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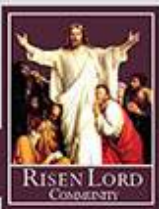


# ON OUR KNEES IN HIS HANDS



## PENTECOST

Sunday, 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2021



DAILY READINGS & REFLECTIONS

Volume 21  
Issue 05



# ON OUR KNEES IN HIS HANDS

MAY  
2021

The Eucharist is the bread that gives strength... It is at once the most eloquent proof of His love and the most powerful means of fostering His love in us. He gives Himself every day so that our hearts as burning coals may set afire the hearts of the faithful.

**Father Damien**

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# On Our Knees In His Hands

## MAY 2021

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## Saturday May 1

Feast of St. Joseph the Worker

*Love's labour is not lost*

Genesis 1:26-23

Ps 90: 24, 12-16

Matt 13: 54-58

Today's first reading speaks about how the Jews and converts to Judaism follow Paul and Barnabas, so that the following Sabbath just about the whole city turns out to hear them. However, some of the Jewish leaders start opposing their message.

How frequently have you received an invite to a party or an event and the card asked you to RSVP? Sometimes the invite even includes a self-

addressed, stamped card to make it easy for you to reply. Have you always responded promptly? Sometimes as easy as the host has made it, the recipients fail to answer, indicating whether they are coming or not. However, most people who are invited to an event do reply to the invite to let the sender know how many people to plan for. In the same way, God has sent each person an invite to enjoy eternal life with him. Some people select to discard this gracious invite, some delay in answering to it, and some are inspired to accept this no-obligation invite.

In today's Gospel proclamation, our Lord Jesus is telling his disciples that if they know him, they also know his Father. Jesus then tells them that when they see Him, they also see his Father! Philip then speaks up and asks Jesus to "show" them his Father. Then they will believe in what Jesus is saying! Jesus would have been severely saddened by Philip's need for proof. Philip had been with him a long while but clearly, he still did not totally trust Jesus. He needed to see the evidence for himself.

How frequently do we ask Jesus for evidence? At times, we also need Jesus to send us a sign that clearly he is with us! Then we will "know." Faith and trust are hard in our human relationships and possibly even more so in our connection with God! At least, with human beings we can see, hear and talk with them. We see their facial expressions and their body language whereas faith and trust in Jesus is challenging, especially during trying times. At these times, I want and need to have a physical sense that God is with me. And often, we are given a symbol of some sort! Nonetheless, most times we merely have to trust that Jesus is with us these gifts of trust, hope and strength allowing us to open our mind and heart to "seeing" him.!

**Prayer: Thank you Abba Father for bringing order into the church, your community of faith. Thank you for our leaders. Thank you also that even when individual leaders move on, you do not leave us without direction. Amen**

## Sunday May 02

5th Sunday of Easter

*The Lord says - "Remain in me just as I remain in you."*

Acts 9: 26-31

Ps 22: 26-32

1 John 3: 18-24

John 15: 1-8

Often we hear this comment where a person says that he or she knows of someone who is good and therefore God blesses such people and they will definitely go to heaven. But the fact is God is not calling us to be just good but is wanting a deeper relationship with us which is more participatory and beneficial. He reveals to us the truth that without Him we are nothing... almost left for dead.

In today's Gospel proclamation which is one of my favourites, we are shown various roles and the importance of them in our lives. Our Lord Jesus clearly states that His Father and our Heavenly Father is the vine dresser and our Lord Jesus is the vine.

Let us keep that clear in our minds and hearts that God the Father is the vine dresser, active and always at work. He is not a tired, grumpy old man but one who is labouring over this giant vine. And this vine is our Lord Jesus.

Now where are we? Our Lord clearly states that we are the branches of this vine. Imagine, our connection is supposed to be so close and intimate with our Lord who is the vine. What is the vine? The whole plant is called the Vine and not the tip or the roots. We are the branches in this tremendously long vine. We are aware that when a branch is snapped off the main body of the vine, it slowly begins to wilt and the leaves lose their colour and vitality, finally fluttering into the breeze.

Our Lord Jesus explains to us the action of the Father that He breaks off branches that do not bear fruit and prunes branches that they may bear even more fruit. We are constantly monitored by the loving gaze of the Father who is constantly showing us His concern. Every leaf while using sunlight to convert energy into food by way of photosynthesis receives life giving sap from the roots of the vine. The vine provides that sap or energy that allows the branch and leaves to stick out and bathe in the warmth of the sunlight. The result is that the branch begins to bear fruit.. not through the action of the sunlight alone but from the sap that flows into it from the main vine. Hence we

need to remember that we may be talented and may possess gifts but the life giving sap or Holy Spirit flows into us through the person of our Lord Jesus and thus we are able to bear fruit. Our Lord tells us clearly Live in me and I will live in you. Without living in the Lord we cannot bear fruit. We are reminded that apart from God we cannot bear much fruit. A life in God opens us up to the wonders of God. He provides the words to preach and he brings in the people.

When we remain in God and in His word, we begin to have clarity and it's only then that our prayers and requests have wisdom and a balance in them so much so that we ask and we receive. It is then that the Father is glorified.

The second reading teaches us how to remain in God. We are told that when we love, we may calm our conscience in His presence so that every time it reproaches us we can say - God is greater than our conscience and He knows everything. This in itself is wisdom. We move towards a complete confidence in God and then we receive what we ask for. We then live in love and belief in our Lord Jesus, we begin to remain in God and He lives in us.

This was the experience of Saul. After his conversion people still distrusted him and lived in fear of Him. But the word says that Saul now Paul began to live with them. He did not remain exclusive or isolated. He began to love and forgive those who mistrusted him till they reached a point where they saw his efforts and zeal. He knew that people also belonged to the Vine and he remained in this vine of the Lord Jesus and the people. It is said that the Church lived in peace. The eyes of the church were fixed on the Lord and filled with comfort from the Holy Spirit.

Our call today is to ascertain where we stand. Are we behaving like the gardener or the vine itself? Are we already dead and thrown to every passing wind? Or are we attached to the Vine, receiving life giving sap from it and bearing much fruit. Let us take time to repeat these words which say, 'Remain in me and I will remain in you.' It is quite normal for us to Remain in ourselves and remain in our world. But our new call is to shift from our world and entanglements to the Vine of our Saviour Jesus. He is waiting to give us a drink of life giving sap . He is waiting to revive us and give us life. Let us choose to remain in Him as He remains in us.

**Prayer: Abba Father, reveal to me where I really am. Let me shift from independence to total dependence in you that I may have life. Amen**

## Monday May 03

### Feast of Sts Philip & James. Apostles

*I am the way the truth and the life John 14: 6*

1Cor15: 1-8

Psalms 19: 2-5

John 14: 6-14

Nothing in history parallels the event of a Man put to death in a deeply humiliating and disgraceful manner, rising again. History itself has been changed and time itself is measured according to the birth of our Lord Jesus. It is this good news that Paul exhorts the Corinthians to hold on to receive salvation. He speaks of his appearing to James who became the head of the Church

and to Philip who had the privilege of being led to preach to a man who was a non-Jew. This non-Jew was the first of such to receive the good news.

Today, we celebrate the feast of these two great apostles. As for Paul, his dramatic encounter with the Risen Lord, transformed him completely from being a persecutor of Christians, to one championing the cause of Christianity. His brilliant invaluable treasures revealed in his letters became the foundation on which the universal church is built.

Even the disciples, found it difficult to understand and truly follow him even after having been WITH him for three and a half years. But after the feast of Pentecost with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, they fulfilled the promise Jesus gave them of accomplishing more than his own ministry. (John 14:12) Our Lord Jesus had 12 apostles and few thousand followers but with the experience of being IN Christ at the feast of Pentecost, the apostles conquered the world for Christianity. With Peter preaching the death and resurrection of Jesus, 3000 followers were won and later 5000 followers.

We too can have this same experience, if we open ourselves to the move of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said I AM the way, not one who showed the way, the Truth - not one who teaches ABOUT the truth but the very embodiment of the Truth. To know Jesus personally is to have a new meaning in life; lifting us from the mundane to a transcendental experience that touches the divine. He lives in us and we need to experience His presence to follow Him. How have we valued this gift? Let us strive to encounter Him in a deeper way.

**Prayer: Abba Father, Lord I look forward to the mighty anointing of the Holy Spirit this Pentecost. Amen**

Acts 14: 19-28

Ps 145: 10-13, 21

John 14: 27-31

In the first reading we come to the final description of the first missionary journey of Paul and Barnabas. With the courage that so often marks his actions, Paul went back into the town but the next day with Barnabas he moved on to Derbe, their last stop on this journey. Derbe was a border town in the south-eastern part of the Lycaonian region of Galatia. Here the two missionaries again proclaimed the Gospel and made “a considerable number of disciples”.

Paul must have been quite an impressive preacher, judging by his success in all the towns in which he spoke. One wonders if his being a Pharisee did not have an influence on his Jewish listeners, although it is clear that it also had a negative impact. If a devout Pharisee could be converted to the Way of Jesus, then maybe there was something in it. At the same time, others would see him as a total renegade to his Jewish faith. Paul “put fresh heart into the [newly-converted] disciples”. He preached and warned them of the trials and difficulties that they could expect to face – just as he did. This was a necessary condition to enter the kingdom. On their return to Antioch, the two apostles gave a complete report of their mission experiences and spoke of how God “had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles” and how well they had accepted the message of the Gospel.

In the Gospel proclamation as our Lord Jesus prepares to leave his disciples, he knows that they are fearful and upset and they will be all the more so when they see what people will soon be doing to him. His farewell, then, includes a gift of peace. ‘Peace!’ (Shalom) is the normal Jewish greeting and farewell and Jesus uses it when he appears to his disciples after the Resurrection. But it is not the peace as the ‘world’ understands it. Peace for Jesus is not simply the absence of violence. It is something much more positive, much deeper. Paradoxically, it can exist side by side with times of great turmoil. It is something internal, not external. It comes from an inner sense of security, of a conviction that God is with us and in us right place.

**Prayer: Abba Father, thank you for the Holy Spirit the revelation of true Peace, Joy, Love, Kindness, in our hearts. Amen**



Acts 15: 1-6

Ps 122: 1-5

John 15: 1-8

Israel in the Old Testament has been depicted as a vineyard which has failed to produce good fruit. The vines of this vineyard overtime had become corrupt, wild & useless. It began as the choicest vine of the Lord and over the years it degenerated itself to be this wild vine which bears no good fruit. With this in the hindsight our Lord Jesus declares this priceless truth that He is the true vine.

He takes the place of Israel as only through Him not only Israel but the whole of humankind can produce good fruit. Our Lord Jesus also tells us that God the Father is the owner, the gardener of this vineyard. It also tells us that He and the father are inseparable. Not only is He connected to the Father but also that the father has the authority to plant, prune, harvest & enjoy the good fruits that are produced. How much does the Father love us? How much does our Lord want to keep us connected to Him.

Have we not failed in so many things in our lives? Failed in our roles as parents, children, professionals and often wondered why? When life, circumstance, environment knocks us down we run into the church or a prayer meeting. Those who go to church may kneel & make a vow, those who come to a prayer meetings cry their hearts out at a worship, repent and find consolation & peace only to be lost in the next turn & wonder why this keeps going on. Our Lord Jesus has spoken & His words are clear, He says that "apart from Him we can do nothing". He does not say that we will not do anything, we will & we sure have. But often He was not consulted, we did not listen to His leading and most things done without Him will only produce corrupt, wild & useless fruits. But our Lord does not want us to stumble & fall. Our failure to produce good fruit does not please God our father. Therefore, our Lord is inviting us to be connected to Him like branches to the vine. To be connected to Him, His words must remain in us & we must connect to Him daily and build an intimate relationship. Then He guarantees that we will bear much fruit which is pleasing to God our Father.

**Prayer: Abba Father, grant me the grace to be connected to Our Lord Jesus who is the true vine & bear good fruits which are pleasing to you. Amen**

## Thursday May 6

### 5th Week of Easter

*'As the Father loved me, so have I loved you, abide in my love.'*

Acts 15: 7-21

Ps 96: 1-3, 10

John 15:9-11

When God works in some one's life, that person shines like a star amid a darkened world. To grasp the love God has for us, it is essential to understand the love the Father has for the Son., for it is the same love – Gods love for His son is eternal- it neither begins with the incarnation of Christ nor ends with the Resurrection. Jesus was with the Father from the beginning and was the

first object of his love. John1:1-2, 17:24.

Jesus loves us with a love that gives everything it possesses and keeps nothing for itself- the Father and Son are one in that love. In the first reading in the Acts of the Apostles, St. James finally supports the fact that there should not be any hindrance to the Gentiles being admitted into the church -accepting Jews and gentiles as one. This is experience Jesus transmitted to the apostles breaking through the traditional rules by the law of love which fulfils the law itself.

St. John in his Gospel is explicit on the theme of love, that takes over our own lives when the risen Lord comes to abide in us. However, unless we keep the commandments, we cannot expect the Lord to abide in us. Today there is so much confusion and dissatisfaction in the world about what God is doing. So much chaos. Material success seems to be the main yardstick that measures progress. Most people are running after a mirage that does not give them the happiness they are looking for- Peace Joy and love.

Once I too thought I could create Heaven on earth in doing things right- working towards success- satisfying all around me-earning a good name. None of this was bad as I saw it and expected God to be pleased with me and continue to bless me as He should. Unconsciously, I was on my own ego trip, until the foundations of my life came crashing down, and I lost the very thing I was building as my own. All the material success meant nothing – I realized the empty shallow ideals I had. Looking at Jesus on the cross, I saw the Savior of my soul- the selfless love of the Father and Son – I was so much a part of it- he was alive. As He lives in me, I am fulfilled-complete. My life took a whole new meaning. This was my resurrection.

You are love itself. So, the soul who follows your truth and teaching in love, becomes through love another you. Dispossessed of her own will, she is so well clothed in you that she neither seeks nor desires anything but what you seek and will for her. (Saint Catherine of Siena)

**Prayer: Abba Father, Lord Jesus thank you for your selfless love!**

Acts 15:22-31

Ps57:8-12

John 15:12-17

Our Lord Jesus said, “This is my commandment: love one another as I love you.” The command to love one another was not new, but the standard of what that love was to be was new. The key word in the phrase is not only “love” but “as”. In other words, love is modeled after someone; it has been defined by someone: God in the person of Jesus.

Our Lord Jesus changed the standard of that love for others from a person’s own innate selfishness (“as yourself”) to His own example of love for them (“as I have loved you”). This love Jesus demonstrated to His disciples was far beyond the love that humans normally show to one another being greater in scope, depth, patience and commitment. One of the special marks of favour shown in the scriptures is to be called the friend of God. Abraham is called the friend of God (Isaiah 41:8). God speaks with Abraham as a man speaks with his friend (Exodus 33:11). Jesus, the Lord, in turn, calls the disciples his friends rather than his servants. What does it mean to be a friend of God? Friendship with God certainly entails a loving relationship which goes beyond mere duty and obedience.

The distinctive feature of Jesus’ relationship with his disciples was his personal love for them. He loved his own to the end (John 13:1). His love was unconditional and wholly directed to the good of others. His love was also sacrificial. He gave the best he had and all that he had. He gave his very life for those he loved, to secure for them everlasting life with the Father. The world’s version of Love is very different from God’s True love. True love is costly. A true lover gives the best he/she can offer and is willing to sacrifice everything he has for the beloved. God willingly paid the price for our redemption — the sacrifice of his only begotten Son. That is the nature of true friendship and love — the willingness to give all for the beloved. True friends will lay down their lives for each other. Jesus tells us that he is our friend and he loves us whole-heartedly and unconditionally. He wants us to love one another just as he loves us, whole-heartedly and without reserve. His love fills our hearts and transforms our minds and frees us to give ourselves in loving service to others. If we open our hearts to his love and obey his command to love our neighbor, then we will bear much fruit in our lives, fruit that will last for eternity.

**Prayer: Abba Father, Your word says –I am your friend and that you have chosen me, to bear fruit for your kingdom, May I relish in being loved by you, bearing fruit for your kingdom, your glory and Honor. Amen.**

Acts 16: 1-10

Ps 100: 1-5

John 15: 18-21

“I know I know O God, you chose my daughter/son as we presented her/him at baptism but just for this calling alone O Lord, could you choose someone else for the mission you have.”

Have you ever heard of that kind of a prayer from a parent or grandparent of a person who is genuinely thinking of dedicating oneself totally to bringing God to others the poor and marginalized

in a land far away and hostile to God?

Well without going that far, could you imagine an occasion where you have borne the pain for personally being rejected, isolated, hated or vilified because you stood firmly for the Lord's demands of his disciples? If you are struggling to search for such an occasion, then probably you have not been a true disciple of Christ in this world.

Whether we have had the pain of being rejected or still being loved by the world, all of us need to reflect on the Lord's words in the Gospel today: “If the world hates you, realize that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, the world would love its own; but because you do not belong to the world, and I have chosen you out of the world, the world hates you...” T

o those who have been rejected, isolated and mistreated, our Lord says; “No slave is greater than his master” “if they persecute me, they will also persecute you.” How heartening and encouraging it is to hear from our Lord that we are Christ-like in our suffering.

A slave is at the service of his master. How uplifting is the Lord's word that we have been at His service. It is the Lord who prepares us for such a challenge despite the rejection. So rely on his strength. For anyone who is yet to find rejection from the world should then just try to live the command of the Lord; “Love as I have loved you!”

In a world full of selfishness, divisions and discrimination, you will find the world hating you. Please know then it makes you more like Christ.

**Prayer: Abba Father, though your Son my persecuted Lord, take me out of this world and make me more like yourself. Amen.**

Acts 10: 25-26, 34-48

Ps 98: 1-4

1 John 4: 7-10

John 15: 9-17

I always wondered why the Lord Jesus told His disciples, and everyone else who He called to serve: “You did not choose me, but I chose you”. His disciples left their professions, their families and joined His ministry the moment they heard His words “come follow me”. When we encountered the Lord Jesus, we too left our old lives, old ways and started following Him. Of course, we constantly get distracted, get caught up or emotionally hijacked. Sometimes we even lose our way but we always long for His presence and eventually return to Him. Then, why did the Lord Jesus say, “you did not choose me, but I chose you”.

Supposing the Lord Jesus said, “I did not choose you, you chose me” what would that mean to us? It would mean He has not chosen us, but we have decided to follow Him. It would be us who take the risks or accept the challenges of that decision. We have seen this aspect in human relationships, if not in our own families at least in families that we know. One would say “you married me knowing I had this problem or this weakness, so you have to deal with the consequences”. Getting back to the words of the Lord, I believe when He said, “You did not choose me, but I chose you” He is turning the tables. He is telling us, because I chose you, I take the responsibility for your lives. I know your weaknesses and all the baggage you bring with you, but I take you where you can never go by yourself.

Even though the Lord Jesus chose us, He did not take away our free will. An example is Judas Iscariot. He was chosen by the Lord, but Judas chose another path. Then we have St. Peter, who denied the Lord at a crucial point. Yet, because he repented and returned to the Lord, his life took a different turn. It is up to us to say “yes” to His calling through the surrender of our lives. To those who have decided to give their lives to the Lord, He says that when the going gets tough I will strengthen you. When you come to a dead end, I will open doors for you in places you never expected. When you are going through spiritual dryness, I will sustain you. When the decisions you made give you results that you did not expect, I will turn them into blessings.

The Lord in His next words explain the reason why He has chosen us; “I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last”. When we look at nature, we do not see trees

striving to bear fruit. They just remain rooted in the soil, absorbing the nutrients and the water it needs, and allow the natural process to take over. As a result, they bear fruit. When we stay connected to Him, rooted in His words, His life will flow through us. Our lives become meaningful and a blessing to others.

We have heard through the CRL teachings that when we do little things God will do great things through us. When we make the Lord Jesus the center of our lives, and we make the mission He has given us the purpose of our lives, the supernatural life of God flows into our lives and to those around us. The Lord Jesus's words in today's Gospel confirms this; "and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you". When we pray the Lord answers our prayers. Signs, wonders and miracles become the norm. The impossible happens in our lives and through our lives.

Maybe we have been caught up in our circumstances, being distracted with what is happening around us. Today, the word of the Lord in the Gospel enters our lives carrying the power to fulfill its purpose. The Lord Jesus has chosen me and appointed me to bear fruit. As I open my heart to His word today the lies that I have been believing are shattered. The distractions that have taken me away from the mission come to light and I am given a second chance to give my life to the Lord in complete surrender. Just like a tree draws nutrients by being rooted into the soil, I draw the life of the Risen Christ through His words; I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last.

The world is replete with stories of people touched by the Lord's love and whose lives were transformed. I happened to see a hard bound book that documented some of New York's famous crime cases. In this sort of book the story of a famous artifact thief was shared where he would break into top Museum's and steal priceless works of art. After many such run-ins with the law he was put into jail and there his life was transformed. It is said that later he became a Pastor with a gifted jail ministry, visiting prisons across the length and breadth of the US, sharing his experience of the love of God. God is always waiting to give us a second chance and with Him all things are possible.

**Prayer: Abba Father, give me the grace to constantly stay rooted in the words of my Lord Jesus Christ. May His life flow through me to my family and to those who are around me. Amen**

## Monday May 10

St. Damien of Molokai, priest

*The Spirit of truth will set you free*

Acts 16: 11-15  
Ps 149: 1-9  
John 15: 26, 16:4

In response to a vision that St. Paul had, he and his companions went to Macedonia. The Lord Jesus was with them, beside them and behind them with a driving power. They went to continue their work of turning the world upside down in the name of the Lord Jesus. Nothing could stop St. Paul from preaching the Good News once he

was assured of the Holy Spirit's leading. There was no Synagogue there, but he was content to sit by the bank of the river and preach to the women gathered there. Surely, it was the prompting of the Holy Spirit that made Lydia, obviously a person of high rank to invite St. Paul and his companions to her house. She is described as a dealer in purple cloth, rich and powerful. When the Spirit moves, He opens doors that are closed to accomplish His mission. Lydia and her family were the first fruits of St. Paul's labour.

Today's Gospel proclamation speaks about how the Lord Jesus consoles His disciples by telling them that after He ascends to the Father the Holy Spirit will be sent to give divine power to them. He asked them to remain in Jerusalem till the Holy Spirit comes and then they would receive power to do greater miracles, signs, and wonders. Just before the ascension of our Lord Jesus, He told them they must first witness to Him in Jerusalem then in Samaria and then in all of Judea. Suffering and persecution would come in the wake of proclaiming the Good News. The Lord Jesus warns them not to abandon the mission entrusted to them.

What does this mean to me? Today's readings challenge me to see how far I am prepared to go to witness for the Lord Jesus. I may not have to face death, but I am asked to act in such a way that others will be attracted to the kingdom. Our Jerusalem is our family, church, and community. Every time I react in anger, selfish ways, refuse to forgive or love others, I realise I fail to live up to my calling. But, if I spend time with the Holy Spirit, He will cleanse my soul and redeem me.

**Prayer: Abba Father, cleanse, heal and redeem me through the power of Your Spirit that I may be a witness to your great love. Amen!**

Acts 16: 22-34

Ps 138: 1-8

John 16: 5-11

Paul and Silas were stripped, beaten, and placed in stocks in the inner cell. I wondered what these "Stocks" were? Until I found out, Stocks were made of two boards joined with iron clamps, leaving holes just big enough for the ankles. The prisoner's legs were placed across the lower board, and then the upper board was closed over them. Sometimes both wrists and ankles

were placed in stocks. Paul and Silas, who had committed no crime and who were peaceful men, were put in stocks designed for holding the most dangerous prisoners in absolute security. Despite this dismal situation, they praised God, praying and singing as the other prisoners listened.

Paul and Silas's reputation in Philippi was well known. When the jailer realized his condition and need, he risked everything to find the answer. The Good News of salvation is simply expressed: Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved. When we recognize Jesus as Lord and trust in him with our entire life, salvation is assured to us.

Paul and Silas took the family unit seriously. So, the offer of salvation was made to the jailer's entire household family and servants. Yet it was not the jailer's faith that saved them; they all needed to come to Jesus in faith and believe in him in the same way the jailer had. His entire family did believe, and all were saved.

No matter what our circumstances, we should praise God. Others may come to Christ because of our example. Pray that God will use you to introduce our Lord Jesus to your family and that they will come to believe in him.

When the CRL first began its mission it has just the key figures from families who were part of the prayer meetings but over time tis changed. Whenever a person was touched, a few years later the whole family would be drawn in and they would collectively experience the salvation of Christ. The promises is to you and your families.

**Prayer: Abba Father, use me to draw my family members and people I meet closer to you. Amen**



Acts 17: 15, 22-18:1

Ps 148: 1-14

John 16: 12-15

Today's gospel proclamation talks about what our Lord Jesus wants to reveal to us. But are we ready to listen? Sometimes we are so caught up in our own little worlds that we cannot seem to hear the voice of God in our lives. We only hear what we want to hear.

Often we go to God for favours or discernment. But we pray asking for our will to be his. If we truly try and listen we might often see that His voice says something contradictory to what we prayed for. Sometimes it may be totally unthinkable, that it may challenge the way we have lived our life or the truths that we have held on to. Sometimes what God wants from us may put us in the most difficult of situations. Just like the struggle of our Lord Jesus at Gethsemane. It is not easy to hear the voice of God and to follow it through, but nevertheless the Holy Spirit enables us to hear the truth and accept his will. By accepting His will in our lives we pave the way for redemption, for his glory to shine through. It may not be the easiest choice, it may bring out the most excruciating experience of our lives but yet it brings out the glory of God not in only our lives but in the lives of the people around us.

The first reading also shows how we often tend to keep God in our own little box, according to our own understanding. But St Paul reveals the love of God. A love and majesty we know nothing about. We hold on to our tiny little world with our own strength not willing to let go even for God. Not willing to accept the crucifixion. But if our Lord Jesus did not accept the will of the father in his life he could have walked away and held onto what he knew, his own understanding. And without the death of our Lord Jesus on the cross, there would be no resurrection.

Without a resurrection there is no salvation. Listening to the voice of God and accepting his will in our lives not only changes our lives but also the lives of our loved ones. So are ready to listen to His voice today

**Prayer: Abba Father, here I am speak to me today. Amen**

Acts 18: 1-8

Ps 98: 1-4

John 16: 16-20

When we have a relationship with our Lord Jesus who is alive, through prayer, receiving the sacraments and reading the word of God we begin to hear His voice leading and guiding us to spread His kingdom.

This calling can vary for each person. We also receive the boldness we need to carry out the direction the Lord gives us even though we may face rejection and become unpopular.

In the Gospel today, Lord Jesus reminds us that in this world we may have suffering and difficulties but it is all for the greater glory of God. This is very evident when we look at Lord Jesus on the cross: — when we look at the cross from the world or the human point of view — it seems to be an utter failure!

All the promises given to the Blessed Mother seem to have been all false. Everything that people had hoped for in their Savior and King has been silenced, defeated and nailed to a cross. — when we look at the cross from the other side or from the spiritual realm — the heart of the Father is shaken by the response of the Son of God! The power of the resurrection shatters death! Heaven is open! humankind and God connected!

Today if we look back at the promises God gave all have been fulfilled! He is King, He reigns forever above all! He is God most High! All the earth knows His name 'Jesus'. Let us then know that even though we may encounter challenges in life, such as, financial, relationship and sickness, our Father in Heaven sees and knows it all. He will use the responses we give to those around us of love, forgiveness, prayer and blessing for the greater glory, so that they too will experience God.

We must remember that the Lord chastises those whom He loves - meaning that He allows us to have suffering so that we may draw closer to Him. The suffering brings us to our knees that we will call upon His name with greater fear and awe... and experience His love.

**Prayer: Abba Father, we pray that you grant us the grace to live the example of Jesus, so that those around us may experience your great love. Amen**

Acts 1: 15-17, 20-26

Ps 113: 1-8

John 15: 9-17

Brothers and sisters in Christ, in the Holy Gospel today, our Lord Jesus invites us to a completely new relationship with him: an everlasting friendship, a one similar to what He had with His disciples. Do we still really feel the importance of this invitation? Or are we able to hold on to what our Lord Jesus is offering us here? The purpose of our Lord Jesus taking an earthly ministry of

a divine purpose is to introduce His loving Father to us. Not just to introduce but to help us build the same relationship with the Father to the same level He had with the Father. He became the best friend of His disciples and brought Heavenly Joy into their relationship with Him as confirmed in John 15:11, I have told you this so that my joy might be in you and your joy might be complete.

In today's world, the challenges that we are facing are perhaps suppressing the importance of this heavenly invitation. We have our daily jobs, chores, responsibilities, commitments, expectations from one end. On the other end, sailing through life is not as smooth as what we want it to be. Sickesses, frustrations, disappointments, failures are often trying to distract us from our journey with the Lord. Often these distractions can quite be challenging so we easily give up and the relationship with our Lord becomes cold and distant. We become slaves to our own selves and without knowing it our problems and challenges taking precedence over us.

Our Lord Jesus reminds all of us through John 15:16 "It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you". Bearing fruit counts towards one's endeavour to walk with God into eternal life. Our Lord needs us to bear fruit that remains in us. Loving one another as He did keeps us in Him. That is what enables us to share the divine friendship that is on offer. Are we ready to accept and makes him our best Friend?

**Prayer: Abba Father, we pray that we are able to accept your son's invitation to become a friend to Him and are able to bear fruit of divine inheritance so that we receive the eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen**

## Saturday May 15

St Isidore, farmer

*We have come from the Father and we must return to Him one day.*

Acts 18: 23-28

Ps 47: 2-10

John 16: 23-28

Imagine the privilege of being able to have Jesus by your side, in the flesh...to walk with Jesus, talk with Him, hold His hands, tell Him of all your concerns and witness Him performing miracles... The apostles had it all and in today's gospel proclamation, our Lord Jesus is preparing them for the inevitable: for the days to come when He will no more be there physically among them. Our

Lord does not plan to leave the apostles to their own devices and the reality remains the same for us today. We are not left alone to fend for ourselves in this complex world. Even though we cannot see Him nor sometimes feel Him, the assurance is that we can ask the Father in Jesus' name for whatever we may need, and it will be given to us.

These words bring great comfort and joy to us for we believe that Jesus' words are truth and life. However, even though His words never fail, often we find ourselves miserable, wanting and in need. Things we ask for, never seem to come our way. This controversy is due to our human nature. We ask for something, yet our hearts are not open to receive it, because we have allowed the world around us to consume us, fill us and overcrowd us. There is barely any space to accommodate anything else. We have set our eyes on valuables here on earth, we have forgotten that we have come from the Father and we must return to Him one day.

We are invited to live in this realisation, every moment of our lives, and then we will be able to fix our gaze on the right destination. As a result, our needs and wants will take a different turn and everything will fall into perspective. Then we will be inspired to ask for things according to the will of our Father and they will be given to us. Our Lord Jesus Christ made this even easier for us by coming to live in us in His resurrected glory and empowering us from within to lift our prayers and petitions through His most Holy name to the Father in heaven. Just as Apollos was open to learn the way of the Lord and in turn strengthened many believers, we are called to be blessed and be a blessing to the whole world.

**Prayer: Abba Father, whatever we ask of You, let it be according to Your Holy will. This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.**

Acts 1: 1-11

Ps 47: 2-9

Eph 4: 1-13

Mark 16: 15-20

The Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ, an awesome event the Church celebrates today, sets Christianity apart from all other religions and philosophies. Christianity is not a mere set of rules to live a “good” life here on earth, nor a profound philosophy to be mastered by the “wise thinkers” of the world. Then what is it? Let’s dive into today’s liturgy in the light of the Holy Spirit

and allow Him to seal this basic truth and foundation in our hearts.

In the Gospel proclamation our Lord Jesus clearly instructs his disciples with His final message. The instruction is to go into all the world and preach the gospel (Good News) to all creation! Let us look at this important instruction or final orders of Our Master.

1. We need to go out of our comfort zone. We cannot be stay home Christians minding our own business, looking after our own salvation alone.

2. What is the good news or Gospel we preach? “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16). We go to our world and share with everyone we interact with, the amazing love of the Father who gave up His Son to get us back to being His sons and daughters, and the Love of our Lord Jesus who embraced the cross to win us back eternal life in heaven. We share the amazing Gift of the Holy Spirit, poured out upon all who believe in the Son, that empowers them to live this promise. When we do our part, the Lord works with us and confirms His promise with miracles, signs and wonders.

3. For those who believe in the Risen Christ and give their life to Him, a set of promises apply, the signs that will accompany them. “In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak in new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.” (Mark 3:17-18) We need to understand that these instructions and promises are for all of us who call ourselves Christian. Yet do we see it happening in our lives?

In the First Reading, St Luke, the author of the Acts of the Apostles gives the final words of Christ just before He was taken up into heaven. The Risen Lord advised the apostles to wait for the Gift promised by the Father, before going out on the mission. The Lord knew that His disciples needed supernatural power to do what He asked them to do.

Having experienced that Power throughout His earthly life, He knew how vital it was for the apostles to be baptised in the Holy Spirit, before they embarked on their mission. The Lord knew of the fragile nature of His apostles, how easily they got discouraged and disillusioned in the face of human opposition, how fearful they were, and how easy it was for them to go back to their old life. At the same time the Lord knew the enormity of their mission He was entrusting to His chosen eleven (the twelfth having chosen his destiny), namely to be His witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth.

The Lord's final words of advice to His closest friends, show how much He loved them and wanted them to have the same intimacy with the Father as He had. The Jordan experience was still fresh in His Heart. He knew how the Holy Spirit continued to direct Him and counsel Him every step of the way till the end. He had the most glorious ministry, healing the sick, raising the dead and bringing freedom to prisoners of all sorts, but to the world it was a flop because His ministry ended on the cross, or so it seemed. Yet we know that it was not so. His ministry triumphed over sin and death as He was raised back to life, and He still continues to live. Having tasted the Power from on high, the Risen Christ wanted His friends also to have the very same, nothing less.

The Lord wants us also to taste and be empowered with the same Spirit as we embark on our mission. The word 'Baptism' is a transliteration of the Greek word 'Baptizo', which means 'to immerse'. If Lord Jesus, as a human being needed to be immersed in the Holy Spirit, then there's no argument that we also need to be plunged into the Holy Spirit and Fire (cf. Matthew 3:11). When we receive that Power from on high, love supersedes the law, keeping God's commands become a joy and not a chore. We begin to hear the voice of our Shepherd clearly and constantly (cf. John 10:27), and life becomes victorious irrespective of our circumstances. Every promise of God becomes 'yes' for us in Christ (cf. 2 Corinthians 1:20).

As St Paul explains in the Second Reading, we need the Spirit of God to know God better. The Holy Spirit opens our inner eyes to see the glorious life and inheritance we have been called to live. The same Power that went into the tomb and raised Christ from the dead and seated Him at the right hand of The Father, far above all rule and authority, become ours to complete the mission we undertook at our Baptism to become His witnesses to our family and friends.

**Prayer: Abba Father, we stand amazed at Your divine plan, to turn our curse to the great opportunity to be filled with Your Own Spirit. So in the face of any giant, Lord, we will be still, and know You are Lord, and You have the final answer. Amen.**

## Monday May 17

7th Week of Easter

*Welcome Holy Spirit, fill us with your power and dwell in us forever!*

Acts 19: 1-8

Ps68: 2-7

John 16: 29-33

As we take the first reading into consideration, we are driven to ponder on the real meaning of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Our Lord Jesus Christ's great passion, crucifixion, death and resurrection have paved the way to the climax of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Therefore unless the Lord Jesus Christ became obedient to the almighty Father unto death, this would not have

been possible. We are called to die to self and empty ourselves to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Is it easy or can we possibly follow our Master in to receive this great privilege God offers us? Once we come to believe in the Lord Jesus, repent of our sin and ask the Holy Spirit from the Father, he lavishly pardons us and fills us with his Holy Spirit. (Luke 11:13 If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!). Thus our deepest desire and longing in life should be to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

When we are baptized in the Spirit we are empowered to bear witness to Christ our Lord and effortlessly do the impossible. That is what took place in the lives of the disciples of the Lord Jesus back in the day when they were hiding behind locked doors after their Master's demise. After the descent of the Holy Spirit they became incredibly bold and fearless. They had the courage and strength to spread the Gospel to the ends of the earth and beyond. They even went to the extent of risking their lives, embraced cruel persecution and death. Hence this is the secret weapon, the treasure or wealth hidden revealed to the childlike, humble and faithful of God. (Matthew 11:25 "At that time Jesus declared, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children;"). Therefore when we draw close to God we are strengthened to cope up with the pressures of the world through His spirit. We are empowered in our inner beings to bear witness to the Lord Jesus Christ. Then there cannot be a challenge we cannot tackle as it is the Spirit of the Lord that is guiding us.

**Prayer: Abba Father, we pray for a fresh in filling of the Holy Spirit, that we will be strengthened, touched and made whole in your Power. Amen**

## Tuesday May 18

St. John, pope & martyr

*The transforming power of God's infinite love*

Acts 20: 17-27

Ps 68: 10-21

John 17: 1-11

In human terms, we would never see the image of death on a cross as a glorious moment. Yet this is the moment of the Lord Jesus' greatest glory, as he glorifies the Father with his very last breath. Every minute of every day of the Lord Jesus' life was spent as an answer to the will of the Father and now as he comes to that moment of choice where he needs to choose his own self-

preservation or to surrender to the will of the Father he once again chooses to glorify the Father with the last drops of his lifeblood.

The Lord Jesus' mission was to reveal in human form, the infinite love, and mercy of God, in all circumstances, for the whole of humanity. This love and mercy is most evident when Jesus responds with love and mercy to being betrayed, rejected, humiliated, scourged, and crucified. The message is that nothing can separate us from his love and mercy. He makes clear the inner nature of God. The evil of the whole human race is transformed in the heart of the Lord Jesus crucified.

Touched by this love and mercy we see in the first reading St Paul calling himself "a prisoner in the spirit". The Lord Jesus' love has so transformed this former persecutor of the Christian faith that he willingly faces all kinds of persecution just to be able to complete the mission that had been entrusted to him, which is to testify to the good news of the gospel. As I ponder these two readings my mind is drawn to the many Martyrs who willingly and joyfully walked to their deaths for the chance to witness to the love of God and the good news of the gospel. This Martyrdom takes place even today in many parts of the world where to be a Christian is to be ready to sacrifice everything, even one's life for the Lord Jesus. We may not ourselves be in these dire situations where life and death hang in the balance, but we are called to suffer joyfully the afflictions that come our way. We are asked to draw strength from the encounter we had with the Lord and walk with him daily in an intimate relationship, holding onto the promises that God has given us; becoming beacons of hope, in an increasingly hopeless world.

**Prayer: Abba Father, Thank you for your love, Lord! Thank you for encountering me a sinner and transforming my life. Lord as I hold onto you and your promises take my life and make it a fragrant offering to you. Amen**



Acts 20: 28-38

Ps 68: 29-36

John 17: 11-19

As I reflect on today's gospel proclamation, my heart is overwhelmed with the immense love and protection of our Lord Jesus Christ to his disciples. In and through the resurrection of our Lord, we too are his disciples and we share the same privilege of receiving this same, powerful intercession of our Lord Himself.

Because of our sinful nature, we keep conforming ourselves to the ways of this world and reap the negative consequence that rob us of our joy. In today's gospel proclamation what touches me most deeply is our Lord's plea to the Heavenly Father saying 'I do not ask that you take them out of the world but that you keep them from the Evil One' (John 17:15) The Lord Jesus knew our weaknesses and, in His mercy, pleaded with the heavenly Father to keep us from the evil one. The Lord Jesus also speaks of His desire for us to share in His joy completely. (John 17:13) My mind runs back to the latter part of last year, where the Lord led me to pray only for one thing for myself .I was in my own struggles with continuous complex work assignments and related issues, family bereavements and many other periodic trials. I was interceding for all my trials but the Lord showed me clearly how to pray. I earnestly prayed for the joy of the Lord. Today I am convinced as I proclaim His word from the gospel of St. John that the Lord Jesus Himself has interceded for me to the Father, that no matter what, I would not lose the joy of the Lord. From the beginning of this year, I have had many trials and our faithful God has not let the evil one take over. The proof of that for me is that I have not lost the joy of the Lord even once. This today is ample proof of the power of the intercession of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The psalmist today speaks of this power of the Lord. And the first reading speaks of the departure of St. Paul on mission. This is just as the Lord Jesus commanded by His request to go unto the ends of the earth and preach the good news. In the context of the Gospel proclamation and the rest of the readings today, for me, the good news is to know that 2000 years after the death of our Lord, He is still working and His intercession to the Father is most powerful.

**Prayer: Abba Father, empower us with your joy that we may boldly proclaim your word with the same power and impact. Amen**

Acts 22: 30:23: 6-11

Ps 16: 1-11

John 17: 20-26

In challenging times a great temptation we face is to lose sight of God and depend on the familiar, on people and the world. Today's readings remind us that we serve a good God who is with us. King David expresses in Psalm 16: 8-9 that our hearts are glad and we find security when we keep the Lord before us. Security in God is when we choose to trust in Him.

The first reading gives an account of St Paul's experience before the council. In the midst of his uncertainty he placed his life in God's hands. He could have chosen the easy path but He remained faithful to his beliefs and the Lord was faithful. St Paul was filled with wisdom as he spoke before the Pharisees and Sadducees. This later brought some confusion amongst them. The Lord's favour did not stop there, that night as he was placed in the barracks the Lord appeared and encouraged St Paul to go to Rome and bear witness to Him. God was with him wherever he went, and His glory upon him.

As we look into our hearts, we can ask what have we placed our security in? Is it on our possessions, family or friends? If when we are judged or misunderstood we fall into anger and bitterness, we need to ask ourselves, have I placed my hope in God?

I acknowledge my own poverty in certain areas where I struggle to let go. In repentance and rest is my strength. King David said, "keep me safe Oh God, in you I take refuge" (Psalm 16:1). And then the words spoke nby the Lord to St Paul, brings light, "Keep up your courage! as you testified for me in Jerusalem. You must bear witness also in Rome." Acts 23:11. Where is Rome? Metaphorically speaking, it is where people have chosen to live life without God. A generation who have lost hope, joy and peace.

In today's gospel proclamation the Lord mentions His mission was not just for those who believed but also for a generation of future believers. A generation that desperately need to know there is a God, a loving and compassionate God, the One who saves!

**Prayer: Abba Father, show us how we may carry out Your mission and help us place our trust in You. Amen**

## Friday May 21

St Eugene De Mazenod

*He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." - John 21:17*

Acts 25: 13-21

Ps 103: 1-12, 19-20

John 21: 15-19

Today's Gospel proclamation is taken from the last chapter of the St. John's Gospel. This passage is significant to St. Peter and his mission to come, so is it for us as we ponder on the living word of God today. Our Lord Jesus asks Peter, son of John thrice if he loves Him. This situation is linked with the three denials of St. Peter when Jesus was taken into custody. He denies Jesus three times

and he truly repents and now he is back with the Lord. This is truly the message Jesus wants to give the Church. We are forgiven and our effort to reconcile is recognised by God. He simply wants us to trust Him.

Our Lord Jesus is speaking to us today by name. Just like how he questioned Peter. Do you love me my child? It is not that he does not know the love we have for Him but He delights in listening to us accepting our love for Him. We are in the same position as Peter. We have denied the Lord and chosen the world in so many situations. We have denied Him in front of our friends, our family even in our own crises. We have denied the reign of our Lord and accepted our own will in situations sometimes for the same reason as Peter, just to avoid the discomfort or certain situations in life. Today the Lord through the Gospel is talking to us and assuring us that He knows we have failed Him a 1000 times or more, but He trusts and loves us so much that He assures us with so much of responsibility just like He trusted Peter with His people - His Church. Peter had no qualifications to be the leader of the Church. Peter himself would have not imagined that Jesus would still want him to be the leader after what had happened in the courtyard where he denied the Lord.

Let us ponder on the three questions by the Lord today. Jesus is asking us individually today, do you love me more than these? These could mean all the wealth, power, pleasures of the world. His question is simple but yet we need to understand it personally. He asks us the second and third time - Do you love me? He's interested about how WE love Him. Not how our father, mother, husband/wife or worship leader, etc is loving Him. Jesus' wish for us is to love Him like Us, not like anyone else. He craves us to love Him in our own special way.

**Prayer: Abba Father, forgive us for falling short in loving You like You deserve. We repent as you give us the grace to love You, Your Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.**

Acts 28: 16-20, 30-31

Ps 11:4-7

John 21:20-25

In today's reading we see the calling placed on St. Peter, St. John and St. Paul. They faced hardship and persecution as they were tried and tested. St. Paul shares about how he was arrested without reason. One may question why would a person want to continue doing something, when he/she is persecuted, rejected, bound in chains. What is clear is that the Power of the Resurrection brought

along with it another kind of fire into their lives; a fire that cannot be blown away in the midst of hardship and suffering, but only increases and continues to spread further and deeper. The more persecution they faced the more they were glad and rejoiced.

In the Gospel Proclamation, we see how the Lord Jesus Himself called St. Peter saying, "You must follow me" (vs 22). The background to today's Gospel passage is where the Lord Jesus, asked St. Peter to look after his flock - that is us, the Church. From this day forward, throughout the history of the church there have been many struggles and hardships, but the calling that was placed on St. Peter remains the same to date. In the 1st letter of St. Peter 2:9, St. Peter confirmed this when he says "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."

Today, this same calling is placed on our lives as well, but we may have our doubts and fears about accomplishing this great task given to us. Let us remind ourselves that St. Peter was only a fisherman, and if he could do it we could do it too.

The Risen Christ has now come to accompany us through this mission into eternity. Our brokenness, our struggles, our limitations are no longer a limitation, because He is now in us and brings us into His perfection through His salvation. As we are on the Eve of Pentecost, let us prepare our hearts and minds and desire for this experience to come alive in our hearts today.

**Prayer: Abba Father, we desire more and more of your Son Jesus in our lives. Fill us with the fire of Your Holy Spirit and empower us to fulfill Your mission here on earth. Amen**

## Sunday May 23

### Pentecost Sunday

*"There are different kinds of gifts but the same Spirit distributes them..."*

Acts 2: 1-11  
Ps 104: 1, 24-34  
1 Cor 12: 3-17, Gal 5:  
16-25  
John 20: 19-23/15...

Today we celebrate the great feast of Pentecost. The word Pentecost conjures up images of fire, sound and power for me. However as I asked the Lord to show me what to reflect on today He asked me to reflect on what this day means – the reality of the Holy Spirit living inside me.

The first day of Pentecost that we remember and celebrate today found the disciples gathered in the upper room and united in prayer for this very purpose. To receive the Holy Spirit promised by Jesus. And when He came – He did not disappoint. He came as a big fire in the middle of them which then separated into tongues of fire and rested upon them. The Word of God says that they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. We may not have received Him in the same way, we may not have had tongues of fire resting upon us but this is still the reality of every Christian who has been baptised in the Holy Spirit. We too are filled with the Holy Spirit – God does not give the Holy Spirit in tiny increments. When He comes, He fills us. It is we who get to determine how much of Him we want manifested in our lives. The word filled indicates being poured until overflow. Being filled with the Holy Spirit to the measure that we overflow is our inheritance as children of God.

I still remember the day when I was baptised in the Holy Spirit. I remember that my tongue took off speaking words that I did not understand. But even as my mind freaked out that there was something wrong with me, my heart was joyful because there was such a sense that I was coming home. I did not understand the words that were coming out of my mouth but there was an undeniable feeling that I had done all of this before – that this was not a new thing but rather I was coming home. Being baptised in the Holy Spirit marked me for good. It changed my life forever. It was not just a phase or it was not something just for retreats – when the Holy Spirit comes, He comes to stay for all time.

In John 14:26, our Lord Jesus promises His disciples the Holy Spirit just after explaining that He will be ascending back to heaven. The word Jesus uses for the Holy Spirit can be understood to mean comforter, intercessor, counsellor, strengthener and standby – the Holy Spirit living within us is all of this and more. I can honestly testify that over the last few years, the Holy Spirit has been all of this

and more to me. The reality of His Presence with and within me has been the sweetest comfort. No matter what chaos raged around me, no matter what mess I found myself in, no matter how loud the anxiety was pounding inside of me, the One Who lives inside of me finds a way to break through. And He always restores my peace first and foremost. His voice cuts through the loudest storm. And once the noise settles down and He has calmed my fears He speaks His truth. He speaks His wisdom. He speaks His answers. The Holy Spirit living within me reminds me of the promises of Jesus. He reminds me of my heavenly inheritance. Whenever I face temptation, it is the Holy Spirit that rises up giving me the rhema word that I need to battle and defeat the enemy that I face. The Greek word Paracletos means the one called alongside to help. And this is what He is to us. He comes alongside us, He helps us, He lifts us up.

The reality of the Holy Spirit living inside us and working through us is for every believer. We do not need to achieve a certain level of holiness or do a certain number of years in ministry. It is not for a select few. This idea that only a certain type or number of people can be filled with the Holy Spirit is a lie of the enemy. We need to recognise it for what it is and banish it from our minds. Jesus paid the ultimate price so we can live the ultimate life – a life lived with the Holy Spirit living with us. And there is no ministry too small for Him. There is no situation too ordinary for Him to act in. There is no problem too small for Him to intervene in.

At home with my children, I experience His Presence to a degree that I have never experienced Him before. It is not just in the weekly meetings or the retreats that He turn up. He does not want me to pray for an hour and beg and plead for Him to come. The Holy Spirit lives inside of me and He speaks just as clearly into my heart as I clean up after my toddlers in the middle of a very messy playroom as He does in the middle of the sweetest worship service. St Stephen, a man who was filled with the Holy Spirit was initially chosen to serve in the food distribution. The reality of what we celebrate today is this – Holy Spirit living inside of us. The disciples were in the upper room, hungering and praying for Him when they received Him. How hungry are we for His presence today? How much do we want Him involved in our every day lives? Because He takes the ordinary and turns it into the extraordinary.

**Prayer: Abba Father, I thank you for the most precious gift of the Holy Spirit. God I want to yield more and more to You and to walk this life in the reality of You. Amen**

Sirach 17: 24-29

Ps 32: 1-7

Mark 10: 17-27

God is love. God is compassion. Everything is possible for God except one thing; that is to stop loving us. God's love for us does not depend on our internal disposition. God chose us and loved us first. In our fallen situations, the love of God for us will stand firm, unchanging, strong and constant. When we are down, pushed and pulled by the cares of life, our own weaknesses,

temptations and attacks from others, we can still go to our God who understands us, loves us and accepts us. We only have to repent, accept our weakness and go to God as we are. God's love and warmth, comfort and forgive us.

A lady was falsely accused by her boss and had been threatened with action against her. She knelt in front of her small altar at home and cried out to God, repented for her wrong doings, especially for the wrong she had done in the office. She gained strength and went to office the following day expecting to face an unpleasant situation. But a miracle took place; her boss who uttered threats to her had changed and worked with her in a friendly manner. This is what is promised to us in the first proclamation today. When we repent and turn to God, He comforts us gives us hope. The difficult situations and weaknesses keep us humble and close to God. Where sin is more there is more grace too.

The Psalmist has beautifully proclaimed this truth; "Then I declared my sin to you; my guilt I did not hide, I said, I confess my faults to the Lord, and you took away the guilt of my sin" (Ps 32:5). This is the hope that we can live with. We are a chosen people, we are God's people the sheep of His flock, and therefore we need not live in sin or be afraid. Further blessings are explained in the Gospel proclamation. The challenged placed in front of the rich man astonished the disciples because they could not understand what the Lord Jesus said. If people's lives revolve around their material wealth and they find security in them then that blessing becomes an idol. Let us make God the centre of our lives.

**Prayer: Abba Father, only you could save me, please come into my life and make me whole. Amen.**

Sirach 35: 1-12

Ps 50: 5-8, 14-23

Mark 10: 28-31

Many years back I used to believe that the gospel passage of today only applied to people who were ordained for religious life. Due to the passage mainly telling us about "letting go", but today I realize that it is not about letting go of houses, family or friends to live a hermit life. Truly it is first and foremost letting go of "me, myself and I". It is our natural inclination even in our acts of

goodness or our pretense of goodness to seek, what is in it for me? How could I benefit from this? We see it today in the opening lines of the gospel reading; St. Peter having invested in our Lord Jesus expecting something in return. The response our Lord gives seems to suggest they would inherit a significant amount of wealth even in persecution. What it speaks to me is that, it is about giving priority to the gospel and Our Lord Jesus above everything or anyone else that also means above ourselves.

Further, our Lord implies that we are not meant live alone but to live in communion, first with God and then with our fellow human beings. It is only when we live selfishly that families, communities the world around get destroyed. Yes, we will inherit, but through fellowship with others for the sake of the gospel. And in the end our Lord Jesus points to a life eternal as our final destination but it is hard to hold unto this fact when we keep holding unto what is on earth, holding unto things and people on earth primarily because we worry about our peace and security, with that ourselves as the primary focus.

We do not need to get caught up in this rat race of being superior in this world, the only thing ours, is our will, and today we have the power to choose through our will to say; Lord you increase in me, while I decrease. When we make this conscious choice we will benefit so will the world around us. This can happen only when we let go of ourselves, it is a daily struggle that cannot be done unless we make the Lord No 1 in our life. Pay attention many who are now first will be last, and the last first. Imagine hearing the words one day, "Well done my good and faithful servant" (Mt.25:21)

**Prayer: Abba Father, increase in me, while I decrease. Help me let go of me and embrace your Son whole heartedly. Amen**



Sirach 36: 1-5, 10-17

Ps 79: 8-13

Mark 10: 32-45

Today's word we look at what Jesus is telling us. He predicts his own death. He tells of how he is going to suffer and the agony that he is going to endure and also the resurrection that will follow after what he has endured. But as we can see that the Disciples are clueless as to what Jesus is talking about and what they are thinking. Because Jesus's words are spirit and he is talking about

spiritual things and the disciples are living in the flesh and they are thinking in a very worldly manner. All they are thinking about is getting the powerful places in the kingdom of God and they are thinking like everyone else thinks.

Jesus says something remarkably interesting here, "the so-called rulers of the nations' ' today we are seeing this unfold before are very eyes. The nations of the world are being shaken to their core, and the rulers in authority seem powerless to do anything. A tiny virus that cannot even be seen to the naked eye is shaking the governments sparing no one from the rich and famous to the poorest. We can see how fragile and temporary life is with it's power and authority. Jesus is saying look at me. I came to suffer and die. I have come not to be served but to serve. That in God's kingdom is not about going to the top destroying everyone else but it's about giving up so that you may be able to love one another. The most important thing in the kingdom of God is love. That's why Jesus said that the most important commandment is to love God and the second which is equally important as the first one is to love one another as I have loved you.

He did not say love one another the way you love yourself or the best you can but love one another as I have loved you. And the way he loved us was by going to the cross for our sins. This was the greatest Act one could do for another and that was to lay down his life and Jesus did this for you and for me. He is inviting us today to follow him, to do the same as we surrender ourselves to God and die to ourselves. Then in and through us, the love of God that can change the world starts flowing from our hearts into theirs.

**Prayer: Abba Father, as I surrender to your move, make me an over flowing vessel of your love that I may minister to the world on your behalf. Amen**

Sirach 42: 15-25

Ps 33: 2-9

Mark 10: 46-52

From the settled life of a Prior of a monastery, St. Augustine of Canterbury was called by Pope Saint Gregory the Great to lead a team of monks to Britain to revive the faith there because many Christians had gone into hiding following the Saxon conquest. When they reached France, adverse reports of the risk to their lives caused many of the monks to become afraid and the team

returned to Rome, but the Pope sent them to Britain again. This time, they followed through and gradually succeeded in reviving the faith, showing that obedience and submission to Divine Will ultimately leads to success. In today's first reading, the prophet Sirach praises all the works of God, which accompany His words; His omniscience, omnipotence and perfection. No thought or word can be hidden from God. Not only is He perfect, but His creation is also perfect. The psalmist is also in awe of the power of God; the wonders of His creation and His mercy and forgiveness.

In the Gospel reading, we see the unquestioning faith of Bartimaeus, the man born blind, known to sit at the temple gate begging for alms for most of his life. Like most powerless people, he is silenced by the crowd for crying out loudly for Jesus when he heard that He was coming. In calling out to Jesus as "Son of David", Bartimaeus is invoking the prophetic ancestry of the Messiah, demonstrating his belief that Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus publicly acknowledges his faith and heals him of his blindness.

During Lent, we were reminded of the subsequent trial of Jesus by the Sanhedrin, which, in casting around for evidence against Jesus, calls Bartimaeus and his father to speak of the healing but can find no cause to convict Jesus. The contrast between Bartimaeus' faith and belief in Jesus as the Son of God, on the one hand, and the rejection of His Divinity by the temple rulers, when Jesus tells them that he is the Messiah, despite all the evidence of his miracles, which were prophesied in the scriptures, could not be more stark.

**Prayer: Abba, Father, send Your Holy Spirit into our hearts to give us the faith of Bartimaeus and make us obedient and submissive to Your Will as was Your Son in going to His ignominious death on the cross.**

Sirach 44: 1, 9-13

Ps 149: 1-9

Mark 11: 11-26

The Prophets echoed the perennial plaintive cry of a loving God, calling people to share in His life. They were to belong to Him, living differently. Trusting Him not only when things were going fine, but even when things were disturbing or chaotic. He was to be their God and they His people. Their way of life would be challenged according to the better plan He had for them. They, however,

opted to have it their way, holding on to pride, envy, jealousy and the ways of the world, In God's hand they were to be a model of a new civilization and world, reflecting the glory of God. Nothing can derail God's plan for Humanity. He comes down through His Son, bringing the "Shekinah" , the manifestation of His Glory that was prophesied ( Ezk.43/ 1,5.).

The "Shekinah" had left the Temple (Ezk.10/ 18) (11-23). The Lord enters Jerusalem bringing the "Shekinah " cleansing the Temple. It had been propagating corruption, cheating and worldly values. He cleanses the temples of our hearts, even though we call ourselves good Catholics, of all inherent worldly values and egoistic tendencies. The cursing of the fig tree is a parable in action, representing Jesus' judgment on a people not being fruitful. It portrays the result of being disobedient and a refusal to accept the Lord as Savior. It's a punishment we bring upon ourselves. It's like the fig tree that "was in leaf" ( reflecting potential; outward picture of a healthy life, but bearing no fruit). When in leaf it produces smaller fruit that can be eaten. How often we show off our external religiosity, to impress or to receive feelings of self righteousness. Internally though , there is nothing spiritual or life transforming, instead the unspiritual or death experience the reality . The reading gives the tools to receive the full potential of life in Christ. Firstly, to trust in Him, believing He can do the impossible to transform our life into His, to remove the obstacles of not being able to forgive. Thirdly to activate the word of God in our life to facilitate sharing in the Shekinah.

**Prayer: Abba Father I thank you for your Son coming into my unworthiness and assuring me you love me enough to make me reflect your glory to change this sinful world through Him. Amen**

Sirach 51: 12-20

Ps 19: 8-11

Mark 11: 27-33

The reading from the Book of Sirach is a lesson in gaining wisdom. Like Solomon we must value Wisdom above worldly wealth and allurements.

The writer of the Book of Sirach gives praise and blesses God's name. Often people have such a problem with Praise and Worship. But the ability to praise is actually an indication of

the degree of inner freedom we possess. When we are internally bound we cannot express ourselves freely, thanking God for His love and mercy. People pin it on their style of prayer and other excuses but an unfettered soul is one of boundless praise and joy. After all, the praise is to God and not to people around. The writer narrates that in his/her youth he/she openly sought wisdom in prayer. We can seek wisdom from Google, people, elders but there is difference in seeking wisdom in prayer. We are elevated to the spiritual realm where thoughts, emotions, prayer become transparent and visible to people on the same frequency as God. The first result was that the person seeking wisdom received a delightful or delighted heart and the person's behaviour began to move towards an obedient path. Wisdom led to repentance and prayer. Then the person began listening to the wisdom given to him/her. We may be given wisdom but when faced with world circumstances we not consider the wisdom foolish or we may do as this Heavenly Wisdom dictates. A certain person was supposed to attend court hearings but on one occasion missed attendance due to an urgent trip. The police officer concerned asked the person for a bribe to cover up the person's mistake. The person began seeking the Lord's wisdom and decided that he would not bribe the officer. The officer was furious. Many people told the person in trouble to give in to the bribe after all it would save him a lot of trouble. On the next hearing the furious police officer complained to the court that the person had not reported to him as required. The judge looked at the records and said that since the person had all along reported and just missed once... he would not need to report in future at all since it was unnecessary. Our Lord Jesus carried this same wisdom in his dealings with the elders of the law when he responded to their questions with a fitting answer.

**Prayer: Abba Father, I seek the wisdom from Heaven to live my life. Amen**

Deut 4: 32-34, 39-40

Ps 33: 4-22

Rom 8: 14-17

Matt 28: 16-20

In today's First Reading Moses is speaking to the Israelites asking them to remember the miracles the Lord has done for them from the very beginning. Moses reminds the people that God has never done this for any other nation and therefore they are privileged. Deuteronomy 4:39 says, "Acknowledge and take to heart this day that the Lord is God in heaven above and on the earth

below. There is no other." Today the Lord is asking us to remember the same thing—to remember that the Lord is God above anything we may face and can change everything in an instant.

When God created mankind, He had a vision of the relationship He wanted to have with humankind. However, from the fall of Adam onwards, people kept turning away from God. Even though Moses asked them to remember what the Lord had done for them, they kept forgetting. Generation upon generation forgot what the Lord had done for them and their ancestors. They continued to fall into the thinking of the world. Then they suffered and burned because they went against the commandments of God. Next, they turned back to God and cried out to Him to save them. The Lord would hear their cry and do a miracle and rescue them. This cycle goes on and on in the Old Testament. The Lord sent his messengers to tell people this was not the way to deal with their lives, but the people did not listen to the prophets.

This cycle continued until God decided to send His one and only Son to the earth to save us. He did not want this cycle to continue in our lives. The Lord Jesus was sent to the earth to save us from our sins and reconnect us with God the Father.

However, instead of seeking the Risen Lord and God the Father, we too fall back into the cycle the Israelites of the Old Testament were in. We fall, burn, cry out to God and He saves us through a miracle and then we go back to our previous lives. But God does not want us to live like this. We can move away from this cycle by making the Risen Lord real in our lives. He is not just someone we celebrate on Easter Sunday or Christmas. He is alive and we can interact with

Him in our day to day lives. One great way we can make Jesus real in our lives, is by remembering all the things He has done for us. When we remember every answered prayer, we are acknowledging that He is alive in our lives.

Today's Psalm says, "For the word of the Lord is right and true; he is faithful in all he does." The Psalmist was able to write this because He knew the Lord. He had a relationship with the Lord. In the same way, the Risen Lord is waiting for each of us to have a relationship with Him. To know Him intimately. In our relationship with the Lord we can find everything we are searching for in the world. He will provide the love we are searching for from the world. He will provide the appreciation and value. He will give us what we are looking for from the world.

In the Second reading, St. Paul explains what will happen to us when we have a relationship with the Lord—divine sonship will become real in our lives. Before, we may have heard that we are sons and daughters of God, but we would not have really felt it in our hearts. But when we know the Lord closely, we will know what it is to be children of God. We will experience this in our lives and call God "Abba Father" and mean it. He will be a Father to us. Not a distant God. He will become as close to us as our parents, spouse or children. Then when we go through a problem, we will have our God as close to us as any other human person and He will carry us through. He will give us the strength to go through anything. For we will know that when we suffer with God, we will also be victorious with God.

The Lord Jesus gives the disciples—and us—a command in today's Gospel reading. When we know the Lord and have a relationship with Him, He commands us to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything the Lord Jesus has commanded us. Each of us, whether we are part of the clergy or laity or whether we are single or married or young or old, we are all called to this mission. Today, the Lord is calling you. He has a special job for you to do in His kingdom. He called you before you were even born. He says in Jeremiah 1:5, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations." When we sit at the feet of the Lord, He will reveal to us what He has called us for.

**Prayer: Abba Father, may I always remember the miracles you have done in my life and may I be able to respond to my mission in the Kingdom of God. Amen.**

Zep 3: 14-18/Rom 12:  
9-16  
Is 12: 2-6  
Luke 1: 39-56

The Blessed Mother was not a demure, quiet, introvert. She was a woman, brimming with boldness. She was a firm decision maker and one who took risks. She did this while having a gaze fixed on her source, the Heavenly Father.

The Blessed Mother's journey to the hill country of Judah was not to the neighbouring hamlet but quite a few hours of treacherous travel. Here was a woman who set out alone to meet her cousin. In those days it was unheard of. She enters the house of Zechariah and greets Elizabeth. There was no stopping her from what she wanted to do.

Just imagine, her simple greeting caused an infusion of the Holy Spirit in Elizabeth's womb and the baby leapt for joy. For all those naysayers who find fault with the Blessed Mother, just imagine. even before the Holy Spirit fell on all the men who were apostles and disciples, the Spirit was active in this young woman. It was active to the point where she just had to speak and a person would be filled with the joy, power and strength of the Spirit. Today, we have so many religious leaders who talk but most often they put people to sleep, stir up negative emotions, find fault with the people's religious practices and are not able to inspire the people in the faith.

The Blessing of Mother Mary on Elizabeth filled Elizabeth with the wisdom of the Spirit where Elizabeth's spiritual eyes were opened and she no longer saw her cousin but the Mother of the Messiah. Then she begins to utter prophecy naming the Blessed Mother as the Mother of my Lord. The drama of a Spiritual explosion does not stop there but erupts further with the Blessed Mother singing out the Magnificat which offers praise and glory to God. She cries out. "My soul magnifies the Lord and my Spirit rejoices in God my Saviour... he has called me Blessed. The mighty one has done great things for me. Let us be visited by the Blessed Mother that we may be infused with the Spirit and we will cry out to God for all the wonders He has done.

**Prayer: Abba Father, my soul magnifies you and my spirit rejoices in you for all you have done. You have given us this Beautiful Mother and may we love her and follow her example more and more. Amen**

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## Tongues of Fire

“When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.”

*-Acts 2:1-4*

## St. John Paul II

“In the Acts of the Apostles, St Luke describes the extraordinary manifestation of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost as a communication of the very vitality of God who gives himself to us. This divine gift is also ‘light’ and ‘power’. Light, to proclaim the Gospel, the Truth revealed by God. Power, to infuse the courage of witnessing to the faith, which the Apostles began at that very moment”

*(May 18, 1997).*

On Our Knees In His Hands is a book of reflections and aid to prayer based on the daily readings of the mass. Its purpose is to help Catholics and other Christians engaged in the normal hustle and bustle of life to discover God's presence and direction in the practical situations they are placed in. This is made possible by a group of writers who themselves are lay people living at the heart of busy day to day life.