precedence over the loving act of healing.

I am reminded of my own experience: I was crippled by the sin of self-righteousness. I had been ardently following religious practices from childhood. Despite this strong religious upbringing, my faith was limited to obligations. Prayers were limited to changing 'others' but not recognizing my own broken nature. I blamed the Lord Jesus for not changing others. I could not experience His love.

Yet, the Lord Jesus, seeing my crippled nature, lovingly spoke to me "Come as you are, I love you". These words enveloped my whole being. Affirmed of this love of the Risen Lord, the Holy Spirit revealed my broken nature. Having repented, I experienced God's love. Obligations of Sabbath no longer became a compulsion, but rather a desire for intimacy and prayer.

"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you." (Ezekiel 36:26) The Lord Jesus took away my heart of stone and gave me a heart that could love and forgive - only possible through the power of the Holy Spirit. St Paul having met the Risen Lord, says "be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you."

We too can experience the supernatural love shared between the Father and the Son, transmitted through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit within us. Living a life in the Spirit helps us to steer away from impurity, as St Paul says, "at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light".

Prayer: Abba Father, give us the grace to stay focused on You and walk in your light. Amen.

Ephesians 5:21-33

Psalm 128:1-5

Luke 13:18-21

St Paul is urging us to submit to one another out of the reverence and love we have for Christ. Most of us are willing, although imperfectly, to submit to God. We are happy to yield to His authority, His will and His plans. But when it comes to submitting to one another, we often resist and fight. This is especially so in a marriage perhaps because we see the weaknesses of each other. So we opt to

subdue instead of submitting. We spend much effort and energy trying to convince the other that our way of thinking is superior.

I am also guilty of this. I tell God that I submit to Him, that I want His will not mine but often I forget that in submitting to God, I am also required to submit to my husband. I get so full of myself wanting to have most things my way. But God reminds me that I demonstrate my love to Him in the way I love and treat the husband that God has blessed me with. I am to submit in recognition that God has given my husband the authority he needs to lead our family. And in submission and love, I partner with God to give my husband the strength and grace he needs to be the man of God he is called to be. I am to build up my husband and encourage him. To be willing to step up next to him and hold him up when I have to.

God requires husbands to be devoted and loving to their wives. To be a representation of His unconditional love to their wives and children. To strive to represent the heart of the Father, the heart of the ultimate lover. And as I write this, I recognise my blessing. I do have a wonderful husband who loves me in ways and means I never expected to be loved. He does such a wonderful job of leading our family. He is a man of God and I am excited that I get to watch him grow more into the calling that God has placed in his life.

God is challenging us to encourage our spouses instead of tearing them down. Praise them to their face, praise them when they are not there. We are called to excel in our marriages and to reflect the love of God.

Prayer: Abba Father, thank You for what You are doing in and through us. Amen.

Wednesday October 28

Feast of Saints Simon and Jude, Apostles

Rediscovering our relationship with the Lord.

Ephesians 2: 19-22

Psalm 19:2-5

Luke 6: 12-16

Today's Gospel proclamation speaks of how the Lord Jesus chose His 12 apostles. Luke 6:12 says, "One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God." He asked the Father whom he should call as His apostles. He did not rely on His understanding or worldly knowledge. He did not interview each person to find the best candidate

for the job. Instead He took everything to prayer.

The Lord Jesus did not look outside himself, to the world, for the answers to decisions or situations He faced. Instead He looked inside, to God, to give Him a solution. He spent the whole night in prayer to God, sacrificing His sleep, because He had an internal relationship with the Father. The Lord Jesus was spending this time with the Father, just as we spend time with our family and friends.

He is calling us to find Him in the midst of our crises. When we sit in prayer and commune with Him on a daily basis, He will become real to us. When we sit with Him in our isolation and loneliness He will fill our hearts with His joy and peace. The Lord Jesus has already carried our sins to the cross, battled the forces of darkness and been victorious. Therefore, there is nothing we bring to His feet that He cannot fix. He can change our despair into joy and our loneliness into times of communion with Him.

St. Paul says when we start sitting at the feet of our Lord Jesus, we will no longer be foreigners or strangers to Him, but we will become fellow citizens with God's people and a member of the household of God. We become a part of the holy temple of God and become aware of the Spirit of God dwelling within us.

The Psalmist speaks of this same experience we can have through prayer. The person who sits at the feet of the Lord will be heard by God. God will be their protector and defender. He is the bridegroom they have been waiting for.

Prayer: Abba Father, may my sorrow turn to joy and my crisis a stepping stone to encounter You. Amen.

Thursday October 29

Thursday of the Thirtieth Week in Ordinary Time

Fighting spiritual battles.

Ephesians 6: 10-20

Psalms 144: 1-2, 9-10

Luke 13: 31-35

We are children of God, called to live under the Lordship of Jesus. We have only one enemy and we are called to fight against this enemy. This enemy comes to us in multiple ways. In the vulnerability of our humanness the evil one comes like a roaring lion to devour us. For this reason St. Paul has written to the Ephesians how we need to be more vigilant in order to fight against the evil one.

There is nothing we could do on our own strength. Every spiritual weapon is from God. Often in our foolishness we think we need to fight the battle against every evil on our own. This is a lie that has been fabricated to fool us; saying that we need to fight our battles on our own. Sadly we often believe the lie that the evil one shows us while there is the truth that God has spoken to us, which we may not take note of. We are to be vigilant and seek God in all circumstances in prayer, petitions and hope with continuous praise and worship.

The legendary story we have heard as children is that Satan demanded the worship which was due to God and then he became God's opponent. Therefore anyone who praises and worships God becomes an opponent of Satan; the adversary of God against whom we fight our battles. We are not alone in this battle; God fights the battle for us. We are called to be vigilant and be well guarded by the full armor of God.

The battle continues in the Gospel proclamation. The Lord Jesus is challenged to stop the work of God. Would the Lord Jesus stop His ministry in fear of Herod? It sounds like a joke. But do we not compromise when such challenges are thrown at us? There could be many situations where we compromise and let down our mission. According to the Lord Jesus, Jerusalem is where accomplishment takes place. In our lives, Jerusalem is our home and our compromises are begun there. Are we hypocrites? Are we equipped by the armor of God? If we are, then why should we be afraid? Why should we compromise?

Prayer: Abba Father, shield me in your love, empower me to fight evil and fulfill your will without compromise. Amen.

Philippians 1:1-11

Psalm 111:1-6

Luke 14:1-6

All of us have come across many people who we know to be good. I have admired such people, loved to be in their company and longed to be like them. While I have a glowing appreciation of them, I also have grappled with the question as to whether such good people could make the move from being good to being better.

I had that question because it seemed to me that for the most part the goodness of most of them came purely from the fact that they had built walls around them so that they would not be exposed to or affected by what would be considered unhealthy, unwholesome or unholy. Gracefully it kept them “good” but unfortunately it also prevented them from becoming better.

As I reflected, to take that step to the next level, to allow that goodness to grow beyond oneself, there was a need to breach and break the walls of self-protection and self-preservation. There is a risk in breaking down the walls but one must take that risk to grow and become better.

True goodness does not come from sheer guarding of oneself with mere rules and regulations but living the spirit of the rules that calls one to open up to the other, especially to the one in dire need.

By asking the scholars of the law and the Pharisees the following question, our Lord changes the focus of the law; “Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath or not?” The focus of our Lord is on healing, irrespective of the day. There I see the challenge of our Lord to go past the walls of laws however good they may seem, by going beyond myself and reaching out to others to be better.

St. Paul reaches out to the Philippians joyfully with the affection of Christ while in prison. Though he is fettered in prison he is happy to be a slave of Christ serving that community. St. Paul lived for the Lord and His people and not for himself. Even in prison he found joy.

Prayer: Abba Father, break my fetters of selfishness so that I may serve those who are in need. Amen.

Saturday October 31

Saturday of the Thirtieth Week in Ordinary Time

Meek and humble.

Philippians 1: 18-26

Psalms 42:2-3, 5

Luke 14: 1, 7-11

What makes us happy? What brings a smile to our faces and joy to our hearts? It could be money, power or fame. We may fantasize about going on a tropical vacation, buying a luxury car or winning a lottery, but St Paul in his letter to the Philippians expresses his joy and emphasizes the real joy of a Christian life. He further describes his passion which is to continue to serve others and to help

them grow closer to our Lord Jesus. He longed to depart this earthly life and to be with our Lord Jesus. Though he suffered he persevered because Jesus Christ would be magnified through him.

The Gospel proclamation of the wedding banquet reminds us that most of us detest self-proclamation when we see it in someone else. However, we may have a strange ability to find reasons why we need to promote ourselves. Many times, we may act like the most intelligent or most important person in a community; though in reality we are not. We may have a tendency to think that we are better or smarter than others. We may take the best seat, grab the best bargain, and be first in the queue for the concert we are seeing. The Lord Jesus wants us to give up on our self-promoting ways. He calls us to be humble and to let God be exalted.

We see how St. Paul presented the Lord Jesus as the perfect example of humility. Our Lord Jesus did not cling to positions. Though He was the Son of God He emptied himself, was crucified as a criminal, and was obedient to God. Therefore God exalted Him at the proper time. When we are baptized, we become a part of the mystical body of our Lord Jesus.

We too are called to be like Him and to let go of our selfishness, ego and pride and to be humble as little children. Let us humble ourselves before both God and others. Let us believe that God will bless us at the appropriate time. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." (Matthew 5:5) Real blessedness lies in true humility, when we give God the rightful place.

Prayer: Abba Father, may we be more compassionate, understanding, and generous in our thoughts and actions. Amen.

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