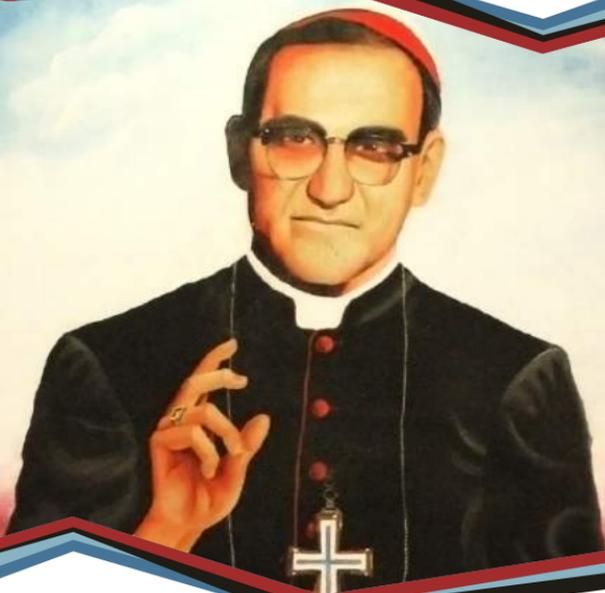


ON OUR KNEES IN HIS HANDS



St. Oscar Romero

Memorial: 24 March

MARCH 2023 | DAILY READINGS & REFLECTIONS



ON OUR KNEES IN HIS HANDS

MARCH
2023

“Beautiful is the moment in which we understand that we are no more than an instrument of God; we live only as long as God wants us to live; we can only do as much as God makes us able to do; we are only as intelligent as God would have us be.”

Saint Oscar Romero

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Wednesday March 1

First Week of Lent

Jonah
3:1-10

Psalm
51:3-4,12-13,18-19

Luke
11:29-32

Repent before it is too late!

In these days and times, we are called to be like the people of Nineveh who, from their king to the least, chose to repent when they heard the voice of Jonah. One voice caused them to repent. We have received so much from the Lord yet tend to think that we were entitled to receive all that we have received. Sometimes God's goodness and blessings are overflowing but we look for what never happened or never came our way. I just cannot forget the scenes in the cancer hospital in Maharagama, Sri Lanka where we see all ages and profiles of people and so many little children suffering from the ravages of cancer. Lent is a time when we just do not think of our sins and repent but thank God for all that has been LENT to us. Yes we have been lent the ground we live on, the things we use and the time we have because 50 to 70 years from now they will belong to someone else and we will be called LATE. So before it is too late let us choose to repent this Lent and find life with the Lord.

Prayer: Abba Father, today I choose to repent and heed the urgent call to change my life. Amen.

Thursday March 2

First Week of Lent

Esther
C:12, 14-16, 23-25

Psalm
138:1-3, 7-8

Matthew
7: 7-12

Seek God and his righteousness.

Today's Gospel proclamation promises that God will give us "good gifts" if we ask, seek, and knock on his door. At times our prayers seem to go unheard or unanswered. But if we keep on praying, asking, and seeking, good things will happen. "Asking" is not always easy for many of us, because we prefer to be independent. The thought: "I can do it myself" is ingrained in many of us. We may feel more comfortable in helping others rather than receiving help ourselves! Are we afraid of turning to God and saying: "I need you to be with me, to help me." Am I wondering that God will not respond to my cry, my need? Do I trust God to love me unconditionally? Do I trust God to help me? Remember a time when you truly felt God's presence! What was the situation? How did you know God was there? Breathe that memory in! You trusted God and God did not fail you! Ask God for what you need. Stay attentive and notice God's presence. God is with us! Do we believe that? I pray we do!

Prayer: Abba Father, may I be generous in giving and humble in receiving. Amen.

Friday March 3

First Week of Lent

Ezekiel
18:21-28

Psalm
130:1-8

Matthew
5:20-26

God of mercy and compassion.

Our God is merciful and full of compassion, he is love, and his love overflows to everyone. He is inviting us to turn back from our wicked ways and to enter into his glorious love. However, sometimes we take it for granted. We might be tempted to think: it does not matter what we do, because we can ask for forgiveness from the Lord. This is a wrong understanding. Yes, God forgives our sins but our sins have repercussions and if we do not reconcile with God, it may lead us to worse sins and we will find ourselves further away from God. Often, we sin because it gives us temporary enjoyment and temporary fulfilment but when we face the consequences of our sin, that is the time we realize that we have fallen on our journey with the Lord. Therefore, let us humbly acknowledge our sinful tendencies, joyfully go to the Sacrament of reconciliation and peacefully receive freedom from our sins. As we journey with the Lord, let us continue to seek his forgiveness and grow in our relationship with the Lord.

Prayer: Abba Father, cleanse me from my sins as I surrender to you.
Amen.

Saturday March 4

First Week of Lent

Deuteronomy
26:16-19

Psalm
119:1-2, 4- 5, 7-8

Mathew
5:43-48

Happy are they who follow the law of the Lord.

Obedying the laws of a nation does not necessarily make people happy. What is so special about obeying the Law of the Lord? "The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul, his commands are the wisdom of the simple." (Ps 19:7) Let us take this opportunity to reflect and see where our lives are headed. Do we freely and lovingly accept God's lordship over our lives? That is to love him and trust in him totally. The love that is poured out on those who believe, is God's love - divine, infinite and eternal. This is why we can go beyond our limited ways of loving when we believe in Jesus. By the power of the Holy Spirit we can love not only those who love us, but our enemies and even those who persecute us. Jesus taught "be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect". This perfection is possible only when we are surrendered to the Lord, allowing his perfect love to transform us that we may become like him. He will reveal how we can love those in our families, churches, communities, neighbourhoods, and the world.

Prayer: Abba Father, take control of my life and transform me, that I may be perfect as you are perfect. Amen.

Sunday March 5

Second Sunday of Lent

Genesis
12:1-4

Psalm
33:4-5, 18-20, 22

2 Timothy
1:8-10

Matthew
17:1-9

Radical transformation.

Radical transformation is written into our destiny. The call on Abraham's life to live under the banner of the Lord's favour and promise is shared by us all. However, stepping into this calling requires a radical move. We are called out of our comfort zones and in to the unknown. We are drawn out from our state of normalcy and plunged into the supernatural.

Today's Second Reading says, "He saved us and called us to a holy life, not according to our works but according to his own design." What does this holy life look like? It involves bearing hardship for the Gospel. It involves a sacrifice.

Are we prepared to be fools for Christ in the eyes of the world? Are we prepared to endure rejection, judgement, and criticism to uphold Kingdom values? Are we willing to be misunderstood when obeying his word?

If indeed we are, then we can expect the glory of Christ as seen on the Mount of Transfiguration to be unveiled in our lives. For when we choose a life of radical living, radical loving, and radical serving, then in turn, we see a radical moving and a radical working of Christ through us. And those words that the Father spoke over the Son, he will speak over us, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

For when Jesus was transfigured, the Gospel reveals that a radiant cloud appeared, and enveloped them all; not just Jesus, but all who were present there. This glory cloud rests over us, and the invitation to "Rise" and "not be afraid" is open to us still today.

We are invited to carry Christ's glory into our spheres of influence, and to be his witnesses not just in our home territory where we are comfortable, but to go beyond as Abram did leaving behind the land of his kinsfolk and go wherever the Lord's glory longs to be released.

All he asks of us is to trust and start moving, and he will bring the light, the wonder, the power, and all the glory. He will be the radical transformer.

As the Lord leads us in this season of grace, let us envision ourselves standing on that mountain with Jesus. Will we say yes to his glory? Yes to the cost of following him for the rest of our lives? Yes to a life lived not for others nor the world, but for Christ alone? Yes to leaving it all behind and marching out to where he directs us?

If our heart's cry is yes, then let us allow to Lord to begin a radical transformation in us. Let us take his hand and dive into a radical experience of his love, mercy and grace.

Prayer: Abba Father, envelop us in your glory. Transform us from the inside out, so that we may live for you alone. Amen.

Monday March 6

Second Week of Lent

Daniel
9:4-10

Psalm
79:8-9, 11, 13

Luke
6:36-38

“Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful” Luke 6:36

The first reading paints a beautiful image of a true follower of Jesus. As baptized people we need to be aware that in our human nature we are prone to sin. Can we find anyone without sin? Therefore we should deal with the truth of our hearts and give it to the Lord Jesus. There are no shortcuts to this journey that the Lord Jesus has called us to. We are certainly saved people because of the passion, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus. But we need to be always mindful of our salvation. The grace of God works powerfully in us, specially when we are broken and fallen. The Lord Jesus and the choirs of angels in heaven rejoice when we return to God. The Gospel proclamation gives an important advice: “Judge not and we will not be judged”. In the depth of our inner being we have our hidden sins, which at times, we ourselves are unaware of. We are responsible for our actions, we cannot blame anyone else. Therefore when we judge we are actually pushing ourselves to be judged.

Prayer: Abba Father, let me not judge others, as I desire to not be judged by others.
Amen.

Tuesday March 7

Second Week of Lent

Isaiah
1:10,16-20

Psalm
50:8-9,16-17,21,23

Matthew
23:1-12

Refiner's fire.

“Purify my heart

Cleanse me from within and make me holy

Purify my heart

Cleanse me from my sin, deep within”

The goodness of our creator speaks to us through the gift of the free will he has given us. Similar to the story in scriptures, how many times have we exercised the power of choice for our sinful desires? God, in his abundant mercy is giving us a personal invitation. He invites us to come to him with a heart of praise and surrender. God the Son sacrificed himself once and for all for our salvation. His precious blood has the redeeming power to wash away all sin, and to cleanse us to become white as snow. Let us receive the redemption and healing that has already been won for us. With childlike faith, let us humble ourselves before the Father, who has his arms wide open, ready to embrace us with his love and boundless grace.

Prayer: Abba Father, purify my heart.
Amen.

Wednesday March 8

Second Week of Lent

Jeremiah
18:18-20

Psalm
31: 5-6, 14-16

Matthew
20: 17-28

“Into your hands I commit my Spirit” Lk 23:46

Today's first reading tells us of the well known pattern of plotting against the prophets of God. The voice of God could be overruled when the leadership is misled by people who have hidden agendas. They wanted to destroy Jeremiah who acted on the instructions of God. Prejudice and judgment lead us to aggression and violence. We easily fall into this trap in our communities. The rulers and elders could not recognize Jeremiah's words as the voice of God. They displayed their ignorance and led themselves into destruction. In the Gospel Proclamation the conflict within us is further elaborated. Jesus continued to speak of his death and resurrection and without understanding what he explained, the apostles were all out to establish themselves in the worldly realm. Our competitive attitudes need to be transformed and we should enter to an authentic inner journey. Suffering is part and parcel of God's plan for us. Suffering becomes joyful when we say “yes, we will drink from the same cup”.

Prayer: Abba Father, grant me the grace to live in the heavenly realm by saying “Let your perfect will be done in my life”. Amen.

Thursday March 9

Second Week of Lent

Jeremiah
17:5-10

Psalm
1:1-4,6

Luke
16:19-31

Our hearts cannot be made right without Jesus.

The first reading cautions us that our hearts cannot be made right, apart from the saving grace of Jesus in our lives. The world's reality entices us to sin and we become like a barren bush in the desert. As I reflect on this scripture, I recollect my life experience. Caught up in the ways of the world, barren and useless, seeking strength in the flesh, that left me in total distress, I met the gaze of the Lord Jesus in a love encounter. Living waters of the Holy Spirit transformed my barrenness to a joyous life that desires to trust him alone. The Gospel proclamation reminds us about eternity with our Lord Jesus. We can become partakers in eternity as we choose to live according to his will; as we become more Christ-like in our actions. He beckons us to a purpose driven life on earth. The present economic crisis in Sri Lanka, has left so many helpless and burdened. Let us honestly examine our hearts. Will I be likened to the rich man in torment, or will I be in the bosom of our Lord enjoying eternity?

Prayer: Abba Father, lead me to your ultimate plan as I trust in you.
Amen.

Friday March 10

Second Week of Lent

Genesis
37:3-4, 12-13,17-28

Psalm
105:16-21

Matthew
21:33-43,45-46

God given vineyard.

In today's Gospel proclamation Jesus summarises the history of salvation. God gave us this beautiful world, likened to a vineyard set up to cultivate. We were supposed to live a fulfilled life, loving and sharing with others. But sin entered into this beautiful plan. The tenants thought the fruit of the vineyard was theirs and selfishness crept in. In his mercy God sends messengers to call them to repentance. All of them are beaten and killed. In this parable Jesus foretells his death. We have received grace upon grace by his death and resurrection. The parable applies to us too. We are each given a vineyard: our life. We have experienced the love of Jesus and have received the grace to live in accordance with his plan. We have been given many chances to put our lives right with God, by living as he desires us to live. Easily we fall into the trap of judging the hardheartedness of others. Today let us awaken ourselves to see how much our lives are giving glory to God instead of trying to steal glory for ourselves.

Prayer: Abba Father, thank you for never giving up on me. Help me to have my confidence in you and to walk according to your ways. Amen.

Saturday March 11

Second Week of Lent

Micah
7:14-15,18-20

Psalm
103:1-4,9-12

Luke
15:1-3,11-32

The Lord wants to know your story.

Today's Gospel proclamation is the story of the Prodigal Son. Our Lord Jesus related this parable when 'sinners' and tax collectors approached him, to listen to him while the others stayed away or found fault with his mingling with sinners. In the story of the Prodigal Son, when the younger son was in need and in a foreign country, the man whom he hired himself out to, was not concerned with his background and life story. He took no time in sending the boy directly to the pigsty to earn his living if there was anything at all. When we sin and stray from the Father's house, it is a different experience with the Lord Jesus. He waits for us to come back to him and break our story to him. In the confessional, he looks forward to listening to the details of our sin and then offers us forgiveness and love. It is his mercy that restores and heals us. While we are yet sinners, he looks at us with a promise of love, waiting for our destiny in him to blossom and break forth. In him we can always have hope.

Prayer: Abba Father, today I choose to return to you with my story and I know that you will infuse me with hope and love. Amen.

Sunday March 12

Third Sunday of Lent

Exodus
17: 3-7

Psalm
95: 1-2, 6-9

Romans
5:1-2, 5-8

John
4: 5-42

Jesus is our living water: Trust in him.

In today's Gospel proclamation we see the Lord Jesus, the giver of living water, thirsty at the well, requesting water from a Samaritan woman. The Samaritan woman is a reflection of fallen humanity. We see how the Lord Jesus seeks her out and engages in a dialogue with her. He meets her at her mundane daily task of drawing water for herself and her household. She is surprised at his interaction.

She is a Samaritan and considered untouchable by Jews and she is a woman and it is unheard of for a Jewish man (a rabbi), to engage in conversation with a woman of the Samaritan race. The fact that she comes to draw water at the heat of the day indicates that she was avoiding interaction with the other women in her society who customarily would have come at the cool of the day to draw water. She was an outcast within her own society. Yet it is to her that the Lord Jesus reveals himself as the giver of living water.

The Lord Jesus' encounter with this woman changes the trajectory of her life. She goes from avoiding interaction with her society to proclaiming to all she met "Come, and see a man who has told me all things whatsoever I have done. Is not he the Christ?"

Is this not what happens to us when we meet the Lord Jesus? We cannot contain our excitement of meeting the source of living water. Do we not want everyone we know and love to encounter him too? The encounter at the well not only changes the woman, but it changes many in the city of Samaria.

In today's First Reading, we see Israelites who did not trust that God's providence is good, but accused Moses and God of harmful purposes. The inability to trust God's goodness was at the heart of their cry. They were the chosen race rescued from slavery in Egypt, they had witnessed multiple signs such as the ten plagues as well as great miracles like the parting of the Red Sea.

Why did they still falter in their trust in the goodness of God? Could this be because they themselves did not have a personal relationship with God but rather relied on Moses to be the mediator? Even here we see that God though angered, answered their need by providing water from a rock.

The Lord Jesus is the rock of our salvation. We are made right with God not by anything we have done or can do, but solely by the saving work of the Lord Jesus on the Cross. He is the living water who pours himself out for us. Let us not harden our hearts, but trust in him.

Prayer: Abba Father, may your living waters flow through my life to all whom I encounter. Amen.

Monday March 13

Third Week of Lent

2 Kings
5:1-15

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

Luke
4:24-30

Familiarity breeds contempt.

Jesus came unto his own but they received him with contempt. Many of us continue living meaningless, powerless and sinful lives. Prisoners to the circumstances of unstable life. God comes into that situation through his Son Jesus to liberate and set us free. But at times we reject that divine help. We have made religious observances and obligations just a habit. We have lost that sensitivity to the sacredness of the Lord's presence and his Word. We are meant to be people of faith, but seem to have lost it. Tragedy of tragedies indeed. Faith comes through reading the Word and proclaiming it into our lives. Being a scripture scholar without knowing the living presence of Christ is futile. When we face difficulties do we hold on to Psalm 91? "You shall not fear the pestilence that roams in darkness nor the plague... Though thousand fall, even ten thousand on your right. Near you it shall not come. You need simply watch." Operational faith is required. Hence the Lord says "Will I find faith on earth when I come?"

Prayer: Abba Father, may we look up to your Son for empowerment, to walk by faith and not by sight. Amen.

Tuesday March 14

Third Week of Lent

Daniel
3:25,34-43

Psalm
25:4-9

Matthew
18:21-35

Forgive as we have been forgiven.

In today's Gospel proclamation Jesus teaches about the Unforgiving debtor. To forgive someone "seventy times seven," means that we should not keep track of how many times we forgive. We should always forgive those who are repentant, no matter how many times they ask. In ancient times, severe consequences awaited those who could not pay their debts. A person lending money could seize the borrower who could not pay and force him or his family to work until the debt was paid. The debtor could also be thrown into prison, or his family could be sold into slavery to help pay off the debt. It was hoped that the debtor, while in prison, would sell off his belongings or that relatives would pay the debt. If not, the debtor could remain in jail for life. As we realize how Christ has forgiven us, we should generously forgive others. When we do not forgive others, we set ourselves above Christ's law of love. Today let us take a step forward to be quick to forgive and follow in the footsteps of Jesus.

Prayer: Abba Father, thank you for forgiving us, give us the grace to forgive others. Amen.

Wednesday March 15

Third Week of Lent

Deuteronomy
41:5-9

Psalm 148:
12-13, 15-16, 19-20

Matthew
5:17-19

Our inner responses show how close God is to us.

God performed mighty deeds and brought out the Hebrews from Egyptian captivity. The nations saw the powerful acts of God and marvelled at how close God was to his chosen ones. When the Hebrews observed the laws and statutes that the Lord declared to them, the nations witnessed their wisdom and marvelled at how close God was to them. We who have encountered the Lord are like those rescued from Egypt. Those who hear our testimonies marvel at the closeness of God and are blessed as they too experience God's mercy. After conversion we enter a new season, where we bless others by hearing the voice of the Lord and obeying him in the secret places of our hearts. However, like it was with the Hebrews, our brokenness often gets in the way. Jesus declares that it is to fix this problem that he came. Whenever we fall, we return to him and give the truth of our hearts to him. We remember and declare the saving acts of God. These memories then become prophesies that are fulfilled over our lives again and again.

Prayer: Abba Father, may we hear your voice and act on it. When we fall and fail, grant us the grace to return to you without delay. Amen.

Thursday March 16

Third Week of Lent

Jeremiah
7:23-28

Psalm
95:1-2,6-9

Luke
11:14-23

The Kingdom of God is within me.

There is a famous saying: If there is a will there is a way. The Jewish leader wants to find fault with Jesus' healing. Jesus responds in one sentence "the kingdom of God has come upon you." The kingdom of God is in our midst. We are called to live according to its values. When we live according to the values of the kingdom, it becomes a reality even for others. How many of us are aware of the truth of the kingdom of God? Instead most of us are busy with other things and focussed on the chaos around us. In our discipleship we are called to be vigilant about the fact that the "kingdom of God is within me". We need to witness to this truth through our words and deeds. Are our words and deeds reflective of God's love? Are our deeds leading others towards the kingdom of God? During this season of Lent we are called to be aware of our words and deeds. We have a divine calling to lead others to the kingdom of God. Therefore let us be more Christ-like in our words and deeds.

Prayer: Abba Father, help me to live according to the values of your kingdom. Amen.

Friday March 17

Third Week of Lent

Hosea
14:2-10

Psalm
81:6-11,14,17

Mark
12:28-34

Love God and love others.

Today's Gospel proclamation talks about the two greatest commandments. Loving God with all we have means giving God the first place in our lives. Often our priorities keep changing according to our needs and God keeps being pushed down on the list. We love God. But that does not mean we give him first place in our lives. I loved God but other things took more priority in my life; my job, finances, family, relationships, rest and entertainment. The more I faced problems I realized I was struggling alone. I had done it to myself by putting God way down on the list. Loving God means giving him all that we are, making time for him above everything else even if it is just 5 to 10 minutes a day. The second commandment is to love our neighbour as ourselves. When we follow the first commandment we begin to love others with the Lord's love. When God comes first in our lives we will be filled with his love. That will enable us to see goodness in people and love even those whom we dislike. Are we ready to love God above everything else?

Prayer: Abba Father, help me to love you and offer my life to you.
Amen.

Saturday March 18

Third Week of Lent

Hosea
6:1-6

Psalm
51:3-4,18-21

Luke
18:9-14

At the feet of Jesus.

We have been raised up through the death and resurrection of Jesus to live in God's presence. Then why do we steer away? It is because we want to project that we are holy, righteous and spiritual. We do not realise how poor we are in spirit. Jesus said "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." If we do not acknowledge that there is a lack within us, we would not be able to repent and come before the Lord. Today, Jesus is speaking to us, inviting us to examine our hearts, minds and lives, to bring before him our truth! To come in repentance and humble ourselves in surrender to his great love so he can raise us into his presence - he will heal us, set us free from addictions and bondages, renew our faith and strength, pour out new life through the Holy Spirit and rebuild us in his grace and mercy. Jesus humbled himself to suffer and die so that when we humble ourselves, we may not be put to shame but be exalted to be with the Lord Jesus in paradise.

Prayer: Abba Father, I am not worthy that you should come to me, but only say the word and my spirit will be healed. Amen.

Sunday March 19

Fourth Sunday of Lent

1 Samuel
16:1,6-7,10-13

Psalm
23:1-6

Ephesians
5:8-14

John
9:1-41

Nothing is as it appears.

The first reading focusses on how people judge the outward appearance but the Lord looks at the heart. This reading evokes so much hope to those who by the world's standards would fall short and it also acts as an encouragement to those who aspire to improve themselves to please God. We need to be humble and resolve to imitate Christ in the way we live. Thus, our hearts will be pleasing to God.

Where would we find our hearts today? At a place where we would be chosen like David? Or are we at a place where our hearts need more work, in terms of becoming humble, reaching out in love and compassion-ate? Do we think of others more highly than ourselves? These are just a few of the attributes that we presume David's heart held, that God saw.

Psalm 23 is one we are familiar with but we could never stop drawing strength from it. Our Lord is the One who provides, he leads us and guides us. He is the God who never ceases to comfort those sheep who depend on him.

What is St. Paul referring to when he says "Brothers and sisters you were once in darkness but now you are light in the Lord" (Eph 5:8)? Before Jesus came down to earth to show us the way to the heart of our Abba Father through his death and resurrection, we were all in darkness. We were governed by the law of sin and death. This carried with it a sense of hopelessness, and a way of life that was destined for gloom as everyone fell short of the glory of God.

Jesus came to change our course. He died once and for all so that we may have eternal life through our knowledge of the Father. We were made righteous, to be called a holy nation and a royal priesthood. A people called by his own name. Do we believe and behave as though this is our destiny? Are we living as children of the light? Do goodness, righteousness and truth abound in our lives?

What is Jesus telling us in today's Gospel proclamation? "I came into this world for judgement, so that those who do not see might see, and those who do see might become blind."

Today's theme seems to highlight an undertone of "nothing is as it appears". If our attention and focus is constantly directed at those that are external, our spirits will be blind to what is going on in the spiritual realm. Our focus must be on Jesus: the light of the world that exposes darkness. We who live and move and have our being in him should not be blind to what is unseen.

Prayer: Abba Father, open the eyes of our heart,
so that we can see the way you want us to. Amen.

Monday March 20

Solemnity of Saint Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary

2 Samuel
7:4-5,12-14,16

Psalm
89:2-5,27,29

Romans
4:13,16-18,22

Matthew
1:16,18-21,24

A life worthy of imitation.

A solemnity is a day of the highest importance; yet there is little reference to the hero of the day in the scriptures! However, the little we hear about this great man; St. Joseph, is enough to know how rich in virtue he was and what a huge influence he could have on our lives. Joseph was righteous and obedient. He was so intent on doing what is right and above all he never hesitated to take God at his word. We see his actions written simply and plainly: "Joseph...did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him." (Mt 1:24); no questions asked, no hesitation but simple obedience. Silence is another characteristic of St. Joseph that we can draw strength from. As Pope Benedict XVI highlights, "St Joseph's silence does not express an inner emptiness but, on the contrary, the fullness of the faith he bears in his heart, and which guides his every thought and action." It is this silence of his heart that allowed him to hear God clearly, trust in God wholeheartedly and act promptly. We are called to follow in his footsteps.

Prayer: Abba Father, may I obey you in humility.
Amen.

Tuesday March 21

Fourth Week of Lent

Ezekiel
47:1-9,12

Psalm
46:2-3,5-6,8-9

John
5:1-16

Living Water.

As I reflect on Ezekiel's vision of the flowing waters from the temple; living waters that refresh the Dead Sea and bring life to the barren banks, with living and multiplying creatures and fruitful trees, I hear myself sing the words of "The River" by Brian Doerksen: "In these waters, healing mercy flows with freedom from despair." Imagine how beautiful and free it must be to be in the depths of that river, where our feet do not touch the ground, where we have no control but the blissful current of God's grace. It is carrying us, moving us forward, giving us life and freedom from despair. As I utter the words "Lord I am ready to surrender every care", I hear the words Jesus asked the Crippled man; "Do you want to be healed?". Are we willing to let go of our ideas of how and what our lives should be? Will we wade into the the river of grace? Or will we just dabble in the shallow part that is only ankle deep and retain control? Or will we remain somewhere in between? How wonderful it would be to walk on to the point where God will be our refuge and strength?

Prayer: Abba Father, take my hand and lead me to the depths of grace
where I am all yours. Amen.

Wednesday March 22

Fourth Week of Lent

Isaiah
49: 8-15

Psalm 145:
8-9, 13-14, 17-18

John
5: 17-30

“I will never forget you” Is 49:15

The fulfilment of God’s promises and the establishment of the Kingdom of God took place on Golgotha when the Son of God died and rose again. The promise of the first reading was fulfilled in the Paschal mystery. Jesus restored human beings to their original state, which was spotless and blameless. Therefore the prophet Isaiah said that God ended up doing the impossible. The gap between the creator and the creation was bridged through the Golgotha Sacrifice. The straight path was made for people to gather together under the shelter of our creator, since he had promised to never forsake us nor abandon us like a mother who cares for her babies. The Gospel proclamation shows us the authority and boldness of Jesus while he was at the threshold of his passion and death. Jesus became the highway and the unity, which the Prophet Isaiah spoke of. Because of Jesus’ love and compassion we are redeemed. Jesus came to fulfil the Father’s will, let us also obey the Father’s will.

Prayer: Abba Father, make me meek so that I could love you and love your creation. Amen.

Thursday March 23

Fourth Week of Lent

Exodus
32:7-14

Psalm
106:19-23

John
5:31-47

Jesus above all else.

“I came in the name of my Father, but you do not accept me; yet if another comes in his own name, you will accept him” Jn 5:43. The Gospel describes our vulnerability as human beings in maintaining a divine relationship. It is a constant battle between the materialistic world and heavenly realm. It can come in the form of choosing between a Holy Mass and a weekend party that we are invited to attend; fasting on a Friday during Lent or choosing to drink a glass of wine; choosing to lie instead of facing the consequences of speaking the truth. The list goes on and Jesus reminds us of the importance of making him the priority of our lives. We should not accept material value over heavenly treasures, instead we are to choose life over death. Yet the choice is ours. We may fail and fall in endeavouring to be what he wants us to become. Let us persist in our desire to be stronger in our relationship with him. Let us identify the opportunities we have within us to draw closer to God and give Jesus the first place in our lives.

Prayer: Abba Father, may we keep our focus only on Jesus. Amen.

Friday March 24

Fourth Week of Lent

Wisdom
2:1,12-22

Psalm
34:17-21,23

John
7:1-2,10,25-30

Life's journey.

Today's readings show how we are to journey in our vocation, with our destiny in mind. Jesus never said that this journey will be easy. Today's first reading shows what we may have to endure when we strive to live a life pleasing to God. It may not be easy when we take the option of not going along with the popular thinking and practices. Resorting to things for personal gain and not defending justice are some of the sins of commission and omission, committed because of selfishness, fear of rejection and or insults. If one stands against the rich and the powerful for the sake of justice, one may even have to undergo torture. Yet in today's Gospel proclamation we see that even though the Jews were seeking to kill Jesus, no one could lay their hands on him as his hour had not yet come. Likewise when we are surrendered to God, acting according to his will in whatever situation we are placed in, God will be involved in what happens to us. Thus we need not be afraid to lead lives pleasing to God in our life situations.

Prayer: Abba Father, I pray for the strength to walk this journey of life in a way that is pleasing to you. Amen.

Saturday March 25

Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord

Isaiah
7:10-14: 8, 10

Psalm
40:7-11

Hebrews
10:4-10

Luke
1:26-38

Nothing will be impossible with the Lord.

Today's readings lead us to commemorate the most sublime event in history when the Son of God took human flesh in the womb of our Blessed Mother at the Annunciation. A virgin (Mary) as well as a barren woman (Elizabeth) conceiving are highlighted in the Gospel proclamation, when the angel Gabriel announces God's message. Both occurrences are impossibilities at the human level, yet through the omnipotent God these were accomplished. Therefore when we go through struggles in life we must never lose heart. Let us imitate the Blessed Mother who held on to the promises of God. She was faithful in her obedience and trust in the Father. On this solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord, let us remind ourselves of the omnipotence of God. Our all-knowing, all-powerful God is supreme and everything is possible with him. Our hopeless situations, helpless problems and unresolved matters can be resolved and made possible with our good Lord. Let us trust in him completely.

Prayer: Abba Father, deepen our faith to depend on you like our blessed Mother. Amen.

Sunday March 26

Fifth Sunday of Lent

Ezekiel
37:12-14

Psalm
130:1-8

Romans
8:8-11

John
11:1-45

If you are in Christ, you are a new creation.

In heaven “good will shall be so ordered in us that we shall have no other desire than to remain there eternally.” - St. Augustine

Today’s first reading reminds us that there is nothing impossible for God. He possesses power over everything – life and death. In Isaiah, the Lord says, “So is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.” He is promising us eternal life with him.

In today’s Gospel proclamation, this promise is fulfilled through his only Son who brings Lazarus back to life from death. This is however an implicit illustration of the eternal life he would win for us after his sacrifice on the cross.

The raising of Lazarus is the sixth of seven signs that Jesus performed according to the Gospel of John. We see similar miracles recorded in the synoptic Gospels such as the raising of the widow’s son and Jairus’ daughter. Lazarus dies but it seems that it is not what it is, the purpose of this is that Jesus will raise him to life and it is an opportunity for Jesus to glorify God through this sign and miracle. It is said that he was delayed by two days. This period of waiting is not a mistake but a part of God’s plan to generate faith in the eyes of disciples as well as others who witnessed the miracle.

We too get emotionally and spiritually disturbed when the waiting period is longer than we expect. But what we need to remember is that everything happens according to the time of the Lord. If we do not wait on the Lord patiently, we will lose the opportunity to glorify him with our lives.

Jesus says, “I am the resurrection”. He wants us to place our hope on the future resurrection that is to come. Jesus possesses absolute sovereignty over life and death. As seen and discussed in the first reading, this was always attributed only to God according to the Old Testament. But this was the moment Jesus explicitly displayed that he is truly the Son of God and that God Almighty has given him power over life and death and everything else.

As this new year began, a popular quote was that “If you are in Christ, you are a new creation”. Now, three months later, it is time to reflect on how we are living that new year resolution we made. We may fail many times, but we need to remind ourselves constantly that it is an opportunity for us to get up and this is the reason we enter into the presence of God through the four steps every day.

Prayer: Abba Father, you are the maker of all things, knowing you and loving you is eternal life; lead me to a deeper relationship with you. Amen.

Monday March 27

Fifth Week of Lent

Daniel 13:1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33-62

Psalm
23:1-6

John
8:1-11

Enter into eternal life not death!

Today's readings reveal amazing insights about sin, death and eternal life. We see in the Gospel proclamation the story of the adulterous woman. Condemned to death by the worldly standards and the compassion, wisdom and intervention of the Lord that releases her from the clutches of death. The wisdom of the Lord is seen in asking the one without sin to cast the first stone. The love of God clearly intervened and turned a rotting soul to eternal life. We see the same wisdom in Daniel who intervenes in the case of Susanna, who was falsely accused of the sin of impurity. She is set free by God through Daniel. We can relate to our own trials in life whatever they may be and take heart that the Lord is there for us when we walk through the valley of death. We may be in the most despicable of sin or we could be falsely accused of the same despicable sin yet we can be assured that the mercy of God will deliver us. The Lord sees the heart, and not the outward appearance.

Prayer: Abba Father, let your goodness and mercy follow us all the days of our lives. Amen.

Tuesday March 28

Fifth Week of Lent

Numbers
21:4-9

Psalm
102:2-3,16-21

John
8:21-30

Even when we are faithless, God is faithful.

Today's first reading reveals the story of a 'complaining people'. A favoured lot who continued in their attitude of ingratitude towards God. How often have we too carried this heart of ingratitude? This challenges us to stop and reflect on God's blessings over our lives. The circumstances we find ourselves complaining about are often pathways to God's purpose and plan. The Israelites did not realise or chose to forget that God was leading them into the promised land. The difficulties were blessings in disguise that drew them to a life of grace and dependence on God. They were been led and opportunities were given to see God's miracles, his providence, healing and faithfulness. God remained faithful even when they were faithless. So it is in our own lives, in the midst of our blessings we may face difficulty and feel stretched at times. God can use those moments to impart wisdom, to build us up and mature us for ministry and finally mould us into the children he intended us to be.

Prayer: Abba Father, let me remember that challenges and times of pruning are pathways to blessings. Amen.

Wednesday March 29

Fifth Week of Lent

Daniel
3:14-20, 91-92,95

Daniel
3:52-56

John
8:31-42

Experiencing paradise in the heart of the fire.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego chose to stand up for their beliefs, for their faith in the One True God. The reward was to be thrown into the hot furnace. In that furnace, they may have uttered words similar to that of the repentant thief: "Remember me when you come into your kingdom" (Lk 23:42). The response was experiencing paradise in the heart of the furnace. What is the furnace we are experiencing today? It can be our life circumstances. The response we choose to give could result in either a heaven or a hell experience. The words of today's Gospel Proclamation stand true in these circumstances; "If you remain in my word, you will truly be my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (Jn 8:31) We can choose to allow our circumstances to control us and be slaves to it or we could allow the Word of God to set us free in the heart of those circumstances. Today's readings remind us to make the Word of God our home in the midst of any situation.

Prayer: Abba Father, I choose to follow you.
I choose to give my 'Yes' to you. Amen.

Thursday March 30

Fifth Week of Lent

Genesis
17:3-9

Psalms
105:4-9

John
8:51-59

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my soul.

As we journey through the season of Lent, today's readings remind us of the importance of listening, trusting and obeying the word of God. In the first reading, we reflect on the everlasting covenant God made with Abraham. The Lord promises to be their God and gives them an inheritance of a land which would be theirs forever. The Gospel proclaims how God keeps to this promise through his son Jesus who speaks to the Jews, who were considered to be the descendants of Abraham. He reveals to them his divinity through the words "before Abraham came to be, I AM". By this he invites them to accept the gift of eternal life by placing their trust in him. However, we see that the Jews were not willing to open their hearts and minds to the truth that Jesus was proclaiming. Jesus invites us to trust in him and accept him as the Lord and Saviour of our lives. Jesus who suffered, died and rose again, lives within those who accept him. Those who remain in his Word shall receive everlasting life.

Prayer: Abba Father, may I trust in your words with all my heart and remain faithful to you all the days of my life. Amen.

Friday March 31

Fifth Week of Lent

Jeremiah
20:10-13

Psalm
18:2-7

John
10:31-42

Radical change.

Today's liturgy invites us to make a radical change in the way we live. Like the prophet Jeremiah, we too face situations where we feel victimised and targeted by others. Jesus was not exempt from this "law of the jungle". Yet both Jeremiah and Jesus made a choice to not look at the gravity of the situation or at those who were plotting to destroy them, but to focus on God's power. They dared to believe in God's perfect plan for their lives. How do we respond when we know someone is trying to hurt us or bring discredit to us for no fault of ours? Do we succumb to the threat and strive to safeguard our self image or our social status, running around like headless chickens, trying to defend ourselves, ensuring that our status or name is preserved? Or do we dare to trust in God who sees everything, including our innermost motives and agendas, to take care of us in his own way? Do we dare to embrace the "cross", knowing that the "tomb is soon going to be empty, giving way to the resurrection"?

Prayer: Abba Father, may we trust your time, your perfect plan, and your power to bring forth life. Amen.

SEASON OF LENT

Let us never grow tired of doing good.

Lent is a favourable time for personal and community renewal, as it leads us to the paschal mystery of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Christ's resurrection enlivens earthly hopes with the "great hope" of eternal life, planting the seed of salvation in our present time (Benedict XVI). Bitter disappointment at shattered dreams, deep concern for the challenges ahead and discouragement at the poverty of our resources, can make us tempted to seek refuge in self-centredness and indifference to the suffering of others. Indeed, even our best resources have their limitations... Yet God "gives strength to the weary, he strengthens the powerless... Those who hope in the Lord will regain their strength, they will soar on wings like eagles; though they run they will not grow weary, though they walk they will never tire" (Is 40:29, 31). The Lenten season calls us to place our faith and hope in the Lord (cf. 1 Pet 1:21), since only if we fix our gaze on the risen Christ (cf. Heb 12:2) will we be able to respond to the Apostle's appeal, "Let us never grow tired of doing good" (Gal 6:9).

(Pope Francis - Message for Lent)

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,
because by your cross you have redeemed the world.

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St. Óscar Romero

St. Óscar Romero was born on 15 August 1917 in El Salvador (Central America). He entered the local public school, which offered only grades one through three. After finishing those three years, he was privately tutored until the age of thirteen. During this time Romero's father trained him in carpentry. His father wanted to offer him the skill of a trade, because in El Salvador studies seldom led to employment, but Romero broached the idea of studying for the priesthood.

Romero entered the minor seminary in San Miguel at the age of thirteen. He was ordained in Rome on 4 April 1942. His family could not attend his ordination because of travel restrictions due to World War II. He moved to San Miguel where he worked for over 20 years, and promoted various apostolic groups. He was later appointed rector of the inter-diocesan seminary in San Salvador. In 1966, he was chosen to be Secretary of the Bishops Conference, and also became the director of the Archdiocesan newspaper "Orientación". On 25 April 1970, Romero was appointed an Auxiliary Bishop, and on 3 February 1977 he was appointed Archbishop.

On 24 March 1980, Archbishop Romero delivered a sermon in which he called on Salvadoran soldiers, to obey God's higher order and to stop carrying out the government's repression and violations of basic human rights. That evening, he celebrated Mass in a small chapel at a church-run hospital. As Romero finished his sermon, a red automobile stopped in front of the chapel, a gunman emerged and fired at Romero. He was struck in the heart, and he died at the Chapel.

On 30 March 1980, Romero was buried in the Metropolitan Cathedral of San Salvador. The Funeral Mass was attended by more than 250,000 mourners from all over the world. His beatification was held on 23 May 2015 at El Salvador, and canonized on 14 October 2018 at St. Peter's Square, Rome.

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.

