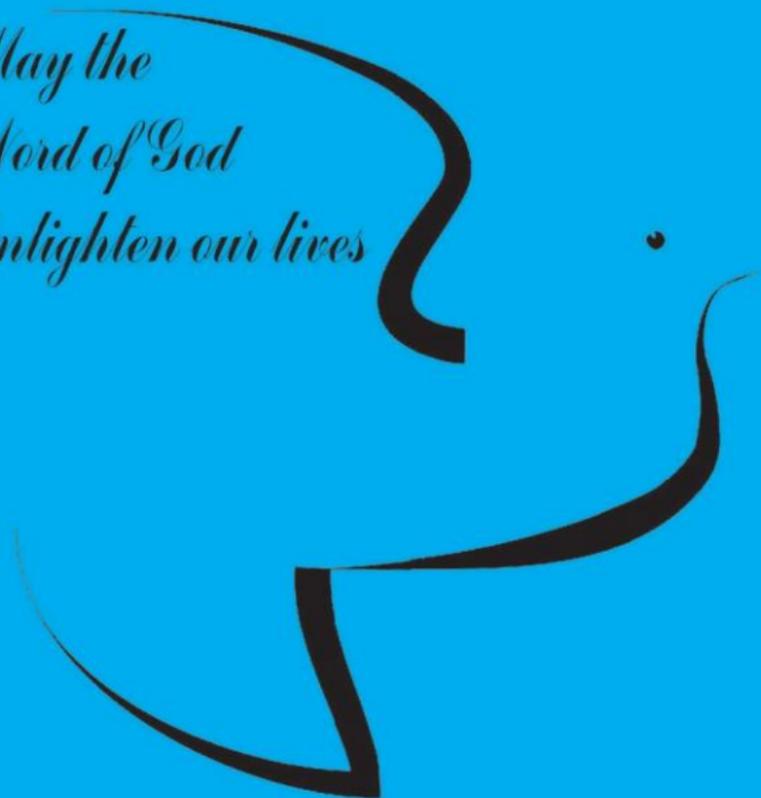
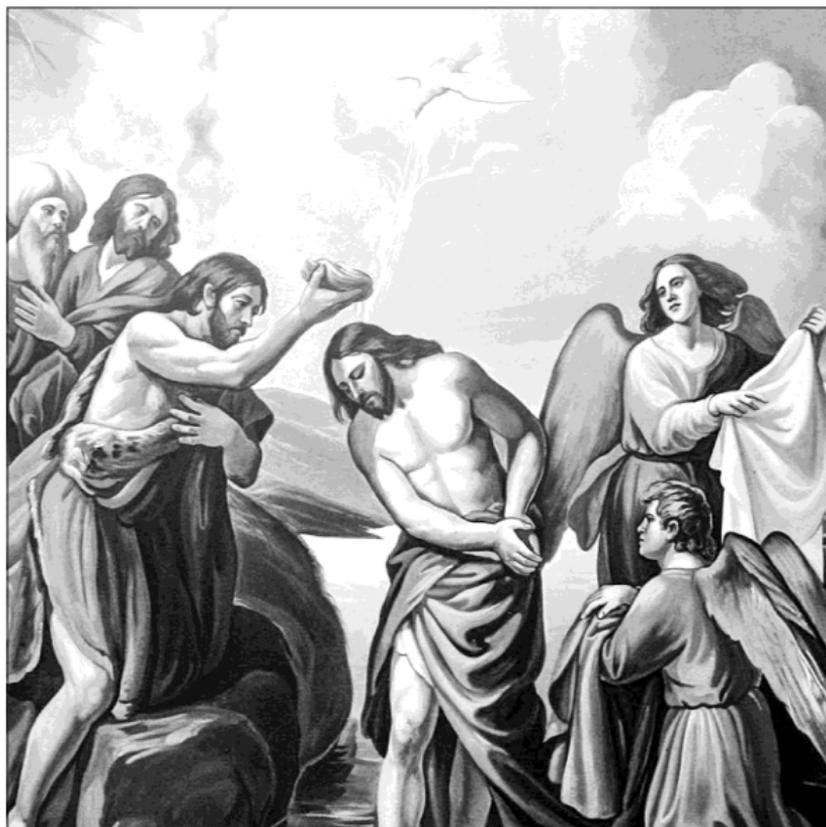


*May the  
Word of God  
Enlighten our lives*



**A V E**

**JANUARY 2022**



“And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him.” (Mt. 3:16)

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## **POPE’S PRAYER INTENTION**

### **For true human fraternity**

We pray for all those suffering from religious discrimination and persecution; may their own rights and dignity be recognized, which originate from being brothers and sisters in the human family.

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**Work for Lasting Peace**

Editorial, S. Jeyaseelan,  
SJ

**(EDITORIAL)**

“Education, work and dialogue between generations: tools for building lasting peace” is the theme Pope Francis has chosen for 2022 World Peace Day message. It is an invitation to all of us “to read the signs of the times with the eyes of faith... so that lasting peace in the world can be achieved by responding to the needs of current and future generations.” Pope believes that by means of providing better education, decent work and encouraging dialogue between generations in view of fostering solidarity, the governments could ‘succeed in setting a horizon of peace.’ The peace message applies fittingly in the context of India as our country celebrates the Republic Day this month. Since the start of COVID-19 pandemic, as in the past, peace eluded many people all over the world, more so the people of India. Farmers’ protest and the arrest of human rights activists such as Fr. Stan Swamy have also painfully disturbed us. Let’s remember that the Republic Day that marks and celebrates the date on which the Constitution of India came into effect, also invites us to resolve, through the Preamble of the Indian Constitution, “to constitute India into a SOVEREIGN SECULAR SOCIALIST DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC” that would set a horizon of peace for all Indians. It beckons us, in the spirit of democracy, to secure peace and the wellbeing for all. What better way than to educate ourselves, the students and the youth in particular, as advised by Pope Francis, about the significance of the values enshrined in the Constitution of India - JUSTICE, LIBERTY, EQUALITY and Fraternity- in order that peace may prevail throughout the nation. May Child Jesus, the King of Peace, help us to be the sources of peace through our courageous and righteous words and deeds!

Today, the Mother Church celebrates the feast of Mary, Mother of God. Mother Mary said 'yes' to the Call of God and accepted the great responsibility of giving birth to Jesus, the Son of God. Her 'yes' to God marked a new beginning of the human relationship with God. Through her response, God has transformed the entire creation. In the Gospel, we see Mary deeply reflecting

on the miracles that unfolded before her. It was her contemplation and reflection that helped her live the call of being the Mother of God by means of accompanying Jesus in His redeeming work. Thus, we are called to become a sharer of God's mission just like our Blessed Mother.

Today, we also celebrate the New Year – of 2022. The celebration of the New Year invites us to look back on our past with gratitude and look forward to the future with renewed hope and faith. As the annunciation changed everything in the life of Mother Mary, so also our celebration of the New Year is likely to change us all for good. Let the New Year make us new in all aspects of life and this newness will come only through our contemplation and reflection of God's blessings. After all, this is the time for renewing our commitments and taking up our responsibilities with more vigour and greater faith.

**Pray and Practise:** Lord, give us the grace to always say 'yes' to Your Will such that like Mother Mary, may we also partake in Your redeeming work.

**01 SAT (MARY, MOTHER OF GOD)  
TO TREASURE THE MARVELS OF GOD**

Lazarus Basumatary, SJ

Nm 6: 22-27

Gal 4: 4-7

Lk 2: 16-21

*"Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart."*

## 02 SUN (EPIPHANY OF THE LORD) LOVE FOR CHRIST

Vijay Prashanth D'Souza,  
IMS

Is 60: 1-6

Eph 3: 2-3a, 5-6

Mt 2: 1-12

*"Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews?"*

Today, the Church celebrates the feast of 'Epiphany of the Lord'. 'Epiphany' means manifestation. However, it doesn't mean that the manifestation of Jesus was only for the three wise men, but also for the whole world symbolically. In today's Gospel, we find two different types of people: King Herod and the three wise men. Herod wanted to kill Jesus by all means, because he felt

that Jesus would be a threat to him as he wanted to hold on to his power and throne. He was unable to see Jesus as the Messiah or a King who was born to redeem His people who were living in the clutches of sin and death; whereas, the wise men followed the star and left for an unknown destination to worship the child Jesus. Not only that, their encounter with Lord Jesus was so empowering and enlightening, that they even defied the orders of King Herod and went home through some other way.

Like the wise men from the East, we too need to recognize the signs of the time and try to find our Saviour in our hearts and in our daily lives. We should not close our eyes to the truth though it may not be pleasant; or otherwise, we too, like Herod, may fall into selfishness and sin and thereby fail to find goodness outside of ourselves.

**Pray and Practise:** Lord, open my heart and mind to recognize Your resplendent presence and love in my life so that I may feel empowered to stand for the Truth which is You.

In the first reading, St. John urges his readers to hold firm to both God's messages and presence as those are what truly endure always. The human world is temporal and consumed in sin. In our world, we are bombarded constantly by distractions and messages of all kinds. How can we possibly discern the truth in every message? It is very easy to simply go along with the messages of the times; the pressure to do so is enormous. When we dare to raise a rebellious voice against the tidal wave of popular opinion of the world, we can easily be vilified.

**03 MON (The Most Holy Name of Jesus)**  
**DISCERNING THE VOICE OF GOD**

Basant Ekka, SJ

1 Jn 3: 22-24, 4: 1-6  
Mt 4: 12-17, 23-25

*"Not every spirit is to be trusted..."*

How do we shut out the noise of the world and its false prophets? To whom do we go? What can we do? These are the questions most of us frequently ask of God virtually every day. Amidst all these struggles, God is steadfast in His love for us. It is in this regard, Matthew, in and through today's Gospel passage, strengthens us by quoting the prophet Isaiah's proclamation that the people sitting in darkness have seen a great light. Similarly, as Jesus travels through Galilee, He calls the people of each town to turn towards the light in repentance. People in the darkness of despair or discouragement were drawn to the light of Jesus' presence. They chose to follow Jesus as His presence offered gleams of healing, love, care and hope in the darkness of the complicated and daunting world that enveloped them.

**Pray and Practise:** Lord, give us the grace to open our hearts and minds to listen to Your voice and walk in Your light.

**04 TUE**  
**THE**  
**COMPASSIONATE**  
**HEART OF GOD**

Girish Kumar Karo, AMB

1 Jn 4: 7-10

Mk 6: 34-44

*"...they were like sheep  
without a shepherd."*

spiritual strength and the opportunity to cherish the love of God.

In today's Gospel, we see Jesus feeding five thousand people with five loaves. In this narration, the main elements are not the loaves and the fish, but the miracle of multiplication of divine love that is taking place. Yes! It points to the Holy Eucharist wherein the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, when consumed, give us the

At this juncture, it is good to remember those who go to bed with empty stomach every day. While many waste the food heartlessly in restaurants and homes, some are looking for a piece of bread in the dustbins and garbage bags along the roads to the extend they even have to fight with dogs to grab the food. Some are pathetically lay dead on the streets, because they were not able to get any food for days. It is a big shame on all of us that some have to die because of lack of food or rather due to lack of sharing of what we have in excess with others. As disciples of Jesus, we are called to make the faithful aware of this fact and encourage them to take care of the street-dwellers and the hungry such that they also may take part in the sharing of divine love.

**Pray and Practise :** Lord, help us develop the habit of not wasting the food such that we may indirectly help the hungry avail their daily bread.

Today's Gospel illustrates how quickly we can move from being amazed by grace to being controlled by fear. The disciples had witnessed the wonder and awe of God's provision by miraculous feeding of the multitude, but their hearts were still closed as clearly seen in their attitude when they experienced stormy sea. They gave in so quickly in fear and despair. Anxiety is the greatest evil that can happen to a soul. When our heart is inwardly troubled and disturbed, it loses the faith and the virtues it had acquired.

**05 WED  
IN LOVE, THERE IS NO  
FEAR**

Sanjay Martin, SJ

1 Jn 3: 11-21

Mk 6: 45-52

*"Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid."*

Life is hard and full of challenges. We are inevitably contending with trouble, anxiety, fear and despair at some point in life. God can even lead us into the storm and because of our commitment, we have many rivals who mistreat us and stand against us. In spite of all these things, we are never out of God's sight. As a follower of Jesus, we will never face the storms of life alone, for God has not stopped loving or caring for us. This is echoed also in the first letter of John that God is love and in love; there is no fear, because perfect love drives out fear. Yes! Though the world we live in is very frightening, Jesus tells us not to be afraid, for He is with us always to the end of the age.

**Pray and Practise:** Lord, instil in us Your love and help us live in charity, loving whole humanity.

**06 THU  
LOVING  
BY LOVING  
NEIGHBORS**

**GOD  
OUR**

Anil Kullu, SJ

1 Jn 4: 19 - 5: 4  
Lk 4: 14-22

*“For the love of God is this, that we obey his commandments...”*

loving our neighbours and obeying precepts diligently. “If I say I love God but hate my brethren, I am a great liar.” As Christians, we are called to love God by sacrificing our self-will, self-interest and self-love for the sake of others.

The Gospel of the day tells us the beginning of Jesus’ ministry of love in Galilee. However, Jesus is rejected by His own people in His hometown. Jesus is empowered by the Holy Spirit in order to bring Good News to the poor, proclaim the release of the captives, give sight to the blind and let the oppressed go free. Today, as ardent followers of Christ, we are invited to be God’s instruments of love to the people who are in most need. Therefore, let us become the channels of love and peace in our life and context.

**Pray and Practise:** Lord Jesus, enlighten us with the power of the spirit of love so that we may become the messengers of love in and through our ministries.

God is love. To love God is to love our neighbours and obey His commandments. Everything comes into being out of God’s love. God has revealed His Love for us in His Son Jesus Christ. Jesus’ life begins and ends with love. Jesus’ response to his Abba’s call is a response of love. Jesus’ example of love inspires us to love God by

We need human testimony on various things to live our material life well. Similarly, in order that we may live our spiritual life well, we need to base our faith that has been testified by Jesus, our Lord. In the first reading, St John wants us to lead a spiritual life neither with blind faith nor with searching for witnesses outside; rather, he invites us to rely on the testimony of God which is infused in us by the Holy Spirit.

**07 FRI (St. Raymand of Penyafort)  
THE TESTIMONY OF  
GOD**

Amardeep Tirkey, AMB

1 Jn 5: 5-13

Lk 5: 12-16

*“If we receive human testimony, the testimony of God is greater.”*

In the Gospel, we see that by believing in Jesus of Nazareth, the leper already witnesses to the fact that he is standing in front of a Holy One. The outcome of such a witness is not only the curing of his leprosy, but also a mission to give testimony to others. In other words, the leper who has the testimony of God in himself bears testimony to it by his life and deeds. Likewise, all the healings and miracles of Jesus are the signs of Him bearing testimony to the union with His Father. As disciples of Jesus, are we bearing testimony to the love of God in and through our words and deeds? Or are we taking Jesus for granted in this regard? Or are we searching for the testimony of God outside of us?

**Pray and Practise:** Lord, help us that like the leper we may bear testimony to our union with You in and through our words and deeds.

**08 SAT**  
**BE HUMBLE**

Robin M, IMS

1 Jn 5: 14-21

Jn 3: 22-30

*“He must increase, but I must decrease.”*

In today’s Gospel, we see John the Baptist as a person who knew his strengths and weaknesses and who he was in the sight of God. He knew his life was to be centred on a person yet to come; he knew he was the announcer of Good News, but not the Good News itself. Something in him faded into insignificance when Jesus arrived, but this sense that he was second to another has made him first among many. Yes! In being humble, we become first in the sight of God.

When we truly reflect on John’s words, we are filled with peace and calmness. For, by his humble example of stepping aside for a greater good, we are reminded that there will be chances for us when we need to shine for Christ and other times when we will be asked to let others be the candle. It is better understood in the context of being a teacher. When a student really shines well academically or in some other areas, the teacher is all too happy to take a step back and appreciate him/her and that fills the heart of the teacher with joy. If that is the case with a teacher, how much more, as a disciple of Jesus, should I be willing to let God take over where I lack in the building of His kingdom? After all, He is the master of everything.

**Pray and Practise:** Lord, help me know with more clarity when I am to be the candle and when I am to simply reflect the light coming from another source to others.

In the first reading, we find God as a loving and comforting Father to the people of Israel, His beloved sons and daughters. However, sin has separated them from their loving and comforting God. Therefore, they do not experience the comforting and loving presence of God in their lives. God calls them for repentance so as to heal the broken relationship between Him and them. The

second reading reiterates the need for repentance in the life of people of God. It reminds them that the grace of God has appeared bringing salvation to those who repent for their sins and mend their ways. It calls them to live a self-controlled, upright and godly life. They are called to be saved as beloved sons and daughters of God in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour.

In the Gospel, John the Baptist calls the Jewish people to repent for their sins. He baptizes them with water so as to prepare themselves to receive the baptism of spirit and fire. The Baptism of Jesus is the source of the Baptism of spirit and fire. In His baptism, Jesus has an Abba-experience. The affirming word of the Father, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased", resounds in His heart. He becomes aware of the mission entrusted to Him by the Father. As baptized people, we are also called to listen to the affirming word of the Father. Are we willing to pay heed to the affirming word of the Father?

**Pray and Practise:** Lord, help us attentively listen to Your life-affirming words.

## **09 SUN (THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD) THE LIFE-PROMOTING WORD OF GOD**

Valentine Sinduria, SJ

Is 42: 1-4, 6-7

Acts 10: 34-38

Lk 3: 15-16, 21-22

*"You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."*

**10 MON**  
**RESPOND TO GOD'S**  
**CALL**

Mankuwar Toppo, IMS  
1 Sam 1: 1-8  
MK 1: 14-20

*"Follow me and I will  
make you fish for  
people."*

Today's first reading tells us something about Elkanah and Hannah, the parents of Samuel. Elkanah's piety is praiseworthy. He goes yearly to worship and offer sacrifice to the Lord at Shiloh. Besides, his love for Hannah is exemplary, because he loved her dearly even though she was barren. He would give her double portion of the sacrifice he makes to the Lord. Nevertheless, Hannah feels the pain of being barren and faces the taunts of people. It is a realistic agony and she would pour it out to God in prayer. In the Gospel, we see the beginning of Jesus' public ministry in Galilee. He proclaims the Good News and invites the listeners to repent and believe in it. He, then, calls out to Simon, Andrew, James and John to follow him and participate in His mission of the Reign of God. They left their nets and family immediately and followed Jesus.

The plight of Hannah in the first reading seems to be hopeless, yet God would transform her situation to raise up a powerful prophet through her. The disciples were simple ordinary people, perhaps with little or no education or wealth or standing in the society. However, Jesus calls them and qualifies them as His disciples. The readings, thus, remind us that God can make beautiful things happen in our lives provided we hold on to Him and believe in His Providence.

**Pray and Practise:** Lord Jesus, give us the grace to trust in Your Providence every moment of our lives so that we may respond to Your call generously and without hesitation.

A prayer offered to God in faith and sincerity never goes unanswered. In the first reading, we find Hannah immersed in passionate and determined prayer in the temple at Shiloh. She pours out her distress of being a barren woman and prays with tears. She pleads to God to remember her in her misery and makes a vow that if

the Lord should grant her a male child, she would raise him a Nazirite. Hannah found consolation to her prayer in the words of the priest Eli that the God of Israel grant her the petition. In the Gospel, we see how Jesus preached and taught in the synagogue at Capernaum with authority and power. People were amazed at His teaching and works of exorcism. Consequently, his fame spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee. However, for those who were liberated from demon possession, it must be their greatest blessings from God. It could be an answer to their own prayers or the prayers of their family members and relatives.

The readings of the day, thus, invite us to dialogue with God in prayer. It also gives us hope that God does not forget, rather He remembers. Prayer attunes our heart and mind to God and helps us change our life to accept God's Will. Just as Hannah is consoled and the demon possessed liberated, we too are called to pray and be open to God's intervention.

**Pray and Practise:** God, help us be attentive to Your so that we may be always open to receive Your blessings.

**11 TUE  
BE OPEN TO GOD  
ALWAYS**

Akhilesh Lucas, IMS

1 Sam 1: 9-20

Mk 1: 21-28

*"Let your servant find favour in your sight."*

**12 WED**  
**THE GOD-**  
**EXPERIENCE**

Aswin Dony, AGR

1 Sam 3: 1-10, 19-20  
Mk 1: 29-39

*“Everyone is searching  
for you.”*

In the first reading, we read that Samuel was a trustworthy prophet of the Lord and in the Gospel, Jesus, the prophet par excellence, doing His prophetic works of preaching and healing. The commonality in both of their prophetic roles is their relationship with the Lord or simply put their God-experience. Yes! Samuel was lying in the ark of God/the presence of God and Jesus, in the morning while it was still very dark, went out to a deserted place and prayed. Thus, the God-experience is the basis for everyone who is called to continue the redeeming work of Christ. Being alone with the Lord empowers us to respond to the woundedness and the brokenness of the world. Therefore, every encounter with the Lord is not only a gift, but also a task to bring about healing as in the mother-in-law of Simon, having been healed by the Lord, is at the service of the Lord immediately.

Simon and his companions' report that everyone was searching for Jesus is a resemblance of the urgency and the longing of the society in which we are today. For, the human society has always been in search of someone who will comfort them, love them and show them the way to God. Thus, the readings of the day invite us to become one such person who will spearhead God's people in the path of the Lord.

**Pray and Practise:** Lord, help us encounter You in prayer and in the wounded reality of the world so that we may bring about healing and transformation.

We live in a context wherein most of the things seem hopeless and meaningless. To such a context of ours, today's Gospel brings the message of hope through the tremendous gesture of faith expressed by a leper. In the book of Leviticus, we find 'anyone who touches a leper will also become unclean and he/she is excluded from the society; ritually unclean, if any leper fails to follow these regulations, will be stoned to death' (Lev 13:14). When we read the Gospel with this understanding, the leper kneeling in front of Jesus has only two options - either life (if Jesus heals him) or death (If Jesus does not heal him, he will be stoned to death for appearing in public). The leper, knowing the consequences of his decision well, decides to kneel before Jesus in public; it only shows his absolute faith in Jesus. He almost leaves Jesus with no other option but to save him. The leper would have been yearning for a human touch and behold he was touched and cured by God Himself.

Certain situations confront us and push us to the end of our lives with only a choice between life and death, like that of the leper. The Gospel, however, tells us that there is always a way and that way comes through Jesus. Yes! Our absolute dependence on God will move God Himself to choose to save us.

**Pray and Practise:** Lord, help us believe in You absolutely, even if it is a choice of life and death.

**13 THU (St. Hilary)  
LORD, MAKE ME  
CLEAN**

Manjit Indwar, IMS

1 Sam 4: 1-11  
Mk 1: 40-45

*"If you choose, you  
can make me clean."*

**14 FRI (Bl. Devasahayam Pillai)**  
**FAITH IN ACTION**

Rakesh Kumar, IMS

1 Sam 8: 4-7, 10-22a  
Mk 2: 1-12

*“Son, your sins are forgiven.”*

In the first reading, we see the origin of monarchy in Israel. Israel was led by charismatic leaders, judges and prophets under the guidance of God until then. However, when the elders of Israel brought their demand for a king to Samuel, he felt displeased and prayed to God who, then, told Samuel that their demand for a king was not so much a rejection of him and his

sons as judges over Israel, but ultimately a rejection of God as their king, a rebellion by the people against God. In the Gospel, a paralytic was healed by Jesus seeing the faith of the four men who brought the paralytic. However, this healing was more than just a miracle, for Jesus revealed something about His divine identity to the gathering. He forgave the paralytic as He healed him. The scribes equated Jesus’ dispensing forgiveness as a blasphemy, because according to the Old Testament, forgiving sins is the prerogative of God. Thus, Jesus unassumingly reveals His divine self through this miracle. Unlike the scribes, the crowd were amazed and glorified God for the miracle.

The elders of Israel and the scribes have a representative role and they chose to reject God. However, we can draw inspiration from the four men who represented the paralytic. Firstly, their work is intended to benefit those who can’t support themselves; secondly their faith and work are not separate as being and doing but integrated; thirdly their work of faith fortified the faith of the community.

**Pray and Practise:** Lord, may we be people who find our mission in serving others. As the Indian Church prepares for the canonization of Devasahayam Pillai, we pray for the gifts of courage and resilience so that all of us can face challenges and work for Gospel values.

Collecting tax for the Roman government by a Jew was a sinful act during the time of Jesus. It was in this context Jesus calls Levi who was a tax collector to follow Him. The mere two words of Jesus as in "Follow me" to Levi made the latter leave everything and follow Him. Such was the power of the words of Jesus. Moreover, it also tells us how much Levi, the tax collector and 'sinner', earned for the love of

God and of people such that he hosted a dinner for Jesus and His disciples. The fact that there were many other tax collectors at the dinner with Jesus tells us that the so-called 'sinners' of Jesus' time were, in fact, more eager than the 'righteous' Pharisees and Sadducees for the love of God and change of heart.

When accused for dining with the sinners, Jesus answers His critics by saying, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have come to call not the righteous but sinners." This very response shows the purpose of the coming of Jesus into this world, i.e., God came to the world to redeem the sinners. Above all, Levi, a tax collector and sinner, becomes a means of Jesus' revelation and mission proving how God keeps inviting us to turn away from our sinful life. This saving act includes healing, too – healing us of our pharisaic mentality and self-righteous attitudes.

**Pray and Practise:** Lord, help us pay heed to Your call such that we may be saved and healed so as to follow You more closely than ever.

**15 SAT**  
**A CALL TO REPENT**  
**AND BE SAVED**

Roshan Toppo, JSR

1 Sam 9: 1-4, 17-19,  
10:1a

Mk 2: 13-17

*"I have come to call not the righteous but sinners."*

**16 SUN (II SUNDAY  
OF THE YEAR)  
INCLUDING ALL  
IN THE CHURCH'S  
MISSION**

Stephan Masih, SCG

Is 62: 1-5

1 Cor 12: 4-11

Jn 2: 1-12

*“All these are activated  
by the one and the  
same Spirit.”*

first reading elucidates that the mission of the Church is ultimately God's work out of His love for humanity and the entire creation. Therefore, when inclusion among human persons happens, the entire creation also participates in that joy.

In the second reading, St Paul invites us to come out of apprehensions influenced by human thinking of working together. He further says that the talents and skills come from the Holy Spirit, the mode of working together is animated by the Holy Spirit and that the mere fact of coming together is done by the Holy Spirit. Human persons on their part need to just cooperate with, i.e., to be open to the works of the Holy Spirit. In other words, listening to the promptness of the Spirit will help us achieve the inclusion of all in the mission of the Church.

**Pray and Practise:** Mary, our Mother! Intercede for us that all of us, with the talents and skills given to us by the Holy Spirit, may relentlessly work together in the mission of the Church.

Today's readings invite us to let the past go and accept the new wholeheartedly. In the first reading, Samuel tells King Saul to destroy Amalekites fully. For without full destruction, it cannot be annexed to the new kingdom. In the Gospel, Jesus presents imageries of old cloth and wineskin to show that in the Kingdom of God, everything needs to be new. Through these imageries, we are called to be completely new in Jesus Christ. If we hold on to the old way of life and try to follow Jesus without a change of heart, then we will be like the old cloth and old wineskin.

**17 MON (St. Antony, Abbot)  
CALLED TO BE COMPLETELY NEW**

Lazarus Basumatary, SJ

1 Sam 15: 16-23  
Mk 2: 18-22

*"The wedding guests cannot fast while the bridegroom is with them, can they?"*

As the new wine needs to be kept in a new wineskin, we too need to have the values of Christ in our Christian life to be fully new with Him. Jesus did not give importance to fasting and eating, but gave importance to a pure heart that is full of righteousness, peace and joy of the Holy Spirit. However, this doesn't mean that we should not fast at all. We need to fast when it is required, because everything has its own time. As St. Anthony the Great says, "The fruits of the earth are not brought to perfection immediately, but by time, rain and care; similarly, the fruits of men ripen through ascetic practice, study, time, perseverance, self-control and patience." Therefore, we are invited to surrender completely to Christ to inherit the kingdom of God.

**Pray and Practise:** Lord, help us live out the values of the Kingdom of God in a way that pleases You.

**18 TUE**  
**WELFARE OF**  
**EVERYONE**  
**Vijay Prashanth**

D'Souza, IMS

1 Sam 16: 1-13  
Mk 2: 23-28

“The sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the sabbath.”

Today's Gospel speaks of the observance of the Sabbath wherein Jesus calls Himself master over the Sabbath. In this regard, the Pharisees had their own understanding of the Sabbath as in the day should be observed in thanking God for all the mighty and merciful deeds He has done to them. We also know that the Pharisees insisted on very many rules for observing the Sabbath which made life extremely difficult for ordinary people. Jesus invites His disciples to mercifully reflect

on the Sabbath and explains to them the real purpose of the Sabbath. As we know, any law is made for the benefit of human beings. The observances of the law were first of all to help people in order that they may live a dignified life and ensure that they treat each other with compassion and love.

Jesus invites all of us to understand that the real purpose of the Sabbath is the well-being of humankind, and not vice versa as the Pharisees intended. Thus, Jesus brings out the aspect of life as one that has to be celebrated and enjoyed. Yes! Sabbath for Jesus was a day for togetherness, sharing values and joys with one another.

**Pray and Practise:** Lord, give me the courage and strength so that I may not cling on to the laws and rules for the sake of practising them, but to reach out to people who need my support and care to be happy in life.

We get angry for many reasons such as the dysfunctional system of our country, traffic on the roads, etc. I personally find myself getting angry at my friends, family members and relatives. I love them, but unlike many others, I too don't get along with them sometimes. In the Gospel passage, Jesus sets an example of righteous anger. Jesus' anger towards the Pharisees was not out of hatred, but out of love. His anger was not selfish; it was fuelled by a strong concern for their lack of faith. Jesus teaches us that in our relationships with others, we are called to love them as God does. In that love, righteous anger is an expression at someone whose heart is hardened towards God.

**19 WED (SJ: SS John Ogilvie, Stephen Pongracz)**  
**Righteous Anger**

Basant Ekka, SJ

1 Sam 17: 32-33, 37, 40-51  
MK 3: 1-6

*"Jesus looked around at them with anger."*

Loving others is extremely difficult, and the sacrifice it entails makes demands upon us. Jesus' high standard of righteous anger in today's Gospel challenges us to let go of our petty anger. In our relationships with others, we must constantly be focused on seeing others through God's eyes. Today's Gospel passage has called me to love my family, friends and relatives in a way that they feel loved and driven towards Christ. Authentic love towards others, despite our anger, can alleviate the hardness of our hearts and that of theirs. When we strive for this kind of genuine love in our relationships with others, we will surely experience Jesus' healing presence.

**Pray and Practise:** Lord, give us the grace to differentiate petty anger from righteous anger and help us rise above from our petty anger and love all the way You loved.

**20 THU (Sts. Fabian and Sebastian)**  
**THE HEALING POWER OF JESUS**

Girish Kumar Karo,  
AMB

1 Sam 18: 6-9, 19: 1-7  
Mk 3: 7-12

*“Unclean Spirits saw Jesus and fell down before him.”*

who Jesus was and is.

The disciples of Jesus followed him very closely for three and a half years and noticed that He was different from the other leaders and preachers of their time. They had never met anyone who lived or spoke like Him. He could heal many people with the authority so much so even the unclean spirits could not stand before him. What is, however, more interesting and remarkable regarding the unclean spirits is that they exactly knew

It was and still is believed that evil spirits or negative thoughts in the words of the modern-day psychologists are the cause of many sicknesses. Hence, if one wants to be healed of his/her sickness, s/he has to get rid of the evil spirit or negative thoughts. Besides, casting out demons and healing people might have been quite new for the Jews of Jesus' time. For nowhere in the Old Testament we read that God cast out demons. Casting out demons is quite unique to the New Testament meaning the Kingdom of God has already come and is at hand. The evils spirits could comprehend it while others couldn't. Are we not almost in a similar context wherein people of other faith could really understand the healing power of Lord Jesus while we, the Christians, take the healing power of Jesus for granted? It is high time that we rightly understood Jesus and followed Him like never before.

**Pray and Practise:** Lord, save us from the unclean spirits that keep us away from serving you effectively.

Looking into the world today, we see how people use and abuse one another to grab power and position. It was not so with David. Kingship in Israel came from God. It means that Saul was the Lord's chosen one. Hence David, from his loyalty and generous heart, spared the life of Saul who, though, intended to kill him. This is a call to all Christian leaders to defeat evil with good.

**21 FRI (St. Agnes)  
CALL COMES FROM  
GOD**

Sanjay Martin, SJ

1 Sam 24: 3-21  
Mk 3: 13-19

*"I will not raise my hand against my lord; for he is the Lord's anointed."*

Today's Gospel also portrays that our vocation comes from God. Often, we think that we have freely chosen to follow Christ. Though it might sound true and good in our human terms, it is Lord who takes the first initiative to have us as His disciples. As we read in the Gospel, it was Jesus who called to Him all those whom he wanted. God's choice of apostles in this regard is really strange. For, Jesus chose His apostles from the ordinary strata of life, from the common people. He chose them not because of what they were, but because He called them for what they could become under His direction and guidance. They were not selected to do their work, but the work of God by becoming God's messengers such that they may bear witness to Jesus and His mission. Yes! Jesus' selection is not based on who He can easily work with, but according to the Will of his Father.

**Pray and Practise:** Lord, make me a worthy instrument to work in Your vineyard and give me the courage to serve You with generous commitment.

**22 SAT (St. Vincent of Saragossa)**  
**THE UNDENIABLE HUMAN REALITIES**

Anil Kullu, SJ

2 Sam 1: 1-4, 11-12,  
17, 19, 23-27  
Mk 3: 20-21

*“In life and in death,  
they were not divided.”*

There is always a dichotomy in our lives. We encounter good and evil, truth and untruth, love and hatred, etc. Besides them, human life has two undeniable realities - life and death. Life is for the service of God and His people while death is the end of one's earthly life and entry into a new life. The first reading reminds us of the monarchy period where kings were in a constant fight for name, fame, wealth, territory, earthly kingdom and prestigious life. On the other hand, Yahweh, the God and King of Israelites, fought for the freedom and better wellbeing of His chosen people and that is what every leader should do.

Today's Gospel also speaks of two realities of life. The first reality is life which is a gift meant for God's mission. Jesus is so busy doing God's mission He doesn't even have time to eat. The second reality is family. While Jesus was relentlessly doing God's mission, the family members, having heard from others, think that He was out of His mind. However, Jesus doesn't stop doing God's mission. It proves that, at times, help provided by the family members could become an obstacle for us; however, it should not deter us from doing God's work.

**Pray and Practise:** Lord, instil in us the spirit of Jesus that we may serve You and Your people selflessly in and through our ministries.

In every liturgy, both our reading and listening to the Word of God do bring in us the joy to celebrate life, the fervour to respect one another and the firmness to be united with the Church. By liturgical readings, we know not only what the truth is for us, but also how the truth is to be lived out in our Christian life. That is why in the first reading, the hearing of Israelites to the Word of God makes them move from crying to rejoicing.

**23 SUN (III SUNDAY  
OF THE YEAR)  
CALLED TO LIVE  
OUT THE WORD OF  
GOD**

Amardeep Tirkey,  
AMB

Neh 8: 2-6, 8-10

1 Cor 12: 12-30

Lk 1: 1-4, 4: 14-21

*“Today, this scripture  
has been fulfilled in  
your hearing.”*

In the Gospel, Jesus does not read the Word of God as a mere reading, rather proclaims it as His mission manifesto which would be reflected all through His life. In other words, as a Jew, whenever Jesus listened to the Word of God in the synagogue, He moved from knowing what of it and how of it to taking an oath to live of it throughout His life. That is how Jesus was able to certainly affirm that in their hearing, the scripture is fulfilled. Even today, Jesus invites us to live out what we read and listen to during the liturgy so that we may have the joy to celebrate life, the fervour to respect one another and to be united with the Church.

**Pray and Practise:** Lord, let our participation in the liturgy of the Word help us move from mere reading and listening to the Word to living it out in our lives as Jesus did.

**24 MON (St. Francis de Sales)  
BE A BUILDER  
OF ONESELF  
AND OTHERS**

Robin M, IMS  
2 Sam 5: 1-7, 10  
Mk 3: 22-30

*"If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand."*

In today's Gospel, Jesus is responding to the scribes by asking them back, "How can a Satan drive out Satan?" It is very applicable to our context, too. Jesus' questions speak directly to a community and to each individual in it. How can a community, that is divided against itself, stand? Too often, we tear each other down in order to build ourselves up, rather than build others up to better our communities as a whole. In today's world, there is a great pressure to be on the top of the ladder, so that one can be best at everything. As a result, we sometimes make decisions without truly thinking of others; we gossip, cheat, lie and bring others down in order to better ourselves, forgetting we are weakening our human community.

Nevertheless, it doesn't mean that we don't have to build ourselves up at all. We must learn to accept and appreciate ourselves for what we are. Hence, just as a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand, a human who constantly brings him/herself down simply cannot grow. This way, Jesus' teaching challenges us all to come together as humans. If we are separated or divided from one another, then we cannot grow and improve. Thus, the readings of the day remind us to be builders of oneself and of communities wherever we are.

**Pray and Practise:** Lord, help me be a builder of myself in order to allow others to grow in the love of God.

As we celebrate the feast of conversion of St. Paul today, it is good to reflect on his life-changing event that took place on his way to Damascus so as to gain some theological and spiritual insights for our wellbeing. In the first reading, we come to know how Paul encountered the Risen Lord. It was a divine encounter with the Risen Lord which transformed his life, his religious convictions and beliefs. He found a new treasure in the Risen Lord Jesus Christ. It was the treasure from where the grace of knowing and following Lord Jesus sprang forth. Besides, St. Paul also experienced the outpouring of the Holy Spirit which enabled his personal conversion which, in turn, made him work for the salvation of Gentiles.

**25 TUE (The Conversion of St. Paul)**

Valentine Sinduria, SJ

Acts 22: 3-16 or Acts 9: 1-22

Mk 16: 15-18

*“Go into the whole world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation.”*

In the Gospel, we find that the disciples are sent on a mission by the Risen Lord to proclaim the Good News to the whole world. At the same time, the people of God were given the grace of faith so as to hear the Good News, reflect on it and believe in it in order to be saved. As the followers of Jesus Christ, we also have received the grace of discipleship through the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation. We are entrusted to proclaim the goodness by our words and deeds. Are we convinced of this grace of discipleship?

**Pray and Practise:** Lord, give us the grace of true discipleship and fill us with your strength such that we may proclaim the Good News to the whole world fearlessly!

**26 WED (Republic Day)**  
**TRUE DISCIPLES**

Mankuwar Toppo,  
IMS

1 Tim 2: 1-8  
Jn 8: 31-42

*“If you continue in my word, you are really my disciples.”*

In the first reading, Paul says, “Requests, prayers, intercessions and thanks be offered on behalf of all people.” Most Christians find it easy to pray for their family, friends and loved ones and stop there; it should not end there. We should also pray for our enemies and for those with whom we have conflict. We should pray for those who upset us and for those who are against us.

A true disciple lives the life of truth. Christ seems to imply that there are true and false disciples. There is only one way to tell the difference between the two: whether one embraces His word not only as an ideal but also as a rule of life or not. Today, a plethora of voices, even within the Christian community, would have us follow a purely “therapeutic” Christianity – a form of Christianity in which we can supposedly believe in Christ while adopting behaviours or attitudes which are opposed to His ‘way’ of discipleship as taught authoritatively by the Church. The temptation to separate our faith from actually practicing it is never far from us. Today, let us ask ourselves: “How much have these false voices impacted my understanding of what it means to follow Christ as a member of His body, the Church?”

**Pray and Practise:** Lord, fill us with your wisdom and help us know the truth and share the same with others ardently and joyfully. Bless our nation so that we experience true freedom and work for those who are enslaved in various ways.

The feast of Sts. Timothy and Titus reminds us of our call to be sent out to witness to Christ. In our witness to Christ, we most often tend to be preoccupied with preparation and execution of strategies as if we are waging war against anti-elements. In this process, we forget to carry Christ and the love experience that we have with God in us. In the Gospel, Jesus sends his seventy disciples in pairs like

lambs in the midst of wolves instructing them to carry no pieces of equipment but the experience of love of him and the fraternity shared between the pairs. In other words, Jesus sends His disciples to conquer the world not by force as any worldly powers would do, but by love.

As we see in the first reading, when St Paul appoints Timothy and Titus respectively in-charge of the local Church, he instructs them to take up the hardship in caring for the people of God. He also presents to them the mission of caring for the people as urgency after him, as Jesus mentions the urgency for evangelisation by the harvest metaphor in the Gospel. Here, the urgency is not to be understood as accomplishments in chronological purview, but as allowing God to act in His Time (*kairos*). It is only in love that God and His Spirit work in us and through us.

**Pray and Practise:** Lord Jesus, help us allow You and Your Spirit to work in and through us so as to become an apostle to witness to Your unconditional love.

**27 THU (Sts. Timothy and Titus)  
BEING AN APOSTLE**

Stephan Masih

2 Tim 1: 1-8 or Tit 1:1-5  
Lk 10: 1-9

*"I am sending you like lambs in the midst of wolves."*

**28 FRI (St. Thomas Aquinas)  
THY KINGDOM COME**

Aswin Dony, AGR

2 Sam 11: 1-4a, 5-10a,  
13-17

Mk 4: 26-34

*“The Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed which...is the smallest of all the seeds on earth.”*

While the first reading of the day speaks about David's grave sin, the Gospel speaks about the Kingdom of God that springs forth in the very person of Jesus himself in and through His words and deeds. In the Gospel, Jesus reveals to His disciples that the Kingdom of God is mysteriously active and profoundly performative even in the insignificant and inauspicious persons like people who are unnoticed and events like situations that are unrecognized.

For instance, the farmers' protest to repeal the farm laws of the Union Government of India had a simple beginning, but then the way it engulfed the whole nation asserting the power of the simple farmers is enormous. It simply inspired every one of us - children, women, men, Muslims, Christians, atheists, Indians and foreigners to stand with the oppressed farmers.

This is the way the Kingdom of God also works. As one family, we are called to work in solidarity against everything that prevents the growth of God's kingdom. As the people of 'this kingdom', who pray every day "Thy kingdom come", the Gospel invites us to become the co-workers with God through the person of Jesus to realize the Kingdom in our lives. It's here, King David of the first reading, becomes a warning that if we let our passions and desires guide and rule over us, we may end up becoming the obstacles to realize God's kingdom.

**Pray and Practise:** Lord, grant us the courage to fight against the ideologies and policies that stand in the way of realizing Your Kingdom.

In both the readings of the day, there is a movement from chaos to orderliness, from tension to tranquillity, from 'great storm' to 'great calmness'. David is disturbed terribly in the first reading as Prophet Nathan prophesies that the Lord will raise up trouble against him. In the Gospel, the disciples are tensed as the great storm tries to topple the boat. In spite of Jesus being with them, the disciples were afraid and anxious as the boat was being swamped by the storm.

**29 SAT  
FAITH MAKES US  
FEARLESS**

Manjit Indwar, IMS

2 Sam 12: 1-7a, 10-17

Mk 4: 35-41

*"Why are you afraid?  
Have you still no  
faith?"*

Both the readings, thereby, convey the precariousness of our existence lived out in the world. At any moment, our life can be toppled by the 'storm' of suffering, decease, injustice, oppression etc., despite having Jesus with us. What we need to understand is that they are only testing grounds wherein we have a chance to prove our faith in God and thereby get saved by the hand of God. It is a wake-up call for all of us, in and through the Apostles, to believe in God even if He seems to be 'sleeping'. For, nothing is impossible for God. If and when we are faced with a storm of challenges and sufferings, let us not get anxious or become faithless; rather, let us turn to God and pray, just like King David did in the first reading, such that we may feel the Providence of God always.

**Pray and Practise:** Lord, help us recognize Your Providence in the difficulties and uncertainties of our life journey such that may our faith in You remain strong forever.

**30 SUN (IV SUNDAY  
OF THE YEAR)  
PEOPLE OF THE  
REIGN OF GOD**

Rakesh Kumar, IMS

Dt 18: 15-20

1 Cor 7: 32-35

Mk 1: 21-28

*“...for he taught  
them as one having  
authority...”*

The first reading speaks of God's prophets and their function. Like Moses, they have a dual role - to prophesy the Word of God and mediate on behalf of the people. As it is, both the stubborn people who don't listen to prophets and the wayward prophets will be accountable to God. In the second reading, St. Paul urges the Corinthians to a life of good order and unhindered devotion to the Lord. Paul writes this in a

particular context with the notion that the second coming of Christ is imminent. While Jesus made it clear by His death and resurrection that the Christians are to live as eschatological people, a people whose vision extends to the ushering in of the Reign of God in all its fullness, a people who lives in anticipation of what will be, instead of being caught up in worldly affairs. Thus, He exhorts them to live in the confidence of God's love and rid of anxiety.

In the Gospel, Jesus teaches with authority and casts out the unclean spirit. The words and deeds of Jesus amazed people and His fame spread in the region of Galilee. Interestingly, the unclean spirit recognized the identity of Jesus as the Holy One of God. The expulsion of the unclean spirit from the man was, indeed, a sign of the coming of Reign of God.

**Pray and Practise:** Lord, make us understand that we don't belong to this world and our true home is in heaven. May our words and deeds befit our true home.

In today's Gospel, we see Jesus healing a demoniac who was possessed by a Legion of unclean spirits. However, in the healing process, a herd of swine got drowned in the sea and that didn't go well with the people of Gerasenes wherein Jesus performed the miracle. It is said, "They begged Jesus to leave their neighbourhood," in spite of coming to know what Jesus had done. This is almost very similar to our

attitude at times. God does so much for us – heals us of our sickness, helps us come out of financial troubles and struggles, forgives us our sins – and yet when we feel that God did something that was not in good terms with us, we end up begging the Lord to go away from us. However, as we have often experienced, Jesus never abandons us, but only asks us to realize 'how much the Lord has done for us.' Yes! The Gospel of the day invites us to introspect ourselves as in how much we are different from the people of Gerasenes.

St. John Bosco, whose feast we celebrate today, did exactly what is aforesaid. He helped the people, the youth in particular, understand and feel the love of God. He helped those around him feel that they are all children of God, no matter who and what we are. Yes! All that we have to do is to desire and try loving God and the Lord will take care of the rest.

**Pray and Practise:** Lord, help us love You always even if we don't understand You or Your plan for us properly.

**31 MON (ST. John Bosco)  
GOD NEVER GIVES UP ON US**

Roshan Toppo, JSR

2 Sam 15: 13-14, 30,  
16: 5-13a  
Mk 5: 1-20

*"...tell them how much the Lord has done for you..."*



**“The devil is afraid of us when we pray and make sacrifices. He is also afraid when we are humble and good. He is especially afraid when we love Jesus very much. He runs away when we make the Sign of the Cross.”**

**- St. Anthony the Abbot (251 - 356)**

## 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 -



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