



ON OUR KNEES IN HIS HANDS



St. Andrew Dũng-Łac

Memorial: 24 November

NOVEMBER 2023 | DAILY READINGS & REFLECTIONS



ON OUR KNEES IN HIS HANDS

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“Be sure that you first preach
by the way you live.
If you do not, people will
notice that you say one thing,
but live otherwise.”

Saint Charles Borromeo

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Wednesday November 1

Solemnity of All Saints

Revelation
7:2-4; 9-14

Psalm
24:1-6

1 John
3:1-3

Matthew
5:1-12

Do we really want to be Saintly?

Often the general consensus is not to be saintly but popular. We compete to look attractive. All Saints Day holds a special significance in calling us back to reflect on our motives. While we want others to look at our faces, Saints were engrossed in their desire to seek God's face, not only in eternal life but in the poor, marginalised, less fortunate and hurting people. The model of saintliness has now been confused with prophecy and prosperity. The Gospel proclamation reflects the values of the saints who across the centuries were singled out by God to represent some facet of the human personality. Not all died young, not all belonged to religious congregations and not all were born into poverty. From wherever they came, they found the beauty of Christ. Some were peace makers, some were warriors, some were noblemen and some were housewives, some were slaves and some were students. Drawn from the various streams of life, they put on the attitude of Christ and led the world towards him. Let us set our sights on saintliness!

Prayer: Abba Father, may we desire holiness, saintliness and the attitude of Christ. Amen.

Thursday November 2

The Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed (All Souls)

Wisdom
3:1-9

Psalm
23:1-6

Romans
6:3-9

John
6:37-40

Greener pastures

We live in a world where we are constantly looking for greener pastures, failing to see the richness and the beauty of what we have. If we truly believe and acknowledge Jesus as our shepherd and our king, we too can proclaim: "the Lord is my shepherd there is nothing I shall want". In this day and age, the wolves are the lies that are promoted in social and other media. We get tempted by the lifestyle of another and we run searching that path, leaving the path our shepherd shows us. We are tempted to follow the wide passage rather than the narrow valley trusting in God. The banquet God prepares is of eternal life and it is the only meal that will satisfy us completely. Our soul yearns this fulfilment, to be in this everlasting banquet. Through Jesus he made it possible for us to be in union with him and attend the meal one day. Today is a celebration of all the souls already united and waiting to be united in his banquet. May he give us the grace to see the green pastures and to rest by the quiet waters.

Prayer: Abba Father, help us not to be tempted by the false pleasures of the world but to see the eternal rest and life you have prepared for us. Amen.

Friday November 3

Thirtieth Week in Ordinary Time

Romans
9:1-5

Psalm
147:12-15,19-20

Luke
14:1-6

The Lord's invitation.

On the Sabbath, the Lord went to dine at the home of a Pharisee, and the people were observing him carefully. He unwittingly took center stage. A heavenly banquet was set in motion. Roles seemed to be reversed. The honored guest becomes the host par excellence and gives a didactic teaching - a moral instruction - "Is it right to heal on the Sabbath"? The legal luminaries have no answer. Or is it that they would see their own double standard and stand condemned? The Lord heals a man suffering from dropsy. The Lord reveals that he alone could heal all spiritual abnormalities. What hinders us from having compassion on those crying for help? The Lord looks compassionately on my own abnormalities. My inability to reach out lovingly to my brother and sister may cause sorrow and anguish at being rejected from my circle of friendship. I invite the Lord to dine with me. Be the host for a heavenly banquet. To heal me to be a healer of the broken relationships caused by various abnormalities.

Prayer: Abba Father, stir my heart so that this wounded person may become the healer of those in my circle of influence. Amen.

Saturday November 4

Memorial of Saint Charles Borromeo, Bishop

Romans
11:1-2,11-12,25-29

Psalm
94:12-15,17-18

Luke
14:1,7-11

We must die not only to sin, but to ourselves also.

Jesus says: "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me". What is this yoke? It is our total submission to the authority of God. We can learn from him, because he bore it too. Christ took the yoke upon himself and endured everything that encompasses the human experience, and now he walks in the fields with us. We get to take the yoke he already bore, and discover how he loved, served and lived. Our God is a God of relationship. And as we enter into relationship with him, he frees us from sin. Today's first reading reminds us of his covenant with us to take away our sins. Christ's yoke is easy, and his burden is light, but to be yoked to Christ, we must release the other weights we carry: sin, our flesh, and the world. We cannot serve many masters. As the Gospel proclamation urges, we must die not only to sin, but to ourselves also. We must be willing to bear the yoke, not drive the plough, and this means taking ourselves off the throne. To be yoked to Christ, is to be free, so he can drive the plough, and so he can have his way.

Prayer: Abba Father, I yoke myself to you and exalt you as my God.
Amen.

Sunday November 5

Thirty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time

Malachi
1:14--2:2,8-10

Psalm
131:1-3

1 Thessalonians
2:7-9,13

Matthew
23:1-12

My heart is not proud.

Today's Gospel proclamation clearly defines the personal traits the Lord wants to see in those who hold leadership positions in the Church and who are called to serve others.

In an Asian context we are given a lot of respect when we assume leadership roles, and we may enjoy the privileges meted out to us as we perform those roles but in the background these readings come as a warning to us.

The Lord is clear that curses follow us when we fail to, "take it to heart to honour God's name". Such is the calling on a leader to hold deep within his heart a regard for all that the Lord instructs and guides him to do. Often in our roles as leaders we get comfortable and slowly lose the sacredness of the task given to us.

Jesus shared many teachings about the qualities a leader must have, specially when he spoke about the Good shepherd who painstakingly looks after the sheep, risking his life to go in search of the lost sheep.

In today's world, people are more concerned about their comfort and conditions and are less willing to make sacrifices to reach out and mend a broken world.

The Psalmist says it so beautifully, "I have set my soul in tranquility and silence". One key feature of a leader is to constantly hear the voice of God and do as God directs and leads. Often, we do our own thing and follow our own leadings and preferences. We are more concerned with tradition and roles than with hearing the voice and leading of God.

The Lord understands it so well when he says, "Listen to what they say but do not do as they do or live as they live". Why? Because it is easy to advise and preach to people but it is difficult to live the life and live the calling given to us. In our secret spaces we fall apart and fail to depend on the Lord.

Today, access to sin is a click away; it is wireless, seamless and so easy. Given the power of temptation we need to spend more time in tranquility and silence, learning to depend on the strength God alone can give us.

A life of prayer is the only answer to strengthen our resolve and make us touch or reach the heights of holiness. The tentacles of sin are reaching out to ensnare people from all ages and walks of life and more so the leaders and religious. As the psalmist says, we wait for the Lord to strengthen us and lead us forward.

Prayer: Abba Father, without you we can do nothing. Neither can we be followers nor can we be leaders. Save us through Jesus. Amen.

Monday November 6

Thirty-first Week in Ordinary Time

Romans
11:29-36

Psalm
69:30-31,33-34,36

Luke
14:12-14

God has given us freedom.

Who could ever fathom God? The mind of God knows all things. Our future is history for God. We should listen to the Words of God, ponder on the words and live the Word of God. In the letter to the Romans, St. Paul explains that the works of God are irrevocable; hence, the call of God in our lives is unchangeable. But if we decide to move away from God that could be possible because God has given us freedom and we have a choice either to remain in the call or move out of God's call. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Is 55:8-9). This explanation is elaborated in the Gospel proclamation. Jesus has given us food for thought. It is not a literal meaning about who our invitees should be, but a lesson we should take to heart. This is unconditional love. We find it difficult to understand God's ways because we operate in a conditional world.

Prayer: Abba Father, change me to think and act unconditionally.
Amen.

Tuesday November 7

Thirty-first Week in Ordinary Time

Romans
12:5-16

Psalm
131:1-3

Luke
14:15-24

Final destination.

We long to go to God's Kingdom and what we do on earth either contributes or hinders our ultimate goal. When we are consciously aware of this, we want to do what is humanly possible to secure our heavenly destination. We often hear heaven referred to as a great wedding banquet given by God and who would want to be left behind from attending such a feast? But, however strong our longing for heaven can be, as we hear in the Gospel proclamation, many cares and commitments in the world can deny us of the opportunity of finally reaching there. We are reminded that the invitation has already gone out if we care to accept it. What is our response to this invitation? Is it a resounding 'yes' or if not, what seems to be our excuse? It may be our careers, our possessions or perhaps our families that take up our time, energy and attention. As St. Paul reminds us, we are blessed with a variety of gifts and let us choose to exercise them to help us respond positively to our calling, so that we can reach our destination.

Prayer: Abba Father, strengthen us in mind, body and spirit, so that we may not falter in our response to your calling. Amen.

Wednesday November 8

Thirty-first Week in Ordinary Time

Romans
13:8-10

Psalm
112:1-2,4-5,9

Luke
14:25-33

Let us love others as God loves us.

We are in debt to Christ for the lavish love he has poured out on us. He wants us to love others in turn. Because Christ's love is infinitely greater than ours, we will always have the obligation to love others. Recently, my mother left this earth to spend eternity with the Lord. Her life here in simple words would be selfless. She went beyond her capacity to help people. That was how she demonstrated the love of Christ. Many of us have got the idea that self-love is wrong. But if this were the case, it would be pointless to love our neighbors as ourselves. St. Paul explains what he means by self-love. We do not willingly let ourselves go hungry. We take care of our bodies. We try not to let ourselves be cheated or injured. This is the kind of love we need to have for our neighbors. Do we see that others are fed, clothed, and provided for as well as they can be? Are we concerned about issues of social justice? Loving others as ourselves means actively working to see that their needs are met.

Prayer: Abba Father, empower us to love ourselves and others.
Amen.

Thursday November 9

Feast of the Dedication of the Lateran Basilica

Ezekiel
47:1-2,8-9,12

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

John
2:13-22

God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.

Today, the church celebrates the feast of the dedication of the Lateran Basilica in Rome. Today's readings remind us that the dwelling place of God is holy and sacred; which is why the Lord Jesus did not approve of what took place at the temple of Jerusalem. At the same time, Jesus reveals that our bodies are a dwelling place for God. St Paul elaborates on the words of Jesus and explains that God is dwelling within those who have believed and accepted Jesus Christ into their lives. We have become temples of God, as we host God's presence. The precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ has sanctified us and made us worthy to carry the presence of God in us. We need to be more aware of it, so that we may keep away from things that may make us unworthy. We need to open ourselves to his grace that leads us to be united with him. Only then, will we be able to carry his presence to those we meet so that they will also be blessed by him to experience life in all its abundance.

Prayer: Abba Father, may I carry your life giving presence wherever I go.
Amen.

Friday November 10

Memorial of Saint Leo the Great, Pope and Doctor of the Church

Romans
15:14-21

Psalm
98:1-4

Luke
16:1-8

Being a wise steward.

Today's Gospel proclamation is a strange parable to understand. We first see the steward being charged as being a squanderer, and wasting the master's property, but later we see this same steward being praised by his employer for providing for his future through fraudulent means. The steward when he was dismissed sat down and took an account of his abilities and resources and came up with an astute plan by which he hoped he could secure his future, thus showing shrewd worldly wisdom. God has made us stewards of a vast array of abilities and resources. Do we steward our resources wisely? Or do we squander these abilities and resources and use them for our own profit? Let us ask God to reveal to us how he wants us to use our abilities and resources to give him glory. Let us ask God for his wisdom and discernment in using these resources and abilities to fulfil the mission he has entrusted us with. St. Paul put all his abilities and resources in the hands of God and proclaimed the Gospel to many nations.

Prayer: Abba Father, into your hands I entrust my life. Give me your wisdom so that I may be a wise steward of all you have given me. Amen.

Saturday November 11

Memorial of Saint Martin of Tours, Bishop

Romans
16:3-9,16,22-27

Psalm
145:2-5,10-11

Luke
16:9-15

Our inheritance in the kingdom of God.

In the first reading, we are being introduced to people who were chosen to share God's Word. Our Lord is reminding us that we should not be discouraged or anxious when we are overlooked or rejected in doing the work of the Lord, but instead give glory to God. The Psalmist encourages us to give thanks and praise to the Lord who gives his promise that when we praise the name of the Lord, generations yet to come will declare his wonderful works. We need to be like Jesus, who became poor so that we too can receive our inheritance in the kingdom of God. To have eternal wealth, first we must die to our selves, take up our crosses and walk each day towards our Abba Father's home. Which gods do we worship and respond to? Perhaps, it is our identity in this world, our status in society, our wealth or our image. Whatever it is, now is the time to repent and come back to the heart of the Father. Let us repent for going after worldly possessions and status to have a position of power in this world.

Prayer: Abba Father, we come back to you with repentant hearts claiming our inheritance as your children. Amen.

Sunday November 12

Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Wisdom
6:12-16

Psalm
63:2-8

1 Thessalonians
4:13-18

Matthew
25:1-13

Let us be like the wise virgins.

Today's readings convey an important message for Christians. Our readiness, preparedness and alertness are required on the spiritual journey. The first reading prompts us to seek wisdom as a treasure and points out that it is essential.

The Gospel proclamation calls us to reflect on the depths of the message it contains. In this world there are two categories of people just as the Gospel conveys: the wise virgins who longed for the bridegroom's coming represent the ones who are prepared, while the foolish virgins who ran short of oil, represent the carefree and negligent ones.

This is a parable that tells us about eschatology or the end times. It speaks about the judgment and final destiny we will one day arrive at. All ten virgins were expecting the bridegroom, yet only the wise ones were able to persevere till the end. Doesn't this nudge our conscience?

It is to this bridegroom that we are answerable, and we should be staying awake and vigilant, as we wait for his arrival.

At times, we too can be like the foolish virgins. When the answers to our life's problems or longings are delayed, we may lose hope. We may waste our time and despair that the Lord will not help us.

The Holy Spirit aids us in our weaknesses. Our prayers and good deeds help us to keep our lamps burning. The worries, struggles and chaotic situations may distract us, and push us in the opposite direction.

There is also another point we need to be cautious about, that is; the oil spoken here was not to be borrowed or lent. This means that we are responsible for what we have collected so far in our lives.

Prayerfulness and good deeds are portrayed by the oil. Therefore we will not be able to depend on others' charity but our own words and deeds.

Our prayer life is challenged, urging us to watch and pray, as we cannot depend on others to do it for us. We must be prepared, thoroughly, and seriously, as we do not know the time of the arrival of the bridegroom.

It is advisable to be prepared every moment of our lives, as we cannot take a risk. Therefore let us not waste time on empty things but aim for this goal.

The Holy Spirit reminds and guides us to return and refocus on the goal we are trying to reach. May our desire, prize and ambition be, to meet and belong to the Lord. Therefore let us be like the wise virgins by staying focussed on our goal.

Prayer: Abba Father, guide and direct us to stay focused on our goal.
Amen.

Monday November 13

Thirty-second Week in Ordinary Time

Wisdom
1:1-7

Psalm
139:1-10

Luke
17:1-6

Seek him in integrity of heart.

What does it mean to have integrity of heart? It is about being honest and having good moral principles. In the book of Wisdom, the author calls us to seek God with integrity of heart. Does our prayer life reflect this? Are we focused on God that other things take second place? In scripture we find prophets such as Jeremiah calling us to seek God with all our heart for it is only then that we will find him (Jer 29:12). Jesus himself calls us to seek him and the kingdom of God above everything else (Mt 6:33). The reality however is far from this. Our seeking stems from gratifying our own needs: our healing, our ease of a struggle and the list goes on. None of these prayers is bad but God wants us to love him that these fade in comparison to the joy of seeking him and finding him. He desires for us to thirst for him, thirst for the knowledge of him, to understand his ways, to understand his works, to understand his heart. God is waiting for us to be genuine in our pursuit of him and sincere in our desire to know him.

Prayer: Abba Father, enable us to realise that the joy of getting to know Christ far outweighs the temporary joys of the world. Amen.

Tuesday November 14

Thirty-second Week in Ordinary Time

Wisdom
2:23--3:9

Psalm
34:2-3,16-19

Luke
17:7-10

Have a humble attitude.

Today's Gospel proclamation speaks about the importance of humility. It encourages us to recognize that our obedience and service to God are not meant to earn us privileges or accolades but should flow from a heart of love and gratitude. It reminds us to keep our motives pure and to have a humble attitude, acknowledging that we are merely fulfilling our duty as servants of God. It reminds us that our service to God should be motivated by love and gratitude, rather than a desire for personal gain or recognition. The focus has to be on faithfully carrying out God's will and serving him, rather than seeking praise for our contributions towards the kingdom of God. We are called to examine our hearts in our relationship with him. Are we serving him with a sincere desire to obey and honor him, or do we seek recognition and personal gain? It calls us to embrace humility and recognize that our greatest joy and reward come from faithfully walking in obedience to God, regardless of whether we receive recognition from others.

Prayer: Abba Father, may I cultivate an attitude of humility. Amen.

Wednesday November 15

Thirty-second Week in Ordinary Time

Wisdom
6:1-11

Psalm
82:3-4,6-7

Luke
17:11-19

A heart of worship

In today's Gospel proclamation ten lepers seek healing from Jesus and he heals them. Nine lepers go away as if their lives belonged to them. Only one returns praising God. He throws himself before Jesus and worships him in total surrender. Jesus says, that his faith had saved him and made him whole. This leper is now ready to go on his way to face the world in total surrender to God. The tragedy of our lives is, we tend to forget that our lives belong to God. We forget that we were forgiven, healed and delivered by him. We forget that all we have: knowledge, wealth, position, authority, responsibilities, children and families are his. We forget that he loves us and cares for us and we want to take control of ourselves instead of living a life of surrender to God. All belong to him and he watches us all. All of us have a free will either to live our lives according to our understanding or live a life of worship, in surrender to God, who loves us and cares for us. We are free to choose but we are not free from the consequences of that choice.

Prayer: Abba Father, may we receive your strength and seek your face.
Amen.

Thursday November 16

Thirty-second Week in Ordinary Time

Wisdom
7:22--8:1

Psalm 119:
89-91,130,135,175

Luke
17:20-25

Wisdom of God.

Today's first reading reminds us of one of king Solomon's stories. God appeared to Solomon in a dream one night and told him to ask for whatever he wanted. Solomon in humility, asked for "wisdom" so he could guide God's people. King Solomon knew that without the Spirit of God within him, he will not be able to proclaim the goodness of God. Imagine the depth of his faith to seek the Holy Spirit in the form of wisdom when he could have simply asked for earthly wishes. This made me question, what will we do if we were given this opportunity? On the same note, the Gospel proclamation reveals how gracious our God is. He did not ask us what we wanted, instead he knew what we desperately needed. Therefore, he sent his only Son to deliver us. Jesus paid the price so we could experience the same wisdom that God granted to king Solomon. Jesus endured a painful death, so we could live in accordance with God's laws. Jesus carried our cross, so that we might walk in freedom.

Prayer: Abba Father, re-ignite our spirits and make us instruments of your love so that we may glorify you. Amen.

Friday November 17

Memorial of Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, Religious

Wisdom
13:1-9

Psalm
19:2-5

Luke
17:26-37

Daily choices.

In today's readings we talk about the blessed hope: of the day the Lord comes again. It takes away the fear of death knowing what God has promised in the past and how he carried out those plans. We do not know when God will come to us, we do not know why something happens to us, or simply we do not know when the end of time is or when we are going to die. The Gospel proclamation reminds us of the choices we make every day. They can be simple or complicated. God says in his Word that he wants us to live life to the fullest and if we make choices and decisions wisely then we would not have to be fearful of dying or his Second Coming. He wants us to trust him and his plans for our life. If we strive to love each other and make wise choices, the gates of heaven will be wide open and Jesus will be waiting for us and he will welcome us with open and loving arms. It is our decision to make. What will we choose? Let us commit our choices each day to the Lord.

Prayer: Abba Father, may I choose to follow you everyday.
Amen.

Saturday November 18

Thirty-second Week in Ordinary Time

Wisdom
18:14-16; 19:6-9

Psalm 105:
2-3,36-37,42-43

Luke
18:1-8

Trusting in God.

In the First Reading, we reflect on the events of the Exodus when the Lord came to rescue the Israelites. It is an image of God's intervention on behalf of the just and demonstrates how the Lord will rise up against our enemies. When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him (Isaiah 59:19). In the Gospel proclamation we see how "God secures the rights of his chosen ones" like he did when he saved his people from exile. This parable reminds us that we must trust that God will bring about his justice on earth. Often we are faced with insurmountable obstacles and trials in our lives. These could be related to anything from health, family, or work issues. In such situations, we are challenged not just to pray but to pray in a way that we express our hope and trust in the Lord. Let us seek the Lord and ask for the strength that comes from the power of the Holy Spirit to be resilient and to believe that we will have ultimate victory in God.

Prayer: Abba Father, we trust in you.
Amen.

Sunday November 19

Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Proverbs 31:
10-13,19-20,30-31

Psalms
128:1-5

1 Thessalonians
5:1-6

Matthew
25:14-30

Let us use the talents given to us.

In today's Gospel proclamation Jesus is seen teaching the disciples about the kingdom principles. We need to be aware of the talents we have been given by God. We have been given talents and gifts. The gifts may vary.

A gift we may fail to recognize as a gift, is the time, given to us. Are we using our time to build the kingdom of God? We need to engage in intercessory prayers for the dead and the living and show empathy to people in pain and sadness. We should also share our knowledge specially spiritual knowledge. We are called to support the needy: the ones who are emotionally, psychologically, physically, spiritually and materially in need. Another talent that we can develop is spending our time to listen to another, starting with our family members and being with the lonely.

What do people generally refer to, as talents? Intelligence, eloquence, creativity, ability to play musical instruments, ability to sing, dance and excel in sports. These are gifts of God, but unless we use them for the glory of God we might lose our way because of these gifts. We should not misunderstand the nature of our gifts. Let us ask Jesus how we should use the gifts that he has given us.

God has given us many talents and we need to recognize these talents and also develop these talents. The development of talents comes by prayer and also using the gifts for building the kingdom of God.

The parable is clear that there will be a day when we will be called upon to give an account of how we have used our talents. Jesus promises that those who have used their gifts will be rewarded. Jesus says that those who do not use the gifts will be cast away. Let us examine ourselves, how we have used the gifts given by God.

In the second reading, writing to the Thessalonians, St Paul reminds us that death will come as a thief. Thus we need to stay alert and do the good works that we were sent to this earth to do.

Let us recall the words of St. Joseph Vaz, who said: "Remember that one cannot easily do at the time of death what one neglected to do all his life".

The first reading from the book of Proverbs gives us an example of a wife who uses her gifts to build a holy family, and the writer calls her an excellent wife.

Let us thank God for the gifts given to us. Let us surrender our lives to the Lord, so that we will be able to use the gifts for the glory of God.

Prayer: Abba Father, pour out your Spirit on us, that we may be able to do the works that we have been sent to do. Amen.

Monday November 20

Thirty-third Week in Ordinary Time

1 Mc 1: 10-15,
41-43,54-57,62-63

Ps 119:53,
61,134,150,155,158

Luke
18:35-43

Are we prompt to answer?

In the Gospel proclamation we meet a blind man seated and begging by the roadside of Jericho. Many times, we too have felt like this blind beggar, helpless in our life situations. When he hears that Jesus is passing by, the blind man takes a bold step of faith by calling out to him. The people around him tell the blind man to keep quiet thinking a useless beggar like him has no right to meet the Master. The blind man's need for Jesus was so great that he ignores them and calls all the louder "Son of David, have mercy on me." It is a reminder that we too need to continue to praise God amid the voices that tell us to be quiet and not bother the Master. Jesus stops to meet the blind man and asks an unusual question "what do you want me to do for you?" even though his need was obvious. We too hear Jesus asking the same from us. Are we as prompt as the blind man to answer? Do we know what we desire from Jesus? We too can ask to see again, to see God's presence in our lives.

Prayer: Abba Father, open my spiritual eyes so that I can see your light.
Amen.

Tuesday November 21

Memorial of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

2 Maccabees
6:18-31

Psalm
3:2-7

Luke
19:1-10

Let us break our limitations.

Today's Gospel proclamation talks about Zacchaeus who desperately wanted to see Jesus that he overcame his obstacle of being short by climbing a tree, just to get a glimpse. Though he was considered to be a sinner he wanted to see the Lord. We have our own limitations and obstacles that keep us away from the Lord. These obstacles can range from time constraints to physical ailments or other commitments. Often our obstacles become our main focus and drive us away from the Lord. When Zacchaeus broke his limitations, he was seen by Jesus. Breaking his barriers on his own accord and his willingness to see the Lord is all it took to find favor with the Lord. Can we break our barriers? Can we find time in our busy lives to see our Lord? Can we make time for prayer over everything else that is important in our lives? When we do that we experience the Lord; our lives are transformed and we begin to journey with the Lord. Are we ready to break our limitations?

Prayer: Abba Father, help me to see you and to know you.
Amen.

Wednesday November 22

Memorial of Saint Cecilia, Virgin and Martyr

2 Maccabees
7:1,20-31

Psalm
17:1,5-6,8,15

Luke
19:11-28

Fill us with fearless trust.

Reading through the Maccabees story is harrowing. The mother's absolute faith in her knowledge of who God is, and her trust in him that all his promises will be fulfilled are breath taking. My mind is drawn to a recent religious podcast. In it a priest explained that faith has 2 parts to it; faith and trust. Faith is knowing something to be true, trust is stepping out and acting on what we know to be true. Faith without trust does not get us anywhere. Knowing Jesus to be Lord is one thing, stepping out and living our life in trust that he will come through in our life completes that faith. On his way to Jerusalem where he would soon be rejected as the son of God, Jesus throws us a challenge. Will we accept him as our Lord and saviour? Free will calls us to decide. When we do believe that he is who he says he is, will we live out that knowledge acting in trust? Will we live our gift of faith actively putting our self out there in fearless trust so that our faith may increase as we live it?

Prayer: Abba Father, fill me with fearless trust as I step out to serve you.
Amen.

Thursday November 23

Thirty-third Week in Ordinary Time

1 Maccabees
2:15-29

Psalm
50:1-2,5-6,14-15

Luke
19:41-44

May our actions be led by God's love.

In today's Gospel proclamation Jesus is seen weeping over the city of Jerusalem. Jesus came to offer peace through love and establishing the kingdom of God upon this earth, but the Jews rejected it and they had to face the consequences of rejecting the peace from God. This is contrary to Matthias, who took a stand for his beliefs. He was not willing to forsake the law and the commandments even at the cost of his life. Unfortunately, this same rejection plays itself out repeatedly on a much smaller scale in our own lives. We reject the way of the Lord in our youth and in our rebellion we think that we can follow whenever and however we may choose. We would have wasted much time and would have forfeited much peace as the consequences of our rebellion and procrastination, bringing upon us heartache after heartache. In addition, some of us can have our hearts become so hardened that we may never wish to return to the Lord, so Jesus is weeping over us, as he wept over Jerusalem. Let us return to his embrace.

Prayer: Abba Father, grant me the zeal and fortitude to stand up for your kingdom. May my actions be led by your love. Amen.

Friday November 24

Memorial of Saint Andrew Dung-Lac and Companions, Martyrs

1 Maccabees
4:36-37,52-59

1 Chronicles
29:10-12

Luke
19:45-48

We are the temple of God.

The Word of God tells us that the new temple of God is our bodies where Jesus promised to dwell along with the Father and the Holy Spirit. When reading and meditating on today's Gospel proclamation, we can reflect on who the merchants in our temple are. Who are selling things, defiling my connection with the Lord? This could be our own habits, our worldly attachments and others who are adding things to our lives. These may draw us away from the will of God. How often do we invite the Holy Spirit to come into our lives? How often do we acknowledge his presence in us? Everytime we receive Holy Communion, we welcome Jesus' body into this temple. How worthy are we to receive him? Do we make an effort to keep his temple pure? The Lord is inviting us to meditate as to what type of merchants are occupying our temple. What actions have defiled this temple? We can bring these things to the feet of the Lord and surrender these so that we would not turn away from the Lord.

Prayer: Abba Father, guide my thoughts and help me to focus on things that are true and pure. Amen.

Saturday November 25

Thirty-third Week in Ordinary Time

1 Maccabees
6:1-13

Psalm
9:2-4,6,16,19

Luke
20:27-40

Joy of the resurrection.

In today's Gospel proclamation we are reminded about the resurrection. If we deeply contemplate on these scriptures, we begin to realize that this is not only talking about something after our death, it is also talking about our present life. For an instance, do we not face death every day in our lives? Because of various difficulties like finances, relationship issues, workplace issues or a fear of the future. We need to believe that there is a resurrection and that Jesus has won our salvation. Then we will not turn back to death because when God raises us up, no one can destroy us. It gives us new life with freedom and love which will lead us to a relationship with our Savior. We do not have to fear or worry about things. It is not easy to live this way, because we are weak human beings, we need the presence of God's love in our lives and he is waiting for our invitation to come and live in us with joy. We need to trust in him and wait upon him. In his time, he will raise us up amazingly. That is our God.

Prayer: Abba Father, raise me up, so I can enjoy the joy of the resurrection. Amen.

Sunday November 26

The Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe

Ezekiel
34:11-12,15-17

Psalm
23:1-3,5-6

1 Corinthians
15:20-26,28

Matthew
25:31-46

The Good Shepherd - my Father and my King

In Psalm 23, the psalmist says, God will lead us beside still waters and restore our souls. The prophet Ezekiel explains further about this Good Shepherd in verse 11, "I myself will search for my sheep and look after them." The Good Shepherd will never keep us in want. He would provide for our needs. His rod, which symbolizes authority, will guide and protect us from the enemy's snares. His staff will support and comfort us.

There have been moments where I felt that I was drifting and I would hear a verse of a Gospel song in my spirit, and as I listen to the song, it ministers to the deepest need of my heart. Or other times when I felt I was drowning in a pit and the flesh was resisting all that's spiritual, I would hear Father God whisper "read this psalm" or "open the Bible". And as I do, in obedience, I find out that particular word is the exact word I needed and I would ponder on it for days on as the Good Shepherd was replenishing and restoring my soul. He is the 'perfect one', the faithful God we serve. Since we have been baptised and grafted in Christ he would not let us go, or allow us to wander away from him.

Once I was troubled over a work situation and disappointed over the behaviour of a person, who was meant to uphold righteousness. Fear and anger gripped me and I was falling ill. I had also felt sad over father figures in my life in general and it was during this season of despair that I was in church one day kneeling in prayer when I heard the Lord say, "I AM your Father and you are my daughter. Don't you think I could send down an army of angels to protect you?" His presence overwhelmed me and I had received his peace, and more importantly a clear revelation of who God is to me.

On this solemnity of our Lord Jesus Christ the King, let us remember that the answer to our questions is not out there. It is in 'knowing' that God is our father. He is our Lord and King. We need to grow in the knowledge of who we belong to. We are the beloved sheep of the Good Shepherd, sons and daughters of the "Father" who will never fail or forsake us.

"Be passionate about truth, so that, with your dreams, you can say: "My life is not captive to the mindset of the world: I am free, because I reign with Jesus for justice, love and peace! With Jesus, I too am a king". I too reign: as a living sign of the love of God, of his compassion and his tenderness. And whenever I fall, I discover anew in Jesus the courage to continue fighting and hoping." (Pope Francis)

Prayer: Abba Father, rescue, protect and reassure me.

Let your rod and staff lead and comfort me. Amen.

Monday November 27

Thirty-fourth Week in Ordinary Time

Daniel
1:1-6,8-20

Daniel
3:52-56

Luke
21:1-4

God rewards our faithfulness.

Daniel's faithfulness to God is shown by the way he refuses to defile his body with food from the king's table. Daniel could have easily chosen to dine like the king but he chose God instead. In return, God makes a way for Daniel to fulfill his plan by causing the chief official in charge of them to show favor and compassion to Daniel. God also gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning to the chosen four from Judah. This earned them favor from the king because the king found that they were ten times better than the magicians and enchanters in his kingdom. God rewards our faithfulness to him when we put him first. When we sacrifice worldly treasures and pleasures, it purifies our hearts and minds. The same message is shown in today's Gospel proclamation where Jesus notices the poor widow and says, "this poor widow has put in more than all the others. All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on." (Lk 21:4)

Prayer: Abba Father, may we focus our eyes on you rather than the world.
Purify our hearts and minds so that we may seek you more. Amen.

Tuesday November 28

Thirty-fourth Week in Ordinary Time

Daniel
2:31-45

Daniel
3:57-61

Luke
21:5-11

Hail Redeemer, King Divine.

Last Sunday, we celebrated the solemnity of our Lord Jesus Christ, the king of the universe. The world is waiting for Christ's second coming as King of the universe and his reign will be everlasting. Today's readings remind us that the worldly power, positions and wealth are all temporary and will be destroyed one day. We have heard and seen many stories about wealthy and powerful people who lost everything in a flash and some even lost their lives in unexpected ways. Death treats everyone equally. But the sad story is that some people are still trying to hold on to worldly leaders, power and positions. In the Gospel proclamation, the Lord Jesus himself says that kingdoms will rise against each other. He wants us to be prepared to face persecution and sufferings before his coming. Therefore let us hold on to the Almighty God and his power that never fails. Let us accumulate heavenly wealth by believing his promises. Then we shall enter his Kingdom which will never perish.

Prayer: Abba Father, reign over our lives forever.
Amen.

Wednesday November 29

Thirty-fourth Week in Ordinary Time

Daniel 5:1-6,
13-14,16-17,23-28

Daniel
3:62-67

Luke
21:12-19

You are the Lord of my life.

The choice to live in God's way or according to our own understanding is with us. Yet we should remember that whatever the role we play, be it as a professional, a teacher, a janitor or a housewife, the aim of our life should be to honour and do God's will. The grave mistake of the king which led to his death and the fall of his kingdom was his arrogance depending on human power and authority. The Psalmist says that the whole universe praises the Lord, giving continuous glory and we too should join in that unending song of praise. David who stood firm and held on to God no matter what physical, mental agony he had to undergo was rewarded beyond human understanding. His wisdom could not be compared to any human knowledge. As disciples of Jesus while we see miracles, signs and wonders as part of our lives, persecution and hardships will take us deeper in the journey. We are blessed to be assured that we will always be covered by his presence throughout this life's journey.

Prayer: Abba Father, I worship you with all my heart.
Amen.

Thursday November 30

Feast of Saint Andrew, Apostle

Romans
10:9-18

Psalm
19:8-11

Matthew
4:18-22

Our call to true discipleship.

The words with which Jesus called his first disciples: "Come after me and I will make you fishers of people," express the core of discipleship. This is the call to us who have come to believe in him and have received adoption through baptism and embraced the role of discipleship. We are to follow him and entrust ourselves totally to him. The feast of St. Andrew is a good time to look at ourselves and see where we are in our journey with the Lord. Are we fulfilling the purpose we have been called for? In his letter to the Romans, St. Paul says "if you believe in your heart and confess with your lips you will be saved". To believe, we must hear the word. We are called to participate in the mission of the church. Our lives when lived 'in him' will witness the power of his love which will overflow into the society we live in. "What really matters in life is that we are loved by Christ and that we love him in return. In comparison to the love of Jesus, everything else is secondary. And without the love of Jesus everything is useless." (St. John Paul II)

Prayer: Abba Father, thank you for your Son, who loved us to the end and made a lasting transformation in us. May we be true disciples. Amen.

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St. Andrew Dung-Lac

Andrew Dũng Lac was born in 1795 into a poor family in Vietnam. Desiring to serve the Church and his country by ministering to the Vietnamese people, he became a Catholic priest and then a missionary. His original name was Dũng An Tran. At the age of 12, the family was forced to move to Hanoi where his parents could find work. While there, Andrew met a Christian catechist who gave him food and shelter. He was instructed in the Christian faith for three years before being baptised and given the Christian name of Andrew.

After learning Chinese and Latin, he became a catechist. He was later picked out to study theology, and in 1823, he was ordained a priest. As a parish priest, he was an indefatigable preacher. He frequently fasted and lived a simple life. His good example led many to become Christians.

In 1835, Andrew was arrested and imprisoned under the emperor's persecutions. However, he was freed, thanks to some members of his congregation, who had secured his release. To avoid persecution, he changed his name from Andrew Dũng to Andrew Lac and moved to another place. But the period of freedom was brief. Once again, they were arrested and taken to Hanoi where they were subjected to dreadful tortures. On 21 December 1839, he and many other Vietnamese were beheaded. They were all canonised in Rome on 19 June, 1988 by Pope John Paul II.

On 24 November 1960, Pope John XXIII established the catholic hierarchy in Vietnam. There are about 6 million Catholics now, about 9% of the population, all the fruits of martyrs' blood.

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.

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