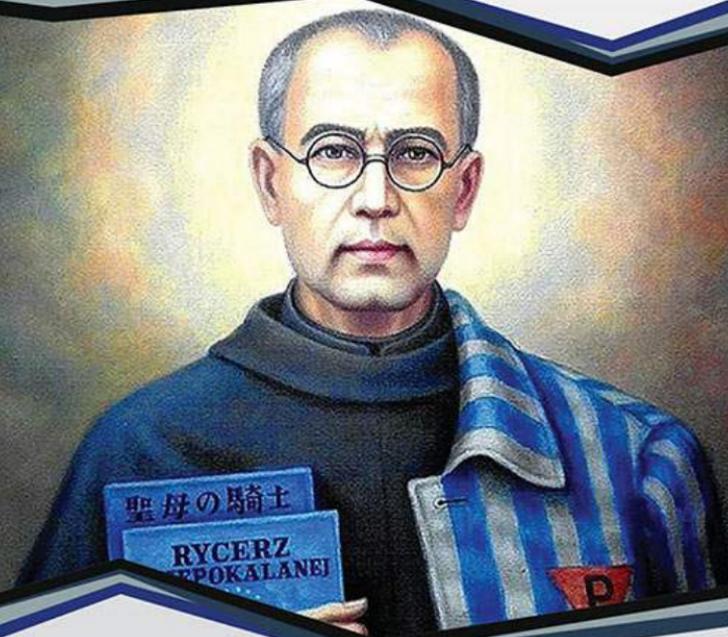


AUGUST
2021

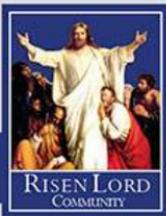


ON OUR KNEES IN HIS HANDS



St. Maximilian Mary Kolbe

Feast Day: 14 August



DAILY READINGS & REFLECTIONS



ON OUR KNEES IN HIS HANDS

AUGUST
2021

“In Mary’s Assumption into Heaven, we celebrate an infinitely greater conquest than the “giant step for mankind” when man first set foot on the moon. When the lowly Virgin of Nazareth set foot in paradise, body and spirit, it was “the huge leap forward for humanity”. This gives us hope that we are precious, destined to rise again. God does not allow our bodies to vanish into nothing. With God, nothing is lost!”

Pope Francis

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Sunday August 01

18th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Exodus
16: 2-4, 12-15

Psalm
78:3-423-54

2 Ephesians
4:17, 20-24

John
6: 24-35

We are called to have the mind of Christ!

Today's liturgical theme is built on food, satiety and transformation. The First Reading portrays Israelites as a people who grumbled about everything. They longed for the pot of meat they ate in Egypt. Suddenly the cruel treatment and injustice they suffered for 430 years as slaves in Egypt seemed preferable to the deprivation of meat. It is easy for us to label them as ungrateful, not appreciative of the magnanimous action of God. Undeserving as they were, yet God being the perfect Father, heard their unreasonable complaints and provided them supernaturally with meat and bread, thus fulfilling the desires of their hearts. At God's command heaven's doors opened every morning, and rained down the bread of angels as food for humans (cf. Psalm 78:23-25), and nature obeyed the Creator's command to send a swarm of quails every evening to cover the ground around their tents. God showed His people that He could feed them with what they thought was impossible to have in the desert, and He assures He is just the same even in 21st century.

Today's Gospel proclamation is about the afterglow of a similar miracle performed by our Lord Jesus, namely the feeding of the five thousand. The Lord is telling us today, as He told them then, to desire a deeper and intimate relationship with Him, The Living Bread. God's word is alive and active, and when we build our life on The Word of God, we do not hunger and thirst for worldly affection and fame. Instead, we are renewed, with His peace and joy filling our hearts. His promises give us breakthroughs in impossible circumstances, giving us victory as God's children.

Food is known to renew and transform our weakened bodily systems. The heaven's bread, The Word of God does the same to our mind, renewing it and enabling us to have the Heart and Mind of Christ. St Paul tells us to put off our old corrupted self and put on the new self that Christ has given us through His death and Resurrection. The Holy Spirit whom The Risen Lord released into us, tells us that we were created to be like Our Heavenly Father, and The Blood of Jesus has made us righteous and holy. Let us allow the Holy Spirit to transform our mindset from being slaves to our flesh to being the victorious sons and daughters of God.

Prayer: Abba Father, thank you for the new gift of victory in life.
Seal it with the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Monday August 02

14th Week in Ordinary Time

Numbers
11: 4b-15

Psalm
81: 12-17

Matthew
14: 13-21

Give them something to eat (Mt 14:16)

It seems that human nature has not changed much over time. The Israelites grumbled against Moses; he, in turn, complained to God; and aren't we, too, inclined to do the same? The manna sent by God was not meant to satisfy, but rather had a timeless, symbolic meaning. God's purpose was to bring God's people into the promised land – a land flowing with milk and honey. The manna looked like the real thing – milk – and tasted like honey. It pointed to the spirit that accompanied them throughout their journey. But the Israelites' senses were blunted to this message. Eating together is a recurring theme in the Gospel; the invitation to eat is reminiscent of the messianic banquet to all who accept Jesus's words. Now it is up to us to bring the Word to those hungry for good news. So, when our Lord Jesus says "You give them something to eat," He is inviting us to participate in building the kingdom.

Prayer: Lord Jesus thank you for giving us Yourself- the Bread of Life. Amen

Tuesday August 03

14th Week in Ordinary Time

Numbers
12: 1-13

Psalm
51: 3-13

Matthew
14: 22-36/15:1-14

Faith, prayer and miracles

The first reading points to prejudice causing Aaron and Miriam to reject Moses' special role. The consequences are dire, but despite their rejection, Moses prays for Miriam's healing. Today's psalm is a humble acknowledgment of sinfulness and a quest for mercy and forgiveness through prayer. In the Gospel proclamation, Our Lord Jesus Christ, pressured inexorably by the multitudes, for healing and teaching, needing space for solitary prayer, instructs His disciples to take the boat to the other side. In the storm, Jesus appears, to their initial disbelief; followed by fear; impulsiveness; doubt; leading to the miraculous rescue by our Lord Jesus. Finally, profound faith of all is stirred in the boat, adoring and acknowledging Him as the Son of God. That sequence is one that is familiar to many of us. We have His real presence in the Holy Eucharist and the support of the Holy Spirit, to lean on during trial and tribulation, to strengthen our faith.

Prayer: Abba Father, create a new heart in me and infuse me with Your Holy Spirit to strengthen my faith. Amen

Wednesday August 04

St. John Mary Vianney, priest

Numbers

13: 1,2, 25-14:1, 26-35

Psalm

33:2-3,10-11,18-19

Matthew

10:1-7

Challenge God with your faith.

Today we witness extremes of faithlessness in God's power versus faith in the Lord's ability to deliver. Among the Israelites, the congregation was quick to lose its faith and even wail the whole night when they heard of the account of the giants that inhabited the promised land. The bible says this so angered God that he swore that they would suffer 40 years, one year for each day of unbelief. It breaks God's heart when we respond with unbelief to the good He has done. Instead of recounting all His works we lose faith and collapse before the next challenge. The Cananite woman on the other hand was persistent with her plea to have our Lord Jesus deliver her possessed daughter. Our Lord was so convinced that He had come to save the lost house of Israel but her faith and bold answer were enough for him to do a powerful miracle where He simply responded and the girl who was physically far away was delivered. Let us come to the Lord with such faith.

Prayer: Abba Father, I believe that you can do all things. Amen.

Thursday August 05

Dedication of St. Mary Major Basilica

Numbers

20: 1-13

Psalm

95:1-9

Matthew

16: 13-23

"Get behind me Satan! You are an obstacle" Matthew 16:23

Today's Gospel proclamation reveals St Peter's greatest declaration. When our Lord Jesus asks his disciples "Who do people say I am?" The response of St. Peter was that our Lord Jesus was the true Messiah the Son of the living God. He revealed the truth about our Lord Jesus Christ because God the Father revealed it to him. Such was St. Peter's faith and love for the Lord that he was chosen to be the foundation on which the church was built. But in the same passage we see the Lord rebuking St. Peter. As much as he loved the Lord, St. Peter thought in the way of the world. He wanted to hold on to what he thought was the best plan of God. He failed to see that God had bigger and mightier plans. Many of us are also like St Peter. We love the Lord, we have faith and we earnestly strive to walk on this journey with the Lord. But we often refuse to see the bigger plans God has for us. We hold on to what we know is real and what we think is right. Trust in the Lord for his plans are bigger and better than our own little understanding.

Prayer: Abba Father, help me to surrender to you.

May your will be done in my life. Amen

Friday August 06

The Transfiguration of Our Lord

Daniel
7: 9-14 / 2 Pt1:16-19

Psalm
97:1-9

Matthew
17: 14-20

This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased

The Gospel passage today is one of the significant moments where the Father accepts Jesus as His Son. This is called a 'Theophany', commonly understood as a manifestation of God. As Catholics, when we profess the creed during mass, we proclaim; 'God from God, light from light, true God from true God', this is truly justified in this Gospel passage where it manifests the presence of the Trinity. It is not a coincidence that the three apostles are with Jesus in this moment. God reveals Jesus's identity to them and asks them to listen to whatever He has to say – Because Jesus is the total revelation of God. We come to know the union of the Trinity and the communion and love between them through Jesus' words, and deeds. Some scholars identify the appearance of Moses and Elijah with Jesus as a sign where Jesus becomes the fulfilment of the law and what the prophets said. Jesus is the long awaited Messiah and God Himself is present among them.

Prayer: Abba Father, . Abba Father, Just as the Transfiguration teaches us that Jesus is the Son, may it also inspire us to be transfigured. Amen.

Saturday August 07

St. Sixtus II, pope & martyr, St Cajetan, priest

Dueteronomy
6: 4-13

Psalm
18:2-4, 47-51

Matthew
17: 14-20

If only you had faith

In the Gospel proclamation, the disciples are unable to heal the epileptic boy which caused Jesus to call them faithless. Jesus admonishes them and tells them that with faith they could even order mountains and trees to move. But the question is how do we generate faith. Yes faith is a gift but we can be woefully unaware of it. Faith can be inculcated into one's lifestyle when it is fed to the person from childhood. This is what the reading from Dueteronomy speaks about. It instructs parents and guardians to never forget the origin of their success. If they possess anything, it has come from the mercy and goodness of God. While human effort and wisdom has worked it out, it is the hand of God that has been upon it all to make things happen. The word reminds us to be thankful and grateful to God for what he has done. We are told to share our faith with our children and write the word on various surfaces. While they lie down, why they are awake while we impart other information, we must build their faith.

Prayer: Abba Father, we pray for the grace to pass on the faith by way of word and example to our children. Amen

Sunday August 08

19th Sunday in Ordinary Time

1 Kings
19: 4-8

Psalm
34: 2-9

Ephesians
4: 30-5:2

John
6: 41-51

He got up, ate & drank and was strengthened by the food -1 Kings 19:8

Have you ever had such a bad day that you felt you would never recover? Have you ever felt like it was time to throw in the towel, admit defeat, curl up in a corner and treat your wounds? The Prophet Elijah knows this feeling and he too wants to throw in the towel. He literally climbs the mountain and curls up in a ball waiting for death. His day started in triumph and victory. But when Jezebel threatened Elijah, she appeared more powerful than God. He ran as far as he could away from her and curled up under a broom bush, asking God to end his life. This can happen to us. One moment we could be flying high for the Lord, doing everything we can for Him, and then the next moment we could be wallowing in self-pity and depression over a negative comment someone said about us. I do not know about you; but it has happened to me many times.

What is the answer to this? It is a relationship with the Lord. When the Lord chose us to be His and called us to His purpose, He did not promise it would be smooth sailing from then on. Instead, He said in John 16:33, "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." He wants us to have peace even as we face the worse day in our lives. He wants to give us this peace even when the world is giving us troubles. He does this by strengthening us daily through a prayerful relationship with Him.

In the Gospel proclamation, the Lord Jesus tells us to take it one step further. He says in John 6:50, "But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which anyone may eat and not die." Not only can we have a relationship with a living God, but He comes to live inside us through the Holy Eucharist. He comes inside us and becomes a part of us. John 6:51 says, "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." Through this union with Christ we can slowly transform our thinking from the ways of the world to the ways of the Lord and live life in total peace, not just for one day or one week, but forever. We can live with the peace of the Lord everyday of our lives, no matter what the world throws at us, no matter what we feel or what our emotions are telling us. This is what the Lord Jesus wants to do in our lives today and forever.

Prayer: Abba Father, the trials I face do not have to bring me down because I can face anything with your peace. Thank you Lord for this great gift. Amen.

Monday August 09

St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross

Deuteronomy
10: 12-22

Psalm
147: 12-20

Matthew
17: 22-27

Living on company account

In today's First Reading we see that there are only a few things the Lord expects of us, as mentioned in Deuteronomy 10:12. This sums up the purpose of our lives. We no longer live to satisfy our own desires, to fill our bank accounts, and to climb up the cooperate ladder; but for something higher, deeper and more meaningful. Along the way, God will bless us with every blessing and more than what we could ever ask for or imagine. His ways are not our ways, His thoughts are not our thoughts, yet we are called to submit to Him and give our "yes" even when we do not understand. This way of life also includes living with the right principles, as we see the Lord Jesus do in the Gospel proclamation. He did not try to talk His way out of taxing and make others believe that He did not need to pay, after all He is the Son of God. No, instead He submitted willingly, knowing that His Father will look after all His needs, as He was living on "company account". Our Father in Heaven will look after all our needs.

Prayer: Abba Father, give us the grace today to say yes to You and fulfill the purpose of our lives. Amen

Tuesday August 10

St. Lawrence, Deacon & Martyr

2 Corinthians
9:6-10

Psalm
112:1-9

John
12: 24-26

The Way to cultivate blessings in abundance

Today's liturgy speaks of the secret of reaping a good harvest in the kingdom of God. As the readings explicitly speak of cheerful giving and how the Lord is happy and loves this quality which bestows many blessings upon the giver. This teaching recalls to us the generosity of Abel who brought forth his offering which was pleasing to the Lord. (Genesis 4:2) and Cain's offering which was rejected. Do we offer gifts cheerfully to the Lord? Are we reluctant and do it because it is obligatory? In my life I have ample experiences where offerings made to the Lord decades ago have brought immense blessings to my life today. Let us be reminded that we are called to be generous in our sowing which in return brings blessings upon us. The Gospel reminds us to die to ourselves, to bear much fruit in our lives. Are we truly ready to serve the Lord by following Him wherever He leads us? Let us be assured that when we serve Him the heavenly Father honours and delights in us.

Prayer: Abba Father, equip me with your Holy Spirit and power to serve you profoundly. Amen

Wednesday August 11

St. Clare, virgin

Deuteronomy
34:1-12

Psalm
66: 1-8, 16-17

Matthew
18:15-20

We reflect God's love in Community

When someone dies we remember them for various reasons. We mourn, we tell stories of how they impacted our lives. The people of Israel mourn the death of Moses, the one who had, at the command of God led them out of slavery from the land of Egypt. God himself created community, indeed as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, God shows us the ideal community. God's love and concern for his people made him send Moses to bring his chosen people out of Egypt. Ultimately he himself the 2nd member of the Holy Trinity comes to liberate us from slavery to sin by dying on the cross. We who are created in the image and likeness of God have a deep abiding need for relationships with others and with God.

In the Gospel proclamation, we see Jesus giving some guidelines on how to deal with conflicts that invariably occur in community. Jesus beautifully illustrates steps to take when conflicts arise. He also reiterates that his presence is ever with us when we gather in his name.

Prayer: Abba Father, you who have called us to be together, as a community. Lord we pray that the love between us will reflect your love to the world. Amen

Thursday August 12

St. Jane Frances de Chantal, religious

Joshua
3: 7-11, 13-17

Psalm
114: 1-6

Matthew
18: 21--19:1

"I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times. Mt: 18:22

In today's Gospel reading, we encounter two very different perspectives, St. Peter perfectly exemplifying the human heart, limited and reluctant whilst our Lord Jesus perfectly exemplifying the heart of God. In Peter's defense he still had not come to terms with the crucified Christ, the Lamb of God and probably still hoping that Israel would be avenged by military might, a human solution. The story does not need repeating, the sins that we willingly choose to offend God with even today, are forgiven. In turn the request seems simple, be merciful just as your heavenly Father is merciful Luke 6:36. But yet we struggle to forgive our neighbor when we ourselves ask forgiveness for the same offense? It is good to ask then, why is it so? The underlying layer of forgiveness is love. We must daily ask our Lord to fill our being with His love because he so desires to and aids us in extending forgiveness to our neighbor but most importantly to ourselves. He will bring healing to our relationships near and far.

Prayer: Abba Father, today I open my heart to be filled with your love so that I can be merciful, just as you have been so to me tyg6 . Amen

Friday August 13

St. Pontian/St Hippolytus, Martyrs

Joshua
24: 1-13

Psalm
136:1-3, 16-24

Matthew
19: 3-12

“Give thanks to the Lord... for his steadfast love endures forever.”

Today's first reading speaks a lot about the history. History is vital – not because it validates one's ability to remember facts, but because it gives us perception for the present. As Joshua begins his final charge to the entire nation, he begins with an evaluation lesson. He begins with God's hand from the modest beginnings of the nation, and takes them through the years of history. Joshua was witness to many of the happenings of which he spoke.

When we recall what God has done in the past, it generates a solid foundation for our perception about the events of the present. Because God is God and He has all the power needed to act and all the goodness to do what's best for us, we can always have confidence. Not because we know what would happen, but because we know, He's doing what is best.

Prayer: Abba Father, I thank you for the many people in my life. People who loved me, who broke me and even people who forgave me. Amen

Saturday August 14

St Maximillian Mary Kolbe, priest, martyr

Joshua
24:14-29

Psalm
16: 1-2, 5-11

Matthew
19:13-15

the Kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these...

When I was a child, I wanted to grow up quickly, I had many dreams. Now that I am older and I look back in to my life, I wish I never grew up. I wish I could remain as a child. This is what Jesus is telling us in today.. Unless we become like children, we will never enter the kingdom of heaven. It is the simplicity and devastating honesty of a child that God prefers, Children are pure of heart, they are free from corruption and free from evil. Jesus, teaches us, that ultimately all that matters is, not how much money we have earned, how much we have achieved in our life time, what matters at the end is our purity and simplicity of life. Today we celebrate the feast Maximilian Kolbe a saint and a martyr, it is his simple life that led him to willingly sacrifice his life for a total stranger.. He willingly put his hand up to die in a concentration camp during World War II to save the life of a total stranger who was begging to be spared. This kind of love can only come from child like simplicity.

Prayer: Abba Father, help us to become to become more like children.
Give us a child like faith. Amen.

Sunday August 15

Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Revelation
11: 19, 12: 1-6,10

Psalm
45: 10-16

1 Corinthians
15: 20-27

Luke
1: 39-56

“Mary, did you know; this Child you delivered will deliver you?”

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (proclaimed dogma in 1950 by Pope Pius XII).

The Arc of the Covenant in the heaven was on earth in a small village called Nazareth. The Arc of the Covenant – dwelling of God through the Exodus lived her childhood in the Temple of Jerusalem. The woman mentioned in Genesis (3:15) is shown clothed with the sun in the first proclamation today.

Death came through one man (Adam). Death was defeated and resurrection came through one man (New Adam – Christ Jesus). This is the promise which God gave in Genesis (3:15) that He would defeat death and Salvation would be granted to the fallen human race. ‘Her offspring’ defeated death.

God took His dwelling in the womb of the ‘woman’. His presence was evident in the Gospel proclamation. The child in the womb of Elizabeth leapt out of joy of experiencing the presence of the living God in the woman who visited them. God’s dwelling place cannot rot. Therefore the Blessed Mother was taken bodily to heavens. God and human became one in the Blessed Mother.

While she was on earth, she always presented herself as the most exemplary disciple of the Lord. Her assumption into heaven was not just due to the fact that she was the Mother of our Lord but the life she led. Mother Mary has taught us to yes to God even in moments when we cannot understand God’s plan and ways. Today people want reasons to believe. They need to understand why and what and the reasons for everything. They require a proper logic and even sometime a word conformation to accept anything. The Blessed Mother was given a glorious promise of her Son being the Son of God but she was also told that her heart would be pierced.

At the foot of the cross, she would have cried and looked up to Heaven but she also embraced the cross and shared in our Lord’s passion being unafraid and not fearing the powers that were in control. As she assumed into Heaven, she has also assumed into our hearts where we carry a love for her and her protection in all we do.

Prayer: Abba Father, thank you for the gift of a Heavenly mother. Amen.

Monday August 16

St. Stephen of Hungary

Judges
2:11-19

Psalm
106: 34-44

Matthew
19: 16-22

“With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

“I am the Lord your God, you shall not have any strange gods before Me.” The first commandment God Himself gave us. God gives us a promise - He is our everything! Yet we forget that God is the answer to everything in life. We make other things our god - our abilities, connections and power, wealth and possessions, desire to control, addictions such as clothes, alcohol, drugs, pornography, social media, electronic devices, gossip, the forbidden relationships, temporary pleasures that satisfy our body and emotions. In troubles we run to God to make God into the idol we want God to be – a God who satisfies our needs! When our needs are met we quickly return to our worldly ways. God invites us to obey the 10 commandments and to also be perfect in our Spirit with Him. He wants us to surrender what we hold on to in place of God and then follow Him. Salvation is difficult for those who have much in the world and yet easy for those who leave it all for Christ. “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” Matthew 5:3

Prayer: Abba Father, by myself I cannot follow you, but with your Holy Spirit I believe that all things are possible. Amen

Tuesday August 17

20th Week in Ordinary Time

Judges
6: 11-24

Psalm
85: 9-14

Matthew
19: 23-30

Seeking God vs blaming God

God sent a special messenger to deliver an important message to Gideon. Gideon questioned God about the problems he and his nation faced and about God's apparent lack of help. What he did not acknowledge was, the fact that the people had brought calamity upon themselves when they decided to disobey and neglect God. How easy it is to overlook personal accountability and blame our problems on God and others. When problems come, the first place to look is within. Our immediate response should be a confession to God of sins' "I will be with you," God told Gideon, and God promised to give him the strength he needed to overcome the opposition. Despite this clear promise of strength, Gideon made excuses. Seeing only his limitations and weaknesses, he failed to see how God could work through him. Like Gideon, we are called to serve God in specific ways. Although God promises us the tools and strength we need, we often make excuses. We should not spend time making excuses, instead, spend it doing what God wants.

Prayer: Abba Father: Please pull me out of my reluctance to do your will!

In Jesus name. Amen

Wednesday August 18

16th Week in Ordinary Time

Judges
9: 6-15

Psalm
21: 2-7

Matthew
20: 1-16

"Thus, the last will be first, and the first will be last." Matthew 20:16

The purpose of human life is written in today's Gospel proclamation where the Kingdom of Heaven is explained. Do we need to know how God thinks? Yes, it is important to discern the mind of God. God seeks hardworking men and women rather than those who idle. This is a valuable discernment for us because we have the tendency to take a middle path in everything that we do. It is seldom that we complete our tasks as smartly as when we began, because in the process, hardships, rejection, sickness, and other burdens weigh us down and we do not run the good race with the same zeal that we began. Eternal life is the usual wage, which is spoken of in the parable, which is given to everyone immaterial of the time duration. All of us are uniquely called to a specific role in the world. We are called to live and work accordingly to God's Kingdom values in this present era. God treats everyone alike and shows His mercy to those to all who seek Him.

Prayer: Abba Father, let my heart, mind, spirit and every cell of my body be sealed with Your Kingdom values. Amen

Thursday August 19

St John Eudes

Judges
11: 29-39

Psalm
40: 5-10

Matthew
22: 1-14

'Many are invited, but few are chosen.'

The invitation of God is to a feast as joyous as a wedding feast. His invitation is to joy. To think of following Jesus as a gloomy giving up of everything which brings laughter and sunshine, and happy fellowship is to misunderstand its purpose. The tragedy of life is that it is often that what is second best shuts out that which is the best. Things that are good shut out what is supreme. A person can be so busy making a living that he or she fails to make a life. The door is open to everyone. It is grace that beckons us and with it comes responsibility. We cannot go on living the same life they we had before meeting the Lord. We will be clothed in a new purity a new holiness and a new goodness. The door is open not for the sinner to come and remain a sinner but for the sinner to come and be a saint. In the book of Judges we see how Jephthah was led by the spirit seeking the Lord's intervention in his mission making a vow which cost him giving up the most precious thing in his life his only child.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we lay our lives before you, here we are we come to do your will. Amen

Friday August 20

St. Bernard, Abbot & Doctor

Ruth
1: 1-6, 14-22

Psalm
146: 5-10

Matthew
22: 34-40

An invitation to love.

How hard could it be to love God with all our heart, all our soul and all our mind? It may seem easy enough until we are reminded afresh that loving God alone is not what we are called to do. It is like trying to open a combination lock with only one digit of the combination. Our love for God comes to perfection, only when we are able to love one another as God us, without reservation. Simple as it may sound, we know how hard it can be when we try to put this command into practice. It may be easy to love someone who treats us well, gives us support, who is there for us in need but what about the neighbour who spreads rumours about us? What about friends who are using us for their own gain? Think of the many people in our lives, who simply bring pain and suffering to us over and again, despite our very best efforts to love them... Are we able to open our hearts with love when we gain nothing out of it? Ruth sets one such example in her action today by choosing to stand by Naomi who had little or nothing useful to offer, and this is our invitation today...

Prayer: Abba Father, fill our hearts with love, selfless enough to reach out to others regardless of what we receive in return. Amen!

Saturday August 21

St. Pius X, pope

Ruth
2:1-38-11,4: 13-17

Psalm
128: 1-5

Matthew
23: 1-12

Whoever humbles himself shall be made great

Today the Lord is teaching us two things, humility and obedience - observe the law and at the same time to be humble. In our own experience we too have missed this instruction. When we observe the commandments we consider ourselves great but when we fall away from the Lord we feel miserable. But the invitation today is not to get stuck in our own little thoughts. Ruth never left her mother-in-law in a time when she needed help the most. Instead she stayed back and supported her in every possible way she could. Boaz at the same time who knew the background of Ruth and of her kindness towards Naomi paid her back with what they needed at that time. Providence, protection and dignity. Divinely this is a testimony of the intervention and reward of God for Ruth's decision for choosing God leaving behind her former gods. Let us leave behind our former ways of thinking, beliefs and understanding humble ourselves before God and experience Him in a supernatural way!

Prayer: Abba Father, ignite the fire of your love in us. Fill in the gaps of our sin and selfishness with your understanding. Amen!

Sunday August 22

Twenty First Sunday in Ordinary Time

Joshua
24: 1-2, 15-18

Psalm
34: 2-3, 16-23

Ephesians
5: 2, 21-32

John
6:60-69

Serving God should not be just lipservice but obedience

Life is one journey of choices. Every moment of the way we are offered the option to turn left or right and in some cases forward. Often we are told not to look back in regret. But every choice we make leads to a whole new-world of happenings and opportunities.

God has given us a free will to make these choices at every moment of our life. Our religious formation conditions us to make better choices and gives us awareness of the implication of wrong choices. Today many young people are ardent supporters of a view or opinion formed from a different set of experiences. They become firebrand promoters of their view and remain fully convinced of their stand. In our experience, when we submit to the love and anointing of the Holy Spirit, we begin to melt and thaw in areas of our thinking and our approach to various issues takes on a different perspective.

Joshua who was the leader of the Israelites summoned all the tribes and shared his stand that he was aware of the influence of the other gods in the lives of the people but he declared, "As for me, I and my household will serve Yahweh." Joshua 24:15

As we delve further into the readings, the letter to the Ephesians talks about submission in the form of obedience. The love between a husband and wife is likened to the relationship between Christ and the Church. This mystery can only be understood in prayer and worship.

In the Gospel proclamation, our Lord Jesus tells his disciples that they will have to eat His body and drink His blood. This really puts off many people and it is recorded that many left our Lord because they could not understand the significance and meaning of our Lord's words.

Often in our journey with the Lord, we will not understand His direction and the way forward. We do not have to understand everything or know the logic behind every word. The truth is that our minds cannot process or understand the full significance of what God has planned for us and has in store for us. Can we expect a child in the womb to know about career development or astronomy? Even when we are lost for words or lack understanding let us respond like St. Peter when he said. "Lord to whom shall we go, you have the words of eternal life." The Lord expects obedience which is the best expression of love. Obedience speaks louder than words.

Prayer: Abba Father, I accept that in this earthly journey I will always be a novice and in need of your direction and wisdom. Show me the way Amen.

Monday August 23

St. Rose of Lima, virgin

1 Thessalonians
1: 1-5, 8-10

Psalm
149: 1-9

Matthew
23: 13-22

which is greater, the gold or the sanctuary that has made the gold sacred?

The temptation of setting ourselves as judges of others, locking people out of the kingdom of heaven is often there, even nowadays. How do I look at people in difficult situations - the divorced and remarried, former prisoners, sex offenders, drug addicts? I let our Lord Jesus challenge what he calls my hypocrisy, my ease to decide who is right and wrong, who deserves to see God and who does not.

Our Lord accuses the scribes and Pharisees of rationalizing their selfishness by appealing to a higher law, even the law of God himself. I let God lead me in my time of prayer, prepared to let go even of habits, rituals and externals – all so that I may better hear the voice of God. I pray for the community with which I worship; may we never confuse the beautiful things we have or do with their source, but may we grow together in humble service of God.

Prayer: Abba Father as I read these hard words with humility I ask for an open and transparent heart. Amen

Tuesday August 24

St. Bartholomew, Apostle

Revelation
21: 9-14

Psalm
145: 10-18

John
1: 45-51

"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you." Ezekiel 36:26

Today we are given a glimpse of the works of the Holy Spirit. Psalm 51 shows the humble petition of King David following the conviction of his sins the Lord brought upon his heart. King David longed for restoration of the presence of God which had given him Joy and sustained him through his trials and challenges. The Spirit of God brings joy and sustains but also has the power to grant us a new heart and a new Spirit as revealed in Ezekiel 36. I recall my own life how futile my efforts were in trying to be good when all I gained was bondage and addictions. How wonderful the day when Jesus Christ saved me through grace! I no longer feel alone, His presence inside me leading, upholding and showing me the way. In the Gospel the Lord teaches us the importance of staying prepared and responding appropriately to His call. Let us turn to God today through confession and allow the Holy Spirit to fill and restore us so that we may be better equipped and qualified for His works.

Prayer: Abba Father, restore the joy of your salvation and grant us a willing spirit to sustain us. Amen

Wednesday August 25

St. Louis of France/St. Joseph Calazanz

1 Thessalonians
2: 9-13

Psalm
139: 7-12

Matthew
23:27-32

Walk the talk

A group of young boys, found a street puppy and each wanted it. A minister passing by saw that the boys were having an argument. He asked them the reason why. The boys told him that each of the had wanted the puppy. So they decided that the one telling the biggest lie would get the puppy. The minister told them that it is a sin to lie as he never lied as a boy. After a deep silence the youngest boy tells the minister "Well, you get the puppy". We may laugh but ultimately it turns on ourselves. Like the minister often we are self-righteously convinced of our goodness and purity. Jesus' warning in the Gospel is for such people. Pharisees and Scribes look righteous but inside they are dead and unclean. They had deceived themselves to an extent they could not see their sins. With the "Woe" statements Jesus challenges them to face the truth and repent. He does challenge you and me. Where does "Woe to you" hit us?

Prayer: Abba Father, help me see my sins and confess them. Help me walk the talk and carry an authentic heart. Amen.

Thursday August 26

Twenty First Week in Ordinary Time

1 Thessalonians
3: 7-13

Psalm
90: 3-5, 12-17

Matthew
24: 42-51

For you do not know when the Son of Man will come

Today again through the Holy Gospel, the Lord reminds us of his second coming. We live in a world where faith has the least importance. Few of us are ready to witness the second coming of our Lord. While we try to live a life in the Spirit, there are greater forces of this world that are trying to deviate us from our divine purpose. Sin has become common and normal, taking true repentance away from human hearts. The message of Calvary has become so insignificant to most of humanity. Can we go like this? Can we afford to neglect the power of the resurrection that Lord Jesus left in the world? As in John 14:3, Lord Jesus promises us by saying "I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and welcome you into my presence, so that you also may be where I am". He wants all of us to be with him at the end and no one knows when he is coming back to gather us into his presence. Let us repent, be ready and continue to outperform and win against the forces of the enemy.

Prayer: Abba Father prepare our hearts, minds and spirits to accept and be ready for your second coming and be watchful of our own salvation. Amen

Friday August 27

St. Monica

1 Thessalonians
4: 1-8

Psalm
97: 1-2, 5-12

Matthew
25:1-13

Are you careless?

In his letter to the Thessalonians St. Paul is addressing the lustful behaviour of some of the early Christians. Even though they had tasted the love of our Lord they had quietly lost their way and faithfulness for their spouses and were living lives of lust. In other words, 'Could they care any less'. Their lives -and this can happen to us- were caught up in the excitement of wrong relationships and emotions. But God's call was and is - to become holy and not to have unlawful sex because we disobey not a human but God himself who gives us His Holy Spirit. In the Gospel proclamation, the five careless bridesmaids, were least prepared for the arrival of the groom. When we are caught up in sin, we fail to prepare ourselves to receive the presence of God. To lack oil is to lack a life spent in times of prayer. The Lord's answer to the five careless bridesmaids was Truly I do not know you. May we be ready with prayer.

Prayer: Abba Father, we pray for a life of intimacy with our creator. May we come to know you deeper and deeper. Amen.

Saturday August 28

St. Augustine, Bishop & martyr

1 Thessalonians
4: 9-11

Psalm
98: 1,7-9

Matthew
25: 14-30

Our talents, gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit

God has given us various gifts and talents for our own growth and to benefit society. How do we use these gifts and talents? Society as a whole is crumbling because many have become lazy and selfish. We do not persevere to nurture the God given gifts and talents in our lives and we selfishly hide them from others. Today's Gospel is calling us, to prudently use our God given talents. For our spiritual journey we are also blessed with fruits and gifts of the Holy Spirit. Today we remember St. Augustine, Doctor of grace. As a young man he was into loose living - parties, entertainment and worldly ambitions. In a complete turn around in his life, he became a transformed man. He was baptized, became a priest, a bishop, a famous Catholic writer and one of the greatest saints that ever lived. He practiced great poverty, supported the poor, preached and prayed with great fervor right up until his death. Once converted he used his intelligence to convert sinners and glorify God. We are reminded today to do the same.

Prayer: Abba Father, may we glorify your name in all that we do. Amen.

Sunday August 29

Twenty Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Deuteronomy
4: 1-2, 6-8

Psalm
15: 2-5

James
1: 17-22,27

Mark
7: 1-8, 14-15, 21-23

The word that can save us

In the first reading today we find Moses advising the people of Israel to keep the commands that the Lord God is giving them. Specifically, they are told to observe the laws, ensuring that they do not add to the laws nor subtract from it. Our absolute obedience in the word of God without subtracting or adding to His spoken word for our own convenience is what makes us wise and understanding before those around us. In his letter, St. James tells us to humbly accept the word that has been planted within us, the word that can save us. I find this to be so timely for myself in this strange season we are all walking through. There are so many promises that God has given me about provision and protection. But despite claiming the word and even writing it down, I have not taken the time to accept the word or to let it be planted deep within. I look at my circumstances, I look at the world around me and I let that dictate how I understand or apply that word I have been given. I add, I subtract, I delete, I edit depending on my mood and the kind of day I am having. And then I wonder why I still feel so miserable and why His promises are yet to come true in this season.

St. James tells us not just to listen to the word but to do what it says. I am guilty of this. I listen to the word but often I do not step out in faith and do what I am asked to do. I allow my heart to be polluted by the world instead of keeping my heart, my affections, my trust completely anchored in God alone. The Pharisees and the teachers of the law were so preoccupied with the traditions and rituals – the external condition - to the neglect of the internal person. But Jesus rebukes them and explains that He is far more interested in the internal condition of a person than what seems to be going on externally. This is often such a good marker for me about where I am with God. Whenever I find myself being so preoccupied with my external condition then that is often an indication that I have veered off the course and am trying to make up for that internal unrest by trying to fix everything externally. But of course no matter how much I fix, something is often wrong and I end up frustrated, disappointed and angry. But here is God reminding me that it's not what is on the outside that defiles but it is what comes from within. And He is inviting us to take time to sit at His feet with the mess that we might find ourselves in today and to allow Him inside our heart. He comes with His peace, He comes with His understanding, All that is required is for us to trust in that Word spoken to us and to trust Him. He is comfortable with my mess, my chaos, my humanness. All He wants is my heart – my complete heart.

Abba Father, help me to sit with You and to abide in You. Let the word that You spoke over me be planted deep inside. Amen.

Monday August 30

22nd Week on Ordinary Time

1 Thessalonians
4: 13-18

Psalm
96: 1-13

Luke
4: 16-30

Close to God

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. The time has come to challenge ourselves to become like Mother Theresa or Nelson Mandela.

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

Tuesday August 31

22nd Week on Ordinary Time

1 Thessalonians
5: 1-6, 9-11

Psalm
27: 1, 4, 13-14

Luke
4: 31-37

He died that we might enter in life

The first reading begins on a scary note that the Lord will come like a thief in the night. When everything seems peaceful and harmonious, He will make His entry to bring down the curtains on earthly life. How are we supposed to react to this statement; with fear and trembling or with peace and assurance. St. Paul assures us that if we have been living and journeying with the Lord then we may be asleep and all this may happen and yet we will react with joy instead of fear... if we have loved the Lord. After all, God is for us and not against us. The word says that He died that we might enter into life. His wish is to save us and give us life. This is shown when Jesus had to deal with the possessed man. Our Lord uses his authority to deliver the man and set him free. By the deliverance, Jesus was giving this man a new lease of life. The evil spirit in the man was quick to declare Jesus as the Son of God. This authority and freedom is available for us today. Let us turn to the Lord and be saved.

Prayer: Abba Father, we pray for the grace to live in obedience and love, never fearing the arrival of our Lord. Amen.

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ST. MAXIMILIAN MARY KOLBE

St. Maximilian Mary Kolbe was born as Raymund Kolbe on January 8, 1894, in the Kingdom of Poland. He was a Polish Conventual Franciscan friar. St. Kolbe was very active in promoting the Immaculate Virgin Mary and is known as the Apostle of Consecration to Mary. Much of his life was strongly influenced by a vision he had of the Virgin Mary. **"I asked the Mother of God what was to become of me. Then she came to me holding two crowns, one white, the other red. She asked me if I was willing to accept either of these crowns. The white one meant that I should persevere in purity, and the red that I should become a martyr. I said that I would accept them both."**

One year after his vision, Kolbe joined the Conventual Franciscans, and was given the religious name Maximilian. In 1918, he was ordained a priest and continued his work of promoting Mary throughout Poland. Over the next several years, Kolbe took on publishing. Kolbe also founded monasteries in both Japan and India. To this day, the monastery remains prominent in the Roman Catholic Church in Japan.

In 1936, Kolbe's poor health forced him to return home, and once the WWII invasion by Germany began, he became one of the only brothers to remain in the monastery. Kolbe worked in his monastery, providing shelter for refugees, including hiding 2,000 Jews from German persecution.

On February 17, 1941, the monastery was shut down and Kolbe was arrested by the German Gestapo and taken to the Pawiak prison. Never abandoning his priesthood, Kolbe was the victim to severe violence and harassment.

One day, some men were chosen to face death by starvation to warn against escapes. Kolbe was not chosen but volunteered to take the place of a man with a family. After two weeks of dehydration and starvation, the guards gave him a lethal injection of carbolic acid. St. Kolbe died on August 14 1941, and his remains were cremated on August 15, the feast day of the Assumption of Mary. He is the patron saint of drug addicts, prisoners, and families. His feast day is celebrated on August 14.

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.

