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**EVERY HUMAN LIFE
IS A GIFT FROM GOD**

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**Living
Water**



Daily Spiritual Reflections

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PRAYER INTENTION

FOR RESPECT FOR HUMAN LIFE

*Let us pray for the respect and protection of human life
in all its stages, recognizing it as a gift from God.*

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FROM WOMB TO TOMB: THE SACRED ARC OF LIFE

In maternity wards, tiny hands grasp the fingers of a nurse. In nursing homes, dementia patients forget their children's names but retain God's image in their eyes. In war zones, mothers grope through rubble searching for their babies, while in euthanasia clinics, the elderly choose death when life becomes burdensome. From the first flicker of consciousness to the final exhalation, human life trembles between recognition and rejection. In the month of July, the Holy Father, speaks of the precious gift of life: that we respect and protect life in all its stages, recognizing it as God's gift. In a world that measures worth by productivity, the Church proclaims: life has value simply because God breathed it.

This intention arrives amid a culture of death that wears many masks. Prenatal life faces abortion normalized as "choice," IVF clinics discarding surplus embryos, sex-selective practices eliminating females, genetic screening pruning away disability. Children born into poverty suffer trafficking, not excluding child labour. Adults face economic disposability: workers replaced by machines, suicides soaring amid isolation, physician-assisted suicide spreading globally. The elderly endure nursing-home isolation and "right to die" campaigns that treat gray hair as burden rather than crown of glory. The threat transcends individual cases, and is a networked devaluation of any life deemed inconvenient, costly, or unproductive.

Genesis would state it clear: "God created humankind in his image" (Gen 1:27). Life's sanctity is not earned; it is inherent from the conception of human life. Jeremiah, as the mouthpiece of God, declares to each member of the human race: "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you; before you were born, I consecrated you" (Jer 1:5). Psalm 139 sings: "You knit me together in my mother's womb... my frame was not hidden from you." The Incarnation confirms this: the Word became flesh (Jn 1:14), God dignifying human life by taking on our frail flesh. The Resurrection These passages from the scripture remind us that we do not own life; we steward what God has entrusted us with. Abortion is killing and euthanasia is betrayal.

July, the month we celebrate our Lady as the Queen and mother of Carmel, offers perfect spiritual armour drawing from her

own life as it has been revealed to us in the scriptures. At the Annunciation, Mary's fiat "Let it be done" accepts life as gift; she carries God incarnate in her womb. The Visitation shows Mary hastening to pregnant Elizabeth; John who is still in Elizabeth's womb leaps in joy. This image becomes the greatest manifestation of life recognizing life even in the womb. The Nativity reveals Mary giving birth in poverty; Joseph protecting the Child from Herod's cruelty. At Cana, Mary notices "they have no wine" and intercedes for life's celebration. At the Cross, she stands amid brutality, becoming new mother of all living. Mary, Mother of Life, teaches us to receive, protect, and intercede for every breath. She who pondered mysteries in silence notices the silenced unborn, the forgotten elderly, and those struggling in battlefields where death awaits them at every step.

The mission of the Church counters worldly logic. Where the trends of the world says "no more children," the Church says "yes to life." Pope Leo recently exhorted young Catholics to marry and have children. As opposed to the world's views which understands "quality of life" as "no pain," the Church says "suffering has meaning in Christ." Where "my body, my choice" becomes "my life, my death," the Church says "life is gift, not property." The Church stands for life, as it is the greatest gift God has given to each human being.

This July, defend one life. Make an effort to visit a nursing home. Pray for one unborn child by name. Pray against abortion. Invoke Mary, Mother of Life and St. Joseph (protector), and all saints who defended life in this battle against elements that target and destroy human life.

In the end, life's sacred arc bends toward eternity. From the first heartbeat to the final breath, God's breath sustains. May our respect for life become a Gospel preached without words. Every defended birth, every honoured elder, every protected child becomes the bearer of Christ's signature – the very image in which we are created. For life is not ours to own, but God's to give, we are called to be stewards, who guard and glorify this precious and gratuitous gift!

Fr Jesvin Tom Benoy OCD



Let Justice Flow and Hearts Be Freed

Ordinary Weekday

Am 5: 14-15, 21-24/ Ps 50: 7, 8-9, 10-11, 12-13, 16bc-17/ Mt 8: 28-34

The prophet Amos thunders with the voice of God: "I hate your festivals, I take no delight in your solemn assemblies...." His words cut deep, not because God despises worship, but because worship without justice is empty. True religion, Amos reminds us, is not a matter of words or rituals but of a heart that mirrors God's compassion. In the Carmelite tradition, interior prayer and justice are inseparable. St. Teresa of Avila insists that authentic prayer always bears fruit in love of neighbour. And St. John of the Cross says that where there is no love, "put love, and you will draw out love." The contemplative is called to be a channel through which God's mercy and righteousness flow into the world like the living water Amos envisions.

In today's Gospel, Jesus enters the territory of the Gadarenes and encounters two men possessed by demons. The scene is striking: the power of darkness trembles before the Light. Yet the people of the town, instead of rejoicing, plead with Jesus to leave their region. Why? Because His presence disturbs their order, their economy, their comfort. The healing of the demoniacs is good news for the oppressed but unsettling for those attached to their security. So too, when Christ comes near to us in prayer, He often disturbs before He consoles. He exposes the hidden demons that dwell within, including those of fear, resentment, attachment, pride. Genuine contemplation allows Jesus to enter those shadowed places, to cast out what keeps us unfree. This inner deliverance is not dramatic but often quiet; it is a progressive liberation that restores the soul to peace.

When we allow Christ to reign within, the justice Amos proclaimed begins to well up from the heart like living water: mercy replaces judgment, peace flows where bitterness once ruled, love overcomes fear. That is the true worship God desires. He desires a heart purified by His presence and a life that bears the fruit of compassion.

Response: To the upright I will show the saving power of God.

2
THUR

God's Authority Heals and Restores

Ordinary Weekday

Am 7: 10-17/ Ps 19: 8, 9, 10, 11/ Mt 9: 1-8

Today's readings invite us to reflect on the healing and restoring power of God. Both the prophet Amos and Jesus encounter opposition because truth always challenges human pride and comfort. Yet through them, God continues His work of restoring His people. In the first reading from the Book of Amos, Amaziah the priest asks Amos to leave Bethel and stop prophesying. Amos was a simple shepherd and farmer. Yet God called him and entrusted him with a mission. This reminds us that God often chooses ordinary people for extraordinary missions. Divine authority does not come from status, education, or power; it comes from God Himself.

In the Gospel, we see a paralytic being brought to Jesus. Before healing him Jesus says something surprising: "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven." Jesus goes deeper than the visible problem. He addresses the deeper paralysis of the human heart caused by sin and separation from God. Physical suffering is painful, but spiritual brokenness is even more serious because it affects our relationship with God. The scribes accuse Jesus of blasphemy because only God can forgive sins. But Jesus reveals His divine authority by healing the paralytic completely. He says: "Rise, take up your bed, and go home." Immediately the man rises and walks. This miracle reveals an important theological truth: Jesus did not come only to heal bodies but to restore the whole person. He heals physically, spiritually, emotionally, and interiorly.

Many people today carry hidden forms of paralysis: fear, guilt, resentment, addictions, discouragement, spiritual emptiness. Outwardly they may appear strong, but inwardly they struggle to move forward. The Gospel assures us that Christ still comes with healing grace. Before He changes our external situations, He desires to heal the heart. Today, Jesus speaks the same words to us: "Take heart." He invites us to trust in His mercy and allow Him to heal the deeper wounds within us. May we, like Amos, remain faithful to God's truth, and may we, like the paralytic, place ourselves completely before Christ, who alone has the authority to heal and restore us.

***Response: The judgments of the Lord are true,
and all of them are just.***

3
FRI**My Lord, My God!****ST THOMAS**

Acts: 10:24-35/ Ps 42:2-3; 43:3,4/ 1 Pet 1:3-9/ Jn 20:24-29

Today, the Feast of St. Thomas invites us to reflect on one of the most profound and comforting journeys in the Gospel: the movement from doubt to faith. The readings from Acts 10:24-35, 1 Peter 1:3-9, and John 20:24-29 reveal the liberating truth that authentic faith is not the absolute absence of questions, but the courage to seek and encounter Christ in the midst of them. By embracing our uncertainties rather than hiding them, we open the door to a deeper, more resilient relationship with God. Thomas reminds us that our vulnerabilities are not barriers to divine love, but the exact places where Christ meets us with His peace. When we bring our honest questions to Him, our fragile hesitation is transformed into a powerful, personal conviction that shapes our entire life's mission.

In the Gospel, Thomas is often labelled as “Doubting Thomas,” a title that does him a disservice. His doubt was not a stubborn rebellion or a cynical refusal to believe; it was a sincere, aching longing for certainty. It was a longing of his heart to waive off all the doubts of his senses. Having witnessed the brutal suffering and public death of Jesus, his heart was naturally guarded against further heartbreak. He struggled to believe the joyful testimony of the other disciples because it simply seemed too good to be true. When the risen Lord appeared, He did not reprimand Thomas for his hesitation. Instead, Jesus met him precisely where he was, inviting him to touch His wounds. In that moment of profound vulnerability, Thomas's intellectual questions dissolved into relational awe. He responded with the highest and most beautiful profession of faith in the entire New Testament: “My Lord and my God!” Thomas teaches us that genuine faith is often forged in the crucible of honest questioning and born anew through a personal encounter with the Divine.

Consider a child learning to trust a parent. A small child may not understand the physics of how an airplane flies or how electricity works, yet he rests secure because of the proven reliability of those who guide him. Similarly, Christian faith is not

a blind leap into the dark, nor is it believing without reason. It is an act of trust in the One who has proven His absolute fidelity through the Cross and Resurrection. This living relationship matures through testing. St. Peter's letter deepens this theme by reminding early believers that although they have not physically seen Christ, they love Him and rejoice with an indescribable joy. Peter uses the imagery of the goldsmith, explaining that trials, doubts, and sufferings are not signs of God's absence, but opportunities for our faith to be purified like gold in the fire, revealing its true, indestructible value.

An authentic encounter with the risen Lord always propels us outward. In the first reading, Peter enters the house of the Gentile Cornelius, breaking ancient cultural barriers as he discovers that God shows no partiality. The resurrected Christ continuously sends His disciples beyond familiar boundaries. Church tradition beautifully connects this to Thomas, who is said to have carried the Gospel to distant lands, eventually reaching the shores of India. His life demonstrates that a person who has truly encountered the living Christ cannot keep that experience to themselves. Faith, by its very nature, becomes mission.

In our modern world, we are conditioned to demand visible, empirical proof before believing in anything. Yet, the greatest realities of human existence, namely, love, hope, trust, and forgiveness, cannot be measured in a lab or touched with our hands. They are known exclusively through experience. Likewise, Christ reveals Himself to us today not in physical form, but through the living Word of Scripture, the intimacy of prayer, the grace of the sacraments, and the self-giving love we share with one another. On this Feast of St. Thomas, we are invited to bring our doubts, fears, and scars honestly before Jesus. He does not reject questioning hearts; He welcomes and transforms them. In a world gripped by scepticism, our willingness to trust without seeing becomes a powerful beacon of hope. Like Thomas, may we move from uncertainty to conviction, and from looking at wounds to recognizing glory. May we proclaim with our whole lives, "My Lord and my God!" For blessed indeed are those who have not seen, and yet have come to believe.

Response: Go out to all the world and tell the Good News.

4
SAT**What Is True Fasting?****Ordinary Weekday**

Am 9: 11-15/ Ps 85: 9ab and 10, 11-12, 13-14/ Mt 9: 14-17

Today we have wonderful theme to reflect upon as Christians. The question about fasting. Baptist's disciples come to Jesus asking a significant question; while we and the Pharisees fast very often, but your disciples not? We know Jesus always gives answer in such a way as to make people think and find the right answer.

First of all, what we should know about fasting. Fasting, a common practice in Judaism, was associated with repentance, mourning and also seeking God's closeness. It may look like the disciples of Jesus not following the traditional religious discipline. To make them understand the real and practical meaning of fasting, Jesus gives some examples – (1) Example of wedding: He says wedding guests cannot be fasting bridegroom is with them. According to Jewish culture and even in our own times, weddings are a time of joy and surely not fasting. Jesus compares himself to a bridegroom, which means his presence is a time of celebration and rejoicing and not fasting. But fasting will come later when the bridegroom will be taken away, which will be his future suffering and death. This clarifies that fasting is about timing and right meaning and not at rejected by Jesus. (2) Example of new cloth on old garment: No one does this mistake because new cloth always shrinks, and naturally tears the old garment making things worse. Here Jesus means to say his new teaching is not a kind of patch but something fundamentally new and important. (3) Example of new wine and old wine skins: New wine expands as it ferments consequently old wine skins do not have any more space to expand and they will burst. This means Jesus' message is the New Wine, meaning to say needs new forms of structures and strategies. It cannot be contained within the rigid, outdated religious frameworks.

So the teaching on fasting an invitation to live in God's presence and embrace his mission, rather than just a clinging on to some tradition of the past that prevent one from the new spiritual realities.

Response: The Lord speaks of peace to his people.

5
SUN

In The Interior Castle Dwells The Meek King

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Zec 9: 9-10/ Ps 145: 1-2, 8-9, 10-11, 13-14/ Rom 8: 9, 11-13/ Mt 11: 25-30

Zechariah's prophecy in the first reading presents us with an extraordinary image: a king who comes "meek, riding on a donkey." In the ancient world, kings rode warhorses, displayed military might, and commanded through force. Yet, the prophet says, the true king of peace arrives in gentleness, banishing chariots and battle bows. This is true strength, strength that is transfigured by love. It is the way of Christ, who exercises sovereignty not through domination but through humble service and sacrificial love.

This same humble king speaks to us in today's Gospel: "Come to me, all you who labour and are burdened, and I will give you rest." These words are an invitation to that profound interior peace that St Teresa of Avila describes in the innermost mansion of her Interior Castle. It is the rest that comes when we finally cease our anxious striving and allow ourselves to be carried by divine love. Jesus reveals that the Father has "hidden these things from the wise and learned" and revealed them to "children." In spiritual terms, this is the *via negativa*, the way of unknowing that St John of the Cross explored in his Ascent of Mount Carmel. Our human wisdom, our carefully constructed systems of thought, our attempts to control and manage even our spiritual lives... all of this must be set aside. We must become like children: trusting, open, vulnerable. In Carmelite terms, we must embrace what John calls "the dark night," that stripping away of all our certainties so that we might know God not through our own understanding but through loving surrender. The yoke that Jesus offers is paradoxical as well: "My yoke is easy and my burden light." How can a yoke be easy? How can a burden be light? St Thérèse of Lisieux explained this mystery through her "little way." She discovered that when we attempt to carry our burdens alone, relying on our own strength and virtue, every step becomes exhausting. But when we yoke ourselves to Christ; that is, when we acknowledge our smallness and allow him to bear the weight, what seemed impossible

becomes possible. The burden does not disappear, but we are no longer carrying it alone.

St Paul's letter to the Romans in the second reading deepens this teaching. He reminds us that we live "not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit." Teresa and John both insisted that authentic spiritual life is not about external practices or achievements, but about allowing the Holy Spirit to dwell within us, to transform us from the inside out. If the Spirit of Christ dwells in us, Paul promises, then the one who raised Jesus from the dead will bring life to our mortal bodies. This is the hope of resurrection that animates our spiritual life: we are not simply trying to be better people through our own efforts. Rather, we are opening ourselves to a divine life already present within us, waiting to transform every aspect of our being. Teresa would call this the prayer of union, when our small will becomes one with God's infinite will, when what we want and what God wants are no longer in conflict. However, this means that we have an obligation to resist living according to the flesh. In other words, we have to strive towards recognizing those patterns of self-centeredness, anxiety, and control that keep us from the freedom God offers. This is the work of purification that, as the spirituality of Carmel teaches us, is accomplished not through our own willpower, but through patient cooperation with grace.

Today, these readings invite us to examine where we are still trying to be our own king, riding our own warhorse, controlling our own destiny. Where are we exhausted from carrying burdens Jesus has asked us to share with him? Where do we need to become more childlike, setting aside our cleverness to receive the simple gift of God's love? The journey inward to the castle's centre, the ascent of the mountain, the embrace of littleness... all lead to the same destination. They lead us to rest in the heart of the meek king, who alone can give us peace. May we learn to surrender our false kingdoms, to accept the gentle yoke, and to allow the Spirit to bring the life of the resurrection to every corner of our being.

Response: I will praise your name for ever, my king and my God.

**6
MON****Compassion Made Visible in Jesus*****Ordinary Weekday***

Hos 2: 14bc, 15cd-16, 19-20 / Ps 145: 2-3, 4-5, 6-7, 8-9/ Mt 9: 18-26

The Carmelite tradition invites us to encounter God in tender love, revealed through His kindness, mercy, and unfailing compassion. Today's readings draw us into this intimate experience of a God who heals, restores, and lovingly calls us back to Himself.

In the First Reading, the Lord speaks with deep affection. He gently draws the soul away from distractions into a place of encounter, leading it into a quiet and intimate space where He speaks to the heart. This is not a distant God, but one who desires closeness and relationship. For Carmelites, this "desert" is the interior life where, in silence and prayer, God reveals His mercy to us. He does not condemn unfaithfulness but instead promises restoration and a renewed relationship rooted in steadfast love, mercy, and faithfulness. The Psalm echoes this truth by reminding us that the Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and rich in love. This is the God whom Carmelites contemplate: a God whose mercy sustains all creation and whose compassion reaches every wounded heart. His kindness is not abstract; but active, personal, and transformative. Gospel reveals this compassion in Jesus. He responds to a grieving father and a suffering woman with the same tender mercy. The woman, who had suffered for many years, reaches out in faith, and Jesus, aware of her silent plea, restores her dignity and health. He then takes the hand of the young girl and brings her back to life. These actions reveal a God who notices even the hidden pain, who responds with love, and who restores life where there is despair.

For the Carmelite soul, these passages are an invitation to trust deeply in God's merciful love. In prayer, we bring our brokenness, our weakness, and our longing, and we discover that God meets us not with judgment, but with compassion. His kindness heals, His mercy renews, and His love draws us into a deeper union with Him. In this gentle encounter, we learn to rest in His heart and to become, in turn, instruments of His compassion in the world.

Response: The Lord is gracious and merciful.



Different Minds, Different People

Ordinary Weekday

Hos 8: 4-7, 11-13/ Ps 115: 3-4, 5-6, 7ab-8, 9-10/ Mt 9: 32-38

In today's Gospel, we encounter four types of people. It is worth pausing at each one to ponder what they can teach us.

The main character is the mute demoniac. Helpless and severely deprived of his basic mental and physical faculties, he nevertheless allows himself to be led by others. God uses his neighbours to guide him toward wholeness. Though possessed, he yields to Divine mercy. This adds a lesson to our own lives: No matter how deeply broken we may be, there remains an unquenchable, divinely planted spark within each of us that continuously draws us back toward the Source of all goodness. Can we pause to thank God for embedding this sacred, inescapable longing deep within our souls, which silently rescues us even when we feel most lost?

The second group consists of the "others." These are the ones who brought the demoniac to Jesus. Little is known about them, except that they took the trouble to guide him because they wanted him healed. We are not told what their motives must have been! Yet, the healing was actualized only because of their actions. Afterward, they shared in the collective amazement, wondering if Jesus was indeed the Messiah. Notice their shift in focus from the demoniac to Jesus; their interest moves from an ordinary man to the Son of David.

Then we have the third type: the Pharisees. They demonstrate how a deep-seated prejudice against someone, in this case against Jesus, can create a vast chasm. They are unable to give Him even a single chance to be right; their judgment is already formed and their reasoning is blinded. Much like the demoniac, their mental faculties are severely impaired. Today, let us shake off the negativity that clings to us when we encounter people we have disliked in the past. Let us give love a chance.

Finally, we look at Jesus. Today's Gospel is sandwiched between two other passages of healing. He continues doing good despite the Pharisees because His focus remains entirely on the works His Father entrusted to Him. Can I keep my eyes fixed on Jesus?

Response: The house of Israel trusts in the Lord.



The First Missionaries.

Ordinary Weekday

Hos 10: 1-3, 7-8, 12/ Ps 105: 2-3, 4-5, 6-7/ Mt 10: 1-7

In today's first reading Hosea speaks against the idolatry of Israel. The hopes for moral reform and for a return to social justice have turned into empty words and false promises. God is asking them and us, to sow integrity and reap a harvest of kindness, to break with the past and to seek the Lord.

Mt.10:5 reflects Matthew's understanding of the mission of Jesus and the church. The pre-Easter mission of Jesus is restricted to Israel. The mission of the risen Lord reaches out through His disciples to all nations. The appointment of the Twelve is not merely as helpers. The Gospel is clear, he elected Apostles to be with him, and to be sent out (Mk 3:13), They symbolize the twelve tribes of Israel, and so stand for the new people of God which Jesus founds.

The discourse puts together certain sayings of Jesus, some of which seem to have been addressed to His first disciples when they were sent to preach in Galilee. The sayings were spoken in different places and at different times, but today, the liturgy addresses the same to us! We are not, of course, to follow literally the instructions given, many of which were meant for missionaries in situation very different from our own. But the attitudes they inculcate (detachment, dependence on God rather than on human techniques, courage in the face of opposition) must inform mission today and be translated into appropriate ways of acting. It is not the letter of the instruction that matters, but it's Spirit.

The Father is the one who sends messengers into the world to gather those who believe in His love and promises. He also sends His spirits to move the minds and the hearts of their listeners. It is through the Spirit that the uneducated messengers are able to boldly proclaim and preach Christ. The Father sends His Son to the earth and in turn the Son sends His apostles. The Father entrusts to Jesus the realization of this plan, and the Church takes upon herself the continuation of the work initiated by Jesus.

Response: Seek always the face of the Lord.



Faithful Missionaries of Christ

Ordinary Weekday

Hos 11: 1-4, 8c-9/ Ps 80: 2ac and 3b, 15-16/ Mt 10: 7-15

The apostles who were moulded by Jesus, faithfully followed his instructions, and because of their obedience, trust, and dependence on God, they became powerful and effective missionaries of the Gospel.

The first instruction Jesus gave to His disciples was to proclaim repentance. Acts 2:38, reveals St Peter preaching: “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” This message touched the hearts of the people, and about three thousand were converted on that very day. The second instruction given by Jesus was to “cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, and cast out demons.” The apostles faithfully continued this healing ministry of Jesus. Again in Acts 3:1ff, Peter and John heals a crippled beggar at the temple gate. Also, in Acts 9:36–42, Tabitha is raised from the dead by the Apostles. These miracles revealed that the risen Jesus continued His saving work through the apostles. The third instruction of Jesus was: “You received without payment; give without payment.” The apostles obeyed this command during their public ministry. When Simon (Acts 8:18-20) saw that the Holy Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles’ hands, he offered them money. But Peter rebuked him sternly. The apostles understood that God’s grace is not for sale. Everything they had received from Christ was a free gift, and therefore it had to be shared freely with others. The fourth instruction was not to depend on gold or silver. Jesus wanted His disciples to trust completely in God’s providence rather than in material possessions. The apostles lived this teaching faithfully. We have the words of Peter “I have no silver or gold, but what I have I give you; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk” (Acts 3:6).

Like the Apostles we too are invited to mirror the life of Jesus—a life of love, forgiveness, humility, simplicity, poverty, compassion, and generosity. The world does not only need preachers of the Gospel; it needs living examples of the Gospel.

Response: Let us see your face, Lord, and we shall be saved.

10
FRI**The Cost of Discipleship****Ordinary Weekday**

Hos 14: 1-9/ Ps 51: 3-4, 8-9, 12-13, 14 and 17/ Mt 10: 16-23

To follow Christ is not to step onto a path of ease, but to embrace a journey marked by courage, patience, and unwavering perseverance. The Christian life does not magically remove suffering from the human experience; rather, it holds together both profound joy and intense trial within the grand mystery of God's salvific plan. Human freedom plays a crucial role here. How we choose to respond to these challenging moments becomes our personal cooperation with divine grace, turning ordinary struggles into a sacred dialogue with the Creator. In the face of these inevitable trials, the disciple is never left alone to falter. Christ explicitly assures us of the gift of the Holy Spirit, who acts as our advocate, guide, and constant source of supernatural strength. Our perseverance, therefore, is not merely a product of human willpower or grit, but a beautiful synergy with God's grace. Our fundamental task is fidelity remaining steadfast and rooted in prayer even amid difficulties.

The first reading reveals this commitment. We witness the striking imagery of how God relentlessly calls the people of Israel back to Himself, even in the midst of their blatant unfaithfulness and spiritual adultery. God remains merciful, continually inviting them back into the desert to restore the fractured divine relationship. This powerful narrative stands as a timeless reminder that God's boundless mercy is infinitely greater than any human failure. Consequently, when we face daily struggles, modern-day persecutions, or even painful rejection because of our faith, we must pray for the grace to stay strong. Let us ask God to fill us with His Spirit so we can make the right ethical choices and possess the spiritual stamina to endure. In the Gospel, Jesus practically equips us for this mission by reminding us to be innocent as doves and wise as serpents. This means we are called to live with a pure, transparent heart, while simultaneously exercising sharp discernment and wisdom when dealing with the complexities of the world around us. Discipleship is certainly not easy, but we are never alone. If we stay faithful, God will faithfully carry us through every challenge.

Response: My mouth will declare your praise.

11
SAT

Have No Fear

St Benedict

Is 6: 1-8/ Ps 93: 1ab, 1cd-2, 5/ Mt 10: 24-33

Two attributes of God are presented to us today. Isaiah has a vision in which he sees the glory, majesty and holiness of God. God's power is manifested in the 'shaking of the foundations of the threshold at the voice of God'; an utterly awe-inspiring encounter which reveals the absolute transcendence of God. Contrasting this, we have the words of Jesus, in the gospel, where He assures his listeners that this transcendent God is so close to us that he even knows the number of hairs on our head! These two attributes: transcendence and closeness, are in fact not contrasts, but complimentary. And what holds them together is God's love for us. Our human condition however, may lead us to doubt or question both the power and the love of God.

Our world today is shrouded in uncertainty, wars, financial and health concerns, loss of freedom; a situation which naturally evokes a sense of fear. Yet Jesus invites us to 'have no fear!' and to trust in an all-powerful and loving God. Trials, persecution, suffering are a part of our spiritual growth. They are inevitable. Jesus does not promise immunity, but strength to endure them. And this he has shown through his own example. We do not have a God who commands slavish allegiance from a distance. Rather by becoming like us and sharing our human condition fully, Jesus has shown that there is life and hope beyond the seemingly hopeless and defeating experiences of life. We are invited to not only share the glory of Christ, but to share in his warfare and agony. To suffer for Christ is to share in the work of Christ. By sharing in the fellowship of His sufferings, we shall also know the power of His resurrection. All our struggles will lead to victory.

May the prayer of St. Teresa of Avila "Let nothing disturb you. Let nothing frighten you. All things are passing. God never changes. Patience obtains all things. They who have God lack nothing; God alone is enough," inspire us in our moments of weakness, and let us make it our own!

Response: The Lord is king; he is robed in majesty.

12
SUN

To an Otherwise Painful Journey
FIFTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Is 55: 10-11/ Ps 65: 10, 11, 12-13, 14/ Rom 8: 18-23/ Mt 13: 1-23

Jesus very probably was passionately thrilled with the magic of the agriculture. He was indeed a keen observer of greenery around; of the process of growth and productivity in plant world, to the extent that he used that paradigm to communicate very effectively the lofty lessons of inner spiritual growth and of values of God's kingdom.

God's Word that was God himself in the beginning, that created the whole universe out of nothing with a word, that same word that became flesh in Jesus is sown into the soil of human life to produce abundant harvest, because it is necessarily meant to produce the abundant fruit. Yes, the Lord says it will not return without having produced the fruits. There is a sure assurance that human story will culminate in an eternal smile.

The parable of the sower, is more a parable of the seed that passing through very many strange stages ends up in the wonder of multiplying itself very many times, is capable of feeding not merely the sower and his family, but also the wider world of the birds of the air and other creatures.

In fact every seed comes well packed with energy to survive the ordeals, all the script and potential enough to be going through the process of germination, growth and productivity. It includes the supply of copious rain water of grace from above at the right time, to be productive and fulfilled. But in spite of that much care, that sadly doesn't always happen. In spite of everything from the side of God the human freedom is able to do what was not intended by God. It can short cut the path for immediate solutions.

Yet the most astonishing aspect of the parable is the extraordinary optimism of the sower. He does not carefully measure where every seed falls. He scatters generously, lavishly. Some seeds fall on the path, some on rocky ground, some among thorns, and some on rich soil. This is precisely how God deals with us. He never ceases to sow His grace into our lives, even when previous harvests have been disappointing. Every sunrise,

every Eucharist, every page of Scripture, every movement of repentance is another seed falling into the field of our heart.

Moreover, the seed works silently. Once buried beneath the soil, it disappears from sight. For a time nothing seems to happen. Yet beneath the surface a hidden transformation is taking place. The Kingdom of God often grows in the same hidden manner. We may not immediately see the fruits of prayer, sacrifice, forgiveness, or fidelity to our vocation. At times we may even feel that our efforts are fruitless. But God is at work in the depths of the soul where human eyes cannot see.

This should fill us with hope. The Lord is more patient with our growth than we are with ourselves. He sees not only what we are today but also what we can become through His grace. The tiny seed contains the promise of a mighty harvest. Likewise, every act of faith, however small, contains within it the possibility of holiness. God never abandons the work He has begun in us; He continues to cultivate, nourish, and patiently wait for the harvest of eternal life.

St. Paul warns us that our sufferings which often make us feel God's absence, are precisely meant to make right choices to move towards the crucified Jesus and to happiness in selfless love and not to drift to loneliness and despair away from God. We and the whole creation is waiting in hope the final transformation of the humanity. We can reach fullness only through the Calvary.

Thank you Jesus for making me clear that I am meant from the beginning of time to produce the fruits of happiness and selfless love. Thank you Lord for understanding that it is I who allowed the field of my heart to be turned into a busy thoroughfare with so much traffic and messy transactions and there is so much deaf resistance in me that your whisper of the voice to make me sensible, is often lost in the din of superficial life. Lord draw me to you so that my soul may not be a barren land but produce the right harvests of love.

Response: The seed that falls on good ground will yield a fruitful harvest.

13
MON**Choosing Christ Above All****Ordinary Weekday**

Is 1: 10-17/ Ps 50: 8-9, 16bc-17, 21 and 23/ Mt 10: 34 - 11: 1

The words of Jesus in this Gospel may sound difficult and unsettling. We often imagine Jesus bringing comfort and peace, yet here He speaks of division, sacrifice, and the cross. Christ is not encouraging hatred within families; rather, He reminds us that true discipleship demands total commitment. Sometimes choosing truth, justice, forgiveness, and faithfulness to God can create misunderstanding even among those closest to us. Many people experience this in daily life. A young woman once decided to dedicate time every weekend to serving abandoned elderly people in a care home. Her family criticized her, saying she was wasting her time instead of focusing on her career and life. Though hurt by their words, she continued serving with love and patience. Years later, she shared that those moments of sacrifice brought her closer to purpose in Christ. By carrying her small cross faithfully, she discovered a deeper joy and peace.

Jesus tells us, "Anyone who does not take his cross and follow in my footsteps is not worthy of me." The cross is not only suffering; it is every act of love, sacrifice, forgiveness, and fidelity that costs us something. It may mean standing for honesty when others choose corruption, remaining faithful in prayer during spiritual dryness, forgiving someone who deeply hurt us, or choosing kindness when it is easier to remain indifferent.

St Teresa of Avila faced criticism and opposition while reforming the Carmelite Order, yet she spoke with unwavering faith and courage, trusting that God would help to complete the work. St John of the Cross endured much suffering, but he never stopped proclaiming God's love through prayer, silence, and total surrender to Christ. St Thérèse of Lisieux embraced hidden sacrifices with childlike trust, teaching that even the smallest acts done with great love become precious in God's eyes. Holiness is found not only in extraordinary deeds, but also in simple daily actions, and quiet sacrifices offered wholeheartedly to God.

Response: To the upright I will show the saving power of God.

**14
TUE****Reconciliation brings Spiritual Resurrection***Bl Kateri Tekakwitha*

Is 7: 1-9/ Ps 48: 2-3a, 3b-4, 5-6, 7-8/ Mt 11: 20-24

The reflection on today's Word of God, ought to commence with the meaning of the word 'Woe'. It means a condition of deep suffering from misfortune, affliction, or grief. The misfortune of grief in the gospel today is that the cities where Jesus did many mighty miracles, did not repent from their sins and turn to God. They did not recognize God had come to save them. Hence, they shall experience deep suffering. It is not a curse or a punishment given to them by Jesus. It is the just consequence of unrepentant sin. 'Sin is before all else an offense against God, a rupture of communion with him. At the same time it damages communion with the Church.' (CCC 1440)

The amazing part is that the whole of humanity was headed towards this 'Woe'. But Jesus came and did a mighty work for us. He embraced our sins, taking it all on himself, and through his death on the cross, defeated sin, and rose from the dead emerging victorious in that final battle. This mighty work of Jesus is a free gift to those who repent, believe and receive Him. Jesus also points out that other cities would have repented with sackcloth and ashes if these mighty works had been done there. What then is the significance of 'sackcloth and ashes'? It represents deep mourning, humility and an external display of internal contrition and sorrow. It is important that our repentance be genuine, turning our hearts back to God and accompanied with a real sorrow and mourning for sins and failure committed. This is the real essence of the sacrament of confession.

'Indeed the sacrament of Reconciliation with God brings about a true "spiritual resurrection," restoration of the dignity and blessings of the life of the children of God, of which the most precious is friendship with God.' (CCC 1468)

Woe to us if we do not receive this spiritual resurrection that Christ promises to us and a chance to experience this friendship with God while we are still alive.

Response: God upholds his city for ever.

15
WED

Living a Trinitarian Life

St Bonaventure

Is 10: 5-7, 13b-16/ Ps 94: 5-6, 7-8, 9-10, 14-15/ Mt 11: 25-27

Judah's encounter with Assyria in 732 continued as the pattern that they understood and expressed in their attitude towards successive imperial powers. These include Babylon, Persia and Greece. Other nations were victorious over Judah and they understood their loss as God's will for them. It was seen as God's way of punishing them for living a sinful life. The Israelites were invited by God time and again to change their behaviour and actions. The imagery used is of presenting Assyria as the axe. YHWH is the one wielding it. The success that Assyria has is because of YHWH. Assyria cannot take pride for their actions and behaviour against Israel and Judah. The Lord is Sovereign is the Lord of every nation, including Assyria. Assyria which lays Israel and Judah to waste will face God's wrath against it. The text invites us to examine our own pride? How do I respond to such situations of pride in my life?

The psalm assures us that "the Lord will not forsake His people." God's justice is not absent. At times, it may appear to be delayed. God is always faithful and His commitment to us is unwavering. We are invited to be patient and place our hope in the Lord.

In the day's Gospel, Jesus offers a prayer of thanksgiving. He says "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants." Jesus' revelation of the Father is His free gift to us. The wise and intelligent are those who rely on their intellectual pride. The infants represent those who are humble, open and place their total trust in God. We understand the mysteries of God by having childlike faith. Jesus invites us to grow in our relationship with Him and the Father. He has sent the Holy Spirit to help us. Can I model my relationships with others on the Holy Trinity. Let us pause and ask for grace to live our life in a Trinitarian relationship with others.

Response: The Lord will not abandon his people.

16
THUR
Through Mary to Jesus
Our Lady of Mount Carmel

Is 26: 7-9, 12, 16-19/ Ps 102: 13-14ab and 15, 16-18, 19-21/ Mt 11: 28-30

The Church today, and moreover the Carmelite family, rejoices as we celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. On October 13, 1917, during the final apparition at Fatima, the Virgin Mary appeared to the three children as Our Lady of Mount Carmel, holding the Brown Scapular and reassuring her protection. The promise she made to St. Simon Stock (1251), she renews every day, continuing to shield us within the maternal folds of her mantle.

In the first reading from Isaiah, we hear a soul yearning: “The way of the just is smooth; the path of the upright you make level.” Isaiah speaks of a deep longing for God, a heart that seeks Him in the watches of the night. This reflects the “interior castle” of the soul that the Carmelite saints, like Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross, taught us to journey through. Mary is the perfect model of this upright path. She is the “Flower of Carmel,” who walked the level path of total surrender, her soul always magnifying the Lord, even in the shadows of Calvary. In the Gospel, Jesus extends a tender invitation “Come to me, all you who labour and are burdened, and I will give you rest.” He asks us to take His yoke and learn from Him, for He is “meek and humble of heart.” There is no better place to learn this meekness than at the school of Mary. To wear the Scapular is to “yoke” ourselves to Mary’s virtues, allowing her to lead us gently to Christ.

Today, as we celebrate her feast, let us entrust ourselves once again to her care. Let us wear not only the scapular, but also her spirit in our hearts, a spirit of humility, prayer, and trust. O Mary, Queen and Beauty of Carmel, wrap us in your mantle! In our weariness, lead us to Christ. In our struggles, be our strength. In our journey, be our guide. And at the end of our lives, bring us safely to the eternal rest promised by your Son. Amen.

Response: From heaven the Lord looks down on the earth.

17
FRI

Setting Our Houses in Order

Ordinary Weekday

Is 38: 1-6, 21-22, 7-8/ Is 38: 10, 11, 12abcd, 16/ Mt 12: 1-8

We all desire to keep our homes clean, organized, and beautiful so that our surroundings become peaceful and welcoming. The liturgy of today invites us to look beyond our physical homes and examine the “house” of our own lives. God desires that our hearts, minds, and relationships be set in order according to His will.

In the first reading we hear about King Hezekiah, a faithful and obedient ruler of Judah during the time of Prophet Isaiah. When he fell sick, prophet Isaiah brought the word of God to him. He was asked to set his house in order as he was to die. The king turned to God with sincere praying and weeping. God heard his prayer and saw his tears. God added fifteen years to his life. He and his city were delivered from the King of Assyria.

In the Gospel, Jesus challenges the Pharisees to set their houses in order. Jesus and His disciples were going through the grain fields on the Sabbath. The disciples were hungry and began to pluck ears of grain and eat. The Pharisees who saw this judged and condemned the disciples that they were doing something unlawful on the day of Sabbath. The hearts of Pharisees were not filled with love and charity; they found fault in others and condemned them. Jesus cites the examples of David and the priests in the temple to show how rules were broken. Jesus reminds them the importance of mercy and that He is the lord of Sabbath. The ritualistic and condemnatory attitude of the Pharisees has to be changed to set their houses in order.

Today, God’s Word invites us to examine our own lives. Are there areas that need to be reordered? Have work, worries, or personal ambitions taken the place of God? Are there relationships that need healing, forgiveness, or reconciliation? Setting our house in order means giving first place to God, nurturing a life of prayer, and treating others with kindness and understanding. Let us ask the Lord for the grace to renew our hearts each day.

Response: You saved my life, O Lord; I shall not die.

18
SAT**The Quiet Power of God's Servant***Ordinary Weekday*

Mi 2: 1-5/ Ps 10: 1-2, 3-4, 7-8, 14/ Mt 12: 14-21

There are moments when the world seems to belong to the powerful — those who plan in darkness, speak with pride, and use their strength to control others. Human hearts easily become restless when injustice appears to triumph and goodness seems silent. Yet God sees what is hidden. He listens to the cry of the wounded, the forgotten, and the helpless. Even when His presence feels distant, His eyes never turn away from those who suffer.

The readings of today reveal two very different ways of living. In the first reading, Micah speaks against those who use their power for selfish gain. They plan evil, exploit others, and place their trust in possessions rather than in God. Their hearts have become closed to the needs of others. In the Gospel, the Pharisees plot against Jesus, yet He responds in a way that surprises us. He does not defend Himself, argue, or seek revenge. Instead, He quietly continues His mission of healing and compassion. Jesus reveals the heart of God—a heart that is gentle, patient, and merciful. Matthew describes Him as the Servant of the Lord who will not break the bruised reed or quench the smoldering wick.

How comforting these words are! There are times when we feel like that bruised reed: wounded by failures, disappointments, misunderstandings, or personal struggles. At other times, our faith may seem like a flickering flame: weakened by discouragement or weariness. Yet Jesus does not reject us in our weakness. He comes close to us, strengthens us, and patiently restores what is broken. Today we are called to examine how we treat others, especially those who are weak, ignored, or struggling silently. The Lord asks us to become people who protect rather than wound, encourage rather than judge, and bring peace instead of division. In choosing gentleness and justice rooted in love, we become living signs of God's quiet but powerful kingdom. Lord, make my heart gentle like Yours, that I may heal rather than wound, encourage rather than judge, and love as You love. Amen.

Response: Do not forget the poor, O Lord!

19
SUN

The Strength of God Is Mercy
SIXTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Wis 12: 13, 16-19/ Ps 86: 5-6, 9-10, 15-16 (5a)/ Rom 8: 26-27/ Mt 13: 24-43

Today's readings reveal a God whose power is expressed through mercy, whose justice seeks restoration, and whose love remains faithful.

Almighty God is Merciful: All religions of the world seem to attribute knowledge and strength to be the primary characteristics of God. Although God is powerful enough to destroy, He acts with great forbearance and lenient judgment. Judeo-Christian religion presents God to be just and merciful through historical references. However, In the Old Testament God is referred to as Father because he is our Creator, who made us and formed us (ref. Deut 32:6). Prophet Isaiah (ref. 64:8) presents God as the Master Potter with the authority to mold us, while we are the pliable clay in His hands as a reminder that we need to surrender to Him in trust and humility. Emphasizing the necessity to undergoing Lord's discipline without resenting his rebuke, because a father's love for a child is tested and purified through discipline (ref. Prov 3:11-12). So, rebellion in different forms was part of human experience that our Creator God kept warning about and disciplining appropriately.

A Faithful God: Today's first reading speaks about the love and care of God for all. It highlights God's absolute sovereignty, care for all, and leniency in punishing the guilty. God's righteousness is aimed at making us righteous by being merciful in the process of correcting and punishing us. It explains that God's power is the source of justice, allowing Him to be lenient, act with care rather than harshness, and provide opportunities for repentance. God shows that mercy and forgiveness is the characteristics of the strong. By acting with mercy, God teaches us that the just must be kind and He offers us the opportunity to repent, that is, turn to God with trust and confidence as St Therese teaches us in her Little Way. As children we are invited to resemble our Creator for he teaches us by deeds that those who are righteous must be kind to others (Ref Wis 12:19).

New Testament Spirituality: There is only one spirituality, that is the Spirituality of the Holy Spirit. God is the same in the Old and New Testament. His love, mercy and faithfulness are consistent regardless of our actions. We see in Jesus, the power of God's love and mercy. If the book of Wisdom reminds us about God's compassion and mercy, the Parable of the Mustard Seed echoes the same message of God's faithfulness that does not exclude anyone from his love and mercy. Even though God does not restrict our freedom, when we sin and wander far away from him, he keeps inviting us to turn to him and experience his life and love. That is what St Irenaeus declares that glory of God is human person fully alive. When sin fragments our life, when we turn to the Lord and rely on his love and mercy, our life becomes full and peace flows in our thoughts, words and deeds.

The World and the Kingdom of God: Jesus made it clear that we, the disciples, are in the world but not of it (ref. Jn 17:14-16). The Gospel of the Kingdom of God is revealed to us by Jesus, the King, by his life of love, mercy and compassion. We have received his mercy and love, so we are being commanded to transmit that which we have received freely. We may find evil in the world, but we cannot be part of it. United with Jesus, in the Holy Spirit, we continue His mission. As St Paul reminds us that God's faithfulness is not based on our performance, but on His unchanging character, allowing for restoration and grace even after our failures. God remains faithful even when we fail to remain faithful to Him, for God is true to his promise and He does not alter his own nature (ref. 2Tim 2:13). Therefore, unlike any other religious teaching, Christian spirituality is of God's self emptying love that desire to make us partakers of divine life by cleansing us by the precious blood of the Lamb of God. Thus the Good Shepherd, Jesus, becomes the Lamb, and makes us adopted children of our Creator God. This is the absolute affirmation we hear that "None among the gods can equal you, O Lord; nor can their deeds compare to yours" (Ps 86:8).

Response: Lord, you are good and forgiving.

20
MON

What God truly wants from Us

Ordinary Weekday

Mi 6: 1-4, 6-8/ Ps 50: 5-6, 8-9, 16bc-17, 21 and 23/ Mt 12: 38-42

In our relationship with God, we sometimes wonder what we must do to truly please Him. Is it great sacrifices, extraordinary prayers or something more? The prophet Micah reminds the people that God has always been faithful to them. He recalls how the Lord saved them and guided them. Instead of gratitude and faithful living, however, the people begin to wonder what kind of sacrifices they must offer to please God. They imagine that God must be satisfied by large and impressive offerings. Through the prophet Micah, God reminds humanity that all he desires is that we “Act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God.” These words summarize the essence of the spiritual life. God desires hearts that reflect His own heart—hearts that seek justice, show compassion, and remain humble before Him. In the Gospel, the scribes and Pharisees ask Jesus for a sign. They want proof before they believe. Yet Jesus knows that their problem is not a lack of signs but a lack of openness.

These readings speak directly to our daily lives. Sometimes we may think that pleasing God requires doing something very great or extraordinary. We may focus on external practices while forgetting the simple things that God truly values. God is pleased when we act justly, when we treat others fairly and honestly. He is pleased when we show mercy, when we forgive, help and care for those who suffer. And He is pleased when we walk humbly with Him, when we trust Him and remember that everything we have, comes from Him. Saint Teresa of Calcutta beautifully expressed this truth: “Not all of us can do great things, but we can do small things with great love.” Holiness often grows in the simple choices we make every day.

Let us ask ourselves a simple question: instead of looking for great signs from God, are we living the simple things He asks from us? When we practice justice, show mercy, and walk humbly with God, our lives themselves become a sign of His presence in the world.

Response: To the upright I will show the saving power of God.

21
TUE**Belonging to God's Family****Ordinary Weekday**

Mi 7: 14-15, 18-20/ Ps 85: 2-4, 5-6, 7-8/ Mt 12: 46-50

Today's readings reveal the tender heart of God, a God who never abandons His people, no matter how far they may wander. Through the prophet Micah, we hear a beautiful prayer asking God to "shepherd your people with your staff". The image of the shepherd reminds us that we are not left to walk alone through life's challenges. God guides us, protects us, and patiently leads us even when we lose our way.

Micah then asks a profound question: "Who is a God like you, taking away guilt and pardoning sin?" These words reveal the greatest attribute of God and His mercy. Human beings often remember failures and hold on to past mistakes, but God delights in forgiveness. He does not define us by our sins but by His love for us. no burden is too heavy, no wound too deep, and no failure too great for His mercy. Whenever we return to Him with a sincere heart, He welcomes us with compassion and gives us the grace to begin again.

This message finds its fulfillment in today's Gospel. Where Jesus says that His true family are those who do the will of the Father. God's family is not built merely on blood or external religion, but on hearts that trust Him and surrender to His will. The greatest thing in life is not success or recognition, but belonging to God and walking in His ways.

Doing God's will is not always easy. It often requires letting go of our own plans, forgiving those who hurt us, remaining faithful during difficulties, and trusting God when we do not understand His ways. Yet this becomes possible when we first experience His mercy. A heart that knows it is loved and forgiven becomes capable of loving and forgiving others.

Let us place our lives before the Good Shepherd. Let us bring Him our fears, weaknesses, and struggles. In His mercy we find healing, in His guidance we find direction, and in His love we discover our true identity as members of God's own family, called to live in His love.

Response: Lord, show us your mercy and love.

22
WED

Seeking the Beloved Until He Is Found

ST MARY MAGDALENE

Song of Solomon 3: 1-4ab (or 2 Cor 5: 14-17)/

Ps: 63: 2, 3-4, 5 6, 8-9/ Jn 20: 1-2, 11-18

The Feast of Mary Magdalene invites us into one of the deepest experiences of the spiritual life: the restless search for the Beloved. Both the First Reading from the Song of Solomon and the Gospel of John are united by one powerful theme; a heart that refuses to stop seeking God. In the Song of Solomon, the Bride says: "Upon my bed at night I sought him whom my soul loves; I sought him but found him not. I will rise now and go about the city... seeking him whom my soul loves" (Song 3:1-2). This is not merely romantic poetry. In biblical spirituality, the Bride represents the human soul longing for God. Love cannot remain passive. True love searches, waits, longs, and perseveres.

This becomes beautifully fulfilled in Mary Magdalene on Easter morning. She is the Bride of the Song of Solomon walking through the city looking for her Beloved. There is something striking in the Gospel: Mary does not stop seeking even when she finds the tomb empty. Peter and the beloved disciple leave, but Mary stays. Love makes her remain near the place where she last encountered Jesus. She stands outside the tomb weeping. Her tears themselves become a prayer. Sometimes the deepest prayer is not words, but longing. Then comes the most beautiful moment in the Gospel. Jesus appears, but Mary does not recognize Him immediately. She mistakes Him for the gardener. John intentionally uses this image. The Resurrection takes place in a garden because Christ is beginning a new creation. In Eden humanity lost God; in this garden humanity finds Him again.

This is the spiritual journey of every believer. The Christian life is not first about rituals, duties, or even theological knowledge. It is about seeking Christ with the heart of a lover. Many people know about Jesus, but few truly seek Him. Mary Magdalene teaches us that the soul that genuinely longs for Christ will never be abandoned. The soul that seeks Him with love will one day hear Him speak its name. And that encounter changes everything.

Response: My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God.

23
THUR**True Happiness and Fulfilment****Ordinary Weekday**

Jer 2: 1-3, 7-8, 12-13/ Ps 36: 6-7ab, 8-9, 10-11/ Mt 13: 10-17

The readings of the day speak about the human heart and the way people respond to God. In the first reading, God remembers the faithfulness of Israel. But later they forgot God and turned toward empty things that could not give life. It is a strong image of how people search for happiness in many places while moving away from the One who truly satisfies the heart. This message speaks powerfully to our own lives. Every human heart longs for happiness, peace, and meaning. Often, however, we look for these gifts in success, possessions, recognition, or personal achievements. While such things may bring temporary satisfaction, they can never fill the deepest longing of the soul. Only God can satisfy the heart because He alone is the One for whom we were created. Whenever we move away from Him, we experience an inner emptiness that nothing else can fill.

The Gospel continues this theme in another way. Jesus explains why He speaks in parables. Some people listen only with their ears, but their hearts remain closed. Others listen with faith and slowly begin to understand the mysteries of God's kingdom. The disciples are called blessed because they are open to receive the words of Jesus. The problem is not that God refuses to speak, rather, many people refuse to listen deeply.

Both readings become meaningful in today's world. Modern life offers many distractions, comforts, and false promises. It is easy to become busy with success, entertainment, or personal desires and slowly forget the presence of God. Like the people in Jeremiah's time, many search for joy in places that finally leave the heart empty. At the same time, the Gospel challenges us to ask ourselves: How do I listen to God's Word? Do I hear it only with my ears, or do I allow it to transform my life? God continues to speak through Scripture, prayer, the Eucharist, and the ordinary events of daily life. Yet His voice can easily be drowned out by the noise, distractions, and busyness that surround us. May we learn to listen deeply to the Lord!

Response: With you is the fountain of life, O Lord.

24
FRI

Returning Home

Ordinary Weekday

Jer 3: 14-17/ Ps: Jer 31: 10, 11-12abcd, 13/ Mt 13: 18-23

The reading of the day carries the voice of a loving Father calling His children home. The people had wandered far from God. They had become scattered, lost, and spiritually empty. Yet God does not reject them. Instead, He invites them to return and promises to gather them again. This is something many of us can relate to. We do not always drift away from God suddenly. Sometimes it happens slowly. Prayer becomes routine. Faith grows dry. We get distracted by worries, studies, work, social media, or personal struggles. At times, our daily un-mindfulness can also make us forgetful of God. Outwardly, everything may look normal, but inside we feel distant from Him.

Still, God never stops calling His people back. That is the beauty of the first reading. God speaks of mercy rather than punishment. He desires relationship, not distance. He wants His people united, healed, and alive again. Even after all their failures, He still calls them His own. The Gospel explains why this invitation moves some people deeply while others remain untouched. The seed sown is the same for everyone. The problem is not the seed but rather the condition of the soil. Sometimes our hearts grow hard because of pride or hurt. Sometimes faith stays shallow because we do not allow God to go deeper into our lives. Sometimes worries, pleasures, and constant distractions choke the little faith that is growing within us. But when the heart is open, patient, and willing to listen, God's word begins to bear fruit.

Today's readings invite us to look honestly at our hearts. What kind of soil am I? Have distractions and worries slowly pulled me away from God? Am I still listening to Him? God is not asking us to be perfect before returning to Him. He simply says, "Come back." Come back with your weakness, your tiredness, and your struggles. The Shepherd who gathers His people has not forgotten us. When a person truly returns to God, even a dry heart can bloom again.

Response: The Lord will guard us as a shepherd guards his flock.

25
SAT**Your Greatness comes from God****ST JAMES**

2 Cor 4: 7-15/ Ps 126: 1bc-2ab, 2cd-3, 4-5, 6/ Mt 20: 20-28

Human Being is the crown of God's creation. In a sense, the human person is great! But what makes a person truly great is not what one is born with, wealth, talent, or inherited advantage, but what one does with what has been received. True greatness lies in humility: the inner recognition that we are not great in ourselves, but that our greatness flows from God, from others, and from the communities that have shaped us. It is from this place of dependence that genuine fruitfulness becomes possible, enabling us to serve generously, love selflessly, and contribute meaningfully to the flourishing of the world around us.

The first reading makes this vividly clear. St. Paul reminds the Corinthians that each of us carries a great treasure, fragile and not to be neglected. Yet in the face of persecution, hardship, apparent failure, and the threat of death, they are neither destroyed nor abandoned. They grow stronger. The secret is not self-reliance but total surrender to the will of God. Paul's message is clear: our weakness is the very vessel through which God's power is revealed. He would say, When I am weak, then I am strong! (2 Cor 12:10)

Alongside this total surrender comes a second quality: ardent zeal to belong to God and do God's work. St. James embodies this perfectly. When Jesus speaks of the chalice he must drink, James responds with extraordinary eagerness; he is ready to share that very cup, even to the point of death. History confirms this: James became the first of the apostles to be martyred for Christ. His life was not merely words; it was a witness.

These two qualities, humble dependence on God and burning love for God, are not optional characteristics in the life of a christian. They lie at the heart of Christian discipleship. Let us ask ourselves: Are we truly willing to accept that our lives are entirely a gift from God? Knowing this, do we live with the responsibility to bear fruit as God desires?

Lord, help me to work for you and love you, even at the cost of my life. Amen.

Response: Those who sow in tears shall reap rejoicing.

26
SUN
Wise Decisions
SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

1 Kgs 3: 5, 7-12/ Ps 119: 57, 72, 76-77, 127-128, 129-130 (97a)/ Rom 8: 28-

30/ Mt 13: 44-52

The first reading and the gospel of today invites us into the deep and demanding theme of wise decisions. It is about the choices that shape our lives and strengthen our relationship with God. These passages reveal that wisdom is not merely intelligence or cleverness, but a grace-filled ability to live our lives doing the will of God.

In 1 Kings, we encounter the young king Solomon, who in a decisive moment of his life asks God not for wealth or power but an understanding heart to judge his people and to distinguish right from wrong. This is the essence of a wise decision: choosing what leads to deeper truth and greater good rather than immediate gratification. God's response affirms this: because Solomon chose wisely, everything else would follow in due measure. This passage reminds us that wisdom begins with humility. Solomon acknowledges his limitations: "I am only a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in." In a world that often rewards self-confidence and certainty, this humility is countercultural. Yet it is precisely this openness that allows God's wisdom to enter. As St. Teresa of Ávila beautifully said, "Humility is walking in truth." Wise decisions are grounded in truth. This truth concerns ourselves, our needs, and our dependence on God.

Turning to the Gospel, Jesus talks about the Kingdom of Heaven in the imagery of a treasure hidden in a field, a pearl of great price, and a net gathering fish. Each image points to the same reality: the incomparable value of God's Kingdom and the decisive action required to attain it. The man who finds the treasure sells everything; the merchant who discovers the pearl gives up all he has. These are not hesitant or calculated decisions; they are bold, wholehearted choices rooted in clarity of vision. Wisdom, then, is not only about knowing what is good, but it is also about recognizing the supreme value of that good, and acting decisively. Many of our struggles arise not because we do not know what is right, but because we fear challenges.

The biggest challenge is choosing between Godly and the worldly things. St. John of the Cross offers a profound insight into this process: “In the evening of life, we will be judged on love alone.” Wise decisions are ultimately decisions for love as love requires sacrifice, surrender, and trust. The man who sells everything for the treasure does not see it as loss, but as gain. This is the paradox of the Gospel: when we choose God above all, we do not diminish our lives; we fulfill them.

The final parable of the net introduces another dimension of wisdom: discernment. Just as the fishermen sort the good fish from the bad, so too are we called to choose the good that pleases God and ask the grace to reject the bad that draws us away from God. This ongoing process requires attentiveness and spiritual maturity. Wisdom is not a one-time achievement but a lifelong journey of choosing rightly again and again. Thérèse of Lisieux reminds us that wisdom does not always appear in grand gestures. She writes, “For me, prayer is a surge of the heart; it is a simple look turned toward heaven.” Wise decisions are often found in small, daily choices—to forgive, to be patient, to trust, to love when it is difficult. These seemingly ordinary decisions, made with faith, become extraordinary in God’s eyes.

In our own lives, we are constantly faced with choices. Some of these are significant, others seemingly minor. The readings today challenge us to examine the criteria by which we decide. Are we guided by convenience, fear, or social pressure? Or are we seeking God’s wisdom, even when it leads us along a more demanding path? Ultimately, wise decisions flow from a relationship with God. They are not rash decisions but acts of faith. As we grow in prayer and openness, we begin to see more clearly, love more deeply, and choose more freely.

May we, like Solomon, desire wisdom above all. May we, like the seekers in the Gospel, recognize the true treasure: God. May we take inspiration from the saints and people who inspire us in our daily lives to choose right from wrong, so that our lives may reflect true wisdom to bring about God’s kingdom here upon earth.

Response: Lord, I love your commands.

27
MON**Hidden in Plain Sight****Ordinary Weekday**

Jer 13: 1-11/ Dt 32: 18-19, 20, 21/ Mt 13: 31-35

There is something quietly powerful about small things. A tiny seed buried in the soil. A strip of linen wrapped around a prophet's waist. Neither seems like much. Yet God chooses both to carry a larger message.

Jeremiah was asked to do something unusual. He was told to take a linen belt, wear it close to his body, and then hide it in the rocks near a river. When he returned after many days, the belt was ruined, spoiled and useless. God then explained the meaning. His people were meant to cling to him the way a belt clings to a person's waist. They were meant to stay close, bound to him and belonging to him. But they walked away, and in doing so, they lost the very thing that gave them identity and purpose. This image stays with me. A belt is not worn to impress others. It is practical, personal and close to the body. God was not asking for public performances of faith. He was asking for daily faithfulness, a quiet willingness to remain near. That was exactly what they failed to do.

Then Jesus speaks of a mustard seed growing into something large enough to shelter birds, and of yeast working silently through an entire batch of dough. Both images point to the same truth. Transformation does not always announce itself. It often begins unnoticed and develops slowly when something small is simply allowed to do its work. Put these readings together, and a clear picture emerges. When we stay close to his life begins to grow within us. Like the mustard seed and the yeast, his grace works steadily from the inside outward. The changes may seem small from day to day, but over time, they become impossible to miss. Character deepens. Faith matures. Love expands. What starts hidden eventually becomes visible.

When we drift away, however, we become like the belt left among the rocks, losing our shape, our direction and our usefulness. We may continue outward routines, yet something essential is missing. The question today is not whether God is powerful enough to work in our lives.

Response: You have forgotten God who gave you birth.

28
TUE**When Tears Become Prayer***Ordinary Weekday*

Jer 14: 17b-22/ Ps 79: 8, 9, 11 and 13/ Mt 13: 36-43

There are moments in life when words fail us. We carry pain in silence, smile in the presence of others, yet deep within, there is dryness, disappointment, and fear. The first reading speaks from such a wounded heart. The prophet looks upon the people's suffering and cannot remain untouched. He cries, mourns, and stands before God in tears. His prayer is not polished or beautiful; it is honest. And that honesty itself becomes prayer. Sometimes it is considered that prayer means saying many words or reciting long formulas. But true prayer often begins when the heart breaks open before God. A mother silently crying for her child, a father worried about the family's future, a young person struggling with failure, an elderly person feeling forgotten. All these hidden tears are prayers that reach God.

The prophet also teaches us something important: he does not pretend that everything is fine. He admits the people's weakness and sins. Yet even amid guilt and suffering, he refuses to give up hope. He continues to turn towards God. That is faith, not pretending to be strong but trusting God even while feeling weak. In our world today, many people carry silent burdens. Some are weary of recurring problems at home. Some are wounded by betrayal. Some feel spiritually dry and distant from God. At times, we may wonder, "Lord, are You still with me?" The reading gently reminds us that God never abandons His people. Even when we feel lost, He listens to every sigh of the heart.

A small child once fell while learning to walk. Crying loudly, he reached out his hand to his father. The father immediately lifted him up and held him close. The child did not need to explain; his tears were enough. Our relationship with God is often like that. We do not always need perfect words. We only need to reach out our hearts to Him. Today, let us not hide our pain from God. Let our tears become prayer, and our weakness become a doorway to His mercy and strength.

Response: For the glory of your name, O Lord, deliver us.

29
WED

Listening amid Serving

Sts. Mary, Martha and Lazarus

1 Jn 4: 7-16/ Ps: 34: 2-3, 4-5, 6-7, 8-9, 10-11/ Jn 11: 19-27 or Lk 10: 38-42

Today we celebrate the feast of Saint Martha, Mary and Lazarus. Martha is often remembered as a practical, hardworking woman — one who managed the household, welcomed Jesus, and took responsibility when her brother died. Active, caring, and deeply devoted, she represents one of two important dimensions of Christian faith. Martha embodies the active life of service, while Mary embodies the contemplative life of listening. These two are not opposites. A true Christian life needs both — service and prayer, action and contemplation.

In the Gospel of Luke, Martha grew anxious and distracted while Mary sat at the feet of Jesus. When she complained, Jesus gently replied: “Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things. There is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part” (Luke 10:41-42). He was not dismissing her service. He reminded her that service without prayer can leave the heart restless. Listening to God must come before everything else. Yet today’s Gospel also reveals the depth of Martha’s faith. After Lazarus died, she approached Jesus with both sorrow and trust: “Even now I know that whatever you ask of God, God will give you” (John 11:22). These words show a faith that holds firm even in grief. Martha teaches us that following Christ is not only about working for Him but equally about trusting Him completely, especially in moments of pain and uncertainty.

Like Mary, we are called to listen. Like Martha, we are called to serve and trust. Yet listening to God is not always easy. We grow distracted, busy, and anxious. We trust our own plans more than His will. Prayer is the remedy. Theophan, the 19th century Russian Orthodox bishop, wrote that prayer is both the test and the source of everything. Cardinal Basil Hume reminded us that without prayer we become only superficial followers of Christ. May the example of Martha and Mary teach us to balance service with contemplation, and to trust Jesus completely in every situation of life.

Response: God is my refuge on the day of distress.

30
THUR**Clay in His Hands, Fish in His Net****Ordinary Weekday**

Jer 18: 1-6/ Ps 146: 1b-2, 3-4, 5-6ab/ Mt 13: 47-53

In today's reading, God spoke to His people in the kingdom of Judah, to whom Jeremiah had been sent as a minister and guide. Prophet Jeremiah faced many difficulties, challenges and hardships throughout his years of ministry, as he had to contend with the stubborn attitude of those who refused to believe in God and His truth. Yet the Lord continued to support and strengthen Jeremiah in his ministry.

Jeremiah looks at the work of a potter. If the potter finds his work unsatisfactory, he destroys it and tries again. God's people are clay in God's hands. If they are not faithful, God will break them, but when they are converted, he tries again, and they become precious in his eyes. The clay in the hands of a potter is fully open to the potter's touch and work, knowing the potter is best at it and will do the best with it. Just as the potter determines the vessel, God shapes our lives. Trust that God is still working on you. If a project or a personal change goes awry, trust that the Potter can shape you again.

The Gospel of Matthew warns us of the final judgment, in which the good fish — those who live in God's love — are gathered, and the bad are separated. This is not a message of fear but an urgent call to ensure our time and actions bear the fruits of righteousness.

We, the Church, are asked to be fishers of people. Our task is to welcome people without reservations or judgment. Matthew described this with the image of a great net that gathered all kinds of fish, big and small, and the Angels of God sorted the good from the bad. These reminders show that the Kingdom of God is open to everyone, to all of God's children, because God truly loves each and every one of us without exception. Just as the bad and flawed fish are rejected, we must remember that God calls us all to follow Him on the path of righteousness and virtue.

Response: Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob.

31
FRI

How Close Are We really to God?

Ignatius of Loyola

Jer 26: 1-9/ Ps 69: 5, 8-10, 14/ Mt 13: 54-58

The first reading, from prophet Jeremiah, must be understood against the turbulent political, religious, and social climate of late 7th–early 6th century BCE Judah, a period marked by instability and the looming threat of destruction. The Temple, the Land, and the King remained intact and were widely regarded as visible assurances of God’s presence among His people. Many believed these symbols made them feel invulnerable to external threats.

Against this backdrop, God commands Jeremiah to stand in the temple courtyard and to deliver a bold, uncompromising message. He is instructed not to “diminish a word,” meaning he must present God’s message in full, without softening it for acceptance. The warning is severe: unless the people repent and follow God’s law, Jerusalem and the temple will suffer the same fate as Shiloh, a once-sacred place that had already faced destruction. This comparison would have deeply unsettled listeners, who believed the temple ensured their safety. This prophecy provoked fierce opposition; the people, the priests and other prophets seized Jeremiah and called for his death. This passage illuminates three enduring principles. First, it exposes the gap between external practice and internal faith: people continued their temple worship even as their hearts remained distant from God, revealing a disconnect between ritual observance and true obedience. Second, it shows how people respond to God’s word: not with humility and repentance, but with anger and resistance, illustrating that truth is often rejected when it challenges comfort. Third, it underscores the cost of faithfulness — Jeremiah’s obedience put him in grave danger, reminding us that genuine commitment to God can invite rejection, misunderstanding, and persecution. In essence, it speaks of God’s steadfast love, Jeremiah’s courageous fidelity, and Israel’s unfaithfulness. In today’s Gospel passage, Jesus’s response, “A prophet is not without honour except in his own town and in his own home,” captures a deep, timeless truth about human nature and perception. Here is a paradox: those closest to a person often struggle the most to recognise their value, authority, or transformation.

Let us know that God privileges truth over comfort and authentic obedience over hollow ritual.

Response: Lord, in your great love, answer me.

Sacrament of Reconciliation

(A Brief History)

Part I – Sin and Confession in the Old Testament

Introduction:

We have so far examined in detail, the Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist) and now we move on to the second set of Sacraments, viz., the Sacraments of Healing – Reconciliation (Confession) and Anointing of the Sick. The Sacrament of Confession, also known as the Sacrament of Penance, Reconciliation, or Forgiveness, has undergone significant development throughout the history of the Church. While its essence - the forgiveness of sins through the ministry entrusted by Christ to the Church - has remained constant, the manner of celebrating the sacrament has evolved over the centuries. The Church teaches that the sacrament itself (reconciliation with God through priestly absolution) belongs to a structure instituted by Christ, while the historical disciplines for how penance was carried out have varied greatly over time.

From a historical-theological perspective, the Church's discipline around this sacrament of confession has gone through major phases, but with a persistent conviction that confession is necessary and fruitful for the forgiveness of sins after Baptism. The International Theological Commission describes this as a development "guided by the spiritual experience of the Church," where spiritual direction and sacramental confession became more closely connected as gradually private forms of confession increased.

The Biblical Foundation of the Sacrament of Confession

The Sacrament of Confession is deeply rooted in Sacred Scripture. While the exact form of sacramental confession developed gradually in the life of the Church, its essential elements -repentance, confession of sins, forgiveness through God's ministers, and reconciliation with the community - are clearly found in the Bible. The history of salvation in the Old Testament can be understood as a continuous story of human sinfulness and God's unfailing mercy. Although humanity repeatedly turned away from God, God never abandoned His people. Instead, He continually invited them to repentance, confession, reconciliation, and renewed covenant relationship.

1. The Origin of Sin: The Fall of Humanity

The entire story begins in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve (Genesis 3). God created human beings in His image and likeness and placed them in a loving relationship with Himself. However, Adam and Eve disobeyed God's command by eating the forbidden fruit. The effect of this sin of disobedience was: separation from God, loss of original holiness and innocence, shame and fear entered human experience, harmony between man and woman was disturbed leading to broken relationships and finally suffering and death became part of human life. When God asked Adam, "Where are you?" (Gen 3:9), God was already seeking reconciliation. Even after their sin, God clothed them and promised a future Savior (Gen 3:15). Sin separated them from God but God immediately began the work of redemption.

2. Sin enters Family Life: Cain and Abel (Genesis 4)

We read further in Genesis 4, how sin quickly spreads from individual to family. Cain and Abel, both offered sacrifices to God. God looked favorably upon Abel's offering but not upon Cain's. Instead of correcting himself, Cain became jealous and angry. However, God warned him: "Sin is crouching at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it" (Gen 4:7). Cain ignored God's warning and murdered his brother Abel out of jealousy - the first murder in human history. When confronted, Cain initially denied responsibility responding: "Am I my brother's keeper?" God punished Cain, yet also showed mercy by protecting him from being killed, He protected Cain from vengeance.

Notice the pattern: Disobedience (Adam and Eve); Jealousy (Cain); Hatred and finally Murder. Sin grows when it is not resisted.

3. Sin Expands in Society (Genesis 4:17-24)

After Cain's descendants multiplied, violence increased. Lamech, a descendant of Cain, is the first polygamist (first one to take multiple wives - Adah and Zillah) in the Bible and the second recorded murderer. Unlike Cain, who expressed remorse for killing his brother Abel, Lamech composed a boastful "Song of the Sword" (Genesis 4:23-24) to his wives, justifying his lethal violence as self-defense and claiming a seventy-sevenfold vengeance if anyone harmed him. He boasted saying: "I have killed a man for wounding me. If Cain is avenged seven times, then Lamech, seventy-seven times."

What Cain did with guilt, Lamech celebrates with pride. Here we clearly see the escalation of evil - Cain killed one person and Lamech glorifies revenge. Ultimately, the biblical text uses Lamech to illustrate how humanity had descended from the tragic, isolated sin of Cain into a culture where violence, polygamy, and boastful pride were widely celebrated. Now, violence becomes culturally accepted. This demonstrates how sin can become institutionalized and normalized within society.

4. The Corruption of Humanity (Genesis 6)

As human beings multiplied, wickedness spread everywhere. Genesis describes a tragic condition: "The Lord saw that the wickedness of humankind was great in the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually" (Gen 6:5).

Here we get a clear picture of the characteristics of the corrupt world - Violence everywhere, Moral corruption, Rejection of God and a Self-centered living. Humanity, by now, had moved far from God's original plan. However, we should not forget the spiritual lesson that sin teaches us: Sin is never static. If unchecked, it spreads from the heart to the family and from family to the society and finally from the society to the entire world.

5. The Great Flood: God's Judgment and Mercy (Gen. 6 - 9)

In response to widespread wickedness, God decided to cleanse the earth through the Flood. However, one righteous man Noah remained. He found favor in God's sight because he walked with God. God instructed Noah to build an ark and save his family and representatives of all living creatures and then came the Great Flood. The Flood is not to be considered merely a punishment; it is also a sign of purification, cleansing, regeneration and rebirth. God was indeed judging evil but at the same time preserving goodness and thereby preparing a new beginning. After the waters receded, God established a covenant with Noah. The rainbow became the sign of God's promise never again to destroy the earth by flood. Thus judgment is followed by mercy.

6. Sin Continues After the Flood (Genesis 9 -11)

Even after the Flood, sin did not disappear because the human heart still needed redemption. In the Genesis narrative, the Great Flood was a physical cleansing of the earth, not a spiritual

cure for human nature. Hence, sin continued because Noah and his family carried the same inherited human flaws onboard the Ark, meaning the internal capacity for disobedience remained intact. God acknowledged this reality in Genesis 8:21, stating that “every inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood.” The flood destroyed the wicked society, but it did not erase human free will or the inclination to sin. For example – Noah’s drunkenness (Gen 9), Family conflicts, The Tower of Babel (Gen 11), where humanity multiplied and repopulated and sought to make themselves equal to God, instead of dispersing to fill the earth as commanded to them, thereby demonstrating collective pride and rebellion against God’s plan.

However, the lesson is clear - The Flood could wash away sinners, but it could not remove sin from the human heart. Humanity was in need of a deeper and personal salvation. Since the Flood dealt with the external environment rather than the spiritual root of humanity, theological traditions recognize it as the beginning of a long-term plan of grace that ultimately required a different remedy

Here is a quick summary of the spread of Sin:

Stage	Event	Effect
Genesis 3	Adam and Eve	Sin enters Humanity
Genesis 4	Cain kills Abel	Sin enters Family Life
Genesis 4	Lamech’s Violence	Sin spreads in the Society
Genesis 6	Universal Corruption	Sin dominates Humanity
Genesis 6-9	The Great Flood	Judgment and Purification
Genesis 11	Tower of Babel	Human Pride Continues
New Testament	Jesus Christ	Redemption and New Creation

7. God’s Desire to Forgive Sinners

In the Old Testament, God’s desire to forgive sinners is a foundational theme. Rather than an angry deity only seeking judgment, God consistently reveals His deepest desire to be gracious, merciful, and eager to pardon those who turn to Him in genuine repentance. The foundation of confession begins with God’s infinite mercy. We see in the Old Testament how God

consistently reveals Himself as a merciful Father to his chosen people, a Father who is always willing to forgive those who repent. Through Leviticus, God established animal sacrifices (sin and guilt offerings) as a means for atonement. This was not a mechanical way to earn forgiveness, but a physical demonstration of God's desire to deal with sin so that people could remain in His presence. Furthermore, the Old Testament prophets frequently emphasized that outward sacrifice is meaningless without an inward change. Here are a few passages for our reflection:

- “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow” (Isaiah 1:18).
- “The Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness” (Exodus 34:6).
- “If the wicked turns from all his sins... he shall surely live” (Ezekiel 18:21).

Forgiveness was sought through repentance, prayer, sacrifices, and confession of sins.

In the Old Testament we also find some insights where people are reminded to confess their sins that they have committed against the other.

- “When a man or woman commits any of the sins that men commit... he shall confess his sin which he has committed” (Numbers 5:6-7).
- “He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy” (Proverbs 28:13).

The Old Testament clearly portrays that judgment is not God's default desire, but a necessary response to persistent rebellion. However, confession of sins and God's mercy and pardon was already part of His covenant relationship with His people.

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94. SAVIOUR

The word "Saviour" originates from Middle English *saveour* (c. 1300), derived from Old French *saveour* and Late Latin *salvātōrem* "a saver, preserver", stemming from the verb *salvāre* "to save" and the root *salvus* "safe". The term specifically refers to one who rescues from danger or sin, heavily influenced by Latin church. Regarding Jesus most Jews had some form of future hope in a King who would free them, whom they called Saviour. In general, they expected God to intervene in history and to restore Israel to a state of peace, freedom, and prosperity. Not all Jews expected God to send a son of David as messiah to overthrow the Romans, though some did. The Qumran sect believed that there would be a great war against Rome, that the sect would emerge victorious, and that the main blows would be struck by the angel Michael and finally by God himself. Notably, a messiah saviour plays no role in this war of liberation, but some Jews were ready at any moment to take up arms against Rome, thinking that if they started the fight, God would intervene on their side. Others were quietists, hoping for divine deliverance without having a more-specific vision of the future saviour theory but literally unwilling to fight a warlike situation. Whatever their specific expectations, very few Palestinian Jews were completely satisfied with the governments of Antipas, Pilate, and Caiaphas. As God's chosen people, the Jews felt they should be free both of foreign domination and of ambitious worldly leaders who were mostly corrupt and full or partially taking advantage of people.

In the final analysis, variety and commonality are equally important to the understanding of Palestinian Judaism in Jesus' day. Jews agreed on many basic aspects of their religion and way of life, and they agreed that they did not want to surrender their covenant with God to accept the lure of pagan culture, but, when it came to details, they could disagree with one another violently. Since God cared about every aspect of life, competing groups and leaders often saw themselves as representing the side of God against his adversaries.

Sources pointing to the Saviour

The only substantial sources for the life and message of Jesus

as saviour are the Gospels of the New Testament, the earliest of which was Mark (written 60–80 AD), followed by Matthew, Luke, and John (75–90 AD). Some additional evidence can be found in the letters of Paul, which were written beginning in 50 AD and are the earliest surviving Christian texts.

There are, however, other sources that may have further information. Non-canonical sources, especially the apocryphal gospels, contain many sayings attributed to Jesus as Saviour, as well as stories about him that are occasionally held to be “authentic.” Among these apocrypha is the Gospel of Judas, a gnostic text of the 2nd century AD that portrays Judas as an important collaborator of Jesus and not his betrayer. The Infancy Gospel of Thomas purports to reveal events in the life of Jesus when he was a child between the ages of 5 and 12. Another important text, the mid-2nd Century AD Gospel of Thomas, has attracted much attention. A “sayings” gospel (114 sayings attributed to Jesus, without narrative), it is grounded in Gnosticism, the philosophical and religious movement of the 2nd century AD that stressed the redemptive power of mysterious knowledge acquired by divine revelation. For Thomas, salvation consists of self-knowledge, and baptism results in restoration to the primordial state—man and woman in one person, like Adam before the creation of Eve (saying 23). Spiritual reversion to that state meant that nakedness need not result in shame. One passage (saying 37) allows it to be suspected that the early Christian followers of the Gospel of Thomas took off their garments and trampled on them as part of their baptismal initiation. There are a few connections between this worldview and that of Paul and the Gospel according to John, but the overall theology of the Gospel of Thomas is so far removed from the teaching of Jesus as found in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke—in which Jewish eschatology is central—that it is not considered a major source for the study of Jesus. It is, of course, possible or even likely that individual sayings in Thomas or other apocryphal gospels originated with Jesus, but it is unlikely that non-canonical sources can contribute much to the portrait of the historical Jesus as the saviour. As in the case of the Gospel of Thomas, the traditions found in other apocryphal gospels are often completely unlike the evidence of the canonical gospels

and are embedded in documents that are generally believed to be unreliable.

There are a few references to Jesus in 1st century Roman and Jewish sources. Documents indicate that within a few years of Jesus' death, Romans were aware that someone named *Chrestus* (a slight misspelling of *Christus*) had been responsible for disturbances in the Jewish community in Rome. Twenty years later, according to Tacitus, Christians in Rome were prominent enough to be persecuted by Nero, and it was known that they were devoted to *Christus*, whom Pilate had executed. This knowledge of Jesus, however, was dependent on familiarity with early Christianity and does not provide independent evidence about Jesus. Josephus wrote a paragraph about Jesus as he did about Theudas, the Egyptian, and other charismatic leaders but it has been heavily revised by Christian scribes, and Josephus's original remarks cannot be discerned.

In Catholic Tradition

Catholic reflections on Jesus as Saviour emphasize his role in rescuing humanity from sin, darkness, and death through the Passion, Death, and Resurrection. He is a personal Saviour who offers infinite mercy, divine providence in daily struggles, and ultimate union with God, calling for repentance, trust, and loving surrender to his will.

Catholicism emphasizes that Jesus is not just a historical figure, but a personal Saviour who invites individuals into a relationship. His mercy is viewed as infinite, aiming to forgive sins and restore people to a perfect union with God. The entire Gospels of Mathew, Mark, Luke and John speak about this theme repeatedly. The whole ministry of Jesus was a powerful testimony of being merciful and compassionate saviour.

Reflections often highlight the need to recognize one's own sin and need for salvation. Jesus is the "dawn from on high" breaking into a world filled with darkness, offering peace and freedom from the effects of sin. The very life of Jesus consisted in multiple examples of rescuing sinners, helping the poor, the sick, the downtrodden, the sad, those in pain and desperation.

The core of salvation is found in the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus, which is not merely an ancient event but

a present reality that continues to heal and free individuals. The whole life of Jesus practically summed up in his passion, death and Resurrection, which spells out the great plan of God for the salvation of mankind through Jesus as their Saviour.

Catholics are encouraged to trust that Jesus provides for all needs, transforming desperate situations and struggles—such as addictions or broken relationships—through grace when surrendered to Him.

Great many saints like St. John of the Cross, St. Teresa of Avila and St. Thomas Aquinas, have stressed in their monumental spiritual writings that the goal of Jesus as the Saviour is to invite mankind to be in union with God here on earth and after death. The goal of salvation is union with God, experiencing eternal life in heaven, and finding complete happiness through the Lord Jesus Christ who is the Saviour of mankind.

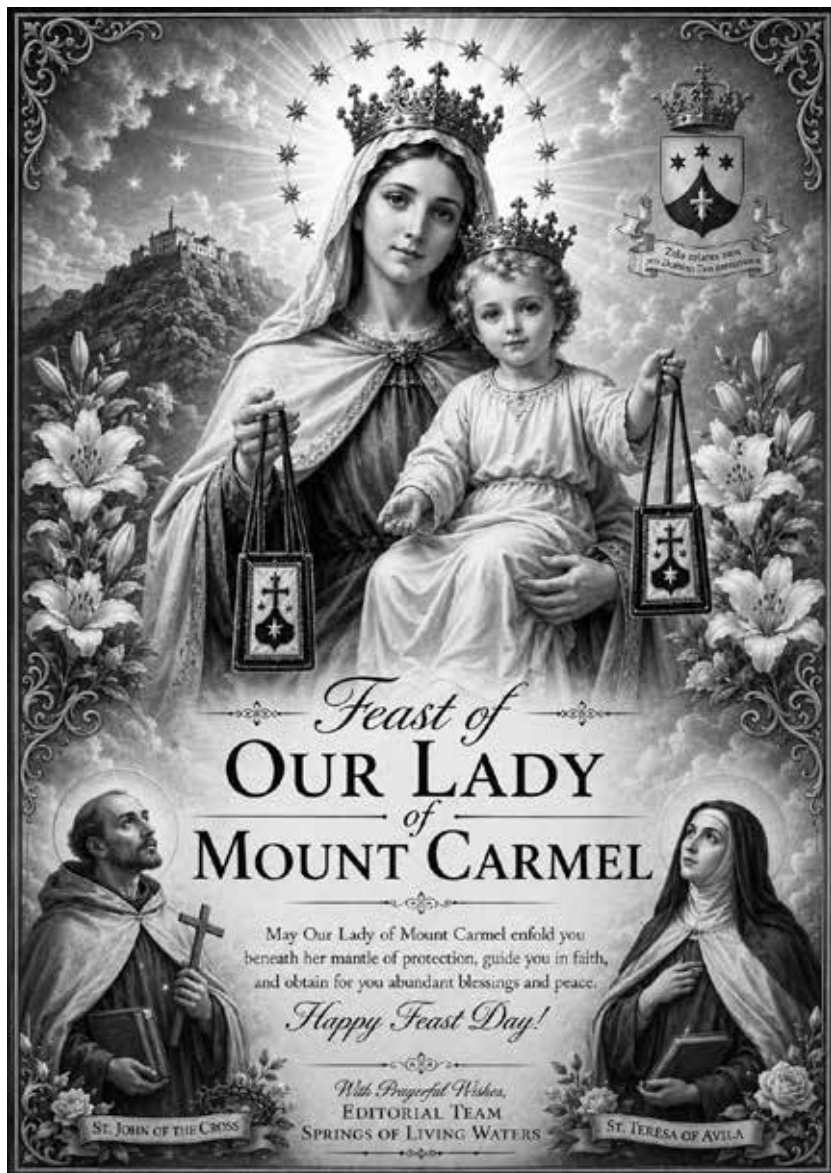
Dr Rudolf V. Dsouza OCD

St. Stephen Church

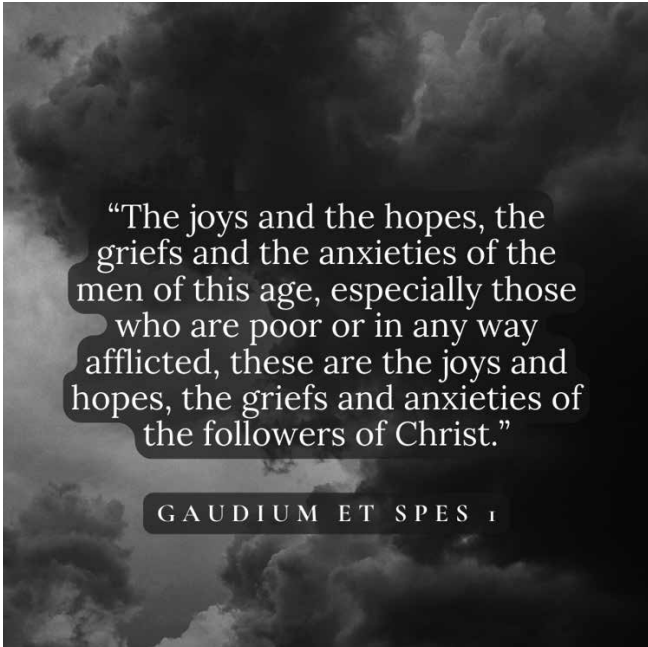
Cayuga – Ontario - Canada



The Carmelite emblem beautifully expresses the identity and spirituality of the Order. The mountain represents Mount Carmel, the birthplace of the Carmelite tradition, while the cross at its summit signifies Christ, whom Carmelites follow in wholehearted allegiance. The three stars recall Elijah, Mary, and the Carmelite family, as well as the call to holiness. The crown and twelve stars point to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen and Mother of Carmel, under whose protection the Order flourishes. Above them, the flaming sword symbolizes the Prophet Elijah and his burning zeal for the glory of God. Encircling the emblem is the motto, "*Zelo zelatus sum pro Domino Deo exercituum*" ("With zeal I have been zealous for the Lord God of Hosts"), expressing the Carmelite vocation to seek God's presence through prayer, contemplation, and ardent love in the service of the Church.



Echoes of Magisterium



“The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ.”

GAUDIUM ET SPES 1

This opening statement of *Gaudium et Spes* expresses the Church's profound solidarity with the whole human family. It affirms that the Church does not stand apart from the world but shares in the experiences of humanity—their joys and hopes, sorrows and anxieties. Particular attention is given to the poor, suffering, and marginalized, reflecting Christ's own concern for the least and the afflicted. Since the Son of God entered human history and embraced the human condition, the followers of Christ are called to accompany people in their struggles and aspirations. This statement sets the tone for the entire document, presenting the Church as a compassionate companion on humanity's journey, committed to listening, serving, and bringing the light of the Gospel to the realities of contemporary life. In essence, nothing genuinely human is foreign to the heart of the Christian disciple.

OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL

*Let all Carmel rise up to greet
Mary, Queen and Mother Sweet
Who from the time that it was born
Its every need has come to meet.*

*Carmel's ship has sailed the seas
For more than seven centuries
Tossed at times by stormy winds
Moved sometimes by gentle breeze.*

*Sustained always by Mary's prayer
Encouraged by Her constant care,
Defended by Her scapular
From the devil's crafty snare.*

*Mary spread your mantle wide
Carmel's destinies You guide
Through the times that lie ahead
Through the ocean's ebb and tide.*



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

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