

JUNE
2021

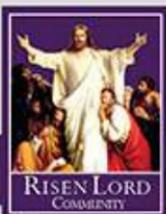


ON OUR KNEES IN HIS HANDS



St. Charles Lwanga and Companions

Feast Day: 03 June 2021



DAILY READINGS & REFLECTIONS

Volume 21
Issue 06



ON OUR KNEES IN HIS HANDS

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2021

In him we have redemption through
his blood, the forgiveness of our
trespasses, according to the riches
of his grace.
Ephesians 1:7

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On Our Knees In His Hands

JUNE 2021

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Tuesday June 1

Memorial of St. Justin, Martyr

In distress, demand the Lord's wisdom.

Tobit 2:9-14

Ps 112: 1-2, 7-9

Mark 12: 13-17

The story of Tobit and Anna, makes for a perfect family drama. But before we continue, the passage mentions, on the night of Pentecost. This Pentecost does not refer to the coming of the Holy Spirit but the Festival of Weeks which was a harvest related festival in the rabbinic tradition.

Though Tobit had been blinded by the pigeon's droppings, it did not change his personality. He still assumed he was right and his wife was wrong. He thought he had all the answers. His poor wife had worked hard and earned a hefty bonus by way of a goat but Tobit insisted that she had robbed it. In many families, suspicion and assumptions throw relationships into a sea of turmoil and bitterness. One partner though so badly disabled, still assumes he or she has the answers and stubbornly pushes for an answer. The wronged party can only be saved by a sure and firm faith in the Lord.

That's why the Psalmist says - The heart of the just one is firm, trusting in the Lord. The just one is sure of his or her answer and purity and instead of focusing on the partner's unreasonable accusations places his or her trust in the Lord. Often partners play the blame game. Everything is pinned on a person's family and the person is cast as the sole cause of all sadness and pain. The unreasonable behaviour of one person causes the other person much pain and sadness and the best resort is the feet of the Lord.

Our Lord Jesus was faced with the unreasonable wicked questions of the Pharisees and Herodians who were eager to trap Him. The question arose about the payment of taxes and the Lord had a revelation from the Holy Spirit. He replied by urging them to look at the denarius coin and repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God. This made them seal their mouths in shame. Anna also had a good answer to give Tobit.. "Where are your charitable acts now? Your true character is finally showing itself." In a way she was saying Charity begins at home, Show some love and concern to your tired wife instead of falsely accusing her of robbery and theft. Let us learn not to be too clever in judging people and on the other hand remain firm and trusting when falsely accused.

Prayer: Abba Father, you know my heart and intentions. Save me when accused and give me the grace to fix my gaze on you. Amen

Wednesday June 2

Sts Marcellinus & Peter, martyrs

He is the God, not of the dead, but of the living...

Tobit 3: 1-11a, 16-17a

Ps: 25:2-9

Mark 12: 18-27

Today we are introduced to the heartfelt prayers of Tobit and Sarah – two individuals who did not know how their lives would intertwine through God's sovereign plan. Tobit wears his heart on his sleeve before God and expresses the depths of his being before the Lord. In other words, Tobit gave the truth of his heart to God. He truly repented before the Lord and then he surrendered

his life, allowing God to deal with him as He saw best. He asked for the Lord to take him away because he could not bear the insults that he had to endure.

At the same time, in another town, Sarah was going through a similar ordeal. She too was reproached by one of her father's maids and the problems that had occurred in her past were brought to light, with the maid using this to insult and humiliate her. Sarah, intending to take matters into her own hands, was set to end her life, but for not wanting to bring shame to her father, she prayed instead. Yet her prayer too was like Tobit's – for death. Both Tobit and Sarah saw death as the escape to their problems, and that can be our own solutions as well. How many people around the world end their lives because they have no other alternative, and how often we too seem to think of extreme solutions to issues that could actually be a breeding ground for God's supernatural blessing!

Both these prayers were answered at the exact same time. It is as if God used the hurt of one to bless another, for we know that ultimately Sarah is brought into Tobit's family as his daughter-in-law, and it is his child that breaks the curse that Sarah was under. In the same way, the hurt that we are facing might just be a way for God to bless someone else. What we have gone through can be used as life experience for others to see God's light more clearly. In this way, we will not be fooled by those who are around us, like in the Gospel Proclamation. The Sadducees try to trap the Lord Jesus in his words, but he is blessed with the spirit of wisdom and sees beyond the natural realm. Let that be our truth today as well.

Prayer: Abba Father, remove the scales from my eyes so that I may see my struggle in the light of your glory. Amen.

Thursday June 3

St. Charles Lwanga & Companions, Martyrs

It is not right that the man should be alone...(Tobit 8:6a)

Tobit 6:10-11, 7:1, 8: 4-9

Ps 128: 1-5

Mark 12: 28-34

Are you far from the kingdom of God? In the Gospel proclamation today, St. Mark prompts us to ask ourselves that question. It offers us an opportunity to do a reality check on how we are moving along in our pilgrimage of faith.

We are all in this together but we need from time to time to examine our own personal journey based on our faith commitment to the person of Jesus. We learn from the righteous scribe to praise the Lord Jesus for giving the best answer possible to his profound question about which commandment is first; he means which one is the top priority. Our Lord responds "Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, is the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might." Jesus adds that the second is tied in with the first, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself."

Thus the scribe helps us to learn from Jesus who answers his question and gives us the best answer possible for setting our priorities. To love God, our neighbor and ourselves properly will give us a step towards peace, justice, and integrity of life. This puts us into the realm of God as the scribe was in that realm. Would it not be great to hear Jesus saying to us, "You are not far from the kingdom of God?" It is Jesus who teaches us how to love God and our neighbor. Jesus will bless us just as he blessed the scribe. In this Gospel proclamation there is little given to the praise of others; this includes the apostles. Some of the women followers are praised but it is rare for others to be praised as Jesus does for this scribe and to another God-fearing young man who however could not leave his possessions behind to follow Jesus. Jesus answers his question from the Mosaic Law as expressed in the book of Deuteronomy. The answer is also the creed of our Catholic Church and that of Judaism. He adds the commandment to love our neighbor but that too is part of the Mosaic law. Today we can learn how to praise Jesus in the words of the scribe: "Excellent Teacher, you are right in saying, 'He is the One, there is no other than He.'" Amen.

Prayer: Thank you Abba Father for this revelation.

Friday June 4

9th Week in Ordinary Time

I will sing praise to my God as long as I live." (Psalm 146:2)

Tobit 11: 5-17

Ps 146: 1-10

Mark 12: 35-37

Today's first reading approaches the pinnacle of the story of Tobit with existential joy and festivities. There is healing, renewal, joyful reunion, and family love in today's readings. There is no greater welcome than the one Tobit gave Sarah. Sadly, this type of love and welcome escape all too many of our families today. Too many sons and daughters are not welcomed home with

arms wrapped around them like Tobias was by his mother. Tobit and Sarah prayed in earnest to God through their pain. They surrendered their lives to God in prayer. Today's first reading reveals the beautiful expression of their prayers and trust in God. When they prayed, heaven heard them. In fact, the Archangel Raphael himself heard them and God appointed the angel to enter in and heal this family. Their prayers were strong. Such strong and mature prayers are the result of years of exercise and times spent with God.

According to the Psalmist, offering praise to God is a normal and natural part of a believer's daily life. Praise is a noticeable characteristic of the believer's life from start to end. Praising God should rely on the circumstances of our lives, which, as we well know, can change at the drop of a hat. Praising God is reliant on our ongoing relationship with our Heavenly Father, a relationship that, for most of us, began on the day of our baptism. That blessed connection continues throughout this life, and complements us to heaven someday. In today's Gospel proclamation, our Lord Jesus points out to the scribes that they have a poor view of the Messiah. They correctly understood that the Messiah was going to be an offspring of David. Jesus' kingdom has come but not yet fully." It is a present spiritual reality and yet it is a physical reality that is yet to come. Sin and death have not yet been fully captured. This means that the Christian life is full of both joy and sorrow because we are in a spiritual battle but victory is guaranteed. Where has this spiritual battle been obvious in your life lately? How can the hope of Christ help you fight this battle?

Prayer: Abba Father, I believe that you have shaped and redeemed me. I believe that you have called me to prayer today. I trust that you will teach me to pray and delight in what is right and true, good and beautiful. I love you, Lord, for in you is perfection, goodness and love. Amen

Saturday June 5

St. Boniface, bishop & martyr

Blessed be God, who lives forever.

Tobit 12: 1, 5-20

Tobit 13: 2-8

Mark 12: 38-44

Today's first reading gives us angelic advice, "Bless God and acknowledge him in the presence of all the living for the good things he has done for you. With fitting honor declare to all people the deeds of God. Do not be slow to acknowledge him."

We are called to Bless God and acknowledge what he does in our lives. I am challenged as I read to question myself how often do I Bless the Lord? Do I acknowledge him in the presence of others? Do I testify for the immeasurable things, signs & wonders in my life and in my family?

I remember the time I came to the CRL meetings first. I was amazed to see & hear people testifying to the things God was doing in their lives. It helped me to see the hand of God in my life and in the events where it concerned me. But over time I was getting used to it and lost the intensity of these. There were signs but they were no longer wonders. As a result, I only Blessed God & gave him glory & honor when I was at a meeting. I needed another knock on the head to get my bearings right. How can any blessing come to me when I was not blessing God or declaring him and what he does in front of the others?

In the Gospel proclamation our Lord Jesus opens our eyes to another group of people whose characteristics were aligning with mine. He was referring to the scribes, but there was a scribe in me as well. One who pretended to praise & participate in the meetings or went for mass and passed the time in my own world of thoughts yet pretended to be holier than the rest. The Lord showed me that in-spite of my sinfulness like the widow who offered the little she had, if I raise him up, blessed him, give the truth of my heart, he could still turn things around for me because He is God above all every other thing.

When God becomes our center, when we Bless him & acknowledge him things start to change in our lives. When we testify for Him, we are empowered to live for him.

Prayer; Abba Father, give us a heart of worship & help us to keep our focus on you, through every day of our lives. Amen.

Sunday June 6

Solemnity of the Most Holy Body & Blood of Christ

"How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, cleanse us!" Hebrews 9:14

Exodus 24: 3-8

Ps 116: 12-18

Hebrews 9: 11-15

Mark 14: 12-16, 22-26

In the first reading today we find Moses telling the Israelites all that the Lord taught him on the mountain. The people listen to him and all of them as one, promise to do all that the Lord has commanded them. Moses goes on to write down everything the Lord had said and then he reads it to the people again. They once again affirm their

obedience to all that the Lord has commanded and a new covenant is established between God and man. We all know what happens soon after. Time and time again, the Israelites break the law and therefore break their part of the covenant.

The priests of the old covenant had a ritual whereby the blood of calves and goats were sprinkled on the people who had sinned and they were cleaned. At least externally considered clean. But of course this ritual could never lead to ultimate cleansing or true internal change. It was merely a symbol pointing to what was to come through Christ.

The reality is that no matter how well intentioned we are or how desperately we try we cannot always keep all the commandments of God. He is Holy. We are not. It is impossible for us by our own human efforts to come before Him. It does not matter how much blood we sprinkle on our selves, how many sacrifices we offer to Him of our own efforts, how many novenas we pray or fasts we partake in. If our attempt in all of that is simply to make things right between us and God then it is all in vain.

But this is exactly why God sent His own beloved Son into this fallen world. Jesus the supreme High Priest entered into the heavenly sanctuary to offer a sacrifice on behalf of the fallen humanity once and for all. He did not come with the blood of bulls and goats, He did not come with tradition and rituals, but instead He came with that perfect offering of His very own blood.

His perfect and very costly sacrifice won for us our eternal salvation. Now we do get to come before God because we come covered in His own Righteousness. We get to come before the throne of God

with boldness and joy, not because of anything good or right we have done but because we come through Him – Jesus, the perfect Lamb of God. Jesus the mediator between God and man.

I feel the Lord really emphasising this to me as I go through this season of learning to let go of control. Where He is really hitting home the point that it's not anything I can do but rather what He has already done. The price is already paid. He does not expect me to go around with my dead works trying to pay a price that has already been settled.

The writer to the Hebrews says that the blood of Christ cleanses our conscience from acts that lead to dead works. I love that. Often time in my daily struggles it's my conscience that needs cleansing. I get so caught up in my brokenness and the imperfectness of my prayer life. I get caught up in a cycle of trying to do things to try and make up. But of course even my best efforts get me nowhere. But here I am reassured that the blood of Jesus, already shed on my behalf, already poured out for the atonement of my sins, has the power to effectively shut my conscience up. To remind me that the work is done. I only ever have to lift my heart to God and it will be received with joy. That no matter how imperfect and unworthy I may feel that when God looks at me, He sees me covered in the righteousness of His Son. The conscience that condemns me and puts me down and keeps me stuck in never ending cycles of tradition and rituals is lifted off. He sheds His light, His truth, His acceptance. I don't have to go around the same old circles, His blood lifts me up right into the Presence of God.

How perfect! How wonderful! How utterly liberating is this truth! I only have to speak this truth over myself and remind myself – His blood cleanses my conscience so that I am free to serve the living God. My lack, my brokenness, my humanity does not stop me from pursuing and adoring God. I get to serve Him, I get to spend my days at His feet in spite of all of that because of Jesus. In Jesus' own words, He offers Himself to us - 'take it, this is My body... take this and drink, this is My blood, poured out for many'. Jesus paid the ultimate price for me. The least I could do is to take that risk and believe Him. To live a life that is worthy of Him. And to be honest, the more I know Him, this is all I want to do. I want Jesus in full all that He paid for.

Prayer: Abba Father, I thank you for the eternal gift of Your Son, of the price that was paid for me. Amen

Monday June 7

10th Week in Ordinary Time

Radiant with joy are those who look to God (Psalm 34:6)

2Cor 1:1-7

Ps 34:2-9

Math 5: 1-12

Recently Brother Lalith reflected about a person's experience of personally encountering the risen Lord through the baptism of the Holy Spirit. At first, it's extremely exhilarating, with answered prayer and numerous miracles. But as the journey continues, suffering, humiliation and apparent defeat seem to dominate. How joyful St. Paul would have been when Jesus Himself ministered to him,

revealing hitherto hidden secrets of the kingdom! But as he got into ministry, St. Paul encountered untold suffering and persecution. Still, in the midst of it all, he also experienced joy and peace that passeth all understanding promised by Jesus. With his eyes fixed on Jesus and the glory that awaited him in eternity, experiencing divine sonship, suffering became the source of St. Paul's joy. The third stage of the encounter comes when St. Paul becomes a blessing to the whole world. His letters, which are part of the foundation for the teaching of the church, are a testimony to this reality. In fact, Jesus himself went through immense suffering as He fought against the world's temptations offered by Satan (Hebrews 2:10). The martyrs and saints also experienced this reality. But through His passion, death, and resurrection, Jesus won salvation for the whole universe, transcending time and space. When St. Paul speaks of rejoicing in the face of suffering (Romans 5:3), and talks of comfort and consolation in tribulation, he is not being unrealistic or foolish, as some may suppose; rather, he speaks from personal experience. If the first reading leaves us reeling with this new approach to suffering, our Lord Jesus' beatitudes plunge us into bewilderment. With them, Jesus establishes a new foundation for His kingdom, a new "Magna Carta". Jesus turns upside down the values enshrined by the world. Centuries ago, God gave the Ten Commandments to Moses and after that the religious leaders who added more than 600 'dos and 'don'ts' to oppress the people. But now Jesus offers a new hope to those who labored under poverty, meekness, deprivation sorrow, and persecution. In and through their pain, they will be comforted, obtain mercy, and see God. We, too, are invited to this experience of joy through suffering.

Prayer: Lord, help me to break free from the enticement the world offers, and to find joy in suffering as I fix my eyes on you. Amen

2Cor 1: 18-22

Ps 119: 129-135

Math 5: 13-16

In today's Gospel Proclamation our Lord Jesus compares Christians to salt and light. Salt and light both do not exist for themselves but for something else. Salt enhances the flavour of other foods and with light we see other things in the world. They are both not meant for themselves.

In our culture today, most of us see religion as something for ourselves, but our Lord Jesus says religion is like salt and light, it is not meant for ourselves but for others. Our lives are not meant to be private, confined to our own four walls and to our personal progress. Are we there when our neighbour is in distress, are we there for that friend who is going through a difficult time in life. Are we there to help the homeless, that person begging on the road, or do we judge these people like the rest of the world, blaming one or the other and washing our hands off from people who are in need ?

Perhaps we can bring light and salt together by saying we find salvation for ourselves precisely in the measure that we bring God's life to others. We need to become salt that brings flavour to the life of others who are helpless in society. We are also invited to shed light that illumines the life of others by revealing what is beautiful and also the ugly truth that destroys peoples' joy. The implication is that, without vibrant Christians, the world will be a much worse place.

The church emphasises that we should all evangelise, it is not meant for priest and Nuns only but for us ordinary Christians to reach out to the world which is so much in need of Christ!! To reach out and be the light to the darkness in this world.

It was the servant girl, who was combing the hair of her mistress, Naaman's wife who urged them to seek the services of the prophet and thus receive a healing from leprosy. As we journey with God he will give us a word that unsettles us, that we are compelled to share with people and this word will change, complete and heal lives. Are we open to God's minstering in our lives? Let us be open to Him.

Prayer: Abba Father, help me to be a true Christian one who gives light to the world. Give me strength and your holy spirit to reach out and bring your love to people around me. Amen

Wednesday June 9

St. Ephrem, deacon & doctor of the church

The Lord came to this world to fulfill the Law.

2Cor3:4-11

Ps99:5-9

Math5:17-19

As explained by Science every planet has a life span & it dies one day, so it is with our very own lives, leaving behind everything material here on earth on our last day. We live in a wounded world. We ourselves are broken. Facing compromising situations, selfish ambitions motivated, we feed our flesh (body & mind) at an unconscious level and damage ourselves further. We head in a

direction where priority is given to ourselves. "Me, myself, I, instead of we, us & ourselves."

In our human nature we forget the fact that I, 'myself' is connected to by the Lord to others. We relate to our brothers and sisters in spirit. In Ephesians 1:5, St. Paul reminds us that God destined us for adoption as His children through Jesus Christ, and that was His pleasure.

The answer to this issue lies within the readings today. St. Paul in his letter to the Corinthians reminds us that through His death and resurrection the Lord Jesus together with the Abba Father and the Holy Spirit has opened the door which was shut to us. Once again we are opened to His ministry in the life giving Spirit.

The law written on stone gives us a base and a foundation but without the Spirit it would mean nothing. Fulfilling a written law would be a mere meaningless obligation without power. We could fall out of it one way or the other. But every commandment in the law ignited by the power of the Holy Spirit could create a great ignition within ourselves and others around. It would even impact the environment we live in. We receive hope and meaning in obeying the Father through His Son in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The greatest gift we have received is the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Lord in His own words said that He did not come to demolish the law but to fulfill it. He has kept His promise until the very end of time by sending His very own Spirit into this world.

Prayer: Abba Father open up our hearts to receive your word and empower us with your Holy Spirit to fulfil its purpose in our lives. Amen.

Thursday June 10

10th Week in Ordinary Time

Love, clothes the humblest and most menial of tasks with glory.

2 Cor 3: 15–4: 1-6

Ps 85: 9-14

Matt 5: 20-26

The first Reading St Paul in his letter to the Corinthians explicitly refers to the veil that had obstructed the children of Israel from gazing at an overpowering glory on the face of Moses. This veil though destroyed by the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus on the cross sadly remains over the eyes of many.

The different forms of veils which obstruct us from experiencing God's power and presence are so subtle that there is a darkness which broods within us not allowing us total freedom. Prejudice, pride, fragmented thinking, disobedience, an unteachable spirit - the blindness caused by the world and its temptations that control and govern us as the flesh give way, darkness envelops us without our knowledge.

If we contemplate Christ in the end, we come to reflect Him. St Paul says where the Spirit is there is liberty. If our obedience to God is based on obedience to a code of laws, we will be in a position of an unwilling slave. But when it comes from the spirit of our heart, the center of our being has no other desire than to serve God, for then it is not law but love that binds us. Love, clothes the humblest and most menial of tasks with glory. 'In Gods service we find our perfect freedom'. The veil is removed, there is a light that dispels darkness.

St. Mathew's Gospel proclamation amplifies this. Hardly a day goes by without the news of a murder or some moral misconduct. We are appalled at these atrocities and feel quite self-righteous before God in comparison to those committing these crimes. This is the kind of righteousness that characterized the Jewish religious leaders. Let us examine our hearts. Our own resentments and hatreds, even though we keep them in check, violate the greatest commandment Jesus taught us. Love of God and Love of neighbor. I should not be jealous of that co-worker, or resent my boss for correcting me or not appreciating the things I do. What about my own family? My spouse? my children? How do I handle these relationships? The Kingdom of God calls for reconciliation, not just an acknowledgement of wrong behavior. Saint John Paul II in a talk given in the Netherlands, as the Pope, said this. "External observances of the law have no great value if the heart is blind or wicked...."

Prayer: Heavenly Father by the power of your Holy Spirit heal my blindness and dispel the darkness, that your light may shine through me. Amen

Friday June 11

Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus

Font of love and mercy!

Hosea 11: 1-9

Isaiah 12: 26

Eph 3: 8-19

John 19: 31-37

Today we celebrate the love of God manifested to us through his Son, Jesus Christ. "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life." The feast of the Most Sacred Heart is a celebration of love. It is an opportunity to reflect on the great love God has for us and it is an invitation to strengthen our

love relationship with him.

Jesus loved us so much, that he chose to be incarnated among us. As a human being he experienced and understood our sufferings and joys. Our Master chose to become a disciple at the feet of the Jewish religious leaders. He humbled himself and endured betrayal by Judas, denial by Peter and torture by the Roman soldiers. "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends." He proved his love for us and saved us from sin by dying on the Cross.

In today's Gospel proclamation we read about the events that happened after the crucifixion and death of Jesus. As he was dying on the Cross, he already gifted his mother to us to be our loving mother. After his death, as his side is pierced, the last drops of blood and water flow out in love for us. Some early Church Fathers interpreted and point to this as the sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist. The water is poured over us at Baptism and we partake of his precious body and blood at the Eucharist. The Church grew from the side of Jesus, this is the fountain of living water. "Let anyone who thirsts come to me and drink." In facing difficulties in life, how do we quench our thirst? How do we resolve issues? Do we go to the fountain of life, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, or do we resort to the worldly wells that merely answers the superficial. Let us make this day a renewed opportunity to grow deep in our love for Jesus, draw from his love to face various situations in life and continue to reflect and share the great love that God has for us.

Sweet Heart of Jesus, font of love and mercy, Today we come, Thy blessing to implore. Oh touch our hearts, so cold and so ungrateful And make them Lord, Thine own for evermore. Sweet Heart of Jesus we implore, Oh make us love Thee more and more.

Prayer: Abba Father, may we learn to rest and lean on the heart of Jesus from where flowed love, mercy, healing and life. Amen

Isaiah 61: 9-12

1 Sam 2: 1-8

Luke 2: 41-51

In the public domain, there is a beautiful poem whose author is unknown. It is called "The Folded Page". It is about an adult paging through an old note-book of his childhood class. He comes across a page that was folded and on it is written "teacher says now to fold this page and write 'I don't understand it now.'" He opens the page, reads the page and says "teacher is right, now I understand".

The poem goes on to say that there are pages in the book of life that we do not understand. So fold it down for now and one day, perhaps in heaven we will turn those pages and say "now I understand".

Today the Church celebrates "The Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary". As the Gospel proclamation says Mary with her anxious heart, is frantically searching for her son in and around Jerusalem. When found inside the Temple, Jesus says to Mary "Why are you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"

The parents of our Lord Jesus did not understand what he said to them, but Mary kept all these things in her heart. Even though Mary did not know what was happening, she kept those things in heart reflecting on them. She had faith that God's hand was in all these events and she treasured them with the faith that God would gradually unfold the meaning of everything.

It is also our human experience that often we come to know the meaning of things that are happening not at the time they happen but later on. It may be months, years or even decades later. What matters there is that we keep those events close to our hearts reflecting on them knowing that God is at work in them. Like Mary we keep our hearts open to God's actions even though we cannot understand now. In dealing with hardships and setbacks in life we need not fold the pages but keep them treasured in our hearts, knowing some day we will understand fully the God given purpose.

Prayer: Abba Father through the intercession of our Heavenly Mother, when life's dealings become hard to understand, help me keep them in my heart to seek in them the divine purpose and respond faithfully like the Blessed Mother. Amen

Sunday June 13

11th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Sometimes the answer to our prayer is not gaining but losing

Ezek 17:22-24
Ps 92: 2-3, 13-16
2 Cor 5: 6-10
Mark 4: 26-34

Today's first reading speaks of taking something small as the shoot of a cedar tree and planting it. As it grows it will one day become one of the biggest trees. Through the imagery of the cedar tree, God makes a promise to the people regarding the salvation of the world. The Israelites do not know it yet, but He is speaking about His Only Son. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the splendid cedar that produces much fruit and gives rest and shelter to those who seek Him. God is saying that He will send someone who will one day become their Saviour. He will come as a small baby but will one day grow up to become the Saviour of the world and He will give rest to His people.

The Gospel proclamation from today echoes the same message. The Lord Jesus speaks of two parables— The Parable of the Growing Seed and the Parable of the Mustard Seed. The first parable teaches us how the Lord will work within us and the second parable teaches us what will happen to us. A tiny mustard seed is planted and grows into a large tree. The Lord is teaching us that we must plant the seed of faith within us. When this faith is nourished, it will grow within us shaping us into the people God created us to be. Then we will be able to bring people to the Lord and become a blessing not only to ourselves but others around us. Our role model is the Lord Jesus Christ.

When God the Father sent His only Son into the world, He did not send Him as a fully grown man, with power and strength. But instead, the Lord Jesus came into the world, as we do—as a helpless baby. The Church teaches us that while the Lord is 100% divine, He is also 100% human. As a baby He needed protection, love and care which he received from Mother Mary and St. Joseph. He needed to gradually grow up and learn things as we all do. None of us come to this world knowing everything. And it is the same with the Lord Jesus. Mother Mary and St. Joseph taught Him everything He needed to develop a firm foundation in the Lord. As He grew up, He nurtured this tiny seed of faith in God. He spent time in prayer, meditated on the scriptures, got to know God the Father and built a relationship with God.

The Lord is calling us to do the same. The Psalmist gives us the recipe to building a relationship with God. Psalm 92:2 says, "proclaiming your love in the morning and your faithfulness at night". We

must commune with the Lord each morning as we rise and each night before we go to sleep. It may seem like a daunting task but as we give time to the Lord He will make it easier. Personally, I have often found prayer a struggle. Each day I get up wanting to pray and as I collect my bible and earphones and sit in front of the Lord, I remember a thousand things I must do. On a scale of importance from one to ten, each task seems to be a 10. I feel like prayer can take a backseat. As I journeyed with the Lord, I began to realize that putting off prayer did not help me in any way. Instead, the important to do list did not seem that important after I put off prayer. Maybe many others have experienced this as well. Once, a few years ago Fr. Ken Barker came to Sri Lanka and spoke at a weekly servers meeting. He said when we sit to pray and things we must do come to mind, we can get out a piece of paper and write them down. We must make a list of the things that must get done and keep it aside until after we have finished praying. Something so simple as a to do list made my prayer time easier. Another tip that transformed my prayer life is the time I spend with the Lord. Lalith Thaththa always teaches us to start small. We can start with a 15-minute or 30-minute prayer time and slowly increase it. If we faithfully sit at His feet, the Lord can do wonders in our lives.

In the Gospel Proclamation, the parable about the growing seed illustrates what will happen to us when we consistently give time to the Lord in prayer. In the parable the man scatters seeds on the ground and then allows nature to take its course. The man does not concern himself about how the seed will grow or if it will grow at all. Mark 4:28 says, "All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head." All of this happens without the man's help. In the same way, when we pray each day the Lord will slowly do things in our hearts; changing us from the inside out. I recently read a post on Facebook that sums this up—Once a man was asked what he gained from prayer. The man replied, 'I lost many things: anger, ego, greed, depression, insecurity and the fear of death'. Sometimes the answer to our prayer is not gaining but losing, which ultimately is the gain.

In the Second Reading, St. Paul speaks of either being at home in the body and being at home with Christ. We cannot have both. Without prayer, we can be at home in our body and away from the Lord. However, when we are connected to God and have a relationship with Him through prayer, we will find that we are at home with the Lord and away from the body. This is the miracle God does inside us.

Prayer: Abba Father, I pray for the gift of faith as big as a mustard seed. Lord, let that seed grow within me, that I may be a faithful servant to the end of my days. Amen.

Monday June 14

11th Week in Ordinary Time

Grace is the invitation to work alongside God in His ministry.

2Cor6: 1-10

Ps98: 1-4

Matt 5: 38-42

In his letter to the Corinthians, St Paul urges them not to waste God's grace given to them. At first glance this seems a rather strange sentence as most of us see God's grace as blessings, healings, and solutions we ask for and receive. But St. Paul understands God's grace as the calling we are given to be a part of God's ministry. He

states that the invitation to work alongside God in His ministry is the grace of God.

When I think back, the grace God poured into my life is immense. I have been washed in the most precious blood of Jesus, cleansed so completely from the stain of sin. The ultimate price for my sin has been paid by my Saviour in full so I can stand as a child of God. I have been given His Holy Spirit who lives within me and guides me. And this grace is new every morning, it never gets old, it never wears off. But how easy it is to receive this grace in vain, to live a life so empty of the power that is contained in this grace.

In today's Gospel proclamation, our Lord Jesus urges us not to resist or turn away an evil person, a broken person or someone who may not have experienced God in their life. He wants us to give without limit or without counting cost. It is what He did for us. Was it not His unending love, His limitless mercy and forgiveness that first drew our hearts to Him?

The Lord Jesus says, "Give to the one who asks of you, and do not turn your back on one who wants to borrow" (Matthew 5:42). He says give of your talents, give of your money, give of your resources and most of all give of your time and love. Do not turn away from the one who has nothing, who has no love so they cannot love you. Do not turn away from the one who is selfish, who has addictions and who has messed up everything. Meet them in love because the Lord Jesus is waiting for us to bring that person to Him.

Prayer: Abba Father, as you are calling me to bring others to You, give me the grace to serve You as You desire me to. Amen!

Tuesday June 15

11th Week in Ordinary Time

- "Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you" Matthew 7:12.

2 Cor 8: 1-9

Ps 146: 2-9

Matt 5: 43-48

Love... The most powerful of all. I've learned that the purest or rather unconditional love comes from God and Children.

By telling us not to retaliate, our Lord Jesus keeps us from taking the law into our own hands. By loving and praying for our enemies, we can overcome evil with good. The Jewish Religious leaders interpreted Leviticus 19:18 as a teaching that they should love only those who love them, and Psalms 139:19-22 and 140:9-11 as meaning that they should hate their enemies. But Jesus says we are to love our enemies. If we love your enemies and treat them well, we will truly show other that Jesus is Lord of our lives. This is possible only for those who give themselves fully to God because only he can deliver people from natural selfishness. We must trust the Holy Spirit to help us show love to those for whom we cannot love.

We can be perfect if our behavior is appropriate for our maturity level-perfect, yet with much room to grow. Our tendency to sin must never deter us from striving to be more like Christ. Christ calls all his disciples to excel, rise above mediocrity, and be mature in every area, becoming like him. Those who strive to become perfect will one day be perfect, even as Christ is perfect.

In maturity: We cannot achieve Christlike character and holy living all at once, but we must grow toward maturity and wholeness. Just as we expect a baby, a child, a teenager, or an adult to behave differently, so God expects us to respond to Him, depending on our stage of spiritual development.

A few months after I experienced Jesus, my interest in reading the bible and wanting to know the Lord, building a relationship with him became my ultimate goal, which remains even now. One afternoon I came across Matthew 7:12 - "Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you". These words of Jesus penetrated deep into my heart. My life completely changed since that day. I've been practicing this rule, and it gives me a great deal of Joy.

Prayer: Abba Father, Place in my heart your kind of love that I may be a vessel to share it with the needy. Amen!

2Cor9:6-11
Ps 112:1-9
Matt6:1-18

Today's readings are worth their weight in gold. They contain some golden rules which we are called to follow and which can transform our lives.

The Psalmist says - 'Blessed the man who fears the Lord.' I see it this way. Blessed is the man or woman who honours the Lord. When we honour the Lord, do as He commands and live those parts of our life in secrecy, God begins to do a new thing.

This truth is a life changer. The one who sows meagerly will reap meagerly. It is about sowing in the key aspects of life, Love, money, wealth, abilities, time, faith and prayer. When we sow meagerly with regard to times of prayer, we lack in faith, wisdom and a miraculous life. When we lack in giving love we feel so bitter and never seem to get better. But for each person there is a critical area where they are called to sow. However the most challenging areas are with regard to money, love and time. Today take time to discover your critical area. God loves a cheerful giver. Many people are looking for the ideal place to invest a sizable chunk of their savings that promises high returns. We cheerfully agree to invest in a venture where we are rock solid sure that the returns will be high. But just imagine if the Lord speaks to us and asks us to put the 'same amount' in a struggling old age home. Will we respond with the same enthusiasm or will we walk away dejected, like the rich young man.

We are cautioned to refrain from making a show of our good deeds. It is very hard to follow. We somehow bring out our goodness through a carefully crafted testimony of how our generosity resulted in a miracle. But today the Lord is telling us in black and white - your Father sees beyond appearances - And your Father who see what is kept secret, will reward you. We are invited to pray in secret and keep our prayer secret. When you pray, go into your room, shut the door, and pray to your Father who is with you in secret and your Father who sees what is kept secret will reward you. You will be rewarded for the things you kept secret not for what you broadcasted. Let's start afresh!Shhhh...

Prayer: Abba Father, I fail so badly in keeping secrets. I blurt out about my accomplishments and generostiy and lose out. Help me to change, Amen

2Cor 11: 1-11
Ps 111: 1-8
Matt 6: 7-15

Since our childhood we have learned to pray. We would have prayed so many times and for so many different reasons. May be some of us felt good praying or felt nothing.

Today our Lord Jesus teaches us what to pray for, how to pray and to forgive in prayer. Prayer is beyond words that we say, it is beyond a feeling—it is an experience of a living and real relationship with our Father in heaven.

To enter into this experience with God we have to reach out to Him a child of God—“Our Father in Heaven...”. God knows what we need, so instead of praying prayers of saying “give me this and give me that” let us start today by reaching into the arms of our Father. He is waiting for us. Let us use our time especially every morning to spend quality time with God.

We can start by praising God using a Psalm like today's ‘Psalm of Praise’ – to give Praise to God for His greatness, glory, goodness, power and for being faithful and true forever. We can use the ‘4 Steps’ to go deeper in communion with the Lord.

When we acknowledge our Father in heaven, Lord Jesus our saviour and the precious Holy Spirit, we immediately connect supernaturally to the family of God – the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. As we forgive those who have hurt us, we receive forgiveness and freedom. We open ourselves to the will of God and our will is aligned in surrender to the will of the Father. In His will all our needs are met. The Spirit we receive does not make us slaves, so that we live in fear again; rather, the Spirit brings about our adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” Romans 8:15

It does not matter where we are today or what our state is, our Lord Jesus is inviting us to call out to our Father who is God the Almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

Prayer: Abba Father, even though I fail many times, I believe I am your child and that you define me, you are inside me and that you are my reality. Amen

2 Cor 11: 18, 21-30

Ps 34: 2-7

Matt 6: 19-23

As much as suffering is part of our own lives, it is a part that we tend to push away, trying to avoid at all costs, simply because it is too painful and we become weak in the face of suffering. We take all measures possible to keep our weaknesses hidden as they expose our vulnerabilities. St. Paul, on the contrary, boasts about his sufferings and weaknesses in the first reading today and the list seems endless. It is difficult to imagine how St. Paul could speak of all negativities he had to go through with such pride. This very act makes me wonder about things that could have enabled him to give such a brave response. It is never mentioned that St. Paul fought his persecutors with weapons, instead his endurance, courage and strength seemed to come from an invisible source. Listening to Jesus in today's gospel, it makes me realise that St. Paul is drawing from the treasures he had stored up in heaven.

It is a great opportunity for each one of us to examine where we have stored up our riches, for there will be days we must draw from our stores to keep on going. In our human capacities, we try to save up enough possessions for the future and the more we have in our savings, the better we feel. But the reality is that all our needs cannot be met with mere physical possessions we pile up on earth. In the face of a terminal illness, betrayal of a spouse or a friend, a financial crisis, loss of a job or a loss of a loved one, all the wealth in the world would come to mean nothing. We would need something beyond physical possessions to help sustain us through these trials in life and these are the kinds of treasure we are called to gather, that no one could snatch away from us. In a special way, let us open ourselves to the leading of the Spirit throughout this day, allowing Him to show us the kind of treasure that endures, that gives us strength to carry on through crisis, that enables us to rejoice in the face of suffering, that fills us with courage to stand firm through uncertain situations and allows us to reach out to others at the same time.

Prayer: Abba Father, Grant that we may always gather up treasure in heaven so that our hearts will always be where You are. Amen!

2 Cor 12: 1-10

Ps 34: 8-13

Matt 6: 24-34

“No one can serve two masters”, says Lord Jesus. Sounds fair enough, doesn't it? I am sure not any of us have been slaves with masters. It might be technically possible to have two masters but would be practically impossible to serve both.

After all, isn't it the very essence of modern life that we have multiple responsibilities and competing commitments, and isn't it the mark of mature adulthood that we manage to balance those numerous responsibilities and maintain our multiple commitments to the various persons to whom we are responsible? It's not like loving two children or working two jobs. It's more like trying to be a devoted fan of two football teams that are in competition with each other. It just doesn't work. You end up either on one side or the other – ‘hating one and loving the other or holding to one and despising the other’.

‘Consider the birds of the air’, Lord Jesus says. ‘They neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet they seem to be doing alright!’ They don't have savings, bank accounts, houses or any sort of worldly security, but they don't have mortgages or bills to pay either. They seem to be doing just fine! And ‘consider the lilies! They never worry about clothes, but they look great!’

Perhaps we fall into the category of serving mammon during the week and God on the weekends. We can't do both, our Lord Jesus is very clear about it. You can't serve both masters. You can't build God's Kingdom if you're busy building your own empire. You can't pour yourself out for God and for those in need if you're busy pouring yourself into building up your own assets. And so Jesus warns us that likewise we won't find a Heavenly security for ourselves if we're too busy securing a place for ourselves on earth. It just doesn't work like that!

Prayer: Abba Father, in our daily life, we are continuously tempted to seek the riches of the world and making it a priority within. Help us to seek first the Kingdom of God and store heavenly treasures which takes us closer to eternal life. Amen.

Sunday June 20

12th Sunday in Ordinary Time - Pope's Day

Quiet now! Be still

Job 38: 1, 8-11

Ps 107: 23-31

2 Cor 5: 14-17

Mark 4: 35-41

This is the season of stormy weather. The Meteorological Department has been posting warning of inclement weather. The winds have been so strong that roofing sheets have been blown off and homes damaged. Beautiful aged trees have finally bowed down to the winds and the waves of the stormy weather.

This was the same weather that greeted the dingy boat in which our Lord Jesus was sleeping and the rest were petrified. They were rock solid sure that their end was near. Imagine if seasoned fisher folk were terror struck by the wind and waves, what would have happened to us. And yet we all face such stormy weather in other guises - a financial setback, a relationship on edge, a death in the family. Each of these bring us to a point where we say, how will we go on from here. We come to a point of hopelessness. But this is the tipping point where human efforts fail and faith should take over.

There are certain areas in life where we as long as we are human will have no understanding. Let's get this straight. We will never have all the answers and the logic. Someone may explain a concept very convincingly but it is not the final answer. As long as we are in the flesh we will see everything with a veil. The blanket is lifted at time when God in His mercy may give us an insight or revelation. But it is never complete in this earthly life. Even the great St. Paul had a wonderful and deep experience of God's love but that did not prevent him from being biased towards women. He was trapped in the customs and behaviour of those times and societies. In certain areas like preaching to Gentiles he was directed and shown the way forward but in other areas he was allowed to be biased. The point being no one is given all the answers... if so that person will be acting as God and we will begin to worship that person. God is completeness and clarity.

In the first reading Job is asked if he knows the boundaries where the seas and clouds are held back. If we look up at the clouds, we will see that they have their own life... wading across the skies at their own pace. And a glance at the seas will show us that untiringly they lap against the shores as though some invisible hands is dipping into

the water and pushing them to the shore. We may have scientific answers about wave action but at some point it can all stop short,

The areas where we do not have answers are the areas where fears step in. Today, we are faced with fear of the future, fear of the outcome, fear of our ability to earn, fear of the future of our families.

I was faced with fears regarding life and death and I began to read HDE stories or Near Death Experiences. These taught me so much. The most important being that we all contain a spirit & soul that will live forever and have all the faculties that we so boast about in our earthly form. Seeing, hearing, moving, thinking continue even after death. Hence, we see people in their physical form but we fail to see them in their spiritual form. A handsome person may be carrying the most evil spirits while a poor leper may be the epitome of angelic beauty. Alas we cannot distinguish due to our lack of heavenly vision.

When we begin a journey with the Lord, some of these senses are awakened and we are urged to love, accept and see people in a different light. Secondly in that realm, words are no longer necessary. You are aware of everyone's thoughts, emotions and feelings. That is why prayer is not about words but the reality in the depth of your heart. God sees the heart and its intentions.

Thirdly, people experience waves of love, familiarity and acceptance. They feel welcomed and they do not want to leave, They are either told that they have completed their mission or have to go back since their mission on earth is incomplete. If we know that our mission on earth was complete, we would not be afraid of death. If we knew that we would be welcomed and loved we would not be afraid of the other side. In Christ all these secrets become a reality. St Paul says we do not regard anyone from a human point of view, we should now regard him in another way. Meaning everyone is a precious soul with a beautiful mission from the Father unknown to me. St Paul says the one who is in Christ is a new creature, The old things have passed and away, a new world has come. This is so deep. I am no longer alone. Our Lord is in my boat, specially when I go through the most violent storms. He is for me and with me. Most importantly He is in me and He says, "Quiet, Be still". Let me respond!

Prayer: Abba Father, I choose to open myself up not to human wisdom and understanding but to the World as revealed by the Holy Spirit. In this spiritual world even my emotions, sighs and motivations are known by the Lord who answers them in His immense love. Amen

Monday June 21

St. Aloysius Gonzaga

When we judge others we do not have time to love them'

Genesis 12: 1-9

Ps 33: 12-22

Matt 7: 1-5

The first reading prompts us to envision the task Abram was assigned with. To let go of the land, his people, the known and step in to the unknown would have been challenging for Abram especially when he was seventy-five in age. As in Abraham's case, when we also take a step in faith in response to God's calling there are huge blessings that are in store for us. Abraham's success is a shining

example in this regard. In our lives we have experienced occasions when our faithful obedience had paid off with immense blessings. It is strange but true. Our service to God is never in vain. When we heed God's voice and surrender our will to His, that it is the best decision we could possibly take. As God knows to bring the blessing not only to us but even generations to come, thus we could sincerely do so with confidence.

The Gospel proclamation stresses on the sin of judging others. As human beings no one has the right to judge. Yet, how often do we hear people judging and condemning others? We may know little of one's story and we may not know what this person's struggle and fight is about. The Lord knows the entire story therefore only He has the authority to judge. With our incorrect assessments and definitions we may misjudge and mistreat people in our self opinions and judgments. Yet, the good Lord is able to see what the human eye cannot see and His judgments are fair in all aspects. Therefore, let us be careful before we speak ill of others in our daily conversations. The measure we judge others or indulge in gossip and slander. This will be the scale for our life to be judged in the Lord's eye. Therefore let us leave the judgment in the good Lord's hand for he is the just judge. As Mother Theresa said "When we judge others we do not have time to love them". In a world much strained and stressed if we just keep loving without judging, what a difference we will make? Isn't it time that empowered of the Holy Spirit we take the initiative to treat our neighbours and fellow beings without judgment and love them instead of judging.

Prayer: Abba Father, Give me a heart to mend my own weaknesses and try to love and understand others without being judgmental. Amen

Genesis 13: 2,5-18

Ps 15: 2-5

Matt 7: 6, 12-14

Lot couldn't believe his ears!! .."Was Abram really offering him the choice of any of land that was before them? Could he really be so foolish?!! The land surrounding the Jordan was so lush and bountiful! Surely Abram wasn't naive enough to think that, he, Lot would choose the less fertile land of Canna and offer him the valley of Jordan?But then who am I to question my

luck when Abram is being so magnanimous? It's best to take him at his word! After-all one has a duty to think of one's self and one's family first..."

Do these thoughts sound familiar? Is this not what the world and our flesh teach us? To look out for number one!! To look out for our own self-interest first, not care for the other person. We know how the story of Lot ends, fixing his eyes on the wealth of the land he ventures closer and closer to Sodom& Gomorrah and soon he is living in the sinful city of Sodom. Ultimately he loses everything including his wife as he flees from the destruction of those cities.

Yet we see Abram taking a totally different approach. He has now journeyed with God for many years. The first reading says 'he is a rich man', but he know the source of his blessing, he knows that he owes all he has not to the bountifulness of the land, but rather to the grace and mercy of God, who has always been faithful to him. Abrams eyes are fixed on God and not on the land. And God blesses him even more, making him the father of the nations. In the Gospel proclamation we see the Lord Jesus extol the disciples to walk through the narrow gate. This is not the gate that our flesh longs to tread, nor is it the gate that the world around us tells us we must walk through in order to gain success. The very fact it is called "narrow"implies it is not an easy way to tread, we are asked to conform ourselves to the narrowness of the gate in order to get through. It is a path of self-denial, a path of sacrifice, a path where we are called to experience death to our own nature. Yet it is that very experience of death which leads us to happiness and fullness of life.

Prayer:Abba Father I come fixing my eyes upon you. Lord show me your ways so I may walk in them. Amen

Genesis 15: 1-12, 17-18
Ps 105: 1-19
Matt 7: 15-20

In today's 1st reading we reflect on God's promise to Abram. Abram received a covenant promise, not a momentary blessing but a blessing for generations to come, it was an exchange of persons when God was saying 'I will be your God, you shall be My people' (Refer Ezekiel 36:28).

Two months ago we faced a major crisis, fear and uncertainty got in us. We had recently also relocated and were feeling vulnerable. In addition we were wrongly judged by family members who didn't want to accept our move. This was bringing doubt into our own hearts. It was a battle to hold on to our divine identity and purpose, like God's promises were slipping away. In my desperation, God revealed His heart through Psalm of 105. In verse 8 we read; "He is mindful of His covenant forever." In the midst of doubt and worry if God was going to remember and fulfill His promises, the Lord was saying, 'I will forever remember My covenant promise.' It hit me, even before we remind God of His promises, God remembers His covenant forever.

In the next few weeks He spoke the same word to me through a Rainbow which I kept seeing four times in a span of six weeks! Didn't realise until on the 3rd occasion when I asked the Lord Jesus, 'Lord What are you saying?', the Spirit reminded me of the 'covenant' promise given to Noah. My mind went back to these words I had read, written on paper and hung on a wall; "God's covenant is not a mere exchange of goods or services. It is an Exchange of Persons; "You shall be My people and I shall be your God." (Ezekiel 36:28). Reflecting on these precious words, "Covenant promise" I suddenly encountered His tangible presence and love. His word came alive. A week later I go for a walk, no distraction of being in a vehicle this time. I see the vast & magnificent rainbow face to face for the 4th time. I'm in awe. His promise is eternal. Today if you are facing a challenge, rest assured no matter the chaos around, you're precious and valued. Your identity is in Christ! God remembers His covenant promise forever = You are His people and He is your God.

Prayer: Abba Father, let us never forget your covenant promise over our lives, in Jesus name. Amen

Thursday June 24

Solemnity of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist

"He must increase. I must decrease."

Isaiah 49: 1-6
Ps 139: 1-15
Acts 13: 22-26
Luke 1: 57-66,80

Today is the Feast of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist. The Gospel proclamation portrays a situation where Jewish parents customarily name their male child on the day of circumcision. This event is of great importance as it signals the beginning of the child's covenant membership in Israel. The people are amazed by the miracle that takes place when John's father Zechariah's

tongue is loosened. Following nine months of silence, he experiences a dramatic recovery. It shows that he no longer doubts but accepts with joy the arrival of the child. The Gospel also says that the child grew up in the spirit.

Last year, while celebrating the Feast of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist, Pope Francis said that, "Let us learn from the one who was the forerunner of Jesus the ability to bear witness to the Gospel with courage, beyond our own differences, while preserving the harmony and friendship that form the basis of any credible proclamation of the faith." The Pope also reminded us that, despite the Covid-19 crisis, to understand that it's indeed "a peaceful time of rest, enjoyment of the beauty of creation, and strengthening of the ties between us and God."

St. John the Baptist passed the baton to our Lord Jesus. The main purpose of his life was to bring people to the awareness of God in repentance. He accepted his mission from the hands of God and never crossed his boundaries to exalt himself. In one instance John's disciples complained that His disciples were leaving him and going to Jesus. John gave a famous response; "That is how it should be. He must increase, I must decrease." This spirituality is vital for us also. As we go through the Gospels, we see Jewish religious leaders sending priests and levites to check if St. John is the Messiah, but he insists he is not. His obedience, humility and standing for truth no matter what are lessons for us today to ponder over. St. John the Baptist obeyed his calling and spent his whole life working towards bringing people to God through repentance. Our mission continues as we introduce Jesus Christ to our family and friends through our words and deeds. **Prayer: Abba Father, I am not very clear about the road ahead of me but I know You are already there waiting for me. Lead me by the right road, I trust you always. Amen.**

Friday June 25

12th Week in Ordinary Time

Blessed are you who fear the LORD, who walk in his ways! Psalm 128

Genesis 17: 1, 9-22

Ps 128: 1-5

Matt 8: 1-4

Reflecting on today's readings might prompt a question in the minds of some. If God is as all mighty as he says he is and he only needs to speak a word to heal, why not speak and showcase his all mighty power to stop the pandemic? Seems a logical and reasonable question to ask at least on the surface level. But lest we forget, in 1917 the world was hit by the Spanish Influenza

virus, it infected about 500 million people – about a third of the world's population at that time. What could be a worse travesty? A decade later began World War II the deadliest conflict in human history, resulting in 70 to 85 million deaths ending with the atomic bomb detonated in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It is not the influenza that carved a deep wound, it is this war that the world is still recovering from.

Yet, 100 years later here we are looking down the same barrel, what have we learned from this? It is the human heart's leprosy that needs healing. We may nod our head in agreement, but perhaps our Lord's response would be "Let me begin with you" Where does the conversion in our heart need to happen? Is there anything in our life that withhold us from walking in obedience to the Lord? What part of our life can we stretch out to the Lord and say "Lord, make me clean". We can ask our Lord to reveal if there is any barrier that we have put and is stopping him from working in our lives. The fruit of Abrahams' Yes! And Our Lord Jesus, Yes! To the Father's will is what we enjoy today thousands of years later.

Our Father so desires to heal the leprosy in our hearts so that we too in turn, can be a blessing not only for the present world but the generations to come. Let us not forget that God does not take any pleasure in sickness or death, he is the God of life and life in all its fullness. He spoke life into Abraham and Sarah he spoke a word of healing to the leper. Today, the world is in desperate need of people who are walking in obedience to the Lord and through their life example to make this world a better place.

Prayer: Abba Father, heal the leprosy in my heart so that I may walk in obedience to you. Amen

Genesis 18: 1-15

Lk 1: 46-55

Matt 8: 5-17

In today's readings we see a buildup of events taking place from the First reading to the Gospel proclamation. These readings paint a picture of our own lives and the shift we are called to make.

In the First reading we are given a visual description of Abraham and Sarah; their age, their inability to bear children, as well as the desire to be parents, that they may have had at an earlier age. Sarah would have longed for the pleasure of being a mother, and would have waited many years and finally given into the hopelessness and the despair of a lost dream. But here we see the Lord coming and prophesying over her life, but instead of accepting it gladly in expectation she laughs in unbelief.

The same can be true in our lives, we may be walking through seasons of waiting and believing for the fulfillment of a promise in our lives. And more often than not we look at our surroundings, our own selves and believe that what we see and hear is the Ultimate Truth. Today's First reading is teaching us that there is another way, the ultimate truth is that the God of all creation, is able to create something out of nothing, and age is no barrier to Him.

The Gospel proclamation introduces us to the Lord Jesus; the Word of God, as the epitome of today's readings. The centurion accepted that the Lord Jesus had all authority, was the Lord and the Word of God. His faith set the benchmark for us - belief in what is unseen and the acceptance of the goodness of God in his life and the life of his servant.

In the Responsorial Psalm we see how the Blessed Mother responded after the angel had given her the good news. It is the bridge between the First reading and the Gospel proclamation; through which we see the difference in responses. In the same manner as for Sarah, the Blessed Mother was foretold about the future and she accepted it in faith and trust in what was told to her, and believed in the unfailing goodness of God.

Prayer: Abba Father, give us Your gift of faith that we too will be able to believe in Your unfailing goodness. Amen.

Sunday June 27

13th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Align with His will in everything

Wisdom 1: 13-15, 2:
23-24
Ps 30: 2-13
2 Cor 8: 7-15
Mark 5: 21-43

Today's liturgy poses a great challenge to our faith journey and invites us to be fully aligned with our identity as Christians. The Greek word Chrematizo means "supernaturally revealed" (imparted or anointed ones). It is more than simply "called". We who are followers of Lord Jesus are anointed to have His Mind, Heart and His Holy Spirit in us, thus being another Christ in our world.

The Book of Wisdom simply tells us that God did not make death, nor does He rejoice in the destruction of the living. We were designed to be imperishable but we all know what happened to that design, and that the Son of God came to this world as one of us, to clean the mess we had gotten ourselves in, and to pay in full, the debt we owed God for our pride and disobedience. So one thing was clear from the beginning, sickness and death are not the Will of God and we must align with His Will when we pray for healing.

Today's Gospel proclamation reveals to us the Heart of the Father that was seen by the Son and enacted in the earthly realm. I love the words used by the synagogue leader Jairus when he came to Lord Jesus and fell at His feet. He said, "...Please come and put your hands on her, so that she will be healed and live." (Mark 5:23) Jairus had no doubt that if Lord Jesus laid hands on his daughter, she will live. It was not a possibility but a certainty. The woman with the bleeding issue for twelve long years, having exhausted all available medical treatment, also came with a certainty; "If I just touch His clothes, I will be healed." (Mark 5:28) Both Jairus and the woman with bleeding issue performed a daring act. In fact the woman went against the Jewish law when she decided to join the crowd and touch the hem of His garment, for the Jewish law had forbidden any woman with bleeding to come into contact with anyone at all. A touch of the "unclean" was believed to make those 'touched', unclean too. They knew they were encountering the One person who had the power to give what they both desired desperately, the healing. This is not about advocating breaking of the law but rising above all restrictions and limitations to open the door to the miracle we need. They did not have any doubt 'if' their pursue would be a failure, they 'knew' that

the miracle was theirs to claim and make their own.

Then in the case of Jairus, he encounters a major crisis in his faith journey as he receives the news of the daughter's death, his worst fear being realised. Yet Jairus was in the right place, he was in the company of Lord Jesus, The One who would not fail. Lord Jesus sprang up to encourage Jairus; He didn't mind the sarcasm of on-lookers. We too are taught a very valuable lesson in faith here; to be in constant union with The Lord by living in The Spirit each moment everyday. When we are having an intimate relationship with The Lord, unfolding of unexpected events and 'bad' news are met first by The Lord Himself and not by us. Then the words of St. Paul in Romans 8:28 becomes real in our lives always! "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." Further, our God has given us a promise through the prophet Isaiah thus: "I am God, and there is no other; ...I make known the end from the beginning,.." (Isaiah 46:9,10). Like Jairus, we too can continue to look at The Lord and not at the world.

What happened to those who were living in the natural, laughing at Lord Jesus when He said that the daughter of Jairus was only sleeping? They were not included in the witnessing of the great miracle that The Lord knew was going to happen! They missed out being party to the supernatural event. We too need to understand that our decision to choose the natural or the world view will have its consequences, missing out the supernatural or heaven's view. God has given us the freedom to choose, but the consequence follows the choice.

We are invited to walk into a new realm in our prayer life and simply in our day to day activities, partnering with The Lord in bringing to the world what Lord Jesus has won through His suffering and death. Through our baptism we become partners with The Holy Trinity in making the dreams in the Heart of The Father come real, and through the baptism in The Holy Spirit we are empowered to do the very works The Lord Jesus did on the earth and much more! St Paul in today's second reading shows how the resources are enough for all when we let go of what we are holding onto. We must make the choice to trust or not to trust God with what He Himself has gifted us.

Prayer: Abba Father, I admit that You alone are my Provider in all areas of my life, turning my wailing into dancing, removing my sackcloth no clothing me with joy. I choose to let go of all what I am holding into Your Hands, and I hold onto You alone. Amen.

Genesis 18: 16-33
Ps 103: 1-11
Matt 8: 18-22

We see in amazement Abraham's close association with the Lord. So close that the Lord reveals what He is about to do in Sodom and Gomorrah. The nations of the earth are going to find blessing through Abraham, due to his fellowship with the Lord. Even his posterity would find purpose in becoming the Lord's disciples. We too are offered divine partnership with the Lord, as He walks with

us too in this journey of life.

Abraham intercedes for Sodom. Contrary to what some feel of the Old Testament, we see a strong thrust towards mercy and compassion being played out between Abraham and the Lord. Here lies a challenge to us Christians, as followers of the Lord, becoming involved in manifesting mercy and compassion. We need to step out into a world which is crying for it. Too long have we been sugar coating faith to stem the flow of people losing faith to no avail. Time has come to challenge ourselves to becoming like Mother Theresa or a Nelson Mandela, so as to manifest the joy and excitement of having the nature of God.

In the Gospel proclamation the Lord Jesus has a conversation. Need to hear what God communicates. When the Lord sees a crowd, He gives orders to cross to the other side. Generally crowds attract people who love crowds. The Lord chooses the opposite. Disciples need to take a cue from this. The scribe probably noticing the availability of popularity, wishes to follow the Lord. The Lord offers instead insecurity of what the world could offer, to win the fulfillment and security of eternal life in the end. The other states 'not now', when called. Let me wait till my father dies and I fulfill a son's duties. After all my life and time belong to me, seems to be what this man is thinking. He seems to not know the excitement of seeking first the Kingdom of God so that all things needed in life would be provided by God. Letting go of worldly concerns negates after all stress and fear. Belonging to God is absolute security. Surely then, we too could walk like Abraham with the Lord.

Prayer: Abba Father, live in me so that the world would see you living in me. Amen

Tuesday June 29

Solemnity of Sts Peter & Paul, Apostles

Faith, deliverance and victory

Act 12: 1-11
Ps 34: 2-9
2 Tim 4: 6-18
Matt 16: 13-19

Today's first reading shows Peter being miraculously freed of his chains in the prison where he was being held captive by King Herod, who already had the blood of John the Baptist and the apostle James, the brother of John, on his hands, hoping that by killing the leaders, their followers would fall away and the fledgling faith would die out.

In the second reading, Saint Paul foreshadows his martyrdom for the faith but fearlessly and eloquently proclaims his instrumentality for the mission of preaching the gospel and his confidence in the eternal reward that awaits him. We know that Paul also experienced a miraculous physical deliverance from chains and imprisonment by his persecutors, during his journey of evangelization of the gentiles. The striking similarity of the deliverance experiences of the two most significant concurrent leaders of the early Church is amazing. We see that, in both situations, fervent prayers and unflinching faith produced spectacular results, to further the divine plan of evangelisation. Faith is also the theme of today's Gospel proclamation. Our Lord Jesus Christ recognised that it was not the human faculties of learning, knowledge or understanding that led Peter to proclaim His divinity, but divine revelation, only able to be 'downloaded' by total faith and which led Jesus to anoint Saint Peter as his successor on earth.

It is instructive to reflect on the very different backgrounds and work of the two saints of today. On the one hand, Saint Paul, who travelled most of the then-known world extensively to preach to the Gentiles and, having studied at the feet of very highly respected Pharisee, Gamaliel, was eloquent in his preaching. On the other hand, Saint Peter's message, born of his humble fisherman's background, was simple, but incisive; and he preached largely to the Jews in Judaea. Despite their differing levels of education, approaches to preaching and their audiences, the results, born of their deep faith and fearless commitment, even unto martyrdom, were similar and stunning.

Prayer: Abba, Father, send your Holy Spirit into our hearts to deliver us from the bonds of earthly things, help us discern our mission and make us instruments of your will. Amen

Genesis 21: 5, 8-20a

Ps 34: 7-13

Matt 8: 28-34

In today's first reading we are told about Abraham, his wife Sarah and the conflict they had regarding Ishmael, the child that Abraham had from his slave girl Hagar.

Essentially the Bible is not a history book but a book of Theology. Catholic Bible scholars say the largely historical part began with God's call to Abraham. But Genesis and other Old Testament books were written by rabbis who were known to be often male chauvinistic. Scholars say most of the Old Testament books were written during the time of exile. When the writers wanted to bring the intellectual Jews back to their country from Babylon.

Catholic Bible scholars say they gave a sort of a spin to the stories. Even in today's reading we see Abraham portrayed as a sincere and caring person while Sarah was disobedient or selfish and demanded that the slave girl Hagar and her son Ishmael be sent out. So Hagar and Ishmael went away with some provisions given to them by Abraham. At one stage they ran out of provisions and Hagar left the child Ishmael to die. But the Genesis writer says God provided their needs and from Ishmael came the new religion of Islam.

We need to be aware because of this one act of selfishness, for the past 2000 years there has been tensions or war between Christian and Islamic forces. Now it is worse than ever before with the terror group ISIS, letting loose their suicide bombers even on churches to kill or injure hundreds of Christians, as they did in Sri Lanka on Easter Sunday April 21 in 2019.

In today's Gospel proclamation we are told that how the Lord Jesus met two savage demoniacs who said to Him, "What have you to do with us, Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the appointed time?" Besides showing the mighty power of Jesus it is also significant that both the Jews and Islamic devotees do not eat pork and the Lord chases the demons into pigs which fall from the hill and perish.

Prayer: Abba Father, may we remember that one selfish act could have consequences for generations. Deliver me from slavery to my self. Amen

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ST. CHARLES LWANGA

Charles was born in the Kingdom of Buganda, the central and southern part of Uganda, and served as chief of the royal pages and later major domo in the court of King Mwangwa.

In an effort to resist a Christian worldview that undermined the authority of his office, King Mwangwa insisted that Christian converts abandon their new faith. When they refused, the king executed them, and continued to persecute many Christians between 1885 and 1887.

Joseph Mkasa, who was the leader of the small community of 200 Christians, was also the chief steward of King Mwangwa's court. When the king killed a Protestant missionary and his companions, Joseph Mkasa confronted the king and condemned his action. The king had him killed. Charles Lwanga took over the leadership of the Christian community at court, and the charge of keeping the young boys and men out of Mwangwa's hands.

When the king found out, he ordered the royal compound to be sealed and guarded so that no one could escape, and summoned the country's executioners. Hearing this, Charles baptized four catechumens that night, including a thirteen year old. The next morning Mwangwa brought his whole court before him. He asked the young men if they intended to remain Christians. When they answered "Yes" with strength and courage, Mwangwa condemned them to death. Charles was separated from the others and was burned alive.

Charles and the other Christians who accompanied him to death, were canonized on 18th October 1964 by Pope Paul VI.

Their feast day is on 3rd June.

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.