SPRINGS OF Living Water

Daily Spiritual Reflections

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Editor: Fr Silvester D'Souza

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Springs of

Living Water

Daily Spiritual Reflections

Volume No. 13, Issue No. 12

NOVEMBER 2026

PRAYER INTENTION

FOR THE PROPER USE OF WEALTH

Let us pray for the proper use of wealth, that not succumbing to the temptation of selfishness, it may always be put at the service the common good and solidarity of those who have less.

Nihil Obstat : Fr John Francis Sequeira OCD
Provincial, Karnataka Goa Province

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Manager : Fr Ligoury Crasta OCD

The Course of the Springs of Living Water

The November 2026 edition of *Springs of Living Water* is a special one for the Karnataka-Goa Province of the Discalced Carmelites, and even more so for the many friars who have, in one way or another, contributed to this ministry of spreading God's Word. This edition marks the end of one significant chapter in the history of the magazine: it is the final print edition of *The Springs of Living Water*. We are entering a new phase in keeping with he modern times and advancements, transitioning from print to a digital, app-based format so that its message may reach an even wider readership.

It began as "Living Water" during the Young Priests' Meeting held in 2010, a year specially dedicated to Priests by Pope Benedict XVI. The first issue of the magazine was published in December 2010. In its initial years, it was published four times every year. Rev. Fr Arwin Tauro and Rev. Fr Venil D'Souza served as its first editors, while the initiative was guided by Rev. Fr Ronald D'Souza, who was then the Provincial Council in charge of Apostolate.

In June 2011, the editorial responsibility of the magazine was entrusted to Rev. Fr Silvestre D'Souza, who took up the baton and guided the publication through a significant period of growth and development. Under his editorial leadership, the magazine gradually evolved from a quarterly publication into a bi-monthly. When the publication was formally registered with the Government, it had to be given a new name: *Springs of Living Water*. It beautifully echoed the biblical imagery of the living water promised by Christ: water that springs forth and becomes a source of life for others. Due to this development, the numbering of the volumes had to begin afresh, though the spirit and purpose of the magazine remained unchanged.

In the year 2020, Rev. Fr Regan D'Souza took over the editorial responsibility. His creativity, dedication and commitment helped sustain the magazine and enabled it to continue its mission of bringing the light of God's Word and the richness of Christian spirituality to its readers. In 2024, Rev. Fr Noel D'Cunha assumed the responsibility of editor. When his ministerial commitments abroad eventually took him away from India, Rev. Fr Jesvin Tom

Benoy took over as editor in August 2025. Each editor, in his own way, has left a distinctive mark on the magazine, contributing time, creativity and pastoral concern to ensure that *Springs of Living Water* continued to flow.

Along with the editors, various friars worked as managers of this magazine: Rev. Fr Praveen Pinto, Rev. Fr Stifan Pereira, Rev. Fr Ivan Robert D'Souza and towards the end Rev. Fr Ligoury Crasta handled that responsibility well! Like careful stewards of a vital source, they tended to the magazine through the years, allowing the spring to broaden and deepen. We are profoundly grateful for their hard efforts. We also place on record our sincere gratitude to Mr. Lawrence Miranda, who has carried out with commitment the designing and formatting of the magazine, since its inception in 2010.

Over the years, the magazine has grown far beyond its original format. Alongside the daily reflections that have remained one of its principal features, it has carried articles, question-and-answer sections, spiritual reflections and contributions from experts on a variety of themes, mainly from the Carmelite Friars. The magazine has focused on particular feasts, ecclesial celebrations, terms with spiritual significance, special years and themes of spiritual significance, seeking not merely to inform but also to inspire and nourish its readers.

The circle of contributors, too, has steadily expanded. In its early years, most of the contributions were our own Carmelite friars. With time, however, the magazine opened its pages to the wider family: Cloistered Carmelite nuns, members of the Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites (OCDS), and even lay contributors have enriched its pages with their rich insights, experiences and reflections. In this way, *Springs of Living Water* has become not merely a publication of the friars, but a shared expression of the life, spirituality and mission of Carmel.

Throughout its journey, Springs of Living Water has remained under the banner of Dhyana Jyothi Publications, the publishing house of the Discalced Carmelites of the Karnataka-Goa Province. As we now prepare to make the transition from print to digital media, it is fitting that we pause and give thanks for the many people who have made this journey possible.

Our sincere gratitude goes to every contributor who has shared reflections, articles, insights and experiences through these pages. We are grateful to the editors who generously offered their time, creativity and energy; to those who worked behind the scenes to ensure the smooth publication and circulation of each issue; to our staff who faithfully supported the practical and technical aspects of the magazine; and to our fellow friars, whose encouragement, goodwill and support have sustained this venture through the years. Above all, we thank God, whose grace has accompanied this journey from its humble beginnings. What began as a small initiative has, over the years, become a channel through which countless words of faith, hope and spiritual nourishment have reached many hearts.

As *Springs of Living Water* moves into its digital phase, we do not see this as an ending but as a new beginning. The medium may change, but the mission remains the same: to share the richness of God's Word, to nourish the spiritual life of our readers, and to help the living water of Christ reach ever more people in the circumstances of their daily lives.

We therefore entrust this new chapter to the Lord with hope and confidence. May the magazine continue to sow the seeds of God's Word, inspire hearts to seek Him, and become a source of spiritual nourishment for many. And may the prayer that has accompanied this journey become ever more deeply fulfilled in all of us: that the living water received from Christ may not remain within us, but may flow forth from our hearts as springs of grace, hope and love for the world.

Fr Silvestre D'Souza OCD
& Fr Jesvin Tom Benoy OCD

We are grateful to the CONTRIBUTORS of the reflections:

OCD Frs Alphonse Britto, Avith Pais, George Santhumayor, Joe Tauro, John Sequiera, Joseph D'Souza, Joy Francis, Melwin Lasrado, Noel D'Cunha, Oswald Crasta, Raymond Santhanaz, Roshan Monteiro, Stany Pinto, Alwin D'Souza, Elston Monteiro, Hilary Rodriguez, Loy Crasta, Stin George **OCD Sisters** from Bengaluru, Chicalim and Pune Carmels **OCD Brs** Aldric Xavier, Cristan Fernandes, Fleming D'Souza, Glawin Lester D'Souza, Melrick Rodrigues, Rikson Moras, Vinod Pais, Wilson Rodriguez, **OCDS** Mrs Diana Wilson, Josephine Menezes and Jubilee Cardozo **Br** Adrian Menezes SW **Mr** Aroon Fernandes and Maxim D'Cruz **Mrs** Delisa Fernandes, Venora Lobo and Wilma Rose

1 SUN

All Are Called to Be Saints

ALL SAINTS

Rv 7: 2-4, 9-14/ Ps 24: 1b-2, 3-4ab, 5-6/ 1 Jn 3: 1-3/ Mt 5: 1-12a

Today the Church celebrates one of her most beautiful feasts: All Saints' Day, a day not only to honour the saints we know by name, but also the countless men and women whose holiness remains hidden in the folds of daily life. This solemnity reminds us of a profound truth of our faith: holiness is not the privilege of a few; it is the vocation of all. Every person, in every state of life, is called to be a saint.

The Vision of Heaven: A Multitude of Hope - The Book of Revelation gives us a majestic vision: a great multitude from every nation, standing before the throne of God, clothed in white and singing praise. It is a scene of fulfillment — humanity gathered in unity, joy, and love before its Creator. These are not only the canonized saints but also the humble and unknown — parents, workers, missionaries, religious, children — all who lived their faith in love and perseverance. Their garments are white not because their lives were without sin, but because they were washed in the Blood of the Lamb. They allowed grace to purify their weakness. This is the hope of every Christian: not perfection achieved by effort, but sanctity received through surrender to divine mercy.

The Identity of the Children of God - St. John, in his first letter, reminds us: "See what love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God." The call to holiness begins here; not with what we do, but with who we are. Holiness is the flowering of baptismal grace; it is God's life growing within us. John continues, "What we shall be has not yet been revealed." Holiness is a journey, not a static state. It is the gradual transformation of our hearts into the likeness of Christ. Every act of faith, every small act of love, every moment of surrender draws us closer to that glory already prepared for us.

The Path to Holiness: The Beatitudes - In the Gospel, Jesus gives us the charter of sainthood: the Beatitudes. They turn worldly logic upside down. The saints are not the powerful, the admired, or the successful; they are the poor in spirit, the meek, the merciful, the pure of heart, the peacemakers, those

who hunger for righteousness, and even those who suffer for truth. Each Beatitude describes a heart that has been shaped by love. The poor in spirit are those who rely on God alone. The merciful mirror the compassion of the Father. The pure of heart see God because they have nothing to hide from Him. These are not impossible ideals; they are portraits of Christ Himself and therefore, portraits of what we are called to become. Holiness is not escape from the world but transformation within it. It means living the Gospel in the ordinary, forgiving when it's hard, choosing humility over pride, patience over irritation, generosity over self-interest. Every act of love, no matter how small, builds the Kingdom.

The Saints Among Us - Today we remember not only the great names like Francis of Assisi, Teresa of Avila, and Thérèse of Lisieux, but also the hidden saints: the grandmother who prayed for her family, the nurse who comforted the dying, the teacher who inspired hope, the youth who kept faith amid temptation. They show us that holiness is possible, that sanctity is woven into the texture of ordinary life. Pope Francis in Gaudete et Exsultate reminds us: "To be holy does not require being a bishop, a priest or a religious. We are all called to be holy by living our lives with love." Holiness is the fruit of daily fidelity, doing ordinary things with extraordinary love. The saints are those who have let God love them fully, who have allowed His grace to shape their lives. They are mirrors of divine beauty, showing what happens when a soul says "yes" completely.

The journey continues as All Saints' Day is not simply about heaven; it is about our present call. The feast challenges us to live differently: to see holiness not as an unreachable perfection but as daily faithfulness to love. Holiness is joy - the joy of belonging entirely to God. It is the only destiny worthy of our hearts.

Response: These are the people who seek your face, O Lord.

2 MON

Hope Beyond Death

The Commemoration of all the Faithful Departed (All Souls)

Wis 3:1-9c / Ps 23:1-3,4,5,6/ Rom 5:5-11/ Jn 6:37-40

All Souls' Day, invites us to contemplate the Christian mystery that death is not the end of communion with God, but a passage into the fullness of life. Today, the Church remembers those who have died in the hope of the resurrection and entrusts them to God's merciful love. While the world may see death as defeat and separation, Christian faith looks beyond death with hope. Pope Benedict XVI, in Spe Salvi, reminds us that Christian hope is not mere optimism but confidence that God's love is stronger than death. St Paul reveals the foundation of this hope in his letter to Romans. Our hope rests not on human goodness but on Christ's merciful initiative. Through His Cross and Resurrection, Jesus has confronted and overcome death. As Gaudium et Spes teaches, Christ illuminates the mystery of suffering and death by entering into it and transforming it. The Gospel gives us Jesus' consoling promise: "I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day" implying that the deceased are not forgotten by God; they remain within Christ's redeeming love.

The Church prays for the dead because the bond of charity is stronger than physical separation. The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that from earliest times the Church has honoured the dead and offered prayers, especially the Eucharistic sacrifice, for them. We belong to one Body of Christ in life and death. This hope has a deep Carmelite dimension. St John of the Cross teaches that the soul's ultimate end is perfect union with God. St Teresa of Avila understood life as a journey toward eternal communion: "It is time to walk, Lord, for my time is come." All Souls' Day therefore invites us to examine our own lives: Am I living in friendship with Christ? Am I forgiving, detached, and allowing God to purify my heart?

Today let us entrust our departed to the Divine Mercy.. May Mary, Mother of Mercy and Queen of Carmel, accompany us until we behold God face to face.

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

3 TUE

The Invitation We Must Not Miss

Ordinary Weekday/ St Martin de Porres

Phil 2: 5-11/ Ps 22: 26b-27, 28-30ab, 30e, 31-32/ Lk 14: 15-24

St. Paul presents before us today, the astonishing humility of Christ: though he was in the form of God, he emptied himself and took the form of a servant. The Gospel reveals to us a banquet to which many are invited, yet some find reasons to remain away. At first, these two readings may seem unrelated, but together they ask us a deeply personal question: Am I willing to empty myself enough to accept God's invitation? The banquet in the Gospel is ready. Everything has been prepared. The invitation is generous and freely given. Yet the invited guests begin to make excuses. One has bought a field, another has purchased oxen, and another has married. None of these things is necessarily wrong. What becomes tragic is that good things become excuses for refusing something greater. Perhaps this is also our struggle. We can become so occupied with our plans, responsibilities, possessions and relationships that we leave little room for God. We may not consciously reject Him; we simply become too busy to respond. The danger is not always saying "no" to God. Sometimes it is continually saying, "Not now."

Christ shows us another way. He did not cling to his privileges but emptied himself in love. The Christian life is therefore not merely about receiving an invitation but about becoming humble enough to accept it. To enter God's banquet, we must sometimes let go of our own agenda, our need for recognition, our attachments and our excuses. The surprising part of the Gospel is that when some refuse the invitation, the master sends his servants to the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame. God's table has room for those whom the world overlooks. His invitation is wider than our calculations and more generous than our expectations. Today, let us ask ourselves: What is keeping me from the banquet? The banquet is ready. The invitation has been given. The question is whether our hearts are ready to say, "Yes, Lord, I will come." May we learn from Christ to empty ourselves, so that God may fill us with his grace.

Response: I will praise you, Lord,
in the assembly of your people.

4 WED

Cost of True Discipleship

St Charles Borromeo

Phil 2: 12-18/ Ps 27: 1, 4, 13-14/ Lk 14: 25-33

Every disciple or every apprentice should be dedicated and committed in the new direction one has taken or new life one has chosen if one wants to be successful or reach one's goal. Otherwise, that person will be a failure. This implies having total focus on the direction or choice one has made. In today's reading we have the same thought running through. St Paul in the first reading firmly warns the Philippians that they need to work out their salvation with fear and trembling. This does not mean physical fear and trembling but spiritual fear of being separated from God. He means to say that they need the total dedication and maximum commitment and never be negligent.

In the Gospel passage we hear Jesus' demand to his followers that they must be ready to detach themselves from all affections of this world and only be attached to His love. Besides one must be ready to accept daily crosses in order to express our dedication and commitment to Jesus. There is no more turning back. The two examples which Jesus gives explains what exactly He means. Before building a tower and before going to fight with the enemy, one is required to know one's ability and capabilities. Otherwise, the whole enterprise will be a failure. So, Jesus wants every one of us be His genuine disciple who is ready to renounce everything in order to possess Him. Saints did the same and they invite us to follow them. St Teresa of Avila says: "God alone suffices". It is not that Jesus tells us not to love anyone in this world but that love should not be a hindrance to possess the love of God. Both love cannot go hand in hand or equally. So, we are able to recognize that it costs to be a dedicated disciple of Jesus or to possess God, and God alone, and this means that we give up or renounce all that is not God. Are we ready for this level of commitment? There cannot be a compromise in loving God with an undivided heart!

Response: The Lord is my light and my salvation.

5 THU

Counting All As Loss

Ordinary Weekday

Phil 3: 3-8a/ Ps 105: 2-3, 4-5, 6-7/ Lk 15: 1-10

"I consider everything as a loss because of the supreme good of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord." This is the cry of someone who has discovered a treasure so valuable that everything else has lost its meaning. And, consider what Paul lists as 'loss': not just sinful things, but his very credentials as a faithful Jew – his achievements, his identity, his sources of pride and security.

This is the doctrine of radical detachment that St John of the Cross teaches throughout his writings. In the Ascent of Mount Carmel, he insists that we must let go not only of sinful attachments but even of good things, including spiritual gifts, religious accomplishments, and consolations in prayer. The summit of the 'mountain of God' is reached not by adding more possessions (even spiritual ones) but by emptying ourselves of everything that is not God. St Teresa of Avila shares that for years she tried to build a spiritual life on her own efforts, her religious practices, her good reputation. But she discovered that all of this had to be surrendered before she could enter into genuine prayer. In the Interior Castle, she describes how the journey within consists of passing through 'mansions' where we let go of everything – attachments to comfort, to the approval of others, to spiritual consolations, even to our own ideas about who God is – until finally we stand empty-handed before the Beloved, Christ, who has already let go of everything to gain us; who even counted heaven itself as loss for us.

Today, Paul challenges us to examine what we are still clinging to. What credentials do we parade before God? What achievements do we think make us worthy? What spiritual accomplishments do we keep desiring for and hold on to? We are invited today to empty our hands of everything – not because these things are evil, but because they keep us from receiving the one treasure that truly satisfies: the supreme good of knowing Christ Jesus our Lord.

Response: Let hearts rejoice who search for the Lord.

6 FRI

Gifts for God's Glory

Ordinary Weekday

Phil 3: 17 - 4: 1/ Ps 122: 1-2, 3-4ab, 4cd-5/ Lk 16: 1-8, 54

Today's readings invite us to reflect on how wisely and faithfully we need to use the gifts and talents that God has entrusted to us. Each of us has received different abilities and opportunities. These are not given merely for our personal success, but so that we may use them for the good of others and for the greater glory of God.

The Gospel presents us with the unusual example of the dishonest steward who, when faced with losing his position, acts with foresight and prudence. Jesus is not praising his dishonesty, but draws attention to his ability to act decisively. This challenges us to ask ourselves: Are we equally wise and responsible in using the gifts God has placed in our hands? Do we make the best use of our time and talents, to serve God and others?

St. Teresa of Avila offers us an important insight into humility. Sometimes, when people appreciate our talents, we are quick to dismiss their praise by saying, "I am not really talented," thinking that this is humility. But true humility is not denying what God has given us. Rather, it is honestly acknowledging our gifts while remembering that they come from Him. We can accept appreciation with gratitude, without allowing praise to make us proud or self-centred. The right response is to say, "Thank you, Lord, for this gift; help me to use it well."

The first reading also reminds us to keep our eyes fixed on Christ. We are citizens of heaven, and therefore our talents and achievements should never become the centre of our lives. Whatever gifts we possess should lead us closer to God and help us become instruments of His love. When we recognize our gifts with gratitude and place them at God's service, we become more useful in building His Kingdom. Our abilities may be great or small, but when offered sincerely to God, they can touch lives and bring hope to others. May we therefore have the wisdom to recognize our God-given talents, the humility to acknowledge them, and the generosity to use them for His glory.

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

7 SAT

The Joy of Giving

Ordinary Weekday

Phil 4: 10-19/ Ps 112: 1b-2, 5-6, 8a and 9/ Lk 16: 9-15

Phil. 4:10–19 is a canticle of a person fully satisfied. This passage of Paul resonates with the truth that one lacks nothing when we have Christ and when we experience the joy that comes from sharing what we possess. St. Thérèse writes in her autobiography: "From the day I forgot myself, I lived the happiest life on earth" — referring to the profound experience of her Christmas night. Another quote might help us from another author, "I make myself rich by making my needs less. We too could embrace this view towards life.

Perhaps true contentment does not come from possessing more, but from learning to desire less and to give more. The moment we begin to look beyond ourselves, our hearts become freer and our lives become richer. We discover that there is a deep joy in making another person happy, in sharing what we have, and in being available to those who are in need. Thus, whenever we interact with someone, may we view ourselves as the least among all and, from the very depths of our hearts, respectfully hold others as superior to ourselves. Such an attitude of humility does not diminish us; rather, it opens our hearts to recognise the goodness of God present in others. Then we will embark on a beautiful journey of self-discovery and discover that the less we cling to ourselves, the more room we create for God and for others.

The Gospel passage from Luke today speaks directly to the interior life, and God, who sees the heart, knows our intentions. When we truly love Jesus, little things matter very much to us. "Whoever can be trusted in little things can also be trusted in great," teaches Jesus. It is indeed something to ponder and introspect. Faithfulness is not demonstrated only through great deeds or extraordinary sacrifices; it is revealed in the small choices we make each day — in our words, our relationships, our responsibilities and our willingness to serve. God looks not merely at what we do, but at the love and sincerity with which we do it.

Response: Blessed the man who fears the Lord.

8 SUN

Wisdom, Readiness and Faithful Love

THIRTY-SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Wis 6: 12-16/ Ps 63: 2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8 (2b)/ 1 Thes 4: 13-18/ Mt 25: 1-13

Wisdom does not usually force itself upon us. It is discovered by those who genuinely seek it, by those who are willing to pause, listen and recognise the presence of God in the midst of ordinary life. The first reading reminds us that wisdom is not something distant or inaccessible. She makes herself known to those who love her and allow themselves to be guided by her. The real question, therefore, is not whether God gives us wisdom, but whether we are attentive enough to recognise and receive it.

This is beautifully seen in the prayer of Solomon. When entrusted with the responsibility of leading God's people, he does not ask for wealth, power or a life free from difficulties. He asks for an understanding heart, so that he may discern what is right and govern wisely. His prayer reveals something important about genuine wisdom: it is not merely knowledge or intelligence. It is the grace to see life from God's perspective and to use what has been entrusted to us for the good of others.

Each of us has been entrusted with something. We have received time, abilities, relationships, opportunities, responsibilities and, above all, the gift of faith. None of these gifts is given merely for ourselves. God's grace always carries a mission within it. The question is whether we are allowing these gifts to bear fruit.

This is where the Gospel's image of the lamps becomes deeply meaningful. The ten young women are all waiting for the bridegroom. All have lamps. All have received the same invitation. From the outside, there appears to be little difference between them. Yet the difference becomes visible when the waiting is prolonged. Some have prepared themselves for the unexpected delay; others have assumed that what they have will be enough.

The Gospel invites us to look honestly at our own lives. Faith cannot simply be something we possess; it must be something we nurture. Our relationship with God cannot survive merely on yesterday's prayer, yesterday's generosity or yesterday's encounter with grace. Love needs to be renewed. Faith needs to be nourished. The inner lamp needs oil.

This oil can be understood as the life of grace expressed through prayer, love, fidelity and good works. Spiritual readiness is not anxiety about the future. It is living the present faithfully. It means cultivating an intimate relationship with God, allowing our conscience to be formed by truth, and becoming available to the needs of others. It means being prepared not simply to meet Christ at the end of our journey, but to recognise Him whenever He comes to us: in the people entrusted to our care, in unexpected demands, in moments of suffering, and in opportunities to love.

There is also something sobering in the Gospel. The foolishness of the unprepared is not necessarily found in some great act of rebellion. Sometimes it is simply neglect. A small failure to pay attention, a little postponement, a habit of taking grace for granted, an opportunity to love that we repeatedly ignore, such things can slowly make the heart inattentive to God. What we repeatedly postpone today may eventually become a way of life, and what we fail to nurture can quietly lose its place within our hearts. This is why St Paul's words to the Thessalonians are so consoling. Christian hope is not founded on the denial of death or suffering, but on the conviction that our lives are held within God's promise of communion with Him. Because our destiny is ultimately union with Christ, the way we live now matters. Our present choices are not disconnected from our eternal hope.

We are therefore called to live awake: not frightened, but attentive; not anxious, but faithful. God has entrusted each of us with gifts that can create, heal, encourage and give life. Love that is never offered gradually becomes stagnant, whereas love expressed in service grows stronger. The more generously we give ourselves, the more capable we become of loving.

Perhaps, then, the prayer we need today is not simply, "Lord, give me more," but, "Lord, teach me to recognise what You have already given me, and give me the wisdom to use it faithfully." The bridegroom comes. The invitation is already given. The lamp is in our hands. What remains is to keep the flame alive.

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

9 MON

Make My Heart Your Dwelling Place

DEDICATION OF THE LATERAN BASILICA IN ROME

Ez 47:1-2,8-9,12 or 1 Cor 3:9c-11,16-17/ Ps 46:2-3,5-6,8-9/Jn 2:13-22

Today the Church celebrates the Feast of the Dedication of the Lateran Basilica, the cathedral church of Rome and the mother church of the churches of the world. The Gospel takes us to the Gospel account where Jesus cleanses the Temple. At first, his action may seem like an expression of anger. But it reveals something deeper: Jesus' great love for his Father and his desire to restore the true meaning of worship. The Temple was meant to be a holy place where people could pray and encounter God. People came from distant places to offer sacrifices, so buying animals and exchanging money were necessary services. But gradually, what had begun as a service became a business. The problem was even greater because the buying and selling took place in the Court of the Gentiles. This was the place where people from other nations could come and seek the true God. Instead of finding a peaceful place of prayer, they found a marketplace. Jesus reminds them of Isaiah's words: "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations" (Isaiah 56:7). By driving away the merchants from the temple Jesus reminds the people that God must always remain at the centre of their lives.

Gospel also invites us to look into our own hearts. St Paul says, "You are God's temple" (1 Corinthians 3:16). Our hearts can also become crowded with worries, ambition, money, anger, pride, distractions and the desire for recognition. Sometimes God has not left us; rather, we have filled his space with too many other things. Jesus wants to cleanse our hearts, not to condemn us, but to renew us. His zeal comes from love. He wants our hearts to become places of prayer, peace and communion with God.

On this feast, let us not only admire the beauty of our churches. Let us also ask: What needs to be removed from my heart so that God can have the first place? May Christ cleanse and renew us, so that our lives truly become a dwelling place for God.

Response: The waters of a river give joy to God's city, the holy place, the dwelling of the Most High.

10 TUE

Faith In Through Humble Service

St Leo the Great

Tit 2: 1-8, 11-14/ Ps 37: 3-4, 18 and 23, 27 and 29/ Lk 17: 7-10

Today, we celebrate the memorial of St. Leo the Great, Pope and Doctor of the Church. His life reminds us that true greatness does not come from power or position but from humble service, faithfulness and love for God's people. In the first reading, St. Paul instructs us on how Christians ought to live. They are called to be self-controlled, loving, patient and to be good examples to others. Our faith should not remain only in words; it must rather be visible in our daily actions. God's grace has appeared to bring salvation, teaching us to reject sin and live upright and faithful lives. This teaching becomes meaningful when we look at the life of St. Leo the Great. As the Pope, he guided the Church with wisdom, courage and responsibility. He understood his leadership not as a privilege for personal glory, but instead as a service entrusted to him by Christ. His life shows us how God's grace can work through a person who sincerely serves the Church. He stood firm in difficult moments, defended the faith courageously, and remained committed to the people entrusted to his care. His example reminds us that authentic leadership is measured not by how many people serve us, but by how generously we are willing to serve others. This call to faithful living and humble service reaches its fullness in today's Gospel. Jesus reminds us that after fulfilling our duties, we should not seek praise or consider ourselves greater than others. We are servants who are called to do what is expected of us. Our service is not a reason for pride, because everything we accomplish is possible through God's grace.

Therefore, today's liturgy invites us to correlate faithful living with humble service. The first reading teaches us how to live as Christians, while the Gospel teaches us the attitude with which we should serve. As we celebrate the memory of this great saint today, let us ask God for the grace to live our faith sincerely, serve others humbly, and remain faithful to our Christian responsibilities without seeking recognition.

Response: The salvation of the just comes from the Lord.

11 WED

From Distance to Closeness

St Martin of Tours

Tit 3: 1-7/ Ps 23: 1b-3a, 3bc-4, 5, 6/ Lk 17: 11-19

Our whole spiritual life is a journey towards union with God. The Gospel of today, in a nut shell captures this journey. We have the ten lepers who meet Jesus, but stand at a distance, away from Him. They are aware of their sickness, the social stigma and the feeling of actually being outcasts. But they are even more aware that Jesus has the power to heal them. And so, they cry out to Him for mercy. We may not be physically infected by leprosy, but each of us has some spiritual leprous wound which disfigures the image and likeness of God in us, makes us spiritually numb and gradually disintegrate. The Old Testament is replete with examples of such lepers whose physical condition was but an expression of a spiritual malaise. We have Miriam (Num 12:1-10) who developed a certain subtle envy, resentment and rebellion against her brother Moses' spiritual leadership. Namaan (2 Kgs 5: 1-15) was guilty of pride, while Gehazi the servant of Prophet Elisha (2 Kgs 5: 20-27) was an avaricious man. King Uzziah was arrogant and defiant to the Lord (2 Chron: 16-19).

Like the ten lepers, sin distances us from God. But there is an opportunity to grow closer. God's mercy is always available and we do desire it. However, the motivation for seeking this mercy is varied. Nine of the lepers who received healing went their own way. They are like the older brother in the parable of the Prodigal son who seek gifts to enjoy with their friends (Lk 15: 29b) and do not care for a relationship with the giver of the gift. The Samaritan however, returned to thank Jesus thereby receiving not just physical healing but spiritual wholeness and closeness with Jesus. Both these tendencies are present within us. We plead for some blessings and favours and do indeed receive them. We thank God sometimes but also often take God for granted. The gifts do not lead us to deeper intimacy with God. Gratitude opens our hearts to wholeness and intimacy. May we deepen this attitude of wholehearted gratitude.

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

12 THU

True Christian Way in Simple Life Tacts and not in Mega Shows

St Josaphat

Phlm 7-20/ Ps 146: 7, 8-9a, 9bc-10/ Lk 17: 20-25

Sensationalism makes impact, and every one is easily carried along by the crowd. The ads are so attractive we fall to them easily and our reasoning and freedom are mortgaged. It is because we are frightened of every pain and want to get rid of it as easily as possible, without change of life attitudes.

Today's readings show us another way for true and happy life as disciples of Jesus. In the Gospel today Jesus himself admonishes us not to rush to magical and superstitious markets of religion where preachers compete with each other to attract crowds by using aggressive marketing skills. We are easily misled by bigger crowds. Jesus declares very clearly that there are no magic solutions for entering the newness brought by Jesus except by a willing modification of our life style. That is the only way we realize the inner freedom from greed for possessions, ambitions for immediate success and slavery to passions; and experience the joy of being God's free children. It's the new mindset new value system, we receive in our vicinity to the crucified Christ. That's the meaning when Jesus says the kingdom of God is right in your midst.

Paul in his beautiful letter to Philemon, a well to do Christian, speaks about Onesimus, also a fellow Christian; He was a bonded labour, who stealthily walked out and came to Paul. Now Paul writes a letter to Philemon with utmost tact and fine blend of human and Christian values to change his attitude towards Onesimus and grant him liberty. Paul succeeds.

This is the effect of our true belongingness to Jesus. Gospel values give us a new mindset to regard all as my brothers and sisters irrespective of their social or economic conditions. We Christians have to manifest the presence of Jesus by radiating Gospel values around us. That is our mission in our families and in our workplaces. May we be rooted in Jesus, follow him closely on the path of Gospel values and be his true instruments of peace and reconciliation in our society.

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

13 FRI

The Grace of Letting Go… and Letting God

Ordinary Weekday

2 Jn 4-9/ Ps 119: 1, 2, 10, 11, 17, 18/ Lk 17: 26-37

A few weeks ago, while clearing out a cupboard, Sara found an old handbag untouched for years. The receipts had gone soft alongside an expired card, a few coins, a note whose meaning she could no longer place. She sat there wondering why she'd kept it all. It was not because it was worth keeping, it is just that she had never truly desired to let it go.

It struck Sara later that this is not so different from how we carry a life. We do not hold on to the past for the mere purpose of holding. An old hurt outlives the one who caused it. A need to be understood outlives the conversation that was long over. A particular image of how things should look outlives its usefulness, and still we sometimes defend it.

The Gospel offers a strange, spare line: Remember Lot's wife. Her turning back may not even have been defiance. It perhaps was only love, or grief, reluctant to leave a life still burning behind her. That is what makes it unsettling. Her focus was on what she was leaving, and not whom she was running toward. Jeremiah 13:29 says "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart." Perhaps the real question is not what to abandon, but what we are refusing to let go. Her heart was in what the Lord was asking her to 'Let go'. She would not find God, because her attention was elsewhere.

The First Reading's "that we love one another" points the same way. Loyalty asks for the smaller discipline of continuing to love while life alters and evolves. Some intentional choices, sometimes internally tough and hard, yet necessary.

St Teresa of Ávila's words hold both comfort and challenge: All things pass; God never changes. People change and will grow past needing us as before. Faith, perhaps, is unlearning the instinct to grip. It means that trusting that the future is not something you must catch up to, but Someone who loves you, who is already there.

Response: Blessed are they who follow the law of the Lord!

14 SAT

Unceasing prayer increases our Hope

Ordinary Weekday

3 Jn 5-8/ Ps 112: 1-2, 3-4, 5-6/ Lk 18: 1-8, 55

The reading from the third Letter of St John and Psalm 112 talk about the Loyalty, Justice, Truth and Perseverance. The Gospel aims to bring out the same theme but does it in a very different way. The Judge in the gospel is neither just nor loyal to God or his people. He also seems to not care about the poor and needy in the land, even the widows who usually did not have protectors or providers during those days. The two themes that the parable aims to bring out are to pray unceasingly and to not lose heart (Lk 18:1).

We usually struggle with both of these in our lives. To pray unceasingly pre-supposes that we have a disposition and a firm faith that God is in control and I am not going to strive to take that control into my own hands. When we trust ourselves more than God, we create a dynamic of trying to do things ourselves before going to God. Bringing something to God in prayer becomes our last resort when it should be the first thing we do. To pray unceasingly means to start with prayer in thanksgiving, move to supplication and culminate at intercession. This teaches us an important attitude of turning to the Lord at all times and builds a discipline of unceasing prayer.

The theme of not losing heart means a deep reliance and trust in the Lord who is the creator and saviour of all. For 'We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him' (Rom 8:28). We are called to rely deeply on him and place our hope in the salvation he has gratuitously offered us. Unceasing prayer is deeply reliant on this hope and as hope increases, even in difficult circumstances, so does our prayer. The object of our hope is a God who is all-knowing, all-powerful, and all-good. Therefore,, our hope ought to be as strong as the man who built his house on rock (Matt 7:24-27), not shaken or shattered by winds or storms.

Response: Blessed the man who fears the Lord.

15 SUN

The Risk of Living the Paschal Mystery

THIRTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Prv 31:10-13,19-20,30-31/ Ps 128: 1-2, 3, 4-5/ 1 Thes 5: 1-6/ Mt 25: 14-30

In today's Gospel pericope, God is the giver of gifts and there are no limits to what He would like to share with us, his children. God has invited us to share in His divine life. This is a central point related to the Kingdom. God lavishes on us His divine Life and Grace. How often do we ask God for his grace to help us? The life that God offers us can't be measured in terms of quantity. Very often many of us make the mistake of trying to count our blessings. God offers us His love and life to have an intimate relationship with Him for eternity.

Talents may be one of the aspects of His life he offers us. Only talents at some time will leave us empty and void. The more deeply we enter into the relationship God offers us, the richer we become. The more faithful we are in small matters, the more we grow in Christ. The manner in which we handle situations in life, should flow from the blessings we have already received in Christ. The readings invite us to pause and reflect on our life and actions: Am I really sharing in my master's joy? The master in the parable is portrayed as hard-hearted, miserly and even dominating. Yet, the servant who has only one talent is also in possession of a gift given by the master. He constantly lavishes his gifts freely and generously on us. Each one of us is precious in God's eyes. He invites us to be faithful in small matters, until His return. What am I doing with the gifts God has placed in my hands? The real surprise in the gospel is when the talent is taken away from the wicked and lazy servant and is given to the servant who already had ten talents. This act speaks of God's generosity and has an eschatological dimension.

Today's Gospel invites us to live the Paschal Mystery. We are invited to go out of ourselves in the service of others and creation. We are happy to go for Mass, reconciliation during Advent and Lent, and say a few novena prayers along with our daily prayers. We are not used to taking risks. Christian maturity/growth comes, when we respond positively in living the Paschal Mystery of Christ. Are we ready to die to ourself, go out of our way to help each other or the poor in need? Do we

risk dying to ourselves and sharing our talents in the service of the community. Do I use the blessings that I have abundantly received from God in the service of God and his community? Do I exercise the know-it-all attitude and place others in servitude? We are invited to be faithful to God.

The first reading and the psalm together offers us a balanced perspective of the image of a woman and a man who in their own way are faithful to God in the different roles that they play in life. We are invited to ask God for grace to live our lives to the fullest. We are called to fear the Lord and be faithful in living covenant-life with him. As we sing the Psalm, let us confidently acknowledge that the talents given to us, helps us to experience the blessedness that comes with it. Today we are invited to reflect on how the demands of discipleship can be brough to fulfilment in our daily living.

In biblical times, to bury a talent may have been the prudent way to avert the risk of the talent getting lost. He would not have to be responsible or accountable in case something went wrong. Our immediate instinct is to play it safe and show ourselves as prudent by not take any risk. The greatest risk we take is to live the Paschal Mystery in our daily life. Pope Francis in his Apostolic letter, Desiderio Desideravi no. 49, affirms that "…the Paschal Mystery is made present so that the baptized, through their participation, can experience it in their own lives." May we therefore, never bury our gifts out of fear, but use them generously, so that when the Lord comes, we too may hear those longed-for words: "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter into the joy of your Master."

Response: Blessed are all who fear the Lord.

16 MON

When Darkness Seems to Win

Ordinary Weekday

Rv 1: 1-4; 2: 1-5/ Ps 1: 1-2, 3, 4 and 6/ Lk 18: 35-43

Have you ever asked, "Lord, where are You?" There are moments when everything seems to go wrong. We pray, but the answer seems delayed. We see suffering and wonder: d oes goodness really have a future? It is into such moments that the Book of Revelation speaks. Revelation may appear frightening, filled with visions, symbols and battles. Yet these is a message: Do not be afraid. God is still in control. Evil may appear powerful, but it will never have the last word. Christ has won the victory.

The first Christians were persecuted and rejected, yet Revelation reminded them: Hold on. Your suffering is not the end of the story. Is that not the message needed today? We face other pressures. A student may feel that marks decide his worth. A family may struggle with money. Many silently carry wounds nobody sees. Revelation asks us to see the world with the eyes of faith. God is working even when we cannot see His work. But Jesus gives the Church at Ephesus warning: "You have lost the love you had at first." What a painful possibility! We can pray, attend Mass, say the Rosary and perform our duties, yet slowly lose the love that once made everything beautiful.

Then comes Bartimaeus. He could not see Jesus, but he believed Jesus could see him. When others told him to be quiet, he cried louder. Perhaps this is the faith, Revelation asks of us: to keep believing when we cannot yet see. When life becomes difficult, let us not ask only, "Why is this happening to me?" Let us also ask, "Lord, what are You trying to show me?" Perhaps my darkness teaches me trust. Perhaps my waiting teaches patience. Perhaps my struggle brings me closer to God. The world may look dark, but the story is not over. Christ is still our Lord, always. And today, let us ask: If Jesus looked into my heart today, would He find the same love He found when I first began to follow Him? If not, perhaps this is the moment to begin again.

Response: Those who are victorious I will feed from the tree of life.

17 TUE

Encountering Jesus in the Poor

St Elizabeth of Hungary

Rv 3: 1-6, 14-22/ Ps 15: 2-3a, 3bc-4ab, 5/ Lk 19: 1-10

We experience the presence of the Lord in the Sacraments of the Church, in the Eucharist. He Himself has promised us that He will be present whenever two or three are gathered in His name i.e., in the assembly, and in the Word of God. We can also encounter Him in the poor and the suffering because He identifies Himself with them.

In today's Gospel Jesus places before us the final moments of judgement. He will come in glory with His angels and will sit on the throne to judge the people. All the people will gather before Him. Then, there will be separation of the good and the evil. Jesus compares this separation to the shepherd separating the sheep and the goat. The good ones will be at His right and the evil one at His left. One may be curious to know the measure used by the Lord for this separation. We come to know the answer from the Lord's address to those at His right.

The good ones are the 'blessed of the Father'. They will inherit the Kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world. How did they make into God's Kingdom? They saw Christ in the poor, i.e., in the hungry, the thirsty, the strangers, the naked, the sick, and the imprisoned. They fed the hungry and satiated the thirst of the thirsty, they were hospitable to the strangers, they covered the naked, visited the sick and those in prison because they saw Christ in them. Jesus affirms that whenever we do something to the least, we do it to Him.

St Elizabeth of Hungary, came from a princely and rich family. But she lived a life of prayer and full of love for the poor. She embraced a life of poverty and simplicity in imitation of Christ. She saw Christ in the poor. She is a wonderful example who loved Christ in the poor and encountered Him in them. Let us then draw our lesson from St Elizabeth, and see the face of Christ seeking our love and compassion in the poor of the world.

Response: I will seat the victor beside me on my throne.

18 WED

Ultimate Sovereignty and Faithful Stewardship

Ordinary Weekday

Rv 4: 1-11/ Ps 150: 1b-2, 3-4, 5-6/ Lk 19: 11-28,

The first reading opens a window into the heavenly realm, revealing God enthroned in unmatched glory, surrounded by living creatures and elders who unceasingly cry, *"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty"* (Rev 4:8). In contrast, Luke 19:11–28 brings this majestic reality down to earth through the Parable of the Ten Minas, where a noble king entrusts his servants with resources to steward until his return. Together, these scripture passages reveal a profound, unified truth: God is the supreme, sovereign King of all creation, and our present lives are a sacred trust—a calling to practice active, courageous stewardship in light of His inevitable reign. The heavenly vision in Revelation establishes that God is the rightful source and owner of all existence. As the twenty-four elders cast their crowns before the throne, they proclaim, *"You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things"* (Rev 4:11). Casting down crowns signifies the total surrender of human glory before divine sovereignty. Everything we possess—our time, talents, intelligence, and breath—is ultimately borrowed from the Creator.

Luke 19 grounds this heavenly kingship in human accountability. The nobleman departs to receive a kingdom, giving each servant a mina with the command, "Do business with this until I return" (Luke 19:13). The parable highlights two responses to divine authority: active fidelity and paralyzing fear. The faithful servants multiply their minas btu the unfaithful fears the master. His tragic failure illustrates how a warped image of God leads to spiritual stagnation. As St. Augustine rightly observed, "Find out how much God has given you and from it take what you need; the remainder is needed by others". True stewardship requires seeing God's gifts not as burdens to hide, but as capital to invest for the Kingdom.

Response: Holy, holy, holy Lord, mighty God!

19 THU

The King Who Weeps

Ordinary Weekday

Rv 5: 1-10/ Ps 149: 1b-2, 3-4, 5-6a and 9b/ Lk 19: 41-44

On the Solemnity of Christ the King the Gospel narrative takes us to Jerusalem. Jesus loved this city and often visited it, especially for the annual Passover. Yet this final entry is different. He does not enter merely as a pilgrim, but as a King. And strangely, the first thing we see in this King is not power, but tears. As Jesus looks upon Jerusalem, He bursts into intense sorrow. His tears are not tears of anger, but of compassion. The people are suffering under Roman oppression, heavy taxation and political uncertainty, and they are longing for a Messiah who will liberate them. Yet their expectations are centred on a political and military king. They fail to recognize the King standing before them—the One who has come to bring a deeper and lasting liberation. Jesus weeps because His people cannot recognize the source of their salvation. This is why He says, "If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace!" The people of Jerusalem understood peace largely as freedom from political oppression. Jesus, however, comes to offer Shalom—the peace that comes from reconciliation with God and the restoration of the human heart. The tragedy is that the Prince of Peace is standing before them, yet they cannot recognize Him.

As we move towards the close of this liturgical year, we are therefore reminded of the true nature of Christ's kingship. Jesus does not come to rule geographical territories through force. He comes to reign in human hearts. His throne will be the Cross, His crown will be thorns, and His victory will be sacrificial love. The Book of Revelation presents Him as the Lamb "looking as if it had been slain," standing at the centre of the throne. By His blood He gathers people from every nation into His Kingdom. Through Baptism, we too share in this mission. We are called to make His Kingdom visible through truth, justice, mercy, forgiveness and love. May we not be like Jerusalem, searching for peace while failing to recognize the Prince of Peace. May Christ the King reign in our hearts.

Response: You have made us a kingdom and priests to our God.

20 FRI

God's Word Must Transform Our Hearts

Ordinary Weekday

Rv 10: 8-11/ Ps 119: 14, 24, 72, 103, 111, 131/ Lk 19: 45-48

In our spiritual life, listening to God's word is only the beginning. The real challenge is allowing that word to enter our hearts and influence the way we live. The vision described in the first reading illustrates this truth in a striking way. John is asked to take the scroll and consume it. This symbolic action shows that the message of God must be received interiorly before it can be proclaimed to others. The experience described is both pleasant and difficult. At first the message brings joy, because God's word enlightens and consoles the human heart. Yet when it begins to influence real life, it can also become demanding. Living according to God's word sometimes requires courage, sacrifice and perseverance. Thus, the sweetness and bitterness reflect the reality of the Christian mission: the beauty of encountering God and the challenge of remaining faithful to His message.

In the Gospel Jesus cleanses the temple. When He enters the temple and corrects the misuse of that sacred place, He shows how seriously God's presence must be respected. The temple was meant to lead people toward prayer and communion with God, yet human selfishness had distorted its purpose. Jesus' action reminds us that God's message must purify not only places of worship but also the hearts of believers. Before we speak about God's word, we must first allow it to penetrate our lives. When God's message truly becomes part of us, it begins to correct our attitudes, challenge our selfishness, and guide us toward deeper faithfulness. The saints often experienced this powerful effect of God's word. St Jerome, who dedicated his life to studying Scripture, insisted that knowing the Scriptures leads us to know Christ more deeply. For him, the word of God was not only a subject for study but a living voice that guides the Christian life.

In our daily lives, we also encounter moments when God's word consoles us and moments when it challenges us. Allowing God's message to transform our hearts, makes us witnesses to His truth.

Response: How sweet to my taste is your promise!

21 SAT

Daughter of Zion

Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Zech 2: 10 – 13/ Ps: Lk 1: 46-47, 48-49, 50-51, 52 53, 54-55/ Mt 12: 46-50

Today we celebrate the Memorial of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a feast that speaks of dedication, trust, and belonging to God. According to ancient Christian tradition, the child Mary was presented by her parents, Sts Joachim and Anne, in the Temple, where she was consecrated to the Lord. Though this event is not found in Scripture, it beautifully expresses the truth that Mary's entire life belonged to God from the very beginning.

The first reading from Zechariah is filled with joy: "Sing and rejoice, O daughter Zion! For I am coming to dwell among you." God promises to make His home among His people. This promise reaches its fullest realization in Mary. Through her generous "Yes," the eternal Word took flesh in her womb. She became the true dwelling place of God, the living Temple where heaven touched earth.

In the Gospel, Jesus seems to distance Himself from His mother when He says, "Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother." These words are not a rejection of Mary but the greatest praise of her. She is His mother not only because she gave Him birth but because she listened to God's word and lived it with unwavering fidelity. Before she carried Christ in her womb, she carried Him in her heart through faith. St. Augustine beautifully said, "Mary conceived Christ in her heart before she conceived Him in her womb." Her greatness lies above all in her obedient faith.

This feast extends to us the reminder that every Christian is called to become a living sanctuary where Christ can dwell, love and reach out to others in the world.

As St. John of the Cross teaches, the soul must become an empty vessel so that God alone may fill it. Mary's presentation reminds us that holiness begins with a daily offering of ourselves to God. Like her, may we say each day, "Lord, here I am. My life belongs to You." Then Christ will dwell in us, and through us, He will bring hope and joy to the world.

Response: Blessed be the Lord, my Rock!

22 SUN

Christ the King: The King We Meet in the Least of Our Brothers and Sisters

Solemnity of Christ the Universal King

Ez 14:11-12,15-17/ Ps 23:1-2,2-3,5-6 (1)/ 1 Cor 15:20-26,28/ Mt 25:31-46

As we come to the end of the liturgical year, the Church celebrates the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe. When we hear the word "king," we often imagine a throne, a crown, authority, power and subjects. But Jesus reveals a very different kind of kingship. His throne is the Cross, His crown is made of thorns, and His power is revealed through love and self-giving. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus gives us an even more surprising picture of His kingdom: He identifies Himself with the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick and the imprisoned. Jesus says, "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." These words completely change the way we look at people. We may sometimes think that we encounter God only in prayer, the Eucharist, the Bible or in a church. Yet Jesus tells us that we must also learn to recognize Him in people who are suffering and in those whom society tends to overlook. The elderly person who needs someone to listen, the lonely neighbour who rarely receives a visitor, the student who is struggling silently, the worker who is treated without dignity, the sick person who needs encouragement, or the person who has made mistakes and needs another chance, all can become occasions in which we encounter Christ.

There is a simple story of a man who regularly visited an old age home. He was not wealthy and could not afford expensive gifts. Yet he continued to visit the residents, sit with them and talk to them. Someone once asked him why he kept going when he had so little to give. He replied that many of those elderly people had everything they needed except someone willing to listen to them. His gift was simply his presence. In the eyes of the world, this may seem like a small act. But in the light of gospel, it becomes something much greater. When we give our time, attention and compassion to another person, we may actually be giving them an experience of Christ's love. Sometimes we think serving Christ requires extraordinary gifts. But the Gospel often asks us to do ordinary things with extraordinary love: sharing

a meal with someone who is hungry, calling someone who is lonely, visiting someone who is sick, encouraging someone who has failed, patiently listening to someone who is struggling, or forgiving someone who has hurt us.

The Cross gives us the deepest picture of Christ's kingship. When Jesus is crucified, a sign is placed above His head: "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." This appears to be His greatest defeat, yet Christians proclaim that the Cross is the throne of our King. Jesus does not conquer through force. He conquers through love. Even while being crucified, He prays, "Father, forgive them". His kingship is of self-giving love.

At every Mass, we receive Christ in the Eucharist. But our encounter with Christ cannot end when we leave the church. We are sent into the world to recognize and serve Him in others. The Christ whom we meet at the altar is the same Christ whom we are called to recognize in the person who needs our love. The Kingdom of Christ begins wherever God's love is welcomed. It begins in a family when forgiveness replaces resentment, in a classroom when a struggling student is not abandoned, in a workplace when people are treated with dignity, and in a community when the lonely and vulnerable are not forgotten. Most importantly, it begins in our own hearts when we allow Christ to become more important than our pride, comfort and selfishness.

At the end of our lives, the moments that matter most may not be our achievements or possessions, but the small acts of love we offered to others: a meal shared, a hand held, a wound treated, a lonely person visited, a wrong forgiven, or a stranger welcomed. These may seem insignificant in the eyes of the world, but Christ tells us, "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."

The King is among us. May we have eyes to recognize Him, hearts to welcome Him and hands ready to serve Him. And may Christ our King truly reign, not only in our prayers and churches, but in our hearts.

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

23 MON

Why Wait, When we know what is Right?

Ordinary Weekday

Eph 4: 1-6/ Ps 24: 1-2. 3-4ab. 5-6/ Lk 12: 54-59

The readings of today invite us to look at the way we live with one another and the way we respond to God's call. The Gospel invites us to recognize what God is asking from us.

Paul reminds us to live in a way that shows our faith and the calling we have received from God. He asks the Christians to be humble, gentle, patient, and ready to bear with one another in love. Paul reminds us that our faith must be seen in the way we treat people. He also speaks about unity. There is one body, one Spirit, one Lord, one faith and one baptism. We may have different personalities, opinions and responsibilities, but we belong to the same Lord. Unity does not mean that everyone has to think in the same way. It means that we learn to respect one another and work together without allowing small differences to divide us.

We may know what is right, but knowing is not enough. The Gospel challenges us to act before the opportunity passes. God gives us moments of grace, and we should not ignore them because of pride, fear, or delay. The Gospel reminds us to recognize the signs of God's presence and His call in our lives. We are often quick to notice what is happening around us, but we may fail to see what is happening in our own hearts. We may know when a relationship is hurting, when someone needs our forgiveness, or when God is asking us to change, yet we sometimes delay responding to His grace.

Today the Lord asks us to take one simple step, that is, to forgive someone, to speak gently, to make peace, or to correct something in our own life. We do not need to wait for a perfect moment. When God gives us the light to see, we should also have the courage to respond. Let us ask the Lord for humble hearts so that we may listen to His voice. May our faith be seen not only in our prayers, but in the way we forgive and love each day.

Response: Lord, this is the people that longs to see your face.

24 TUE

The Harvest of Hope

St Andrew Dung-Lac & Companions

Rv 14: 14-19/ Ps 96: 10, 11-12, 13/ Lk 21: 5-11

When we open the Book of Revelation, it is easy to feel overwhelmed by the imagery. In today's first reading, John paints a dramatic scene: "One like a son of man" sitting on a white cloud, wearing a golden crown, holding a sharp sickle in his hand. Angels cry out, "Use your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is fully ripe." At first glance, this image of harvesting and threshing can sound harsh or frightening. But to the early Christians who first heard these words, a small, persecuted community facing injustice, oppression, and uncertainty, this vision was not meant to cause terror. It was meant to bring deep, abiding comfort.

A farmer plants seeds with intention, waters the ground, and waits with immense patience. The harvest only comes when the fruit is fully ripe. What the book of Revelation lays bare before us is that human history is not spinning out of control. Evil, cruelty, and systemic injustice do not have the final word. There is a divine timeline, and God is waiting for the precise moment to gather what is good and bring clarity to what has been broken. The sickle in the hands of the Lord represents ultimate accountability. Every act of kindness you offer when no one is looking, every quiet prayer, every burden borne with patience, and every stand taken for truth is a seed planted in God's field. Nothing is lost. When the harvest comes, God separates the wheat from the chaff, distinguishing true righteousness from hollow pretenses.

This connects directly with Jesus' warnings in the Gospel about the destruction of the Temple, and the psalm's call for the earth to rejoice because the Lord comes to judge with justice. We do not need to fear the harvest if our lives are rooted in Him. Instead of living in anxiety over the future, the reading invites us to examine our current growth. What kind of fruit are we bearing in our daily lives? Live so that when the harvest arrives, your life is ripe with mercy, faith, and love.

Response: The Lord comes to judge the earth.

25 WED

Faith That Sings Through the Storm

Ordinary Weekday/ St Catherine of Alexandria

Rv 15: 1-4/ Ps 98: 1, 2-3ab, 7-8, 9/ Lk 21: 12-19

The readings today bring us face to face with a reality we often find difficult to accept: the journey of faith is not always a smooth one. In the Gospel, Jesus speaks plainly to his disciples about persecution, rejection and suffering. They will be handed over, questioned and even betrayed by those closest to them. Yet, in the midst of this difficult prediction, Jesus gives them a beautiful assurance: "Not a hair of your head will be lost. By your perseverance you will secure your lives."

The first reading gives us a glimpse of those who have passed through the storm and now stand victorious before God. They sing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb. Their song is significant because it is not the song of people who never suffered; it is the song of people who remained faithful through suffering. Their victory did not come from avoiding the trials of life but from persevering through them with faith. Perhaps we sometimes imagine that a faithful Christian should have a life without difficulties. Jesus, however, promises us neither a life without suffering nor a journey without opposition. Instead, he promises his presence and the grace to remain faithful. Even our moments of struggle can become opportunities to give witness to our faith. Jesus tells his disciples, "I myself shall give you an eloquence and a wisdom." We do not always have to know exactly how to face persecutions. When the moment comes, God will give us the grace we need. Our task is simply to remain faithful. There may be moments when we feel misunderstood, rejected or discouraged. There may be situations in which doing what is right seems harder than remaining silent. At such moments, let us remember the witnesses in Revelation who now sing before the throne of God. Their song reminds us that suffering does not have the final word. The Christian journey is ultimately a journey towards that song of victory. Therefore, when life becomes difficult, let us not give up, but trust that every trial endured with faith becomes a testimony of God's grace.

Response: Great and wonderful are all your works, Lord, mighty God!

26 THU

Serve the Lord with Gladness

Ordinary Weekday

Rv 18: 1-2, 21-23; 19: 1-3, 9a/ Ps 100: 1b-2, 3, 4, 5/ Lk 21: 20-28

God's word is always soothing and full of promises and hope. Today's scripture reading reminds us to look beyond the troubles and uncertainties of this world and place our hope firmly in God. In the first reading, the Book of Revelation presents the fall of Babylon, symbolising the collapse of human pride, corruption, and everything that stands against God. The heavenly multitude rejoices because God's justice has prevailed. The message is clear: whatever appears powerful in this world is temporary, but God's kingdom endures forever.

In the Gospel, Jesus speaks about distress, fear, and the shaking of nations. Yet His message does not end in fear. He says, "Stand erect and raise your heads because your redemption is at hand." The Christian attitude is therefore not despair but courageous hope. Even when life seems uncertain, Christ remains Lord of history.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that Christian hope gives us confidence in God's promises and directs our hearts toward eternal life (CCC 1817–1821). It also reminds us that the Church will experience trials before Christ's final victory (CCC 675–677). Therefore, difficulties should not make us abandon our faith; rather, they can deepen our trust in Christ.

St. Therese of Lisieux teaches us to trust God with the simplicity of a child: "I will not remain inactive in Heaven; my desire is to continue working for the Church." Her life encourages us to remain faithful in small things while trusting God's greater plan. If each of us like St. Therese nurture the desire to live the gospel in our own personal lives, how beautifully would that bring about the kingdom of God wherever we are placed in our lives.

Therefore, today let us ask for the grace to remain faithful when we face difficulties. Like the psalmist let us serve the Lord with gladness, lift our heads and hearts in hope, and remember that Christ is our redemption and our eternal hope.

Response: Blessed are they who are called to the wedding feast of the Lamb.

27 FRI

God makes all things New

Ordinary Weekday

Rv 20: 1-4, 11 – 15, 21: 1-2/ Ps 84: 3, 4, 5-6a and 8a/ Lk 21: 29-33

The readings today invite us to look at life through the eyes of faith. In the first reading, John sees a vision of the final victory of God. Evil is finally defeated, and those who remained faithful to Christ share in his victory. Then John sees the judgment before God. Every person stands before him, and each one is judged according to his or her deeds. This reminds us that our choices have meaning and that we live before God. The reading then moves from judgment to a vision of hope. John sees a new heaven and a new earth. The old order has passed away, and the holy city, the new Jerusalem, comes down from heaven. God is bringing about something new. This is not simply a change in our surroundings; it is the fulfilment of God's desire to dwell with his people.

This vision speaks to our daily life. We often experience situations that seem broken and difficult to change. We may carry failures, wounds, fears and disappointments. At such moments, we can think that nothing will become new. But Revelation reminds us that God has the final word. He can bring newness even where we see endings. The Gospel gives us a simple image to help us understand this. Jesus points to the fig tree. When its leaves appear, we know that summer is near. In the same way, Jesus asks us to recognize the signs of God's presence and action. The Kingdom of God is not something distant. We are invited to notice how God is working in our lives and in the world around us.

Christian hope is not passive. It calls us to remain faithful and attentive. Jesus has assured us that His words will not pass away. When life becomes uncertain, we can hold to his promise. Today, let us ask ourselves: What is God inviting me to leave behind, and what newness is he bringing into my life? May we trust his promise, remain faithful in our daily duties, and become signs of the new creation through our love, forgiveness and faith.

Response: Here God lives among his people.

28 SAT

Stay Awake and Keep Hope Alive

Ordinary Weekday

Rv 22: 1-7/ Ps 95: 1-2, 3-5, 6-7ab/ Lk 21: 34-36

There are moments in life when we become tired of waiting. We pray, we hope, and we wonder when things will become better. Sometimes the future looks uncertain, and we are tempted to lose heart. Today's first reading gives us a beautiful picture of hope: the river of life flows from the throne of God, and the tree of life gives its fruit. It reminds us that God is leading His people towards life, healing, and peace. The world around us may not always look like this. We see suffering, broken relationships, fear, sickness, and disappointment. Yet God's promise remains. He is not finished with us. There is a life beyond what our eyes can see, and there is a future held safely in His hands.

Today's reading speaks of the river of life. A river keeps moving. It does not remain still. In the same way, God's grace continues to flow, even when we do not notice it. Sometimes we may feel spiritually dry and think that God is far away. But His grace may be quietly working within us, giving us strength to take one more step. The tree of life also speaks to us of nourishment. We cannot live without God any more than a tree can live without water. We need His word, His presence, and His love every day. When we remain close to Him, our hearts slowly become stronger, even in difficult seasons. The reading ends with a simple but powerful invitation: "Come, Lord Jesus." This is not only a prayer for the end of time. It can become our prayer every morning. Come, Lord, into my home. Come into my worries. Come into my family. Come into the places of my heart that I am afraid to open.

Today, let us not be afraid of tomorrow. We may not know what it will bring, but we know who holds tomorrow. God is faithful. Therefore, let us walk forward with courage, trusting that every step we take with Him is already leading us towards the fullness of life.

Response: Maranatha! Come, Lord Jesus!

29 SUN

Waiting for the Lord

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Is 63:16b-17,19b;64:2-7/ Ps 80:2-3,15-16,18-19/ 1 Cor 1:3-9/ Mk 13:33-37

There is something deeply human about waiting. We wait for people we love, for answers to our prayers, for difficult situations to change, and sometimes simply for life to become a little more certain. Yet waiting can be uncomfortable because it demands patience and trust. Human as we are, we often seek immediate answers, quick solutions and clear directions. God, however, does not always work according to our timetable. The readings today invite us to look at waiting not as a passive experience, but as a time of faith, hope and preparation.

The first reading expresses the longing of a people who are waiting for God to intervene. The prophet cries out, "You are our Father," and remembers that God is the one who has always been faithful to his people. Yet there is also a painful question: "Why do you make us wander from your ways?" It is the cry of a heart that feels distant from God and longs for him to return. There are moments in our own lives when we may feel the same. We pray, but God seems silent. We seek direction, but the path remains unclear. We wonder when things will change. The prophet teaches us that even in such moments, we can continue to cry out to God because our relationship with him is founded not merely on our feelings, but on his faithfulness.

The reading from Isaiah also gives us a beautiful image: "We are the clay, and you are our potter." These words remind us that God is still shaping us. The clay does not always understand what the potter is doing. It must remain in the hands of the one who knows what it can become. Perhaps some of the waiting periods in our lives are precisely such moments of being shaped. God may be working quietly within us, forming our character, deepening our trust and teaching us to surrender. Sometimes we become impatient because we cannot see what God is doing. Yet the absence of visible change does not mean the absence of divine action. Like the clay in the hands of the potter, we are invited to trust the hands that hold us.

St. Paul gives us another reason for hope. He reminds the Corinthians that God has already blessed them abundantly and

that they are not lacking in any spiritual gift as they wait for the revelation of Jesus Christ. Christian waiting, therefore, is never empty waiting. We wait with grace already given to us. God accompanies us even before we see the fulfilment of what we are hoping for. This is an important truth to remember: we may be waiting for something from God, but God is not waiting to begin loving us. His grace is already present and active in our lives.

The Gospel, however, adds an important dimension to this waiting. Jesus repeatedly tells his disciples: "Watch!" The master of the house may return at any time, and the servants must be found awake. Jesus does not tell us the exact hour of his coming. Instead, he asks us to remain attentive. Perhaps this is the real challenge of Christian waiting. It is possible to wait for something while becoming spiritually asleep. We can become so occupied with our routines, responsibilities and worries that we fail to notice God's presence in the ordinary moments of life. We can become so focused on tomorrow that we forget to live faithfully today. Advent reminds us to awaken again. The Lord is coming, but he is also already present among us.

To be watchful does not mean living in fear. It means living with awareness. It means recognising that every day offers opportunities to love, forgive, serve, pray and begin again. Advent, therefore, is not merely a season of calendars, candles and preparations for Christmas. It is an invitation to prepare the heart. We decorate our homes and prepare our celebrations, but the deeper preparation is interior. We are called to clear away whatever has become an obstacle to God's presence: resentment, selfishness, indifference, pride or excessive attachment to the things of this world. The Lord desires not simply a beautiful celebration, but a heart that is awake and ready to welcome him.

Therefore, as we begin this Advent journey, let us ask ourselves: What am I waiting for? And while I wait, how am I living? Am I allowing God to shape me, or am I resisting his hands?

Response: O God, bring us back; let your face shine on us, and we shall be saved.

30 MON

Go Forth and Proclaim

St ANDREW

Rom 10: 9-18/ Ps 19: 8, 9, 10, 11/ Mt 4: 18-22

Paul writes to the church in Rome, a mix of Jewish and Gentile believers wrestling with questions of identity and acceptance. Paul makes a declaration that this offer of salvation is for all people and reflects through the eyes of the Old Testament prophets. In the ancient world, identity was deeply tied to culture and religious heritage, but Paul says that God's kingdom is not built on such distinctions. Instead, anyone, no matter their background, past failures or social standing, who call on Jesus will be saved. But how will people believe if they have never heard about HIM? Hence the gospel must be preached and the mission of the church is to carry this good news to the ends of the earth. As individuals, we too have a responsibility to share the gospel with those who have not yet heard it. God has appointed us for this task. Let us commit ourselves today to being faithful messengers of God's good news.

When we confess Him as Lord, we belong to Him fully, completely and eternally. One of the features of the gospel of Matthew is its focus on discipleship. We see two sets of brothers whom Jesus calls to follow Him in this passage. Jesus is the one who calls. Jesus is the one who initiates the discipleship process. These ordinary men are called to do extraordinary things in the middle of their ordinary lives, thus to be his disciples. Leaving everything and following Jesus is the most important decision for the disciples. They left their jobs, they left their nets, they left their families, they left their priorities, they left their plans, they left their businesses, they left everything, to follow Jesus. Following Jesus means imitating Him, living a holy life, spending time with Him. Jesus chose these men and changed them forever. He chooses ordinary people, like us to be His modern-day disciples. We are called to serve Him through our loving service to our neighbours and cheerfully follow Him wherever He leads us, for Jesus does not call the qualified rather He qualifies the called!

Response: Their sound goes forth through all the earth.

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

Part V – Emergence of Public Penance in the Early Church

Introduction: The period between A.D. 100 and 250 was crucial in the historical development of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. During this time, the Church gradually developed an organized penitential discipline while maintaining its belief that Christ entrusted it with the authority to forgive sins (Jn 20:21–23; Mt 16:19; 18:18). Unlike today's private confession, the early Church emphasised public penance, particularly for grave sins committed after Baptism, which was regarded as the primary sacrament of forgiveness. The Church thus faced the pastoral challenge of upholding both God's mercy and the holiness of the Christian community.

I. Historical Background

By the beginning of the second century, Christianity had spread throughout the Roman Empire. Baptism was understood as the complete forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38; Rom 6:3–4), demanding a life of holiness. However, grave post-baptismal sins, such as apostasy, murder, adultery and idolatry, challenged both personal faithfulness and the holiness of the Church, prompting the development of formal penitential practices.

Regarded by the Church Fathers as new birth and spiritual cleansing, Baptism led some Christians to fear post-baptismal sin and even postpone receiving it until old age. This concern partly explains the severity of early public penance.

II. Emergence of Public Penance

The Church believed that Christ entrusted the apostles and their successors with the authority to forgive sins, especially as expressed in John 20:22–23: "Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them." When Christians committed grave sins after Baptism, the Church gradually developed a formal process of repentance known as **canonical or public penance**. Since grave sin wounded both the individual's relationship with God and the communion of the Church, reconciliation involved a journey of conversion rather than merely the pronouncement of absolution.

A. The Process of Public Penance

Unlike modern private confession, public penance was a prolonged process lasting months or years. Its principal stages were:

a. Confession of Grave Sin: The penitent acknowledged the grave sin before Church authorities and expressed sincere repentance.

b. Admission into the Order of Penitents: After assessing the penitent's sincerity, the bishop admitted the person into the *Ordo Paenitentium*, beginning a formal period of conversion.

c. External Signs of Repentance: Fasting, prayer, ashes, humble dress, kneeling and works of charity expressed repentance. Tertullian described this public manifestation of penance as *exomologesis* in *De Paenitentia*.

d. Exclusion from Eucharistic Communion: Penitents were generally denied Holy Communion until reconciliation, signifying the need to restore full communion with Christ and the Church.

e. Spiritual Guidance and Duration: Bishops and presbyters supervised the penitent's progress in prayer, humility and moral reform. The duration varied according to the gravity of the sin, the penitent's repentance and local discipline; reconciliation could sometimes be expedited when death was imminent.

f. Reconciliation by the Bishop: Upon completion of penance, the bishop reconciled the penitent through prayers and the laying on of hands, restoring full ecclesial communion and access to the Eucharist. Holy Thursday became associated with this rite in later centuries.

B. The Significance of Public Penance

The public character of early penance reflected four fundamental convictions:

- **Sin wounds the Church:** Grave sin affects not only the individual but also the Christian community.
- **Repentance requires conversion:** Genuine sorrow must be expressed through a transformed life.
- **The Church exercises Christ's authority:** Reconciliation is entrusted to the Church (Jn 20:22–23).

- **Forgiveness restores communion:** Reconciliation renews the sinner's relationship with God and the ecclesial community.

Thus, public penance was understood not merely as punishment but as a process of spiritual healing and restoration, uniting divine mercy with the call to holiness.

C. One Opportunity for Public Penance

A striking feature of early canonical penance was that it was generally permitted only once after Baptism for grave sins. Influenced by works such as *The Shepherd of Hermas*, many Christians understood public penance as a unique opportunity for post-baptismal reconciliation. This discipline emphasised the seriousness of Baptism and grave sin. However, the restriction concerned the Church's formal penitential discipline, not the limits of God's mercy or His willingness to forgive.

D. Purpose of Public Penance

Public penance aimed not merely at punishment but at genuine conversion, spiritual healing, and the restoration of communion with God and the Church. It also served as a visible witness to repentance, helping preserve the holiness and unity of the Christian community. Thus, public penance was a pastoral and medicinal process that expressed both God's mercy and the Church's ministry of reconciliation.

E. Historical Significance

The public penance of the second and early third centuries laid the foundations for the later Sacrament of Reconciliation. Despite its rigorous, communal nature, it contained elements recognisable in the modern sacrament: confession, contrition, ecclesial ministry, acts of penance, reconciliation and restoration to Eucharistic communion.

From the sixth century onwards, particularly through the influence of Irish monasticism, public penance gradually gave way to repeatable, private sacramental confession, which eventually developed into the practice familiar in the Catholic Church today.

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99. SEXUALITY

The word "sex" originates from its Latin term "sexus" which signifies state of being male or female. It is derived from the verb "secare" meaning "to cut" or "to divide" suggesting a concept of division in nature. The term was borrowed into English in the 14th Century initially referring to the binary classification of male and female. Over time it's meaning expanded to encompass the biological and sexual aspects associated with this classification.

Sexuality and Spirituality

Spirituality plays a significant role in shaping attitudes towards sexuality, influencing people's beliefs, practices, and moral codes regarding sex. Views on human sexuality can vary widely among different religions, ranging from negative connotations to seeing sex as the highest expression of the divine. Let's explore the influence of religion on sexual decision-making and its impact on marital satisfaction.

Moral Codes on Sexuality

Most major religions have developed moral codes that regulate sexual activity and influence people's sexual practices and interests. These moral codes often differentiate between sexual activities for reproduction and those solely for pleasure when evaluating morality. For example, Abrahamic religions endorse a patriarchal and heteronormative approach towards human sexuality.

Religious teachings and doctrines provide guidelines and principles that individuals consider when making decisions about their sexual behaviour. Followers often seek to align their actions with the teachings of their faith, which may include abstaining from premarital sex, practicing monogamy, or following specific guidelines for sexual conduct in relationships. These religiously influenced sexual decision-making processes can impact individuals' relationships, personal values, and overall well-being.

Sexuality and Marriage

Spirituality can also influence marital satisfaction, though with varying effects. Among married older adults, religion is

largely unrelated to sexual frequency and satisfaction. However, religious integration in daily life has a weak but positive association with pleasure from sex. This suggests that the role of spirituality in marital satisfaction extends beyond sexual aspects, encompassing broader religious engagement and spirituality. Research indicates that religiosity or spirituality can shape sexual attitudes and behaviour, even after marriage. Religious individuals are less likely to engage in certain sexual behaviours, such as thinking about sex, masturbating, or having multiple partners. These behaviours align with the moral codes and teachings of their respective religious traditions. Religiosity tends to become increasingly important as people age, and it may influence sexual decision-making and satisfaction. However, it's worth noting that the impact of religion on sexual attitudes and behaviour can vary among individuals and communities, as interpretations and practices within religious traditions can differ. Understanding the role of religion in shaping sexual attitudes can provide insights into the complexities of human sexuality and the diverse perspectives that exist across different religious contexts. It is important to approach this topic with sensitivity and respect for the beliefs and values of individuals from various spiritual and religious backgrounds.

Sexuality and Spirituality

Sexuality and spirituality intersect in various ways across different belief systems. Let's take a closer look at how different religions and traditions approach the concept of spirituality at tandem with sexuality. Views on human sexuality vary widely among different religions, from negative connotations to seeing sex as the highest expression of the divine. Major religions have developed moral codes that regulate sexual activity and influence people's sexual practices and interests.

Abrahamic Religions

Abrahamic religions, such as Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, endorse a patriarchal and heteronormative approach towards human sexuality These religions often emphasize procreation and view sex within the context of marriage. Sexual acts outside of marriage may be considered sinful or immoral, while sexual intimacy within a marital relationship is seen as a sacred bond between partners.

Eastern Religions

Eastern religions, including Hinduism and Buddhism, approach sexuality and spirituality from a different perspective. In these traditions, sexual energy is seen as a powerful force that can be harnessed for spiritual growth and personal transformation. The practice of sacred sexuality is rooted in Eastern traditions such as Tantra and Taoism.

St. Paul on Sexuality

Paul talks about sex in several different ways across his letters. Sometimes he discusses sexual practices in detail. Sometimes he just alludes to specific sexual practices or sexual immorality generally. Paul also includes Greek terms connected to sex in a list of vices that describe the immoral behaviour of those who do not display faith in God.

It is often difficult—if not impossible —to determine exactly what sexual practices Paul refers to. When Paul talks about "flesh"or "desire," for instance, his use of these ideas tend to suggest uncontrolled sexuality. When Paul says to avoid porneia (frequently translated "sexual immorality"), he could be referring specifically to sex work (Cfr. 1 Cor 6.9). However, in the first century AD, Romans like Paul used porneia to refer to all sorts of sexual practices they deemed abnormal and un-Roman—much like some people do with terms like "prostitution" today. Other terms—like arsenkoitai and malakoi in 1 Cor 6.9 or para phusin in Rom 1.26–27—seem to refer to specific sexual practices or preferences, but scholars disagree on exactly what those are. Translation frequently obscures what Paul says or does not say about sex and creates anti-LGBTQ+ interpretations.

Whatever the terms mean, Paul's discussions of sexuality respond to specific situations happening among his audiences. For instance, Paul harshly condemns the Corinthians for including in their assembly a man who takes his father's wife and tells his audience they should "hand him over to Satan for his flesh's ruin" (see 1Cor 5.1–5). In 1Cor 7.1–16 and 1Cor 7.25–40, Paul argues that people should remain celibate and single if possible. However, if anyone cannot control their sexual desires, then they should get married. Paul tells married folks that they should not remain celibate if either partner desires sex. This

sexual advice is rooted in the apocalyptic orientation of his broader theology. Paul believes that God's justice will arrive on earth during his lifetime. He considers his theology and sexual ethics as temporary measures during this delay.

Sexuality and Catholicism

Catholics believe that sexuality has a fundamental purpose, decreed by God: procreation. Many Christians — who are fully willing to abide by what the Bible teaches — do not understand why the Bible teaches what it does about sex, even if they accept that it teaches certain things that have been normative in Christian cultures, to more-or-less degrees. They have no clue why certain things are prohibited, and other things required. Moreover, having never been taught, many do not even dimly understand the distinctive Catholic teachings on sex, such as the prohibition of contraception.

Likewise, secularists and atheists and agnostics who ultimately don't care what the Bible teaches, because they deny that it is revelation, and believe various myths about its nature and origins, want to hear non-biblical, non-religious secular, purely logical rationales for why we believe that certain sexual activities are wrong. This is my task as an apologist.

The Catholic Church teaches that it is a grave sin to deliberately separate sexuality from procreation, because the latter is its most essential purpose. God created sex for this purpose, and for unity. Within its proper sphere, marriage between a man and a woman, he also established that spouses should experience pleasure and enjoyment. He created it for the deep fulfilment of human beings. Whatever is prohibited by Him is meant to foster this fulfilment, not to make people miserable and "incomplete", etc. We believe that when people follow the design that God has for sexuality, that they are the happiest, and that families and society prosper and flourish as a result (and indeed, this is sociologically demonstrable). To the extent that they do not follow the guidelines, the opposite will be the result.

Catholic sexuality is not anti-woman, anti-pleasure, anti-homosexual (persons), anti-natural desire. That is how it's too often construed, because its nature or rationale isn't properly comprehended. God isn't against sex. He invented

it. He described our relationship to Him as like a marriage. In minimally graphic language, the Catholic view is that complete sexual fulfilment (including pleasure, which is not forbidden) must occur in the act of love with one's spouse of the opposite sex: that one is committed to for life, and that the couple must be open to life and possible conception. Sexual acts engaged in, apart from this circumstance are wrong and sinful.

Contraception (deliberately thwarting a possible conception and engaging in sexuality under those circumstances) is wrong because it has an essentially "contra-life will": it insists on separating what ought not be separated (sexuality from possible conception or being "open" to conception).

There are innumerable intricacies of sexuality in the modern world. To understand and accept people of vulnerabilities should be a priority of the Catholic Church. Jesus never rejected anyone in his company, because the Son of man came to call back the sinners and not the righteous (Cfr. Mt 18.11; Lk 5.32; Rm 5.8).

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"Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize, that is to say, in order to preach and teach, to be the channel of the gift of grace, to reconcile sinners with God, and to perpetuate Christ's sacrifice in the Mass, which is the memorial of His death and glorious resurrection."

EVANGELII NUNTIANDI 14

Dear Subscriber,

Greetings of peace and gratitude from the *'Springs of Living Water'* editorial team.

First and foremost, we want to sincerely thank you for your faithful support and encouragement over the years. Your commitment has kept *'Springs of Living Water'* flowing into homes and hearts, nourishing many with reflections and inspiration.

As you are aware, times have changed rapidly. With rising printing and distribution costs and a decline in subscriptions, continuing the magazine in its current printed form has become increasingly difficult. After much prayer, discussion, and discernment, our editorial team has decided that the **November 2026 issue will be the final printed edition** of *'Springs of Living Water'*.

From December 2026 onwards, with the new Liturgical year, we will continue to share *'Springs of Living Water'* digitally. This will allow us to reach more readers, reduce costs, and remain faithful to our mission of spreading reflections and inspiration in a sustainable way.

We are aware that some of you have subscribed for longer periods. Please be assured that your subscription will be honored in full through digital delivery. You will continue to receive every issue without interruption, and we are committed to making the digital format accessible and reader-friendly.

We deeply value your trust and companionship on this journey. While the medium changes, the message remains the same: to bring living water to thirsty souls. We hope you will continue to walk with us in this new chapter.

With heartfelt thanks and blessings,

The Editorial Team

'Springs of Living Water'

Echoes of Magisterium

"Christ, the final Adam, by the revelation of the mystery of the Father and His love, fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear."

GAUDIUM ET SPES 22



This profound statement from *Gaudium et spes* 22, expresses the Christian understanding of the human person in the light of Christ. By calling Jesus the "final Adam," the Second Vatican Council presents Him as the fulfilment and renewal of humanity. In Christ, God does not merely reveal who He is; He also reveals who the human person truly is. Through His life, teaching, suffering, death and resurrection, Christ shows that the human person is created for communion with God and for self-giving love. Christ therefore reveals humanity's dignity, purpose and destiny. Our supreme calling is not merely earthly success, power or self-fulfilment, but participation in divine life through love. In knowing Christ, we come to understand both God's love for us and the deepest meaning of our own existence.

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SAINTS OF GOD

Made of the same clay as we
How they rose to sanctity!
By God's most amazing grace
They rose from a fallen race.

Purified from sin by pain,
Endless glory they attain
Let us try to emulate
And their virtue imitate.

So shall we become like them
In the New Jerusalem
Sharing the glory of God –
Who Himself is their reward.

- **Rev. Fr Paul D'Souza, OCD**
(for daily liturgical poems visit
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