

SPRINGS OF **Living Water**



Daily
Spiritual
Reflections

Bengaluru

Vol: 13

No: 4 Pages - 52

Price: ₹ 15

Editor: Fr Silvester D'Souza

March - 2026
English Monthly



DISARMING HEARTS, DISARMING NATIONS

We are grateful to the CONTRIBUTORS of the reflections:

OCD Frs Alphonse Britto, Avith Pais, George Santhumayor, Joe Tauro, John Sequiera, Joseph D'Souza, Joy Francis, Melwin Lasrado, Noel D'Cunha, Oswald Crasta, Raymond Santhanaz, Roshan Monteiro, Stany Pinto

OCD Deacons Alwin D'Souza, Elston Monteiro, Hilary Rodrigues, Loy Crasta, Stin George,

OCD Sisters from Bengaluru, Chicalim and Pune Carmels

OCD Brs Aldric Xavier, Cristan Fernandes, Fleming D'Souza, Glawin Lester D'Souza, Melrick Rodrigues, Rikson Moras, Vinod Pais, Wilson Rodrigues

OCDS Mrs Diana Wilson, Josephine Menezes and Jubilee Cardoza

Br Adrian Menezes SW

Mr Aroon Fernandes and Maxim D'Cruz

Mrs Delisa Fernandes, 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, Geddalhalli,

Kothanur Post, Bengaluru – 560 077

Email: dpublications7@gmail.com, dpublications1999@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>

Springs of
Living
Water



Daily Spiritual Reflections

Volume No. 13, Issue No. 4

MARCH 2026

PRAYER INTENTION

FOR DISARMAMENT AND PEACE

Let us pray that nations move toward effective disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament, and that world leaders choose the path of dialogue and diplomacy instead of violence.

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

Disarming Hearts, Disarming Nations

Under the same sky where children play and families pray, thousands of nuclear warheads stand ready; these are capable of erasing cities, civilizations, and generations in moments. In an era of renewed tensions between great powers, where ceasefire agreements are disrespected, where nations take pride in their possession of nuclear weapons, the shadow of death is cast over humanity. To this precarious landscape, the Holy Father directs the Church's prayer intention for March: that nations may pursue effective disarmament, especially nuclear disarmament, and that world leaders choose dialogue and diplomacy over violence.

Instead of being a diplomatic wish this intention is a prophetic voice rooted in the Gospel's demand for peace. The Church has spoken with increasing clarity on nuclear weapons, declaring not only their use but their very possession as immoral. Trusting in arms and ammunitions, project an idolatry of power; it is built on the threat of mutual annihilation. As Pope Francis insisted, possessing such weapons is a crime against humanity, for they place the future of creation in the hands of fallible leaders, vulnerable and dangerous systems prone to error, accident, or malice. True security lies not in hoards of weapons, but in conversion of hearts, and nations, toward the path of non-violence which Christ walked.

The Gospel is clear: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God," (Mt 5:9). The prophets envisioned a day when nations "shall beat their swords into ploughshares and spears into pruning hooks" (Is 2:4). Yet nuclear arsenals project the exact opposite: a readiness to annihilate millions, including the poor, the unborn, and future generations. The Cross overturns this logic. Christ refuses retaliation, prays for His executioners, and transforms violence to redemption. The Risen Lord calls His followers to serve and to heal divisions, not to dominate others. In a nuclear age, peace-making demands rejecting the spiral of fear that justifies arsenals spread across acres. Today's world underscores the urgency. Major powers expand and upgrade their nuclear capabilities amid deteriorating relations, while emerging technologies like cyber warfare and upgraded missiles heighten the risks. The Holy Father's call to "effective disarmament" echoes the Church's longstanding support for peace treaties. Dialogue and diplomacy, he emphasizes, are not to be considered as signs

of weakness but are moral imperatives, paths where adversaries become fellow travellers under God's providence.

Disarmament also begins as spiritual conversion. Nations cannot dismantle armories while harbouring in their hearts resentment, suspicion, and domination. Lent, falling in this season, invites believers to fast from violence in all its forms: harsh words in families, indifference to distant wars, the arguments that promote the distinction of "us versus them." Every act of forgiveness in a home, every effort at reconciliation, every choice for dialogue over division turns out to be the global change we seek in the world. The Church, as a sacrament of unity, lends credibility to this call when her members live as artisans of peace. Parishes can educate on Catholic teaching, host forums on nonviolence, and support organizations working against the arms trade and for conflict mediation.

The Church's mission is visible on multiple fronts. Holy See and the Bishops proclaim: "No more nuclear weapons." Diplomatically, Catholic networks foster encounter across divides, as seen in interfaith peace initiatives and Vatican mediation efforts during times of crises. At the grassroots, lay movements accompany war-torn communities, advocate for ethical arms control, and embody integral disarmament working to alleviate poverty and promote care for the environment. These efforts remind us that peace is active labour, demanding courage from leaders as much as citizens.

Even in such tumultuous times as ours, the Spirit stirs courageous voices: scientists who expose the perils of nuclear warfare, diplomats who negotiate in dim-lit rooms, ordinary believers who pray for peace without ceasing. The sight of children studying in warn-torn regions reveal what is at stake: the innocence of humanity which we must protect. At every Mass as we hear the words the Prince of Peace whispered: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you" (Jn 14:27) let us work to make that peace visible.

This March, let our prayer become action: let us pray that nations may pay heed to the Church's voice calling for peace and disarmament, and may human dignity be respected everywhere. Let nations realise that the path to peace is not through superior firepower but superior love.

- Jesvin Tom Benoy, OCD



The Journey of Transfiguration

Second Sunday of Lent

Gn 12: 1-4a/ Ps 33: 4-5, 18-19, 20, 22/ 2 Tm 1: 8b-10/ Mt 17: 1-9

Lent is a season of journey. It begins in the desert with Jesus tempted, and it moves toward the mountain where He is transfigured. Each step is meant to deepen our faith, purify our hearts, and prepare us for the glory of Easter. Today's readings trace this Lenten path, from the call to set out in faith, to the endurance of suffering, and finally to the revelation of divine glory.

In the first reading, we meet Abram at the threshold of a great adventure of faith. God says to him, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you." There are no maps, no guarantees, no explanations, but only a promise. Abram must leave behind the familiar and trust the unseen. His journey is not merely geographical; it is spiritual. It marks the beginning of salvation history—a movement from security to surrender, from human plans to divine providence. Every true believer must, at some point, hear that same call: "Go forth." Leave behind what confines your faith. Step out of comfort and control. Lent, in this sense, is our own pilgrimage from certainty to trust, from possession to promise. God blesses those who walk in faith, not because the road is easy, but because the destination is divine.

St. Paul, writing to Timothy, gives us the next stage of this journey. He urges him, "Bear your share of hardship for the Gospel, with the strength that comes from God." Like Abraham, Timothy is called to courage, not comfort. Faith will always involve risk. But Paul reminds us that grace has already gone before us: "Christ Jesus abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel." The Transfiguration that dazzled Peter, James, and John is already a hidden reality in every believer—we live in the light of a glory that suffering cannot destroy. Lent, therefore, is not about earning God's favor through hardship; it is about uncovering the grace that already sustains us through the cross.

The Gospel brings these themes together in the luminous mystery of the Transfiguration. Jesus takes Peter, James, and

John up a high mountain. There, before their eyes, His face shines like the sun and His clothes become dazzling white. Moses and Elijah who stand as symbols of the Law and the Prophets appear, speaking with Him about His coming passion. It is a breathtaking moment, and Peter, overwhelmed, wants to stay there forever: "Lord, it is good for us to be here." But the voice from the cloud redirects their gaze: "This is my beloved Son... listen to Him." The Transfiguration is not a call to remain in ecstasy; it is a preparation for fidelity. The glory of the mountain will soon give way to the agony of Gethsemane. Jesus allows His disciples to glimpse His divinity so that when they see His humanity bruised and broken, they will not lose hope.

Lent invites us to climb that same mountain, not for escape, but for perspective. There, we see who Jesus truly is: the Son in whom the Father is well pleased, and who we are called to become. But we cannot stay on the mountain. We must descend into the valley of daily life, carrying within us the memory of the vision. The light we have seen is meant to guide us through darkness.

Notice the tenderness of Jesus' gesture at the end of the scene. The disciples fall to the ground in fear when the divine voice speaks, but Jesus comes to them, touches them, and says, "Rise, and do not be afraid." These words are the heart of the Gospel today. Faith is not freedom from fear; it is the courage to rise again because Jesus is near. "Rise, and do not be afraid." That is God's word to every pilgrim soul this Lent. When the journey feels uncertain like Abraham's, when the cost of discipleship feels heavy like Timothy's, when the cross looms large before us, remember this moment on the mountain. The glory revealed there is not a passing vision; it is the destiny prepared for all who follow Christ. The Transfiguration is not just about Jesus, it is about us, transformed by grace into His likeness. As we continue through Lent, let us allow the Lord to lead us up the mountain of prayer, to strengthen our faith, and then to lead us back down into the world with renewed courage.

***Response: May your merciful love be upon us,
as we hope in you, O Lord.***

2
MON**Return to the Lord with a Merciful Heart***Second Week of Lent*

Dn 9: 4b-10/ Ps 79: 8, 9, 11 and 13/ Lk 6: 36-38

Lent is a sacred season of return, a journey inward to the truth of our hearts and forth to the tangible practice of kindness. The Word of God presented to us blends two essential aspects of Christian life: humble repentance before God and active mercy towards our neighbour. As God's children, we are called to consider whether our Christian way of living genuinely yields the fruit of kindness. The first reading presents one of Scripture's most powerful penitential prayers. Daniel stands before God without excuses, confessing shared guilt and embodying the Church's teaching that sin has both personal and social dimensions (*Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*). He identifies with the people and accepts shared responsibility. Yet his confession is also filled with hope, proclaiming a faithful God whose mercy restores justice with love. As the Catechism teaches, no sin is beyond forgiveness. In the Gospel, Jesus reveals God's very nature: mercy. Lived through forgiveness, generosity, and freedom from judgment, mercy shows how deeply God's kindness has healed us. As *Misericordiae Vultus* affirms, mercy is the foundation of the Church's life.

Carmelite spirituality insists that true contemplation leads to compassion. St. Teresa of Ávila warns that prayer without love of neighbour is an illusion, while St. John of the Cross teaches that we will be judged only on love. The stillness of Carmel is not an escape from the world, but a place where God purifies the heart of judgment, anger, and self-righteousness. Only an emptied heart can become a vessel of kindness. As *Gaudium et Spes* reminds us, the joys and sorrows of humanity are also those of Christ's followers. Lent calls us to honest self-examination: to be humble before God, compassionate toward others, and purified in prayer. Jesus reminds us that the measure we give is the measure we receive. Lent is not only about renunciation, but about becoming like the Father. Daniel teaches us to return to God in humility; Jesus teaches us to live that reconciliation in mercy. May this Lent make us credible witnesses of the Father's gracious love.

Response: O Lord, do not treat us according to our sins.

3
TUE

From Ritual to Renewal

Second Week of Lent

Is 1: 10. 16-20/ Ps 50: 8-9, 16bc-17, 21 and 23/ Mt 23: 1-12

Today's scriptural passage reaches into the very heart of Lent, calling us to embrace a deep, life-changing conversion. In Isaiah, the prophet speaks to the people as if they were "Sodom" and "Gomorrhah"; intending to wake them up from spiritual complacency. God is not interested in empty rituals or pious appearances; He desires a transformed heart. "Wash yourselves clean... cease to do evil, learn to do good." Lent is to turn from the habits that darken our lives and to choose the light. Isaiah also offers a promise as bold as the call: "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall become white as snow." God never exposes our faults to shame us, but to heal us. Repentance is not condemnation, it is an opening, a clearing of the soul where grace can flow freely again. Like a parent who sees a child covered in mud, God does not reject us; He draws near with compassion, ready to wash and renew. In the Gospel, Jesus speaks of the scribes and Pharisees. They know the Law well, but the gap between their words and their deeds create chaos. They burden others but do nothing on their part. Jesus teaches us that true greatness in the Kingdom is not found in titles or honor, but in humility.

Together, these readings expose two dangers which Lent confronts: hypocrisy and empty religiosity. It asks us not to be Christians only in appearance, nor to treat faith as a ritual. Instead, we are called to integrity; where what we profess with our lips is lived in our lives. Think of a person who quietly serves; perhaps a parent caring for a sick child, or someone who forgives without demanding attention. These hidden acts reveal the heart of Christ more powerfully than public displays of piety. God is keen on the surrender our hearts live, than on the impression our hearts create. As we journey through Lent, may we allow God to wash us, reshape us, and lead us into deeper authenticity. Let us choose humility over pride, service over status, conversion over comfort. And may we discover that in surrendering ourselves, we find the true freedom and joy that God desires for us.

Response: To one whose way is blameless, I will show the salvation of God.



Poor Attention to The Rich Joy

Second Week of Lent

Jer 18: 18-20/ Ps 31: 5-6, 14, 15-16/ Mt 20: 17-28

As we continue our Lenten journey, the readings invite us deeper into the mystery of pain and suffering, helping us to understand the Cross of Jesus. Jesus came into the world to reconcile us with God. Our sins had distanced us from His presence, and the path He chose to restore us was the way of suffering and the way of the Cross. In the Gospel, Jesus is on His way to Jerusalem, where He will be rejected, accused, persecuted, and finally nailed to the Cross. He tries to prepare His disciples for this harsh reality, inviting them to accept this bitter truth with courage. Instead, the sons of Zebedee expect something entirely different. They seek positions of honor beside Jesus, rather than sharing in the suffering and passion of the Lord and trusting in the greater joy that would follow. The other disciples respond with judgment toward these two, revealing that they too fail to grasp the deeper joy Jesus is offering. They struggle to follow not the Jesus of miracles and extraordinary preaching, but the Jesus of suffering.

Yet Jesus is clear: “Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me” (Mk 8:34), and again, “Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple” (Lk 14:27). Discipleship, therefore, is inseparable from the Cross. In the first reading, we hear the anguished cry of the prophet Jeremiah. The people refuse to listen to his warnings against their evil ways; instead, they seek to silence him by killing him. In his desperation, Jeremiah cries out to the Lord for mercy and protection. His suffering foreshadows the truth that the Cross always points beyond itself to future joy.

Like Jeremiah, and like the disciples, we often fail to understand what Jesus is trying to teach us and what He is truly offering us. It is not power or position that leads to the joy of the Kingdom, but a life of humble service, simplicity, and self-giving love. Only by embracing the Cross can we enter into the rich and lasting joy that Christ promises.

Response: Save me, O Lord, in your merciful love.



Search the Heart, Test the Mind

Second Week of Lent

Jer 17: 5-10/ Ps 1: 1-2, 3, 4 and 6/ Lk 16: 19-31

“I, the Lord, search the heart...”

And what shall He find in our heart, the seat of desire; where all our ‘treasures’, our attachments are stored; where all our ‘beloveds’ reside? “Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me...” (Mt 10:37ff). Lent is the time to make this examination between the reality of our life, and the call of the gospel; i.e. between what is and what should be. Christ cannot be one among other treasures; rather, the value of all things must be measured through Him. In other words, their significance must be discerned in the light of the fulfilment of His will. Therefore, take time to search your own heart this Lent, and clear it of its unhealthy treasures to make space for the one Treasure that deserves it all.

“...and test the mind”

What shall the Lord find in our mind, the seat of reason? For here it is we discern the principles that guide our actions. Here it is we define our philosophy of life. “Everyone who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock...” (Mt 7:24ff) Jeremiah calls us to examine our principles, our convictions, our theoretical foundations. And while it might seem that a conclusion that is arrived at through reason cannot be wrong, there are times it can be a front for an unhealthy desire in the heart. A classic example is the ‘pro-choice’ argument. While the argument itself sounds reasonable right – God has given us free will, and therefore pro-choice is celebrating this great gift of God – it is used as a justification for the unhealthy desire of separating the responsibility of procreation from the pleasure of sexual union, and consequently, for the unholy act of abortion. “Test your mind’ this Lent for such convictions with the gospel as their measure, so that ‘our ways’ and ‘the fruits of our deeds’ might be pleasing to the Lord.

Response: Blessed the man who has placed his trust in the Lord.

6
FRI**Remembering God's Wonders***Second Week of Lent*

Gn 37:3-4,12-13a, 17b-28a/ Ps 105:16-17,18-19,20-21/ Mt 21:33-43,45-46

In the holy season of Lent, we are invited, to journey inward and surrender all the evil desires that cling to our hearts. It is a time of purification, a desert experience where we are called to strip away selfishness, envy, and pride, so that the Spirit may breathe new life within us. This beautiful season of Lent is not merely about external practices of fasting or abstinence, but about the deeper conversion of the heart—a turning away from sin and a turning toward the Lord who alone satisfies.

We are reminded of the brothers of Joseph, who allowed jealousy and resentment to poison their hearts, selling their own brother into slavery. Likewise, the tenants of the vineyard hardened themselves against the master, choosing violence and greed over gratitude and stewardship. Today's readings warn us of what happens when evil desires are allowed to take root: they blind us to God's presence and estrange us from His love. These readings remind us that when we allow envy and bitterness to rule, we risk becoming blind to God's larger plan.

Yet the psalmist offers us another path. He "remembers the wonders the Lord has done", and in that remembrance finds strength to trust, to hope, and to rejoice. Lent calls us to this same remembrance: to recall the countless mercies of God in our lives, the times He has rescued us, forgiven us, and drawn us close. Gratitude cleanses the heart, for it shifts our gaze from ourselves to the One who is faithful. As disciples of Christ, we walk in silence and prayer, seeking union with God in the hidden depths of our souls. This season is an invitation to let go of all that weighs us down, to surrender our desires at the foot of the Cross, and to allow Christ to transform us. In giving away the darkness within, we make room for His light. In renouncing evil desires, we discover the freedom of love. May this Lent be a time of renewal, where our hearts become dwelling places for the Lord and we live as witnesses of His mercy and joy.

Response: Remember the wonders the Lord has done.

7
SAT

What is our Heavenly Father like?

Second Week of Lent

Mic 7: 14-15, 18-20/ Ps 103: 1-2, 3-4, 9-10, 11-12/ Lk 15: 13, 11-32

Jesus knew His heavenly Father intimately, and so He told a parable that revealed the deepest truth about His Father's heart. We are called to reflect on this parable today with openness and humility. First, God does not give up on us. The father in this parable was treated unjustly by his younger son. He could have spent his days nursing his wounds and rehearsing his pain. Instead, he scanned the horizon each day, hoping that his son would have a change of heart and return to him. Even when we have given up hope on ourselves or our loved ones, God never does.

Second, God is compassionate. We might expect anger or resentment to rise up in the father when he spots his son. Instead, he is "filled with compassion." He sees what his son has suffered, and instead of rejecting him, he throws his arms around him and welcomes him home without conditions. That is how God treats us. He is not angry at us because we have sinned; He simply longs to restore our broken relationship with Him.

Third, God celebrates. The father in the parable does not just give his son some leftovers to eat; he kills the fatted calf and orders a feast. This is no time for recriminations—no, it is time to celebrate, because his son "has come to life again." When we repent and return to the Father, He rejoices. He sees not the sin, but the new life He desires and lovingly creates within us.

Finally, God cares for every one of us. The older son was naturally resentful, but the father assured him of his love and gently begged him to join in the celebration. God wants us to feel secure in His love and just as joyful as He is when a lost person returns to their true home. This is what the Heavenly Father is like. So let us praise and thank Him for His love, mercy, and unfailing faithfulness.

Response: The Lord is compassionate and gracious.

**Give me a Drink.*****Third Sunday of Lent***

Ex 17: 3-7/ Ps 95: 1-2, 6-7, 8-9/ Rom 5: 1-2, 5-8/ Jn 4: 5-42

Tormented by thirst the people complained against Moses. In reply to his anguished prayer God said to him: Go, I shall be standing before you there on the rock, at Horeb. You must command the rock, and water will flow from it for the people to drink. God is the Rock that saves us: in Him we can place our hope. No obstacle, no difficulty will be too big for us if we will only turn to Him in prayer with faith and trust. The hardness of our hearts is the biggest rock that has to be overcome in order that God can enter into our lives and save us.

The light of God's truth can change the way in which we see our lives and the situations we encounter and have encountered. The story of the woman at the well is a striking example of how the Lord brought the light of truth to one lost in darkness.

Jesus met the woman of Samaria by Jacob's well. He could easily see her need, her inner thirst for forgiveness, acceptance, reconciliation, and hope. He knew that the woman's sinful life had darkened her mind and prevented her from grasping spiritual truths, and so invited her to see her true condition and offered her the 'living water'.

While it was the natural water that was in the woman's mind, Jesus offered more than just the temporary relief and sustenance that she sought at the well. He offered her eternal life, but the woman did not understand His meaning. As Jesus continued to reveal the nature of this living water, the woman again responded from the limits of her own human understanding. Once again, the compassion of the Son of God caused Him to speak, as He revealed the woman's spiritual darkness and her dire need for life. We can hear in the woman's reply, a longing to find God, but an ignorance of where to look for help. How then was she to find God? Jesus showed her that the new life he could give would enable her to worship God in a new way. She would not be confined to any one time or place.

Wells and places of water have a singularly important meaning among people living in arid regions, after a drought. Water miraculously restores life to a desert like it is on earth and

revives humans, animals and plants alike, rescuing them from death. For this reason, the Old Testament prophets and sages often spoke of living water to signify the gifts that would flow when the Messiah would finally come.

We can imagine, that when Jesus came upon Jacob's well he recalled the scriptural tradition that the Messiah would be the source of a kind of water that would sustain a person's life eternally. As the promised Messiah, Jesus' mission was to do the Father's Will and to accomplish His work and the 'work' that the Father had given Him, which was to give eternal life to all people. This must have occupied Jesus' thoughts as the Samaritan woman approached the well.

As we read about this encounter, we see the patience and love Jesus had, as He brought the woman to believe in Him as the source of the Living Water. At first, she had taken Him for an ordinary Jew. Then she realized that He was a learned person, perhaps a rabbi and began to refer to Him. Then she understood Him to be a prophet. At last she sensed that He may well be the promised Messiah as He claimed.

The woman had come to the well to fetch water for the day ahead. It was her daily task. And the well was a familiar place, part of her routine. But, after meeting Jesus however, she left her water jar behind, things changed, she was no longer thirsty. She now had within her a spring of water that would last forever. She wanted to share that spring of life giving water with others too! She went back and called the people, who also received the living water as they encountered Jesus and came to believe in Him themselves.

As believers, we can ask the Holy Spirit to awaken an appreciation for the 'gifts of God' in our hearts. The Wells of our souls do need to be cleansed of all things earthly that prevent us from encountering Christ in the routine of our lives: but this is something that Jesus loves to do for every one of us. As we reflect on the truths of God proclaimed in Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman, let us allow waters to spring up within us once again!

Response: O that today you would listen to his voice! Harden not your hearts!

9**MON****Healing Begins When Pride Ends*****Third Week of Lent***

2 Kgs 5: 1-15b/ Ps 42: 2, 3; 43: 3, 4/ Lk 4: 24-30

The first reading speaks of the sickness and healing of Naaman. Namaan was the commander of the Syrian Army. He was a great, successful, and respected man; yet his story reminds us that illness does not spare the rich, the influential, or the powerful. It can equally touch and disrupt any life be it of a sincere human person, or a crooked one. Naaman stands as a clear example of this truth. Leprosy was a common disease in ancient times, Those afflicted with this deadly disease lived a miserable and isolated life in the Israelite society. The book of Leviticus read thus in 13:45 "...the person who has the leprous disease shall wear torn clothes and let the hair of his head be dishevelled, and he shall cover his upper lip and cry, 'unclean, unclean.' He shall remain unclean as long as he has the disease. And shall live outside the camp." The leper had to tie a bell around his neck, as a warning for the people to move away from him. And the lepers were banished from the society, they were rejected by the people, and more so by their own families; they were compelled to live in isolation. They were given a warning not to appear in the public places, if at all they were found in the public places, people used to throw stones at them to keep them away from the public. The Rabbis would not even eat an egg brought from the street where a leper had passed by, because they would consider it unclean. Such was the cruel and inhumane treatment inflicted on lepers.

Now Naaman the man who was in power, position, who was highly respected in the kingdom had to embrace the miserable life of a leper. But in his helpless situation the servant girl, who had no status, no power, the one who was ignored by everyone became the ray of hope for his life. The pride of Naaman did not allow him to take bath in the river Jordan, but the humility of his servants made Naaman to humble himself before God, when Naaman humbled himself, God healed him.

Response: My soul is thirsting for God, the living God.

10
TUE

Faith in the Furnace

Third Week of Lent

Dn 3: 2, 11-20/ Ps 25: 4-5ab, 6 and 7bc, 8 and 9/ Mt 18: 21-35

A small village once faced a terrible drought. The fields were dry, the wells were empty, and people gathered daily in the temple asking God for rain. At first, they brought gifts flowers, grain, candles but nothing changed. One evening, an old farmer came with empty hands. He knelt and said, "Lord, I have nothing to offer but my weakness. If you do not help us, we will perish." That night, clouds gathered, and rain fell gently over the land. The village learned that what God desires most is not offerings, but a humble and trusting heart.

This story reflects the prayer of Azariah in the Book of Daniel. Standing in the blazing furnace, with no temple, no sacrifices, and no leaders, Azariah does not blame God. Instead, he acknowledges the people's sins and approaches God with humility. He prays, "Yet with a contrite heart and a humble spirit may we be accepted." This prayer teaches us that even when everything is taken away, faith remains powerful. Azariah understands that God is not bound by rituals alone. When sacrifices and offerings are impossible, repentance becomes the true offering. The fire around him represents suffering, exile, and helplessness but also purification. In the midst of fire, Azariah places his trust in God's mercy, not in his own goodness. His prayer is honest, humble, and filled with hope.

This message continues in the Gospel, where Jesus reminds us that God looks at the heart rather than external actions. True prayer is not about showing holiness but about recognizing our need for God. Jesus consistently welcomes sinners, the weak, and the humble those who know they cannot save themselves. Like Azariah, the Gospel invites us to approach God not with pride, but with sincerity. In our daily lives, we too experience "furnaces" failures, sickness, broken relationships, guilt, or fear. Often, we feel unworthy to pray because we think we have nothing good to offer. Today's readings assure us that God does not reject us because of our weakness. Instead, He listens closely when we come with a repentant heart.

Response: Remember your compassion, O Lord.



Eternal Greatness

Third Week of Lent

Dt 4:1. 5-9/ Ps 147: 12-13, 15-16, 19-20/ Mt 5: 17-19

There is an innate desire in us to be great and remembered forever. And the source of this desire is in God's original plan for us – to live for ever. Today's readings provide a blueprint for this eternal greatness. Do you want to be great? Do not just keep the letter of the law, but fulfil the spirit of the law. We have an outstanding example of this in the history of the Carmelite Order.

The Carmelite Order, begun in the early 13th Century, underwent a phase of drastic spiritual decline in the 15th Century. To arrest this gradual but steady decline in the original contemplative spirit, several reform initiatives were introduced ranging right from the central authority of the Order, the Prior General, to individual communitarian reforms. However, none of these proved successful as the focus was on observance, a rigid keeping of the letter of the law. The transforming power of the Holy Spirit came to the Order through the most unexpected source- St. Teresa of Avila, a humble nun of the Order, who undertook a reform that would impact not just the Order but have a lasting impression on the entire spirituality of the Church. The difference between her reform and previous reforms was that she emphasized the spirit of the law: a deep, personal and loving relationship with Jesus and with the nuns in her community.

The supreme law surpassing all ritual, religious observance and practices is love. Laws are important, but have value only when obeyed and performed in a spirit of love. Love does not permit self-righteousness for our so called 'fidelity' to the law. On the contrary, it demands compassion, kindness, gentleness, patience and forgiveness towards those who do not keep it. By this alone can we have our God 'so near to us... whenever we call upon Him!' We may not be called to be reformers like St Teresa of Avila. But each of us is called to the greatness of the kingdom of God. May we be guided by the Spirit of love in all that we do.

Response: O Jerusalem, glorify the Lord!

12
THUR

Victory without Christ, Failure without him!

Third Week of Lent

Jer 7: 23-28/ Ps 95: 1-2, 6-7, 8-9/ Lk 11: 14-23

As we plunge deeper into the holy season of Lent, today's Liturgy of the word is making a scan of our soul. Prophet Jeremiah finds his audience adamant and obstinate, far from the very humble people who were liberated from slavery to Pharaoh in Egypt and who were given the land flowing with milk and honey. They have forgotten all about the past and they are now far away from the promise they made to be docile and obedient to Yahweh's commandments so as to be able to live a truly happy life as God's chosen people.

The deterioration of religion happens when we think that by religious practices we are satisfying a hungry and angry God. Our God is neither. He is only concerned about our wholesome well-being. He cannot be bribed out by donations and costly sacrifices while our hands are dripping with the blood of injustice and immoral living. Wrong is wrong even if every body does it, and right is still right even if nobody does it. What God wants is our moral and spiritual growth in accordance with the Gospel of Jesus. Jesus called us to follow him; to be his disciples. But we hide behind some excuses of cultic practices and pious devotions as substitutes to clean, honest and value-based life. The reason is our difficulty to make the needed changes to our lifestyle.

In such a heart, the evil powers will find ample place to hide themselves in. For often we compromise with evil as our passions and desires are unruly and we are comfortable with them even when we know that they do not give us interior peace and serenity. When we do not have interior life, the evil in us spreads on and on even reaching out to our families; in the places we work and the people we interact with. We are invited today to make Jesus of the Gospels our permanent communion of life who guides us in all our decisions and the evil will be defeated and we will always win in the long term.

Response: O that today you would listen to his voice! Harden not your hearts.

13
FRI**Returning with Simple Words and Steady Love*****Third Week of Lent***

Hos 14: 1-9/ Ps 81: 6c-8a, 8bc-9, 10-11ab, 14 and 17/ Mk 12: 28b-34

One evening, a man sat quietly in his car after work, tired. The day was tough. Bills were waiting at home. A difficult conversation was coming. He felt unsure about what to do next. Sitting there, he finally said a simple prayer. "God, help me. I do not have the right words." That small prayer is where today's readings meet our daily lives. In the first reading, Hosea speaks to people who have failed and wandered. God does not reject them. He invites them back. "Return to the Lord," He says! He does not demand explanations or promises. He only asks them to come with honest words. This is comforting. God meets us when we are weak. He promises healing. He promises love that is freely given.

God uses gentle images in the reading today! He speaks of dew, roots, branches, and fruit. Growth does not happen overnight. It happens quietly and slowly. Often without being noticed. This is how God works in our lives too. When we keep returning to Him, even in small ways, He slowly restores what feels broken.

In the Gospel, a scribe asks Jesus an important question: "What is it that matters most?" Jesus answers simply: Love God with your whole heart; love your neighbour as yourself. Faith is not meant to be complicated. It is lived in daily choices. Choosing patience. Choosing honesty. Choosing kindness, when it is not easy. The scribe understands this. He sees that love is greater than sacrifices. Jesus tells him he is not far from the kingdom of God. Many of us feel far from holiness because life is messy. But Jesus shows that being close to God begins with love. St. Teresa of Ávila urges us, "Let nothing disturb you, let nothing frighten you. All things are passing. God never changes." These words remind us that God remains steady. Today, returning to God may be as simple as a quiet prayer. Loving God may mean trusting Him in small moments. Loving others may start with patience at home or kindness at work. This is enough. God meets us there.

Response: I am the Lord your God: listen to my voice.

14
SAT

Humility Requires Repentance

Third Week of Lent

Hos 6: 1-6/ Ps 51: 3-4, 18-19, 20-21ab/ Lk 18: 9-14

The Gospel speaks about humility, setting before us the contrast between the humble tax collector and the proud, self-assured Pharisee. At its heart, this passage is about the inner disposition of the heart that Jesus desires from each one of us. Jesus calls us to a soft and receptive heart—a heart shaped by repentance, marked by humility, and courageous enough to recognize and accept its own weaknesses and failures. It is a heart that is always willing to turn back to the Lord. This Gospel invites us to examine ourselves honestly. How quick am I to recognize my own sin? How often do I justify my anger, my envy? Do I readily bring my sins before the Lord in the sacrament of confession, or do I keep them away? These are neither easy nor comfortable questions to face. Yet it is precisely for this reason that Jesus emphasizes the attitude of repentance, as without it, our hearts slowly harden, and we become closed to God's transforming grace.

Many of us can recognize the Pharisee within ourselves. Pride subtly creeps in, leading us to look down on others and measure ourselves against them, often concluding that we are better, more faithful, or more righteous. St. Paul reminds us, "Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves" (Phil 2:3). This is exactly the reversal Jesus proposes in this Gospel. Pride keeps our eyes fixed on the faults of others while blinding us to our own need for mercy. Yet the opposite temptation also exists. Some of us look only at our weaknesses and failures and begin to see ourselves as unworthy, unsuccessful, or rejected in the eyes of the world and even in the eyes of God. Discouragement can become just as dangerous as pride, tempting us to give up rather than trust in God's mercy. Jesus offers us a radically new perspective. He invites us to fix our gaze on Him. Through repentance and confession, we are called to admit our sins, place our trust in His mercy, and ask for the grace to become more like Him. True humility is born in such an encounter.

Response: I desire steadfast love, and not sacrifice.

15
SUN
Eyes Opened, Hearts Renewed
Fourth Sunday of Lent

1 Sm 16: 1b. 6-7, 10-13a/ Ps 23: 1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6 (1)/ Eph 5: 8-14/ Jn 9: 1-41

In the first reading of the fourth Sunday of Lent, God sends Samuel to find David. In the second reading, Christ comes to us with His light while we are hidden in darkness. In the Gospel, Jesus sees the blind man as he passes by. Jesus later finds him when the authorities have thrown him out. The Psalm reveals God to us as a loving Shepherd. In all the readings, God seeks someone out. God seeks each one of us. What grace will I ask God for today in prayer? How open am I to obey the promptings of the Holy Spirit in my life?

In the first reading, 1 Sam 16:1, taken as a continuation from 1 Sam 15:35, God had decided to replace Saul as king. Samuel is asked to go on a secret mission to anoint the one whom God has chosen to replace Saul with. The difference in the anointings of Saul and David is that God makes the choice. In 1 Sam 16:12, the Lord said, "Rise and anoint him; for this is the one." At our baptism, God has chosen and called each one of us by name. The responsorial psalm teaches us to realize the hidden presence of God. In the gospel, Jesus healed the man born blind. It appears that He was followed by the temple authorities who desired to confront him. The man must defend himself alone while his parents shy away from answering when questioned. Very often, we fail to realize the hidden presence of Jesus. He knows what is happening and seeks the man out later. In this light, the responsorial psalm reveals God as our loving shepherd. God might not remove the trials we encounter along the way. But as his disciples, he trusts in our ability to deal with every situation we come across. We need to ask for his grace and place our trust in Him. Which situations in my life would I like to surrender to the Lord?

The gospel pericope describes the events that evolve around a simple phrase, "I was blind and now I see." The Pharisees are unable to accept any explanation beyond their own viewpoint. They refuse to believe in Jesus as the "Son of Man." The blind man, in his belief, goes beyond the fact that Jesus healed him. He sees and recognizes Jesus, believes in him, and worships him.

During this season of Lent, we are invited to understand and experience God's healing, His encounter, and place our belief and worship in Him during our Lenten journey. As a community, we are called to continue journeying together as pilgrims of hope and experience the fullness of life that God desires for us.

The Lenten season should lead us to encounter Jesus, in all that we do during this season. This season of grace also helps us to realign our vision with the saving mission of Christ, as we worship Him; it reminds us that this mission, is as much ours now as it is Christ's and the Church's. Lent is also a time when the values of Jesus Christ, the light of the world, challenge the darkness in our lives. Like the blind man whose sight Jesus restores, we too are called to exclaim, "I do believe." In the gospel, we learn that faith moves the believer to action, then confessing Jesus as Lord and worshiping him. To sum up, our worship starts with an encounter/experience with God, who gives us sight. His vision leads us to reach out to others and care for creation. In *Dilexit Te* no. 26, Pope Leo XIV affirms that "Love for our neighbour is tangible proof of the authenticity of our love for God..." We are invited to walk in the light, and not just walk and cherish that light exclusively for us but also to bring that light to others, inviting them to taste and see that the Lord is good. When walking as God's children in the light, we must undoubtedly bear the fruit of light. St. Paul affirms that "...the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true."

In our lives, worshipping God for us should be far more than participating in the Liturgy. We all need to cultivate a lived Eucharistic Spirituality. Instead of being merely present at the Eucharist, let us make efforts at every Eucharist we attend, to go beyond mere participation in ritual acts. Our worship should include a mission to reach out to others, those in need, and to learn to care for creation. We are called to start the action ourselves and not wait for others. For example, we could help those in our community who might need spiritual support, healing, or other works of mercy which we possibly offer to them!

Response: The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

16
MON**New Heavens Dawns****Fourth Week of Lent**

Is 65: 17-21/ Ps 30: 2 and 4, 5-6, 11-12a and 13b/ Jn 4: 43-54.

Lent is often experienced as a season of fasting, self-examination, and patient waiting. Into this atmosphere, prophet Isaiah speaks an unexpected word of hope. God announces not a repair of the old order but a complete renewal: "I am about to create new heavens and a new earth." This promise is addressed to people who knew disappointment and injustice, much like our own times, and it invites us to look beyond present brokenness to God's faithful future.

Three themes run through this rich reading and shape Isaiah's vision of the new creation. The first is joy. God calls the people to rejoice because Jerusalem itself is being created as joy, and even more strikingly, God rejoices over the people. At a time when many lives are weighed down by fear, regret, and constant self-judgment, this image is deeply healing. Lent is not only about giving up but also about recovering the joy of being loved by God, who delights in His people despite their frailty. The second theme is life in its fullness. Isaiah imagines a world where life is no longer fragile or cut short, where suffering does not have the final word. While biological death remains part of human existence, the prophet points to God's deeper intention: a life protected, dignified, and allowed to flourish. In daily life, this challenges us to resist habits and structures that drain life, indifference, neglect of the weak, and a culture of exhaustion, and instead choose attitudes that nurture hope and compassion. The third theme is justice, especially in relation to human labour. In God's new creation, people enjoy the fruit of their work and live without fear that their efforts will be stolen or wasted. This vision confronts the economic inequalities of every age and calls believers to fairness, solidarity, and responsibility in the way we work and share.

Jesus restores life by a word that is trusted before it is seen as we encounter him in the Gospel! Isaiah's vision finds its fulfilment in such faith. Lent invites us to believe that God's new creation has already begun wherever His word is trusted and welcomed.

Response: I will extol you, Lord, for you have raised me up.

17
TUE
New Life in Jesus
Fourth Week of Lent

Ez 47: 1-9, 12/ Ps 46: 2-3, 5-6, 8-9/ Jn 5: 1-16

The entire creation longs for renewal and refreshment. A land that has not received rains looks dry and barren with scant plants and life. So, the desert becomes deserted place. Animals cannot survive when they do not find water and fodder. Human beings also starve when they do not get both physical and spiritual nourishment. God's presence in our life can take away all our experiences of dryness and nothingness and give an experience of new life.

In the book of Ezekiel, we come across a vision of God's temple. Here, water begins to gush forth from the temple. Water is life for it gives life to everyone. The trees begin to grow and they in turn give fruits. God in us gives new life with new fruits. The water from the temple replaces the stagnant and dirty waters wherever it is found. When the waters flowing from the temple touch the filth and sinfulness of our lives, they cleanse and transform, replacing sin with purity and renewal. These living waters do not merely wash away guilt; they infuse us with God's own vitality. From the one who welcomes this divine presence, a new life of grace, holiness, and joy will spring forth, becoming a source of hope and refreshment for others as well. Living creatures need water for their survival. With the waters from the temple the living creature which swarms will live. There will be lot of fish. Even the waters of the sea become fresh. Everything will live where the river goes. All kinds of trees will bear fruit. This is the power of the water flowing from the temple which gives new life to all.

In the Gospel, we find at the Sheep Gate pool, a man suffered thirty-eight years, waiting in vain for help. Worn, desperate and desolate, he meets Jesus, the life-giver, who commands: "Rise, take up your pallet, and walk." This was enough. He found new life in Jesus. He not only praised God, but also gave testimony that one can find new life in Jesus. We too, need to go to Jesus to experience new life in Him.

Response: The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our stronghold.

18
WED**Held in the Hands of a Faithful God*****Fourth Week of Lent***

Is 49: 8-15/ Ps 145: 8-9, 13cd-14, 17-18/ Jn 5: 17-30

Today's Word invites us to trust deeply in a God who never forgets us and who gives life through His Son. In a world where people often feel unseen and unheard, these readings gently remind us that we are remembered, loved, and called to life. The prophet speaks God's tender promise: "I will never forget you" (Isaiah 49:15). Even if a mother forgets her child, God's love is stronger and more faithful. This is not just comforting words; it is a covenant of care. God bends toward the weak, the suffering, and the waiting, assuring them that the right time will come (Isaiah 49:8). In the silence of prayer, we learn to rest in this promise, discovering that His fidelity is the anchor of our hope, and His mercy the light that guides our weary hearts toward peace. The psalm continues this song of trust, praising a God who is "gracious and merciful, slow to anger and rich in kindness." God's greatness is shown not in distance but in closeness—He lifts those who are bowed down and gives food and hope in due season.

In the Gospel, Jesus reveals the heart of this promise. He speaks with quiet authority: the Father works, and so does the Son (John 5:17). Life flows from this loving relationship. Jesus does not act apart from God; He shows us God. He did not merely speak about truth—He is the Truth standing before us. Another contemporary teacher reminds us that when we look at Jesus, we see what God is like: generous, life-giving, and faithful. To hear the Son and believe is already to pass from death to life (John 5:24). The saints lived this trust even in darkness. God is present and works through love even in our dark rooms. We need to embrace the strength and trust God's faithful heart.

Therefore, dear brethren, let us consider the following:

1. Trust God's memory: when you feel forgotten, remember you are engraved on His hands.
2. Listen to Jesus daily: His words bring life and direction.
3. Become a sign of God's care: through small acts of kindness, let others feel remembered by God.

Response: The Lord is kind and full of compassion.



The Legacy of St Joseph

Solemnity of St Joseph, Husband of Mary

2 Sm 7: 4-5a, 12-14a, 16/ Ps 89: 2-3, 4-5, 27 and 29/ Rom 4: 13, 16-18, 22/
Mt 1: 16, 18-21, 24a or Lk 2: 41-51a

As we celebrate the Solemnity of St Joseph, the husband of Mary and the foster father of Jesus, the first thing that comes to our mind is what the Scripture says about him: a just and faithful man, whose silence continues to speak to us so powerfully because of him doing God's will diligently, teaching us humility, obedience, and steadfast trust in God's providence even amidst uncertainty and hidden struggles of daily life.

The Greatest of men saints: Known as a carpenter, a working man, who voluntarily relinquished his early royal lineage. A compassionate, caring man, St Joseph shows what real manhood means. Real strength is to be obedient to God's will and defend the dignity of the vulnerable. He surrendered his rights and fulfilled his obligation as God dictated to him as the angel told him taking Mary as his wife (ref. Mt 1:19-25). So, being a just person means desiring, willing and striving for the good of others. Faithfulness is our relying on and trusting in God's project, plan and protection.

A man for others: When society often exults and rewards human greatness and achievements, St Joseph reflects that true greatness lies in caring for the needy and the most vulnerable; for him, it meant leaving everything he owned, family, friends, and fleeing to a strange country with his wife and child, reflecting his care and concern, as an example of love of God lived concretely in caring for others. So, the Church rightly holds St Joseph as the patron saint of the Universal Church, families, fathers, expectant mothers, travellers, immigrants and the dying. In 1955, when Pope Pius XII established the Feast of "St. Joseph the Worker" to be celebrated on International Workers' Day (May 1), the Church wanted all to reflect Joseph's status as the patron of workers.

Servants whose reward is reserved: The first reading projects God's intervention in David's decision and his assurance, through the prophet, that God himself would build his house as well as a kingdom that lasts forever. David was chosen to unite

the twelve tribes of Israel, yet the unity did not last long. It is only that Joseph, the foster father of Jesus, shares the Davidic lineage and the spiritual kingdom would be built on the sacrificial love of Jesus. However, God chooses people as and when necessary to work for him. In being chosen by God to do His work, it is important for us to keep the example of St Joseph and let our attitude be “when you have done all that you were commanded, say, ‘we are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty’” (Lk 10:17).

Faith and Righteousness: Our salvation is a gift from God. So, faith simply means trust and dependence on what God has to offer and not rely on our strength and achievements. While St Paul speaks about God’s faithfulness in keeping His promise, our attitude needs to be that of Abraham who manifested a humble obedience and commitment to God’s plans. Abraham believed in hope and so became the father of many nations. His example is vividly visible in the attitude of St Joseph, a life of trust and surrender, a life and worship acceptable to God.

A model to our times: In a world that values human power, possessions and achievements, the feast of St. Joseph reminds us of the fundamental principle of Christian spirituality and holiness. St Joseph’s trust in God, silent strength, and unwavering commitment is an inspiration and challenge in our spiritual growth. Even though we do not find a single word spoken by St Joseph, his life speaks volumes about faith, obedience, humility, and trust in God. His greatness consists in playing an important role in God’s plan, offering a model of holiness that is still relevant today. In a materialist modern world, Joseph inspires us to embrace God’s plans without hesitation. Faith requires trusting God in the unknown without hesitation or fear, trusting in God’s divine providence. Joseph was given a unique role, but he never sought recognition. He worked quietly. In a world that rewards noise and honour, St Joseph reminds us that true greatness can be achieved with a quiet life doing God’s will. True greatness comes from serving God and others selflessly, just as St Therese of Child Jesus and Mother Teresa of Calcutta remind us, “God wants us to be faithful in small little things to achieve great sanctity.”

Response: His descendants shall continue forever.

20
FRI

When Truth Becomes A Threat

Fourth Week of Lent

Wis 2: 1a, 12-22/ Ps 34: 17-18, 19-20, 21 and 23/ Jn 7: 1-2, 10, 25-30

History shows us that those who choose righteousness are rarely welcomed with respect and acceptance. Instead, they are watched closely, misunderstood, and sometimes deliberately opposed. A person who tries to live honestly and do what is right can sometimes make others uncomfortable. The Book of Wisdom speaks about the plotting of the wicked against the righteous person. The righteous one becomes a problem simply because of who he is. His life exposes false ways, questions selfish choices, and reminds others of God's truth. Unable to accept this challenge, the wicked turn against him. They choose hatred over self-examination and violence over conversion. The text foreshadows the suffering of Christ, the truly righteous one, who would be rejected and condemned by those who could not bear the light he brought into the world.

In the Gospel, we see this reality unfolding: Jesus knows that His life is in danger, yet He does not abandon His mission. He goes to Jerusalem and teaches openly. The people are divided, some accept that He is sent by God, while others remain trapped in their own ideas and expectations. They judge Him by appearances and fail to recognize that His mission comes from the Father. Yet one thing is clear: human plots can never defeat God's purpose; no human plan can stop what God has begun. God works in His own time and in His own way. Even when goodness is rejected or attacked, God's plan continues quietly but certainly. These readings invite us to look at ourselves. How do we react when the truth challenges us? Are we willing to accept it and change, or do we resist it because it disturbs our comfort?

Following God is not always easy. It may bring misunderstanding or rejection. But we are never alone. God stands with those who choose what is right. The world may try to suppress the truth, but the truth belongs to God. And God never abandons those who walk in it. May we be given the courage to live truthfully, the openness to accept God's ways, and the patience to trust in His time.

Response: The Lord is close to the broken-hearted.

21
SAT**The Cost and Glory of Faithfulness***Fourth Week of Lent*

Jer 11: 18-20/ Ps 7: 2-3, 9bc-10, 11-12/ Jn 7: 40-53

The words we read in the prophet Jeremiah in today's reading "Let us cut him off from the land of the living, so that his name may be quickly forgotten" reveals the disturbing logic of a world threatened by truth. When God's word disturbs comfort, exposes injustice, or calls people to conversion, the response is often not repentance but rejection. Silence the voice. Remove the witness. Erase the memory. If the prophet disappears, perhaps the truth will too. Jeremiah's suffering is not an isolated story. It is the story of every faithful servant of God, and it reaches its fulfillment in Jesus Himself. Jesus was truly "cut off from the land of the living," crucified outside the city, treated as though His name deserved to be erased. Yet the cross, meant to silence Him forever, became the greatest proclamation of God's love. What the world tried to destroy, God transformed into the source of salvation.

This Word speaks directly to our own time. Even today, the Gospel is often silenced—not always by violence, but through ridicule, indifference, and pressure to conform. Consecrated men and women who choose simplicity over comfort, fidelity over compromise, prayer over noise may feel misunderstood or marginalized. Lay people who live their faith honestly at work, defend the dignity of life, forgive instead of retaliating, or stand for truth may feel isolated and "cut off." At times, the struggle is within us. We are tempted to silence the prophet—not outside, but in our own hearts. We choose comfort over conscience, and silence over witness. Fear of rejection can weaken our commitment to live the Gospel boldly.

But today's Word reassures us with hope: God never forgets His faithful ones. Names the world tries to erase are written on the heart of God. Jeremiah was not forgotten. Jesus was not forgotten. And neither are we when we remain faithful. The Resurrection proclaims this unshakable truth: voices can be silenced, but truth cannot; witnesses can be buried, but God's plan can never be destroyed. Let us pray for the grace to be faithful prophets trusting that even if the world forgets us, God always remembers.

Response: O Lord, my God, I take refuge in you.

22
SUN
COME OUT: FROM DEATH TO LIFE
Fifth Sunday of Lent

Ez 37: 12-14/ Ps 130: 1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8/ Rom 8: 8-11/ Jn 11: 1-45

There are moments in life when we are not physically dead, yet we are no longer truly living. We wake up, go to work, pray, attend Mass, smile at people, and continue with our routines; yet deep within, something lies buried—a dream that has died, a relationship that has collapsed, a prayer that went unanswered, or a sin we have quietly learned to live with. The readings of today give a name to this condition. Liturgy of the Word, today, calls it the tomb. In the day's readings, Jesus does not give advice. He does not offer explanations for suffering. He does not remain at a distance. He comes and stands before the tomb and cries out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out." This is the heart of today's Gospel. This is the heart of Lent. This is the heart of our faith.

The first thing we notice in today's Gospel is that Jesus comes to Bethany knowing Lazarus is already dead. He does not avoid the house of mourning. He does not bypass human pain. In fact, John tells us something unsettling: "Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus... yet he stayed two days longer where he was." What appears as delay feels like silence and even absence. How many of us have prayed the same words: "Lord, if you had been here..." my marriage would not have broken, my child would not have gone astray, my faith would not have weakened. Martha and Mary both speak these words: "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." These are not words of unbelief; they are the cries of wounded heart, and soul whose faith is scarred.

The first reading from the prophet Ezekiel sheds light on this mystery. Speaking to a people crushed by exile and loss, God promises, "I will open your graves and bring you up from them." Israel was not physically dead, but spiritually defeated and hopeless. What Ezekiel proclaims symbolically, Jesus fulfills personally in Bethany. He is the God who enters into death in order to conquer it from within.

Before Jesus acts, He weeps. "Jesus wept." These two words reveal the heart of God. He does not stand above human suffering

as a distant observer. He enters it, shares it, and sanctifies it. Reflecting on this moment, St. Augustine writes, “Christ wept as man, but raised Lazarus as God.” The tears of Jesus tell us that our pain matters, that grief is not a lack of faith, and that God is often closest when we feel most broken. Then comes the decisive moment. Jesus approaches the tomb and commands that the stone be taken away. Martha hesitates, reminding Him of the stench of death. How often we resist when God asks us to roll away the stone, because we fear what might be exposed—our failures, our wounds, our sins. Yet grace is never afraid of decay. Jesus lifts His eyes to the Father and cries out with a loud voice. The loudness of His call is significant. Death does not release its grip easily. Despair does not surrender quietly. Sin does not loosen its hold without resistance. Jesus calls Lazarus by name, because God’s call is always personal. That same voice continues to call each of us by name, inviting us to step out of whatever tomb holds us captive.

Lazarus emerges alive, but still bound in burial clothes. Jesus then turns to the community and says, “Unbind him, and let him go.” This detail is profoundly important. While God alone gives life, He entrusts the work of restoration to the community. Resurrection is not meant to be lived in isolation. The Church is called to be a place where people are unbound; freed from labels, judgment, shame, and the weight of their past. The Christian community exists not to preserve tombs, but to take off the shroud that ties us down!

As Lent draws us closer to Holy Week, Jesus stands before our personal tombs even when silence and void make itself present with us there. He is not repelled by the smell of our failures, he neither frowns in disgust at our miserable life, nor is he discouraged by how long we have been buried. He does not ask us to improve ourselves before coming out. He simply calls us to trust His voice and take one step into the light. He offers us assurance when he says, “I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live.” May we have the courage to respond, to come out, and to walk from death into life. Amen.

Response: With the Lord there is mercy, in him is plentiful redemption.

23
MON

God Who Sees the Truth

Fifth Week of Lent

Dn 13: 1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33-62/ Ps 23: 1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6/ Jn 8: 1-11

The story of Susanna invites is indeed captivating and it invites us to reflect on living our faith quietly yet boldly even in moments of fear and injustice. She is a God-fearing woman who suddenly finds herself falsely accused by those meant to protect justice and prove to be worthy servants of God. Faced with an impossible choice, Susanna refuses to save herself by doing what is wrong. Instead, she places her life in God's hands, trusting that He knows the truth even when others do not. Her courage is not loud or dramatic, but steady and rooted in deep faith.

Susanna's experience speaks gently to everyday life, especially within families and communities where misunderstandings, unfair judgments, or silent suffering can occur. There are times when we feel powerless, unheard, or wrongly treated. This reminds us that God is close to those moments. He sees what is hidden, understands what is unspoken, and remains faithful to those who choose integrity. God responds to Susanna's trust by raising up Daniel, a young and unexpected voice. Through wisdom and calm courage, Daniel questions falsehood and brings truth to light. His role shows us that God often works through ordinary people to restore justice and protect the vulnerable. We too are sometimes called to speak up with humility and clarity when something is wrong. Such an action should emerge from us being guided by prayer and with a sincere desire for what is right.

The Gospel deepens this message by revealing the mercy of Jesus, who refuses to condemn and instead offers forgiveness and a new beginning. Together, these readings show us a God who is both just and merciful, a God who defends the innocent and restores those who are willing to change. This invites us to choose patience over anger, trust over fear, and mercy over harsh judgment. When we respond with integrity and compassion, even in difficult situations, we allow God's grace to work quietly through us. May we learn to trust God as Susanna did, to speak truth with courage like Daniel, and to show mercy as Jesus teaches, confident that God's justice and love never fail.

Response: Even in the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil.

24
TUE**Healed by a Gaze of Faith*****Fifth Week of Lent***

Nm 21: 4-9/ Ps 102: 2-3, 16-18, 19-21/ Jn 8: 21-30

Today's readings offer us a pointer in difficulties. It invites us to reflect on what we do when life becomes difficult and faith feels heavy. The Israelites in the first reading are on a long journey through the desert. They are tired, frustrated, and disappointed. Slowly, gratitude turns into complaint. They forget God's care and begin to question His presence. Their murmuring reveals a deeper problem: they stop trusting. As a result, they are wounded. Yet, when they repent and cry out, God does not reject them. Instead, He offers healing in an unexpected way. Moses lifts up a bronze serpent, and those who look at it in faith are restored. Healing comes not through effort or escape, but through trustful looking.

This strange image finds its full meaning in the Gospel. Jesus speaks of Himself being "lifted up." He is pointing to the Cross. Like the serpent in the desert, the Cross may appear disturbing and confusing. But it becomes the source of life. Jesus makes it clear: without faith in Him, people remain in darkness. To believe in Him is not simply to know who He is, but to accept Him, to trust Him, and to allow His truth to shape our lives. Even people who listen to Jesus, struggle, because they think only in worldly terms. They hear His words, but they do not open their hearts. Faith always demands humility. It requires us to admit that we do not have all the answers and that we need God's guidance. The Psalm today beautifully assures us that God hears the cry of the afflicted. He does not ignore suffering hearts. He rebuilds what seems broken and restores hope where it appears lost.

In our own lives, we too experience desert moments: times of discouragement, weakness, and doubt. Like the Israelites, we may complain or lose patience. Today, the Word reminds us to lift our eyes again to Christ on the Cross. When we look at Him with faith, we find healing, forgiveness, and new life. Let us ask for the grace to trust Him more deeply and walk forward in hope.

Response: O Lord, hear my prayer, and let my cry come to you.

25
WED

Our Inner Capacity to Discern and say “Yes”

Solemnity of Annunciation of the Lord

Is 7: 10-14; 8: 10/ Ps 40: 7-8a, 8b-9, 10, 11/ Heb 10: 4-10/ Lk 1: 26-38

We all realize the blessing of receiving a sign. A sign is an object, a quality or a happening whose presence indicates the existence of something else, not contained in the sign itself. For example, when I give a red rose to someone I communicate my love and affection, although the rose in itself has no love and affection. The person who receives the red rose understands immediately the warmth and affection communicated to them through the rose. A road sign would be a similar example: it shows the direction of the road to follow although neither is the road nor the destination itself.

In the first reading, God himself proclaims to King Ahaz that He is going to give a sign: a virgin shall give birth to her first-born Son and He will be called “Emmanuel” meaning God with us. It is opportune to discuss the expression, the first-born Son who is Emmanuel before we move on to the meaning of the word ‘sign.’

We all know that chapter seven of Isaiah speaks about the realization of the prophecy concerning the mystery of Incarnation or the birth of the person of Jesus Christ. However, if we read this passage in the light of St. Paul’s Letter to the Colossians 1: 15-18, it has a deeper meaning. The Word of God, is the begotten son of God! It is through Him and for Him all things were created. The same Word became the First-Born as Incarnate Son of God in the virgin’s womb. Mother Mary bore Him in her virginal womb for nine months before giving him to the world. And most importantly, says Paul, “He is the firstborn from the dead.” It is in his death and resurrection, that we are baptized, in Him we become the first born.

It is from this argument we conclude that, our being reborn in Christ Jesus, was from all eternity in the thought of God, redeemed at a definitive time in history through the death and resurrection of His Son Jesus Christ, and now through whom we have become sons and daughters of God through adoption. Therefore, our becoming sons and daughters of God in itself is a sign that God, Emmanuel, is at work with us. Therefore, our

Christian destiny is not a passing event rather it is eternally conceived by the Father in the Person of His Son Jesus Christ. In other words, our Christian destiny itself is eternal and well thought of by the Father and therefore our Christian life factually, is the greatest sign to prove that God is constantly at work with us.

However, the beauty and the profundity of the mystery of Annunciation lies not just in the fact that God is with us but rather in the reciprocation of this truth by Mary in her acceptance through the “fiat.” It was Mary who, in faith, accepted this divine work in humanity and readily consented that the sign may be realized in and through her. She neither questioned the modality of this divine work nor objected to be the instrument of divine sign, rather accepted it in obedient faith and consented in deep love. It is for this reason, that Mary became a model for us in the manifestation of divine sign in us. It is to this effect, Mary was filled with the grace of God, meaning she had a personal experience of the presence of God within her. It was through this experience she was able to discern the will of God and consent to it.

The challenge that the secularized world of the 21st century poses before us is similar to that faced during the time of King Ahaz and even during the hidden years of Mary of Nazareth, it is the challenge of the forgottenness of God and the absence of a living experience of Him. It is in this secularized world we are called upon primarily to be faith-filled Christians so that we are able to see God constantly at work amidst us. Secondly, like Mary we too are called to discern and consent to God so that His mysterious plans for the salvation of humanity are realized in us. When we are filled with His grace and when we also say “let it be to me as you wish,” the divine plan would be realized in us. Our prayer today must be simple and sincere, like that of the Apostles who recognized their own insufficiency: “Lord, increase our faith.”

Response: See, I have come, Lord, to do your will.

26
THUR

Trusting the Promises of God

Fifth Week of Lent

Gn 17: 3-9/ Ps 105: 4-5, 6-7, 8-9/ Jn 8: 51-59

The readings today remind us of God's unchanging faithfulness and our call to trust Him more deeply. Abraham humbly falls before God who makes a covenant with him: the promise that he will become the father of many nations. Abraham did not see the full picture, but he believed God's word. His faith invites us to do the same, even when life feels turns uncertain.

Many a times, God speaks promises into our lives too: peace, strength, healing, guidance, but like Abraham, we must trust even when we do not yet see the results. A parent who is praying for their child may not see immediate change, but like Abraham, they continue to believe that God is working. Faith means trusting that God is faithful even when the situation looks slow or impossible. We are reminded to "seek the Lord and His strength" and to remember His marvellous works. In stressful moments, it is easy to forget God's goodness, but the Psalmist teaches us to look at God's deeds of the past! When a student recalls how God guided them through a difficult exam or situation, it strengthens them for the next challenge. Remembering God's past faithfulness fuels present hope.

In John Jesus makes a bold statement: "Whoever keeps my word will never see death." He is speaking of eternal life, the life that continues with God beyond this world. When Jesus says, "Before Abraham was, I AM," He reveals His divine identity. He is not only the Son of God, He is God Himself, eternal and unchanging. This challenges us to ask: Do I truly live as if Jesus is God, or do I treat His words like suggestions? If Jesus is truly God, then His teachings must shape our choices—how we speak, how we forgive, how we love. For example, choosing to forgive someone who hurt us may be difficult but becomes possible when we follow Jesus' word. Keeping His word alive with us leads us to real freedom and peace. Today's readings remind us that God keeps His promises, and that Jesus is the fulfilment of those promises.

Response: The Lord remembers his covenant forever.

27
FRI**God Stands with Those Who Trust Him***Fifth Week of Lent*

Jer 20: 10-13/ Ps 18: 2-3a, 3bc-4, 5-6, 7/ Jn 10: 31-42

Sometimes in life, doing good brings pain. When we speak the truth, people may not like it. When we follow God, we may feel alone. Today's readings speak to such moments. They remind us that God is close to those who trust Him. In the first reading, Jeremiah is afraid. People speak against him. They watch him and wait for him to fall. He feels weak and tired. Yet, God speaks to Jeremiah through His presence. God does not take away the problem, but He stays with Jeremiah. The prophet understands that the Lord is like a strong friend who stands beside him. Because of this, he begins to trust God again. He praises the Lord, even in pain, because God saves the poor and the weak.

The psalmist responds to God with a simple prayer. He calls God his rock and his helper. He remembers times when fear was all around him. In those moments, he cried out to God. God heard his voice and helped him. The psalm shows us how to pray when life is hard. We do not run away from God. We hold on to Him and trust Him.

In the Gospel, Jesus also faces trouble. People are angry with Him. They want to stone Him because they do not believe His words. Jesus stays calm. He speaks gently and points to His good works. He shows that He is sent by the Father. Some people still do not believe, but many others begin to believe in Him. This is how God responds to human prayer. God gives strength to stay faithful. He allows truth to shine, even when there is rejection.

These readings teach us something very important. God does not promise a life without problems. But He promises to be with us. When we feel afraid like Jeremiah, we can trust God. When we feel weak like the psalmist, we can cry to God. When we face rejection like Jesus, we can remain faithful. This Lenten season, God invites us to trust Him more. He asks us to stay close to Him, even when the way is difficult.

Response: In my anguish I called to the Lord, and he heard me.

28
SAT**God Brings Back What Has Been Scattered***Fifth Week of Lent*

Ez 37: 21-28/ Jer 31: 10, 11-12abcd, 13/ Jn 11: 45-57

The readings today carry a quiet and steady promise. God sees His people living in pieces, pulled apart by fear, pain, and confusion, and He speaks a word that reaches across every distance in the human heart. He says that He Himself will gather His people again. He will bring them back, form them into one, and give them a place to rest. It is a promise filled with gentleness. The prophet describes a people separated not only from one another but from their own sense of who they were meant to be. Life had broken them in many ways. Yet God does not speak harshly. He speaks with the calm certainty of someone who has already decided to restore what is lost. God will bring them home. God will unite what life has divided.

In the Gospel we see this promise taking steps walking on the earth. Jesus becomes the sign that God keeps His word. But instead of welcoming the hope He brings, some begin to fear Him. They worry about their own control, their own safety, and their own plans. Their fear leads them to plot His death. What they do not know is that their decision becomes the very path through which God fulfills His promise. God uses even the darkest choices to gather His scattered children back to Himself.

This touches something real in each of us. We all have days when we feel scattered inside. Days when our thoughts run in different directions, when our hearts feel tired, or when old wounds pull us away from peace. Sometimes we feel far from God without being able to explain why. But the truth in these readings is simple. God is always searching for the lost pieces of our hearts. God knows where we feel divided and He does not turn away. He brings unity where we feel broken. He brings calm where we feel stretched thin. As we move toward the Holy Week, perhaps the invitation is to allow God to gather us again. To let Him bring peace to the places where we feel scattered. To let Him bring us home.

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

29
SUN**Open Hands, Open Hearts: The Attitude of Christ**
Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion

Is 50: 4-7/ Ps 22: 8-9, 17-18, 19-20, 23-24/ Phil 2:6-11/ Mt 26: 14 - 27: 66

Today we celebrate Palm Sunday, entering the Holy Week, the most meaningful days of our Christian faith. Today we remember the moment Jesus entered Jerusalem. Crowds welcomed Him with cheers, laying branches and cloaks on the road as a sign of honor. Yet during the same Mass we also listen to the long Gospel of the Passion, which speaks of Jesus being betrayed, condemned, and put to death. Palm Sunday holds both celebration and sorrow together. Many of the palms we receive are shaped into crosses, while others are kept as simple branches. The palms from last year are burned to create the ashes placed on our foreheads at the start of Lent. It is all connected: joy, repentance, and sacrifice.

One of the priests during the homily invited people to look at their own hands. He said that the same hands can be used for loving, caring, helping and also hurting and rejecting. The same hands that wave palms in praise can also form fists in anger. The same people who welcomed Jesus singing "Hosanna!" were, a few days later, part of the crowd shouting "Crucify Him!" Our hands and our hearts reveal who we really are. Jesus, on the other hand, always keeps His hands open. In the Eucharist He offers Himself completely, generous, forgiving, and unconditional. He never closes His hands against us; He never stops giving. The question posed by the priest remains: are your hands open or closed? Are they ready to help, to forgive, to give? Or are they clenched, guarding pride, anger, or selfishness? To open our hands is also to open our hearts to God and others.

Today's theme is clear: "Your attitude must be Christ's." Our attitude shows who we truly are. In the Gospel, the people praised Jesus when they thought He would fulfill their expectations. But when they realized that He was not the powerful political leader they hoped for, they turned against Him. This teaches us how quickly human attitudes can change. What we say and do reveals the truth inside us. There is a saying that people can be compared to different objects because of the

attitudes they show. Here are eight simple examples that help us reflect on ourselves:

(1) Some people are like wheelbarrows. They do not move unless someone pushes them. They avoid making decisions and wait for others to push them forward. (2) Some are like canoes. They move only when someone paddles them. They need constant reminding, monitoring, or encouragement before they act. (3) Some are like kites. If you do not hold the string, they drift away. These are people who behave well only when someone is watching. (4) Some are like kittens. They feel good only when they are praised or petted. Without attention or appreciation, they become discouraged. (5) Some people are like footballs. You cannot predict which direction they will bounce next. Their choices are inconsistent and unstable. (6) Some are like balloons. They are full of air, easily offended, and quick to burst. They see only the faults of others while ignoring their own. (7) Some are like neon lights. They shine brightly for a while, then suddenly go off. Their enthusiasm comes and goes. (8) And a few are like good watches: open-faced, gold, and steady. They work quietly, faithfully, and generously. They serve without expecting reward. These people offer their time and energy simply out of love for God.

A question might come to us from all this: what do we do with the first seven types of people? The answer though simple is challenging: even in the most difficult person, there is still some goodness. God's grace can fan that small spark into real change. Our task is to encourage, to guide, and to correct with kindness, even when it feels useless. We are not called to make people bitter but to help them become better. This is the attitude of Christ. He did not give up on anyone, not even on the ones who betrayed, denied, or abandoned Him. As we enter Holy Week, we are invited to examine our own hearts honestly. What kind of person am I? How do I use my hands, my words, and my actions? Do I reflect the open, generous heart of Jesus? Palm Sunday challenges us to walk with Christ – not only in moments of joy, but also in moments of sacrifice. May our hands and hearts remain open to God and to one another.

Response: My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

30
MON**Act of Pouring our Love*****Monday of the Holy Week***

Is 42: 1-7/ Ps 27: 1, 2, 3, 13-14/ Jn 12: 1-11

In today's first reading, we have the first of the 4 songs of Isaiah's Suffering Servant; a beautiful description of God's mysterious servant, which applies so aptly to Jesus. The passage taken from II Isaiah, speaks of the "Servant of Yahweh" chosen and set apart to be God's witness before the nations - gentile nations. From the very first line the prophecy points out to Jesus.

The prophet reminds the exiled Israelites that God has not abandoned them; the plan for their liberation is underway. God's spirit filled servant will gather Israel and be a covenant to the people; he will also be a light to the nations. Contrary to their expectations of a political Saviour who would redeem Israel by defeating the enemy. The servant will be gentle & compassionate, a bruised reed he will not break.

God sets his servant as a covenant of the people, a light for the nations; he is commissioned to open the eyes of the blind and to set captives free; to bring into the light those who live in darkness. He will be a Universal Saviour, bringing justice to the Jews, but also to the coastlands - the Gentile world that await his teaching. The psalm rings out this good news "The Lord is my light and my salvation" (Ps.27:1a).

In the gospel we see, Mary's wholehearted devotion to Jesus which is observed as she poured costly perfumed oil at Jesus's feet without any hesitation. As we enter Holy Week, let's apply her example to love without holding anything back in our commitment to Jesus. Just as Jesus gave His life for us without reservation, may we also offer our entire selves to Him in gratitude for our salvation. May we not hesitate to give our all to Jesus as Holy Week begins. Let us offer everything to Him, without thinking of ourselves. Let us be devoted to Him, remembering His death with all our hearts, and loving Him as He deserves. Like Mary's act of pouring perfume for Jesus, let us pour out our lives for Him as we journey towards resurrection.

Response: The Lord is my light and my salvation.

31
TUE
God calls us from our Mother's womb!
Tuesday of the Holy Week

Is 49: 1-6/ Ps 71: 1-2, 3-4a, 5ab-6ab, 15 and 17/ Jn 13: 21-33, 36-38

Today's first reading, reveals Isaiah's reflective mood. Exile was a time of introspection, purification, and renewed purpose for Israel. The prophet addresses surrounding nations, revealing Israel's unique relationship with Yahweh. At the outset, the prophet proclaims that Yahweh has freely chosen Israel as his servant—formed, called, and set apart from the mother's womb. In Hebrew, the word *rechem* refers exclusively to a woman's womb; it is derived from the term *racham*, which means "compassion" or "mercy." This linguistic connection essentially reflects the womb's protective role in childbirth and its profound metaphorical and spiritual significance in Hebrew thought. Just as the heart is considered the seat of the mind, the womb represents a core spiritual or "soul" dimension of human existence.

Among all nations, Israel is clearly portrayed as God's chosen people—not because of any merit, but solely because of God's gracious choice. This naturally raises an important question: why this choice, and for what purpose? The answer lies in the concluding verse of the passage: "I will also make you a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth." Israel is thus called to be God's servant, entrusted with a universal mission. Yet, in stark contrast to this exalted calling, Israel's present reality is one of despair. The monarchy has collapsed, the land has been lost, and the Temple has been destroyed by the Babylonians. Now living in exile, in a foreign land, Israel wrestles with a painful and pressing question: where do they now stand in their relationship with Yahweh?

The irony is striking. When Israel had everything and God was visibly present, they neglected Him and pursued idols. Now, though they have lost all, Yahweh remains with them in suffering, offering hope, comfort, and restoration. In today's Gospel, Jesus, the suffering servant of Isaiah, poses a similar challenge. He declares his boundless love, a love that leads him to lay down his life even for sinners. The question Jesus asks is truly striking, Will you still betray me?

Response: My mouth will tell of your salvation, Lord.

Instructions on the Holy Eucharist (Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of Sacraments)

14. The faithful, whether religious or lay, who are authorized as extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist can distribute Communion only when there is no priest or a deacon, when the priest is impeded by illness or advanced age, or when the number of the faithful going to Communion is so large as to make the celebration of Mass excessively long. However, no priest who concelebrates should refrain from distributing Communion and leave this task to the laity.

15. The Church has always required from the faithful respect and reverence for the Eucharist at the moment of receiving it. With regard to the manner of going to Communion, the faithful can receive it either kneeling or standing, in accordance with the norms laid down by the episcopal conference: “When the faithful communicate kneeling, no other sign of reverence towards the Blessed Sacrament is required, since kneeling is itself a sign of adoration. When they receive Communion standing, it is strongly recommended that, coming up in procession, they should make a sign of reverence before receiving the Sacrament. This should be done at the right time and place, so that the order of people going to and from Communion is not disrupted” (Sacred Congregation of Rites, Instruction *Eucharisticum Mysterium*, no. 34). The Amen said by the faithful when receiving Communion, is an act of personal faith in the presence of Christ and therefore, it should be audible. After receiving the Communion, faithful go back to their respective seats without bowing to the tabernacle.

16. With regard to Communion under both kinds, the norms laid down by the Church must be observed, both by reason of the reverence due to the Sacrament and for the good of those receiving the Eucharist, in accordance with variations in circumstances, times and places. Communion under both species is permitted, over and above the occasions listed in the ritual books:

- a) to priests who cannot celebrate or concelebrate Mass;
- b) to the deacon and others who perform a service during the Mass;

c) to the members of communities during the Conventual Mass or in the Mass that is said to be of the community, to seminarians, to all who participate in a spiritual retreat or in a spiritual or pastoral conference.

Episcopal conferences and ordinaries (Bishops) also are not to go beyond what is laid down in the present discipline: the granting of permission for Communion under both kinds is not to be indiscriminate, and the celebrations in question are to be specified precisely; the groups that use this faculty are to be clearly defined, well disciplined, and homogeneous.

17. Even after Communion the Lord remains present under the species. Accordingly, when Communion has been distributed, the sacred particles remaining are to be either consumed or taken by the competent minister to the place where the Eucharist is reserved.

18. On the other hand, the consecrated wine is to be consumed immediately after Communion and may not be kept. Care must be taken to consecrate only the amount of wine needed for Communion.

19. Particular respect and care are due to the sacred vessels, both the chalice and paten for the celebration of the Eucharist, and the ciboria for the Communion of the faithful. The form of the vessels must be appropriate for the liturgical use for which they are meant. The material must be noble, durable, and in every case adapted to sacred use. Use is not to be made of simple baskets or other recipients meant for ordinary use outside the sacred celebrations, nor are the sacred vessels to be of poor quality or lacking any artistic style. Before being used, chalices and patens must be blessed by the bishop or by a priest.

20. The faithful are to be recommended not to omit to make a proper thanksgiving after Communion. They may do this during the celebration with a period of silence, with a hymn, psalm or other song of praise, or also after the celebration, if possible, by staying back to pray for a suitable time.

21. Particular vigilance and special care are recommended with regard to Masses transmitted by the audiovisual media. Given their very wide diffusion, their celebration must be of exemplary quality. The Eucharistic celebration is to be carried

out in a sacred place, unless in a particular case necessity requires otherwise; in which case the celebration must be in a fitting place (Canon Law 932). In situations determined by the local bishop, Mass can be celebrated in another place, such as a home. As long as the Church's liturgical norms are followed, as well as any prescriptions of the bishop, such a celebration/offering of the Mass is fine. In the case of celebrations that are held in private houses, the norms of *Actio pastoralis* of May 15, 1969, are to be observed, Instruction issued by the Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship on Masses for special gatherings (Latin: *De missis pro Coetibus particularibus*). The core purpose of the instruction was to offer guidelines for celebrating the Eucharist with specific, particular groups, with the goal of meeting their special needs and intensifying their Christian life. It explicitly states that these celebrations should not aim to create a separate or privileged class within the Church.

Key aspects of the instruction include:

Mass for the sick and elderly: It permits the celebration of the Eucharist for specific groups, including family members gathered around sick or elderly individuals who cannot leave their homes, allowing them to participate in the celebration of the Mass.

Pastoral Adaptation: The document emphasizes a pastoral approach to the liturgy, allowing for certain adaptations to meet the specific needs and preparation levels of the people in different gatherings.

22. Public and private devotion to the Holy Eucharist outside Mass also is highly recommended. The presence of Christ, who is adored by the faithful in the Sacrament, derives from the sacrifice and is directed towards sacramental and spiritual Communion. The exposed Eucharist must never be left unattended.

23. When Eucharistic devotions are arranged, account should be taken of the liturgical season, so that they harmonize with the Liturgy, draw inspiration from it in some way, and lead the Christian people toward it.

24. It must not be forgotten that before the blessing with the

Sacrament, an appropriate time should be devoted to the reading of the word of God, to hymns and prayers, and to some silent prayer also. At the end of the adoration, a hymn is sung, and a prayer chosen from among the many contained in the Roman Ritual is recited or sung.

25. The tabernacle in which the Eucharist is kept can be located on an altar, or away from it, in a spot in the church which is very prominent, truly noble, and duly decorated, or in a chapel suitable for private prayer and for adoration by the faithful.

26. The tabernacle should be solid, unbreakable, and not transparent. The presence of the Eucharist is to be indicated by a tabernacle veil or by some other suitable means laid down by the competent authority, and a lamp must perpetually burn before it, as a sign of His presence and honour paid to the Lord.

27. The venerable practice of genuflecting before the Blessed Sacrament, whether enclosed in the tabernacle or publicly exposed, as a sign of adoration, is to be maintained. This act requires that it be performed in a recollected way. In order that the heart may bow before God in profound reverence, the genuflection must be neither hurried nor careless.

28. If anything has been introduced that is at variance with these indications, it is to be corrected. Most of the difficulties encountered in putting into practice the reform of the Liturgy and especially the reform of the Mass stem from the fact that neither priests nor faithful have perhaps been sufficiently aware of the theological and spiritual reasons for which the changes have been made, in accordance with the principles laid down by the Council.

Priests must acquire an ever deeper understanding of the authentic way of looking at the Church, of which the celebration of the Liturgy and especially of the Mass is the living expression. Without an adequate biblical training, priests will not be able to present to the faithful the meaning of the Liturgy as an enactment, in signs, of the history of salvation. Knowledge of the history of the Liturgy will likewise contribute to an understanding of the changes which have been introduced, and introduced not for the sake of novelty but as a revival and adaptation of authentic and genuine tradition.

In order to reach these ideals more easily it will be necessary to foster liturgical formation in seminaries and faculties and to facilitate the participation of priests in courses, meetings, assemblies or liturgical weeks, in which study and reflection should be properly complemented by model celebrations (Cf. Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, Instruction on Liturgical Formation in Seminaries *In Ecclesiasticam Futurorum Sacerdotum Formationem*, June 3, 1979). In this way priests will be able to devote themselves to more effective pastoral action, to liturgical catechesis of the faithful, to organizing groups of lectors, to giving altar servers spiritual and practical training, to training animators of the assembly, to enriching progressively the repertoire of songs, in a word to all the initiatives favouring an ever deeper understanding of the Liturgy.

The Bishops, “whose function it is to control, foster, and safeguard the entire liturgical life of the Church entrusted to them,” (Second Vatican Council, Decree *Christus Dominus*, no. 15) will not fail to discover the most suitable means for ensuring a careful and firm application of these norms, for the glory of God and the good of the Church.

-- Rev. (Dr.) Rathan Almeida, OCD

Dhyanavana, International Institute of Spirituality
Email: meetrathan22@gmail.com

“Fasting cleanses the soul, raises the mind, subjects one’s flesh to the spirit, renders the heart contrite and humble, scatters the clouds of concupiscence, quenches the fire of lust, and kindles the true light of chastity. Enter again into yourself.”

- St. Augustine of Hippo

Lenten Path of Prayer and Love

Liturgical Day	Spiritual Task (Interior Conversion)	Corporal Task (Exterior Charity)
2nd Sunday of Lent	Contemplate Christ's glory	Be joyful and patient at home
Monday	Pray for humility	Serve without recognition
Tuesday	Renounce one comfort consciously	Share food or resources
Wednesday	Pray the Our Father slowly	Speak truth gently
Thursday	Spend time with Scripture	Help someone practically
Friday	Fast from unnecessary words	Practice silence and listening
Saturday	Thank God for blessings	Clean or care for common spaces
3rd Sunday of Lent	Renew your baptismal promises	Reconcile with someone
Monday	Pray for conversion of heart	Control anger consciously
Tuesday	Reflect on mercy	Show mercy in judgment
Wednesday	Pray for perseverance	Avoid complaining
Thursday	Spend time in Eucharistic adoration	Perform an act of generosity
Friday	Unite your suffering with Christ	Accept inconveniences peacefully
Saturday	Pray for vocations	Support Church ministries
4th Sunday of Lent	Rejoice in God's mercy	Spread joy intentionally
Monday	Examine your attachments	Let go of something unnecessary
Tuesday	Pray for interior freedom	Practice simplicity
Wednesday	Ask for grace of obedience	Accept correction humbly

Liturgical Day	Spiritual Task (Interior Conversion)	Corporal Task (Exterior Charity)
Thursday	Read John 6	Feed someone spiritually or materially
Friday	Fast more intentionally	Practice self-control
Saturday	Pray the Litany of Humility	Serve quietly
5th Sunday of Lent	Surrender your fears to God	Encourage faith in others
Monday	Pray for renewal	Avoid negativity
Tuesday	Meditate on the Cross	Help someone carry a burden
Wednesday	Confess your sins sincerely	Make peace where possible
Thursday	Thank God for His patience	Be patient with others
Friday	Pray Stations slowly	Forgive deeply
Saturday	Rest in God's mercy	Do an act of kindness anonymously
Palm Sunday	Enter Holy Week prayerfully	Serve joyfully
Monday of Holy Week	Stay with Jesus in prayer	Be attentive to the suffering
Tuesday of Holy Week	Reflect on betrayal	Be faithful in small things
Wednesday of Holy Week	Pray for repentance	Avoid harsh words
Holy Thursday	Adore Christ in the Eucharist	Serve like Christ
Good Friday	Fast; meditate on the Cross	Offer your pain for others
Holy Saturday	Keep silence; trust in hope	Prepare your heart for Easter

Echoes of Magisterium

“The Holy Spirit dwells in the Church and in the hearts of the faithful, as in a temple. In them He prays and bears witness to their adoption as sons.”

LUMEN GENTIUM 4



By affirming that the Holy Spirit dwells in the Church and in the hearts of the faithful as in a temple, LG 4 clarifies that the Church is not merely an institutional reality but a living organism whose soul is the Holy Spirit. As the temple once signified God's presence, so now the ecclesial community and each baptized person become God's dwelling through the Spirit.

The Spirit is actively at work within believers. In teaching that the Spirit prays in them, the Church indicates that Christian prayer is a participation in Christ's prayer to the Father, initiated and sustained by the Spirit. LG affirms that the Spirit bears witness to the believers' adoption as children of God, which emphasizes the filial nature of salvation. Through incorporation into Christ, the faithful are truly made sons and daughters of the Father. The Spirit thus serves as the interior witness and guarantee of this divine sonship, grounding Christian identity and hope.

ST JOSEPH

*So simple, humble, patient
Hidden from public view
So constant in his duties
With friends and past-times few.*

*With justice, he treats Mary,
When her with Child he sees,
Withholding deep frustration
Till he knows God's decrees.*

*The humanizing effects
In him are clearly seen
Of God in human nature
Marvel till then unseen.*

*So little, is he thought of,
Spoken of, even less.
His lowliness admire,
May he your efforts bless.*



- 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