



ON OUR KNEES IN HIS HANDS



Mary, the Holy Mother of God

Solemnity: 01 January

JANUARY 2023 | DAILY READINGS & REFLECTIONS



ON OUR KNEES IN HIS HANDS

JANUARY
2023

“The Gospel invites us
to respond to the God of love
who saves us,
to see God in others
and to go forth from ourselves
to seek the good of others.”

Pope Francis

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Sunday January 1

A Happy and Blessed New Year to all!

Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God

Numbers
6:22-27

Psalm 67:
2-3,5-6,8

Galatians
4:4-7

Luke
2:16-21

The Word of God sets our hearts on fire.

In today's first reading we see Moses hearing the voice of the Lord, and being instructed to declare that word to Aaron, who in turn must declare it to the people. When Aaron declares it to the people, God will act from heaven and supernatural intervention will occur.

How important it is to hear the voice of the Lord! Be it hearing it directly from the Lord or from one who has heard it from the Lord, our hearts are set on fire because of the supernatural element of God acting from heaven. And like Aaron, when we declare the word that set our hearts on fire, God acts from heaven, and the anointing of the Holy Spirit makes the people who hear it, come alive.

In today's Gospel proclamation, the shepherds who have heard from heaven, convey the word revealed to them to the Blessed Mother and St. Joseph. I wonder what was going through Mary and Joseph's minds at that time. Plucked out from the comfort zone of their home and family at the most inconvenient of times, finding no proper place to give birth, would they have been tempted to ask where God was? Sometimes, the contrast between reality and how I am called to see reality through the eyes of faith overwhelms me. To Mary and Joseph, God sends the shepherds with anointed words, letting them know that God is still seated on the throne despite what they see and feel. A situation that moments ago seemed to be hopeless changes to one of amazement. When we are helpless, down, and overwhelmed, we are called to hear the voice of the Lord declared over us.

The Blessed Mother treasures the words in her heart. She deposits "memory stones" in her heart to remember and see her through difficult times in the future.

In today's second reading, St. Paul declares a word over us. It is like the word Aaron declared over the people of Israel. It is like the word the shepherds spoke over Mary and Joseph. We are not slaves but sons and daughters of God.

In the parable of the prodigal son, the elder son, even though a son, lived no different than a slave. The father declares to the elder son "all I have is yours". That is the privilege of a son that a slave does not have. At Baptism, God sent the Spirit of his son into our hearts so that we become his adopted sons and daughters. We can call upon the resources of heaven to impact our world, just like how Jesus the son of God did. Jesus took what we deserved, so that we can have what he deserved. May this declaration make you come alive throughout this new year.

Prayer: Abba Father, guide me throughout this new year.
Amen.

Monday January 2

Memorial of Sts. Basil the Great & Gregory Nazianzen, Bishops & Doctors

1 John
2:22-28

Psalm
98:1-4

John
1:19-28

Let us become witnesses.

When the religious leaders asked John the Baptist who he was, he said who he is not. It is not about me, I am not the Christ. John clearly understood who he was — under Christ, he was a witness pointing to Christ. Jesus is the Messiah. So John answers their question, since this is who they are thinking he might be, not by explaining who he is, but by telling them who he is not and in doing so he points to the Messiah. John is a witness. It is not about him, it is about Jesus. Our testimonies are not about us. It is about Jesus. Many of us have remarkable testimonies about how we came to Christ and what the Lord has done in our lives. But the most important part of our witness is Jesus. We need to tell people about Jesus; about who he is; about what he has accomplished for us by his death and resurrection. Whether or not we have a remarkable story to tell about is not what's important. Whether or not we will focus our life and witness on Jesus is what's important. Become witnesses of God's love in Christ Jesus.

Prayer: Abba Father, I come to you and ask for your guidance. May your love be stronger than my doubt. May you protect us from all evil. Amen.

Tuesday January 3

Optional Memorial of the Most Holy Name of Jesus

1 John
2:29--3:6

Psalm
98:1,3-6

John
1:29-34

Identity of a beloved son/daughter of our Heavenly Father.

John the Baptist recognized Jesus as 'the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world'. The true identity and purpose of the life of Jesus was revealed in John's testimony. At Baptism, we too are lavished with the love of the Father receiving the identity of a son or daughter of God's family. God is faithful and promises that he will always be with us. Yet, how often do we believe in this truth? When storms come our way, this truth is replaced with lies of loneliness and betrayal. Lies that lead us to separation from God. Jesus reminds us, as he did to John, that he is the Lamb of God. He was slain on the cross to defeat our sin. As we repent of our sinful separation, and return to the fold receiving his body at the Eucharistic Table, we are once again reunited in a love intimacy with him. We carry him in our families and business life. He created us in his likeness because he loves us unconditionally. Let us pray that the Holy Spirit will be a constant companion with us leading us to the purpose that he created us for.

Prayer: Abba Father, thank you for calling me your child.
Amen.

Wednesday January 4

Season of Christmas

1 John
3:7-10

Psalm
98:1,7-9

John
1:35-42

God has done marvelous things.

God sent his Son into the world so that we might have life through him. Indeed that life awakens new beginnings. The Psalmist too endorses saying "He has done marvelous things." (Ps 98:1) In the Gospel proclamation we see Andrew and an unnamed disciple, probably representing anyone who has love for the Lord, having an amazing encounter with Jesus. It is so monumental in the spirit, that human words would be insignificant and insufficient to spell out that experience. That day spent with the Lord opens the inner depths of hearts, to suddenly realize, that the search for the meaning of life is unexpectedly discovered and realized. It is so beautiful that one cannot but tell others about what happens when met by the Lord. Every Christian is called to share the experience with someone else who has not met the Lord. I have met the Lord. He touched me and I am no longer the same. No more shackled by the the heavy burden of sin. Allowing the nature of God to evolve within us, destroys the need to be anything else.

Prayer: Abba Father, may my heart be filled with love to serve the unloveable.
Amen.

Thursday January 5

Season of Christmas

1 John
3:11-21

Psalm
100:1-5

John
1:43-51

Who do I belong to?

Today's Gospel proclamation is a tale of perceptions, symbolism and identities. It is interesting to note how Philip introduced Jesus with an earthly identity and proclaiming "we have found the Messiah". Philip had things upside down. The fig tree holds great symbolism in scripture; a biblical metaphor for establishing God's Kingdom, scholars propose that Nathaniel was perhaps meditating on the impending arrival of the Messiah. After encountering the Son of Man and the knowledge Jesus had of Nathaniel's past, present and future made him acknowledge that someone great has indeed come from Nazareth. In the same way, Jesus is aware of our past, present and future knowing the most intricate details of our lives, bringing about blessings even from seemingly insignificant places that we perceive as hopeless. Therefore, it pays to have our perceptions moulded through the Word of God, for he knows us at all times. Knowing whose we are can open us to supernatural encounters.

Prayer: Abba Father, help me mould my perception and identity of who I am through your eyes. Amen.

Friday January 6

Season of Christmas

1 John
5:5-13

Psalm
147:12-15,19-20

Mark
1:7-11

You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.

Today's Gospel proclamation illustrates the Baptism of the Lord Jesus Christ, which was the first step taken by the Lord Jesus Christ before commencing his public ministry. We see the sinless Son of God humbling himself and being baptized by John at the river Jordan. It was a sign of the Lord Jesus Christ totally submitting himself in obedience to God the Father, who was delighted in him and the Holy Spirit descended like a dove. Jesus remained obedient to the Father even unto death. Everyone who believes in the Lord Jesus is sanctified by his blood, filled with the Holy Spirit and granted eternal life. As believers of the Lord Jesus Christ, through his merits we are adopted as children of God. As such, we are called to live a life of surrender in obedience to the will of God and continue the mission of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is certain that just like the Lord Jesus Christ, we will surely rise victoriously from all the challenges that come our way and give glory to God through our life.

Prayer: Abba Father, let me experience the joy of surrendering to your will.
Amen.

Saturday January 7

Season of Christmas

1 John
5:14-21

Psalm
149:1-6,9

John
2:1-11

We are called to prepare the ground for miracles.

Today's First Reading gives us guidance on how we could live out the Gospel Proclamation. In the Gospel Proclamation, the Blessed Mother mentions to her Son a need that has risen at the banquet. It seems as though this request is ignored by the Lord Jesus. However, the Blessed Mother continues to act on it by gently putting her faith into action; "Do whatever he tells you". The First Reading reminds us of our identity, that we are children of God. That means we have access to the store house in heaven, and have been given the authority and power to use it. Therefore we have confidence to approach God. It is with this confidence that the Blessed Mother made a humble request. She used the authority given to her, and prepared the ground for a miracle. We are called to do the same in our lives, in the situations we are placed in. We have been given the same authority to prepare the ground for miracles by declaring our faith in who we are, as sons and daughters of God.

Prayer: Abba Father, give me the grace to walk in my identity as your child.
Amen.

Sunday January 8

Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord

Isaiah
60:1-6

Psalm
72:1-2,7-8,10-13

Ephesians
3:2-3,5-6

Matthew
2:1-12

Rise up! Your light has come.

The Prophet Isaiah makes a number of references to 'light' in today's first reading and the theme of light beautifully echoes in the Gospel proclamation. It says that the Magi were overjoyed at seeing the star and they followed it in the hope of paying homage to the newborn king. The joy that was stirred by the light of the star took the Magi out of familiar places towards unknown territories where they had no idea of what they would encounter.

What amazes me is the fact that the uncertainty of the journey had little effect on the Magi; they simply endured through nights and days, until they reached their final destination. This act alone prompts us to look deep into our heart. Without a doubt, as we celebrated the birth of Jesus a few days ago, our hearts must have been filled with joy. The question is, where did that joy take us? Did we simply share the joy among our loved ones, trapped in our own comfort zones or did we dare to go out to share this joy with someone less fortunate than us?

Pope Francis reminds us to go out to those forgotten by society, the lowly places, like the manger our Lord was born in. Our Lord himself lived this by example; he was always there in the most unlikely neighbourhoods, with people who were considered unworthy, lowly and sinful. What about us, his dear children?

It is all too common in this time and age to get busy with our own affairs which in turn blurs our vision to the outer world. If we but choose to look beyond our own secure perimeters, we will begin to witness the light of Christ beckoning us to venture out into the unknown. As with Magi, the result would be worth the pursuit.

The solemnity of the Epiphany is God's manifestation to us; God's own way of unravelling the mysteries of his kingdom so that we know him as he is. Remember the many times that God's manifestation was real in our lives; the many divine encounters we had through the events and relationships of our lives. The many miracles and healings we have experienced and witnessed through the years. It is time to go out and proclaim all the good that God has done in our lives and be a light in a world full of darkness.

Let us follow the shining star and go to worship the Lord Jesus, acknowledging him as our Lord and God. As we do that, let us also lead others to Christ, let us invite others to join us on this journey of faith and love. O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

Prayer: Abba Father, thank you for revealing the mysteries of your kingdom.
May we grow in the awareness of your great love for us. Amen.

Monday January 9

Feast of the Baptism of the Lord

Isaiah
42:1-4,6-7

Psalm
29:1-4,9-10

Matthew
3:13-17

Let us prepare for eternal life with our choices.

Today's first reading reminds us of the plan of salvation that God promised us through his son, Jesus. Isaiah's words were fulfilled in the life of Jesus. The people who were dwelling in darkness were promised a light of hope so that the blind can start seeing again. Isn't this the promise fulfilled in our lives as well after we encountered Jesus? We may have not been physically blind, but spiritually blind and choked in worldly bondages that controlled our lives. But after meeting Jesus, we were set free from this blindness and bondages that weighed heavily upon our lives. God has a plan for us. It is not only for us, our family, and the people we like; but his plan is for all human beings, including our enemies. Often we believe that God has a plan for the lives of the people we like but not for those whom we dislike. We are parts of one body, equally important and working towards the one goal of eternal life. At times, we stray away from the love of God, but let us strive to come back to the Lord.

Prayer: Abba Father, help me to love, trust and obey you more.
Amen.

Tuesday January 10

First Week in Ordinary Time

Hebrews
2:5-12

Psalm
8:2,5-9

Mark
1:21-28

Ministering from a right identity and relationship.

When our Lord spoke, people listened. They were astounded by the wisdom that was imparted. They were healed, delivered and set free in Christ as he spoke with authority and conviction. He knew where he came from and where he was going. He lived, moved and had his being in the Father. Today's Gospel proclamation narrates the story of the deliverance of the man with an unclean spirit. A few verses prior we hear of Jesus' proclamation, "the Kingdom of God is near, repent and believe in the good news", and now he demonstrates that with signs and wonders. He was God but emptied himself of his divinity. So how was all this possible? Christ did what he saw his Father doing and depended on the Holy Spirit, in his times of intimacy in prayer. He ministered from a right identity and relationship. In examining our hearts, let us ask ourselves, have we lost that intimacy with God or our dependence on the Holy Spirit? Have we truly repented of our selfish ways of thinking and given them to God in confession?

Prayer: Abba Father, help me to come back to the heart of intimacy that I may demonstrate your power with signs and wonders. Amen.

Wednesday January 11

First Week in Ordinary Time

Hebrews
2:14-18

Psalm
105:1-4,6-9

Mark
1:29-39

God's ways and direction are the path to heaven.

In the healing of Peter's mother-in-law, the Lord Jesus does not speak or command or do any such actions as he usually did, instead the scriptures say that the Lord Jesus took her by the hand and helped her up and the fever left. How powerful was the presence of the Lord Jesus for such quick and complete healing. Was there a secret to that healing power of the Lord Jesus? I believe so. What strikes me most in today's Gospel proclamation is the importance Jesus gives to prayer and solitude: connection with God the Father. The Lord Jesus rose up early morning to pray in solitude. Didn't the Lord Jesus say that we would do greater miracles than he? Does it happen that way today? Could the reason be our lack of deep connection with the Lord in prayer? We read that the Lord Jesus healed every person brought to him that day! Let us worship in spirit and in truth and fulfil God's calling by preaching the good news, healing the sick and raising the dead. Let us exercise our ministry in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Prayer: Abba Father, open my spiritual eyes and fill me with your compassion to heal and restore your people. Amen.

Thursday January 12

First Week in Ordinary Time

Hebrews
3:7-14

Psalm
95:6-11

Mark
1:40-45

Surrender without demanding.

In today's Gospel proclamation we see Jesus showing deep compassion for the leper. Leprosy was a dreaded disease of that time, where those who had this incurable disease lost everything and became outcasts of society. They were the untouchables. In the leper's prayer we see deep faith in Jesus' ability to heal him. We also see how he surrenders without demanding, by laying himself at the mercy of Jesus saying "if you choose you can make me clean". Let us examine our hearts, we may not have an incurable physical disease but maybe there is some hidden area of sinfulness or brokenness. If we continue to choose to ignore and give into sin, it eventually could destroy us. The pleasure of sin is a delusion, promising pleasure and satisfaction, but leading to sorrow, pain and destruction. Let us bring every area of sinfulness to the feet of Jesus, bringing him the truth of our hearts, and surrendering to him every area of brokenness and woundedness, allowing him to touch us and heal us and make us clean.

Prayer: Abba Father, search my heart, reveal to me my hidden sins. If you wish, you can make me clean. Amen.

Friday January 13

First Week in Ordinary Time

Hebrews
4:1-11

Psalm
78:3-4,6-8

Mark
2:1-12

Faith can move mountains.

Today's readings breathe the word 'faith' over our hearts. In the Gospel proclamation we meet the paralytic man and his friends who discovered that their path to Jesus was blocked by swarming crowds. However, they found a way to Jesus through the roof of the house. As Christians, we believe faith can move the mountains in our path. As the Gospel proclamation shows us, faith can also build highways across those mountains. Evidently, faith made a new way for the paralytic by fixing an earthly problem with a Kingdom solution. And as the First Reading says, faith is a Kingdom value. In light of this truth, how do we increase our faith in the Lord Jesus? The Psalmist gives us the answer. "Do not forget the works of the Lord!". As we remember what he HAS done, IS doing, and WILL do, we can declare to the staggering mountains before us what our God CAN do. It is then that we will see faith arising, clearing the path and leading us to the heart of the Lord Jesus.

Prayer: Abba Father, increase our faith so that we may live and walk in the power of your Kingdom. Amen.

Saturday January 14

First Week in Ordinary Time

Hebrews
4:12-16

Psalm
19:8-10,15

Mark
2:13-17

We are the salt and the light of the world.

Today's Gospel proclamation is challenging us, as Jesus opts to dine with sinners. In society we often opt to mingle and spend time with the well behaved and good reputed people. However Jesus does something contrary in this regard. He chooses to be found and to be seen with people who are discarded and tarnished in character. Let us think about how many such occasions we have avoided because we were worried about the world's view and opinion about us? As Jesus tells us, it is the sick who need the doctor not the healthy. Therefore this righteousness that we have received has a healing effect on those we encounter. The Lord's fragrance could be felt through a believer who is willing to go and seek the lost in prisons, bars or the streets at night. Are we bold enough to carry the light of Christ to the darkest places? Or do we feel embarrassed to find ourselves with the lost and the broken? Let us fulfil the mission of Christ, for when we go to the sinners we will not become like them, but they will become like us.

Prayer: Abba Father, transform the world through your children who carry your light to the world. Amen.

Sunday January 15

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Isaiah
49:3,5-6

Psalm
40:2,4,7-10

1 Corinthians
1:1-3

John
1:29-34

Find out the true purpose of life.

It is the joy of any parent to introduce their child to everyone around. We take pride in our children and even their little achievements. The Heavenly Father is no different.

God speaks through the prophet Isaiah about his Chosen One that he has a much greater plan for his suffering servant; that he will not only gather the people of Israel together but also be a light to the Gentiles, taking his salvation to the ends of the earth.

In the Gospel proclamation, we meet John the Baptist, who had heard the Father's introduction to his beloved Son when John baptised him in the river Jordan.

At the height of the ministry of John the Baptist, he is focusing the spotlight on the One who came to be baptised by him just the other day, declaring him as the long awaited Messiah.

It looks like John's encounter with Jesus had brought the realisation that powerful preaching alone could not bring inner transformation to people's lives. Not only did he demote himself as being unworthy to untie the sandals of Jesus, but was declaring the true purpose of his life and ministry as the one going before the Promised One. John had completed his assignment. Further, he prophesied and proclaimed that the Messiah's purpose and mission is to baptise everyone with the Holy Spirit.

This is the truth about our own lives too. We will be living in a false reality until we encounter the Lord Jesus, who will put everything in its correct perspective.

Are we being misunderstood and humiliated by those who are around us? Have we received bad news about our own health or of a loved one? Are we facing a financial crisis or an unexpected disaster? Run to the One who will accept our own truth of the current situation and give us his truth, and put everything in heaven's perspective. Then we can receive the light and freedom that John enjoyed after his encounter with the Lord Jesus at the Jordan.

In today's Second Reading Saint Paul outlines the result of that encounter with the Lord. We will have joyous grace and endless peace from the Father and the Lord Jesus, the Anointed One.

"The Greek word for God's grace is "charis". It implies God's favour and supernatural potency, leaving us both charming and beautiful in whatever circumstances we may be. Who would not want to possess this treasure that every human heart is yearning for?"

Prayer: Abba Father, thank you for sending your Son, to lift me up from the desolate pit I was in, to be in your arms. Amen.

Monday January 16

Solemnity of Saint Joseph Vaz, Priest

Isaiah
52:7-10

Psalm
97:1-3,6-8,10

Acts
20:17-18,28-32,36

Mark
16:15-20

Far from beautiful.

“How beautiful are the feet of him who bears good news”. In reality, the feet of the people who bore good news would have been dirty, disfigured and worn out. These would have been people who walked many miles sharing the Gospel message. These were the feet of St Joseph Vaz who walked many miles bearing God’s word. St Joseph Vaz in his love for the people traversed the length and breadth of Sri Lanka sharing God’s word. It is said that he walked in such haste that his assistant who was younger could not keep up with his speed. While he honoured God’s call, the Lord honoured his love protecting him from wild beasts and forces of nature. Many lives were impacted and renewed. It was the sound of their feet, when they entered a village that brought joy to the people who were starved of the presence of Jesus. We are not only called to seek the intercession of such an inspiring saint but to follow in his footsteps. Signs and wonders will follow us as we share the good news of God’s love.

Prayer: Abba Father, we are grateful for the gift of St. Joseph Vaz to us and to the Church in Sri Lanka. Amen.

Tuesday January 17

Memorial of Saint Anthony, Abbot

Hebrews
6:10-20

Psalm
111:1-2,4-5,9-10

Mark
2:23-28

Hope in God.

Today’s first reading reminds us of hope, faith and patience. As Christians we need to have these virtues in our lives. If we are not with the Lord, it will not be possible. Often we are tempted to reach our goals with our human efforts without the Lord’s help. The Lord assures us that he is the Lord of everything and we do not need to worry. We are called to surrender everything to God with faith, because he is our Father and he knows what is good for us. Even before we ask, the Lord will provide what we need, in accordance with his will. The Lord reigns over the whole universe and there is nothing greater than him. Our God is eternal and he is love. We need to be confident in his love. We are to praise and thank him for what he has done in our lives. Let us take a moment to think about our past and we will be able to see how the Lord guided us through impossible situations. How great is God our loving Father. Let us keep our hope in God and patiently wait for his answer because he will never abandon us.

Prayer: Abba Father, I hope in you.
Amen.

Wednesday January 18

Second Week in Ordinary Time

Hebrews
7:1-3,15-17

Psalm
110:1-4

Mark
3:1-6

We are called to love like God loves.

In today's Gospel proclamation, Jesus asks the Pharisees a question – "Is it lawful to do good or evil on the Sabbath?" The Pharisees and the rest of the Jewish communities knew that the sabbath was a day of rest commanded by God. They took that to mean that even helping someone on the Sabbath was breaking the law of God. But Jesus knew the mind of God. He thinks differently and sees things differently. Isaiah 55:8 says, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways." 1 John 4:8 says, "Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love." These two verses show us that God neither thinks like we do or loves like we do. The Lord Jesus knew the mind of God and fulfilled God's commands even when it went against others' ideas or expectations. As disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are called to do the same. To love like God loves and to care for others like God cares for them. The Lord is calling us to seek his mind in the situations we face and act accordingly.

Prayer: Abba Father, I pray for the grace to do your will in every situation. May others see you through everything I do. Amen.

Thursday January 19

Second Week in Ordinary Time

Hebrews
7:25--8:6

Psalm
40:7-10,17

Mark
3:7-12

You are the Son of God.

The Lord Jesus faced rejection from the high priests and pharisees. He was not accepted for who he was. Many believed he was as same as many other prophets who prophesied in the Old Testament times. Only a few believed him to be the Son of God. Today's Gospel proclamation shows how Jesus was proclaimed as the Son of God even by unclean spirits. The Lord Jesus was known among the people, mainly for healing, and large crowds followed him believing that they will be healed from their sicknesses. They do not seem to have understood the importance of spiritual healing over physical healing. In contrast, unclean spirits were aware that they have no power over the Lord Jesus, and they can no longer be in existence. No matter how hard we try, we are incapable of overcoming sin. That is why Jesus saved us by the power of the cross and resurrection. His power continues through the high-priestly intercession taking place at the right had of the Father. How blessed are we.

Prayer: Abba Father, thank you for the gift of salvation.
Amen.

Friday January 20

First Week in Ordinary Time

Hebrews
8:6-13

Psalm
85:8,10-14

Mark
3:13-19

Let us hold on to our faith.

Today's Gospel proclamation talks about how Jesus chose the twelve apostles. Jesus did not choose extraordinary people to be his disciples instead he chose twelve ordinary men with their own weaknesses and failures. None of them were perfect when Jesus chose them. They were tax collectors, fishermen and rebels. But in the Lord's hands even ordinary becomes extraordinary. These twelve disciples journeyed with our Lord and were transformed along the journey. Each of them faced their own trials after the death of Jesus when they could not see him any longer. But the love of our Lord and their faith enabled them to hold on even when they could not hold on any longer. After the day of Pentecost these ordinary disciples became God's messengers who took the good news to the ends of the earth. If they did not hold on to their faith and the love of Christ, none of us would be Christians. So are we ready to hold on to our faith even when it seems like we cannot hold on any longer?

Prayer: Abba Father, give me the grace and faith to hold on to you even when I cannot hold on. Amen.

Saturday January 21

Memorial of Saint Agnes, Virgin and Martyr

Hebrews
9:2-3,11-14

Psalm
47:2-3,6-9

Mark
3:20-21

Cost of discipleship.

The world has values which are different from the values of Christian discipleship. When we try to do the will of the Father, we might be misunderstood. Our Christian discipleship is challenged by the ways of the world. Are we prepared to obey God even when it is difficult? Even in the early church when the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit in the upper room, they were called out as 'out of mind'. Many saints had similar experiences, as people insulted or questioned their spirituality. When we start to live according to the values of the Kingdom, we might also be called 'mad'. We should not blame or criticise the people around us for insulting us, instead we are to love them more. This is a part of our discipleship. When we allow the Holy Spirit to take control of our lives we may get insulted by our families, workplace, and the society. Be happy because we are valuable in the eyes of our God who is in control of our life. Let us not seek human praise, instead let us seek to glorify God our Father.

Prayer: Abba Father, help me to live as a true disciple.
Amen.

Sunday January 22

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Isaiah
8:23-9:3

Psalms
27:1,4,13-14

1 Corinthians
1:10-13,17

Matthew
4:12-23

The light that shines in the darkness.

Today's readings reveal that the promise of God given to Prophet Isaiah was fulfilled in Jesus. Yet, still are there people living in the land of the shadow of death and darkness?

Some would say that one of the greatest tragedies of humanity is when one looks back at their own life and sees their own sinfulness and the suffering it caused to others and then feeling that we cannot do anything about it. The world tells us that the consequences of what we have done and the brokenness of the past has to be borne by our self alone. This is a lie that people believe. Because we have removed God from the equation. It is he who can make it possible to reconcile with those whom we have hurt. If we care to speak to the people around us, we are sure to find out many who carry the burden of their sins in their hearts .

Jesus took our sin and brokenness upon himself and paid the ransom for our sins with his precious blood. It is the answer for our past. The great good news is that we can enter into the original plan that God intended for our lives. This is the light that shines in our darkness.

Jesus says "Repent". We need to repent for our sins. Sometimes the cares of this world become so real in our minds that it overwhelms us. We may forget that the gift of redemption has already been given to us. We need to accept it in faith. The Lord Jesus invites us to repent of our sinful ways of thinking, speaking and behaving.

Let us examine our hearts, does the past weigh us down? Are we living in bondage and in sinfulness due to the brokenness of the past? Jesus can heal our past. Let us give it to him. Let us repent and confess our sins. Let us confidently approach the sacrament of reconciliation.

The psalmist says: "the Lord is my light and my salvation" and he seeks to dwell in God's presence. Praising God brings us to the presence of God. Let us strive to praise God always. In his presence we will be healed and transformed from our past .

St.Paul talks of a division. He says that there is only one truth and we should be perfectly united not divided in mind and thought on this. He emphasizes that he preached the Gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit, so that this message of salvation, the message of the cross of Christ, will be delivered to the people.

Let us ask the Holy Spirit to reveal our hidden sins and lead us to repentance. Let us share this message of salvation with others who may not have a clear understanding of the Gospel of Christ.

Prayer: Abba Father, reveal deep into our hearts, the truth of redemption.
Amen.

Monday January 23

Third Week in Ordinary Time

Hebrews
9:15,24-28

Psalm
98:1-6

Mark
3:22-30

The Father's gift of the Holy Spirit.

A biblical covenant is a sacred agreement between God and his children. God sets specific conditions, and he promises to bless us as we obey these conditions. Making and keeping covenants qualifies us to receive the blessings God has promised. When we choose not to keep covenants, we cannot receive the blessings. God always keeps his side of the promise in the covenant, but we humans often fail to trust him completely to receive his blessing. Those who are in Jesus are in the new covenant with the Father. The sealing of the covenant was with the blood of Jesus on the Cross on Calvary. In the Lord Jesus the blessing of the Holy Spirit has been poured into our hearts. In today's Gospel proclamation, the scribes have a singular goal: to condemn Jesus' work even after watching him do so many miracles. It is their hardness of heart which bound them in their sin, without receiving the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ that is highlighted in the Gospel proclamation.

Prayer: Abba Father, I pray that I may have a heart that ponders and gratefully accepts your everlasting covenant. Amen.

Tuesday January 24

Memorial of Saint Francis de Sales, Bishop and Doctor of the Church

Hebrews
10:1-10

Psalm
40:2,4,7-8,10-11

Mark
3:31-35

Christ's perfect sacrifice.

In today's first reading we read about Christ's sacrifice, which was once and for all. Psalm 40:7-9 is not cited in any other New Testament book. However, it is a central teaching of the Old Testament that God desires obedience and a right heart, not empty compliance with laws and rituals. When people gathered for the offering of sacrifices on the Day of Atonement, they were reminded of their sins, and they undoubtedly felt guilty all over again. Animal sacrifices could not take away sins; they provided only a temporary way to deal with sin until Jesus came to deal with sin permanently. How, then, were people forgiven in Old Testament times? Because the Old Testament believers were following God's command to offer sacrifices, he graciously forgave them when, by faith, they made their sacrifices. But that practice looked forward to Christ's perfect sacrifice. Christ's way was superior to the Old Testament way because the old way only pointed to what Christ would do to take away sins.

Prayer: Abba Father, thank you for setting me free from my sins.
Amen.

Wednesday January 25

Feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul, Apostle

Acts
22:3-16

Psalm
117:1-2

Mark
16:15-18

Speak the name of Jesus over every heart.

St. Paul was from an affluent family, well educated, a member of the Sanhedrin, who became a persecutor of the followers of Christ. On his way to Damascus he had a life changing encounter with the Lord Jesus. This brought him into the light and he began sharing the Gospel with the gentiles along with signs and wonders. St. Paul shared that even though we have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, the righteousness of God is available through faith in Jesus, and therefore there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ. We are God's beloved sons and daughters and are commissioned to go out and proclaim the good news to those who do not know the truth. He gives us a promise that signs and wonders will accompany us as we share the Gospel. It is difficult to be a disciple as Jesus is calling us to be, especially in a world where corruption is high. But when we put on Jesus and walk with an open heaven above us, God the Holy Spirit will guide us to do great things.

Prayer: Abba Father, bless me with spiritual boldness to speak the name of Jesus. Amen.

Thursday January 26

Memorial of Saints Timothy and Titus, Bishops

2 Timothy
1:1-8

Psalm
96:1-3,7-8,10

Luke
10:1-9

The will of God.

The will of God is that we receive eternal life in Christ Jesus. It is not because we have a special talent or ability or we deserved it but God in his mercy reaches out to us and calls us by name just like he called Saints Paul, Timothy and Titus. We are saved by his grace alone. When he called us, he did not give us a spirit of fearfulness but he gave us his Holy Spirit of power. We are now his witnesses and called to share our testimony of his love and mercy with others by our deeds and words starting with our own families. Jesus reminds us, that light came in to our lives, to give light to those who are in darkness. He also warns us that if we do not bear fruit even what we have will be taken away. We can no longer live for ourselves alone. Let us open our ears to hear his voice and remain faithful to him. In this journey there will be times of spiritual dryness, shame and suffering. St. Paul reminds us that it is only through constant prayer that we can remain in the Lord Jesus, bear witness and reach our ultimate goal: eternal life.

Prayer: Abba Father, we thank and praise you for revealing your love into our hearts, give us the grace to be faithful to you. Amen.

Friday January 27

Third Week in Ordinary Time

Hebrews
10:32-39

Psalm
37:3-6,23-24,39-40

Mark
4:26-34

Perseverance brings endurance.

Today's First Reading reveals the experience of God's children, not only then, but even now and for all times. We know that suffering is a component in the life of a disciple of Jesus. The light we have received through Jesus is bright enough to chase away the dark shadows which are brought by the three enemies: the world, the flesh and Satan. Faith is the shield, with which we can deflect all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Our faith is in the faithfulness of our God, knowing that he fulfils his promises. Jesus gives us a choice. We can either shrink back in the face of suffering and be destroyed or have faith and be saved. Just as a mustard seed grows into a large tree and creates a haven for birds to nest and have shelter, the spiritual seeds planted in our hearts start to grow and produce love, peace, and joy. Let us choose to trust and have faith in our Father, that even when we do not understand and when we struggle to hold on in faith, he will give us the grace to persevere and endure until the end.

Prayer: Abba Father, help me to persevere, knowing that when I have done your holy will, I will receive what you have promised. Amen.

Saturday January 28

Memorial of Saint Thomas Aquinas, Priest and Doctor of the Church

Hebrews
11:1-2,8-19

Luke
1:69-75

Mark
4:35-41

Faith turns impossibilities into possibilities.

The letter to the Hebrews speaks about Faith; which is to hope for the unseen. Faith is vital for us in the present days. We often cry out for instant answers because most things at present are instant. But when we deal with God our perceptions would be shattered first because God's way of working cannot be rationalised or humanly understood. Abraham's life changed drastically after setting out to go in the direction that God called him to. Abraham's trust in God changed impossible things into possibilities. This is something that we could learn; even though our surrounding could threaten us, when we see God's hands in the ordinary things, impossible is turned to possible. The responsorial psalm is also praising God for changing impossible situations into possible situations. We become cheerful people only if we could see the hand of God in the challenges we go through. God changes challenges into victory. The Gospel proclamation is the climax of faith. When the Lord is with us we need not worry.

Prayer: Abba Father, please remain in my boat.
Amen.

Sunday January 29

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Zephaniah
2:3; 3:12-13

Psalms
146:6-10

1 Corinthians
1:26-31

Matthew
5:1-12

Hope in Christ.

“Seek the Lord,
all you humble of the land,
who have observed his law;
Seek justice,
seek humility;
Perhaps you will be sheltered
on the day of the Lord’s anger.” (Zeph 2:3)

In today’s first reading Zephaniah warns the people to seek God, to seek humility, to seek righteousness and to do his commands in the ‘hope’ that this ‘may’ save the people from the wrath of God. This reading concludes by God himself saying that he will not wipe out the ‘Remnant of Israel’ who are a small group of people with humility, integrity, not of high stature, seeking refuge in God’s name, who do no wrong, nor lie, nor have deceitful speech. They will journey through life, not being afraid of anything. If we were living in Old Testament times, I wonder if we would qualify to be the ‘Remnant of Israel’?

In today’s second reading Paul sheds light on the undeniable imperfection of humans. A calling is made to examine our own imperfections, an awareness of how insignificant we are when compared to the perfection that is in Christ Jesus.

The world system and its warped thinking says that success in the material world equals to human success. Thankfully this is not how God sees it. In the eyes of God we are all his beloved. There is no partiality, nor distinction among God’s children. All this thanks to our Blessed Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus uses the words of the Psalmist to build on one of the most paradoxical sermons ever given: the Beatitudes. What hope this sermon exudes to the hearer! What excitement it evokes in our hearts, to accept challenges as blessings!

Jesus assures those who are - hopeless, depressed, who have lost a loved one, who are submissive, who thirst for good and integrity, those who overlook the offenses of others, those with clean hearts, sincere encouragers of peace, those persecuted for pursuing righteousness and those falsely accused for honouring the name of Jesus, that our reward will be great in heaven. If we fall into any of the above categories, let us rejoice. In God’s eyes we are all his beloved and glory awaits in heaven. Let us journey in faith.

Prayer: Abba Father, may our spiritual eyes remain open to see the good in every situation in life. Amen.

Monday January 30

Fourth Week in Ordinary Time

Hebrews
11:32-40

Psalm
31:20-24

Mark
5:1-20

Blessed be God who works miracles for me.

Today's readings tell us that our promise-making God is faithful, generation after generation. God uses inadequate and flawed people to do extraordinary things through their faith. Generation after generation, people of faith put their trust in God to be their strength, irrespective of the temporal results. Whether there be earthly rescue and temporal victory, or a path of grief like Christ had in this life, God is faithful. He is our strength and keeps his promises. We have received the highest confirmation that God keeps his promises — the satisfaction of God's promised salvation in Jesus. Today's psalm is a lament occurring from affliction, yet one in which David places his trust and belief in God, realizing, "My destiny is in your hands" (Ps 31:16). David suffers from a worsening illness that makes him, as he says, "To all my foes I am a thing of scorn;...when they see me in public, they quickly shy away" (Ps 31:12). David has deep faith in God and prays: "Into your hands I commend my spirit; you will redeem me, Lord." (Ps 31:6)

Prayer: Abba Father, you are my shelter and protection.
Amen.

Tuesday January 31

Memorial of Saint John Bosco, Priest

Hebrews
12:1-4

Psalm
22:26-28,30-32

Mark
5:21-43

Be patient.

Today's readings call us to have patience and perseverance. Sometimes life will bring challenges and sometimes we may feel defeated. The First reading calls us to "persevere in running the race that lies before us while keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus". At times we may feel tired and want to give up. Today's reading tells us "Consider how he endured such opposition from sinners, in order that you may not grow weary and lose heart". In the Gospel proclamation, Jairus pleads with Jesus to heal her dying daughter. Without running in to save her, Jesus stops and heals another woman. Jairus would have been impatient. Imagine his grief when his daughter died before Jesus got to the place. When all hope was lost, Jesus came and raised this girl from the dead. As we go through many challenges, let us remember, it is never over with Jesus. He can resurrect us from any hopeless situation and bring peace and joy to our life even in seemingly impossible situations.

Prayer: Abba Father, give me courage to persevere and to keep my eyes focused on you alone. Amen.

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MEMORARE

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that any one who fled to your protection, implored your help, or sought your intercession was left unaided. Inspired with this confidence, I fly unto you, O Virgin of virgins, my Mother. To you do I come, before you I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in your mercy hear and answer me. Amen.

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