

*May the
Word of God
Enlighten our lives*



A V E

MARCH 2023



“The angel answered and said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God.”

Luke 1:35

POPE’S PRAYER INTENTION

For victims of abuse

We pray for those who have suffered harm from members of the Church; may they find within the Church herself a concrete response to their pain and suffering.

“But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by

UNION WITH GOD

Jayaprakash, SJ

your father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you” (Mt 6: 17-18)

(EDITORIAL)

Lenten season is a time to be with God in prayer, and silence and solitude enable one to listen to the Spirit and discern answers. Lent is also often described as a time of preparation and an opportunity to go deeper to know God through penance and fasting.

Fasting fosters a deep sense of one’s unity with God, and it’s a transforming process. Does this process bring us to ask ourselves what intentions we fast for? Fasting should remind us that we are called to serve others, not just ourselves. Fasting can be a cry to God for justice and help to serve our neighbours in the present context.

As Isaiah says, during a fast, stop hurting others with words and behaviour, stop judging others, and stop speaking harsh words. Unforgiveness, bitterness, or offence towards somebody may not help us to have fruitful fasting. Fasting is a time to repent. According to John Piper, “the absence of our fasting is the measure of our contentment with the absence of Christ.” Fasting can also be an expression of humbling ourselves before the Lord, who offered Himself for our sins. So, during this Lenten season, along with Pope Francis, we too pray for those who have suffered harm from members of the Church; may they find within the Church herself a concrete response to their pain and suffering, and we may live a life that is worthy of God’s love.

In today's Gospel reading, the crowd that followed Jesus seems to be a mixed bunch. First, some wholeheartedly believe in Jesus, and then those who question Jesus and want some form of proof of His identity. In other words, they want a sign from Heaven. In fact, Jesus had already performed numerous miracles. But it seems that these miracles were not enough. They want more—and that desire clearly indicates a stubbornness of heart and a lack of faith. So, Jesus does not and will not give them the sign they want.

1 WED

DIE WITH CHRIST

Johnson R, SJ

Jon 3: 1-10

Lk 11: 29-32

"No sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah."

Instead, Jesus says that the only sign they will receive is the sign of Jonah. Jesus' sign would be similar. He will suffer at the hands of the religious leaders and civil authorities, be killed and be placed in a tomb. Then, three days later, He will rise. The lesson for us is that God will not convince us of matters of faith through powerful and public manifestations of God's greatness. Instead, the "sign" we are offered is an invitation to die with Christ so that we can personally begin to experience the new life of the Resurrection. This gift of faith is interior, not exterior.

Pray and Practise: My crucified Lord, we gaze upon the crucifix and see in Your death the greatest act of love ever known. Give us the grace we need to follow You to the tomb so that Your death will triumph over our sins. Forgive our sins, Lord, so that during the Lenten journey, we may share in Your new life of the Resurrection.

2 THU BE GENEROUS AS OUR GOD IS

Nishanth Noronha, SJ

Est. C:12. 14-16, 23-25
Mt 7:7-12

*"Do to others as you
would have them do to
you."*

interests, He will always answer our prayers according to His plan. Therefore, we need to be patient, persistent and strong in trusting Him.

Dear friends, our God is a giving God. He has proven Himself by giving His only son to us; through that, we have become partakers in His salvific mission. Hence, as His sons and daughters, we are endowed with the responsibility "to do good to others as we would like them to do to us." - As Christians, we are called to follow this golden rule. It does not cost us much; Having experienced God's everlasting love and generosity, let us be the channels of His love to many more, especially to those who have not yet heard and experienced Him.

Pray and practise: Dear Lord, as You have called us to be Your children, fill us with Your everlasting mercy and generosity. Give us a heart like that of Yours, which feels for the sick and the suffering humanity and by understanding Your love for us, we may walk an extra mile to serve the poor and the marginalised.

In today's Gospel reading, Matthew highlights the generosity of God. As humans, we have numerous needs and demands. We lose hope and give up on God when our prayers are not answered. Today, Jesus is insisting that we not lose hope but ask to search, knock, and do this in total faith so that our generous God will provide us with the necessary gifts and graces.

Since He knows our needs and

The Church, through today's reading, invites each of its faithful to develop an attitude of reconciliation. The Church assures us that God blesses the wicked if one repents from one's wicked ways. It's a call to be closer to God with due respect to all the humans whom God has created. God is pleased by the offering of a pure heart rather

than an impure one. The Psalmist makes us aware that every one of us is weak in the flesh but strong in the spirit, as God is there for us if we turn to Him. The Gospel reminds us to be constantly on guard and to be aware of the evil ways that displease God. Thus, it's a call to live in peace with fellow human beings and to look at others as a blessing from God. Eventually, such gestures of love would set an example of reconciling humanity.

We are called to leave our comfort zones and to be the first ones to take a step towards reconciliation. Reconciliation is easier said than done. Nevertheless, Jesus provides us with an assurance that He would be more pleased with this reconciliation than an offering from an impure heart. May we strive to develop a pure heart.

Pray and Practise: Dearest Jesus, you have taught us an important lesson today. Bless us with the grace to obtain this purity of heart, to turn away from my evil ways and to live in harmony with our fellow human beings to play our part in constructing a better world.

03 FRI

RECONCILIATION: A BETTER OFFERING

Noel Dias, SJ

Ez 18: 21-28

Mt 5: 20-26

"Be reconciled, then come and offer your gift."

4 SAT (St Casimir) LOVE LEADS TO PERFECTION

Preethesh Misquith, SJ

Dt 26:16-19

Mt 5:43-48

"Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

Perfect love results only when we love somebody or something completely. If our love is not genuine and true, then there cannot be perfection. Loving oneself and loving our dear ones does not involve many risks, whereas loving our enemies and those we hate needs lots of effort and is against the usual trend.

God is the ultimate example of loving our enemies, which is portrayed rightly in today's Gospel. Our God is a loving and graceful God. He is generous to both good and bad people on this earth. Today the same Lord invites us to love our enemies as we love ourselves, our near ones and our neighbours.

The world today struggles with injustice, homicide, discrimination, persecution of minorities and the poor, etc., because of enmity and hatred. 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth' rule is very vibrant in today's world. The call of Jesus to turn the other cheek when one strikes one cheek and walking an extra mile if we are asked to walk one mile is hardly practised today. Love that does not count the fault of the other, the selfless one, is the key to living a life worthy of a Christian. It is the gateway to tread the path of perfection of the Father.

Pray and Practise: Dear Lord, we pray that we may have the immense grace to love our enemies and to be with them in their struggles. Help us to walk an extra mile with them so that we may walk together in love towards perfection.

Jesus Christ, in today's Gospel, abolishes death and brings forth life and immortality. What is this death? What is life? Are we not going away from the truth just because we are limited in our understanding of anything that goes beyond empirical data? We need faith to comprehend the mystery of salvation.

**05 SUN (II SUNDAY
OF LENT)
PHYSICAL TO
SPIRITUAL REALM**

Pruthvi Rodrigues, SJ
Gn 12:1-4a
2 Tm 1: 8b-10
Mt 17:1-9

*"This is my Son, the
Beloved; with Him, I am
well pleased."*

Moses gave the law, and the prophets came to remind people about the law. The laws had become a burden to the people. They did not help them lead a happy and contented life. The laws demanded an upgradation. Jesus comes to give new meaning to the law and the prophets. Sometimes the laws become mechanical without any meaning. We try to follow because we have to. We lack the deeper insight to recognise their value in our lives. However, like Abraham and Jesus, if we abide by God's word, we will be able to understand God's will through these laws. To do so, we need to move from mere human reasoning to faith. Peter, after Jesus was transfigured, still remained in the physical realm. Even being very close to Jesus, the disciples could not raise themselves to the spiritual understanding of the Saviour. What about us? Are we content with the physical realm?

Pray and Practise: Dear Lord, grant us deep faith in order to recognise the presence of Jesus in our lives. Help us to realize that as humans, we are limited and, hence, we need deeper faith. May Christ's love and compassion transfigure us!

06 MON CALL TO GENEROSITY

Roydon Misquith, SJ

Dan 9: 4b -10

Lk 6: 36 – 38

“For the measure you give will be the measure you get back”

Today’s Gospel is a call to generosity, not so much in terms of money, but in terms of mercy, compassion, kindness, understanding, tolerance and forgiveness. In a world where we lack these virtues, Jesus invites us to a radical response.

Today’s passage continues Jesus’ teaching on loving one’s enemies, but He takes it a step further by inviting us to explore the pinnacle of God’s generosity. Jesus has introduced God to us as our Father. Since we are the children of the Lord Most High, our daily actions should be in sync with those of God. That is why the Gospel of today begins with the instruction, “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.” Through this instruction, Jesus sets God as the standard for our generosity in upholding the aforementioned virtues. This may seem like an overwhelming and demanding request, but we must first become aware of the vastness of God’s mercy and forgiveness towards us before we attempt to emulate it in any small way towards those around us.

Pray and Practise: Loving Lord, grant us the grace to recognise the abundance of Your love, compassion, mercy, and forgiveness that we have received in our lives. Inspired and overwhelmed by this magnanimity towards us, help us to be magnanimous in manifesting our mercy, compassion, and forgiveness to the people we meet in our daily lives so that we remain true to our calling as God’s sons and daughters.

A family moved into a new house. From their window, they saw the dirty walls of their neighbours and started judging them. Meanwhile, their little daughter cleaned the windowpane they were looking through. "It was the house window which needed cleaning from within and not the outer walls of the neighbours."

**07 TUE (Sts Perpetua
& Felicity)
21ST CENTURY
CHRISTIAN**

Sandeep Gonsalves,
SJ

Is 1: 10,16-10
Mt 23:1-12

*"Wash yourselves
clean!"*

The windowpane in the story describes the Scribes and Pharisees. They adhered to every external ritual and religious practice. By doing so, they considered themselves clean before God. But Jesus was angry about their unclean heart and attitudes. Their actions did not ooze out of their relationship with God. Just to cite an example of their superficiality, God gave only ten commandments to the Israelites, but the Scribes and Pharisees expanded them into 613 commandments. If a person failed to keep any of these commandments, the penalty levied was huge. Sometimes the poor went bankrupt, paying the fine. "Would our merciful Abba intend this?!"

To prove I am a pious person, I may go for Mass, Confession, and retreats. I may put on sacred dresses and objects. But on the other hand, I do not mind going against my religious vows, cheating my partner in married life, looting people in business, gossiping, spreading fake news, character assassination in inter-personal life, and getting involved in corruption. If I am a person of duplicity, no wonder Jesus would condemn me for being "a Scribe or Pharisee of the 21st century."

Pray and Practise: Lord, make us humble to acknowledge my weaknesses. Lord, give us the strength to mend our ways. Thus, may our every good deed be the outcome of our love

**08 WED (St John of
God)
SERVANT
LEADERSHIP**

Sharun Roy D'Souza,
SJ

Jer 18:18-20
Mt 20:17-28

*"Whoever wishes
to be great among
you must be your
servant..."*

for You!

There is a desire in everyone's heart to be somebody in society. We are ready to take up any means in pursuit of such desires. In today's Gospel, the pursuit of similar desire is seen in the sons of Zebedee. It looks like they could hardly differentiate between the kingdom of God that Jesus is talking about and the royal kingdom that they have witnessed on earth. It is important to note that the conversation of seeking the position comes soon after

Jesus mentions about His passion, death and resurrection for the third time. Jesus shows His disciples a way that is unappreciated by others – the road to Christ's kingdom is by way of the cross. In order to participate in the glory of the Master, the disciple must share in His sufferings. Jesus is not against being the first. Jesus is against the way of being the first. He shows the right way.

Jesus, as a servant leader, knows and loves His followers. The values that Jesus propagates are truth, honesty, authenticity and justice. To follow Christ, it is necessary to imbibe these qualities. A disciple must walk in the footsteps of servant leadership. In fact, every baptised Christian is called to enter into the servant leadership of Jesus.

Pray and Practise: Grant us, Lord, the mind and heart to know You, the pure spirit that always thirsts for You. Help us to be like You – a Servant Leader so that we may also lead a life of simplicity and humility, not seeking power and prestige, but doing everything for the greater glory of God.

The parable of the rich man and Lazarus is the implication of those who try to serve both God and wealth. The rich man's plea, 'Father Abraham...' and Father Abraham's address to the rich man, 'child,' indirectly portray that the rich man was a believer and wanted himself to be treated as 'Son'. On the contrary, nothing is said about Lazarus except for his utter poverty and starvation. We notice that there is no interaction

between the rich and the poor neighbour in their earthly life. Who created this great divide? Rich or the Poor? The great chasm is replicated when Lazarus is at the side of Abraham and the rich man in Hades. Who created this great divide? Being 'a child of Abraham', therefore, is no guarantee that one will dwell with Abraham in paradise. The Rich man was blind to the needs of Lazarus. He was in a false perception that riches and glory are the fruits of God's blessings on him and sickness, poverty etc., as a curse from God. A believer who is not sensitive to the needs of the poor is not a believer at all.

We live in a world where the poor walk miles to get food, and the rich walk miles to digest food. Poverty and starvation existed during the time of Jesus and even today. As Christians, let us introspect how many times we have sacrificed our time and energy to address the needs of our neighbours. Being a Christian alone does not assure us of life after death in heaven.

Pray and Practise: Lord, help us to be sensitive to the needs of others. Let us see You in the face of others.

9 THU(StFrances of Rome) BE SENSITIVE TO THE NEEDS OF OTHERS

Joseph Jerald, SJ

Jer 17:5-10
Lk 16:19-31

*"You cannot serve God
and wealth."*

10 FRI

SELFISHNESS TO SELFLESSNESS

Joswin Pereira, SJ

Gn 37: 3-4, 12-13a,
17b-28a

Mt 21: 33-43, 45-46

*“He will let out the
vineyard to other
tenants...”*

The hills of Galilee were lined with numerous vineyards, and it was quite common for the owners to let out their estates to tenants. Why did Jesus’ story about wicked tenants cause offence to the scribes and Pharisees? Because it contained both a prophetic message and a warning. Isaiah had spoken of the house of Israel as “the vineyard of the Lord” (Isaiah 5:7). Jesus’ listeners would likely understand this parable as referring to God’s dealing with stubborn and rebellious people.

This parable richly conveys some important truths about God and how He deals with His people. First, it tells us of God’s generosity and trust. The vineyard is well-equipped with everything the tenants need. The owner went away and left the vineyard in the hands of the tenants. God trusts us enough to give us the freedom to run our lives and make our own choices. This parable also tells us of God’s patience and justice. Not once, but many times He forgives the tenants their debts. But while the tenants take advantage of the owner’s patience, his judgment and justice prevail in the end. Do we live our lives the way Jesus wants us to live with the freedom given to us?

Pray and Practise: “Thank you, Lord Jesus Christ, for all the benefits you have given us; for all the pains and insults you have borne for us. O most merciful redeemer, friend, and brother, may we know you more clearly, love you more dearly, and follow you more nearly, for your own sake.” (St. Richard of Chichester)

Prophet Micah praises the mercy and forgiveness of God, who restores and makes everything new again. He reminds us of God's great deeds in history. God has done wonders for His people in the past. So, the present and future are giving us hope. God will show us His faithfulness and mercy. God can and does forgive sins. This shows his greatness more than any other deed He did for His people.

11 SAT COMPASSION AND LOVE

Kiran Anthony Lima, SJ

Mic 7: 14-15, 18-20

Lk 15: 1-3, 11-32

"He was lost and is found."

In the Gospel, Jesus gives a parable. There are many sinners in His audience. The people sit around Him. On the fringes of the crowd are the Pharisees who judge Jesus in their hearts, saying, "If he were the Messiah, he would have been on our side and not on the side of this scum of humanity: publicans and public sinners." Jesus sees what is in their hearts, and He tells them three parables. The first is the Good Shepherd. Micah, too, reminded God in his psalm: We belong to your flock: we are yours. Second, the Parable of the lost drachma (Coin) tells us that as the small silver coin is precious to an old widow, so are we to God. The Prodigal Son - the greatest parable ever told touches our hearts, when Jesus narrates that the father forgives the prodigal son who repents.

Pray and Practise: Dear Jesus, thank You for Your love, mercy and forgiveness towards humanity. Give us the courage to extend this forgiveness to those who have offended us. Help us to realise that we need Your forgiveness to be whole and to regain peace and Your friendship.

12 SUN (III SUNDAY OF LENT)

I WILL NEVER BE THIRSTY

Maxim D'Souza, SJ

Ex 17: 3-7

Rom 5: 1-2,5-8

Jn 4: 5-42

Today's first reading and the Gospel highlight the basic need, namely water. Jesus, in conversation with the Samaritan woman, speaks of living water, which will quench the thirst of every human soul. The living water which Jesus promises is He Himself.

"Sir, give me this water so that I will never be thirsty."

The conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman shows that the mission

of Jesus inclusive of all humanity. Jesus gives a chance to Samaritans to be in God's kingdom, and they accept it wholeheartedly. Though the woman testifies to Jesus at first, later, the Samaritans come to believe in Jesus on their own first-hand experience of Jesus.

Jesus never judged people based on their ethnicity. Thus, this reading calls us not to be judges of others' lives. He calls us to be living water for those people who come on our way. Many a time, we wander in the deserts of our lives and look for water that quenches only the bodily thirst like the people of Israel in the desert. We are called to look for and ask for living water like the Samaritan woman at the well. To find this living water, we must put away all our prejudices and remain strong, believing in Christ and being witnesses to Him. Thus, we become worthy Christians by becoming strong in faith and leading others to Him.

Prayer and Practise: Lord Jesus, the living water, help us to be rooted in You and to spread the message of living water to those whom I encounter today.

Our God is compassionate, loving and rich in mercy. The bounty of His deliverance is for all the poor and the oppressed regardless of nationality, caste, gender, group or race. In today's Gospel reading, Jesus speaks in His hometown about the radical inclusiveness of God's love and grace. Jesus tells them the plain truth that with God, there is no partiality. However, this announcement of Jesus enraged the people of His hometown as they were selfish and concerned only about their welfare. Jesus, quoting from the Old Testament, shows that God's love is beyond boundaries. Like the Israelites, the non-Israelites, tax collectors, and others are equally included in the saving plan of God. Pope Francis, through his encyclical 'Fratelli Tutti', challenges our selfish and indifferent attitude of 'creating walls' in society. He calls us to promote a universal aspiration toward fraternity and social friendship instead of creating boundaries. He invites us never to restrict the love and grace of God to the boundaries of any nation, Church, group or race, but rather to create open space for everyone to receive God's unconditional grace.

At times, consciously or unconsciously, we have erected boundaries based on culture, language or region in our family, workplace, community or in society. Therefore, let's ask for forgiveness and grace to transcend these boundaries to experience God's mighty works in our lives.

Pray and Practise: Lord Jesus, help us to be inclusive as You were and bless us with the prophetic courage to speak up against the culture of 'creating walls' in the present society.

13 MON

GOD'S INCLUSIVE LOVE AND GRACE

Paul Anand, SJ

2 Kgs 5:1-15a

Lk 4: 24-30

"Behold, I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel"

14 TUE TO FORGIVE WITHOUT LIMITS

Wilson Saldanha, SJ

Dn 3: 25, 34-43

Mt 18: 21-35

*"Not seven times, but
I tell you, seventy-
seven times."*

demonstrates the prerequisite to receiving pardon: a heart ready to forgive others.

To be a Christian is to imitate Christ, who died, forgiving those who nailed Him to the cross. When Peter asked Jesus about forgiveness, he must have been offended by someone, or someone among the disciples must have gotten into an argument with him. For sure, he must have felt great for raising the forgiveness limit to seven times. In response, Jesus teaches Peter and us that divine quality, that limitless love, that merciful act of forgiveness, which makes us partakers in what God does to us. We know that none of us is perfect, and we falter too often. But God, being merciful, forgives us and hopes that we begin each time anew. Jesus came to show us this face of His heavenly Father, and He insists that we, too, be merciful just like Him. Forgiveness from God is experienced tangibly when we forgive those who hurt us.

Pray and practise: Dear Jesus, grant us the spirit with which You forgave us from the Cross. Grant us the grace to forgive those who trespass against us; by doing so, we may amplify Your loving kindness in the whole world.

The prayer of Azariah in today's first reading provides us with a perfect example of prayer, as it includes thanksgiving as well as a petition of forgiveness. In the Gospel, Jesus apparently puts a condition to receive this forgiveness from God. Through the Lord's Prayer, He taught us to forgive others in order to receive pardon for our sins; today, we have a parable that clearly

There is an interesting Spanish story about a father and his son. Because of some issues, they became alienated and estranged. After some time had passed, the father, perhaps realising the emptiness of his life without his son or possibly missing him, sets out to find and reconnect with him. He searched for his son for months. He searched for him everywhere but was unable to find him. In a last desperate effort to find his son, the father put an ad in a Madrid newspaper. The ad read: "Dear Paco, meet me in front of this newspaper office at noon on Saturday. All is forgiven. I love you. Your father." To his surprise, eight hundred "Pacos" showed up on Saturday, looking for forgiveness and love from their fathers.

In today's Gospel, we see Jesus telling His disciples that He has come not to abolish the law but to fulfil them. Whoever does them will be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. For fulfilling the commandments, we need to observe the spirit of the law than the letter. All these commandments are shown through the love of God and the love of the neighbours. The love of others is shown concretely by forgiving one another. It is by the forgiveness that we show the merciful and compassionate face of God to the people we come in contact with. Through forgiveness, we can fulfil the commandments and be the children of God.

Pray and Practise: Dear Lord, give us the grace to show Your forgiving love to others and, by doing so, fulfil Your commandments.

15 WED MERCIFUL FACE OF GOD

Johnson R,SJ

Dt 4:1,5-9
Mt 5: 17-19

*"I have not come to
abolish the law but to
fulfil them."*

16 THU JESUS, THE DIVINE HEALER

Nishanth Noronha, SJ

Jer 7:23-28

Lk 11:14-23

*"Then the kingdom of
God has come to you."*

In today's Gospel reading, we hear Jesus performing a miracle and manifesting His divine power. He heals people from all kinds of sickness and drives out even the mighty demons. In today's episode, we find two types of people, the ordinary people in the crowd and the Pharisees. The crowd is amazed at the power and authority of Jesus over everything, especially His power to overthrow demons. On the other hand, the Pharisees are questioning the authority of Jesus. Most of the time, we find them trying to criticise and condemn Jesus. Jesus gives them a stern reply to which they do not dare to question Him further.

We, too, in our lives, receive appreciation sometimes and criticism from people. Several people encourage and appreciate us for any good deed we do, and then there are a few waiting to put us down. As Christians, let us imitate and follow the example of Jesus in everything that we do. Jesus never gave up doing good; He healed the sick, drove out demons, and accompanied the poor and outcast despite the criticisms of people like the Pharisees. In our broken world, there are people who long to be loved, cared for, and healed of their sicknesses and weaknesses. Can we be the healers?

Pray and practise: Loving Jesus, fill us with your healing power and unconditional love so that we are determined, like You, to do good, touch, and heal people in and around us without being afraid of criticism.

Today's readings call us for repentance and love. During this season of Lent, Jesus, through His words, reveals to us what love is. He invites us to cultivate an attitude of love toward God and our neighbour. Both these commandments proposed by Jesus are the core of every Christian faithful. In the context of Hosea, Israel is called to repent

their evil ways and come back to experience the love of God. For this very reason, Jesus' words in the Gospel inspire us "and to love one's neighbour as one's self is a greater thing than all holocausts and sacrifices." God is no more interested in our shallow offerings. God wants us to become more humane this lent. Our love towards God is expressed in the manner we treat our fellow human beings without any expectations from them. We are called to listen to the cry of others at the time of their needs and thus please God with our deeds of love towards humanity. Love is an act done for the benefit of the other. Love is not mere emotion.

Let's reflect today on how selfish we have become in times to love our neighbour. Sometimes reasons for disharmony are petty, but we don't realise the harm that is caused. Jesus' words in the Gospel invite each faithful to have a glimpse of God in the other and to love the other despite the discomfort or inconvenience caused.

Pray and Practise: Dearest Jesus, teach us to love our neighbour and bless us with the grace to celebrate others' victories as if they were our own.

17 FRI (St Patrick) LOVE COMMANDMENTS

Noel Dias, SJ

Hosea 14: 2-10
Mark 12: 28 – 34

*"To love one's
neighbour as oneself."*

**18 SAT (St Cyril of
Jerusalem)
BE HUMBLE
BEFORE GOD**

Preethesh Misquith,
SJ

Hos 6:1-6
Lk 18:9-14

*"Pray in humility
because humility is the
mother of all virtues."*

Pharisee and the tax collector, that the one, who humbles, will be exalted, and the one who exalts will be humbled.

In our day-to-day life, we come across different events or situations where people want to exhibit their pride, honour, and glory before others. Today, no one wants to be humble before others because they think that it makes them low and little before others. So, each one becomes selfish and regards others with contempt. This is where we fail to accept everyone as children of God. Becoming humble before God and others make a person completely free and approachable, and the person can be judged as trustworthy and righteous. Hence, we need to imbibe the virtue of humility and the taste for prayer.

Pray and practise: Dear Lord, we pray for the gift of humility, that our prayers may become a humble surrender before You and not a proclamation of self-glory. Give us the grace to increase our love for prayer, and through prayer, we may become trustworthy and righteous persons in this world.

Prayer is an essential element in everyone's life. We are all created by God, and we need God's support and providence in every moment of our life. Prayer is not something that is demanded by God; rather, it is a humble surrender before God. Most often, prayer is seen as an accountability of one's goodness and glory before God and also used to compare oneself with others, which is not a right prayer. The Gospel today rightly points out, through the parable of the

Humanity has moved from the black-and-white era to the age of multi-colours. Science has been identifying more colours, adding to the traditional VIBGYOR. All these shades of light give us a point of view to look at our reality. But the darkness of our human life can be driven away by only Christ, the Supreme Light.

19 THU DEEPEN YOUR RELATIONSHIP

Sagili Karunakar, SJ
Heb 7:25 - 8:6
Mk 3:7-12

*".....You are the Son
of God....."*

The sun that gives sight to the eagle blinds the owl. Often, we fail to understand God and His deeds. God has created us, but in trying to understand God, we create our own gods. In today's first reading, we see God choosing David instead of his mighty brothers. God is light, dispelling our ignorance. Jesus, too, came as a light to this world to dispel our ignorance. "I am the light of the world, says the Lord; whoever follows me will have the light of life." He heals the blind man and reveals Himself as the light.

Lent, especially, has the purpose of making us realise who we actually are! And help us to ponder, "Is Christ really the light of our life? Do we compromise with His teaching?" Let us realise the truth and rejoice while lifting the Easter candle that Jesus is the light of our lives. He goes before us with His rod and with His staff to give us courage.

Pray and practise: Lord Jesus, You have always shown us the way from darkness into light. Grant us all the grace to see a way forward through the present darkness so that we may have hope for the future.

20 MON (St Joseph)
RADICAL AND
COURAGEOUS
FAITH

Roydon Misquith,
SJ

2 Sam 7: 4-5a, 12-14a, 16

Rom 4: 13, 16-18, 22

Mt 1: 16, 18-21, 24a

"He did as the angel of the Lord commanded him."

Today the Church celebrates the solemnity of St. Joseph, the spouse of Mary and the guardian of our redeemer. St. Joseph is the epitome of faith in God and obedience to the will of God. Therefore, he is held in such high regard by the Church.

The Gospel of today tells us that he was a righteous man. When faced with a choice between following the letter of the Torah and the spirit of the Torah, he chose the spirit of the Torah, namely, to act out of concern for another person's dignity. It may seem a very simple decision when we see it objectively from our contemporary moral perspective. However, when viewed through the lens of his time, his was indeed a very brave decision. In addition to his moral uprightness, he had the art of listening to the voice of God, discerning it, and obeying it in complete faith. It is not so easy to sacrifice one's desires and goals for the sake of others. But St. Joseph made it and followed all the commands of God faithfully; this was an act of deep faith. As Christians, we are called to emulate this radical and courageous faith in our day-to-day lives.

Pray and Practise: Let us ask through the intercession of St. Joseph that we may live a life of faith, obedience, and righteousness, so as to carry out the will of God in our lives.

The first reading today contains a part of the lengthy vision Prophet Ezekiel had during the 25 years of Israel's captivity. The temple, considered God's dwelling place, was destroyed. The Israelites felt that God had abandoned them and was doomed for eternity. Amidst this hopelessness, the prophecy of Ezekiel brings new hope.

21 TUE

THE LIFE-GIVING WATER

Sandeep Gonsalves,
SJ

Ez 47; 1-9,12

Jn 5: 1-16

*"Jesus said to him,
'Get up, take up your
bed, and walk.'"*

Science, history and our daily experiences have proved that water signifies life, survival, and growth. The overflowing water in the prophet's vision depicts God as the life-giver. This means "God will liberate them from the death of exile to the life of return." While the people of God in the Old Testament were captives in a foreign land, the people of God in the New Testament are the captives of their sinfulness. The sickly man by the pool, suffering for a long time, symbolises ailing humanity waiting for salvation. The healing deed of Jesus proves that "In Jesus, we have salvation".

Dear friends, if we look around, we see scandalous leaders in the religious world, we see infidelity in married life, and political leaders creating riots to promote their ideologies, destroying places of worship, persecuting Christians, and violating human rights and human dignity. As a result, there is misery, poverty and death. Isn't it the time to repent and move closer to God? During this season of lent, let us repent and help others return to Jesus, the life-giving water.

Pray and practise: O holy Jesus! Let our hearts be washed with that life-giving water! Thus, we may become the instruments to preach Your kingdom to others.

**22 WED
JESUS,
REFLECTION OF
THE FATHER**

Sharun Roy D'Souza,
SJ

Is 49: 8-15
Jn 5: 17-30

*"My father is at work
until now, so I am at
work."*

The book of Genesis speaks of God resting on the seventh day as a sign of completion of a wonderful mission. This is the origin of the Sabbath for Jews. Jesus condemns such a narrow understanding of Jewish leaders. Jesus is radical in His approach. If healing someone makes one equal to God, who is the author of life, then so be it. So, He says, "For the father loves his son and shows him everything that he himself does..." So, Jesus, instead of denying the accusation, confirms it. He feels the love of the father in the act of giving life. Sabbath was meant to restore life, and Jesus is the life-giver.

In our life, too at times, we face a great dilemma when it comes to choosing between the rules and the values that promote humanity. Jesus is the perfect example for us, who teaches us the art of discernment. As Christians, we are called to be life-givers, the perfect reflections of the Son of God.

Pray and Practise: Gracious Lord, we thank You for Your eternal love and life. Guide us on our path to choose life so that we may truly practice Your commandment of love in our life.

The Gospel of the day is the aftereffects of healing the crippled man on the Sabbath day, who was ill for thirty-eight years. It was an indicator showing the divine authority of the incarnated Son of God. The Jewish leaders are furious with Jesus for breaking the Sabbath and for calling God His Father.

The book of Genesis speaks of God resting on the seventh day

Jewish leaders questioned Jesus' authority and His relationship with the Father in today's Gospel. They could not accept the radical teachings of Jesus. In order to do away with Him, they had many false charges against Him.

**23 THU (St Turibius
of Mogrovejo)
BEAR WITNESS**

Joseph Jerald, SJ
Ex 32: 7-14
Jn 5: 31-47

Jesus faces the challenges and produces witnesses for all that He claims. Jesus highlights John the Baptist, who bore witness to Him. None of the Jewish leaders took John's teachings seriously. Secondly, Jesus brings the most holy scripture of Jews as His witness. He points out from the scripture all that was said about Him. But the words and witness of Jesus fell on their deaf ears. According to Jewish custom, if there was only one witness contrary to the charges, the condemned person would not be punished. Despite the witnesses given by Jesus, they were adamant about putting Jesus to death. In this case, they went even against the Holy Scripture and Moses. They did not search for God in the scripture rather were busy finding those passages that affirmed their ideas.

*"I know that you do not
have the love of God in
you."*

Many a time, we might be afraid of those who challenge us. We find it difficult to face them and escape their presence. We cling to only those who are pleasing us or are in line with our own ideas. Jesus challenges us today to do God's will. When one does it, then we have no one to please except God.

Pray and Practise: Lord, open my mind to find You in the Holy Scriptures, in our neighbours and serve You at all times.

**24 FRI (St Oscar Romero)
FOR HIM OR
AGAINST HIM**

Joswin Pereira, SJ

Wis 2: 1a, 12-22

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

“His hour had not yet come.”

What can hold us back from doing the will of God? Fear, especially the fear of death, can easily rob us of courage and the will to do what we know is right. Jesus met opposition and the threat of death with grace and determination to accomplish His Father’s will. Jesus knew that His mission, His purpose in life, would entail sacrifice and suffering and culminate with death on the cross. But that would not be the end. His “hour” would crush defeat with victory, condemnation with pardon and freedom, and death with glory and everlasting life. The religious authorities did all they could to stop Jesus because they could not accept His claims and the demands He made. But nothing stopped Jesus. He was always aware of His Father’s will, and He wants nothing else than to do God’s will.

We cannot be indifferent to the claims that Jesus makes about us. We are either for Him or against Him. There is no middle ground. We can try to mould Jesus to our own ideas and preferences or allow His word to free us from our ignorance, stubbornness, pride, and deception. We must ask ourselves, do we accept all that Jesus has said and done for us, with faith and reverence or with disbelief and contempt?

Pray and Practise: Dear Lord, grant us the grace that we may realise the purpose of our call and may not lose heart at the negative comments of others, but may we be led by Your Spirit to carry

The Gospel of Luke takes us back in salvation history to God's promise made first to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, then to David. This promise is fulfilled through the annunciation to the Blessed Virgin Mary, who had been chosen to be the Mother of Our Lord.

25 SAT (Annunciation of the Lord) NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE WITH GOD

Kiran Anthony Lima, SJ

Is 7: 10-14, 8:10

Heb 10: 4-10

Lk 1: 26-38

In the first reading, prophet Isaiah confronts king Ahaz for his lack of trust in the Lord's promise, whereas in the Gospel, Mary keeps complete trust in the Lord's promise. Both King Ahaz and Mary are promised a future king. When God is with us, we can do wonders. Hence, the angel instructs the Virgin Mary, saying, "Nothing is impossible with God".

"Hail, O favoured one, the Lord is with you."

As Christians, we need to ponder, as a favoured one of God, am I keeping the promise to God through living a righteous life? As God has incarnated for us, what are we doing in return? As baptised Christians, are we living as true disciples of Christ? Like Mary, we, too, need to respond to God's call of promise in faith. As we daily recite the rosary, let us remember Mary as our model, her fiat – her willing acceptance of God's holy plan. She gifted us the Saviour by saying 'yes' to God. May we grow in faith to become the favoured ones in the eyes of our God.

Pray and practise: Dear Lord, give us an open heart to listen to Your word and respond to Your call so that we may always be faithful to our Christian call like May Our Mother.

**26 SUN (V Sunday
of Lent)
LEADING TO NEW
LIFE**

Maxim D'Souza, SJ

Ez 37: 12-14

Rom 8: 8-11

Jn 11: 1-45

*"I will put my Spirit
within you and you
shall live."*

Resurrection is the theme of today's readings. We, as Christians, hope in the resurrection; therefore, we lead a life of holiness, trusting in Jesus, who is the resurrection and life.

In raising Lazarus from the dead, Jesus shows us that He is above death; in Him, death finds its new meaning as entry into eternal life. Although the resurrection is

highlighted, the underlying message for us today is to believe in Jesus and find new life. Jesus weeps - which can be interpreted as a call to conversion. This weeping could be for the lack of faith of people in the healing and strengthening power of God. Today Jesus looks at you and me, weeps and wants us to be raised from our shortcomings and weaknesses. After rising from all our iniquities, God will instil in us a new spirit to live a life of true followers of Christ. This journey of faith is not in isolation but in the care of others. To be risen again with Christ, one has to be in a close relationship with one's neighbour. So, let us not be a cause of destruction to others. Instead, be an instrument that leads everyone to new life.

Pray and Practise: Dear Jesus, by raising Lazarus to life, You promised and showed us that the resurrection and new life are in You alone. May we never keep You away and help us to become a channel of peace and love, leading them to You.

The narrative conflict in the Gospel is about Jesus' relationship to the law and the religious establishment. Here, we notice that Jesus isn't pleased with the scribes and the Pharisees, who interpret the law according to their own whims and fancies. The scribes and Pharisees brought the woman to Jesus as an object to be manipulated for their own ends, i.e., to trap Jesus. Jesus knowing the situation challenges not only the scribes and the Pharisees but also the law and the claims of the Jewish religious establishments. Jesus, unlike the scribes and the Pharisees, places His authority to forgive and offer freedom in an unjust social and religious context. It is a succinct expression of Jesus' mercy. It portrays Jesus as the serene judge who treats the woman and the scribes equally and respectfully. Moreover, we see a delicate balance between Jesus' justice (sin no more) and mercy (go in peace). Jesus is merciful and offers the opportunity to detach oneself from the old ways of sin and attach oneself to a new world marked by freedom.

Unfortunately, sometimes we end up judging people based on our selfish interests. Jesus invites us not to judge others. Who am I to judge and condemn others if God doesn't judge? Our God never condemns but being rich in mercy offers the opportunity to reject the paths of sin and embrace a path of truthfulness and freedom.

Pray and practise: Lord Jesus, with Your grace, help us to grow to be non-judgemental and to learn to respect every single person irrespective of his/her class, colour and creed.

27 MON **JESUS-SERENE** **JUDGE**

Paul Anand, SJ
Dn 13: 1-9,15-17,19-30,33-62 or 13: 41c-62
Jn 8: 1-11

"From now on, don't sin again."

28 TUE CROSS: THE TREE OF LIFE

Wilson Saldanha, SJ

Nm 21: 4-9

Jn 8: 21-30

*“... then you will realise
that I am he.”*

As we come closer to the celebration of the paschal mystery of our faith, namely, the passion, death and resurrection, the readings bring before us the importance of the Cross and the redemption of humanity through the Cross. The sojourning Israelites in the wilderness found the bronze serpent on a pole as a symbol of life and deliverance from the curse. Similarly, Jesus Christ, lifted up on the Cross, becomes the sign of deliverance from sin and God's remedy to death for the entire humanity.

When the Israelites wavered in their faith, they faced the consequence of their hard-heartedness; but God provided them with a way to save their lives. For Christians, there is a sure way of salvation through the Cross of Christ. This is the tree where death was conquered and from where life flows for all. The Cross does not promise us the end of all our sufferings, but it shows us a way of making sense of our daily sufferings and struggles. Through the Cross of Jesus, we understand that God has a plan for us in all our struggles - plans for our welfare and not for our harm. Therefore, today let us cast a glance at the one who was hung for us on the Cross and put our unwavering faith in Him.

Pray and practise: Dear Jesus, thank you for the gift of Your Cross. We realise that our faith is fragile and dependent on signs. Help us to understand and ponder on the mysteries of Your passion and the graces You bestow on us through the Cross.

Being the descendants of Abraham, the Jews thought that they were privileged to be called the chosen people of God. Yet, their behaviour did not measure up to the image of God, who is a loving and merciful Father. They even murdered the messengers of God who called upon them to repent and change their ways. When Jesus, the Son of God, comes along, instead of welcoming, listening and loving Him, they rejected and crucified Him as a criminal. Thus, they continued to be enslaved by their sinful ways.

29 WED ABIDE IN ME

AdeshLakra, SJ

Dn 3: 14-20, 24/91-
25/92, 28/95
Jn 8:31-42

*"The truth will make
you free."*

Rejecting Jesus means to continue living in the valley of darkness which consists of lies, deceit, hatred, arrogance, and guilt. There is no joy and peace in this valley. Only through the acceptance of truth will one be set free from the sinfulness and darkness of such a valley. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6). Only Jesus can set us free from the clutches of sin and death. If we believe in Him, His mercy and saving grace will be upon us, and we will be forgiven. Not only that, but He will also give us the strength we need to turn away from our enslavement. We will then learn to love and forgive ourselves first and to accept, forgive and love others too.

Pray and Practise: Dear Jesus, You invite us to embrace the truth in You and to be truthful like You. Help us to imitate You so that by seeking and abiding in Your truth, we may be agents of justice in this world.

30 THU UNION WITH GOD

Anish Raj, SJ

Gn 17:3-9
Jn 8: 51-59

*"I will make you
exceedingly fruitful."*

Jesus is the ultimate way to know God fully. If we can say that we know God only because we know Jesus is the perfect revelation of God. This pure and genuine knowledge of God is a grace. This knowledge is the source of fruitfulness and meaningfulness in our lives.

The God of Abraham is a faithful God. The faithfulness of God is depicted in the first reading with the covenantal promise of God with Abraham. The promise of God, in His abounding faithfulness, exceeds all boundaries. It lasts for generations after generations. The fulfilment of this promise is Jesus Christ, who gives eternal life. The Gospel of today showcases the perfect union of God of Israel and Jesus Christ. Jesus is the perfect revelation of God, in whom is eternal life. This is the mystery the Jews failed to recognise. They failed to see that we experience the God of Israel in person through Jesus, who was present in front of them. In knowing Christ, we strengthen this bond of being the children of God and share His sonship. Thus, we become the adopted children of God.

The Jews couldn't recognise Jesus as the eternal word because of their self-righteous mindset. We can recognise Jesus only when we see Him in our family members, colleagues and friends. The promise of God-our fruitfulness-becomes real and meaningful only when we walk together, experiencing the union of God in the face of the other.

Pray and Practise: Lord, grant us an unimpaired perception to see You in the face of the other, especially those who are in need of a touch of love.

While confronting evil, suffering and persecution, either we often try to avoid or run away. We fail to bear witness to the truth and profess our faith in One true God, the Saviour of us all. The belief is that the more we go closer toward God, the more persecution and hatred we encounter. So, shall we give up our faith just to avoid suffering and pain? No, as true Christians, we need to grow in holiness. The path towards holiness is persecution, suffering, hardships, and sorrow-filled life. Sometimes, this may not make sense to us. Remember, this was the way for Jesus, and so be ours.

31 FRI

BELIEVE IN JESUS

ArockiaSamy P, SJ

Jer 20: 10-13

Jn 10: 31-42

"And many believed in him there."

As we draw close to the passion narrative in the Gospels, we find the hatred toward Jesus from the scribes and Pharisees grows stronger. Little by little, the number of haters increases, and even they try to stone Him, but the beauty is that He embraces death and willingly offers His life for humanity. On one side, the persecution towards Jesus increases. On the other side, Jesus's faith in His Father increases. Similarly, one thing God wants of us is that amid persecution, struggles, sufferings, and sorrowful moments, we remain pure in our faith and resolve to stand firm in His word and truth. We need to believe that these crosses are not to destroy us but are gifts from God to strengthen us for a greater purpose.

Pray and Practise: Dear Jesus, help us to see the purpose You have for us amid the challenges we encounter and deepen our faith in You.

March, 1815-

10 March



“There is no rest in the heart of God until He knows that you are at rest in His grace.!”

– St. John Ogilvie

COVER

The Holy Spirit, the all pervading presence of God in Jesus Christ, is symbolised by the dove. The Spirit envelops the entire world with God's grace and action. May the Spirit guide us in our experience of the Divine, enlighten our lives through daily reflection on the Scriptures — the 'AVE'.



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