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Issue 11



ON OUR KNEES IN HIS HANDS

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**“Having faith does not mean
having no difficulties, but
having the strength to face
them, knowing we are not
alone.”**

Pope Francis

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On Our Knees In His Hands

NOVEMBER 2020

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Sunday November 01

SOLEMNITY OF ALL SAINTS

Blessed be God in his angels and in his saints.

Revelation 7:2-4, 9-14

Psalms 23: 1-6

1 John 3: 1-3

Matthew 5: 1-12

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of All Saints. Hidden within the mystery we celebrate today is a revelation of great importance and value.

In today's first reading St. John says "After this I had a vision of a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation, race, people, and tongue. They stood before the throne and before the Lamb, wearing white robes and holding palm branches in their hands." This is similar to our Lord's entry into Jerusalem, which we commemorate on Palm Sunday. This time it is not just the Jews; there are people from all nations. So many that they are beyond counting – more numerous than the Saints recognized by the church. They cry out "Salvation comes from our God, who is seated on the throne and from the Lamb." They acknowledge that they have been "saved". In his writings the audience is a church under persecution. What did the word "saved" mean in that context? "These are the ones who have survived the time of great distress; they have washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb." It meant they had remained faithful despite trying circumstances.

The "saints" attribute their salvation to two factors. The first is the blood of the Lamb. Even though the Lamb gave His blood to save us, the saints too had to do something. They had to wash their robes in the blood. The second was God, whom they saw as seated on the throne. Even though they went through "great distress", they see God as sovereign over their circumstances. This is an attitude we saw in our Lord Jesus in the court of Pontius Pilate. He accepted the cross from the hands of His Father. Not from Pilate nor from the Jews. For the saints, the blood of the Lamb dealt with issues of the past, while God's sovereignty dealt with the issues of the present and the future.

Today's Gospel proclamation is from our Lord's famous sermon on the mount - the beatitudes. He picks certain types of people and calls them "Blessed". I believe the church is trying to tell us that the beatitudes describe the way that the saints lived during their life on earth.

If we take a rational look at the type of people that the beatitudes extol, they do not seem blessed.

For example, being poor is often seen as a curse. When we are mourning, it means that something unfortunate has happened to us. Hungering for righteousness means that we are struggling with the ruling powers. Being insulted and persecuted is not something we generally look forward to.

Psalm 84:5-6 says “What joy for those whose strength comes from the Lord, who have set their minds on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. When they walk through the Valley of Weeping, it will become a place of refreshing springs.” These words reveal that there are some people, who when they walk through distress are able to convert it in to a blessing. These people are those who seek the Lord and whose strength come from him.

In the Acts of the Apostles we see St. Peter and St. John meeting a lame beggar. St. Peter says, “silver or gold have I none, but what I do have I give you”. Their lack of silver and gold opened the doors to the resources of heaven. The saints were those who sought the face of God through mountain-moving-faith and God turned their curses into blessings.

In today’s second reading St. John tells us “Beloved, we are God’s children now; what we shall be has not yet been revealed. We do know that when it is revealed we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.” St. John is implying that we too are called to be counted among the multitude that were present in the throne room, described in the first reading.

The saints play an important role in our lives. We look up to them for they are holy men and women. Often we assume that God visited them and raised them to sainthood because they were holy men and women. But as we read their writings and learn about their life stories, we discover that they too had fears, doubts, struggles, and battles with their nature. Sometimes, they even struggled with doubts whether God existed or not. How did these men and women become saints? In their struggles and in their brokenness, they learnt to seek God.

Today the church presents them as models we can look up to, so that we too can learn the principles behind how God works through our brokenness to lift us to Himself.

Prayer: Abba Father, may we imitate the saints in dealing with our trials under your sovereignty. Amen.

Monday November 02

COMMEMORATION OF ALL THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED

At death...life is changed not ended.

Wisdom 3: 1-9

Psalm 23

Romans 5: 5-11

John 6: 37-40

A definite thing about life is death. Saints and sinners, kings and paupers, all are subject to its inexorable law. Poets have waxed eloquent on the subject: "Golden lads and girls all must/As chimney-sweepers come to dust," wrote Shakespeare.

Yet most of us pursue with relentless intensity the elusive phantom of success, wealth, and fame, as if these will last forever. Death is pushed away from consciousness because we fear the end.

The day's readings abound with joy and hope. The Book of Wisdom says that immortality is the source of that hope. Hope is described as "faith in the infinite goodness of God and belief in His promises." In the letter to the Romans, St. Paul describes the salvific plan of God: Christ died for us while we were still sinners. Therefore, we can experience love, acceptance, forgiveness, and eternal bliss in the family of God. Blessings in abundance, faith for the faithful, and grace and mercy are promised to God's people. Grace is the gift we do not deserve. Mercy, is when we DON'T get what we deserve for our sins. Rescued from our sin through the blood of the Lamb, we can trust in God's infinite mercy, surrender ourselves, and be open to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. In John 6, the Lord Jesus promises that none will be lost, but will be "raised up at the last day."

Death leads to eternal life. "Even though I walk in the shadow of death, I will fear no evil..." - sang the psalmist. Having this multitude of promises from the Universal God, who has deigned to invite us into His family, surely we have no cause to fear death, which is the gateway to eternal bliss. With John Donne, we can declare, "One short sleep, we wake eternally/And Death shall be no more/Death, thou shalt die."

Christ has conquered the last enemy, so we can triumphantly ask, "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?"

Prayer: Abba Father, eternal rest grant unto your faithful. We look to the day when we are united with them in Christ. Amen.

Philippians 2:5-11

Psalm 21:26-32

Luke 14:15-24

The Lord Jesus took on the nature of a servant. He humbled himself. Often we look to hold on to power and position. If something or someone threatens our position then we hate that person and we want to cut that person out of our lives. Here we read about the Lord Jesus taking on human nature because he loves us with an everlasting love.

In the Gospel proclamation we see how the king sends his servant to invite people to the banquet that he has prepared. This speaks of the situation of our lives. The Lord has come to invite us to the banquet, to the marriage supper of the lamb, but we might miss it because we are so busy with our day to day lives. Each person was saying what they were doing, they were busy doing this thing and that thing, the mundane works of life. This world had become the reality of their lives, this may be the situation of our lives too.

To enter the banquet of God we must receive his servant. Because the invitation came through his servant, but this servant is also the king. The king who took on the form of a servant is inviting us to his banquet.

We can see that those who finally qualified to enter the banquet, were the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame. They were powerless, they had no hope and they needed a savior. Therefore, the Lord Jesus said that it is the sick who need a doctor and not the healthy, it is the sinner who needs a savior and not the righteous.

Let us humble ourselves and accept that we are sinners who need a savior. Many generations have run this age-old race and at the end have found that they have been running in the wrong direction.

The Lord is inviting us through his son who is our servant king to come and feast with him, to live in peace, joy and happiness. Let us accept this invitation by accepting His Son into our hearts for we are in the world, but not of the world.

Prayer: Abba Father, may I be worthy to partake in your heavenly banquet. Amen.

Wednesday November 04

Memorial of Saint Charles Borromeo, Bishop

Joyous Christian faith.

Philippians 2: 12- 18

Psalms 26: 1,4,13-14

Luke 14: 25-33

Today's readings emphasise joy, faith and sacrifice in Christian life. St. Paul has insight into his impending martyrdom in Rome. Instead of being apprehensive and fearful, he embraces his forthcoming death, just like St Peter and St Stephen, knowing that eternal life with God follows martyrdom. St Paul exhorts us to share our joy with him as he shares his joy in our faith. Many of us

do not experience persecution - at most we may be ridiculed for our beliefs. We may downplay our faith among friends for fear of being considered "uncool". Contrast this with the worshippers who were killed in the Easter Sunday Attacks in Sri Lanka; Mr. Staines and his two boys who were burnt in their motor vehicle in India; Asia Bibi in Pakistan, unjustly condemned to death under trumped up charges of blasphemy against Islam but providentially reprieved.

The Gospel proclamation follows the same theme. The word 'hating' sounds harsh but it is a hyperbolic emphasis to exhort us to give our highest priority to God over other things, including the love of our families, since they themselves are a gift of God to us. As Our Lord Jesus wanted, some of us devote our lives to the service of God and our fellow human beings, giving up our families, homes, the prospect of career, income, social status and the comfort of forming our own families. Some go to far-off places, risking and often losing their lives at the hands of hostile people.

Are we prepared to make some sacrifice in serving the community? Following the Lord Jesus is not easy. He requires us to give up our possessions and follow him - both material possessions and self-gratifying pleasures. For a start, should we not begin by empathising with those less fortunate than ourselves? Do we spare a thought about the poor in underdeveloped countries confronting the existential challenges of disease, poverty, unemployment, homelessness, starvation, war and constant fear for their lives and that of their families? Or are we comfortable in our complacency? Do we share the joyous Christian faith?

Prayer: Abba Father, give us the grace to appreciate and thank you for your gifts without becoming obsessed by them. Amen.

Philippians-3:3-8

Psalms 104:2-7

Luke 15:1-10

St. Paul as Saul followed the Jewish Law. His knowledge and righteousness was also based on the law. He even persecuted the believers, thinking he was doing the right thing. After his experience with the Risen Christ, he claims that all he once possessed was garbage compared to the worth of knowing Christ Jesus.

In the Gospel Proclamation the Lord Jesus is surrounded by tax collectors and sinners. Many have gathered around him to listen to his preaching. Among the crowds were Pharisees and Scribes. They accused the Lord of receiving sinners and eating with them. He heard their murmuring and spoke to them in parables: the Parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin.

For various reasons we may wander away from the Lord. It could be the loss of a loved one, being let down by a person we trusted, unemployment, financial crisis, anger, hatred, fear, self pity so on and so forth. In such moments of darkness, if we are able to remember who our God is, it will lift us up swiftly. Our God is a loving, forgiving and powerful God, who will leave the ninety-nine to come looking for the lost one.

It is overwhelming to think that the Lord Jesus left the ninety-nine to look for me when I was lost. When he found me he carried me on his shoulders. Like St. Paul stated, there is no greater treasure than to be found by the grace and mercy of God, to be loved, forgiven and healed. The Lord Jesus says, "There will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent". These words encourage us to mend our relationship with God through the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Let us look around with compassion to find and help people who have wandered away from the Lord. Take the Good News to the hopeless, helpless and the lost. Make them aware that our God is a loving and forgiving God; a God who grants second chances.

Prayer: Abba Father, thank you for your unconditional love, give me grace to live in a manner that is pleasing to you. Amen.

Philippians 3: 17-4:1

Psalm 121: 1-5

Luke 16: 1-8

Today's readings reveal the restlessness of our hearts until we find the missing piece that makes us whole. It shows us how weak, frail, and sinful we can be when we live away from God, and it contrasts the life we will have when we accept Him as our Saviour.

In the Gospel Proclamation we read about the shrewd manager. It brings to light where and what the manager's heart is set on. The Gospel Proclamation describes this manager as someone "who wasted possessions" that did not belong to him.

In this parable, the Rich Man is a representation of God the Father, and the duty given to the manager is to look after his property. This seems similar to the creation story, where God the Father gave authority and power to Adam to look after the Garden of Eden. There seems to be a message that is conveyed by both these readings, where the Lord Jesus is revealing to us, the call He has given us, which is 'to look after his possessions'.

In the First Reading St. Paul speaks about the saving power of our Lord, without whom we are not able to fulfil this purpose and as a result are restless. This restlessness drives us to fill ourselves from empty wells which we look up to as gods though not satisfying. It can be gods of money, personal glory, power or recognition. He reminds us how much we need the Lord in our lives and how dependent we should be on Him, without whom it is impossible to please the Father.

St. Augustine of Hippo says, "You have made us for Yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You. No one knows what he himself is made of, ... but you, Lord know everything about a human being because you have made him."

Let this be the cry of our hearts; for our hearts to find rest in Him. And when this happens, we can say together with the Psalmist, "I rejoiced with those who said to me, "Let us go to the house of the Lord." (Ps 122:1).

Prayer: Abba Father, may my heart find true rest in knowing You more deeply. Amen.

Philippians 4: 10-19

Psalms 111: 1-2,5,6,8,9

Luke 16: 9-15

The things we can live with and the things we cannot live without are important things to think about. Can we live with what we have or do we crave for more? Are we caught up with hoarding things?

The Lord Jesus wants us to share what we have, and in his time he will provide us more than what we need; let us believe this and act on it so that it will become real in our lives. Jesus Christ is our true provider and more than providing us with material items he gives us grace, joy, hope and happiness to live with what we have. What he asks is that we be FAITHFUL.

The Holy Spirit was given to us so that we have someone we can rely on when we are anxious in life. The Holy Spirit helps us evaluate our decisions. For this discernment we need to pray in the spirit and give the truth of our hearts, surrender ourselves to the Holy Spirit so he can take over. Then He will shine light on our lives' areas that need attention and also give us strength to overcome hurdles and conquer situations.

As we are expecting a child, I have learned that parents are often caught up with being obsessed over their children, without taking in to consideration as to WHO this child belongs to – we belong to God and him alone and we merely are earthly parents. As much as it is a great intention to give your child the best in life, it is important to see parenthood as being a spiritual guide, a caregiver, a person who molds a child to be empathetic towards the neighbours as opposed to exposing them to fine luxuries. At the end of the day it is important to be realistic in life and know that whatever we buy, whatever we inherit in the earthly realm cannot be taken to our grave.

What we can do is hold on to the promise God gives us that there is an inheritance waiting for us in heaven and what we have to do is look to the things above, trust in the Lord Jesus and wait on him in joy and hope.

Prayer: Abba Father, give me the grace to trust you knowing that I can do all things through you. Amen.

Sunday November 08

Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Worldly treasures all forsaken, take me Jesus, take me now.

Wisdom 6: 12-16

Psalms 62: 2-8

1 Thess 4:13-18

Matthew 25: 1-13

If God speaks to you right now and says, "Ask for whatever you want me to give you" (cf. 1 Kings 3:5), what would be your answer? Will you struggle, unable to decide? King Solomon, inherited the throne from his father David. God asked him this question in a dream, and he had the answer ready. He asked for Wisdom, not of man but of God. And we know how much it pleased God and

how he ended up receiving Wisdom in abundance, and along with it, everything he did not ask too, namely wealth, honour and long life.

Today's First Reading is a beautiful description of God's Wisdom. The Bible says that whoever gets up early to seek Wisdom, will have no trouble but will find her sitting at the door; waiting to be found. (Wisdom 6:15). Further it says that anyone keeping awake for Wisdom will soon be free from care, worry and anxiety. What is this Wisdom that the author speaks about so ardently? Those who embrace God's Wisdom as the most desired treasure in life embrace the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit shows us God's perspective for every life situation and thus we begin to live with a clear mind, free of unnecessary clutter and confusion.

God is more than willing to impart His Wisdom to anyone who desires to receive. He does not try to hide from us, if we seek His Wisdom. If so, why do we make wrong judgments and fall into a mess many a time? The Lord speaks to us about the essential part of our daily routine that we need to develop and strengthen, namely our daily quiet time with Him. That is when His Wisdom is imparted to us, specially through His Word.

The Gospel proclamation is another narrative of the value of Wisdom. If we choose to read this parable as a mere story, we could conclude that the five 'wise' virgins were sensible enough to be prepared, and were saved from embarrassment. Yet if we take this passage to prayer and read through it under the illumination of the Holy Spirit, the lessons become more profound. The Lord Jesus starts the parable as "at that time, the Kingdom of heaven will be...". He is speaking to us about a new realm.

We are like those ten virgins, who waited impatiently for the bridegroom to arrive and the wedding festivities to begin. They had dressed up and were ready to go, their lamps burning bright.

As we reflect on this parable, we realise that this life is a period of waiting or transit, to begin eternal life in heaven, to join the ongoing celebrations in the company of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. How are we waiting? Do we have enough oil to keep our lamps burning continuously? Are we doing only the minimum necessary, out of obligation to prepare for eternity? Do we fall asleep, becoming comfortable in worldly pleasures? Or do we even think anything beyond this life, for fear of the unknown journey ahead?

Oil in Scripture is a metaphor for the Holy Spirit, who keeps our lamps burning. We received this great gift at our Baptism. Have we been re-filling the jars of oil, keeping them full, or are we running low? How do we know if we are running low in the Spirit's Presence? Galatians 3:22-23 tells us how to measure the supply of oil. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control." The Holy Spirit makes us a new creation as promised in 2 Corinthians 5:17, changing our perspective of life, empowering us to live by faith, not by sight. (2 Corinthians 5:7). The Word of God becomes more real to us than what our senses tell us. We are transformed by the renewing of our mind. (Romans 12:2). In all circumstances, we choose to take on life as victors, as God's children, rather than as victims of circumstances. The Second Reading is about this new perspective, even with regard to death. As Christians we cannot look at death as the final loss or end.

One person caused someone a huge financial loss. He wanted to react in the worldly 'wisdom', but heard the voice of the Spirit giving him a choice. He could consider that he gave it to the other person. He chose to be a cheerful giver as in 2 Corinthians 9:6-7, and he and his wife prayed for this person and blessed him. Ten days later, a couple from another state dropped by and gave them a card and left. When they opened it, there was a cheque to the exact amount that they lost! Being believers of the Word, and knowing God's generosity to those who do His will, they knew that it was just the first instalment of a hundredfold return.

Prayer: Abba Father, I choose to let go of worldly treasures to possess You and to be possessed by You. Amen.

Ezekiel 47: 1-2,8-9,12

OR 1 Cor 3:9-11,16-17

Psalm 45: 2-3,5,6,8-9

John 2: 13-22

In Psalm 46, we read about a river that gladdens the city of God. The river here, denotes God's presence. In the midst of turmoil and the changes that surround me if I choose to be still and truly know who He is, this river brings me peace. God becomes my refuge, my help in trouble. God will be exalted!

Prophet Ezekiel similarly describes a 'river'. Wherever it flows, there is abundant life and fruitfulness. This is no ordinary river, it is the mighty presence of God. It never runs dry because it flows from God's sanctuary. In fact the more we behold Him, the larger and deeper it grows.

We are blessed to know this God and to know that as we run to Him in our circumstances, His presence and blessings grow deeper in our hearts.

St. Paul shares a revelation which was not experienced under the old covenant. "Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?" God is not just 'with' us but also 'in' us.

By the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus, we have been given an opportunity to become God's temple. From the temple within us flows the presence of God, and through us into the world.

We need to protect this temple. Perhaps by being conscious of what we allow into our bodies, and minds. Also how we treat others as they too are God's holy temple. God will not let His temple be defiled. Today's Gospel proclamation gives an account of the Lord Jesus' response towards the Jews as he sees His Father's house being defiled.

We do not need to worry ourselves more than we ought to on earthly matters, because "His divine power has given us everything needed for life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness." (2 Peter 1:3). We are never alone, because the triune God lives within us and He calls us His own.

Prayer: Abba Father, may I be mindful of your presence in my life and in the lives of others. Amen.

Tuesday November 10

Tuesday of the Thirty-second Week in Ordinary Time

Humility means taking ourselves off the pedestal.

Titus 2: 1-8, 11-14

Psalms 36: 3-4, 18-23, 27, 29

Luke 17: 7-10

“If you are humble nothing will touch you, neither praise nor disgrace, because you know what you are.” Saint Theresa of Calcutta

It is hard to be humble! This is a struggle that I face when I do any task. Almost unconsciously I long for recognition, I long for attention, I long for acknowledgement. But in today's Gospel proclamation the Lord Jesus clearly states. “So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.’”

In the world humility has a bad reputation; this is because many people do not understand what humility is. It is not thinking of ourselves as beneath other people, but rather it is taking ourselves off the pedestal and placing God at the center of our lives. Trusting that God will take care of our needs.

The Lord Jesus is the embodiment of true humility. The Lord Jesus' attitude was one of service, obedience and sacrifice. It was one that sought the good of others, one that was willing to lay down his rights and privileges to glorify the Father. Scripture repeatedly tells us that the purpose for which we were created, our reason for being alive, is to glorify God by doing the work we have been given by God, not for ourselves but for God and for others.

We cannot force ourselves to be humble. But by daily walking with God and growing in a deep and abiding relationship with him we slowly change from within. As we follow the responsorial psalm's invitation, grow in our trust of the Lord and make God our heart's delight, He becomes the center of our existence.

Our inner needs are met by his provision. We stop looking for approval from those around us and we stop being hurt by the rejection of people. God becomes our satisfaction. This frees our inner being, our lives are blessed, and we in turn become a blessing to others.

Prayer: Abba Father, I acknowledge my inability to be humble. Help me grow to be more like you. Amen.

Wednesday November 11

Memorial of Saint Martin of Tours, Bishop

Gratitude is the memory of the heart.

Titus 3:1-7

Psalms 22:1-6

Luke 17:11-19

Today's first reading prompts us to focus on our true nature as "believers", reminding us how we must conduct ourselves. As a believer and a citizen of a country we are advised to be submissive and obedient. When we cooperate with the leadership in any establishment be it our home, workplace, community or nation to build a just and fair society we experience the smooth

flow of God's goodness and grace. Are we ready to fulfill our Lord's instructions as Christians by giving up our negative attitudes and quarrelsome nature? We could then hope for a better tomorrow as this is the pathway to build the kingdom of God. Maintaining unity in diversity, being gentle and understanding paves the way to our destiny in the kingdom of God.

Psalms 23 speaks to us in a special way as it has always done. When biblical literature refers to God as a shepherd, we are reminded that we are the flock inviting the Lord to shepherd His people. Therefore let us be confident and consoled for our good shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ is the highest authority we must depend on. As a shepherd knows to feed his flock, to guide, govern, defend, handle and heal, let us open ourselves to the Lord's care for us, to watch over and preserve us at all times.

The Gospel proclamation brings out another dimension of a shepherd other than leading and guiding – a healing narrative. Of the ten lepers who were physically healed of their disease only one returned to thank and praise God. The rest went away with their healing granted but only one comes praising God in a loud voice. He even throws himself on his face to worship the Lord Jesus Christ. This conveys an important message to us. We must return to the Lord even after our broken lives are restored. Even when we are healed we must not forget to praise to God in gratitude. Thus as the Lord declares, it is our faith that saves us. Are we grateful and bold enough to make this choice?

Prayer: Abba Father, may we praise and worship you with utmost gratitude for what you have done in our lives. Amen.

Thursday November 12

Memorial of Saint Josephat, Bishop and Martyr

We are handpicked to be prayer warriors.

Philemon 7-20

Psalms 145:6-10

Luke 17:20-25

In the letter to Philemon, St. Paul pleads on behalf of the slave Onesimus. We are reminded afresh of our calling. We are called, chosen, and handpicked to be prayer warriors, lightning conductors, humble intercessors on behalf of our brothers and sisters in need. How often have we lived up to this calling?

Most often, as we sit in prayer, our prayers revolve around ourselves and our families. It is about laying down our burdens, pressing issues, sicknesses, and crises, asking for blessings and graces, for our happiness and fulfillment. We feel that our burdens are heavier than those of others and our issues are more urgent. Often our needs become so great, we fail to remember the requests of our friends and relatives and lift them up in prayer. How often do we promise to pray for someone but immersed in our own difficulties, forget to pray for them?

Let us make a conscious effort to follow the example of St. Paul and for a moment, forget about our needs, and intercede for our nation, our people in this time of dire need, and draw upon them God's favour. Let us call to mind, each person who has asked prayers from us and fervently lift them up to the hands of the Father.

As we put our need next to the needs of the other, we are given the powerful assurance 'I am the vine and you are the branches...' (John 15:5) When we live in this realization, we are no longer separate individuals but parts of the body of Christ. We become one with Christ and without effort or asking from our part, our needs are met, our desires fulfilled, our lives transformed and we are set free to be sensitive to the needs of the other. Our lives will not only be about ourselves anymore.

In living so, just as it is revealed in the Gospel Proclamation, we will start to experience the kingdom of God, within us, surrounding us and consuming us.

Prayer: Abba Father, You are our God from age to age and You reign forever. Our help comes from You alone. Amen.

Friday November 13

Friday of the Thirty-second Week in Ordinary Time

Perfect freedom.

2 John 4-9

Psalms 118: 1-2, 10-11,
17-18

Luke 17: 26-37

In the first reading we see St Paul being firm with the Galatians. On deeper reflection we find that the Galatian Jews who became converts to Christianity were now confusing the non-Jewish Christians by trying to bring back the Jewish law. They were trying to bring back the rigidity and restrictions imposed by the law in contrast to the message of freedom that St. Paul preached.

They received the message of grace and then converted to Christianity. However the need to perform rituals in order to be saved, and the need to be in control of their lives was deeply ingrained. And perhaps it was irritating to see these heathens now having the same if not a better access to God simply by believing in Christ! Perhaps the simplicity of what was being preached was too offensive.

We have heard the message of grace preached so often to us. It is in fact the basis of our faith, it is the basis of the four steps through which many of us have encountered the Lord in a personal and life changing manner.

How often do we assume that God loves us more when we have been good, when we have fasted, when we have served? And how often we struggle to accept the love of God when we have not done what we feel like we should have done. Can I still believe that God loves me just as much on those days when I have not prayed compared to the days when I have spent a glorious morning with the Lord?

St Paul reminds us that grace can never be earned. It can only be received with a grateful heart that knows that it is given something it could never obtain of its own accord. Let us focus on the Word of the Lord no matter how offended our mind can get.

Let us ask the Lord to fill us with His love. Let us walk in the freedom that Christ purchased for us at such a great cost – let us continually run to Him, to delight in His grace and find new ways of walking in perfect freedom.

Prayer: Abba Father, I choose to walk in the freedom that you offer me. Amen.

3 John 5-8

Psalm 111 : 1-6

Luke 18 : 1-8

In St. Matthew's Gospel we are presented with the story of a boy possessed by a demon. His father approached the Lord Jesus and said "I brought him to your disciples, but they could not heal him." The Lord Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of the boy. The Apostles probably in embarrassment asked the Lord Jesus as to why they could not heal him. The Lord Jesus

said: "Because you have so little faith..., if you have faith the size of a mustard seed...nothing will be impossible for you."

In the Gospel proclamation we are reminded of the importance of praying continually and persevering until we see God's will in our situations. When we realise the will of God and his plan in our lives, we will be blessed with love, joy and peace deep within ourselves. In this parable it is mentioned that the 'helpless' widow with difficulty, and with no indication of success is pleading with a judge who is notorious for ignoring his people. But the widow's endurance and perseverance yield results for her.

How do we face our struggles in our day-to-day life? How do we fight our battles? What do we do when things do not go the way we planned? What do we do when there is none to help us? Often, we get entangled with worldly trends and flows. We easily get influenced by people around us. We get influenced by negative media that is free for everyone now. What is becoming more real for us is the world. What we see, what we can touch with our hands and what we can smell from our nostrils. In the presence of these worldly and temporary sources we have, we tend to underestimate the power of prayer.

The Lord Jesus invites us to pray continually and to not lose heart. It is a clear statement that we should pray whenever and wherever we are. There are no exception clauses. Prayer does not always have to be out loud but it could also be silent communication with the Lord. Prayer should be like breathing. If we do not breathe, we suffocate. Similarly, we are to pray at all times lest we "suffocate spiritually".

Prayer: Abba Father, may we continually and consistently seek your face. Amen.

Sunday November 15

Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Fear of the Lord and being afraid of God are different things.

Prov 31:10-13, 19-20,
30-31

Psalms 127:1-5

1 Thes 5:1-6

Matthew 25:14-30

Today's first reading tells us about the perfect wife. She has many noble qualities. She is prudent, industrious, generous, faithful, trustworthy. Then, there is this one quality that shines above the rest; "a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised". Even though Proverbs 31 is about the perfect wife, we can think of it in terms of a believer, and his or her relationship with God. Then, it will show us

that the greatest quality of a believer is the fear of the Lord.

The theme that runs across today's readings seems to be the fear of the Lord. Even though fear itself is considered a negative emotion, fear of the Lord is considered a positive attribute for a believer. We can see it throughout the Bible; Moses selects men who fear the Lord to be the leaders (Exodus 18:21), fear of God will keep you from sinning (Exodus 20:20), the main reason that people fall into sin is because they do not fear the Lord (Romans 3:18).

Fear of the Lord and being afraid of God are two different things. Fear of the Lord is the result of a love relationship with Him. It comes from a place of awe, love, intimacy. We are so connected to Him intimately, that sin loses its hold on us. We face temptations by clinging on to Him for strength to give inner responses. When we fall into sin we cannot wait to get back to God; we repent, trust in the forgiveness and mercy of God to cleanse us as we return to His heart.

Fear of the Lord, gives us the opportunity to make a U-turn. Being afraid of God on the other hand, is a result of living a self-centred life. It drives us further away from God. We are unable to trust in His goodness, so we avoid Him and take matters into our hands.

In today's Gospel proclamation we read about the Parable of the Talents. This parable teaches us that as stewards of the resources that God has given us, we are to use them fully to serve Him.

As I was reflecting in the light of the fear of God, I saw another side of the parable. When the Master entrusted his wealth to the servants, he did not give them any specific instructions about investing.

The first two however, simply knew what they had to do. They knew what pleased him and what did not. It is obvious that the third servant did not know the Master well enough as the first two servants.

He trusted his own understanding of the Master; a hard man, harvesting where he had not sown and gathering where he had not scattered seed... he was afraid of the Master and he made a wrong judgment that displeased him.

I find the actions of the third servant familiar. When we are disconnected from God our hearts are filled with many fears; we get scared when our securities are threatened. Just like the third servant we try to protect them by controlling them tightly.

When I was told that there was a possibility for my son to move to another country, my first reactions were sadness, followed by anger and even emotions of betrayal. I was angry at him, I was angry at my husband and I was angry at God.

Eventually, when I reluctantly opened my heart to the Lord in prayer, I began to see that I had been holding on to my son for comfort, for security and even for joy.

As the Lord started to minister to me, I started to experience a greater comfort, a greater security and a greater joy in the Lord. I began to see the hand of God in the whole situation. I also saw objecting to the doors that were opening for my son would in fact be standing against the plans of God Himself. Once again my heart was allowing the fear of the Lord to rule, and I had found the U-turn to return to God.

In his letter to the Thessalonians St. Paul says, "You are all children of the light and children of the day. So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be awake and sober".

The world around us is covered in darkness and it has become the norm. It tells us that if we are to be happy, we need to be part of it. It tells us that a self-centred life is the way to happiness.

Sacrifice, honesty, commitment and living as God-fearing people is seen as weakness. The Lord is reminding us that He is the light of the world and those who follow Him will never walk in darkness.

Prayer: Abba Father, when temptations become too powerful for me, let the fear of the Lord rule over my heart. Amen.

Monday November 16

Monday of the Thirty-third Week in Ordinary Time

Light of the world - open my eyes let me see.

Rev 1:14,2:15

Psalms 1:1-4,6

Luke 18:35-43

Today's readings, remind me of my first experience of 'God's Love', it also brings me to the awareness of how I fall in and out of that experience. After our baptismal encounter with God we are called to witness to the Word of God and to the Lord Jesus by how we live and conduct our lives.

When this fire is kindled deep within us, we thirst to be with the Lord and to serve Him. In doing so we work tirelessly, endure, suffer and still want to do more.

Do I carry the love, peace, humility and joy of the Lord? Or have I fallen into a routine of prayer and services that I do largely for my self-satisfaction and worth? Have I lost the Love of God in the process? It is time for me to repent, leave aside the 'I know', 'I can' attitudes and return to the Lord Jesus. It is then that the Lord can show me who I am in Christ. The Lord invites us to abide in Him, so that living waters may flow through us.

We are like the blind man in the Gospel. When the Lord is near, we begin to see our sins and weaknesses, it is then through the Spirit of the Lord that we cry out for mercy and forgiveness. God in His love forgives us and sets us free so we may see through His eyes.

When life becomes comfortable, I tend to drift away from the undying thirst I otherwise have, to spend time with the Lord - mainly to get my needs met. When crisis hits I crawl back to the Lord.

After sometime I realized that this is not what the Lord wanted from me; He wants me to live in Him. The way I spend time in prayer changed. I came to the awareness of Him being my Father, Creator and Saviour.

His love and presence is constant and never fading. This is what leads me to the light. Even though I still fail to walk in the light 24x7, this awareness helps me to get back to the light as soon as I fall into darkness - It is a continuous journey.

Prayer: Abba Father, I believe that in your light I am gradually transformed into a new creation. Amen.

Rev 3: 1-6, 14-22

Psalms 14: 2-5

Luke 19: 1-10

Today's Gospel proclamation speaks about how Zaccheus ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree, to catch a glimpse of the Lord Jesus. Zaccheus was a tax collector. The religious leaders deemed these tax collectors as sinners and unclean because of their greed and their collaboration with the Romans. So Zaccheus was well aware that he was one of the despised. He knew

that he was deemed unclean and that he had procured his wealth through greed. But here we see Zaccheus running on ahead to climb the tree. What he wanted was to have a glimpse of the Lord Jesus.

Zaccheus' actions show his eagerness to know the Lord. Though he was a sinner, he took the first step to seek the face of the Lord. What happened next was dramatic. No one, not even Zaccheus thought that the Lord Jesus would stop and speak to him. The Lord Jesus went to the extent of visiting Zaccheus' home and dining with him that day. All it took was the effort from Zaccheus, who was a sinner to seek the face of our Lord, and the Lord Jesus in turn decided to come into his home and save not only Zaccheus but his entire household.

There are times in our lives when we fall from grace. Times when we fall into sin. Though the Lord Jesus came to seek and save the lost, we find it hard to accept it and unlike Zaccheus we may not take steps to climb the tree to seek the face of God. Instead we hide from him. We lie low fearing that God will not forgive us. This takes us further away from the Lord. We know that in the story of the Prodigal son, when he repented and came home, his father ran to him and met him on the way with open arms. So is our Father, He is waiting with outstretched arms to welcome us back, to forgive us and to love us.

The beautiful sacrament of healing - the sacrament of reconciliation has been given to us. Some of us may have not made our confession for years, but it is not too late. What it takes is to believe that our Lord is waiting with open arms, with forgiveness and love. When we take the first step, the Lord will not only save us but also our entire family. So are we ready to take the first step to run ahead and climb the tree to seek the face of our Lord?

Prayer: Abba Father, give me the grace to take the first step to have a closer relationship with you. Amen.

Wednesday November 18

Wednesday of the Thirty-third Week in Ordinary Time

Let us be givers not grabbers!

Rev 4:1-11

Psalms 150:1-6

Luke 19:11-28

The Book of Revelation presents a God-centered vision of the world. He reigns as king from his throne and nothing takes place outside of his governance. The Apostle John is given an invitation to witness the eternal worship of 'the Father'.

The Book of Revelation starts by addressing the letters to various churches highlighting one of the major problems as emperor worship – which is a focus on the wrong throne. Worship is not just coming together and doing whatever we want but it is about recalibrating our lives in line with God's will.

St. John mentions the word 'throne' 45 times in the Book of Revelation. In every liturgy we have an opportunity to witness this worship as he did when there is a reference to "Lift up your hearts" and when we respond to the invitation by saying "We lift them up to the Lord". We join in worship along with the 24 elders and heavenly hosts. Worship is not an individual affair but a community event.

The Gospel proclamation highlights that Life is about giving. The talents given to the three servants are not so much monetary gifts or personal capacities; they are a share in the mercy of God, a participation in the divine love. But since mercy is always directed to the other, these "talents" are designed to be shared. In fact, they will increase in the measure that they are given away.

The last servant did not use what he was given. Instead, he clung onto it. The other servants faithfully gave what that they had and they gained even more.

The Lord Jesus invites us to live and use our gifts for others –our time, friendship, money, talents and intelligence.

We are here, not to amass and accumulate, but to share what we have to build others up and help them also to invest their gifts for others. What will we gain when we give? We gain a sense of deep fulfilling joy, a joy that the world cannot give us.

Prayer: Abba Father, may I use my talents for proclaiming and establishing your kingdom on earth as it in Heaven. Amen.

Rev 5: 1 - 10

Psalms 149: 1 - 6, 9

Luke 19: 41 - 44

Jesus Christ is portrayed as both a Lion - symbolizing his authority and power - and a Lamb - symbolizing his sacrificial submission to God's will. One of the elders calls John to look at the Lion, but when he looks, he sees a Lamb. Christ the Lamb was the perfect sacrifice for the sins of all; therefore, only he can save us from the terrible events revealed by the scroll. Christ the

Lamb won the greatest battle of all. He defeated the forces of evil by dying on the cross. The role of Christ the Lion will be to lead the battle where Satan is finally defeated. Christ the Lion is victorious because of what Christ the Lamb has already done. We will participate in his victory, not because of our efforts or goodness, but because he has promised eternal life to all who believe in him.

From every nation people are praising God before his throne. God's message of salvation and eternal life is not limited to a specific culture, race, or country. Anyone who comes to God in repentance and faith is accepted by him and will be part of his Kingdom.

The Jewish leaders had rejected their King. They refused God's offer of salvation in Jesus Christ. God did not turn away from the Jewish people who obeyed him, and he continues to offer salvation to the people he loves, both Jews and Gentiles. Eternal life is within our reach; accept it while the opportunity is still offered.

In 66 A.D., the Jews revolted against Roman control. Roman soldiers attacked Jerusalem and broke through the northern wall. In 70 A.D. they entered the city and burnt it. It is believed about six hundred thousand Jews were killed during the onslaught.

The Lord Jesus says in verse 42 – “But now it's too late, and peace is hidden from your eyes.” Let us not allow our flesh to lead us to that place where the presence of the Lord dwells no more! Let us not allow prejudice or bias to keep us from sharing Christ with others. Christ welcomes all people into his Kingdom.

Prayer: Abba Father, come into my heart, I give complete control of me and my life to you. Amen.

Rev 10:8-11

Psalms 118: 14, 24, 72,
103, 111, 131

Luke 19:45-48

In today's first reading, the Book of Revelation speaks of a scroll and a command to consume it. The scroll contains the Word of God. The Word brings sweetness in the mouth and bitterness in the stomach.

When we read the Word of God, it transforms us from our sinful nature to carry the attitude of our Lord Jesus. Our internal transformation causes us to share the goodness of God with the world. The sweetness of the Word of God is the conversation and the transformation within us. Our depths are soaked in the love of God and the fire of the Holy Spirit. It causes us to speak the goodness of God.

Therefore, anyone who has experienced the love of God through the living Word will not be able to stop evangelizing. This is why the Lord Jesus said, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent me." (John 4:34) Is it the same with us too?

In today's Gospel proclamation we see the Lord Jesus' reaction at the temple. He enters the temple area and drives out those who are selling things there. He takes possession of the temple and reveals His ability to do God's will.

When the Lord Jesus is in the temple, the temple becomes a sanctuary to host Him. "Do you not know that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own" (1 Corinthians 6:19).

We welcome the Lord Jesus into our hearts whenever we receive the Holy Eucharist. The Creator of Heaven and Earth, the Lord Almighty dwells in us. Do we respect His presence in our Body, Soul and Spirit?

The Lord Jesus invites us and gives us hope. He is our role model. We need to have a desire to be like Him. Are we ready to dedicate ourselves to Him? Can we prioritize His will over our wants, dreams and wishes?

Prayer: Abba Father, as I read your Word, let me hear your voice. Strengthen me to build my life on your Word. Amen.

Saturday November 21

Memorial of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Our vision and mission.

Rev 11:4-12

Ps 144:1,2,9-10

Luke 20:27-40

I remember a story about a serviceman deployed in the Iraq war. While on duty, he was exposed to military burn pits and regularly inhaled toxic trash smoke. When he returned from the war, that exposure had given him a lung disease. His wife tried to seek help from the military who refused to take responsibility and denied the wife's claims. Frustrated, the veteran put a shotgun to his mouth

one day to put everything to an end.

His service dog instantly jumped into action and bit his shorts knocking him off balance giving the wife time to get the gun. This brush with suicide spurred the wife with new energy to form a coalition and fight not only for her husband but for those, military or not, affected under similar conditions. Finally she was able to convince the authorities to secure benefits for those who had suffered. In the end for the wife and the husband it is a story of living for a purpose and accomplishing a mission. As for the man he had a mission to accomplish and for that he could not afford to take his life.

There are times more often than not where we feel frustrated with life, with what is going on. We may feel convinced that there is no purpose or meaning to life. With such familiar thoughts, consider the celebration we have today, the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

In line with her other celebrations like the Immaculate Conception and the Nativity, the celebration of Her Presentation reminds us that she was dedicated to God who sanctified her for the unique role expected of her in His saving work. It is also a reminder that we as this Mother's children are also dedicated to and sanctified by God for a specific role in His saving work.

As in the first reading, God's two witnesses will not see death until their mission is accomplished. After death they rise to eternal life. In the Gospel proclamation our Lord assures, that they are beyond earthly bounds and are like angels who never die.

Prayer: Abba Father, I dedicate myself to your call to share in your saving work. Help me persevere to the end. Amen.

Sunday November 22

Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe

Hail Redeemer, King Divine.

Ez 34:11-12,15-17

Psalms 22: 1-3, 5-6

1 Cor 15: 20-26, 28

Matthew 25: 31-46

Growing up in the Catholic faith, we may have a special liking towards certain Feast days that occur throughout the liturgical calendar. For me, my favourite day is the Solemnity of Christ the King, and as I reflect today, I am seeing the word of God speak back to my own heart.

What words come to mind when we think of kings of old? I recall words such as ruler, authority, war, power, armies. Kings are known to rule with an iron fist, and those who do not are seen as weak and unworthy of the throne. We see political leaders who choose to show mercy are ostracized by society, because people are so accustomed to having a king be someone who is mighty and full of his own strength.

The brief description above could not be further away from the truth when it comes to our God and King, the Lord Jesus Christ. If we take the same words that we looked at – ruler, authority, war, power, army – we will see that it can be applied to the Lord Jesus when he walked on this earth, but not in the conventional and expected way. The Lord Jesus ruled not with an iron fist, but with mercy. He has authority over heaven and earth, but His authority comes from His identity and knowing He is the beloved Son of God. The wars that He wages are against the powers and principalities of darkness and not the rulers of this world. The power that He receives is from the Holy Spirit, divine power to forgive and heal, not wound or destroy. His army is not made of soldiers but of the hosts of heaven who are continuously waiting on Him.

What kind of leadership is this? Surely it is not the kind we are used to, and this kind of leadership would have shocked even the disciples who walked alongside the Lord Jesus. The way that the Lord Jesus ruled on earth was as a Servant King, humbling himself for the glory of the Father, giving of himself no matter how great the cost, going through humiliation and agony for love of his brothers and sisters – he laid down his life for his friends, and because of this, he was raised in glory on the third day. It is because of this servant's heart that we celebrate the Solemnity of Christ the King.

The Father raised the Lord Jesus to the highest place because he humbled himself in the face of adversity. However, the Kingship of the Lord is not to be taken lightly. He is still the Ruler of the nations, He is still the Great High Priest, the Alpha and the Omega, the Almighty, the Righteous Judge – He still wields all power in Him, but in equal measure, He is merciful, just, kind and forgiving. It is this superhuman balance of mercy and justice that makes Him worthy of the title of ‘King of kings’.

As we look at today’s readings, we see the servant King Jesus also overlap with the Shepherd King, the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep. It is this Shepherd of our hearts that guides and leads us to righteousness. It is He who makes us worthy to stand in the throne room of God. It is He who brings us to green pastures, and it is He who prepares a banquet for us in the presence of our enemies. Just like the Lord Jesus had a meal for the Last Supper, in the presence of his enemies – the betrayers and the deniers – we too are led to instances where we will be in the midst of people who are against us, sometimes for lack of knowledge. What then, is our response?

We see the answer in today’s Gospel proclamation. The Lord Jesus gives us a glimpse of Judgment Day, when Christ the King’s true glory and majesty will be revealed before all nations. It is how we react to the people around us that will bring out the true servant heart of our Lord and King. If we fail to bring out His love, we have failed in our mission.

We may try to live in the kingdom of God, by being upstanding citizens, by never saying anything to upset anybody, by always doing the right thing – all of which is commendable. However, what did we do for our neighbour? How did the Lord Jesus, the Good Shepherd, come alive in the hearts of people who were yet to know Him? If we were not instrumental in making the Lord Jesus a reality to those who are poor, downcast, marginalized and shunned – then we have to answer to Christ our King.

We are the keepers of our brothers and sisters, and it is our responsibility as Christians to bring the kingdom of servanthood and love into a hurting world.

Prayer: Abba Father, give me the grace to have a servant’s heart and serve others in little ways each day. Amen.

Rev 14:1-5

Psalms 23:1-6

Luke 21:1-4

Human Existence unfolds in the service of the world. Humans complete themselves by giving of themselves, sacrificing themselves. On this Christian principle, Anne Vercors commented before the dead body of his daughter, in Paul Citadel's 'The tidings brought to Mary'. "Perhaps the end of life is living? And perhaps the children of God remain sure footed on the wretched earth?"

Not living but dying- and giving in gladness all that we have. This is joy, liberty, grace, eternal youth! What value does the world have compared with life? And what value does life have if not to be given?"

The first Reading takes us back to the place in history when John the Baptist proclaims, "Behold the Lamb of God". In heaven we see the same vision from St John the apostle of the 'Lamb standing on mount Zion,' and the vision of the thousands praising and worshipping the Lamb of God. Are we sure of being in that crowd some day?

Living in this world means dying to ourselves, giving of our time, sharing our possessions, showing our love, care and concern for our brothers and sisters. It is an opportune time to remember to look at our lives and see where we are in the journey of discipleship. We are called to be disciples of Christ. That is the purpose and meaning of our life on earth.

Are we only concentrating on the externals? In the Gospel of St Luke, the Lord Jesus states that others gave from the bounteous wealth they had. What are our hearts centered on? Is He the center of our lives? Do we realize that we are sinners and need forgiveness? Do we realize that life is not just about us?

The poor Widow with the act of giving, gave all she had. In her poverty, she displayed true discipleship. She was surrendered to God. She was one who longed to see the face of God and could be counted as one of the thousands praising and worshipping God. That should be the aim of every child of God - to see His face.

Prayer: Abba Father, may we know You with a heart surrendered to You. Amen.

Tuesday November 24

Memorial of Saint Andrew Dung-Lac, Priest & Companions, Martyrs

God's mercies are new every morning.

Rev 14: 14-19

Psalm 95: 10-13

Luke 21: 5-11

We as God's children are called to praise, thank, worship and glorify God with our whole being. The Lord Jesus revealed God as our heavenly Father and it is the Father's desire to have us in His presence.

Often our responses to the Lord's instructions are minimal. As a result of our ignorance to the divine leading, we may walk in confusion and carry a heavy load not realising that it makes us feel miserable and hopeless. The Lord is calling us to discover Him and maintain the relationship we have with Him and to discover the love, joy and peace He offers.

In the presence of the Lord, we are led to express our feelings, the burdens we carry, to surrender our lives. In return we receive His forgiveness, mercy, compassion, healing and wisdom to deal with life. If we are unable to respond to His call, to be humble before Him, let us ask for His Grace. He is a righteous Judge and judges the people with truth.

He is our Lord and Master. It His desire to see His children bear His fruit. He prunes and moulds us. We know He has given us His image. If we say yes to Him, He will make sure that we produce His fruits in due season.

While the people admired the temple building, the Lord prophesied its destruction. The Lord's instructions were "Take care not to be deceived, do not be frightened".

We are no different to these people. We are in awe of the splendor and the glamour we see in this world and in times of trouble we tremble with fear.

The Lord is speaking to our hearts. Where are our hearts focused? On the treasures and problems of this world? Or are they fixed on Him? The Lord Jesus holds the key for our salvation and He is the answer for every problem.

Prayer: Abba Father, give us a heart of worship to praise you and thank you, for your mercies are new everyday. Amen.

Rev 15:1-4

Psalm 97:1-3, 7-9

Luke 21:12-19

We believe that God is in control over our lives and that He knows everything that happens, good and bad, blessings or calamities. Plagues like the Covid-19 or earthquakes, floods, fires or even death of our loved ones or death in great numbers. Still if we could hold on to the fact that God knew it and He knows what is happening in the next moment, the only thing to do is to thank

and praise Him.

The readings tell us that those who believed in Him along with the celestial beings praised God who won the victory over sin and the dominion of the devil.

In today's Psalm we are once again reminded to thank God while praising Him for the marvelous, wondrous things He has done, not only in our lives but in all of creation.

In the Gospel proclamation we are warned that persecution will come to us and that it may start from our families, neighbours, relatives or communities for being believers and witnessing to our Lord Jesus.

"Why do you act differently, why don't you join us, do something other than reading the Bible?" are some of the simplest things we hear around us. But our Lord tells us to remain quiet and continue to praise Him till the Holy Spirit tells us what needs to be said.

Many of us may not have to face persecution in its extreme forms. We may not live in places where Christianity is forbidden. We may not be dragged before the courts and condemned to die because of our faith in Christ.

However we need to live upto our Christian identity. It should stir up our neighbours, friends and others to ask, "Why do they behave so lovingly? Why are they kind and forgiving?" This sort of lifestyle is not easy, we will have to die to our nature whenever we do it. Shall we take up the challenge and be more loving, caring, forgiving?

Prayer: Abba Father, increase our faith so that we may be able to hold on to You in times of trouble and persecution. Amen.

Rev 18: 1-2, 21-23,
19: 1-3,9

Psalm 99: 2-5

Luke 21: 20-28

The Lord Jesus speaks of the fall of Jerusalem and warns that the time of desolation is near and the people must flee to the mountains. Around us wars are raging and people are suffering. The Corona virus came as a huge shock to us, and within a short time, it has challenged our attitudes and behaviors.

“In one sense, life continues as normal – and yet it is not normal. Should I take the bus? Can I go out for a walk? Should I visit my neighbour or my friend? That cough I notice, could it be the virus? What of the children’s education? What if I lose my job? Are we going to have a recession? How long will this last? Will we ever get back to normalcy again?”

Sometimes, the anxiety surrounding the publicity is as contagious as the virus itself, spreading fear and nervousness among us. In the developed world, the people are in a state of shock. In many ways, they had come to believe that they are in control of their lives, that they have a cure for every disease, that they can fend off all the dangers that threaten their securities. They want to build up solid walls to protect them against unwanted guests, but now those walls have been breached.

Our securities no longer seem so secure, something in our world is out of our control, and many do not know where to turn to.

We hope and pray, that we will soon find a vaccine for this disease, and that it will be made available for everyone, rich or poor. But in the meantime, we can reflect on our shock. It is a reminder to us that we are never in total control of our lives, that we can never eliminate every misfortune or heal every illness.

Ultimately, our trust has to be in something more solid than we can find on earth. God alone is our security. He is our refuge and our strength, a helper close at hand in times of distress’ (Ps.46:1). Trust Him.

Prayer: Abba Father, let me see what is really valuable and what is fleeting. And help me to act accordingly. Amen.

Friday November 27

Friday of the Thirty-fourth Week in Ordinary Time

I dream of a New Jerusalem that will not pass away.

Rev 20: 1-4, 11 - 21: 2

Psalm 83: 3-6, 8

Luke 21: 29-33

Sometimes we may wonder if all this is worth it. Following the Lord Jesus can be difficult at times, we have to go through hardships, rejections, persecutions, and sometimes it may cost our lives. Often when we go through sufferings, we may lose faith, and start to ask questions.

Today's readings beautifully explain some of the fruits of our labour. Gives us the ultimate truth of all things. The Bible started with the creation of this world in Genesis and it ends with the book of Revelation, explaining our ultimate destination.

The Book of Revelation explains what must ultimately take place. The powers of darkness that rule the earth will be chained. Every one will be judged according to their deeds. Those who remained faithful to the Lord Jesus, through every hardship in this life will reign with him. A new Jerusalem will appear - a new order of life in which God reigns, where there will be no more suffering.

This all sounds like a dream. But it is for this hope that many Christians gladly suffered throughout the years. They stood firm for the truth of the Gospel even at the cost of their own lives, because this was not a fairy tale for them. This was truth and it was written in their hearts, for this truth they became martyrs, they happily went through hardships and sufferings in this life. As the Gospel proclamation says, "heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away."

We are constantly searching for answers, what is the meaning of life? Why is there so much of suffering in this world. In today's world, many of us are unhappy and sad as we have lost the true meaning and purpose of life. And we as Christians have also fallen into this trap of thinking and living like the rest of the world.

It is to us that the Lord Jesus speaks through today's readings. He is the way, the truth and the life! It is through him that we can find rest when we experience this truth in our lives.

Prayer: Abba Father, help me to believe in the truth and be transformed by it. Help me to be a true witness to you. Amen.

Rev 22:1-7

Psalms 94:1-7

Luke 21:34-36

Can anyone evade the second coming of the Lord Jesus? It involves the whole of humanity, The Bible tells us 'that day will close in on you unexpectedly like a trap'. This does not mean that Christ's second coming will be completely unannounced. There will be signs before his coming. Do we need to wait until signs appear? No, there is no need to wait. Because of our hard-

heartedness, God sends us signs to help us to realise what he is going to do. These signs tell us to prepare with hope.

Whether we realise it or not, preparation is a must. There is a saying that 'heaven is a prepared place for prepared people.' How are we going to prepare? Our preparation is by responding to the call of the Lord Jesus, in the spirit. It is not like other preparations we do in our life. They are seasonal. It ends within a period upon achieving an objective or a target.

The Lord Jesus said "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." We should follow the Lord Jesus daily throughout our lifetime. We may have a lot of selfishness within us. We must deny ourselves by giving inner responses to the Lord Jesus. Instead of our own will, we should accept the will of God in our lives. This preparation is a life style. It is lived in a love relationship with God.

Let us reflect on our preparation. During our lifetime we may have seen many people turning to God. No matter what caused or inspired them, let us accompany them most importantly through prayer and life examples.

Let us not forget the lessons God teaches us. We have sinned and fallen. But we all have second chances. Therefore, let us go before his presence with thanksgiving. Let us seek his forgiveness with humble hearts. Let us ask God to give us the grace to take a firm decision to follow Him.

Prayer: Abba Father, guide and guard us so that we may complete our journey and see you face to face. Amen.

Sunday November 29

First Sunday of Advent

God is waiting for us to return.

Is 63:16-17, 19, 64:2-7

Ps 80:2-3, 15-16, 18-19

1 Cor 1:3-9

Mark 13:33-37

Today we celebrate the First Sunday of Advent. It is a time to joyfully prepare for the second coming of our Lord Jesus. The readings centre on the theme of returning to God and restoring our relationship with Him. It is not meant to scare us into finding God, instead it is to remind us that we have a loving Father who is waiting for us to return to Him. He does not want us to miss out

on the life we can have with Him. Therefore, He is calling us to come back to Him.

In the First Reading the people are crying out to God for His mercy to forgive their sins. They have strayed away from the Lord and now they want to come back to Him. They want to re-centre their lives on God. Verse 19 says, "For a long time we have been those you do not rule, those who are not called by your name." This may be the cry of our hearts as well. We may have lived without God in our lives. We may have trusted in ourselves and in the people around us without looking to God. We may have gone astray and learned to live without God. God is calling us to come back to Him. To allow Him to rule our lives once again by giving Him the first place. The Psalmist also says, "Restore us, Lord God Almighty; make your face shine on us, that we may be saved" (Ps. 80:19).

In the Second Reading, St. Paul reminds us how faithful God is to His people. "God is faithful, he has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (v. 9). Our God is faithful to us. We may stray from Him, but He will never stray from us. He is the Father of the prodigal child. He is waiting for us to turn back to Him. When we do, He comes running to greet us and welcomes us back into His family.

In the Gospel Proclamation, the Lord Jesus paints an alarming picture for us. He is pleading with us to be ready for the day of judgement. He is not trying to scare us of death. Instead He wants to focus our lives on him. We will not live forever. James 4:14 says, "You do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes." The Lord Jesus is reminding us that our eyes should not be on this life, but on eternity.

That is why He says in Mark 13:36-37, "If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to everyone: 'Watch!'" We can keep watch by cultivating a relationship with God and focussing our lives on Him. For He is eternity. When we do this, our lives and the lives of those around us will be transformed and blessed.

How can a relationship with God transform our lives? John 15:4 says, "Remain united to me, and I will remain united to you. A branch cannot bear fruit by itself; it can do so only if it remains in the vine. In the same way you cannot bear fruit unless you remain in me."

When a branch is cut from the vine, immediately a signal is sent through the branch to the vine and then the signal is sent to the root. Once this signal is sent sap is sent through the vine to the branch and it heals the broken part. This is how the branch and the tree work.

The vine is the Lord Jesus; the root is the Father and we are the branches. If we are connected to the Lord Jesus, we do not have to keep anything inside ourselves. If we are wounded or rejected and keep this pain in our hearts it will fester and rob us of our happiness. Instead we can send our pain and struggles through the vine to the root. Instead of keeping things in our heart we can give them to the Lord Jesus. When we give the vine (The Lord Jesus) the struggles of our lives, the root (The Father) will return to us the fruits of the Holy Spirit. What we have to do is give the Lord our struggles. When we give Him the disturbances of our hearts, He will give us peace. If we are feeling rejected, sad and lonely and we give Him these feelings, He will fill us with His love. We will be filled with the fruits of the Holy Spirit in the midst of our struggles. The problems may not change but we will experience the fruits of the Holy Spirit through each struggle.

As we enter the season of Advent, let us deepen our relationship with God through prayer and be filled with the fruits of the Holy Spirit. We can use the 4 Steps to connect to Him. We can come to Him as we are, without any pretence. We can give Him the truth of our hearts and be cleansed by His precious blood. We can surrender our problems to Him and give Him control of our lives. When we take these 3 steps, the Lord will fill us with His Holy Spirit.

Prayer: Abba Father, may we draw closer to You and witness our struggles turn into the fruits of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Romans 10:9-18

Psalms 18:2-5

Matthew 4:18-22

“When does God reveal His glory in the heavens?” The great works continually send out their messages, both during the day and night. It is as if God’s works are speaking. There is a message. It is not meaningless words or a random string of letters. Just like the messages that we send out into space in hope of having some alien detect it. The message has significance. It reveals knowledge. God is releasing knowledge about Himself. It is a pity that most people call it nature for they miss the message. The parallelism of day and night give a solid testimony about God’s glorious person.

Today’s Gospel proclamation describes the call of St. Andrew, whose feast we celebrate today. What we are celebrating is his call to mission: pure and simple. If we are to be a church that mirrors and lives out the spirit of St. Andrew, we too are called to a community life of mission. Worship and mission go hand in hand as the important features of community life. From the first days of the church, the Lord Jesus called his disciples, and gave them a task to do: “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of people”. The task of mission and ministry is at the heart of our call.

Fishermen must have perseverance. Fishing has become a popular past time activity among affluent youth in the developed world. I suppose it stands in complete contradiction to the fast pace of life that they customarily lead. Fishing offers a moment to stop, and be still and reflect on life in a calm surrounding. But the fishermen called to be disciples did not sit on the peace and quiet of a riverbank but in the anxious, risky, physically-exhausting environment of the deep sea.

As we seek to develop as a Mission-oriented Church, we need perseverance. We are persuaded of our call to mission; there will be rough waves along the way. So we need to persevere, confident that we are walking in the way of agreement to the call of Christ. As that happens, there will inevitably be a process of purifying as God asks us to reexamine what is important in the life of our community.

Prayer: Abba Father, may we persevere in our relationship with you and know you in a new way. Amen.

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