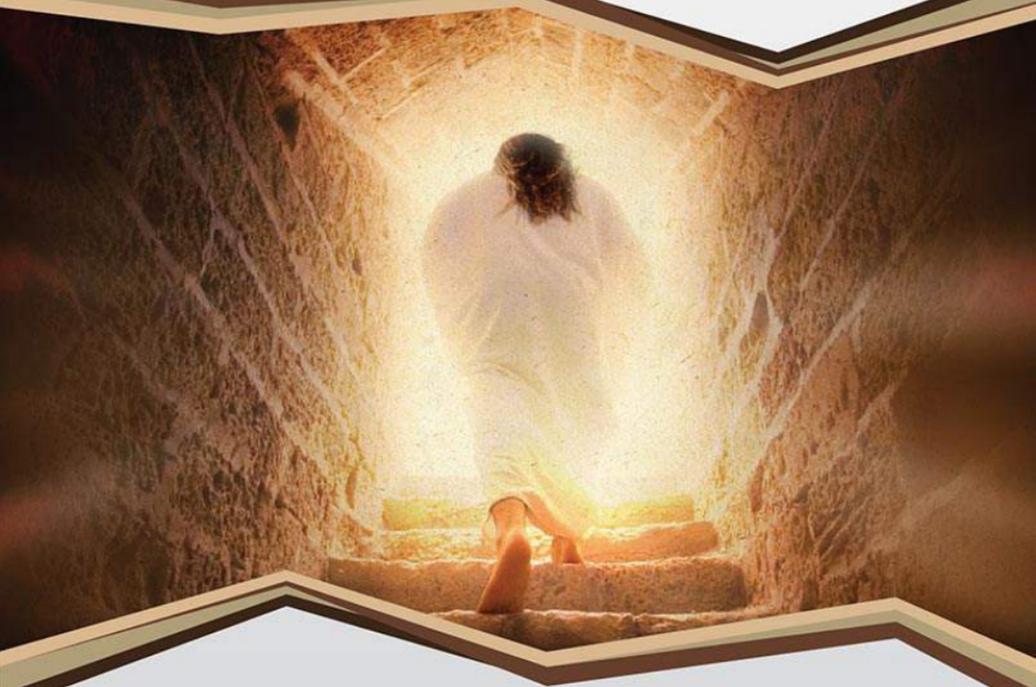


APRIL  
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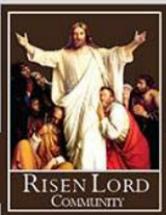
# ON OUR KNEES IN HIS HANDS



**EASTER**

**"He is not here. He has risen!"**

*-Matthew 28:6*



DAILY READINGS & REFLECTIONS

Volume 21  
Issue 04



# ON OUR KNEES IN HIS HANDS

APRIL  
2021

Once we said Emmanuel, God is with us. Now we can say Emmanuel - God is in us! We carry His resurrected presence and power!

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# On Our Knees In His Hands

## APRIL 2021

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## Thursday April 01

Holy Thursday

*...he loved them to the end. (John 13:1b)*

Exodus 12: 1-8, 11-14

Ps 116: 12-13, 15-18

1 Cor 11: 23-26

John 13: 1-15

Today we remember the Passover of the Lord, just as the Israelites of the Old Testament. In the time of the Israelites, the Passover was looked at as a remembrance of God's faithfulness to His people. He saved them from bloodshed and misery by covering them with the blood of the lamb. Though we have been made aware of this symbolism over the years, the beauty of it never ceases to

amaze me. God's historic salvation is recreated in the readings of today, as we look at the sacrifice our Lord Jesus made for humanity.

Though Maundy Thursday is famous for the Last Supper that the Lord Jesus shares with his disciples, the Gospel Proclamation focuses more on a different experience – the washing of the feet of the disciples. The Lord Jesus, when he received his mission from the Father, was entrusted these disciples and told what to do: He was asked to love them to the end. He had to love them despite their failures, their shortcomings, their weaknesses, their betrayals and their denials. Knowing full well that they would choose their own happiness over his, the Lord Jesus chose the path of love.

When I look at the readings of today, I imagine myself in the place of one of the disciples. I would have been so concerned about the state of my feet that I would not have let the Lord even come near them! Is that not what we are like with our own lives? When we see something that is not ideal, we choose to hide it from the Lord instead of giving it over to Him so that it may be washed by His healing flow. But the Lord Jesus took the dirty feet of his apostles and silenced their raging minds with a simple gesture of love and obedience.

For the Lord Jesus, the washing of his disciples' feet meant the washing of each of us as well. For him, rejection did not matter, pain did not matter, suffering did not matter. His heart of love overcame every other emotion that he would have to endure in the coming days. When we are given difficult people, are we able to wash their feet? Are we able to look beyond their weakness and love beyond measure? Through the power of the Holy Spirit, that was made available to us through the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus, nothing is impossible for us. Even the most unlovable hearts can be transformed by our acts of love and service.

**Prayer: Abba Father, give us a heart of unconditional love. Amen.**

Isaiah 52: 13-53:12

Ps 31: 2-6, 12-25

Heb 4: 14-16, 5:7-9

John 18: 1- 19: 42

As I picked up the readings to prepare for this reflection, the first verse from Hebrews caught my attention. Heb 4:14 says - We have a great High Priest, Jesus the Son of God, who has entered Heaven.

The journey that our Lord went through sounds so easy and smooth. He came from Heaven and went to Heaven. But as I thought about it, I realised there was an period between our Lord's coming and going. He came from Heaven, went through Hell and then went to Heaven.

Many of us want to go to Heaven but we want to stay clear of the Hell experience. Even the two disciples' mother wanted her sons to sit at the right and left side of God in Heaven. In asking for that, our Lord asked her if they would be able to drink the same cup that He would have to drink from. He was referring to the cup of suffering.

Our Lord's cup of suffering began not just at Calvary or in the hands of the Sanhedrin but from the time he was conceived in the womb of the Blessed Mother. That is when He took on the human form and accepted the will of the Father to be limited to humanity.

Just imagine if we had the ability to turn water into fruit juice, the gift of bilocation, grow extraordinarily tall or small, turn an elephant into a rabbit, know all the mysteries of the universe and yet just not exhibit all our powers. In short, our Lord's temptation to show who He was and the powers he had recourse to, would have been present from the moment he was born. 'Who do you think you are' or 'Do you know who I am?' is a common remark we have lurking in the back of our egos. It comes to the fore in an argument, at a traffic light or in queue. But our Lord did not fall for this.

Hence Good Friday is only the culmination of our Lord's passion and death which actually began once He stepped within the confines of human life. Our Lord Jesus' temptations and suffering cannot be imagined because they were not limited to the physical but to his knowledge, awareness, ability, potential, character and emotions. He could do all things but he was doing nothing - dying to himself that we might receive life, Life in abundance, Heaven. He gave His life for us because He loved us deeply and sincerely.

**Prayer: Abba Father, our Lord Jesus suffered and died for me, giving up His life that I may be set free and have access to Heaven and eternal life. cross. Amen**

No readings for today!

There stands the cross. A stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles. And what about us? What does the cross mean to us? Over the past 40 days we have attended the way of the cross. We have pondered on the sufferings, the agony of Jesus and yesterday we commemorated the death of our Lord Jesus. We come to the cross, we weep, we stand in awe – and

then what? Most often we walk away only to come back weeping, to come back broken, to come back sorrowful – to think about the absolute agony that it was for our Lord Jesus to die on the cross.

But today, in the silence between the cross and the resurrection of Easter Sunday, I hear God calling me to walk to the other side. He went to the cross for me. He endured horrific sufferings and died an agonising death on the cross for me. For me! Just the thought overwhelms me, I cannot even begin to start comprehending it. But my lack of comprehension, my inability to understand does not negate the truth of the matter. Our Lord Jesus died on the cross for me. And now He wants me to keep walking, onwards from the cross. He wants me to cross over to the resurrection life – the resurrected life that He won for me.

The resurrected life, the life beyond the cross – is a life of victory. For it is no longer I who live but Christ Jesus, the Risen Lord who lives in me. And He is the God of victory. As a mother of two toddlers, He tells me that I now get to live the life of victory. No longer do I have to walk around tired, sleep deprived and stressed accepting that this is the 'normal' of this time. He calls me to victory in this season. I do not have to put up with the 'normal', I get to pursue after victory. And that victory may look different from season to season but there is peace, there is love and there is joy promised in every circumstance. He tells me that the life beyond the cross is a life of power not defeat. Because the cross overcomes everything. I get to lift up this glorious cross, high above every emotion, every circumstance, every situation that threatens to overwhelm me and crush me. The resurrected life means I get to walk in health and wholeness because of the precious blood that was shed for me.

**Prayer: Abba Father, this Easter I am stepping forward into Victory, I am moving to the life beyond the cross, in the power of the cross and all because of the cross. Amen**

Acts 10:34,37-43

Ps 118: 1-2, 16-23

Col 3: 1-4 or Cor 5: 6-8

Jn 20: 1-9 or Mk 16:1-7

I remember the first charismatic talk I listened to. Rev. Sr. Marie Antonita stood before us and proclaimed, "Jesus is Alive, and because He is alive, you can encounter him, and when you encounter Him, your life will never be the same." All my life I had heard sermons that exhorted me to be righteous so that it would please God. With

those sermons it did not seem to matter whether Jesus rose from the dead or not. But this sermon was different. It promised action on God's side. This Jesus she spoke of was not a concept or a great idea. He could come and meet me. He could change my life. She then shared testimonies of those who confessed of an encounter and how their lives had changed. There was sense of curiosity and expectancy that arose in me, which kept me coming back for more.

In today's first reading, St. Peter, proclaiming that our Lord Jesus rose from the dead, says "This man God raised on the third day and granted that he be visible, not to all the people, but to us, the witnesses chosen by God in advance, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead." The first factor that struck me was, although He had risen from the dead not everyone was able to see Him and encounter Him. Yet to those who He chose to become visible to, He was very much alive. St. Peter describes it in a word picture as follows: "ate and drank with us after he rose from the dead." What was so special about the people He chose to reveal himself to? If we can discover the principles behind what made them members of this select band, we could cooperate with God for our own experience, and discover that He is fully alive.

In today's first reading, St. Peter describes our Lord Jesus with the following words: "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power. He went about doing good and healing all those oppressed by the devil, for God was with him." He goes on to describe the "we" who were chosen to encounter the Risen Lord as "We are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem." So, we get a clue about the first qualification of being part of the "we" who encountered the Risen Lord. We should spend time reading the Gospels and becoming familiar with what our Lord Jesus did and said, as much as those

who followed Him around the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem.

Let us look at today's Gospel proclamation to further explore who it was that encountered the Risen Lord. The first person we meet is Mary Magdalene. She is the one from whom Our Lord Jesus exorcised seven demons. She was blessed by being ministered to. She loved the Lord deeply. So much so that she visits the tomb before anyone else would rise. What is the point in visiting the tomb? The Lord is dead and gone. Everything was finished. Yet, the love that she had for the Lord, the gratitude she had for the Lord, the connection she had with the Lord, made her long for Him. If you continue reading the Gospel of John beyond today's reading, you will discover that she remained at the tomb while the others left, and that is when she encountered the Risen Lord. For the one who seeks the Lord in darkness, the empty tomb, which is the place of disappointment and sadness, becomes the place of encounter.

We also meet St. Peter and St. John in today's Gospel proclamation. They come to the empty tomb, and they believe. The reading does not tell us whether they believed that Our Lord Jesus has risen from the dead, or whether they believed what Mary Magdalene said; that the body of the Lord had been removed. I presume they believed He had not risen. Do you not find it surprising that for they who witnessed so many miracles of our Lord Jesus raising the dead did not think that he would rise from the dead? Perhaps they prayed really hard asking God to save him after He was captured. When nothing happened, and they saw the extent of the torture inflicted on our Lord Jesus, they perhaps lost hope in God. To them the empty tomb would have been adding insult to injury. They needed Mary Magdalene to come back to them and tell them "I have seen the Lord" before they could encounter the Risen Lord.

Today's Gospel proclamation says that "They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead." St. John seems to imply that if they had seen the events through the light of a revelation from God, they would have known that God was working even when it seemed that nothing was happening. So, we gather those with a rational mind and those who have no revelation from scripture need the witness of a person who has had an encounter experience of the Risen Lord. This acts as a catalyst for their encounter experience.

Easter Sunday transforms the empty tomb; the place of hopelessness, disappointment, and despair, to a symbol of hope that God continues to work when there seems to be no answer.

**Prayer: Abba Father, grant us the grace to cling on to the Risen Lord even in darkness, so that our own empty tombs become places of encounter. Amen**

**Monday April 05**

**Easter Monday**

***The Spirit Has Been Poured Out on You (Acts 2:33)***

Acts 2: 14, 22-23

Ps 16: 1-2, 5-11

Matt 28: 8-15

The Acts of the Apostles could well be called the Acts of the Holy Spirit. The apostles who entered the jet stream of the Holy Spirit experienced a total transformation of their natural lives and entered into the realm of the exhilarating life of the Spirit. Indeed, this invigorating breath of fire that the Holy Spirit poured out at Pentecost resulted in the birth of the Church.

In the first reading, we see the extraordinary transformation in the life of St. Peter. Peter first proclaimed what God had done in Christ. Then he fearlessly condemned the authorities for what they had done, and passionately communicated what God did despite their horrific actions. The people thought of Jesus as a defeated prophet, but St. Peter confirms that God granted Jesus the most incredible gift: raising Him from the dead and fulfilling the prophecies foretold in sacred history. The cross was not an accident, but fore-ordained by God (Psalm 16:8 – 12). As one writer puts it, “the cross was a window of time, allowing us to see the suffering love eternally in the heart of God.” The resurrection is the final proof that Jesus was indeed the son of God, the messiah, the chosen one. After the crucifixion we see the apostles as broken men, with dreams gone, lives shattered, cowering fearfully in the upper room. But then we witness the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, descending in His fiery glory and galvanizing the apostles into action, transforming cowards into heroes. St. Peter, who cringed before a maid, denying Christ, now boldly challenges the highest religious authorities, who had the power to destroy him. Such was the power of Peter’s preaching the Good News that 3,000 people were converted.

In the Gospel proclamation, Mary Magdalene witnessed the staggering fact of the empty tomb. Believing in the incredible truth of the resurrection, she soon met the Lord. We too encounter Him, believe in our hearts, and proclaim with our mouths the truth of the resurrection. We too will be given the same mission: “Go, tell...”. The soldiers and priests did not look for Jesus, and missed the encounter. We need to share the good news of salvation when we appropriate it.

The good news is that the apostles’ experience could be ours.

**Prayer: Abba Father, anoint me with the fire of the Holy Spirit, so I may joyfully and fearlessly proclaim your good news. Amen**

## Tuesday April 06

### Octave of Easter Tuesday

*For the word of the LORD is upright, and all His work is done in faithfulness. Psalm 33:4*

Acts 2: 36-41

Ps 33: 4:5, 18-22

John 20: 11-18

Today we see the first and instant results of St. Peter's proclamation of the Gospel message. After St. Peter's assertion his hearers are "cut to the heart", totally moved and shaken, and genuinely ask what they should do. It mirrors both their belief in what they have just heard about our Lord Jesus and regret over former rejection. They are told to "repent". Repentance was important in the

message of the precursor, John the Baptist, in the evangelization and in the directions our Lord Jesus left just before his ascension.

'Repentance' implies not just regret for the past but, much more certainly, a drastic change to one's way of thinking and behaving. This they pledge through being baptized and having their former sins forgiven and left behind, and getting the gift of the Spirit.

The psalmist encourages us to sing joyful praises to God with our lips and in our hearts. This comes naturally to those that have been born from above and have been clothed in the righteousness of Christ our Saviour. To those are called by our great Creator God, to worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness - .Should not we who are the undeserving recipients of His saving grace and unfailing love, give glory to our Creator God and sing praises to the God of our deliverance - for the word and knowledge; the promises and the principles of our God are altogether upright and are perfect in righteous - and all His work is carried out in faithfulness, grace and truth. Praise His holy name.

When Mary Magdalene arrived at the tomb, the stone had been moved away. How regularly have we gone searching for our Lord Jesus? At times, we also have been desperate to find Jesus and experience his presence and care. At times, life often is more than we can handle on our own. Yes, we can and must depend on the people who care about us. Nevertheless, we also need to experience the peace and comfort of our Lord Jesus. Today Jesus will call us by name. Then Jesus will wait for us to answer. Will our minds and hearts be open and listen deeply enough to hear His call? Or will we be too busy!? What an awful loss that would be! Today may we attempt to keep our hearts attentive to His voice

**Prayer: Abba Father, glory be to Our Saviour - the God of our Salvation. Let me sing praises to you all the days of my life for you alone are holy, you alone are the Lord. Amen**

Acts 3: 1-10

Ps 105: 1-9

Luke 24: 13-35

The two followers returning to Emmaus at first missed the significance of history's greatest event because they were too focused on their disappointments and problems. In fact, they didn't recognize Jesus when he was walking beside them. To compound the problem, they were walking in the wrong direction-away from the fellowship of believers in Jerusalem. We are

likely to miss Jesus and withdraw from the strength found in other believers when we become preoccupied with our dashed hopes and frustrated plans. Only when we are looking for Jesus in our midst will we experience the power and help he can bring. The news about Jesus' crucifixion had spread throughout Jerusalem. Because this was Passover week, Jews visiting the city from all over the Roman Empire now knew about his death. This was not a small insignificant event affecting only the disciples, the whole nation was interested.

These followers from Emmaus had been counting on Jesus to redeem Israel, that is, to rescue the nation from its enemies. Most Jews believed that the Old Testament prophecies pointed to military and political Messiah, they didn't realize that the Messiah had come to redeem people from slavery and sin. When Jesus died, therefore, they lost all hope. They didn't understand that Jesus' death offered the greatest hope possible.

Even though these Jewish men knew the biblical prophecies well, they failed to understand that Christ's suffering was his path to glory. They could not understand why God had not intervened to save Jesus from the cross. They were so caught up in the world's admiration of political power and military might that they were blind to God's Kingdom values that the last will be first, and that life grows out of death. The world has not changed its values. The suffering servant is no more popular today than he was 2,000 years ago. But we have not only the witness of the Old Testament prophets; we also have the witness of the New Testament apostles and the history of the Christian church testifying to Jesus' victory over death. Will we confront the values of our culture and put our faith in Jesus? Or will we foolishly continue to ignore this Good News?

**Prayer: Abba Father, I pray that I may not miss the visitation of Christ the Messiah. Amen**

## Thursday April 8

### Octave of Easter Thursday

*"He stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you."*

Acts 3: 11-26

Ps 8: 2, 5-9

Luke 24: 35-48

What a dramatic, world-changing story we have witnessed from Good Friday to Easter Sunday. We killed God and God still loves us. We have tried as much as possible to distance our self from God, and he returns!! We performed the most heinous, unthinkable act by crucifying the author of life on a cross but still we are offered peace and love. Once he is raised from the dead, the first thing he offers is peace (Shalom). Peace of God, that surpasses all understanding; universal wellbeing that nothing else in this world can offer us.

This is why He willingly gave up his life for us. This peace is what people longed for throughout the Old Testament since the betrayal as portrayed in the story of Adam & Eve. It is in this way our Lord Jesus becomes our Saviour and one who takes away the sin of the world.

After all he did for us, he only asks to repent of our sin, recognise the damage we have done to God, to this world and to our loved ones and ask for God's forgiveness. Yet he does not force it on us, because God values our freedom, he does not impose anything on us, yet for those who come to him in Repentance, he provides this ultimate gift of peace (shalom) on earth and eternal life.

We so often tend to miss this key message of Repentance and forgiveness of sins, although the call to repentance is the first message of the 4 key figures of the New Testament. First, John the Baptist then Jesus Christ, followed by Saint Peter and Saint Paul, all of them called people to repent.

One of the greatest gifts of the Catholic Church is the sacrament of reconciliation where we not only give the truth of our hearts to God but receive the grace to pick ourselves up from our fallen state and live in the Spirit. By the power of the Holy Spirit we receive the grace to deepen our relationship with the Risen Lord discern and do God's will in all things, as the Lord Jesus did and obey the final command He gave us "Love one another as I love you." St. John 15:12

**Prayer: Abba Father, we pray we will be drawn to repentance of sin and turn our hearts to you, so that we may have peace that surpasses all understanding. Amen**

Acts 4: 1-12

Ps 118: 14, 22-27

John 21: 1-14

The readings today direct us to the events which took place after the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. When Peter and John were arrested for proclaiming that “in Jesus there is resurrection of the dead”, they were tested & tried. Filled with the Holy Spirit they were able to face it wisely and boldly, to stand firm in the revelation they had received through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Today in our lives when we are faced with challenges & difficulties how do we respond? Naturally when things go right we praise and thank God but in difficulties what is our response? Do we respond to God and His truth that the Lord Jesus is the only way or do we react to the events and people around? If not with our words and actions definitely in our minds.

In such situations we may get the urge to return to our old nature than to remember the first love we experienced in the Lord. Sometimes in that dark moment of confusion it is hard to choose the right path.

This it is an opportunity to simply sit down at the feet of the Lord in surrender and obedience to enter into His presence using the four steps the Lord has offered us. The Lord will direct our way as He did for His disciples when they went back into after his death. He will prepare a meal for us and enjoy our fellowship with Him. And He will ask us what it is that we have brought into His presence to lay at His feet. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the Lord will fill us with the right mind and understanding to deal with the situation and if necessary He will equip us as He did to the disciples.

The reading says amidst the abundance of fish the net did not tear. It is a sign that in the presence of the Lord we are invited to expect the supernatural to happen. In every death experience, as an inner response to the Lord there is hope. He is there at the shore of our lives waiting for us to share His Love because He is the stone that the builders rejected and became the corner stone. When we say yes to Him, He becomes the corner stone in our lives holding us firm, sharing His resurrection power with us. There is no other way to experience this life in the Spirit.

**Prayer: Abba Father, bless us through the resurrection power of your beloved Son. Amen.**

## Saturday April 10

### Octave of Easter Saturday

*The true call to discipleship, Go, out to all the world and preach.*

Acts 4: 13-21

Ps 118: 1-21

Mark 16: 9-15

Saint John Paul II said, "For new evangelization it is necessary to pass from faith based on traditions- even good ones- to a personal enlightened convicted witness." Without an inner conviction, our efforts to give Jesus to others becomes futile. It is our faith experience based on transformation through grace when you become a new creation by the power of the Holy spirit.

In the first reading we see how the confidence shown by Sts Peter and John, astonished the rulers and scribes. The leadership showed contempt towards them considering them to be uneducated and ignorant but could do nothing in the situation. They forbade them to speak about this miracle. But the person in whose heart Christ is possesses a real dignity that neither academic attainment, nor professional status can give. They were full of the Spirit and were fearless as the Spirit of Jesus was with them.

In St Mark's Gospel, we see the true call of discipleship to go out into the world and preach the Gospel to all creation. It is the duty of every Christian to tell the good news of our Lord Jesus to those who have not heard it. We can do it in so many ways by being who God meant us to be in the place God has providentially placed us. We can be living witnesses of the miracles we encounter. We see in the Gospel that even the disciples could not believe when Mary Magdalene had encountered the Risen Lord and the disciples on their walk to Emmaus reported how they had seen the Lord at the breaking of the bread. The disciples would not believe until he appeared to them and chided them for their unbelief when they were in a closed room. With the resurrection He now lives within us

Sometimes we Christians still do not experience his presence and the external environment has become so real to us. We need to look, into ourselves to find ourselves. Sister Wendy Beckett a contemplative Carmelite living in England once said, "Because in your heart where you can't see him Jesus rejoices. He is more you than you are yourself. But the experience of this is exactly back to front, because precisely he is there, so close we see ourselves in all the agonizing truth. How the human heart longs to see beauty and grace in itself- to be 'as god' in some way".

**Prayer: Abba Father, we thank you for the power of the Resurrection. Let us continue to be witnesses to the world to this great truth as disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen**

Acts 4: 32-35

Ps 118: 24, 13-24

1 John 5: 1-6

John 20: 19-31

Today's readings tell us a story of how our Lord Jesus' disciples grew in maturity. When they first met the Lord Jesus they were men caught up with their lives. They heard the Lord's call, left everything to follow Him and listen to His teachings. However, even though they spent 3 years with the Lord, listening to Him preach, watching Him heal the sick and drive out demons, their hearts were not changed. When the Lord Jesus died on Mount Calvary, they had nothing to hold on to and turned back to their old lives.

Today's Gospel reading takes us to the first encounter the disciples had with the Risen Lord. When the Lord Jesus died on Mount Calvary the disciples lost hope and were living in fear. They were hiding away from the rest of the world afraid that they too would be crucified if captured by the people who put their Master to death. The Risen Lord comes into this locked room and surprises His disciples. While they would have been overjoyed to see Him once again, they were also afraid as to what the future held for them. It is to this fear that the Lord speaks to them and says "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you" (John 20:21). The Lord was giving them a mission. This was to be their mission for the rest of their lives. To take on the job the Lord was giving them the fuel they needed was the Holy Spirit.

The Lord had this encounter with all the disciples except for St. Thomas. When St. Thomas heard of this encounter, he did not believe it. And rightly so. A person rising from the dead was not something that happened every day. St. Thomas would have been a pragmatic person. He thought he knew better than to believe a tall tale about a resurrection without evidence to prove it. The Lord Jesus knew His heart and appeared to the disciples a second time; this time with St. Thomas present. The Lord knew the doubts in St. Thomas' mind and spoke directly to them when He asked St. Thomas to touch his hands and side. He wanted to give St. Thomas tangible evidence that this resurrection was real. That the Risen Lord Jesus was real. For years to come, St. Thomas would have carried this experience in His heart and remembered it each time He preached the Good News to people. This was the moment everything in His life changed.

Let us take a minute and remember the moment the Lord Jesus changed our lives. The day we realized the Lord was calling us to a journey and a lifetime with Him. Today, the Lord is calling us to remember the moment we encountered Him and when everything changed. Just as it did for St. Thomas.

Though the disciples were called by the Lord to take the Good News to ends of the earth, they would not have been able to do it in that state of weakness. They needed to be moulded by the power of the Holy Spirit. In the same way, the Lord needs to mould us into a person who can fulfil His mission. To do this we can build our faith by reading the Word of God. Verse 31 says, "But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." We receive faith and the life of the Lord Jesus by reading His Word.

The Second Reading explains how the disciples were transformed from the men in the upper room into saints of God. It is through believing that Jesus, the Son of God, overcame the world that we too can overcome the world. When we know our Master and Lord overcame whatever the world threw at Him, we can hold on to Him and come out victorious as well. This is the change that took place in the lives of the disciples. Before, they thought they had to face the world by their own strength. But once they met the Risen Lord, they realized they did not need to do anything by their own strength. But by believing in the Lord Jesus, they could live by His power and strength. It is this power of God that transformed them.

The first reading shows us the kind of people the disciples became after meeting the Risen Lord. Now they were not hiding in the upper room or doubting the resurrection. Instead, they grew in their spiritual maturity, preached the Gospel and inspired others to do the same. They gave their experience of the Risen Lord to others. Their lives had taken a 180-degree turn. Instead of trying to protect themselves and meet their own needs, they left everything in the hands of God. All they wanted to do was the will of God and in turn the Lord took care of them. Acts 4:33-34 says, "With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all that there were no needy persons among them." They all lived by God's providence.

Today the Lord is calling us to a deeper journey with Him. We need to mature through a relationship with the Lord. Day by day as we sit in His presence we will be changed. 2 Corinthians 3:18 says, "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit." Psalm 118:22 says, "The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone." When we make the Lord the cornerstone of our lives He will change us into great saints of God just as He changed the disciples.

**Prayer: Abba Father, I want to go to the deeper places, to know the dreams of Your heart. I want to find all the secret places, hidden places Lord. I want to be completely Yours. Amen.**

Acts 4: 23-31

Ps 2: 1,4,7-9

John 3: 1-8

The Acts of the Apostles is the Acts of the Holy Spirit. The apostles hid in the upper room for fear of the authorities after the death of our Lord Jesus. By receiving the Holy Spirit these men became fearless and spoke boldly. Filled with the Holy Spirit and wisdom, they began to understand that every word of God would certainly bear fruit on earth.

Hence, even in the midst of chaos, they saw God's presence in their acts.

We need to live our lives in this awareness as people who recognise the hand of God in our lives, society and the world. Every word God spoke will surely be fulfilled. The Apostles prayed to make them strong to witness boldly rather than rebuking the trials and tribulations. This should be our prayer too. When we see situations in our lives, society and the world we should be courageous to witness boldly. We need to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit and be surrendered to God.

In the Gospel proclamation the Lord Jesus spoke of being born again. This Born Again concept has become a controversial topic in Christian circles. Could it be that we have lost the true meaning of 'being born again'? What was meant by the Lord Jesus when He spoke to Nicodemus? Is it difficult for us to understand what 'born again' is? The Lord Jesus said what is born of flesh is flesh and what is born of the Spirit is Spirit. Therefore, while we are still in our body our 'born again' experience is the awakening of our spirit to the Holy Spirit; what is born of spirit is spirit. When our inner spirit is open to the Holy Spirit we understand and recognize God in every aspect of our lives. Born again does not mean to move from one church to the other.

The born-again experience brings clarity to us and we become full of wisdom, understanding and knowledge. God's presence become tangible and the Scripture becomes clear to us.

In the first proclamation the Apostles knew that the word of God had been fulfilled in and through the passion, death and resurrection of Christ Jesus. They continued the mission in unity guided by the Holy Spirit. When we are born again, we become united and dislike divisions. The wind blows where He wills in surrendered hearts.

**Prayer: Abba Father, let me be born again every morning, be renewed and filled with your Holy Spirit. Amen.**

Acts 4: 32-37

Ps 93: 1-2,5

John 3: 7-15

in the 1st reading (Acts 4:32-37) unbelievably it feels like heaven on earth where the early Christian community was of one mind and heart. They had everything in common and no one was in need. It was a world of perfect sharing, a heaven on earth. For our times it remains a utopia.

How did those early Christians become one in heart and one in mind? In the Gospel proclamation, the Lord Jesus Christ speaks of the necessity of a new birth, a birth from above. Just as wind blows where it wills, so are those born of the Spirit. Through His death, resurrection and the subsequent sending of the Spirit the Lord brought winds of change to the lives of early Christians. The new birth in the Spirit allowed the early Christians to become who God has called them to be; people made in the image and likeness of God and heaven-bound. Those early Christians, through their perfect sharing while on earth became witnesses to life in heaven.

Not only the early Christians but even today we are called by the new birth to become who God has created us to be. So, it is necessary to allow Jesus Christ to take hold of us through our surrender to the Holy Spirit. Surrender means that we let go of our hold and allow God to make us into a new creation. When we give up control, our old self with hurts, resentments, and habits that kill our spirit will be left behind and we are reborn from above.

With the Watergate scandal, President Nixon's special counsel Chuck Colson was sent to prison. He realized that God had put him there for a higher purpose. In prison he founded the Prison Fellowship, became a Christian leader and saw the miracles God had done in his life even through his selfishness, mistakes and brokenness. While a prisoner he found new freedom by surrendering to Christ in a birth from above.

Colson and those early Christians allowed the Spirit of new birth to renew them dramatically. Do you?

**Prayer: Abba Father, Lord Jesus, send us your Spirit to renew the face of the earth. Amen.**

Acts 5: 17-26

Ps 34: 2-9

John 3: 16-21

Today's first reading demonstrates the work of the Holy Spirit in two simple fishermen who rebelled against the powerful authorities. People flocked to hear them not only to listen to their preaching and witness the miracles, but in response to their powerful lives that they and the new Christians were leading. They lived out what they preached joyously, accepting each other, and sharing all

they had with the less fortunate. They were models of a joyous life—lived to the fullest even in the most challenging circumstances and they offered the greatest gift of all the Lord Jesus had promised – an abundant life. The High Priests and the Sanhedrin tried to stop them, but they could not lock up the truth and conviction of the Apostles, who preferred to obey God rather than man. They were not concerned with intellectual arguments, but simply proclaimed the saving power of the cross. The Holy Spirit did the rest.

The Gospel speaks about the true love of God our Father, which should strike the heart of every follower of the Lord Jesus. It was God the Father who loved us first. Isn't it an unimaginable thought that He loves us as much as He loves His Son? He gave what was dearest and the best, so that humanity would have eternal life. The unlovable, the ugly, the sinners and even those who put Him to death – all are included in this love.

The experience of this wonderful sacrifice on the cross was what encouraged the Apostles to communicate this same experience to the people. What is our response to this amazing love? Should we not yearn to know the Lord Jesus and grow deeply in Him that we carry His fragrance wherever we go? Our behavior and actions should manifest the presence of the Lord Jesus in us. We need not preach but the way we act should make people curious to know why we live the way we do. Am I leading a life in the flesh which is aligned with worldly desires, subject to fear, favour, and approval of people rather than that of God? Or am I witnessing to our Lord Jesus according to my Baptismal calling?

**Prayer: Abba Father, the love I experience through Your Son, our Lord Jesus has filled me with freedom, joy, and peace. Give us the grace to defeat darkness and become a child of Your Light. Amen!**

Acts 5: 27-33

Ps 34: 2, 9-20

John 3: 31-36

Today, from the book of Acts, we are taught by St. Peter, the apostle who went into being the first Pope, the greatest lesson for all times. “We must obey God rather than Human beings” If we look back into our lives, living as nominal Catholics or after a true conversion being baptized by the Holy Spirit as a charismatic Catholic, how many times have we failed to obey

God and have succumbed to the sin of pleasing man. St. Peter was filled with courage and bravely responded to the Sanhedrin.

Even today, we are called to preach, heal and cast out demons in the name of our Lord Jesus and how many of us boldly take up the challenge. If this is a hard call, then we are called to witness and preach by our actions. I recall a time that my office was based at the World Trade Centre, and there was a tiny church on a by road of Pettah. A few of us at work made it a habit to attend daily mass at 12 noon, during our lunch hour. We had two directors of the company who openly ridiculed us for going to church daily and specially me for leaving all work on Wednesday at 5 pm to attend the Wednesday meeting. My time at the organization at that time was very unpleasant not only for the personal ridicule I faced for giving the first place to God but also there were many allegations against them. All I did was take it all into prayer daily to the Blessed Sacrament and give the truth of my heart for it was very hard to like them, but despite my-self I continued to forgive and bless them and their entire families. I would arrive at office by 6.30 am, and play the ‘Take me Higher’ CD very loud going around the office believing fully that proclaiming the name of God will be honoured.

I remember how crushed in the Spirit I was due to the ridicule that has to be faced for loving the Lord so deeply. The psalmist today says “The Lord is close to the broken hearted and saves those who are crushed in Spirit” This ultimately became true as after a few months of blessing and forgiving and praying in office through the CD, supernaturally, the leadership was changed as the organization was bought over by very just people. The benefit of that was for the whole organization with around 3,000 people.

**Prayer: Abba Father, give us a Spirit of boldness to stand up for what is right, in your mighty name. Amen**

Acts 5: 34-42

Ps 27: 1-4, 13-14

John 6: 1-15

The first reading from Book of Ezekiel speaks about Ezekiel's vision of the Temple and its flowing waters. From what is described, the water seemed to be originating from the south side the altar. Further down in the passage we learn that wherever this water flowed there was life and healing.

In the Gospel proclamation, we have a beautiful miraculous experience of our Lord Jesus visiting the Pool of Bethzatha. According to the tradition of that place, the people yearning for a healing lay in the caves and niches that lined the waters, waiting for the waters to be stirred and the first person who jumped in would be healed.

On this particular Feast day of the Jews, which was also the Sabbath, our Lord Jesus made his appearance. What was special about our Lord? Here was the Temple of the God, walking into that place and from his heart was flowing the living waters of life. But the focus of the sick was entirely on the murky waters of the pool. They had so much faith in the pool, the tradition and the waters' ability to heal them.

Our Lord Jesus knew that for thirty-eight years this paralyzed man had been waiting for an opportunity to jump into the pool but no one had offered him a hand. There are many people in our circle of life who are spiritually paralyzed and there is no one there to help them shift their gaze from the murky waters of various practices to the living waters of our Lord Jesus' presence. Our Lord asks the paralyzed man a rather silly question - "Do you want to be healed?" In other words, the Lord was telling him, this has been the tradition for so many years, but there is a powerful alternative. Are you desperate enough to be healed? The Lord was saying - Simply come to me the way you are. I am the living waters and from me a powerful healing is being made available for you. No more long queues, precise moments, earthly help or local superstitions. I have the answer. I am the temple of God. When the Lord told him - do not sin again, it meant "Do not go back to the murky waters but come to me for life and healing. I have come that you may have life. life in abundance.

**Prayer: Abba Father, we come into the presence of your Son our Lord Jesus who in His mercy comes to us bring the living waters of life and healing. Amen**

Acts 6: 1-7

Ps 33: 1-5, 18-19

John 6: 16-21

We are chosen to be His disciples. To be disciples of praise, faith and of the Holy Spirit, praying, humbled and serving.

God's kingdom is not a worldly kingdom of outward pomp, power, comforts without toil, secular interest, titles or about bringing down others for selfish gain. Do we not seek Christ for signs,

wonders and self-gain? just like the crowds during the time of Jesus. Christ never sort after worldly honour, ambition or affection, instead He served the people and retired from the crowds and went to the mountain alone to spend time with God the Father in prayer. In serving God we should never lose God.

Like the disciples in the boat-storm tossed in the dark, we too encounter challenges, fears and risks in serving and are not able to find our way out. It is the absence of our Lord that is the sole reason for our troubles. Like the storm rose when they were at sea troubles come when we least expect it, and that is why we need to be prepared, and this preparation comes only by spending time alone in prayer with God, hearing His voice.

Even in trouble, Christ comes to us, to lead us safely to the shore. He comes in all His glory and power raining supreme above all things. We often misconstrue God reaching out to us and are left more afraid and confused. It is then that Jesus speaks to us "It is I, be not afraid!" John 6:20

The ship is the Church and we are the disciples who have embarked on a journey with Christ, though tossed at sea we will not be consumed but arrive safe at shore. If we try to steer the ship with all our talents and strength we are bound to get lost at sea but if we as individuals and together as a church receive Christ Jesus willingly into our hearts, minds and spirits then we become one body and one spirit with Christ.

In my experience there are many a times I lose sight of God. It is only in prayer that I have realized that it is not about me but all about His presence and my willingness to let God use me so that His love, forgiveness, mercy and grace can flow into the lives of those around us.

**Prayer: Abba Father, as I sit in your presence to hear your voice, I know that you will lead your church to the fullness of its glory. Amen**

## Sunday April 18

### 3rd Sunday of Easter

*"Repent... that times of refreshing may come from the Lord". (Acts 3:19)*

Acts 3: 13-15, 17-19

Ps 4: 2,4, 7-9

1 John 2: 1-5

Luke 24: 35-48

Most people knew the lame beggar. He sat outside the temple gates and begged for as long as they could remember. Now he is walking and jumping, praising God following the two Apostles Peter and John into the Temple. The people saw what had happened, and were surprised. How could these two "nobodies" perform such a miracle? This is the background to today's first

reading. St. Peter addresses the crowd and shifts their attention from them to the Lord Jesus. "By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has completely healed him, as you can all see".

Unfortunately, at this point most people stop their journey with God even before they could start it. The miracle becomes a distraction. They enjoy the blessing, and they may even speak about it to others, but they miss the invitation for a deeper journey with the Lord Jesus. Even for those who have had the grace to move beyond the miracles to a journey with the Lord, the distractions can be very real. We may be faithful to God in the bigger decisions and in the more exposed areas of our lives. Yet, in the secret places of our lives we could be living in rebellion with God. St Peter in the wisdom of the Holy Spirit redirects the attention of both groups; "Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord". He is reminding us that the miracle is not the end but the beginning. It is an invitation to put a stop to our old ways and return to the Lord. When we come as we are to the feet of the Lord Jesus, give Him the truth of our hearts in repentance, and once again ask Him to take over our lives in complete surrender, times of refreshing come from the Lord. We are filled in the power of the Holy Spirit to do what has been impossible in our lives.

In today's Gospel proclamation we read about the Lord Jesus appearing to His disciples in the upper room. Three days ago, the disciples witnessed the brutal crucifixion of their Master. They placed his mangled body in the tomb. They have not recovered from the shock of the events that took place. They were confused, startled,

and frightened to see the Lord Jesus before them. The question that the Lord Jesus asked them under those circumstances was strange; “Why do doubts rise in your minds?”

Doubts and fears take over our minds when we are unable to see our circumstances through the word of God. When we go through an unexpected painful situation our first reactions come out of our broken nature; pain, anger, self-pity, shame, guilt... When the Risen Christ appeared to the disciples, they went through all the emotions. The disciples probably were trying to come to terms with their own behavior from the moment the Lord was captured to the moment He was crucified. They had to run away leaving Him behind out of fear for their own lives. They probably looked the other way when the Roman soldiers called for a volunteer to carry the cross of the Lord. I wonder if for one second they thought it would have been better for them if the Lord Jesus was a ghost!

The Risen Christ invites them to have fellowship with Him. He works through their fears, shame, betrayal from the inside out. When we sit down with the Lord even when we are still battling with our doubts, fears, shame, guilt, struggling to believe His word, He nourishes us from the inside. He awakens our spirit and suddenly the word of God comes alive. We recognize the Risen Christ in our midst. The result is, we too become His witnesses to the ends of the earth.

In today's second reading St. John says; “I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world”. The life that the Lord Jesus has called us to live is impossible. If we did not know better, we could think He has set us up for failure. Distractions, and temptations are constantly in our face. The good news is sin can have power over us only till the moment we decide to return to God. The moment we turn to God, the power of sin is broken by the atoning sacrifices offered by the Lord Jesus. As we return to the Lord in repentance, have fellowship with Him in the Holy Eucharist, we are nourished from the inside to live the impossible life that He has called us to live as Christians.

**Prayer: Abba Father, I know that I was made to live a life of worship of you. Give me the grace to remain connected to you by the intercession of your Son our Lord Jesus. I depend on the power of the Holy Spirit who lives in me. Amen**

Acts 6: 8-15

Ps 119: 23-30

John 6: 22-29

Today we live in a complex world where complexity increases daily. Many struggle to satisfy their daily needs. We feel they are not within the reach of our own capacities. Sometimes our wages, our health, our relationships and others can come between us and our expectations.

When we cannot meet our expectations regarding physical and emotional needs, we tend to go after temporary means of meeting our needs. The Lord Jesus speaks about the importance of focusing on things that bring eternal life, and not temporary satisfaction.

If we put ourselves in the place of the people who went in search of the Lord Jesus to be fed for the second time, we would have probably been with them. According to the Lord Jesus, what is more important is to switch our focus to find eternal food than just searching for miracles of multiplications.

How do we switch our focus to eternal food? What is eternal food? What shall we do to ensure we receive it? In John 6:29, the Lord Jesus says, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one He has sent."

What is it that the Lord Jesus is reassuring here? He will be there for us. We do not need to labour for the food that perishes. How are we facing our situations? How are we going about our daily life – at office, at home, at school?

In John 6:35 the Lord Jesus is giving us a beautiful promise. "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

No matter what the struggle or situation we find ourselves in. We have been reassured of the bread of eternal life through the heavenly gift of the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Prayer: Abba Father, thank you for the gift of your only son. May our minds be attentive to the words spoken through Him. Amen**

Acts 7: 51, 8:1

Ps 31: 3-8, 17-21

John 6: 30-35

The seemingly sincere but ignorant question at the start of today's gospel, "What sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do?" (John 6:30), makes one ask, 'was not the incident of feeding the five thousand, just the other day, miraculous enough that they still want a sign to believe?' More often than not, we too fall into similar situations.

We attend a prayer meeting, receive a word of healing or deliverance and we go away rejoicing but fall into despair the next day because of another crisis. We then start to worry again and wonder whether our God is really for us. We have- just like the people of old- let the circumstances trap us, trials overcome us, and darkness rule us. Foolishly we look for signs and wonders so that we can have hope. Into this chaos, our victorious Lord enters and declares "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." (John 6:35) We have the privilege of tasting this living bread in the form of the Holy Eucharist. However, the question remains; Do we never hunger or thirst? I can relate to the many times I take my needs to the feet of God and wait on Him for an answer but worry and fret within until the needs are met. My worry shows that I still hunger and thirst. In the first reading, we are introduced to a person, who seems to be so satisfied that he cares for nothing. Whatever Stephen seems to be doing in this particular moment, it is definitely not seeking gain for himself. On the contrary he attracts strong contempt through his words of truth, that put his life in danger. Yet, even the danger of death has no hold on Stephen as he is being fed the bread from heaven. Stephen goes into the extent of praying for those who persecute him, following the example of Jesus, his master.

This is the life we are called to live in, unwavering through the midst of trials. We are invited to look beyond our needs, and Jesus, the bread of life will come into our lives to nourish us on a daily basis empowering us to rise beyond our being.

**Prayer: Abba Father, as we are fed and nourished by the living bread from heaven, free us from within to live for you and others. Amen.**

## Wednesday April 21

3rd Week of Easter, St. Anselm, Bishop & Dr

*Praise you Lord Jesus, you are the just Judge!*

Acts 8: 1-8

Ps 66: 1-7

John 6: 35-40

Today's first reading explains the great persecution of the early church. The scattered church and devout people weeping and mourning over the first martyr of the church Saint Stephen, with Saul working for the destruction of the church dragging the faithful and putting them in jail speaks volumes to me recalling the cruelest tragedy of our time the April 21 Easter attack in 2019. The innocent

worshippers were massacred ruthlessly. Young and the old alike got killed leaving behind their families injured, damaged, wounded and dumbfounded.

As we see in the first reading, the church preached the gospel and proclaimed Jesus. Even through the struggle between life and death when they preached the gospel, they come across miracles, proclamation of Jesus brings healing and wholeness to this entire town. Thus it is clear that preaching the good news in and out of season brings good results all the time. Who can bring about peace, justice and love to a wounded and fallen world? Who can repay the injustices and cruelty done to a person? What actions were taken for the martyrs who suffered death in History? We believe they were given the crown of life and that the blood of martyrs remains the seed of Christianity.

How did our blessed mother take up the injustice of her son's crucifixion? Did she plead before any human authority for justice? Can true and proper justice be found in this world? Yet, we can be assured that no one can escape, God's court of Justice. Now, our Lord Jesus Christ died a cruel and a tragic death in the most unjust way hanging on the cross, shedding his pure and precious blood. He was even mocked at for not having anyone to rescue him in his plight. Was this cause of injustice ever ignored, unconsidered or forgotten by the almighty Father? Hence the heavenly Father made sure to see His Son risen in three days. Jesus Christ our Lord was risen, ascended and is seated at the right hand of the father. 2 Cor 4:14 Let us rest, knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus.

**Prayer: Abba Father we come to you in our distress, only you can bring about the kingdom values we seek. Amen**

Acts 22: 8, 26-40

Ps 66: 8-9, 16-20

John 6: 44-51

In today's Gospel proclamation, the Lord Jesus teaches us that it is his Father who draws one to believe and that those who believe in the Lord Jesus have everlasting life. The Father is ever drawing us into the life of the Blessed Trinity. Drawing us through people we meet, through successes and failures, disappointments, trials. Do we not learn more from our seeming failures

than our successes? As we look at our lives, where are we? Do we allow ourselves to be drawn by the Father through our mundane daily lives? Do we see his loving hand gently guiding us through situations and circumstances, drawing us ever closer to his heart?

The Lord Jesus reiterates the point that he is the bread of life from heaven, and that those who ate manna died. But those who eat of Him will not die. The Lord Jesus feeds us with both the revelation of his Word and the Eucharistic body and blood. In the first reading we see the Eunuch travelling on a desert road diligently searching for God. He had gone to worship in the temple and is now continuing this search by reading the scriptures. This search is rewarded by God who sends Philip to minister to him. And he is fed with the bread (Word) as the Risen Lord is proclaimed. As we travel the desert roads of life do we continue to try to fulfil our temporal needs trying to survive? And in searching for life, do we meet death instead, through slavery to sin and addictions? Or do we continue to diligently search for God through attending the Holy Eucharist and other sacraments and by reading and reflecting on the Word of God allowing this life giving bread to flow through our lives? The Lord Jesus knows how to meet our daily needs. As we put him first in our lives he will meet every other need. (Matthew 6:33).

It is the Holy Spirit who is ever present who leads Philip to minister to this particular Eunuch, a minister to the Queen of Ethiopia. We who have received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, are we open to the leading of the Holy Spirit? When we sense his gentle voice do we obey him? Are we willing to be witnesses to the Risen Lord?

**Prayer: Abba Father, I come to you as I am, draw me close to your heart, feed me with the bread of life and send me to be your witness in this world. Amen**

Acts 9: 1-20

Ps 117: 1-2

John 6: 52-59

Throughout the ages the mighty God has shown His infinite love in many ways through His word and miracles. The greatest expression of that love was shown on Calvary when Jesus Christ took our sins upon Himself on that cross (John 3:16) and He continues expressing His love through the Holy Spirit sent to be with us forever (John 14:16).

In today's gospel proclamation we are introduced to one of the most powerful expressions of God's love, the Eucharist: which is the body and blood of our Lord as He said "unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you". Put it simply, we become what we feed on and worship, on a daily basis.

I watched this movie many years ago of a famous personality; a person loved and known by many and deeply sought after by the media. In her struggles she also sought the world and fed on the media to relate her story. Few years later there was no way out for her from the media, she became prey to them like the weak becomes prey to the powerful in a food chain. In the end the very thing she fed on caused a fatal downfall.

A thought to ponder; what are we feeding on? Are we feeding on unhealthy habits, unhealthy relationships, judgement and slander or is it on Social media and news that we feed on? None of which brings eternal life, just fear and anxiety.

Unlike in the world where the powerful preys on the weakest, here the Most powerful God becomes a tiny piece of bread so we could consume Him. And be raised on the last day. When we partake of this meal He renews us and comes alive. The Eucharist is the living presence of Jesus Christ and one of the greatest expressions of God's love. It is the heart of the Church, the temple of God which cannot be destroyed by humans.

If we are carrying a burden, let us spend time with the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. He will never fail to enter our lives.

**Prayer: Abba Father, help me encounter Your presence and power through the Eucharist. Amen**

Acts 9: 31-42

Ps 116: 12-17

John 6: 60-69

The first reading today is taken from the Acts of the Apostles, when we read the passage today, we see a mirror reflection of the Gospels. The same works of Christ are continued and miracles are performed by His disciples. The Kingdom acts that were performed by our Lord Jesus Christ are reflected through the lives of His disciples. Aeneas was paralysed for eight years and Peter releases

him of his sickness. Tabitha has been raised from the dead. The Kingdom of God that was brought down by Christ Jesus into this earth has been continued by His chosen disciples filled with the Holy Spirit.

How can we make a return to the Lord for all the good he has done for us? The disciples chose to let go of their worldly understanding and completely trust in the Lord. Mother Mary stood by them and guided them through their weaknesses and uncertainty. If we are going through a similar phase in life, let us remind ourselves of all the good things He has blessed us with and decide to follow Him at any cost. We are called to become living examples of Christ Jesus that ascends the Kingdom of God into this world and become instruments just like St. Peter and St. Paul. Despite all our weaknesses to let go and trust solely on the power of our Lord and Saviour.

We are indeed in this way of life following and believing in Christ Jesus, only because the Father Himself chose us to follow His Son. "For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by my Father." Let us therefore with the experience and faithfulness gifted to us through the lenten season, choose to follow the Lord just like the disciples and proclaim: "You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God."

Pope Francis pointed out an amazing thought, "What instructions does the Lord give us for going forth to others? Only one, and it's very simple: Make disciples. But, be careful: his disciples, not our own." This should be the mission of Christians. To preach the Kingdom of God through our lives, follow the footsteps of our Lord and live as a community in the favor of the Father.

**Prayer: Abba Father, transform us that we might transform this world through Your love and Your power. Amen.**

## Sunday April 25

4th Sunday of Easter, Vocational Sunday

*Now we are children of God..*

Acts 4: 8-12

Ps 118: 1-9, 21-29

1 John 3: 1-2,

John 10: 11-18

There is one theme that is clearly spoken out in today's liturgy; the love and commitment of The Lord Jesus to us. We are invited to build our lives upon this love of God rather than any human love or affection.

In today's Gospel proclamation, the Lord Jesus speaks out His innermost conviction. He loves us not out of duty or obligation but of His own accord and free will. The shepherd does not need anyone's encouragement to go after his sheep to save them and bring them to safety and green pastures. He is so certain that his sheep recognise his voice and will follow him. This is a truth that we as God's children need to remember. Human heart recognises the voice of its Creator. Christian journey is not a to-do list but a heart-to-heart relationship, two becoming one, creature uniting with the Creator to enjoy and fulfil the purpose of creation.

The Lord Jesus says, "I know my sheep and my sheep know me—just as the Father knows me and I know the Father..." (John 10:14). Our minds might be confused by the lies of the world but our spirit knows The Lord's voice clearly. Our day to day journey with The Lord is all about hearing His voice in our spirit, and until we get this truth established in our hearts and minds, our life and journey with The Lord will be a burden, a duty to be fulfilled, a tiring task. Let us take a few minutes to search our own hearts, and find out where exactly we stand. Do we hear His voice in our spirit, and live each moment everyday according to what He is speaking to us? Or do we just have a monologue in what we call 'prayer' and present a list of requests and wants to The Lord and go away the same way we went to prayer? Our Shepherd and Master is fully alive, in His glorified Body and Spirit, He is The Word made flesh, and He does speak.

I only need to think about my own relationship with my spouse and my children to realise how important the communication and dialogue is in our relationships. Our heart to heart chats make our relationships thrive and blossom day after day and I am certain that it is the desire of our own hearts and that of The Lord too.

In the First Reading we witness St Peter, the disciple who was cowardly enough to deny his Lord and master three times before a servant girl of the high priest, now filled with The Holy Spirit, declaring boldly, of the power in the Name of the Lord Jesus that healed the lame man. St Peter's relationship with his Lord and Master has made this drastic transformation in him. He was hosting the Presence of The Risen Lord in him and The Holy Spirit was speaking through him. This is the call for every baptised Christian. Let us desire and choose to have this same lifestyle of a disciple. We who are the present day disciples of the Risen Lord, can and will transform our world, just as the disciples challenged and transformed the whole Roman Empire.

The Second Reading gives the foundation of a disciple's lifestyle. We are children of God. This identity is changing my life to stand tall and strong before every life situation, without becoming a victim of circumstances. This is definitely not arrogance, but quiet certainty of who I am and whose I am. Every morning I enter the Throne Room of The Father and am assured of His love and fatherly care and protection, which is alive in me, whether I am at home or at work. Whenever I tend to forget this reality and fall into the trap of my mind, believing anything other than God's Word, I simply go back to The Father, using the tool of the four steps I have learnt through the Risen Lord Community. Before I lie down at night, I go before Him once again to tell The Father about my day, to be commended, forgiven, taught, moulded and restored in love. I have a restful sleep, knowing that The Lord watches over me when I am asleep, speaking and ministering to me even in and through my dreams.

We are often quick to criticise the Godless behaviour of the world at large, the attempts of the governments and authorities to bring in laws and practices that go against God's law. The Lord is speaking to us, the sheep of His flock, saying it is our prime duty to enable those outside His flock to hear His voice. We are called to take the Lord to those who are yet to encounter Him. We need to host Him in our lives. Others should hear the voice of the Lord Jesus when they hear us. This is not about preaching to others what to do and what not to do. When we are filled with The Holy Spirit, and we have an intimate relationship with The Lord, hearing His voice and obeying His instruction, people who interact with us will experience the Lord Jesus. People will flock to our churches to experience The Risen Lord. Thus we will fulfil our baptismal call, as kings, prophets and priests, expanding the territory of God's Kingdom.

**Prayer: Abba Father, thank you for adopting us as Your own children. Amen**

Acts 11: 1-18\*

Ps 42: 2-3, 43: 3-4

John 10: 1-10

In today's readings we see a clear transition from the Old Testament to the New Testament. In the Old Testament, only a handful of people heard the voice of God. In the New Testament, after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we see a transformation taking place. From a few people in the Old Testament, it moved to the apostles through the Baptism of the Holy Spirit in

the New Testament, and from them to the whole world. This reminds me of the famous quote by St. Augustine of Hippo, "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until it rests in You." This is the deepest cry of our hearts, that cannot be fulfilled by any worldly pleasures. The Psalmist echoes this same cry, "My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?" (Psalm 42:2).

In the Gospel Proclamation, Jesus Christ describes Himself as the "gate for the sheep", which also makes him the shepherd of the sheep (vs 2). The sheep know the voice of the shepherd only and he knows each of them by name. In other words, this sheep will not respond to anyone else other than the shepherd. He further describes the sheep finding pasture, that is "life in all its fullness". Jesus Christ is telling us that we are these sheep; you and I. In the depths of our spirits, we are able to recognize this voice. This voice gives us "life in all its fullness"; that is a full package.

This experience is real even today. We see in the First Reading, how God called St. Peter to preach to the Gentiles. This was unheard of before the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. We are made to understand, this was God's plan as described by the vision that St. Peter had. This Baptism of the Holy Spirit, as described by St. Peter is still freely available in our midst today. We are called to heed to the cry at the depths of our Spirits and say "yes" to this cry. It is only then that we could experience "life in all its fullness", which will bring us peace of mind, joy in the midst of suffering, love in the midst of misunderstanding, and rest in the middle of chaos.

**Prayer: Abba Father, give us the grace to heed to the cry of our Spirits and say yes to You, the one true Shepherd. Amen.**

Acts 11: 19-26

Ps 87: 1-7

John 10: 22-30

Christ means “anointed one” therefore we “Christians” are the followers of this “anointed one”, and in our baptism we receive the same anointing through the Holy Spirit which enables us to share, reflect and glorify the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ. We see it happening in the first reading; the Holy Spirit is spreading like wild fire through ordinary people who in the eyes of the world are

nobodies but now made partakers of a mission far beyond the realm of human understanding. When we share and proclaim the good news we are sharing in the power, dominion that is been given in the name of the “anointed one” the “living one” Jesus Christ our Lord. That is why the authentic message of Christianity disturbs the world.

At my last place of employment, I was mocked and ridiculed for speaking in the name of Christ. They called me brainwashed, but in that moments of ridicule my heart rejoiced. It is a great joy and privilege to be mocked in the name of Christ. That is what we see when Barnabas visited Antioch, did he rejoice because he saw what luxurious lives the people were living in? No, he saw how people were rejoicing even in the midst of persecution and hardships. Internal obedience brings external blessings. When we remain faithful to God’s mission his grace moves in our life and our environment, our needs are met in supernatural ways, life has meaning and purpose.

In Solomon’s portico before the Jews, walks the anointed one, the same presence that moved in an awe-inspiring manner in the temple as described in Ezekiel (Ezekiel 10) and the very reason for the feast of dedication.(2 Maccabees 10) But to these Jews, Jesus does not fit their perspective of what he should be, hence they reject him. Similarly, the world may reject us but our calling is for an eternal dwelling. Our Lord refers to us as sheep, because sheep have the unique ability to discern the voice of their caretaker among thousand others, we are Christians because the Father has called us by name, nothing can take that away from us, hence we should not be afraid to live the calling of an authentic Christian.

**Prayer: Abba Father, I thank you for calling me to be your own. By your grace empower me to share your love with others. Amen**

## Wednesday April 28

St. Louis de Montfort, priest, St. Peter Chanel, priest & martyr

*The Lord is with us in every situation.*

Acts 12:24, 13:5

Ps67:2-3,5-8

John 12:44-50

The gospel proclamation reveals that the Lord Jesus came into the world as Light. That Divine Light illumines the human mind. The light that makes clear, informs, explains, illustrates.

Today's world is in the darkness of ignorance and blind to aspects of truth and reality. In every strata of society it is a case of blind leading the blind. Let us not delude ourselves thinking it is nothing to do with us. Did not the Lord say, if you knew you were blind, you would have no sin, but, when we say we see, sin remains. The Lord comes to open our eyes. A metaphysical healing through the Word of God. Refusal to accept and respond to the Word ,brings on our acceptance of condemnation. We even perpetuate harming others. In Christ however, we who are blind will see and who know not, may understand.

This utterance of Isaiah is an urgent word needed for our dark world that is locked within the gates of Hades. "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. Upon those who dwell in the land of gloom a light has shone. He will bring us abundant joy and great rejoicing. For the yoke that burdened and the pole on their shoulder and the rod of their taskmaster shall be smashed".

Twelve years ago, I had undergone bypass surgery for a serious heart condition. I was in a state of deep depression. Darkness of soul in broad daylight. I put on my ear phone to hear worship songs, soon after a family member read Psalm 23 repeatedly. Suddenly something happened, my soul was flooded with rejoicing. I cried with joy. A joy I had not experienced before. The attendant medics thought I was in post operative pain. I said it is another sort of pain. A heavenly joy amidst the gloom.

Barnabas, Saul and Mark go on mission proclaiming their encounter with the Light. Propelled by the Holy Spirit they sow the Word of God into human hearts. The Light of Christ begins to shine from within. Ignorance is revealed. The word becomes a lamp unto their feet. Earth walks into Heaven.

**Prayer:Abba Father, even walking through dark valleys, I see you there. Amen**

Acts 13: 13-25

Ps 89:2-3, 21-27

John 13: 16-20

From the age of seven, Saint Catherine dedicated her life to Our Lord Jesus Christ, experiencing visions and steadfastly refusing marriage to a nobleman, despite having her lovely long hair shorn. Her sanctity drew thousands who were converted, the priests unable to accommodate the penitents. Her empathy and influence led to peace between princes and ecclesiastical hierarchy alike, causing

them to promise allegiance to the rightful pontiff at a time of serious dissension in the Church, in which she was not afraid to identify abuses and call for reform. Pope Benedict XVI said of her: "though aware of the human failings of the clergy, she always had the greatest reverence for them, because through the Sacraments and the Word they dispense the salvific power of the Blood of Christ." In the current climate of dissension within the Church, we would do well to remember her approach of working for reform while honouring the clergy for their sacramental mission and role ordained by Jesus Christ Himself.

In the first reading, Saint Paul recounts the history of the Israelites, citing examples of God's gifts to them, providing leaders and continuing love and support, despite their unfaithfulness. Saint Paul points to the realization of the promise of salvation in the line of David, through Jesus who was publicly recognized by John The Baptist as the Saviour of the world.

The Gospel proclamation shows the fulfilment of God's plan in the acceptance by Jesus of his sacrificial task. Jesus speaks of Himself knowing His role as being obedient to His Father and that of the apostles knowing their role and the blessings that flow from doing what they (and we) are meant to do. As evidence of His role, He points to the fact that he has chosen each of them, including one who would betray Him and foretelling that fact, so that when it happens they will remember it and know that he is the Messiah.

The life of Saint Catherine and the readings bring out the fact that St. Catherine, David, and St. Paul were chosen instruments who fulfilled the roles given to them by God with unquestioning obedience, faith, love and commitment which changed the world.

**Prayer: Abba, Father, teach us to model our lives on the teachings of Our Lord Jesus Christ; to surrender; to believe; and to change our world. Amen.**

Acts 13: 26-33

Ps 2: 6-11

John 14: 1-6

In today's Gospel proclamation the Lord Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth and the life." We need to ponder deeply on this proclamation as it is vital for our spiritual growth and our growing relationship with the Risen Lord. The Lord's way was proclaimed by him, mainly during his message at the Last Supper. He said, "Love one another as I love you." John 13:34, 15:12. He also

says, "Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends." John 15:13

The New Testament regularly tells us about God's love for us. There are many qualities in this love, the main being; it is unending, unending, unlimited, and unmerited. Freely as we receive this gift from God, the Holy Spirit gives us the power to freely give it to others. Then we will become a living sermon. As St. Francis of Assisi has said, "Preach all the time, but use words only if necessary." What that means is that our lives must be a living message that Christ is alive and living in us.

The New Testament also tells us that our care for others is God's measure of our greatness. For us to be happy or joyful, we need to make others joyful. By the power of the Holy Spirit, we need to care and share with others. Help them when they hurt us, bless them when they curse us and pray for them when they persecute us. (Luke 6)

Mainly we need to keep on forgiving others, not just seven times seven, but even seventy times seven as the Lord told St. Peter ( ) When the Lord Jesus stood before the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate, the Lord told him, "I have come to bear witness to the truth". The Governor then asked him, "What is truth?" The Lord did not answer. But many Catholic Bible scholars suggest that he told Pilate to wait till the next day, which was the day of his crucifixion. On Calvary's Cross, the Lord gave himself totally for us so that we could have eternal life. That is also the abundant life he was referring to.

**Prayer: Abba Father, you have told us that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Trinity. May we be vessels of love and service to others. Amen.**

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## The Empty Tomb

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, **“They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him!”**

So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus’ head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. *(They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead)*. Then the disciples went back to where they were staying.

*-John 20:1-10*

On Our Knees In His Hands is a book of reflections and aid to prayer based on the daily readings of the mass. Its purpose is to help Catholics and other Christians engaged in the normal hustle and bustle of life to discover God's presence and direction in the practical situations they are placed in. This is made possible by a group of writers who themselves are lay people living at the heart of busy day to day life.

