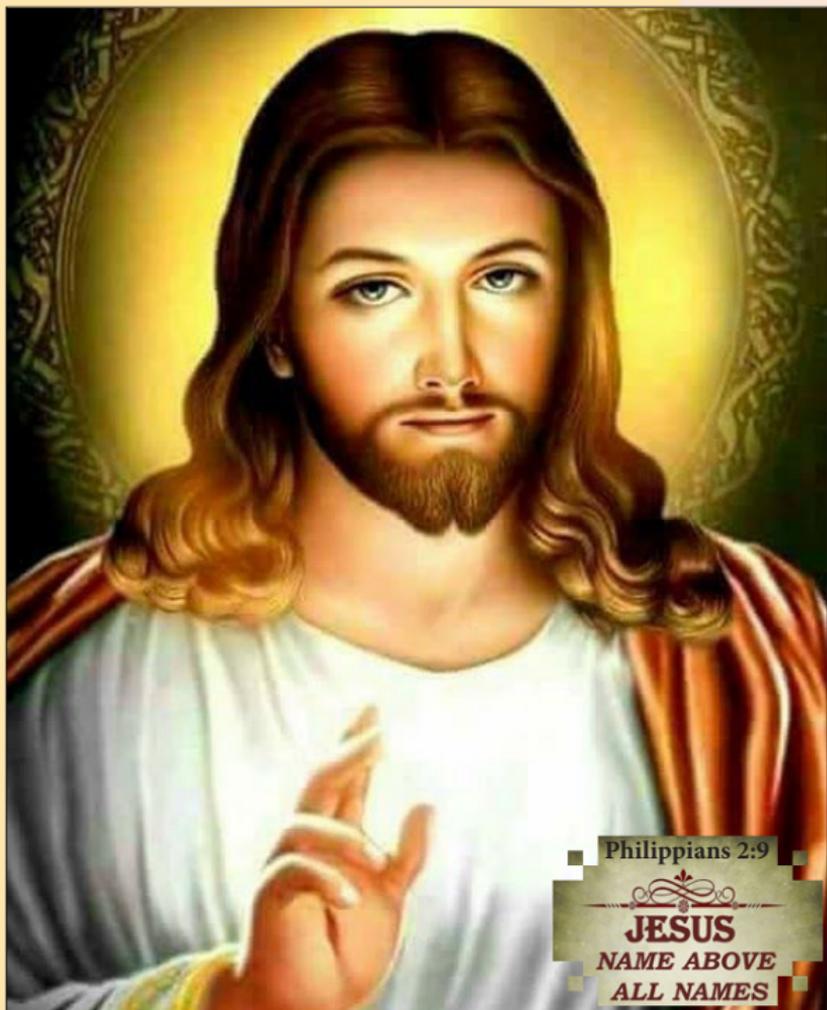


*May the
Word of God
Enlighten our lives*



A V E

JANUARY 2023



So that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth... (Phili. 2.10)

POPE'S PRAYER INTENTION

For educators

We pray that educators may be credible witnesses, teaching fraternity rather than competition and helping the youngest and most vulnerable above all.

'The object of a New Year is not that we should have a New Year. It is that we should have a new soul' says G.

PUT ON A NEW SOUL

Pravin Jose, SJ

(EDITORIAL)

K. Chesterton. Yes, the new year provides opportunities for us to cultivate a new soul by giving new occasions and prospects to develop ourselves and serve others as the Infant Saviour wants. The New Year also presents us with a fresh start, new perspectives and opportunities to discover ourselves. We remember and give thanks for the past year's blessings, despite the challenges, adversities and uncertainties that we endured. We also thank God for the wonderful Christmas celebration, renewing our confidence that God sent His only begotten son, our saviour, to bring new light and life to our world.

Equally, the new year gives us a chance to look forward in hope. The Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God, with which we begin our new year sets tone for our disposition as we march ahead to write a new chapter in our life's story. The feasts of the Epiphany and the Baptism of Our Lord add joy to this new beginning. These celebrations lead us to deepen our faith by understanding the true meaning of these feasts. For the month of January, the Holy Father's intention is 'For educators. We pray with the whole Church that educators may be credible witnesses, teaching fraternity rather than competition and helping the youngest and most vulnerable above all.

Like Mary, the Mother of God, let us place our lives and the world in the hands of God. May God bless the year 2023 with his redeeming grace to bring prosperity, lasting joy and peace to the whole world.

THE AVE EDITORIAL TEAM WISHES YOU ALL A HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Mary's role as Mother of God places her in a unique position in God's redemptive plan. Mary's divine motherhood broadens the Christian storyline. Mary has an important role to play in the Incarnation of the second person of the Blessed Trinity. Jesus, Savior of all humankind, wants to give Mary's Motherhood the greatest range. The gift of His mother was the final gift that He gave to humanity. He, therefore, chooses John as the symbol of all the disciples whom He loves, and He makes it very clear that the gift of His mother is the sign of a special intention of love with which He wants to embrace all who want to follow Him as disciples.

1 SUN (Mary, Mother of God) MOTHER IS ALWAYS A MOTHER

Christu Raju, ADL
Num 6: 22-27
Gal 4: 4-7
Lk 2: 16-21

"Mary treasured all these words."

The reciprocation of mother Mary's love was manifested when she submitted herself in obedience to the plan of God. Thus, it was the will of the Father that His Son, Jesus Christ, be sent into the world for the purpose of redeeming the human family. It was also the will of the Father that a woman be intimately involved in this wondrous plan of human redemption, for as St. John Paul tells us, "The Mother of the Redeemer has a precise place in the plan of salvation.

Pray and practise: Mary, Mother of God, give us a heart unto thine and pray for us that we may grow closer to your son, Jesus Christ, in our daily lives.

**02 MON (Sts Basil and Gregory Nazianzen)
BEARING WITNESS
TO JESUS**

Alok Ekka, SJ

Jn 2:22-28

Jn 1:19-28

"I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness..."

Trinity a little more? St. Ignatius of Loyola, in his Spiritual Exercises, gives a contemplation of the Holy Trinity, discussing how to save humanity from falling into sin. The Church gives us this chance to reflect on how Jesus is born into our world to redeem us and bring us closer to God.

In the Gospel, John the Baptist gives his testimony to Jesus of Nazareth. He points at Jesus when asked about himself. John is presented as an example for us. In the noisy world of today, we are called to be the loudest voice crying out in the wilderness that Jesus is the chosen one, one who can give us eternal life. It is in Him we are to always abide in with confidence.

We thank God for everything that has happened during this festive season. However, let us ask ourselves what helped me the most spiritually to go a step closer to God.

Pray and Practise: That in this New Year, we may bear witness to Jesus through our words and actions.

Today is the Feast of the Most Holy Name of Jesus. It is an ancient feast calling our attention to honour the Name above every other name. It is a most powerful name and that is why we end all our prayers, praise and petitions with the phrase "In Jesus' name." In fact, we should do everything "in Jesus' name," and all will be well, according to His will and plan.

03 TUE (The Most Holy Name of Jesus) BE A WITNESS

Jaison Lobo, SJ

Jn 2:29-3:6

Jn 1:29-34

"I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God."

When we meet a person whose name we can't remember, it becomes embarrassing and awkward when that person asks: "Do you remember me?" This is not the case in today's Gospel, where John the Baptist at once recognised who Jesus was and announced to the public: "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." We see John the Baptist witnessing Jesus and telling his listeners that Jesus is truly the Son of God. Both the readings of today call us to reaffirm our allegiance to God and to witness to Him at all times.

What does 'witness' mean for us? First, we need to recognise and accept Jesus as our Lord and Saviour. Second, we need to praise and thank Him for taking away our sins through His Passion, Death and Resurrection. Finally, like John the Baptist, we need to point Jesus out to others through our word and deed so that others get to know Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Pray and Practise: Lord, give us the courage to be witnesses of the Gospel message. May we surrender ourselves entirely in proclaiming Christ to all.

04 WED
EXPERIENCE OF
JESUS

Jobin George, SJ
1 Jn 3:7-10
Jn 1:35-42

“What Are You Looking for?”

Mark Twain once said, “The two most important days in your life are the day you are born and the day you find out why.” Yes, if we have not yet asked ourselves this question, let us do it today: What am I really looking for in my life? Can I name what I deeply desire?

In today’s Gospel, Jesus asks those willing to follow Him, “What are you looking for?” If He asks us today, we will have many answers: happiness, peace, freedom, wealth, health, fulfilment, and so on. However, Jesus, as in the Gospel passage today, would go beyond these and invite us to have an experience of Himself: “Come and see.”

In order to know Him better, we need to experience Him. And the joy of an experiential knowledge of Jesus Christ cannot be taken away from us (Jn 16:22). Further, we find three titles describing Jesus in today’s Gospel passage: Lamb of God, Rabbi and Messiah. Yes, the identity of Jesus cannot be fully explained by just one title. As disciples encounter Jesus closer and closer, they come to understand Him better and better. Do we hear Him knocking at the door of my heart and mind? (Rev 3:20). Every prompting of the Holy Spirit in our conscience is an invitation to have an experience of Jesus. Let us not harden our hearts.

Pray and Practise: Today, as Jesus invites us to have an experience of him, let us pray that we may know Him more intimately, love Him more intensely, and follow Him more closely.

Today's Gospel exemplifies how, like Nathanael, one should discard one's prejudices in the face of the truth. Nathanael's prejudiced mind is portrayed by his question: can anything good come from Nazareth? We all have preconceived notions about the people around us. It could be of caste, religion, region, colour, or language that blinds our eyes to see and experience the God of love working in the other. All our prejudices have strong influences on our value system, and as a result, all our decisions and choices are nothing more than reflections of our prejudices.

05 THU
PREJUDICES TO
PREFERENCES

John Vimal, SJ
1 Jn 3:11-21
Jn 1: 43-51

"Rabbi, you are the Son of God!"

We are invited today to reflect on our prejudices and preferences as Christians, just as Nathanael unlearns his prejudices and becomes a disciple of Jesus, committing himself to the preferences of Jesus' mission. God's preferences are always for the poor and marginalised. In His words and deeds, Jesus advocated for the empowerment of the poor and the liberation of the marginalised from the shackles of religious oppression in His day, reforming the prejudiced minds of the Pharisees and Scribes. The essence of His preferences was His love for all of us. Let us ask ourselves: what is the essence of our preferences? What are our priorities in life and mission? Do our mission and life reflect and revive Jesus' preferences, or do we cling to our own unquestioned prejudices?

Pray and practise: Dear God, give us the grace to shed our prejudices and commit ourselves to Your preferences of love so that we may bear witness to the Gospel in our day-to-day life.

**06 FRI
WITNESS
TESTIMONY**

AND

Amit Juel Lakra, SJ
1 John 5:5-13
Mk 1:7-11

“God gave us eternal life, and this life is in the Son.”

In the first reading, John speaks about three gifts in terms of witness and testimony. He brings about the three factors that give testimony to who Jesus is: the Spirit, the Water and the Blood. When Jesus received the baptism of water, the Spirit descended on Him and remained with Him. John makes it very clear in simple terms that if you have Jesus, you have life; if you don't have Jesus, you don't have life. In fact, all that we need to know and have is a relationship with God that is found in Jesus Himself. John reminds and reassures us that if we are in Jesus, then we are in God's family, and God's Spirit is in us.

In the Gospel, we find a twofold message which John brings out through his baptising. First is the message of Christ and self-surrender. John made himself unworthy and less than a slave than who is to come after him. The second was the power of Christ. Only Christ could minister the baptism of the Holy Spirit of God. Jesus' baptism involved a decision and a total surrender. His baptism brings about the mission of God to save the world. We see commissioning and empowering involved in Jesus' baptism. Every believer is commissioned and empowered by God to do the work of God. Are we aware of our commission and the power given to us? What is our mission today as baptised followers of Christ?

Pray and Practise: Lord, give us the power of the Holy Spirit that we may follow Your footsteps to do Your mission.

The revelation of God starts through the first sign in the Gospel of John. The Wedding at Cana is the first act of Jesus' ministry in the Gospel of John. As we are in the season of Christmas, the event of being born among us reveals Jesus as the Messiah to all creation. Every sign is a statement. The significance of Cana is its insignificance. Just as God regularly chooses unlikely candidates to do His work (Moses, David, Gideon, etc.), He also chooses unlikely places to reveal His glory (Bethlehem, Nazareth, Cana). In today's Gospel, John wishes to bring out the theological meaning of the person and life of Jesus through His public ministry.

07 SAT JOY IN THE LORD

Leston Lobo, SJ
1 Jn 5:14-21
Jn 2: 1-11

“Do whatever He tells you.”

Obedience is listening. Mary tells the servants to listen to whatever Jesus says. It is significant that John begins and ends the public ministry of Jesus with the presence of the “woman” that shows the fulfilment of the promise in Cana has been anticipated. In the First letter of John, we are given insight and understanding into the ultimate Truth. Our Lord hears us, and we obtain grace through Him. ‘Where have you kept the best wine?’ The best wine is addressed to Jesus. Wine stands for Joy. The purpose of Jesus' signs is to inspire belief. This, then, becomes a story about moving from the water of the law and prophets to the wine of Jesus' grace.

Prayer and Practise: Almighty God, grant us the understanding that we may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah and that through believing, we may have life in His name.

**08 SUN (THE
EPIPHANY OF THE
LORD)
LET'S ADORE HIM!**

Louis Lobo, SJ
Is 60:1-6
Eph 3:2-3a, 5-6
Mt 2:1-12

*“They knelt down and
paid him homage.”*

The word “Epiphany” comes from the Greek word ‘epiphanos’ meaning ‘revelation’, or ‘manifestation’. According to the tradition, “The Epiphany of the Lord” signifies – specifically, the manifestation of child Jesus to the entire world. In the Gospel, the Magi came with joy in their hearts to visit baby Jesus and God permitted them to see and experience wonders. An element

of suspense and curiosity marked every moment in the journey of the Magi, who never knew what road the Spirit of God was going to lead them. The passage invites us to have the same curiosity as the explorers and the movie fans so that we may discover the “epiphany”, or manifestation, or Self- revelation of our God in every person, every being and every event that we encounter.

In the first reading, the prophet Isaiah is consoling the people in exile. He speaks of the restoration of the New Jerusalem from which the glory of Yahweh becomes visible even to the pagan nations. St. Paul reveals God’s “secret plan” –the Gentiles also have a part with the Jews in the Divine blessings. He affirms the mystery of God’s plan of salvation in Christ for all. Jesus was born to be available for all of us. He became human and manifested Himself so we can have a meaningful and personal encounter with Him.

Pray and Practise: Lord Jesus, grant us the grace that we, too, like the magi, seek You sincerely and earnestly and be blessed and become blessings to others.

Today we celebrate the feast of the Baptism of the Lord. This event is foundational to the ministry of Jesus. By receiving baptism at the beginning of the ministry, Jesus finds His identity and affirmation from God the Father. It also shows the readiness of Jesus to commit Himself to the mission of God. The opening of the heavens indicates that communication between God and humans is being re-established in a new way. The splitting of the heavens enables the Spirit of God to come down and descend on Jesus like a dove as a sign of approval. The voice from heaven reveals to us Jesus as the beloved son of God and God as Father.

09 MON (The Baptism of the Lord) BAPTISM IS A REMINDER

Maria Albin Raja, SJ
Is 42:1-4, 6-7 /Acts
10:34-38
Mt 3:13-17

“This is my son, the beloved, with whom I am well pleased.”

The Lord’s baptism is significant because it shows His unity with all of us. It reinvents both the vertical and horizontal axes of our relationship. A vertical relationship with God refers to a relationship with the Father, signifying our relationship with others as brothers and sisters. We become children of God through His baptism. Jesus’ mission was based on the principle that God is our Father, and we are His children. Jesus’ baptism reminds us of our own baptism. Through baptism, we are also given the responsibility of bringing healing and forgiveness to our broken world like Jesus. So, our baptism is a vocation to carry out Jesus’ mission of establishing God’s kingdom.

Pray and Practice: Lord, help us to have the fortitude to keep the promises we made at our baptism so that we can be more effective tools in proclaiming Your Kingdom.

10 TUE
JESUS CURES A
DEMONIAC

Celestine Minj, SJ
Hebrew 2:5-12
Mk 1:21-28

*“Be silent, and
come out of him.”*

In the first reading, Paul describes Jesus’ supremacy over all things on earth. Jesus being a Son of God, became human for all of us. He had to experience our human suffering and temptation even though He was exalted through humiliation. He became the “captain” of our salvation through His suffering, death, and resurrection. It proves that Jesus is not an angel but rather superior to all created beings. He is, in fact, the son of God. And yet, He became fully human in order to love and serve people.

In today’s Gospel reading, Jesus openly reveals His power and authority over all things by healing a man with an unclean spirit. Jesus cast out the spirit with profound love and compassion and freed him. Jesus is the Word of God made flesh. When He speaks, God speaks. When He commands, even the demons obey. As human beings today, we are faced with many challenges. There is a constant fight between good and evil forces within. The spiritual battle within is more powerful than any other thing in the world. He is always by our side; therefore, we should always strive to be in touch with Jesus so that we may not be subjected to demonic power; rather, we free ourselves from modern-day evils that lurk around us today.

Pray and Practise: Almighty God, awaken our minds and hearts so that we may be vigilant against the power of demons within us, and amid our spiritual darkness, may Your word be our shield.

In today's first reading, Jesus is addressed as the liberator from the fear of death. Through His death, Jesus destroys the fear of death. Jesus is the model for those facing suffering and death. His resurrection and exaltation open access to God and grant confidence and freedom to the believer.

He is the winner over death. He went through suffering and death willingly in order to give us salvation. Salvation, which hinges on incarnation, suffering, and death, is not an angel's story. Angels are in divine service for those who inherit salvation. Christ is a merciful and faithful high priest in God's service. His sacrifice is once and for all for the entire humankind. He is the lamb that was slain for our salvation and to remove the fear of death from us.

In the Gospel, we find the healing of Peter's mother-in-law by Jesus. He healed her from fever by lifting her up. Demons are the source of testimony in this event. Jesus destroyed Satan's power by healing various diseases and casting out demons. Similarly, He has the power to liberate us from sickness and fear of death. He has the power to destroy everything that is evil. Therefore, let us not be afraid of death but rather courageously work towards proclaiming Christ in this world.

Pray and Practise: Lord Jesus, bless us with Your grace of courage, love, and passion for serving the needy. May we not be afraid of death but rather grow in serving sick and needy people in our society.

11 WED JESUS LIBERATOR

THE

Nelson Minj, SJ
Heb 2:14-18
Mk 1:29-39

"Let us go on to the neighbouring towns."

12 THU EXPERIENCING GOD IN FAITH

Nilesh Kumar
Heb 3: 7 - 14
Mk 1: 40 - 45

"If you would listen to him today, do not harden your hearts."

Today's first reading tells us about true and false fidelity. The author asks us to listen to the Lord 'Today' and not be like the people of the past. We are asked not to harden our hearts but to encourage one another and remain co-heirs with Christ. The Word of God highlights that through our faith to interpret the events of our lives. But this is not so much just dogmatic faith but an openness to God's guiding spirit in our daily lives. We must be open to new impulses inspired by God's presence in our lives. Faith must be experienced and lived 'Today'—and not as mere fidelity to forms of the past.

In today's Gospel, Jesus emphasises the same theme. The leper wasn't sure whether Jesus wanted to heal him, as is clear from his opening words to Jesus, "If you want to, you can cure me." Jesus showed He wanted to heal by touching him. Jesus wants to touch all of our lives because He wants to bring life to us all. Nothing we do or fail to do, no circumstance in which we find ourselves, is beyond His reach. The Lord touches our lives, where we are, as we are. All we need is something of the leper's initiative in approaching Jesus. When we approach Him, He increases our faith in Him.

Pray and Practise: Loving Father, fill us with Your grace so that we may increase our faith in our daily lives.

In today's Gospel reading, we find Jesus in a house at Capernaum. We read that "so many people gathered that there was no room left, even in front of the door". It turns chaotic when some strip the roof of the house and lower the stretcher bearing a paralytic so that Jesus may heal him. Seeing their faith, Jesus heals the paralytic. The reading presents Jesus as a teacher, healer and forgiver. He teaches that God loves, heals and forgives us. This is the Good News that He came to give to the world. The whole of Jesus's earthly life and ministry was motivated by this. He wants us to be filled with God's love, joy and peace.

13 FRI JESUS IS OUR HEALER

Parciush Marak, SJ
Heb 4:1-5, 11
Mk 2:1-12

"Who can forgive sins but God?"

Today's Gospel reading shows that we can be sick physically as well as spiritually. Many of our physical sicknesses may be healed easier than our spiritual sicknesses. The scribes suffer from spiritual illness. They are not able to really see His good deeds. On the contrary, they find fault with Jesus. They think that He is blasphemous – "Who but God can forgive sins?"

In life, we come across such people who are pessimistic and negative. Like the scribes, they notice only limitations and wrongs in others. When someone does something good, their attitude is: "Oh, she's doing it only to get people's praise". Such people cannot stand others doing good, nor are they themselves ready to do anything good. Today we, too, need to introspect about our lives and see what attitude we have.

Pray and Practise: Lord Jesus, help us grow positively to see good in others.

**14 SAT (St.
Devasahayam)
SEEING AS GOD
SEES**

Pawan Kumar
Meesala, SJ
Heb 4:12-16
Mk 2:13-17

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

The first reading tells us that the word of God is living and active. It reminds us that the word of God is powerful and can surprise us with how it impacts us. It can come from unexpected directions and require us to respond to unanticipated calls. This is noticeable in the life of St. Devasahayam, who got initiated in Catholicism through a friend. Captain Eustachius De Lannoy, who became a great friend of Devasahayam, influenced him to accept and embrace the Christian faith.

Today's Gospel passage tells us how Jesus reaches out to Levi, not because of what others saw, but what He saw in Levi, the potential of a life given to Him. Tax collectors in the days of Jesus were regarded as sinners because of the corrupt and violent way they collected taxes from the people. They were hated and labelled as sinners by society. Jesus Christ challenges this worldview and makes it clear that He came to save sinful men and women who were lost, for the righteous do not need repentance. So, let us introspect, it is easy to concentrate on the outside of someone, but does the love of God compel us to see others with the eyes of Jesus?

Pray and practise: Lord, instill within us the gift of love that we may see what is good in others rather than finding faults, and, grant us the grace to discern truth from falsehood in the light of Your Word.

The book of Prophet Isaiah has four “Servant Songs,” also known as “Servant Poems,” that describe a specific Servant of God, who will be seen in Christ. The second of these Servant Songs is included in today’s first reading. The Servant is described as “Israel” in this brief poem, yet it is evident that the Servant is separate from the country of Israel, for the Servant himself speaks about Israel in this song. This seeming disparity can be reconciled by recognising Jesus as genuine Israel. In the second reading, St. Paul’s letter to the Corinthians, he claims that he was “called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus” in the very first verse of his letter.

15 SUN (II SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME) THE LAMB OF GOD

Rakesh Kumar, IMS
Is 49:3, 5-6
1 Cor 1:1-3
Jn 1:29-34

“Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!”

In the Gospel, St. John combines history and a symbol together. Jesus is called ‘the Lamb of God’. This title brings to mind the Exodus and the night of the first Passover. The blood of the Paschal Lamb, with which the doors of the houses were signed, was a sign of liberation. Jesus is the new Paschal Lamb who liberates His people and takes away the sins of the World. Jesus reveals that God’s Wisdom, which existed before all the other creatures and which was with God, fixed her dwelling among the people of God. Let us come and adore our Lord, who is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

Pray and Practise : Dear Lord, shower Your blessings that we may become channels of peace to others.

16 MON (St Joseph Vaz)
GRACEFUL PRESENCE OF GOD

Rakesh Sharma, SG
Hebrews 5: 1-10
Mark 2: 18-22

“You are a priest forever, in the line of Melchizedek.”

In the first reading, we see that each individual is called and chosen by God, who has entrusted us with the works pertaining to God. God sees not the weakness of humans but the meekness of the heart. How many of us give heed to this call of God which whispers within us? Jesus, the High priest in His meekness deals with the human race with gentleness and meekness. As people called to be the royal priesthood in Christ, how do we deal with our fellow people? As we see in the Gospel of the day, the Bridegroom is with them for a short while, which indicates to us the moments of grace that flow in our lives. We need to pay attention to these moments of the Holy Presence of the Lord in our lives and to feast fully on the graciousness of this presence as well as the presence of humankind in this modern world.

Am I able to see God grounded my feet in the technical world of newness and still behold the presence of the bridegroom in my life? We are called in a special way to be the royal Priests of God through our Baptism to firmly behold the Lord's presence in our lives while still, our feet are standing in the Modern world of newness.

Pray and Practise: Lord, grant us the grace to cherish Your presence in our lives and to radiate that immense experience to our brothers and sisters.

The first reading from the Letter to the Hebrews reminds us that God is faithful to His promise and fulfils it in due time, provided that we need to be patient and hopeful. The most important thing we need to do is to stay focused on Jesus. Abraham is tagged with the title 'Father of Faith' because of his faithfulness to God's promises. He waited patiently for the fulfilment of God's promise.

Today, we witness the fulfilment of the promises that were made to Abraham in the form of Israel, the great nation and Christianity.

In the Gospel, we see how hard-hearted the Pharisees were. To maintain their false glory and prestige, they targeted violators of the law. The scribes and Pharisees knew the Law by heart but did not know the spirit of the Law, which is mercy. Therefore, the action of plucking grain was interpreted as reaping, which is prohibited on a Sabbath. This was to find fault with Jesus and His disciples so that they may condemn. But Jesus responded with wisdom, quoting the Scripture that when David and his men were hungry, they entered into the Lord's Temple and ate the consecrated bread that only priests could eat. The laws are meant for people to live with freedom and dignity, not to oppress. An outward observance of the law without thinking good about others can make us only more Pharisaic than righteous.

Pray and practise: Lord Jesus, forgive us for the times we were rigid when imposing rules on others and grant us grace not to oppress others.

**17 TUE (St. Anthony,
the Abbot)
THE SPIRIT OF THE
LAW**

Roshan Toppo, JSD
Heb. 6:10-20
Mk. 2:23-28

*"The Sabbath was
made for man, not
man for the Sabbath."*

18 WED RIGHTEOUS ANGER PROMOTES LIFE

R John Paul, SJ
Hebrew 7: 1-3,15-17
Mk 3: 1-6

“Is it lawful to do good
or to do harm on the
sabbath?”

In today's Gospel, Jesus sees the man in need and voluntarily goes to help him despite the evil intent of the Pharisees and burdened Jewish law (Sabbath). He throws a question at them to choose between life and death. In their silence, the Pharisees choose death.

Today many of us are silent, like the Pharisees, in our approach towards the injustice in society. By remaining silent spectators, we are choosing death. We are silent because we may lose our comfort zone, our jobs, positions, wealth, relationships and favours. Napoleon once said, “The world suffers a lot. Not because of the violence of bad people, but because of the silence of good people.”

The righteous anger of Jesus brought life to the man with the withered arm. Jesus was angry at the burdened Jewish rule (Sabbath) on the people. But more than that, He was very angry at the silence of the Pharisees. Anger in itself is not bad. Many good people's anger brings life to many, like that of Fr. Stan Swamy's. Whenever we see an unjust act, we need to get angry and try to bring justice and life over there. This is what Jesus has done and shown for us to follow. As Christians, we are to practice the teachings of God, including being angry at the things which demote the dignity and life of the creation.

Pray and practise: O Lord, grant us the grace that we may not be silent spectators; rather, our righteous anger may be a voice of the voiceless and promote life in the world.

Today's first reading reminds us that Jesus is Our High Priest, who is holy and sinless. He sits at the right hand of God the Father forever to make intercession for us and always to save those who approach God through Him. He offers Himself for us every day in the Holy Eucharist so that we might have eternal life.

19 THU DEEPEN YOUR RELATIONSHIP

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

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

The opening words of today's Gospel state that Jesus and His disciples withdrew from the crowds. I would imagine that Jesus needed time for rest and peace. Jesus was healing and preaching to many people, and when the word was passed unto other countries, many came to Jesus, for they wanted to be healed.

Even Impure spirits shouted at Him that He was the son of God. Many people recognise Jesus as the son of God; only at times we need healing or enlightenment. A crowd of people praise and worship God, but only a few deepen their relationship with Him. But the message is clear, even though Jesus needs rest, He still continues to give time for us. Thus, we should always desire to deepen our relationship with God. Are we ready to spend time with Him?

Who is Jesus to us? Do we truly recognise Him as the Son of God? Do we have a personal relationship with Jesus? Do we only want Jesus to heal us so that we can lead our lives peacefully? If so, will we approach Him and ask Him for what we desire?

Pray and Practise: Let us pray to God that we may deepen our relationship with Jesus and spend ample time with Him every day.

**20 FRI
VOCATION IS A
GRACE**

Savariappan, SJ

Heb 8: 6-13

Mk 3: 13-10

*“To be sent out
to proclaim the
message.”*

vineyard of the Lord. To serve God is the greatest gift in one's life.

In today's Gospel, Mark tells us that Jesus “appointed twelve” men to be apostles. Sometimes God calls people to labour with Him, and sometimes He appoints people to serve in His ministry. Moreover, we have been appointed by God to be His disciples in the context where we live and with whom we live. It is only possible when we have the grace of God and are aware of our call. The grace of God works mysteriously in us as it worked in the twelve apostles. Although they were from different backgrounds, they could accomplish the plan of God purely because of God's grace and their conviction and commitment to the Lord. Are we ready to know the purpose of God for us and work for it?

Pray and Practise: Lord, when we go astray from our vocations due to worldly desires and attraction, give us the grace to be firm in the purpose that You have for us so that we may never be distracted but focus on You alone.

Today the mother Church commemorates St. Agnes, the patron saint of chastity, gardeners, girls, rape victims and virgins. She is presented to us as a model of good faith who was martyred during a time of intense persecution of Christians and the Church. She was born into a noble Christian family in Rome. As a young Roman noblewoman, she had many suitors who were interested in her. But she rejected all those suitors and dedicated herself to God. Her life was countercultural, and people could not understand her choices. Yet she inspires us that it is possible to live life for a greater and higher cause.

21 SAT (St Agnes) STEADFASTNESS IN THE LORD

Stephan Masih
Heb 9:2-3, 11-14
Mk 3:20-21

*"Purify our conscience
from dead works to
worship of the living
God!"*

Likewise, the first reading recalls the once for all sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the redemption of humanity. And the Gospel reminds us how the mission of Jesus was misunderstood by the people and even by His near and dear ones. Jesus was not deterred by how people perceived His mission. He relentlessly and steadfastly continued to do what He came to do. Sometimes this is also what we need to do, especially in tough times when people around us do not understand and believe in us or our mission. Therefore, brothers and sisters in Christ, let us all put ourselves in the hands of the Lord and commit ourselves to His mission.

Pray and practise: May the Lord be with us all, and may He give us the strength to follow Him wholeheartedly now and always, without fear or worry.

**22 SUN (III SUNDAY
IN ORDINARY TIME)
CONVERSION TO
VOCATION**

Arockia Sasi Kumar,
SJ

Is 8:23-9:3

1 Cor 1:10-13, 17

Mt 4:12-23

*“Repent, for the
kingdom of heaven
has come near.”*

a conversion of the change of heart to respond to the invitation of all, out of the ordinary, into the extraordinary.

The Greek word *metanoia* is translated as ‘convert’ or ‘repent’. The closest meaning to *metanoia* is ‘change of heart’, which can be understood in many ways. For John, the Baptist, ‘Be converted’ means ‘turn away from one’s sins. In the words of Jesus, ‘Conversion’ implies a renewal of life or a radical call to imitate His footsteps. According to fundamentalist ideology, conversion means the change from one religion to another. The true meaning of the conversion Jesus put forth to all is a radical change in individual behaviour or a cultural change in a community. We are called to convert our old ways to a new vocation to live a harmonious, peaceful, and equal life in a country of pluralism.

Pray and Practise: Lord our God, give us the strength to bear witness in the midst of religious tolerance. May we prompt to encourage young people to a religious vocation to proclaim the Gospel.

In Today's reading, Jesus is besieged by those who resist His words and actions, and the people accuse Him of being possessed by Beelzebul. But Jesus is clear about who He is and what He is doing. It is only good that can overcome evil. Only light can remove darkness. Jesus used this maxim to the advantage of all.

23 MON IT IS THE END OF SATAN

Akhilesh Lucas, IMS
Heb 9: 15, 24-28
Mk 3:22-30

"Christ has been offered once to bear the sins of many."

However, some people never tried to listen to Him. So many accusations had been levelled against Jesus that He was from Nazareth, from where nothing good can come (Jn 1:46), that He was just a son of a carpenter (Mt 13:55), that He was misleading people (Lk 23:14), He blasphemed (Lk 5:21), He was a sinner (Jn 9:24), and He even had an evil spirit with whose help He drove out other demons (Mk 3:30) and so on. The Jewish authorities had slung a lot of mud on Jesus, hoping that at least some of it would stick. His opponents could see the good done by Jesus and always found ways to blame Him.

The tendency continues, the selfless and dedicated services of missionaries have been ignored and false allegations mindlessly made by many. Despite the blames and allegations, let us continue to dedicate our service to the needy and wait for the days when goodness will win like our Lord Jesus.

Pray and Practise: Lord, fill us with the purity of thought and action so that we may be able to see the goodness in others and remove the darkness of life.

24 TUE TO DO THE WILL OF GOD

Ignatius Tete, SJ

Heb 10:1-10

Mk 3: 31-35

“Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.”

We are all connected to each other through God, who created us in His image and through Jesus, who saved us from eternal damnation. In today’s Gospel, Jesus invites us to see the larger family of God where we all belong, and he tells us something revolutionary. He expands the term family. It is much more than a blood relationship. The family members are those who do the will of God, like Him. Today we are also called to be members of the intimate family of Jesus. He includes all of us as His brothers, sisters, and mother to do His will.

Sociologically, we think that the blood relation is the one that binds our family strongly. But Jesus is inviting us to think beyond our family and relatives. By birth, we not only become the family members of Jesus but also, we need to live out our Christian Baptism faithfully. It is good to ask ourselves, do I belong to Jesus’ family? It is a great challenge for all of us to be called a family of Jesus unless we do His will. In order to become family members of Jesus, we need to help the needy and downtrodden. There is nothing greater than Love and service in the world. Today we are invited to do the will of God by loving and serving others through our small works and sacrifices. By this act, we can become Jesus’ brother, sister, and mother.

Pray and Practise: Loving Father, give us Your grace to grow in the deeper word of faith that we may be able to enter Your divine family.

Today the Catholic Church celebrates the feast of the conversion of St. Paul. This feast reminds us powerfully of the whole missionary dimension of the Church. Before St. Paul's conversion, Paul lived a worldly life and enjoyed his life and the mission given to him. Through the first reading, Paul tells us about the man he was and how he encountered Jesus Christ on the way to Damascus. This encounter totally transformed him and made him a staunch supporter of Jesus Christ. In the Gospel reading, Jesus appears to the eleven apostles and instructs them, saying, "go forth into the whole world and proclaim the good news to every creature."

25 WED GOD IS INVITING YOU

Anuranjan Tigga, SJ
Act 9: 1-22
Mk 16: 15-18

"There is joy in the presence of God over one sinner, who repents."

St. Paul's conversion was from his understanding of who Jesus was. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting" was a moment of new awareness, a new awakening, and a unique turning point in the life of Paul. Today the first reading is inviting us to bear witness to Jesus Christ, and calling to conversion, probably not in a sudden dramatic fashion like Paul but still, constantly, day by day, we are called to surrender our lives to Christ. He calls each one of us by our own name with great mercy and tenderness. He calls us to abandon our special resistance to our worldly desires and conform ourselves to His will and plan.

Pray and Practise: Let us pray for the grace to preach the Gospel to all those who do not know Christ as St. Paul did and for wisdom to remember that God's grace is so powerful that it can turn the greatest sinner into a saint.

**26 THU (Republic Day)
TRUE FREEDOM**

Sanjay Tigga, SJ
1 Tim 2:1-8
Jn 8:31-42

“The truth will make you free.”

praised constitution.

We might have heard this famous saying, “Be true to yourself, and the truth will follow you”. Republic Day signifies the right spirit of Independent and individual India. This day always will be an important event for Indians. On this day, we got true freedom in terms of our fundamental rights and the much-

In the Gospel reading, Jesus invites us to reflect on the word truth that leads us to freedom. Jesus says to the Jews, “If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free”. Each one of us is called to be His disciple by following His word. The question is, how do we embrace his word in life? Do we follow His word ideally and as a rule of life?

In the present situation, many good and bad things have occupied our life that God has no space to take root in our hearts. The world is full of temptation. One thing is sin that separates us from faith. To be a true disciple, one must begin to live according to Jesus’ teaching with full consciousness and great faith. Thus, Jesus calls everyone to acquire His way of freedom, which is always spiritual, moral, and interior.

Pray and Practise: Lord, we pray that we may grow in the knowledge of the truth so that we may exercise our freedom responsibly for a better mission that Jesus Christ entrusted to us.

In today's Gospel, Jesus speaks about a lamp and light. Jesus asks His disciples, "Is a lamp brought in to be put under the bushel basket, or under the bed, and not on the lampstand?" Further, He says, "For there is nothing hidden, except to be disclosed; nor is anything secret, except to come to light."

**27 FRI (Sts Timothy and Titus)
LIGHT BRINGS JOY**

Suresh John Tirkey,
SJ

2 Tim 1: 1-8

MK 4: 21-25

"For there is nothing hidden, except to be disclosed."

Jesus remarks that nothing can remain hidden or secret. We can try to hide things from others, from ourselves, and from God. How tempting to shut our eyes from the consequences of our sinful ways or bad habits, even when we know what those consequences are. And how tempting to hide them from others and even from God? But, nonetheless, everything is known to God, who sees all. There is great freedom and joy for those who live in God's light and who seek his truth and goodness. Those who listen to God and heed His voice will receive more from Him. And they will not lack what they need to live as Christ's disciples. And they will shine as lights that show the wisdom and truth of God's word. Do you know the joy and freedom of living in God's light and truth?

Pray and Practise: Lord Jesus, guide us by the light of Your saving truth. Fill our hearts and minds with Your light and truth and free us from the blindness of sin, ignorance, and deception so that we may see Your ways clearly and understand Your will for our life.

**28 SAT (St. Thomas Aquinas)
LORD INCREASES
OUR FAITH**

Udaya Prakash, SJ
Heb 11: 1-2,8-19
MK 4: 35-41

“God takes away our fear through the faith that He gives us.”

The church commemorates the feast of St. Thomas Aquinas, one of the Church’s greatest theologians who instilled Christian faith in many people’s life. His work during the Middle Ages is the summit of intellectual achievements. His book “Summa Theologica” showed the reasonableness of faith and defended human intelligence as a prelude to faith.

We know that the disciples had been constant witnesses that Jesus could speak over an illness, and it would be healed. With just a word, paralysed legs could walk, and blind eyes could see. Time and time again, the disciples saw Jesus’ miracles with their own eyes. But even after seeing all these miracles, they still were not sure who Jesus was. They did not have faith that He was the Son of God. In today’s Gospel, we hear that Jesus wanted faith from His disciples. He was not concerned with who was the smartest, strongest, or best sailor. Faith in Him was all that mattered. Jesus allowed this storm so the disciples could see for themselves that they did not yet have faith in Him. The faith that Jesus spoke of was: having complete trust in Jesus, knowing for certain that He is God being, capable of doing all things - including calming a terrible storm.

Pray and Practise: Let us pray that just like the disciple’s storm helped them see that they did not have faith, the trials in our lives can help us see how much faith we have in Jesus.

The sermon on the Mount teaches us to be humble. Each beatitude affirms that the afflicted or suffering people are actually blessed. Jesus declares that they are already blessed. We see that the beatitudes are the first declarations of God's grace. The Beatitudes are like a road map to earn entry to God's kingdom. Jesus speaks today of how we find happiness and how we are totally blessed. He has a view of happiness different from many others. He could preach beatitudes because He lived them. According to Pope Francis, 'This is a new law, the one we call the Beatitudes, it's Lord's new law for us the road map for Christian's life which gives us the indications to move forward on the right path.'

**29 SUN(IV SUNDAY
IN ORDINARY TIME)
PURE IN HEART**

Arvind Minj, SJ
Zep 2:3; 3:12-13
I Cor 1:26-31
Mt 5:1-12a

"Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy."

When we see the reality of life, no one likes to mourn. It is a sorrowful state. But the second beatitude says, "Blessed are those who mourn...." Jesus tells us about the Kingdom of heaven, where mourning becomes a blessing, and the mourners will be comforted there. The Beatitudes are the characters and values of the Kingdom of heaven. Meek, merciful, hungry for righteousness, and peacemakers are the steps to reach God's kingdom. These are not only the characters to reach the Kingdom of God, but these are like a roadmap that helps us to move forward on the right path, as Pope Francis has said.

Pray and Practise: Lord Jesus, grant us a pure heart to love our persecutors. Help us to be merciful so that we may establish Your kingdom here on earth.

30 MON WITNESSES OF FAITH

Benitto Arulsevan,
SJ

Heb 11:32-40

Mk 5:1-20

*“Tell them how much
the Lord has done
for you.”*

The members of a family or an organisation should have strong faith in each other. Faith knits them together as one unit. When there is a problem of faith, it creates a gap which separates them. Such a separation alienates one from the family, and the alienated becomes a wanderer. Eventually, though the person is a family member, he or she still feels lonely.

The first reading of today highlights the profound testimony of the heroes of faith in the Old Testament. People like David, Samuel, the prophets and kings who accepted the faith dimension of God and responded positively, conquered kingdoms, administrated justice, won strength out of weakness etc., and others experienced many sufferings, mockery and even imprisonment. But their witness was not in vain because in Christ, the promise of salvation was accomplished.

The Gospel reading highlights the plight of a person possessed by a legion of unclean spirits. He lived among the tombs and on the mountains, howling and bruising himself with stones. He lost his family and friends because of unclean spirits, which caused fear to others and to himself. When he encountered Jesus, he was liberated from the possession of the legion of unclean spirits. The power of Jesus was very strong that it overpowered the unclean spirit. This act of Jesus inspired the liberated person to proclaim the mercy of God to the people.

Pray and Practise: Dear Lord, bless us with a strong faith in You so that we may always be close to You and proclaim Your mercy through our lives.

Today's readings portray Jesus Himself as a role model of faith and the giver of life. The first reading presents Jesus as the perfecter of faith and has revealed His faithfulness through the cross. The Gospel wraps together two accounts of profound faith in Jesus, the healer. The submission of oneself with faith in Jesus restores life.

31 TUE (St John Bosco)

FAITH LEADS TO TRANSFORMATION

George Victor, SJ

Heb 12:1-4

Mk 5: 21-43

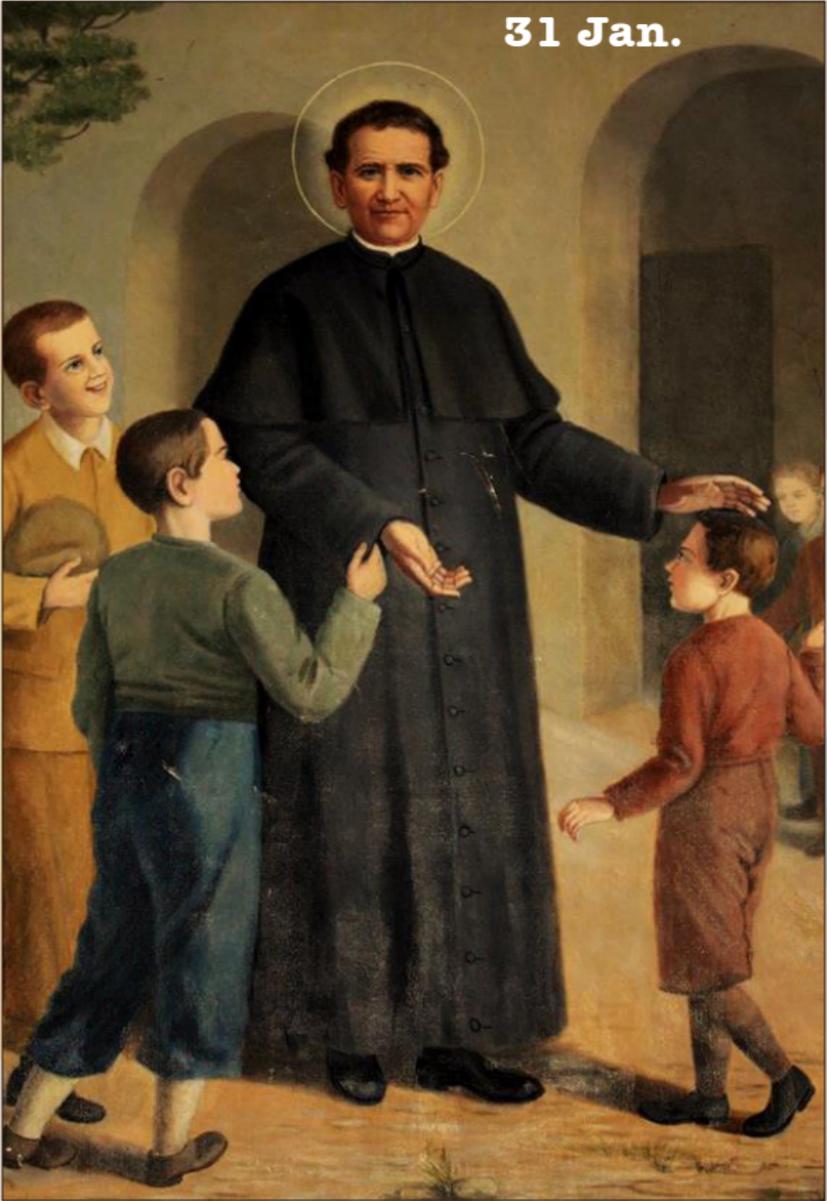
"Your faith has made you well."

In the Gospel, Jesus establishes social justice by healing the haemorrhaged woman and respect through the resuscitation of the synagogue leader's daughter. Jesus restores the dignity and self-respect of the haemorrhaged woman in society by curing her sickness. She was once again incorporated into a society that had kept her away according to the Mosaic law because she was considered physically unclean and unholy. The leader of the synagogue, who was well-respected in the society, humbles himself to save his daughter. It is not just physical healing and resuscitation but a call for a greater transformation of oneself.

Both the faith encounter teaches us that it is not name, fame, or position that would save us but faith in God. We need to humble ourselves and let go of our ego like the leader of a synagogue who fell at the feet of Jesus. We need to strip ourselves of one's position and status and learn to fall back to God with faith and trust so that we may receive His graces and blessings.

Pray and Practise: O Lord, grant us the grace that we may humble ourselves and let go of our ego and prejudices and have faith and trust in God.

31 Jan.



“Be good. This will make your angel happy. When sorrows and misfortunes, physical or spiritual, afflict you, turn to your guardian angel with strong trust and he will help you.”

St. John Bosco

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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