



Bengaluru

Editor: Fr Silvester D'Souza

Vol: 12

No: 10 Pages - 52

Price: ₹ 15

September - 2025 English Monthly

SAINT THERESE AND THE CROSS OF CHRIST

We are grateful to the CONTRIBUTORS of the reflections:

OCD Frs Alphonse Britto, George Santhumayor, Jason Coutinho, Jeevan Tauro, Jesvin Benoy, Joe Tauro, John Sequeira, Joseph D'Souza, Nikesh D'Souza, Noel D'Cunha, Oswald Crasta, Pranay Pereira, Prithesh Crasta Rakesh Parmar and Raymond Santhanaz.

OCD Srs from Bengaluru, Chicalim and Pune Carmels.

OCD Brs Aldric Xavier, Alwin D'Souza, Elston Monteiro, Glawin D'Souza, Hillary Rodrigues, Rickson Moras, Stin George and Wilson Rodrigues.

 $\begin{center} \textbf{OCDS Mrs} \\ \textbf{Diana Wilson, Josephine Menezes and Jubilee Cardozo.} \\ \end{center}$

Brs Adrian Menezes SW.

Mr Aroon Fernandes and Maxim D'Cruz.

Mrs Fay Mckinley, Venora Lobo and Wilma Rose.

Kindly find the bank details to credit the subscription amount. Once you credit, please let us know via Phone call or email.

AC Name	Dhyana Jyothi Trust - Living Water
AC No	000 9053 0000 18496
Bank Name	South Indian Bank
	Cantonment Branch, Bengaluru
IFSC Code	SIBL 0000 009
SWIF Code	SOININ55XXX

You can send your comments or suggestions to:

livingwatereditor@gmail.com

For Subscriptions, Renewals or other correspondence, write to the following address:

The Manager, Springs of Living Water Dhayanavana Publications,

C/o Carmel Niketan 1/7. Behind Carmel Complex, Geddalahalli, Kothanur Post, Bengaluru – 560 077

Email: dpublications 7@gmail.com, dpublications 1999@gmail.com

Phone 080 - 2844 3229 Mob: 76193 92358

Subscription Rates

1 Year - Rs. 200 / 3 Years - Rs. 550 / 6 Years - Rs. 1000

Visit us on: http://springs.carmelmedia.in



Daily Spiritual Reflections Volume no. 12, Issue no. 10

SEPTEMBER 2025

PRAYER INTENTION

FOR OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH ALL OF CREATION

Let us pray that, inspired by Saint Francis, we might experience our interdependence with all creatures who are loved by God and worthy cf love and respect.

Nihil Obstat : Fr Silvestre D'Souza OCD

Provincial, Karnataka Goa Province

Editorial Board:

Chief Editor : Fr Jesvin Tom Benoy OCD Editorial Team : Fr Alphonse Britto OCD

Fr Rudolf V D'Souza OCD Fr Regan Paul D'Souza OCD

Fr Noel D'Cunha OCD

Fr Prithesh Steeve Crasta OCD

Manager : Fr Ivan Robert D'Souza OCD



The 'Little Way' in Mary and the Cross

The month of September holds much joy, as it commences with the Feast of Mary's Nativity on the 8^{th} and it reaches its deepest note of solemnity in the celebration of the Exultation of the Holy Cross on the 14^{th} .

If we were to pick up the little way of St. Therese, it would offer us much help in contemplating the deep mysteries of these feasts. Mary's birth and Jesus' glorious Cross is but a revelation of God's unfathomable love which is manifested in trust, surrender, self-giving love and littleness.

From Therese's perspective, we see that Mary embraced her spiritual childhood—a life of complete surrender, trust, in the Father's plan and living a life in quiet fidelity. Mary's infancy though unknown on the earth, is celebrated in heaven—a testament to the fact that God delights to initiate His masterpieces in simplicity and silence; for through her, the light of salvation has dawned.

For the Church, this Feast is the celebration of the silent victory of God's providence— His promise, which opened a new chapter, a new order.

In Therese's writings we come across her desire to live her life, as a 'little flower'— unseen, unnoticed, hidden from the world's eyes, yet, open completely to the Divine Sun! Mary though, considered as the 'first flower' of redemption, lived a very common and ordinary life. Her generosity in allowing grace to work within her and transform her makes her obscure life significant and she lived that generosity through her faithful surrender of her daily life, in the small town of Nazareth. Like her, we too are invited to recognize the 'Nazareths' of our lives where God's grace quietly works in the ordinary.

If Mary's Nativity is the morning of redemption, the Cross is the noon day Sun!

Though the world saw the Cross as a sign of defeat, it was the full revelation of God's unfathomable love. The Feast of the

Exultation of the Cross challenges us to see beyond the sufferings manifested on the Cross and to recognize the triumph of God's love— the love that sacrificed His Only Begotten Son.

In Therese, we have a champion, who called herself a 'Victim of Merciful Love.' She embraced her sufferings not as an end in itself but, as a participation in Christ's work of redemption, offering her pain for the salvation of souls! For a heart that loves, Cross is not a sign of fear but, a revelation of unconditional love. Therese embraced her sufferings as her own cross— a gift from God. Just as Mary stood strong at the foot of Jesus' cross, Therese teaches us to accept life's trials with unwavering trust in the Father's plan.

The Cross, as these saints instruct us, is an invitation to embrace our daily struggle with hope, believing that in the mystery of total surrender, love has the final word. Every act of endurance, mortification and silent suffering when surrendered to God, becomes a sharing in Christ's redeeming mission.

Therese's 'little way,' in its essence, is having childlike trust where we encounter her imitate Mary in her hiddenness and embrace Jesus in the mystery of His Cross. Therefore, we are invited, on our part, to embrace our own littleness and entrust everything to the Father's heart which is the abode of his mercy and compassion— for even the smallest acts, when done with a heart beaming with love, can become instruments of Grace.

As we step into September and celebrate these Feasts let us pray for God's grace to walk the 'little way' of St. Therese, to celebrate Mary's humble infancy and to look with an elevated gaze of trust, upon the Cross of our daily sacrifices. Let us learn from St. Therese, that trustful selfless love, is the path that leads to the Father, who we learn to approach with the confidence of a son and daughter.

Fr Jesvin Tom Benoy OCD



Fix Your Eyes on HIM

Twenty Second Week in Ordinary Time 1 Thes 4: 13-18; Ps 96: 1, 3-5, 11-13; Lk 4: 16-30

Just as a shooter fixes his eyes on the target and the hunter on the prey, a disciple of Jesus is to fix his/her eyes on the Lord.

Jesus was at the Synagogue where He was given the scroll of prophet Isaiah. He read it aloud and it proclaimed His mission: The Spirit of the Lord was upon Him for He was anointed to preach the good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives, to recover sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. The people in the synagogue who heard Him fixed their eyes on Him. But, later instead of fixing their attention on Jesus, they were distracted; they spoke of Him as the son of Joseph the carpenter.

St Paul reminds us that we need to focus our attention on the Lord. Paul himself had his eyes glued to the omnipotence of the Jewish Law, until the Lord made him see the difference. Paul adds that dying in Christ, we rise in Him and therefore, we must not grieve like those who have no hope. When we fix our eyes on the Lord, we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and He will make those died in Him to rise from the dead. Those who are alive, they need to fix their eyes on the Lord and wait for His glorious coming.

When our eyes are fixed on the things of this passing world, we end up in despair. Sometimes, our eyes are fixed on our own name and fame. This brings about disaster. Some of us may fix our eyes on money and pleasure; it makes us hopeless and pessimistic. When we fix our eyes on our weakness and nothingness, we will find it hard to overcome them. But, when we become aware of our frailty and fix our attention on the Lord, on His love and mercy, we will be transformed into new people. We need to fix our eyes on the Lord, learn from Him and imitate the lessons He taught us through His very life in our daily living. This will make us happy and joyful.

Prayer: Lord, help me to fix my eyes on You all the days of my life.

Response: The Lord comes to judge the earth.

02 TUE

Encouraging and Building up

Twenty Second Week in Ordinary Time 1 Thes 5: 1-6, 9-11; Ps 27: 1, 4, 13-14; Lk 4: 31-37

"Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as vou are doing." Paul, while enlightening the Thessalonians not to be needlessly anxious about the 'day of the Lord', exhorts them to maintain hope, vigilance and mutual edification. In doing so, he himself encourages them as he commends them for doing the same already. We have something to introspect here! Am I a pessimistic person filled with lot of negativity and useless criticisms? Paul invites the Thessolonians into two actions encouraging one another and building one another up. Today. we have many discouraging realities around us: the weakened fabric of Christian families: Christian marriages that crumble in alarming numbers at times even due to silly reasons, many youngsters not even opting for the sacrament of marriage due to ideologies, priestly and religious vocations that have terribly shrunk, unemployment and stressful life, contemporary Christian children and youth often not strong enough to face the rough waters of life, elderly people helplessly left alone at homes or entrusted to the care of the home for the aged, widening divisions among the communities on communal lines, shallow faith life etc. Amidst these realities 'reciprocal encouragement and building up' would contribute much to mutual edification!

This evangelical virtue about which St Paul exhorts the community, does not come from psychological sessions or secular motivational talks, but rather from the truth of Christ's resurrection which has conquered the world and offers us an unending hope. The gospel testifies it further - He is Jesus, one who liberates. He is Immanuel God with us and cares for us!

The theme of the Jubilee Year, 'Pilgrims of Hope,' keeps resounding in our ears. As pilgrims filled with hope in Christ, can we do something to encourage others and build up the timid who live around us? Let us look for opportunities to communicate life and hope to those around us!

Response: I believe I shall see the Lord's goodness in the land of the living.



The Gospel of Christian Hope

Memorial of **Saint Gregory the Great** Col 1: 1-8; Ps 52: 10-11: Lk 4: 38-44

Today's readings remind us of the very heart of Christian life: faith, hope, and love. Faith is our deep reliance on God, a trust that allows Jesus to sustain us in the ordinariness of our daily lives. Hope, in turn, directs our gaze toward the ultimate reward—the unseen reality of eternal communion with God. It is not wishful thinking but a firm trust in God's promise of salvation, as Pope Francis often reminded us: Christian hope is the certainty of eternal life in and through Jesus Christ. Rooted in our present life in Him, this hope finds its ultimate fulfillment in our future union with Him.

In the Gospel, Jesus reveals His mercy and compassion, healing the sick as a sign of His boundless love. Yet His mission goes beyond healing and earthly blessings; St Paul would say, "if for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied" (1 Cor. 15:19). Hope in Jesus is not about acquiring wealth, success, or comfort in this life; it is the unshakable assurance of our full union with Him as God's beloved children and heirs of His Kingdom. St. Paul reminds us: "Hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit" (Rom 5:5). Even now, God's merciful love purifies and unites us, with its fullness to be realized in the life to come.

Jesus calls us to proclaim this Good News everywhere—a hope that transforms lives, rooted in the unfailing faithfulness of God. He is present among us, drawing us closer to Himself in Christ. Our lives, then, are to be marked by gratitude: gratitude for the victory Christ has won for us through His suffering, death, and resurrection.

Thus, our faith and ministry are not measured by worldly accomplishments but by the joy of knowing the end of our journey—the perfect union with God that awaits us. As St. Paul beautifully affirms, "the faith and love that spring from the hope stored up for you in heaven" sum up the true message of the Gospel (Col 1:5–6).

Response: I trust in the mercy of God, forever and ever.



The Spiritual or the Mundane?

Twenty Second Week in Ordinary Time Col 1: 9-14; Ps 98: 2-6; Lk 5: 1- 11

Ordinary everyday experience tells us that when we begin our day, most often our thoughts run towards the fulfilment of our everyday tasks. Almost all productivity experts advise us to have a clear picture of the day before us for the successful implementation of our desired plans. As a result, all our attention and energy is spent mostly on the mundane things of life.

The human person, and especially a Christian, has a spiritual self. Our Christian vocation invites us to pay attention to this aspect of life. The reasons are, primarily, God has a better and broader plan for us. Paying attention to divine things will help us to see things from the divine perspective and choose that which is qualitatively greater. Secondly, when we pay attention to the things of God, we eventually put on the mindset of God thereby transforming all our desires to the likeness of God's desires. This in turn will transform us as heavenly people. God becoming man so that man may live upon this earth with divine intent. St. Paul states that he prays for the Colossians everyday so that they could be filled with the knowledge of His will, would walk according to His ways so that they could do the works of God himself upon this earth. Paul desired to see Colossian Church live an authentic Christian life. In the Gospel. Jesus shows us how divine knowledge reveals what humans are seldom able to see and that divine understanding surpasses all human understanding.

Where do we stand as Christians today? Are we people guided by the Holy Spirit, and filled with divine wisdom and understanding? Have we ever realized the greatness of our Christian vocation and ever desired to walk in divine paths?

Response: The Lord has made known his salvation.



Rooted and Revolutionary Faith *Memorial of Saint Teresa of Kolkata* Col 1: 15-20: Ps 100: 1-5: Lk 5: 33-39

In the first reading, Paul unveils a breathtaking vision of Christ as the "image of the invisible God," the One through whom and for whom all things were created. He is before all things, the source in whom "all things hold together," and the reconciler of all creation, making peace "by the blood of His cross." This hymn to Christ's supremacy lifts our gaze to the divine realm: Jesus is not merely a wise teacher or moral guide, but the very center of creation and redemption. Everything in the universe – seen and unseen – finds its meaning and ultimate destiny in Him.

This vision harmonizes with the Gospel, where Jesus speaks of the "new wine" of His Kingdom that cannot be contained in "old wineskins." When questioned why His disciples did not follow the fasting practices of the Pharisees, Jesus replies that His presence ushers in a radically new reality: God's reign breaking into history. The new wine of His Spirit cannot be held by rigid structures clinging to external observances without inward transformation. Christ's grace reshapes us from within, calling for new hearts that expand with His overflowing life.

Today, the Church invites us to embrace a faith that is both rooted and revolutionary:

- Rooted in Christ's Lordship He is the Alpha and the Omega, holding our lives together even in chaos.
- Revolutionary in our response Encountering Christ moves us from ritual to relationship, from law to love, from mere compliance to living communion.

Paul's hymn assures us that no matter how broken the world or our hearts seem, "all things are being reconciled" through Him. Yet the Gospel challenges us: will we remain rigid old wineskins, or become flexible vessels ready for His Spirit? Let us surrender to Christ's supremacy. Let Him be the centre that orders our chaos, the new wine that transforms us. For in Him alone, all things, including our fragmented lives, find their true purpose and peace.

Response: Come before the Lord, singing for joy.



The Gate of Mercy

Twenty Second Week in Ordinary Time Col 1: 21-23; Ps 54: 3-4, 6, 8; Lk 6: 1-5

Nelson Mandela spent 27 years in prison, much of it under unjust and harsh conditions. Upon his release in 1990, he remarked, 'As I finally walked through those gates, I felt—even at the age of 71—that my life was beginning anew." His words capture the essence of liberation, a new beginning after long captivity. That experience echoes the spiritual reality described in the first reading Col 1:21–23—a reconciliation that leads to true freedom and new life in God.

His words speak of liberation, of a radical new beginning—one that emerged from long suffering and deep injustice. They reflect something profound that lies at the heart of our faith: the experience of being set free, of beginning anew—not politically or socially, but spiritually. In today's reading from Colossians, Paul describes something even greater than release from a prison cell. He speaks of a reconciliation with God that reaches into the depths of who we are and changes our eternal destiny.

God, rich in mercy, did not leave us in that state of separation from Him. Through Christ's death, we have been reconciled. Paul declares, "He has now reconciled you in his body of flesh by his death." This reconciliation is total and complete. It restores relationship and redefines identity. We are no longer enemies, but those presented as holy, blameless, and irreproachable before God. The barrier is removed. The Father receives us not as slaves or strangers, but as sons and daughters.

However, reconciliation demands perseverance. "Indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast," Paul adds. This is not uncertainty but a call to remain grounded in the gospel, never shifting from its hope. The grace that reconciles also empowers us to endure. Faith is the root, but perseverance is the fruit.

As Mandela walked into freedom, let us walk into the life that Christ has won for us!

Response: See, I have God for my help.



Mathetes

Twenty Third Sunday in Ordinary Time Wis 9: 13-18; Ps 90; Phlm 9-10,12-17; Lk 14 : 25-33

More than two thousand years have passed since the resurrection of Jesus Christ and still humanity is conflated with Jesus and Christ. In our normal conversation we used Jesus and Christ in the same breath as if Christ is Jesus's last name. The *Prologue* in John's Gospel, Colossians 1 and Ephesians 1, state with absolute clarity that Christ existed from all eternity and Jesus existed just within the bounds of time. In fact the Gospel of John, is all about the Christ [*But these are written that you may believe, that Jesus is the Messiah (Christ), the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name (Jn20:31)]. St Paul encounters this Christ on his way to Damascus.*

In the synoptics, i.e., Matthew, Mark and Luke, it is mostly about Jesus who existed in time. This Word-made-flesh as revealed to us in John 1, cannot be dispensed with! We are familiar with how events unfolded when Jesus walked on this earth and large crowds followed him, however He expects of us to head towards a different level of following Him. His invitation is discipleship. The Greek word used for a disciple is *mathetes* which is a derivation of *Mathano* from the root '*math*,' indicating 'thought accompanied by endeavour'. In other words, a disciple is a person who learns from another by instruction, whether formal or informal. Discipleship also includes the idea of one who intentionally learns by inquiry and observation and thus *mathetes* is more than merely a pupil.

Jesus of Nazareth, who existed in time is a perfect archetype of human journey i.e., from his conception in Bethlehem, ordinary life of 30 years like most of us to his trial, betrayal, death and resurrection. Jesus' command, "Follow me," appears more than ten times in the gospel which proves its importance.

Jesus asks his would-be-followers to consider the cost of following Him at three different levels:-

Close Family Ties: If the values of the kingdom you desire to embrace stands in stark contrast to your close family ties, then

whom would you chose? Are you ready to leave your close family and follow him?

Worldly values: If one believes that life is all about earning money, building a house, and surrounding oneself with comforts, then—according to the mystics—one has truly gained nothing. Jesus does not call us to destitution, but He does call us to examine our values. When worldly ambitions stand in contrast to the values of His Kingdom, whom will we choose? Jesus presses the question even further: once you have made the decision to follow Him, are you prepared to see it through to the end? St. Paul, at the close of his ministry, could say with confidence, "I have finished the race; I have kept the faith." Can we make the same claim, or will we abandon Him halfway when the cost of discipleship becomes real?

War between Spirit & Flesh: This refers to the ongoing battle between the kingship of Jesus and the deception of Satan. Once we step away from worldly values, we are called to a higher way of life—one that requires us to be fully equipped with what St. Paul calls "the armour of God." As disciples, we must remain constantly united to the true Vine, Christ Himself. The moment we allow disconnection, we step outside the shelter of God's protection, leaving ourselves vulnerable to the enemy's snares.

Jesus of Nazareth, who followed the will of his Father while on earth was crucified, died, buried, but rose from the dead. This Jesus is the Christ, who has sent us His Holy Spirit so that we are not left orphans in our journey of discipleship. This Resurrected Christ is presented as a "Forgiving Victim." Before the disciples who hide in a closed room, Christ presents himself. This Christ who was betrayed by his close ones, speaks not questioning the betrayal, but proclaims "Shalom" or the "Peace of the Sabath", "As the father has sent me, I am sending you" and he breathes the Holy Spirit upon them. Then he shows his disciples the wounds of his hands and his side warning them of the cost of discipleship. This is the new beginning for just as Yahweh breathed life into Adam, Jesus Christ breathes into the cold heart of Human beings; if only we welcome the life he offers us!

Response: O Lord, you have been our refuge, from generation to generation.



Mary: Chosen for God's Purpose Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin

Mi 5: 1-4/Rom 8: 28-30; Ps 13: 6; Mt 1: 1-16, 18-23

Today's liturgy presents two choices for the First Reading. The first is from prophet Micah. The prophet has been speaking against the rulers of Israel who are paying dearly for their sinful ways. In today's passage he is speaking of the restoration of Israel through a Messiah.

Prophet Micah announces the coming of the Lord of Israel who will come forth from Bethlehem of Judah. The Mother of the Messiah, presented as one about to give birth, will give life to the prince and pastor of the house of David who will bring justice and peace. She will work with the Messiah to bring forth a new people.

The second choice of the reading is from Romans. Paul speaks of how all are picked out specially by God. "We know that everything works together for the good of those who love God, who are called according to his purpose". This is an important statement. We see it in Mary's acceptance of the angel's invitation, even though she did not fully understand its implications at that time.

Matthew's genealogy of Jesus traces his lineage from Abraham, the father of God's chosen people, through the line of David, King of Israel. Jesus the Messiah is the direct descent of Abraham and David, and the rightful heir to David's throne. God in his mercy fulfilled his promises to Abraham and to David that he would send a Saviour and a King to rule over the house of Israel and to deliver them from their enemies.

Today, as we celebrate the birthday of Mary, the Mother of Jesus and our own Mother, who is our special advocate with her Son, let us pray that her intercessions may earn us the favours we ask of God!

Response: I will greatly rejoice in the Lord.



The Trinity of Transformation

Twenty Third Week in Ordinary Time Col 2: 6-15; Ps 145: 1-2, 8-11; Lk 6: 12-19

The Trinity of Transformation– Rooted in Christ, Guided by Prayer, and Empowered to Serve – can lead to a life of meaning & purpose, fulfilling the mission of Jesus. Just as a tree's roots dig deep into the earth, anchoring it firmly against strong winds and turbulent weather, being rooted in Christ provides a strong foundation for our spiritual lives. With Christ as our anchor, we are empowered to withstand life's challenges, knowing that our roots run deep into something greater than ourselves. When we are rooted in Christ, we build a strong foundation that stands firm against life's storms. This rootedness empowers us to live with confidence, hope, and a sense of purpose.

Prayer is our connection to God's wisdom and love. When we pray, we open ourselves to God's guidance and wisdom. Our hearts align with His plan, and we find peace and clarity, even in uncertain times. Just as Jesus modelled the importance of prayer, pouring out His heart before making crucial decisions like choosing the 12 apostles, we can seek God's wisdom and guidance in our own life. It is only through prayer that we will cultivate a deeper intimacy with God. When we are rooted in Christ and guided by prayer, we are empowered by the Holy Spirit to serve others like Jesus. This empowerment enables us to fulfil the greatest commandment: to love God and to love our neighbours. In our service to others, we are transformed from within and our connection with God and others deepens. When we combine these three elements, we experience transformation. By embracing this 'Trinity of Transformation', we experience a life-changing journey of faith, prayer, and service. May we be transformed by God's power and love, and may our lives reflect His glory. As we live out this trinity, we shall find joy, peace, and purpose in our relationship with God and others.

Response: How good is the Lord to all.



New Life in Christ

Twenty Third Week in Ordinary Time Col 3: 1- 11: Ps 145: 2-3. 10-13: Lk 6: 20-26

In baptism, we were buried with Christ and raised with Him through the power of His resurrection (Col 2:12). In this sacrament, our sins were forgiven, and we became sharers in His victory on the cross—a marvellous gift for every Christian. But what does it mean to live out this new life?

In today's first reading, St. Paul urges the Colossians to "seek the things that are above," for God has granted us life in Christ through the forgiveness of our sins. He calls us to "put to death" what is earthly in us—those inordinate passions and desires that arouse the wrath of God (cf. Eph 4:20). To follow Christ is to put on the "new self," striving to walk in love of God and neighbour.

This new life in Christ is marked by compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. The "old self," ruled by selfishness and enslaved by harmful passions, destroys both ourselves and those around us. The "new self," by contrast, is characterised by a communal spirit and constant concern for others. Gratitude then becomes our natural response—a heart that sings the praises of the Creator, echoing today's psalm. Truly, Christians have been blessed "with every spiritual blessing in Christ" (Eph 1:3–14), and ceaseless praise is the fitting response.

The Beatitudes in Luke's Gospel reveal the very mind of Christ. They free us from the burden of our sinful nature and open before us the path to true happiness and peace, the way Jesus Himself walked on earth. To live by these Beatitudes is to allow Christ's own attitudes to shape our choices and relationships.

As pilgrims on earth, we live with our gaze fixed on heaven. Since Christ has passed beyond this world, we too must learn to live for what endures. The good we do may never be seen, recognised, or praised, but it is known to God, "who searches the heart" and rewards in His own time. Let us, then, persevere in living as a people raised with Christ, clothing ourselves each day with the virtues of the new self and walking in grateful praise until we share fully in His glory.

Response: How good is the Lord to all.



A Much Needed Reminder

Twenty Third Week in Ordinary Time Col 3: 12-17: Ps 150: 1-6: Lk 6: 27-38

There are days when we wake up feeling unworthy. The weight of our failures, and the words we wish we could take back settle on us like a fog. Yet, in today's reading, Paul wakes us up to remind us who we really are, not by our own merit but by God's mercy – chosen, holy and beloved. Paul does not just motivate us into wishful thinking. Rather, he calls us to remember what has already been done for us. We are no longer who we were! Our old selves have been put off and now we dress ourselves in something new. But what?

Put on compassion, he says. Not a feeling of sympathy but the kind that prompts us to place ourselves in the place of those who are suffering. Put on kindness, he adds. Not the kind that makes us feel good but restore dignity in those who need it. Wear humility, he says, not self-pity but the quiet strength to let go of being right all the time. Wear gentleness, he says, in a world that often demands hardness. Wear patience, he says, to love people for what they are; not wishing for what we would want them to be.

Paul then takes us another step! He tells us to bear with one another, to realize that we are not perfect ourselves and neither are our enemies. They need to be forgiven not because they deserve it but because Christ forgave us when we did not! Paul then says to put on love, the love that seeks the good of the other. It is this love that binds our fragmented selves into one happy child of God! Paul gives us some advice after. He says to let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts. What is this peace? This peace is not the absence of trouble but the presence of Christ even amid tribulations. It is the joy that comes when he dwells deep within us.

This passage is not some suggestion. It is a reminder of who we are and whose we are. Let us remind ourselves that and wait for the change of perception of life!

Response: Let everything that breathes praise the Lord!



Tuning The 'I' First

Twenty Third Week in Ordinary Time 1 Tm 1: 1-2, 12-14: Ps 16: 1-2, 5, 7-8, 11: Lk 6: 39-42

The readings today speak clearly about the need for humility and self-awareness, especially when we feel the urge to correct others. In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus uses a vivid and even dramatic image: someone trying to remove a speck from another person's eye while a log remains in their own. It's an exaggeration, yes—but a purposeful one that exposes how easily we focus on others' faults while ignoring our own.

We have all experienced this. Perhaps we get irritated with someone's habits, or we are quick to point out their flaws—but how often do we stop to ask ourselves: *Do I struggle with the same thing?* Jesus is not forbidding fraternal correction. Rather, He is inviting us to begin with honest self-examination. Before we speak into someone else's life, we must allow God to examine and transform our own.

The first reading gives us a powerful example of this in St. Paul. He speaks with striking honesty about his past: once a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an arrogant man. Yet Paul does not mention this to wallow in guilt. He recalls it to proclaim the overwhelming mercy of Christ. Paul knows that it was not his own goodness that saved him—it was God's grace. This awareness keeps him humble and makes him a compassionate leader, not one who corrects from a place of superiority, but from deep gratitude and love.

The message is simple yet deeply challenging: real change begins with me. If I want to help others grow in faith or virtue, I must first surrender my own weaknesses to God. Real correction, must flow not from pride or irritation, but from love—genuine, humble, patient love.

Let us ask the Lord today for honest and open hearts—hearts that are willing to be corrected, hearts that see others with mercy, and hearts that always choose the path of humility.

"Lord, help me to see myself clearly. Remove what blinds me, so that I may walk in truth and guide others gently—just as You have guided me."

Response: It is you, O Lord, who are my portion.



Cultivating Virtue from the Root Memorial of Saint John Chrysostom

1 Tm 1: 15-17; Ps 113: 1-7; Lk 6: 43-49

Jesus says in today's Gospel: 'A good tree does not bear rotten fruit, nor does a rotten tree bear good fruit. Every tree is known by its own fruit.' Jesus uses this image of the tree to teach that a person's actions - whether good or bad - reflect what is in their heart. As Charles Read once said: 'Sow an act and you reap a habit; sow a habit and you reap a character; sow a character and you reap a destiny.' Just like a fruit, character does not appear instantly. It grows over time. Jesus teaches that good fruit comes from a healthy and sound life - one that follows moral values and has integrity. If our lives show love, faith, patience, and honesty, it means we are living rightly. But if we show anger, envy, selfishness, or laziness, then something inside us may be spiritually unwell. The words we speak can reveal what is in our hearts. So, we should always try to choose our words from the goodness we store within.

Jesus also tells a parable about building on the right foundation. This connects to His message about sound living. The foundation we build our lives on, will determine how we handle life's difficulties. The only way to prove our sincerity is by putting our faith into action. Words alone are not enough; actions speak louder. Faith must be active - it calls us to respond. And this response would mean that we nurture and grow in the virtues that are expected of us as Catholics, and reject all vices that keep us away from God's love!

Thus, if we produce good fruits, let us rejoice! But if we notice bad fruits in our lives, let us turn to God and ask for a change of heart - a *metanoia*. We need to be transformed from within. This means reaching out to healing through confession and working hard to build a virtuous life.

True people are honest and trustworthy before God, themselves, and others. Their words and actions go hand in hand. So, let us ask ourselves: What kind of foundation is my life built upon?

Response: May the name of the Lord be blest for evermore.

14 sun

The Cross Still Speaks

Feast of the **Exaltation of the Holy Cross** Nm 21: 4-9: Ps 78: Phil 2: 6-11: In 3: 13-17

The liturgy of the day holds a profound significance. Today is the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. This feast has more than a historical remembrance. It is a personal invitation to reflect on how God transforms suffering into redemption. The readings of the day guide us through this same mystery, beginning with the Israelites in the desert. One can only imagine their exhaustion and their frustration after years of wandering. They cry out against God and Moses, not just complaining but rejecting the very journey meant to lead them to freedom. In response, they face venomous serpents. It is not a punishment that God gives, but it is a consequence of their own turning away from trust. Yet even here, God does not abandon them. He instructs Moses to lift up a bronze serpent, so that anyone who looks at it in faith, may live. It is a powerful moment, and a lesson that redemption from death does not come from their own efforts, but from simply lifting their eyes to what God has provided.

This story speaks to our own lives. How often in our struggles, do we grow impatient with God? We question His timing, His plan, even His love. We might not voice it aloud, but our hearts whisper, 'Why is this happening? Where are You?' And yet, even in our doubt, God offers a way back. Way back not by removing the consequences of our choices, but by giving us something to fix our gaze upon. For the Israelites, it was the bronze serpent. For us, it is the Cross.

Jesus makes this connection clear in the Gospel when he says, "...just as Moses lifted up the serpent, so must the Son of Man be lifted up." The Cross is not just a tragic end to Christ's life; it is the moment where God takes all our brokenness, our fears, our sins, our despair and transforms it. When we look at the Cross, we not merely see an instrument of torture; we behold in it 'love' in its purest and most vulnerable form. It is as if God says, "I meet you here, in your suffering. I do not stand apart from it, rather I enter into it, and I make it holy."

Paul's words in his letter to the Philippians deepen this truth. Christ, though divine, emptied Himself, not reluctantly, but willingly. He did not cling to His power; He let it go, becoming human, embracing weakness, even accepting death on a Cross. This is not the distant God as some of us sometimes picture, watching from afar. This is a God who kneels in the dirt, who knows hunger and thirst, who feels the weight of betrayal and the bite of nails. And because of this, the Cross becomes more than a symbol, it becomes a bridge between heaven and earth, between God's holiness and our humanity.

So, what does this feast declare to us? It means that when life feels heavy, when we are weighed down by failure, grief, or uncertainty, we do not have to carry it all alone. The Cross teaches us that suffering, when united to Christ, is not meaningless. It is where we meet God most intimately. It also calls us to repentance. Like the Israelites, we are invited to recognize where we have turned away from trust and to look up again, to let God's mercy heal us. And finally, it challenges us to love as Christ loved. Not in grand, sweeping gestures, but in small, daily sacrifices: to practise patience when we are frustrated, forgiveness when we are hurt, humility when we would rather assert ourselves.

The Cross is not a relic of the past. It is alive, it is God's ongoing answer to human suffering – still speaking, still offering hope. Christ's outstretched arms still embrace the broken, His wounds still speak mercy to the guilty, His death still brings life to the despairing. Every moment of forgiveness, every spark of hope in darkness, proves the Cross' power did not end 2,000 years ago.

Today, let us pause and really look at the Cross, not as a distant symbol, but as a personal promise. God does not explain away our pain, but He does something greater: He redeems it. In the shadow of the Cross, even our darkest moments can become places of grace. In a world of temporary solutions, the Cross remains God's eternal promise that no suffering is beyond redemption.

Response: Never forget the deeds of the Lord!

15 MON

Seven Sorrows; One Love

Memorial of Our Lady of Sorrows

1 Tm 2: 1-8; Ps 28: 2, 7-9; Jn 19: 25-27 or Lk 2: 33-35

Today, we celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows. The Church remembers the deep sorrow and pain Mary experienced as the Mother of Jesus. Tradition speaks of the seven sorrows, that marked her life as she stood beside her Son in His suffering for our salvation. These seven sorrows are: 1. Prophecy of Simeon: who told her that a sword would pierce her heart; 2. Flight into Egypt: escaping with the newborn Jesus to avoid Herod's deadly plan; 3. Losing Jesus in the Temple: searching for Him in great distress for three days; 4. Meeting Jesus on the Way to Calvary: seeing Him bruised and burdened with the cross; 5. Standing at the Foot of the Cross: watching Him suffer and die; 6. Receiving Jesus' Body: holding His lifeless body taken down from the cross; 7. Placing Jesus in the Tomb: laying Him to rest and returning in sorrow.

Her sorrow was not merely emotional but spiritual and full of meaning. She willingly shared in the suffering of Christ for our sake. That's why the Church honours her sorrow twice: during Passion Week and again today, a feast instituted by Pope Pius VII in the 15th century. Mary is not only the Mother of Jesus she is also the Mother of the Church, which is the Body of Christ. Though she no longer suffers, her compassion continues. As the Book of Lamentations says, "To whom shall you be compared, O Virgin? Your sorrow is like the sea." Even today, statues of Mary in various places have reportedly wept reminding us that she still feels in her motherly heart, the pain manifested in the world. Her heart remains open to all who suffer.

So, when trials come, bring your pain to Mary; imitate her in reaching out to others in pain—with a kind word, a listening ear, or a gentle touch. Mary teaches us that sorrow joined with Christ brings healing and grace. Her loving endurance shows us how pain can lead to deeper love and unity. Let her example help us carry our own crosses with hope and help others do the same!

Response: Blest be the Lord, for he has heard the sound of my appeal.

16 TUE

Called to be Life-Givers!

Memorial of Saints Cornelius and Cyprian

1 Tm 3: 1-13; Ps 101: 1-6; Lk 7: 11-17

"God has visited his people," must have been the response of the people of Naim, as they witnessed Jesus raise the son of the widow. St John the Evangelist beautifully articulates it in Jesus' words, "I have come that they may have life and have it in abundance!" Jesus raised three people back to life – the daughter of Jairus, the son of the widow of Naim, and Lazarus. Although these examples project Him, the Author of Life, giving life to frail humans who received death's painful embrace, He had nevertheless come in human flesh to give life to our sinful selves. He had come to redeem us from sin and slavery and to elevate us to the lost dignity of children of God.

Though unrelated in the first glance, the first reading of the day bears a meaningful connection to the Gospel. In his Letter to Timothy. St Paul sets a standard for the life of a bishop and a deacon. Deacons. Priests and Bishops are all ordained ministers of the Church. Unlike every baptized who share in the common priesthood, these are specifically ordained into the ministerial priesthood of Christ! Hence, in the liturgy, they act in persona *Christi.* In his ministry, Christ gave life to people, and these men who are chosen by God, are called by the Lord to share in the same mission - to be givers of life. Of course, our clerics are not expected to raise the dead, but through their ministry, through their holiness, and prayer life, they are invited to raise people from their spiritual dormancy, cure their indifference to religion, and rejection of faith! An example par excellence would be the saintly Cure of Ars. Through his selfless efforts and persistent prayers, St John Mary Vianney was able to revive faith in the village of Ars: he brought people back to life! This is what the Church expects from her ministers.

As we draw our reflection on these passages from the scripture, let us offer our prayers for our deacons, priests and bishops so that in their ministry they may be guided by the spirit and may revive souls for God!

Response: I will walk with blameless heart.



Responding to God's Speech

Twenty Fourth Week in Ordinary Time 1 Tm 3: 14-16; Ps 111: 1-6; Lk 7: 31-35

In Luke 7:31–35, Jesus rebukes His generation for their stubbornness, likening them to children in the marketplace who refuse to respond to either joyful music or a funeral dirge. Through the prophets, God repeatedly called His people to conversion, yet they turned away. Jeremiah lamented, "They have turned their backs to me and not their faces" (Jer. 2:27), and Isaiah decried those who "hear but do not understand, see but do not perceive" (Isa. 6:9). Again and again, divine invitations to return to the Lord were met with indifference or hostility.

Jesus exposes this tragic pattern by contrasting the ministries of John the Baptist and Himself. John came in fiery asceticism, calling the people to repentance in the spirit of Elijah (Mal. 4:5–6), yet many dismissed him as fanatic or possessed. Jesus, embodying the tender mercy of God (Hos. 11:4), shared meals with tax collectors and sinners, and was derided as a glutton and drunkard. The same God who spoke through the Law and the Prophets now spoke through John and through His own Son—yet His people refused to listen, because it was not their expectation!

Christianity, then, is the culmination of this divine dialogue. In Christ, both the uncompromising holiness of God, as proclaimed by John, and the boundless mercy of God, revealed in Jesus, meet in perfect harmony. The "children of wisdom" (Lk 7:35) are those who discern the voice of God in every form it takes—whether through the stern call to repentance or the gentle offer of grace. They recognise that God's ways, though at times unsettling, always lead to life.

Today, this challenge persists. Are we willing to welcome God's wisdom in all its expressions, even if it unsettles us? Do we embrace both the cross of conviction and the banquet of mercy? May we not be like the unresponsive children of the marketplace, but imitate those who, hearing God's voice, rise to answer.

Response: Great are the works of the Lord.

18 THU

Faith is Lived; Not just Professed

Twenty Fourth Week in Ordinary Time 1 Tm 4: 12-16; Ps 111: 7-10; Lk 7: 36-50

Paul urges Timothy not to let his youth become an obstacle but to "set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity" (1 Tim 4:12). Authentic faith is not measured by age, experience, or status but by a life that bears the marks of Christ's transforming power. Paul further exhorts him to "devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching, and to teaching," underscoring that the Word of God must both be proclaimed with clarity and embodied with integrity.

The Gospel gives us a striking picture of this integrity in the unnamed sinful woman who anoints Jesus' feet with her tears and perfume. Her actions, humble yet bold, scandalise Simon the Pharisee, who silently questions Jesus' prophetic credentials. But Christ defends her, revealing that the depth of her love flows from the forgiveness she has received: "Her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown." Here, true devotion is not about outward appearances or social standing but about a heart surrendered to grace.

What do we learn from the Word of God today?

1. Faith is lived, not merely professed: Like Timothy, we are called to mirror Christ in our words, actions, relationships, and choices. 2. God's grace fuels our growth: Timothy's gifts required nurturing, and the forgiven woman's love sprang from mercy received. 3. True devotion defies expectations: A young leader and a repentant sinner both embody the values of God's Kingdom, where the humble are lifted up and the self-righteous are challenged.

Today, Christ still asks: "Will you love Me with your whole life and not just in words?" Whether we serve faithfully, like Timothy, or pour out extravagant love, like the forgiven woman, our lives can become living testimonies of God's grace.

Response: Great are the works of the Lord.



Partners in Jesus' Mission

Twenty Fourth Week in Ordinary Time 1 Tm 6: 2-12; Ps 49: 6-10, 17-20; Lk 8: 1-3

The Scripture clearly tells us that in obedience to God's plan, Jesus the second person of the Blessed Trinity took upon himself human nature and dwelt among us. His mission was to reconcile the fallen humanity to God the Father. And as he went around to teach and preach about the values of the Kingdom of God many people gathered around him. He had so many disciples and among them some were women as we heard in today's gospel. Not only there were just his followers but they also provided to Jesus and his disciples and took care of them. And it is also said of these women that they were helped by Jesus in one or other way. So we see in turn being very grateful to Jesus for all the help they had received from him, they became his followers and took care of their needs in their missionary works. Hence, they became active partners in Jesus' mission.

In the first reading we hear St Paul's advice to Timothy as a pastor and spiritual leader. Without doubt that advice applies to all spiritual leaders and believers. His advice is how to face false teachings and to be steadfast to the truth without any monetary gains. He invites all to purse righteousness, godliness, faith, love endurance and gentleness. This advice is nothing but to continue the very mission of Jesus. In baptism all of us are given the same mission and we are to invited to work as as to propagate the Kingdom of God to all people and to all nations.

How do we live this mission in our own day to day lives and how do we participate in the mission of Jesus? Are we aware that we are partners in the mission of Jesus? Are we ready to be fully committed to the mission of Jesus? We have the beautiful example of the women who not only followed Jesus, but also provided for his needs from their own resources. It is a kind of example for many of us to be partners in the mission of Jesus providing from our sources for the mission works.

Response: Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.



Living the Word

Memorial of Saints Andrew Kim and Companions

1 Tm 6: 13-16; Ps 100: 1-5; Lk 8: 4-15

In the first reading, St. Paul exhorts Timothy to remain faithful to the Gospel, reminding him of the One whom he serves: Jesus Christ, "the King of kings and Lord of lords." Paul describes Christ as the one "who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light." These words are not just majestic; they are meant to ground us in reverence and awe. We are called to live not for ourselves, not for the applause of the world, but for the eternal King whose return we await.

The parable in the Gospel of Luke invites us into deep self-examination. Jesus, the Divine Sower, scatters the seed of the Word across all hearts, but the fruit depends on the condition of the soil. Some seed fall on the path, on rocky ground, among thorns; only the good soil bears lasting fruit. Jesus teaches that this good soil is the heart that hears the Word, holds fast to it with a good and honest heart, and bears fruit with patience.

It implies that fruitfulness in the Christian life begins with receptivity. Not just hearing the Word on Sunday but allowing it to shape our decisions, our desires, our very identity. It also means recognizing the distractions and temptations that threaten to harden or choke our hearts: anxiety, pleasure, pride, superficial living. If we are not careful, we can be among those who hear the Word but never allow it to take root.

But the good news is that the seed is powerful, and that the Sower is generous. If we prepare our hearts through prayer, humility, and a willingness to change, the Word will bear fruit: thirty, sixty, and hundredfold.

To be rooted in the Word is to be anchored in truth, to live with purpose, and to grow in faith, even when the journey is slow or difficult. We do this not for a fleeting reward, but because we live for the King; the eternal Lord who will come again in glory.

Let us, then, open our hearts anew, cultivate the soil of our souls, and live every day with our eyes fixed on Jesus Christ, our King and our Sower.

Response: Come before the Lord, singing for joy.

21 SUN

Choosing God over Greed

Twenty Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time Am 8: 4-7; Ps 113: 1-2, 4-8; 1 Tm 2: 1-8; Lk 16: 1-13

Today, on the 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time, all the readings point us in one direction: the call to honesty and integrity in all our dealings. From the prophet Amos in the First Reading to St. Paul in the Second, and St. Luke in the Gospel, all the writers are united in warning us against the destructive power of greed. Greed is a vice that is subtle but spreads rapidly. The Lord abhors dishonest gain and will not forget the injustices done to others through deceit. As Ephesians 5:5 reminds us, greed is a form of idolatry, and idolatry distances us from the presence of God.

We live in a world constantly enticing us to desire more wealth, influence, and recognition. Many, including leaders and influential figures, have fallen due to unbridled cravings for power or possessions. Even ordinary people are tempted to cut corners, ignore justice, or pursue self-interest at the cost of others. Greed may not always be loud, but it silently corrodes the soul. That is why the second reading urges us to pray — not only for ourselves but for everyone, especially those in leadership. Prayer roots us in God's will and protects our hearts from being captivated by materialism.

In Carmelite spirituality, prayer is not just a discipline; it is a relationship that transforms. Earnest prayer gives clarity about what truly matters. The Carmelite tradition reminds us that silence, solitude, and inner detachment lead to freedom from worldly attachments. The more we immerse ourselves in God, the more we can resist the allure of wealth, status, and success.

The Gospel presents us with the parable of the dishonest steward — a puzzling story on the surface. While Jesus is not praising the steward's dishonesty, He commends his *shrewdness*. The steward realized he had little time and acted decisively to secure his future. Likewise, Jesus invites us to wake up to spiritual urgency. If only we were as quick and intentional about heavenly matters as we often are about earthly ones! It is never too late to turn our lives around. Mercy is always available, and healing is always possible — especially when our repentance is sincere and accompanied

by action.

The Psalm today affirms the heart of God: "He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap." God's justice always favours the vulnerable. In Biblical language, the *anawim* — the poor, the forgotten, the lowly — have a special place in His heart. This aligns with the spirit of Mary, Our Mother, who proclaimed in her *Magnificat* that God "lifts up the lowly" and "fills the hungry with good things." To follow God means to walk in solidarity with the poor and to be generous in heart and deed.

Greed not only causes personal spiritual decay but also wounds the fabric of the community. When we are consumed by selfishness, families suffer, relationships break down, and societies become unjust. We are invited today, on the feast of St. Mathew, who was a tax collector, to examine our choices — how we earn, spend, give, and withhold. Are our decisions rooted in justice and love? Do we care for the marginalized or ignore their cries? Do we store up treasures in heaven or chase after what moth and rust destroy?

Let us then choose to serve God, not mammon. Let us turn away from greed and walk the path of trust, prayer, and generosity. As Jesus says, "You cannot serve both God and wealth." But we can serve God with our wealth — by using it to bless others, heal wounds, and uplift lives. May our lives be marked by truth, humility, and mercy. And may our prayers rise like incense before God, drawing us ever closer to His heart.

In a world driven by consumerism and excess, today's readings confront us with a counter-cultural invitation. We are called not only to avoid greed but to embrace a life of simplicity and generosity. This does not mean living in poverty for its own sake, but cultivating a free heart — free to give, to serve, to detach, and to love without conditions. Such a heart is a fertile ground for God's presence, as evident in the words of St Paul!

This message resonates deeply with the Carmelite vocation. The spirit of Carmel calls us to embrace *spiritual poverty* — to empty ourselves so that God may fill us. In surrendering our grasping hearts, we gain a deeper treasure: intimacy with God and unity with His will.

Resp.: Praise the Lord, who raises the poor from the dust.

22 MON

Let Your Light Shine

Twenty Fifth Week in Ordinary Time Ezr 1: 1-6; Ps 126: 1-6; Lk 8: 16-18

Today, Jesus offers what seems at first to be nothing more than common sense: "Who would light a lamp and then cover it with a jar or hide it under a bed?" A lamp is meant to shine, to dispel darkness, and to guide. Yet the Lord's teaching goes beyond simple logic: "For nothing is hidden that will not be made manifest...to those who have, more will be given!" These words come alive in today's first reading through the remarkable story of King Cyrus of Persia.

Nearly 47 years had passed since the destruction of Solomon's Temple and the exile of the Jews in Babylon. During that time, the mighty Babylonian empire itself fell to the Persians, and Cyrus ascended the throne. In the first year of his reign, the Lord "stirred up the spirit" of this pagan king, commissioning him to rebuild His temple in Jerusalem. Why would God entrust such a sacred mission, to a Gentile ruler rather than to one of His own people? Perhaps here we find the meaning of Jesus' words: "To the one who has, more will be given."

This had nothing to do with Cyrus' wealth or military power; it was about his openness to the living God of Israel. The more Cyrus acknowledged the Lord as the true God, the more God entrusted to him—His plans, His people, and His mission.

Seen side by side, the Gospel and the first reading paint Cyrus as the very image of the lamp Jesus describes. Lit by the fire of God's word, Cyrus refused to hide this light. Instead, he proclaimed it boldly throughout his vast empire by issuing an edict: every Jew held in exile was free to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple of the Lord. His proclamation was not only an act of governance but a testimony—a light shining for all to see—declaring that all his victories and kingdoms were gifts from the God of Israel.

May we, like Cyrus, allow the light of God's word to burn brightly within us, refusing to hide it, so that others too may walk in its brilliance.

Response: What great deeds the Lord worked for us!

23 TUE

Obedience is Doing God's Will

Memorial of **Saint Pio of Pietrelcina**Ezr 6: 7-8. 12. 14-20: Ps 122: 1-5: Lk 8: 19-21

Jesus preached good news and transformed the lives of those who believed. He frequently emphasized that His disciples had to hear and obey His word. Take heed then how you "hear" (Luk 8-18). Jesus uses opportunity to teach once more about true discipleship: 'my mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it.' Perhaps Jesus' statement may seem odd, reducing his family relationship. But Jesus knew he could point to His mother Mary, as the supreme illustration of one who hears and accepts the word of God.

Our relationship with God, and with those who are associated with us in obeying God's will is far superior to our relationship with our family members! Luke presents Mary as a model of obedience; a model of what Paul calls the obedience of faith. To obey is to listen to God's word and to do what God inspires us to do. It comes from the Latin word meaning 'hearing.' This connection between obedience and listening is also expressed in Greek: to 'obey' is to listen from below, to listen from a position of reverence and humility.

In his *Spiritual Canticles* St. John of the Cross writes: "The union of love of God is habitual and loving attentiveness of the will to God."

St Teresa of Avila, in her book *Foundations* says, "When once a soul has resolved to love You and has resigned itself into Your hands, You will have nothing of it save that it shall obey You and find out for itself how it may please you and desire to do so. It has no need to look for paths or to choose them. For its will is Yours, You my Lord take upon yourself the task of guiding it in the way which is the greatest benefit to it." The highest perfection consists not in interior favours or in great raptures or in visions or in the spirit of prophecy but in the bringing of our souls so closely into conformity with the will of God, that as soon as we realise that He wills anything we desire it ourselves with all out might.

Response: Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord.



Forgive, as God has Forgiven us Twenty Fifth Week in Ordinary Time

Ezr 9: 5-9; Tb 13: 2-4, 7-8; Lk 9: 1-6

Betrayal, treachery, infidelity, deceit are experiences that can leave us marred for life. And there are, perhaps, only a few who have not experienced these wounds, either to a greater or lesser extent. How difficult is it to trust again after such setbacks! And the dearer the perpetrator, the deeper the wounds and the more acute the pain. Though our relationship with others teach us this truth, we fail to amend our action at times, and such remains our repeated behaviour, in our relationship with God!

In today's first reading, amidst all the festivity in the Temple, Ezra is the only one who has a heart to recognize his unworthiness, his and his ancestor's slavery to sin and God's infinite love and mercy; the infinite difference in the way God acts and the way we humans do. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts (Is 55: 8-9).

Our response to any breach of trust is anger, hatred, eternal distrust or revenge and we nurture these passions. However, the invitation we have today is to be like God who moves towards forgiveness and draws closer to us in kindness. This does not mean that we allow ourselves to be abused again. Rather, the invitation is to give up our right to hit back and wound in return for the wound received. "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us": a prayer found on the lips of every Christian, a prayer taught by our Lord Himself by word and perfect example. Our sin cost Jesus His life. The sin we hold against our enemy has not cost us our life. Can we then, not forgive?

The power to forgive has been given to each of us by our Lord, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us (Rom 5:5). May we invoke the same Spirit, may we forgive and let ourselves be healed today.

Response: Blessed is God who lives for ever.



The Hole in our Pockets

Twenty Fifth Week in Ordinary Time Hg 1: 1-8; Ps 149: 1-6, 9; Lk 9: 7-9

The first reading presents the prophet Haggai addressing the Jewish people who had returned from Babylonian exile. Now settled in Jerusalem during a time of peace, they were no longer burdened by war or forced labour. They had time and resources at their disposal. Yet, rather than using these blessings to rebuild the temple of the Lord, a symbol of God's presence among them; they chose instead to focus on constructing luxurious homes for themselves. Through Haggai, God confronts them: "Consider your ways." Their material efforts were yielding little fruit. Despite their labour, they were not satisfied. Haggai links their lack of satisfaction to their spiritual state, suggesting a connection between holistic well-being and fidelity to God.

This prophetic message remains relevant today. When life is comfortable and routine, we, too, are tempted to sideline God. We may fulfil religious duties externally, but our hearts may be more invested in personal goals, possessions, or comfort. In an age where self-interest and consumerism dominate, it is easy to lose sight of our spiritual foundations. We end up building our own "panelled houses" while the inner temple – our relationship with God, lies neglected.

This neglect has consequences. Despite success and abundance, something always seems to be missing. Our hearts feel restless, our achievements hollow. We try to fill the void with more activity, more acquisition—but nothing satisfies. The words of Haggai echo in our hearts: stop, reflect, "consider your ways." What am I lacking? Where is God in my list of priorities?

Jesus reminds us of the first and greatest commandment: to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, and mind. Flowing from this is the second: to love our neighbour as ourselves. When our lives are oriented around this love, our priorities shift. When we seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, all that we truly need will be given to us (Mt 6:33).

Response: The Lord takes delight in his people.

26 FRI

Small Today, Glorious Tomorrow

Twenty Fifth Week in Ordinary Time Hg 2: 1-9; Ps 43: 1-4; Lk 9: 18-22

Have you ever poured your energy into something with high hopes like, planting a garden, preparing a big event, even rebuilding parts of our lives, only to step back and feel disappointed? We expect something grand, something glorious, and instead we see something plain, incomplete, or slow to grow. We wonder, "Is this it? Was all that effort worth it?" That's how the people felt in today's First Reading from the prophet Haggai. They had rebuilt the Temple, but compared to Solomon's majestic version, it looked dim. Disappointed, they thought, "Is this all?" But God responds with encouragement, "Take courage and work, for I am with you. The glory of this house will be greater than the former." God was not focused on the size of the stones, but on the strength of their hearts. He reminded them that the great things often begin small.

In today's Gospel we see Jesus asking, "Who do people say I am?" That is easy, He is asking us to repeat what others say. But then He asks the real question, "Who do you say I am?" This is not just about information. It is about identity, relationship, and faith. Peter boldly says, "You are the Messiah of God." But Jesus does not promise immediate victory. He speaks of suffering, rejection, death and resurrection. Because the path to glory is not flashy, but it is faithful.

So what does this mean for us? Like the people of Haggai's time, we often look at our lives and feel they are not measuring up. We compare, we doubt, we wonder if our efforts matter spiritually, emotionally, even professionally. But the truth is that, God treasures faithfulness over fame. He sees the hidden efforts, the quiet perseverance. He promises that what looks small today can shine with glory tomorrow. So let us not be discouraged by the present. Do not underestimate what God can do with our "little." If our answer to Jesus is personal, that is, "You are my Messiah," then take courage. Let us keep building, praying, trusting. Because with God, what starts small, ends glorious.

Response: Hope in God; I will praise him yet again, my saving presence and my God.

27 SAT

No Shortcuts to Glory

Memorial of Saint Vincent de Paul

Zec 2: 5-9, 14-15; Jer 31: 10-13; Lk 9: 43-45

The Babylonian exile of 586 was a total collapse of the edifice of Israelite cultic mindset. The very God who in the first place gave to his chosen people, holy land, holy city, holy temple, holy kings, holy liturgy, holy priests dispatches all these into exile as they refused to follow the moral injunctions of the law. They were trying to purchase God's favour by quantities of holocausts and sacrifices without a change of life. Institutions that stand as an obstruction between God and humans will be done away with. But God's actions are always salvific, formative and not destructive or vindictive.

Prophet Zachariah in his vision of angels, messengers from God sees the irrelevancy of nostalgic rebuilding of the fallen walls of Jerusalem. He assures them that from the side of God, the Sinai covenant has not been abrogated. When God is with us who can be against us. Prophet invites the dejected returnees from exile to return to God and trust him alone; as no walls of stone can defend them; In vain do the builders labour. God is the 'wall of fire' which no enemy can pull down. Our Spiritual growth is always preceded by moral purification. Without inner freedom, no full restoration of communion with God.

Jesus himself makes this clear in the Gospel today, by shocking the apostles, who rode on the wings of popularity of Jesus'miracels. He makes it clear that he has to undergo very inhuman repulsive sufferings. It is not a mere statement but a message that has to sink into their mind visualizing the happy life. Jesus makes it very clear that purification and healing is the road map for complete happiness; no short cuts. Every disciple has to embrace this liberative and formative purification to be able to enter into the inner joy of belonging to God's kingdom; to Gods' eternal covenantal communion.

Such redefinition of our life makes us look beyond our narrow self, seeking interests and love. It will impel us to get out of our secure fortresses for making the less fortunate lives of poor more secure as St. Vincent de Paul did and found fulfillment.

Resp.: The Lord will keep us, as a shepherd keeps his flock.

28 SUN

God's Voice, Day by Day

Twenty Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time Am 6: 1, 4-7; Ps 146: 7-10; 1 Tm 6: 11-16; Lk 16: 19-31

"God walks among the pots and pans."—St. Teresa cf Avila

God is always speaking—not just in moments of crisis or joy, but in the ordinary situations of human life. The question is: are we listening? The Gospel account of the rich man and Lazarus is a powerful reminder that it is possible to miss the sight of God even when He is right at our gate. Not because we are evil or unwilling, but because we are distracted, preoccupied, or numbed by routine.

Yet the invitation remains open: to return to a way of living that listens to the promptings of the Divine! Here are four steps to help us hear God's voice more clearly in the midst of daily life.

(1) How can we make space for stillness? In a world full of noise and urgency, stillness can feel unproductive—but it is still essential. God rarely speaks over our distractions. He waits for the quiet. Stillness allows our inner world to settle so that we recognize the subtle ways in which He speaks. You do not need an hour of silence. Start with a few minutes in the morning or during a break in your day. Just sit. Breathe. Invite God into that space. These small moments of quiet can soften the heart and tune us in to grace.

It is in stillness—not stress—that we begin to hear the voice of God: gently nudging, reminding, and guiding.

(2) Paying attention to who is at our gate: The rich man's downfall was not hatred. It was indifference. He lived beside someone in need and did nothing. He likely walked past Lazarus often—but never really saw him.

We all have people at our gates—sometimes physically, sometimes emotionally. A colleague who is struggling, a family member who is withdrawn, a friend we have been meaning to check in on. Their needs may not be dramatic, but they are real. God often speaks through these people—not with words, but with presence. When we notice someone, really notice them, we are beginning to hear the voice of God calling us to love. Ask yourself: Who have I stopped seeing?

(3) Respond with love, even when its inconvenient: Once we see, we are invited to act. Love, at its core, is a response. But its rarely convenient. To love in daily life means to be interrupted. To offer time when we are busy. To listen when we would rather move on. To forgive, to stay, to show up—especially when it costs us something.

These acts may seem small, but these are the point of departure for transformation. Each one is a doorway to grace. In choosing to love here and now, we allow God's voice to be enfleshed through our actions. Not every situation can be fixed. But every moment is a chance to respond with kindness, humility, and courage.

(4) Letting ourselves be seen too: Sometimes, we are not the ones offering help. Sometimes, we are the ones in need—tired, grieving, anxious, or unsure. Hearing God's voice also means allowing ourselves to receive. It means not pretending we're fine when we are not. It means letting others carry us when we cannot walk alone.

This is not weakness—it is part of being human. And it opens us up to the grace of community, where God often speaks through the love of others. Letting yourself be seen is a sacred act. It keeps us grounded, honest, and connected to the truth that God's voice speaks in both giving and receiving. The voice of God is not always loud or unmistakable. Often, it is quiet and insistent—a tug on the heart, a moment of compassion, a call to slow down or draw near.

It is easy to wait for a big sign. But in the end, we are already being spoken to—through people, interruptions, Scripture, beauty, and need. God does not shout; He calls. And He waits for us to respond, not with perfection, but with presence.

To obey God is to carry that divine life into the world—not with grand gestures, but with small, faithful steps. This is exactly the exhortation St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross would give us: "The deeper one is drawn into God, the more one must go out of oneself; that is, one must go to the world in order to carry the divine life into it." The gate is still open. The voice still calls. Let us begin.

Response: Come, Lord, and save us.

29 MON

Single-Hearted Love

Feast of Archangels Michael, Gabriel and Raphael
Dn 7: 9-10. 13-14: Ps 138: 1-5: In 1: 47-51

Nathanael comes in to the picture with a lot of prejudice that existed during the time of Jesus. He says, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" He starts of by being skeptical of Jesus as the Messiah even before he meets Jesus and when he learns that Jesus is from Nazareth, his skepticism only grows further. Jesus' opening greeting to Nathaniel breaks through all the walls that he has built up in his life and as the conversation continues Nathaniel comes to believe that Jesus is the Son of God. Now this is a quick transformation. But this is the plain reality of an encounter with Jesus – Jesus transforms us!

How often do we keep ourselves at a safe distance from Jesus? We cannot see him now and that can be a big hindrance to building on faith. He promises that we will see the heaven opened and we shall see the Son of Man and the angels ministering to Him. But how and when do we see this? How do we truly encounter Him? All we need is to approach Him so as to genuinely encounter Him. Our coming to Him would transform us. Our journey with Him would transform our heart.

Nathaniel's heart was ready to listen, to be touched, to be transformed. He was genuine and honest and had no deceit in him. This also means that he nurtured a single-hearted devotion to God. His heart was not divided in caring about other things. He genuinely desired God and wanted to encounter Him. And he received just that when he met Jesus. May we truly desire to meet and encounter God when we come to Him, in our own prayer, in the Eucharist and in Confession. May we open our heart in undivided attention – Jesus thirsts for our hearts. He is waiting to open our eyes, to transform our heart to love and believe, which is a life-long process. The deeper we believe – the more undivided our heart becomes, until the day when we see Him in the resurrection and we will single-heartedly love Him just like the angels do.

Resp.: In the presence of the angels I praise you, O Lord.



Living Everyday in Grace

Memorial of **Saint Jerome** Zec 8: 20-23: Ps 87: 1-7: Lk 9: 51-56

In the first reading, the prophet tells us that the Holy One dwells in the midst of the people for Gentiles would say, "...we have heard that God is with you!" In the New Testament, we see the Church's growth overtime, by its witness to Christ. It is Christ who attracts people. When people see, experience and witness love, humility, gentleness, generosity of the Church's members, prophet Zechariah's words affirm that they will desire "to go with you!" "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (Jn 13:35). Zechariah thus, speaks of the universal mission entrusted to us by God. In my interactions with others, I am invited to manifest the Christ who dwells in me! Do I?

In Psalm 87:1-7 the psalmist expresses his joy in the presence of YHWH at Jerusalem. St Paul in Eph 2:13 says that "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ." Today, because of what Christ has done for us, we experience His presence in our lives. Am I aware of Christ's presence with me, during the day?

The day's gospel presents the episode of Jesus rebuking James and John. They wanted to bring down fire from heaven on those who did not accept Jesus. Probably, the two apostles felt that this was not the way Jesus should have been treated. Insulting people, slamming the door on others' face is not a value that the Gospel teaches us. Even today, when we shut the door on others, we shut the door on Christ who created each one of us in his own image and likeness. The Lord teaches us how to deal with the situation in a Christian Spirit. We are challenged to nurture a spirit of humility and gentleness. The Lord invites us to be His witnesses and to build bridges in love. The Commission on Spirituality: Spirituality for Synodality affirms that "the great gifts of faith, hope and love are lived for Christ in our relationships with each other and especially our neighbour, especially the neighbour who is in need."

Response: God is with us.

THE SACRAMENTS



The Eucharist and Recent Papal Teaching

The post-conciliar Eucharistic theology has been developed by Popes like Paul VI, John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Francis.

Pope St. Paul VI and the Real Presence in the Eucharist

Paul VI has given a new dimension to the mystery of Eucharist in his Homilies, Messages, Addresses, Letters and Encyclicals. It may not be possible to study all these, however, let us have a look at one of his significant encyclicals - *Mysterium Fidei* - Mystery of Faith (Encyclical on the doctrine and Worship of the Eucharist, Sept 03, 1965), focusing on the Eucharist and its significance in the Catholic Church.

In this encyclical, the Pope considers the Eucharist a gift received from Christ as a pledge of boundless love. He understands the Eucharist as the heart and centre of liturgy that enables us to live together by the bond of love. The purpose of this encyclical, the Pope often reiterated, is to discuss pastoral concerns, since erroneous doctrine on the Eucharist was in circulation especially on transubstantiation and presence of the Lord after the Mass. Hence, he explains the Eucharist as a mystery of faith made present in the sacrifice of the Mass and promotes the worship of the Eucharist even outside the Mass.

Pope Paul VI declared the following teachings as impermissible or forbidden:

- to emphasize the 'communal' Mass to the disparagement of Masses celebrated in private,
- to discuss the mystery of transubstantiation without mentioning the marvellous conversion of the whole substance of the bread into the Body and of the whole substance of the wine into the Blood of Christ, speaking rather only of what is called "transignification" and "transfiguration."

• to propose and act upon the opinion according to which, in the Consecrated Hosts which remain after the celebration of the Sacrifice of the Mass, Christ Our Lord is no longer present. These and similar opinions do great harm to the faith and devotion to the Holy Eucharist. Pope Paul VI addressed what

devotion to the Holy Eucharist. Pope Paul VI addressed what he saw as errors or deviations in Eucharistic theology, such as minimizing the Real Presence, emphasizing only the communal aspect of the Mass, or focusing solely on the symbolic nature of the Eucharist. While *Mysterium Fidei* reaffirmed traditional doctrine, it also acknowledged the need for a liturgical reform and the use of vernacular language in certain parts of the Mass, as outlined in the Second Vatican Council's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. In response to requests for more diverse liturgical texts, Pope Paul VI authorized the composition of new Eucharistic Prayers, which were examined by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and authorized for use in 1968.

Pope St. John Paul II and the Eucharist

Though Pius X is known as "the Pope of the Eucharist," Pope St. John Paul II opened the treasures of the Eucharist to the modem world in his theological writings. He loved the Eucharist, the wonderful sacrament, most intimately, and has taught the Church to do the same.

a) **Dominicae Cenae** - The Supper of the Lord - (Apostolic Letter to the Bishops of the Church, Feb 24, 1980) – Pope John Paul II began to write letters to the priests on the occasion of Holy Thursday, since the year 1980. In this letter he explains how the Eucharist can become the school teaching how to love the neighbour (ref. Vat II, Vol. 2, pages 86 - 109).

This beautiful pastoral letter emphasizes the Eucharist as the central mystery of faith and worship, highlighting its role in fostering unity and love within the Church community. The document also touches on the importance of reverence and devotion to the Eucharist, urging priests to be mindful of their role as ministers of the sacrament and guardians of its sacredness. It emphasizes the special responsibility of priests

in celebrating and caring for the Eucharist, highlighting their role as ministers and presiders over Eucharistic celebrations. Furthermore, this document encourages various forms of Eucharistic devotion, including adoration and contemplation, to deepen the appreciation for Christ's presence in the sacrament. Lastly, it stresses the need for reverence in the celebration of the Eucharist, cautioning against arbitrary personal styles or interpretations of the liturgy. This letter is divided into three chapters: The Eucharistic Mystery in the Life of the Church and of the Priest; The Sacred Character of the Eucharist and Sacrifice; and The two tables of the Lord and the common possession of the Church

b) *Dies Domini* - The Day of the Lord - (Apostolic Letter of Pope John Paul II on May 31, 1998). This letter highlights the importance of the day of the Lord and presents the Eucharist as the heart of Sunday. He describes Sunday Eucharist as the "fountain head" of the life of the Church (DD 32) and the epiphany of the Church (DD 34). He considers Sunday Eucharist as a means also to express the unity of the parish community (DD 35-36). He treats the important points of the Eucharist like the table of the word, table of the Body of Christ and the Easter banquet in detail (DD 39-44).

Besides emphasizing the importance of Sunday as the Lord's Day and encouraging Catholics to rediscover its significance in their lives, it also addresses the growing secularization that has diminished Sunday's sacred meaning, urging a return to its liturgical, spiritual, and social dimensions. The letter highlights Sunday as the day of Christ's Resurrection, the celebration of the Eucharist, and the day the Christian community gathers. It calls for a renewal of Sunday observance, emphasizing its role in strengthening faith, fostering community, and promoting human dignity. Thus, the letter aims to help Catholics understand the deep doctrinal foundations of keeping Sunday holy, reminds them to renew the tradition of gathering for Mass, and requests them to place Sunday at the heart of their Christian life, thereby fostering a deep and personal relationship with God and also with others.

This letter has five chapters viz., The Celebration of the Creator's Work; The Day of the Risen Lord and of the Gift of the Holy Spirit; The Eucharistic Assembly: Heart of Sunday; Sunday: Day of Joy, Rest and Solidarity and finally Sunday: The Primordial Feast, Revealing the Meaning of Time

c) Novo Millennio Ineunte - At the Beginning of the New Millennium (January 6, 2001). This letter calls for pastoral planning by the Church everywhere in which the universal call to holiness plays a key role and a spirituality of communion is accented. Examining the dimensions of "a spirituality of communion," including "the ability to see what is positive in others," Pope John Paul II explains a spirituality of communion - "resisting the selfish temptations which constantly beset us." He discusses celebration of the Eucharist, the sacrament of penance, ecumenism and inter-religious dialogue, forms of prayer, the reading of Scripture, the new evangelization, inculturation, ecclesial movements, respect for life, and numerous other topics. Pope St. John Paul II also writes: "We must learn to see [Christ] especially in the face of those with whom he himself wished to be identified: 'I was hungry and you gave me food'... By these words, no less than by the orthodoxy of her doctrine, the Church measures her fidelity."

This letter emphasizes the need for a personal encounter with Christ as the central message, urging the Church to focus on holiness and evangelization in the new millennium. The document outlines key priorities for the Church, including the importance of prayer, contemplation, and living out the Gospel message in daily life. The Pope also emphasizes that holiness is the urgent pastoral task for the Church in the new millennium, calling for a renewed commitment to prayer and spiritual formation. This letter uses the Latin phrase "Duc in Altum" (Launch out into the deep), urging Catholics to move beyond their comfort zones and embrace the challenges of the new millennium with faith and courage. He calls for a deeper understanding and application of the teachings of the Second Vatican Council, particularly in the areas of scripture, liturgy, Church communion, and the Church's role in the world. Finally, the document stresses the primacy of grace in the Christian life, emphasizing that salvation comes through grace and not through human effort alone.

The letter has four chapters, viz., Meeting Christ – The Legacy of the Great Jubilee; A Face to Contemplate; Starting Afresh from Christ and Witness of Love.

d) *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* - The Church from the Eucharist - This Encyclical of John Paul II dated April 17, 2003 explores the relationship between the Eucharist and the Church. He values the Eucharist as the "spiritual wealth of the Church" and invites the Church to gaze at the Eucharist and to discover the boundless love of God. Since the Church is born of the paschal mystery and that is so clearly manifested in the Eucharist, the Pope adds that celebrating the Eucharist is recalling and reliving that mystery in signs. The Pope approaches the mystery of the Eucharist with amazement and laments on shadows that distort this mystery of faith.

The first chapter, "the Mystery of Faith" highlights the Eucharist as the mystery of faith and a gift par excellence. Hence, each time the Church celebrates the Eucharist, it recalls and renews the sacrifice of the cross that culminates in the resurrection. That is why adoration is due to this mystery of faith. Since the Eucharist is a food, it relates to those who share it. Hence, the communion we receive is an explicit expression of Communion with the Church and its head, Jesus Christ. This calls for a commitment to justice and solidarity. The celebration of the Eucharist is not a repetition of Christ's Passover, or its multiplication in time and in space; it is the one sacrifice of the Cross, which is re-presented until the end of time. It is "a medicine of immortality, an antidote to death".

The second chapter, "the Eucharist Builds the Church" examines the role of the Eucharist in building the Church. In fact the growth of the Church depends on the mystery of the Eucharist. That is why we call the Eucharist as the "source and summit" of evangelization that leads us to build a new humanity. The worship of the Eucharist outside the Mass too has a value for the life of the Church; since it is the same Lord

we meet and contemplate there. When the faithful approach the sacred banquet, not only do they receive Christ, but they in turn are received by him. The consecrated Bread and Wine are the force which generates the Church's unity. The Church is united to her Lord who, veiled by the Eucharistic species, dwells within her and builds her up. She worships him not only at Holy Mass itself, but at all other times, cherishing him as her most precious treasure.

The third chapter deals with "the Apostolicity of the Eucharist and of the Church." Just as the full reality of Church does not exist without apostolic succession, so there is no true Eucharist without the Bishop. The priest who celebrates the Eucharist acts in the person of Christ the Head; he does not possess the Eucharist as its master, but is its servant for the benefit of the community of the saved. It follows that the Christian community does not possess the Eucharist, but receives it as a gift. Church has to be true to its apostolic foundation and that becomes the mission of the Church. In other words the mission of both - the Church and the Eucharist is one and the same. In fact, in the Church, the role of the Eucharist reinforces its mission and gives a foundation to the ministerial priests to be at the service of the Church and the Eucharist. The Eucharist is celebrated in conformity with the faith of the Apostles and can be celebrated only by the Apostle's successors.

The fourth chapter speaks of "the Eucharist and the Ecclesial Communion." The Church, as the minister of Christ's body and blood for the salvation of the world, abides by all that Christ himself established. Faithful to the teaching of the Apostles, united in the discipline of the sacraments, she must also manifest in a visible manner her invisible unity. The Eucharist cannot be used as a means of communion; rather it presupposes communion as already existing and strengthens it. In this context emphasis needs to be given to the commitment to ecumenism which must mark all the Lord's followers: the Eucharist creates communion and builds communion, when it is celebrated truthfully. It cannot be subject to the whims of individuals or of particular communities. Since the Church

is communion of God and humanity, the Eucharist becomes its perfection, not the starting point. Hence its ecumenical dimension calls to work for unity among the various Churches with hope.

The fifth chapter deals with "the dignity of the Eucharistic Celebration" and reminds the pastors to celebrate it in the way the Church directs it. Since it is a gift to the Church, the Pope reminds the priests to celebrate it worthily taking into account the modern culture and its challenges. The celebration of the Mass is marked by outward signs aimed at emphasizing the joy which assembles the community around the incomparable gift of the Eucharist. Architecture, sculpture, painting, music, literature and, more generally, every form of art demonstrate how the Church, down the centuries, has feared no extravagance in her witness to the love which unites her to her divine Spouse. A recovery of the sense of beauty is also needed in today's celebrations.

The sixth chapter, "at the School of Mary, A Woman of the Eucharist" is a timely and original reflection on the surprising analogy between the Mother of God, who by bearing the body of Jesus in her womb became the first tabernacle, and the Church who in her heart preserves and offers to the world Christ's body and blood. The Eucharist is given to believers so that their life may become a continuous <code>Magn.ficat</code> in honour of the Most Holy Trinity. This final chapter presents Mary as the woman of the Eucharist and invites the Church to take to heart the example of Mary who offered herself to the Father for the salvation of the world.

(to be continued in next issue)

-- Rev. (Dr) Rathan Almeida OCD Dhyanavana, International Institute of Spirituality, email: meetrathan22@gmail.com



89. RELICS

The word 'relic' is derived from the Latin "reliquiae," meaning "remains," and is a form of the Latin verb 'relinquere' signifying "leave behind" or "abandon."" A reliquary is a shrine that houses one or more religious relics. A relic is a fragment of the body or physical possession of a canonized saint that can help us grow closer to God.

Relics are divided into three classifications. A first class relic is a body part of a saint, such as bone, blood, or flesh. Second-class relics are possessions that a saint owned, and Third category relics are objects that have been touched to a first or second-class relic, or that the saint has touched himself or herself.

Veneration, or an act of honor or respect (not worship), of relics from martyrs dates back to the beginnings of the Church, but Catholic churches did not expose relics until the 1100s. In fact, churches were often built on the remains of Christian martyrs and the recently canonized saints to provide more blessings. The most famous relic - and probably the most controversial - is the Shroud of Turin, which is a burial cloth that many believe depicts the face of Jesus Christ. Other well-known relics include pieces of the cross on which Jesus was crucified, fabric from the veil of Mary, Mother of Jesus, and the Crown of Thorns.

The bodies of some saints are incorruptible, or preserved from natural decomposition of human remains. Even after hundreds of years, saints like John Vianney, Francis Xavier, and Catherine of Bologna have not been fully decomposed and inspire many to learn more about the missions they carried out for God. Many believe that certain relics signify good health and protection. Take for example, the vial of blood from St. Januarius, the patron saint of Naples who was born in the third century, was martyred after he was persecuted for his Christian faith and beheaded. On the Feast of San Gennaro in Italy each year, his blood, which is crusted against the side of the vial, miraculously liquefies. Many Italians believe this miracle indicates a good year for Italy.

Although the miracle does not happen every year, the blood usually liquefies on two more occasions during the year: on the day that celebrates his patronage of Naples and on the day that celebrates the gathering of his relics. Sometimes, the blood additionally becomes liquid when the pope visits.

The veneration of relics can be traced to the early church. Robin Jensen, a professor of theology at the University of Notre Dame, has written a book about the emerging prominence of relics in the fourth century. She admits that she still does not have a working hypothesis to explain why it happened, but she thinks the number of people recounting miracles that occurred in the presence of relics played a part in sparking the movement. "It's pretty clear that this was a kind of dramatic shift in Christian practice," she said.

Tradition has it that in the late fourth century, Helena, the mother of Emperor Constantine, went to Jerusalem and found the cross on which Jesus had been crucified. By the end of the fourth century, people were going to Jerusalem to venerate it. As the veneration of relics began to flourish, controversy and proscriptions followed, involving church fathers such as Jerome, Ambrose, and Augustine, Jensen noted. Wanting to be close to the saints is "a big part of Catholic devotional piety. It's not a world where only Jesus is at the top and we are at the bottom. There's a lot of in-between."

After all, she said, Christians of all varieties, whether or not they pray for the help of saints or venerate relics, are drawn to the concrete places where tradition says Jesus lived, feeling themselves to be in the presence of the holy.

Relics became less prominent in the liturgical renewal that followed Vatican II, according to John Thavis, author of *The Vatican Prophecies: Investigating Supernatural Signs, Apparitions, and Miracles in the Modern Age.*

They saw a resurgence when Pope John Paul II began to canonize numerous saints. Along with each saint came new relics and, in the 1990s, new instructions from Rome on how

they were created, authenticated, and used. Moving to quash a brisk online trade in relics, the Vatican in 2017 issued rules that forbid selling them in online auctions or using them in blasphemous rituals. It also mandated that anyone who might be considering unearthing a body get permission from the family of the candidate for sainthood.

The recent guidelines "confirm a recent trend away from corporeal relics, ruling out 'dismemberment' of saints' corpses without specific permission from Vatican officials," "Today, the Vatican sees a piece of clothing, not a body part, as a proper relic. That's quite a change from earlier centuries, when saints' bones were literally sawed into tiny pieces and distributed to the faithful. In the 1500s, for example, the priest exhuming the body of Saint Teresa of Ávila took one of the fingers from her corpse and wore it around his neck for the rest of his life."

In the popular mind, relics often have a more personal and supernatural significance. Christians have prayed before relics and asked for healing or miraculous favors, convinced that the bone of a saint may serve as a portal to the divine. Vatican officials continually caution against the concept of "magical powers" of relics, but it seems impossible to eliminate these popular beliefs.

Biblical Background

Further, relics actually have a basis in the Bible. In the Old Testament, a brief story is recounted of a man who died, and while he was being buried, a marauding band came by; the man was quickly thrown into prophet Elisha's grave, which was nearby. The Bible tells us that "as soon as the man touched the bones of Elisha, he revived and stood on his feet" (2 Kgs 13:21). Here, God worked a miracle through contact with Elisha's earthly remains, his relics. Of course, God could have done this without the relic. But doing so through the mediation of the relic gives us a tangible sign of the power of the saint's ongoing presence.

Two other examples stand out in the New Testament. In the Acts of the Apostles, healings are said to have occurred

through contact with Peter's shadow: "Now many signs and wonders were done among the people by the hands of the apostles ... so that they even carried out the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and pallets, so that as Peter came by, at least his shadow might fall on some of them" (Acts 5:12-15). Later, with Paul, a similar incident occurs: 'And God did extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, so that handkerchiefs or aprons were carried away from his body to the sick, and diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them" (Acts 19:11-12).

The early Church eagerly gathered the remains of her saints, especially the martyrs. This was not a matter of superstition, but a conviction that God works through the material order. And He often graces His Church with physical signs of His abiding spiritual presence, as well as physical signs of the ongoing vitality of His saints and their continued love for us.

Christianity is not merely an idea. Rather, Christianity is about God's search for us, a search that occurs in history, in real space and time. This gives Christianity a gritty, historical, and concrete quality that is very different from mere myth or a vague spirituality.

One can readily see this difference by noting Christianity's intensely missionary character. From the outset, Christians traveled the known world because they encountered a person; they listened to, touched, and supped with the God-man, Jesus Christ, and they knew it (see Luke 24.36-43). They did not become missionaries because they encountered an interesting new idea—that would not have transformed the Roman world.

Pilgrimage

Biblical faith has also always been a pilgrimage of faith. For example, in the Old Testament, males were required to go on pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the feasts of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles (see Exodus 34:22-23). This is what brought Mary and Joseph and the twelve-year-old Jesus to Jerusalem during the Passover (Luke 2:41-51). These feasts commemorated God's great acts of salvation, acts that occurred in history.

Christians quickly followed suit, showing an earnest desire to be where Jesus was, to walk where he walked—or to travel where God's mighty work had been manifest in a particular saint.

Pilgrimage, relics, and the sacraments all stem from the logic of the Incarnation. God became one of us to touch us and allow us to touch Him; He came down to meet us where we are in order to raise us up to where He is. This is the wondrous mystery of Christianity—the great exchange, whereby He takes on our humanity in order to elevate us to share in His divinity.

Devotion to relics is a genuine desire to be in touch with the holy people or holy places that inspired millions of people with the things of God. This devotion to relics should be encouraged because, in our daily life, we also have photos of our beloved family members that we cherish looking at. In the same way, if we want divine contact, we need to have those relics of saints and holy places giving us an indication that there is something more than normal that can help us get closer to God.

Rev. (Dr) Rudolf V. D'Souza OCD

St. Stephen's Catholic Parish Cayuga, Near Niagara Falls Ontario - Canada RNI No. KARENG/2013/52638. Date of Publication: 10th August 2025 Licensed to post without prepayment: License No. PMG/BG/WPP-320/2023-25

Springs of Living Water Registered KA/BGGPO/2574/2023-25; Posted at Patrika Channel, O/O SSRM, Bengaluru Sorting Division, Mysuru Road, Bengaluru - 560026 on 14th or 15th of every month.

THE CROSS EXALTED

Why did God will that His Son Upon the Cross should die? Cf Adam's sins and those cf Eve To heaven reached the cry.

But God in great compassion Looked down upon the skies And listened to the pleading That through dark clouds arise.

God told the Word incarnate To show His love for them So Jesus gave up Himself Outside Jerusalem.

Today the Cross is exalted On which our Savious died Target of human hatred Yet hope of the Baptized.



- Rev. Fr Paul D'Souza, OCD (for daily liturgical poems visit http://lyrics.carmelmedia.in)

if undelivered please return to:

DHYANAVANA PUBLICATIONS
(A unit of Dhyana Jyothi Trust®)
Cloistered Carmel Annex
14, Ali Asker Road, Bengaluru 560001
Karnataka, India

Mob: 76193 92358

Printed by: Mrs Thankamma Joy, Matha Printers & Publishers
Published by: Fr Praveen Pinto, Owned by: A Unit of Dhyana Jyothi Trust
Dhyanavana Publications, Cloistered Carmel Annex
No. 14, Ali Asker Road, Bengaluru - 560001, Karnataka State