



ON OUR KNEES IN HIS HANDS



Sts. Eulita & Kyriacos

Christian Martyrs

JULY 2022 | DAILY READINGS & REFLECTIONS



ON OUR KNEES IN HIS HANDS

JULY
2022

“Forgiveness is above all
a personal choice,
a decision of the heart
to go against
the natural instinct
to pay back evil with evil.”

Saint John Paul II

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Friday July 1

Thirteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Amos
8:4-6, 9-12

Psalm 119:
2,10,20,30,40,131

Matthew
9:9-13

Love of God and neighbour.

The first reading warns us against exploitation and profiteering at the expense of the needy. The consequences of such behaviour will be dire and bring unhappiness and suffering. The responsorial psalm promises blessings for those who earnestly search for God's teachings and seek to observe His commandments, reminding us that the word of God gives life and is more important than the physical sustenance provided by bread alone. The Gospel proclamation emphasizes that Jesus came to save sinners by extending mercy and forgiveness. His mission on earth is the embodiment of love of neighbour, culminating in the sacrifice of his life for our redemption. The warning against exploitation is relevant to a world obsessed by the pursuit of wealth, sometimes at the expense of the most vulnerable in society. Such behaviour is diametrically opposed to the commandments to love God and our neighbour. Instead, we are instructed to love others and extend forgiveness and mercy to those who may have harmed us.

Prayer: Abba Father, send your Spirit into our hearts to help us keep your commandments and to love our neighbour. Amen.

Saturday July 2

Thirteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Amos
9:11-15

Psalm
85:9-14

Matthew
9:14-17

Inner healing.

From the prophet Amos, the first reading is a prophecy about the restoration that God wants to do for the Israelites. The Lord promises a prosperous future for his people. As we look around us, it might feel like this is still a dream, because many are suffering, unable to earn enough to make ends meet. However, God's promises always have a spiritual message too. If we hold onto Him, we will experience the fruits of the kingdom: love, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. In today's Gospel proclamation, Jesus uses practical examples to explain the importance of real change of hearts. Most of us have deep inner wounds, some are dormant since childhood. The church offers excellent opportunities to deal with our past and to invite Jesus into our painful memories and thereby receive inner healing. The sacrament of reconciliation helps us to receive healing for our sins. We also need spiritual help to forgive those who hurt us. Let us be honest about our wounds, invite Jesus to cleanse us and empower us to forgive those who hurt us.

Prayer: Abba Father, help me to forgive others as you have forgiven me. Amen.

Sunday July 3

Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Isaiah
66:10-14

Psalm
66:1-7, 16, 20

Galatians
6: 14-18

Luke
10: 1-12, 17-20

To dream the impossible dream.

At a time when many steps are taken by different authorities in power to create discrimination among the people and differentiate us from our own brothers and sisters, today's readings remind us that there is no difference in the world that can separate us from our own. We are in the same body and Christ Jesus is the head. We are working towards one aim which should be in the back of our minds no matter what.

When we are in God, we are indeed a new creation. We are all one in Spirit. The goal of our lives is eternal life and we as humans need to find the humanness in us each day. This is because we have been created in the image of God. The more human we become, the more closer we get to God. Being human does not mean we become a part of the world, but God's purpose for us was to become more like Him, this is to find our humanness.

The most perfect role model for us is Christ Himself, the perfect human life lived here on earth, living each second in the will of God. The same can be applied to Mother Mary, she showed us the way we should be taking. And the Catholic Church provides us the lives of Saints, who found the true meaning of life, mingling in the world, but the world could not bring them down. They rose against the world, from the flesh through the help of the Spirit and found the meaning of life and paved the way for all of us.

The lives of the Saints are a gift to us. The Gospel reminds us that the harvest is many, but the workers are few. We are indeed chosen workers of God sent to this earth to bring His people closer to Him. The Saints keep reminding us that the life of holiness and the calling to us is never ending. God is always in us and calling us to find Him. Whatever be the circumstance we are in or way of life, we could be married, single, studying, working, serving the Lord full time or even drifted from God at this moment. The calling is clear - we are His chosen people, we are sent out to the world, to people who are yet to know Him and experience Him. We know He is alive and with us because we have experienced Him. If we have lost this experience, let us make an effort to go back to Him. He is waiting with His arms wide open. Let us ask the Lord to make us His instruments, the vessels where His love pours out to the world.

Pope Francis said that "God has a dream for your life. Welcome that dream, and pursue it with joy." As we journey with the Lord in His Spirit, let us hold on to the dream, the beautiful vision that God has for our lives, let us embrace it with joy, no matter what the world says.

Prayer: Abba Father, re-align my heart to Yours, and grant me strength always.
Amen.

Monday July 4

Fourteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Hosea
2:16-18, 21-22

Psalm
145:2-9

Matthew
9:18-26

Freedom from captivity

Today's first reading says that God led Israel to the desert. He had a plan for his people. He did it to have that long awaited intimate conversation with them. To bind and build a love relationship with them. So, they will be united in love forever. Subsequently, to have that intimate relationship and to bring them out of captivity and to grant them the ultimate gifts of peace and faith. This renewal of intimate relationship brought about the gift of faith and elevated them into a place, where, even when loved ones died, they were brought back to life. Even if we stand unworthy we still can touch his cloak and be healed. Thus, today we might be in that desert, in that hopeless place, but God says, I shall give you faith. He will speak to us tenderly and we will hear his voice in that secret place. He will thereby renew our relationship. He will transform our valleys into highways. He will embrace us as his spouse. Today God is inviting us to praise his mighty name since he has a perfect plan for our lives.

Prayer: Abba Father, may I grow in my relationship with you.
Amen.

Tuesday July 5

Fourteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Hosea
8: 4-7,11-13

Psalm
115:3-10

Matthew
9:32-38

When they sow the wind, they will reap the whirlwind.

The fact that there is a bountiful harvest but few workers, is nothing new. The Lord Jesus knew it 2000 plus years ago, and He gave the solution, to ask the Lord of the harvest, and none else. Have we missed this straightforward advice? We tend to analyse and even recruit "non-workers". The Lord Jesus did not bother about those who paid lip-service to God, but misinterpreted His work as from the devil. He passed them by, and chose common people who glorified God, witnessing His miracles. Let us remember that the harvest field - our area of service - belongs to God and not us or anyone else. Our intimacy with the Lord is of utmost importance in our serving. Let us ask the owner without striving by our self-effort. Otherwise the words of the prophet Hosea will apply to us, "when they sow the wind, they will reap the whirlwind. producing headless stalks of grain, and even the little grain that we might reap, being swallowed by 'foreigners'." Let us serve Him as He wishes to be served.

Prayer: Abba Father, help us to be teachable, knowing that You are our help and shield. Amen.

Wednesday July 6

Fourteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Hosea
10:1-3,7-8,12

Psalm
105:2-7

Matthew
10:1-7

The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.

Jesus chose mere ordinary people, who were otherwise despised and insignificant in society to do the extraordinary task of proclaiming the Kingdom of God. Jesus equipped them with what was necessary by giving them power and authority to cast out unclean spirits and heal every disease and infirmity. As we read in today's Gospel proclamation, indeed, the Kingdom of God is at hand. If we submit ourselves to the will of God, we can live in the Kingdom where God reigns. By reading His word and meditating upon it, we are directed and guided to do His will. In the Kingdom of God, there is freedom from all bondages of sin and healing for all diseases. The miracles done by Jesus as he ministered here on earth bears evidence of the same. The Kingdom of God is a place where we are assured of having true peace, love and joy ruling in our midst. Therefore, the choice is ours to choose His will and enjoy life in all its fullness. Filled with His presence, we will no doubt become witnesses to His Kingdom.

Prayer: Abba Father, let your kingdom come and let your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

Thursday July 7

Fourteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Hosea
11:1-4, 8-9

Psalm
80: 2- 3, 15-16

Matthew
10:7-15

The Father's heart.

Today's First Reading portrays the Father's love and compassion for His people. Despite human weaknesses and sinfulness he does not turn away from his people. In the Gospel Proclamation, we see Jesus placing this same heart of love and compassion on his disciples, to go after the lost sheep. The call is not only to preach the Gospel, but also for signs, wonders and miracles and to bring down the Kingdom of heaven to earth. How is this applicable to us, in today's day and age? We have been given the same call since our baptism, to be disciples; to be another Christ. It is to carry the heart of the Father, a heart of love and compassion wherever we go, and to demonstrate the power of the Kingdom of God here on earth. To do this, we need to first believe in our identity as children of God, and then believe that there is no lack in heaven. God is rich and powerful, and when we are in alignment with this mind-set we are able to draw down the power into our lives and to the people around us.

Prayer: Abba Father, give me the grace to carry Your heart of love and compassion, towards those I meet today. Amen.

Friday July 8

Fourteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Hosea
14:2-10

Psalm 51:
3-4, 8-9,12-14,17

Mathew
10:16-23

His mercies are new every morning.

In the first reading, Prophet Hosea is warning the nation of Israel. "Return to your God, your sins have caused your downfall". We can apply this to the situations we may be in right now. We may be going through a spiritual dryness and our prayer life affected, our union with Christ is broken and with that we have stopped hearing the voice of God and our mind has been filled with untruths. Sin, in its subtleness, may have become attractive and we may have fallen. Maybe it has hurt not only our journey but also those who are close to us. But the Psalmist gives us hope. No matter how much we have fallen, the mercy of God is above all for those who repent truly. "My sacrifice O God, is a broken and contrite heart." This is a promise we can hold onto, that His mercy is endless for those who truly repent and return to God. In our human weaknesses we may stray from the path that God has set forth for us. Amidst the current social trends and pressure, we are called to stand firm faithfully to return to His perfect will and plan for our lives.

Prayer: Abba Father, forgive our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
Amen.

Saturday July 9

Fourteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Isaiah
6:1-8

Psalm
93:1-2, 5

Matthew
10:24-33

We are his, we are one in Christ.

According to the first reading we will not hear the voice of God until we rid ourselves of the feeling of guilt that is brought about by sin. When Isaiah was told by the seraph that the coal touching his lips would cleanse him of guilt and sin – Isaiah was empowered with a spirit of boldness to answer the Lord "Here I am, use me". We may or may not have such dreams but spending time with the lover of our soul will take us from sin to boldness for Christ. The Gospel highlights that a student is not greater than his teacher. What God reveals to us in prayer is meant to be shared with multitudes, be not afraid of people. How cheap the life of a sparrow is in the world system and yet how precious they are to our creator; how so uniquely he knows us that each hair is numbered. If God knows which hair fell on the ground do we think he does not know about our dire situations? We are his – let us relax and continue to praise Him in all circumstances as that is his will for us in Christ. Because we are one in in Christ.

Prayer: Abba Father, thank you for the spirit of boldness that you equip us with to proclaim your love from the rooftop. Amen.

Sunday July 10

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Deuteronomy
30:10-14

Psalm 69:
14,17,30-37

Colossians
1:15-20

Luke
10:25-37

Let us become good Samaritans.

Kindness comes easy when we are looking for opportunities to be charitable and generous, but kindness is a struggle when we are dealing with inconvenience and offense. Today's Gospel proclamation reminds us of a parable most of us have grown up with – the parable of 'The Good Samaritan'. We usually analyse this in black and white; we see the priest and Levite as the villains of the story, and the Samaritan as the moral hero. We struggle to imagine ever being as cruel and insensitive as these 'villains' and tend to relate to the Samaritan. True enough, most of us would undoubtedly rush to rescue someone so visibly in pain as the man in the parable. However, if the victim's cry for help was silent, and less obvious, would we still play the part of the good Samaritan?

Often, our loved ones could hurt us and cause offense during heated moments. And in these moments, it is easy to take offense by blindly clinging to our own sense of righteousness and avoid the offender as the priest did. Or else, we might ignore them out of a desire to avoid conflict, and we might walk away as the Levite did.

How often, would we ask the Holy Spirit to give us the eyes of compassion that Jesus had for His people, so that we may understand the inner wounds, and inner hurt causing this person's rage, desperation, and/ or frustration?

How many times would we draw near to someone when their wounds cause us offense, inconvenience or threaten our peace of mind? Would we notice a victim who appears fine on the outside, but robbed of their joy and peace by burdens they carry, being beaten down by the storms of life, and wounded internally?

As the Psalmist writes, the Lord's kindness, humbles us in our pride, lifts us up when we are wounded, and loves us when we are in captivity, imprisoned by rage, envy, or any destructive emotion. This is the kindness that Jesus Christ himself personified when he dined with sinners, redeemed criminals, and freed captives. This is the kindness He teaches us about.

The neighbours we are to love, are not only those begging for help on the streets, but also those close to us, those who may not ask for our love verbally but beg for it spiritually.

As written in the First reading, the law of loving the Lord is already in our hearts and minds. Therefore, despite what our eyes may see, despite what our minds may lead us to believe, it is the love of Jesus in our hearts and on our tongues that must drive us in our lives as Good Samaritans.

Prayer: Abba Father, help us to love as You do. Teach us to love without judgement, without hesitation, and without conditions. Amen.

Monday July 11

Memorial of Saint Benedict, Abbot

Isaiah
1:10-17

Psalm
50:8-9,16-17,21,23

Matthew
10:34-11:1

Follow Christ to the Cross and experience the Resurrection.

Being a disciple of the Lord Jesus is not an easy path to follow. Yet this is the call of each Christian. Are we willing to put God first in our lives? Is God truly the King of our hearts? Is our food doing the will of the Father in heaven? Being a Christian is being a Christ follower in word and in deed. But if we made an honest soul search, many a time we realise that we may be Christians in word, but not in action. We say we love our brothers and sisters, but we are unwilling to travel an extra mile, let alone die for them. There are times when being a Christian means we may need to make hard choices. Sometimes these choices involve those who are nearest and dearest to us. Are we willing to lay aside our fear of the opinions of family and friends to follow the Lord Jesus? The price of being a true follower of Christ is high. It means sacrifice, it means the Cross. But for those who choose to follow Christ the ultimate reward is far greater. It is only through the Cross that we are able to experience the power of the Resurrection.

Prayer: Abba Father, strengthen me to become a true disciple of Christ.
Amen.

Tuesday July 12

Fifteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Isaiah
7:1-9

Psalm
48:2-8

Matthew
11:20-24

Stand firm in faith.

We all love to experience miracles. A physical or a psychological healing, a healing of a broken or strained relationship, an answer to a financial crisis are some of the miracles that we would have experienced. Miracles lead us to deeper faith. Today Jesus is reminding us that when we experience a blessing or a miracle from God it is not enough to thank God and go back to our former ways of living. Jesus wants us to change our ways. The way we respond to a painful situation, a struggle, a sickness or any other crisis. The way we respond to situations will bring to light what is hidden deep inside us. These should lead us to examine our conscience and repent of our former ways. Are our responses pleasing to God? Most of us have experienced God's miracles. Let us examine our faith journey. Are we like the people of Capernaum, who are mentioned in the Gospel or do we "walk the talk". God told King Ahaz to 'stay calm and have no fear', this is what would happen when our ways change to do what pleases God.

Prayer: Abba Father, anoint us with the Holy Spirit so that we will be transformed in our ways to live a life pleasing to you. Amen.

Wednesday July 13

Fifteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Isaiah
10:5-7,13-16

Psalm
94:5-10,14-15

Matthew
11:25-27

The Lord will not abandon His people.

In the midst of crisis, confusion, chaos and disorder, 'where is God?' is the constant complaint of the majority; even the faithful. Isaiah's words in today's first reading also add onto this confusion and one might even begin to wonder about the true nature of God. Does He really intend to harm us? We who have tasted His goodness at one point or another know that our God is love and His intentions are solely to prosper us, but what keeps us separated from experiencing His favour as Isaiah points out is our pride and ego. Pride throws our reasoning out of proportion and leads us to think highly of ourselves. Pride makes us assume power and control over one another and creates division. Above all pride separates us from God and makes us feel as if God is against us. In the Gospel proclamation Jesus offers us the key that leads to the heart of the Father. We are invited to be clothed in humility, to be childlike and the mysteries of the Kingdom will unravel for us. Then we will surely know that our God never abandons us.

Prayer: Abba Father, with childlike trust we hold onto You for our help comes from You alone. Amen.

Thursday July 14

Fifteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Isaiah
26:7-9,12,16-19

Psalm
102:13-21

Matthew
11:28-30

Inner peace.

Amidst any kind of situation, challenge or turmoil, what do we lose first? One might say it is God who becomes the first casualty – sure enough! However at that moment, do we realize, that the absence of God is the root cause of the unrest? Which also means that we have lost our inner peace. How do we get into a time of losing inner peace – by being unaware that God is still in control, still enthroned, in our situations and environments. The prophet Isaiah states that the Almighty establishes peace for us and all that we have accomplished is what God has done for us. If that is so, what about our failures? What was the cause of those? As the Word shows us, not being righteous with God or being wayward in our ways and also by showing ignorance to his will, causes us to be uneasy and burdened. This results in a loss of inner peace. This is why Jesus is the answer to our unrest as he calls us, to cheer us, to refresh us! All that he requires of us is openness to his Spirit.

Prayer: Abba Father, thank you for calling us to rest in you, we wait for times of refreshing so that our lives may bring glory to you. Amen.

Friday July 15

Memorial of Saint Bonaventure, Bishop and Doctor of the Church

Isaiah
38:1-6, 21-22, 7-8

Isaiah
38:10-12, 16

Matthew
12:1-8

Our God is merciful.

'God is merciful', but we may not understand it until we personally experience the mercy of God. Most of us have experienced this mercy of God many times. In the first reading, King Hezekiah understood the love God had for Him when he received the mercy of God. The Lord was quick to respond to a repentant heart. In the Gospel proclamation, Jesus says, "I desire mercy, not sacrifice." God wants us to love Him more than He wants our sacrifices and offerings. Like the parable of the prodigal son, God is waiting with a ring to welcome us back to a relationship with Him. He wants to love us and take care of us. We need to repent and come back to Him. While God despises our sin, He loves the sinner. He yearns for us to give up our sinful ways and return to Him. He wants to give us a new life. "The Lord is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance." 2 Peter 3:9 Let us repent and renew our relationship with Him. This is his desire, not just for a few, but for humanity.

Prayer: Abba Father, your mercy is unconditional; may I come back to you in repentance and experience love and joy in your presence. Amen.

Saturday July 16

Fifteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Micah
2:1-5

Psalm
10:1-4,7-8,14

Matthew
12:14-21

Union with God, who is three in one.

We are journeying in tough times in the world and many countries are severely affected by economic crises. Perhaps this is also the case within the communities and families that we are part of. Our political, social, and economic systems are in chaos in many ways. More and more people are being pushed below the poverty lines by the same leaders that people put their trust in. Unfortunately, we do not seem to be able to come out of the vicious cycle. The more we try to come out we get further trapped in the situation, thereby losing hope. In today's Gospel proclamation, we are invited to a life that is full of hope: a hope which is divine and everlasting, a hope that heals and sustains us, hope that builds us and strengthens us. Hope that frees us and takes us out of slavery. This hope comes from the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit who are three in one. To make us one in Him. Our communities need to be united in Him and our nations also need to become one in him. "In Him all the nations will put their hope." Mt 12:21

Prayer: Abba Father, we pray, that we can put our hope in you, instead of the attractions of this world. Amen.

Sunday July 17

Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Genesis
18:1-10

Psalm
15: 2-5

Colossians
1:24-28

Luke
10:38-42

Are we distracted like Martha or focussed like Mary?

The First reading highlights the hospitality of Abraham, who received God as a guest and in three separate people yet referring to the one Triune God, symbolizing the Holy Trinity. It is clear that Abraham and Sarah having shown generosity and hospitality to God, receive their desire, and God graciously grants what they had been longing for in their marriage. Hence the long awaited and given up hope in their old age – the child birth of a promised son is found in the favour and blessing of God, having shown reverence and hospitality to God.

Today's Responsorial Psalm gives us the criterion on how to live our Christian life blamelessly before God. We are reminded to speak the truth always and to do what is right, controlling our tongue in speaking and causing no harm and damage tarnishing our neighbours' image. It is also forbidden to bribe against the innocent. The calling is for us to walk blamelessly before God.

In the second reading we read how suffering is a part of the calling. Here the mystery spoken of is "Christ in you the hope of glory", thus the inward presence of Christ in us as followers and the Holy Spirit in us is the sign of future glory. St. Paul toils and struggles with all his strength to see the maturity of his flock in Christ. Can this be appealing to us today? Are we mere Christians or do we long and desire for a mature walk with the Lord? Interestingly, the Gospel proclamation speaks of two sisters who received Jesus into their home. When one was overwhelmingly troubled and exhausted with the serving, the other kept sitting at the feet of the Lord, listening to the word of the Lord.

We see Jesus, encouraging the one who chose to sit at His feet and listen to the word, over the other sister who was preoccupied. Does this mean that serving and the strenuous work involved in same is useless? During the time of Jesus, only males were allowed to sit at the feet of a Teacher. So, when Mary sat at the feet of Jesus, Martha was shocked, and in other words, told the Lord, to instruct Mary to not go against the traditions. But the Lord went against the rigid rules of the time. Jesus also said, "Blessed are they who hear God's word and keep it" compelling us to listen to His word and obey it. Therefore let us try to fathom the important message conveyed to us: to be set apart to listen to the Word and be at the feet of the Lord leaving aside matters of secondary importance is a real blessing in disguise. This is what the Lord wants of us, as hearers and doers of the Word. This seems an impossible task, hence we need the Holy Spirit.

Prayer: Abba Father, give us the grace to open our heart and minds to receive your Word and put it in to practice in obedience to you. Amen.

Monday July 18

Sixteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Micah
6:1-4,6-8

Psalm 50:
5-6,8-9,16-17,21,23

Matthew
12:38-42

Jesus - the sign of God's love.

Today's Gospel proclamation shows us how the religious leaders were asking for a sign from the Lord Jesus. Today most of us are also like these scribes and Pharisees. We are also asking for a sign. A sign that we can hold on to. Signs that give us hope and a sense of direction. But the only sign that God has given us is the sign of our Lord Jesus himself. Our Lord Jesus came to this world to save us, because of the unconditional love he has for us. He is the only sign we need. He is the sign of unconditional love, the sign of our hope and the sign of our faith. Nothing can surpass the love the Lord has for us. It is easy to get deceived by temptations to look for external miracles, healings and mighty works. Let us not take the risk of chasing behind miracles, and thereby losing sight of the miracle worker. Let us not be a generation that needs an external sign to renew our faith and love in the Lord, but let us be a generation that worships the living God. He is the way the truth and the life.

Prayer: Abba Father, open the eyes of my heart to see Jesus as the only sign of our faith. Amen.

Tuesday July 19

Sixteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Micah
7:14-15,18-20

Psalm
85:2-8

Matthew
12:46-50

Carrying our daily cross.

Jesus is asking a question "Who is my brother and sister" and he himself gives an answer to the question. "Whoever does the will of the Father in heaven is my brother and sister." To be a disciple of Christ, we need to do the will of the Father in heaven. What is the will of the Father? This is what we need to find out. In Luke 9:23, Jesus looks at his disciples and tells them, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it." This is the will of the Father. Some of us find it hard to carry our daily Cross happily and willingly. When I am willingly carrying my daily cross, I am doing the will of my Father. When I am ready to carry the Cross, Jesus is there to help me. He gives us a promise that he will strengthen us right along the journey of life. "Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge." 2 Cor 5:5

Prayer: Abba Father, Father help me to do your will daily.
Amen.

Wednesday July 20

Sixteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Jeremiah
1:1,4-10

Psalm
71:1-6,15,17

Matthew
13:1-9

Allowing the Word to be rooted in us.

In today's Gospel proclamation, Jesus tells the parable of the four soils. In 2010 when my mentor spoke about this parable to me, I had no clue what he was trying to convey to me. But it had rooted within me without my knowledge. This parable has also been the foundation of my faith. Human ears hear many sounds, but there is a deeper kind of listening that results in spiritual understanding. When speaking in parables, Jesus was not hiding the truth from sincere seekers, because those who were receptive to spiritual truth understood the illustrations. To others, they were only stories without meaning. Let us not be discouraged if we do not always see results as we faithfully read the Word. Belief cannot be forced to follow a mathematical formula. Rather, it is a miracle of God's Holy Spirit using our words to produce faith in Christ. I have been guiding a few of my staff on sharing the Gospel, and this parable has helped me to identify the characters and pitch the message accordingly.

Prayer: Abba Father, I pray that you make us good soil so that we will harvest a great crop and follow your path. Amen.

Thursday July 21

Sixteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Jeremiah
2:1-3, 7-8, 12-13

Psalm
36: 6-11

Matthew
13:10-17

Parables reveal the secrets of God's Kingdom.

Many have mistakenly thought that the Gospel announced the Kingdom of God only in Heaven. Christ came to tell us that the Father sent Him to rule among us. A new world is emerging silently and undetected by human faculties. This is spiritual knowledge, grasped and seen only through faith by those accepting Christ as the Lord of their life. God's Reign is Christ, and those who walk in His footsteps rule with Him. When Christ is accepted, the secrets of God's Kingdom are revealed. When darkness covers the depths of the sea, nothing is seen. But when the 'sun' shines brightly, the treasures beneath are observable. The myriad colors and variations of fish and plants are seen. Rich veins of gold, minerals and pearls revealed. As I write, I see endless queues for fuel and essential items: caused by an economic recession. In this darkness where is God's Reign? We see the young generation emerging, breaking barriers of race and religion, that had divided us for many years. Is this not reflective of God's Reign?

Prayer: Abba Father, may I discover the treasures of your Kingdom in your Son amidst my fears and trials. Amen.

Friday July 22

Feast of Saint Mary Magdalene

Song of Songs
3:1-4

OR 2 Corinthians
5:14-17

Psalm
63:2-6,8-9

John
20:1-2,11-18

“I have seen the Lord and this is what He said to me” Jn 20:18

The first reading from Song of Songs has some beautiful expressions which should best describe our journey and relationship with the Lord. “I looked, I sought him, I will rise, I will seek, I found the love of my heart.” Such was the thirsting and desire in the heart of Mary Magdalene. She had experienced love, forgiveness and deliverance from the hands of our Lord Jesus and these filled her with such a thirst for the Lord. So much so that after Jesus was crucified, died and buried, she set out early in the morning to check on His mortal remains. While it was still dark - she began from a point of confusion and uncertainty. Often we go to the Lord as the last resort. Here Jesus was her everything. When our Lord spoke to Mary she was unable to recognise him till he called her by name. In our prayer time, let us wait for the Lord to call us by name. Let us be patient and consistent in our prayer times. Then like Mary, we will be able to proclaim to the world, “I have seen the Lord and this is what he said to me.” Jn 20:18

Prayer: Abba Father, I pray for a deeper thirst for the presence of Jesus in my life. May I seek His face and hear His voice every day. Amen.

Saturday July 23

Sixteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Jeremiah
7:1-11

Psalm
84:3-6,8,11

Matthew
13:24-30

Let us become wheat amidst weeds.

The grace of God is constantly available. The deceitful enemy is working overtime. We are caught up in the battle between darkness and light most of the time. We could be Christ-like only in words and be numb to people around us. The first reading says the deceitful words: The temple of the Lord! What does this mean? The words could be deceitful and the true colours are shown in the action. We need to find the presence of the Lord in the Temple of the Lord. But if we find people who have only deceitful words and unreformed actions then there is a question about such a ‘temple’; whose presence would be in such a temple? In the Gospel proclamation the Lord Jesus explained it properly. When the owner of the field sowed good seed that is the original creation of God, then the enemy sowed weeds and we ended up having both good and evil in us. We are the Temple of the Lord. We have both wheat and weeds in us. May we become more of wheat so that we will be gathered into God’s barn.

Prayer: Abba Father, I am your child.
Amen.

Sunday July 24

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Genesis
18:20-32

Psalm
138:1-3, 6-8

Colossians
2:12-14

Luke
11:1-13

Touch the heart of God through prayer.

Today's readings speak of the value of intercession. The Lord calls us to come to a place in our spirituality that we can become an intercessor for others. To be an intercessor we should have an intimate relationship with our Creator and seek His face every day. He wants us to take time out to talk to Him. As we come to His feet everyday the Father will begin to reveal His true nature, His heart and mind to us.

An example of this is given in today's First Reading as Abraham had developed a relationship with God over the years, he was able to freely talk to God and intercede on behalf of the people in Sodom and Gomorrah. The same thing can take place in our lives when we build a relationship with God.

When we know God intimately, we will not have the desire to pray for ourselves alone but also for others. We will be so secure in our relationship with God that we know that He will take care of our every need.

Today's second reading reveals that one of the greatest intercessors is our Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus knew that we would lead weak, defeated lives and He prays to the Father and sacrificed His life so we would be able to live a life free of sin.

The Lord Jesus gave us victory by nailing our sins to the cross. He had the most intimate relationship with the Father and therefore was able to intercede on our behalf and become the sacrifice needed to free us completely.

In today's Gospel proclamation the Lord Jesus gives us the format of intercessory prayer. The disciples wanted to begin a relationship with God the Father and asked the Lord Jesus how they should pray. The Lord Jesus taught them 'the Lord's Prayer' to build their relationship with God.

Why does God need us to intercede? If it is God's will to give the Holy Spirit, why does He want us to intercede? Although God can act sovereignly, He prefers to work with human partners.

Sometimes, when there is no one to partner with Him, in that place the intervention of God will be missing. God needs a person to intervene. That is what intercessors are called to.

The Lord Jesus encourages us to pray and intercede persistently for people. "So, I say to you; Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened." (Luke 11:9-10)

Prayer: Abba Father, bless me with the gift of hearing your voice so that I may engage in prophetic intercession. Amen.

Monday July 25

Feast of Saint James, Apostle

2 Corinthians
4:7-15

Psalm
126:1-6

Matthew
20:20-28

We carry God's presence.

What is the treasure that we carry within us? We are fragile, weak people but the Lord has poured out his Holy Spirit into our hearts. What a privilege to host God in ourselves. But is this evident in the way we live? Can others see the presence of God through us? Whatever the trials and temptations God's strength is always within us. With him on our side, we can do all things. God's grace is undeserved, unmerited, that is why it is indeed a gift. We did not and cannot earn it, it is a free gift. As we celebrate the feast of Saint James, we read about his mother's request for the best seats in the Kingdom of God. Sometimes we too could be misguided, we may be mighty warriors for God, while having ulterior motives. Let us purify our intentions, as people carrying God's grace within us, let us strive only to do what is pleasing to God. As we continue to journey with the Lord, we will be able to draw more people into an inner experience of the Holy Spirit, and thereby as we said in the Psalm; all the peoples will praise God.

Prayer: Abba Father, thank you for giving me grace beyond measure.
Amen.

Tuesday July 26

Memorial of Saints Joachim and Anne, Parents of the Virgin Mary

Jeremiah
14:17-22

Psalm
79:8,9,11,13

Matthew
13:36-43

God alone is the judge! In Him alone is our hope.

When weeding your garden while plants are still seedlings, desirable plants and weeds can look much alike. This is the experience of the church trying to grapple with good and evil in its midst. Prophet Jeremiah interceding for God's mercy pleads forgiveness for the wickedness of the people. God alone knows all and permits all. Jesus in this parable shows us that the church is not the final Judge, but the Lord is the Judge. With this image Jesus tells us that in the world the good and the evil are so intertwined that it is difficult to separate and eradicate all evil. The Lord will do so in the last judgement. Pope Francis highlights that evil comes from the enemy, the evil one. Satan acts in darkness, in secret, in confusion. That is why, Jesus said that we are to walk as children of Light. As we battle against evil, and strive to do what is right in God's sight, let us remember that it is a long battle. We need to be consistent and persistent in our efforts. Those who keep trying will be able to reach the goal.

Prayer: Abba Father, keep us from judging and condemning others,
we place all our hope in you. Amen.

Wednesday July 27

Seventeenth Week in Ordinary Time

Jeremiah
15:10,16-21

Psalm
59:2-4,10,11,17,18

Matthew
13:44-46

The Kingdom of God is among us.

How do we find the kingdom of God in our lives? Are we caught up in the fake kingdom which often appears more attractive? The kingdom of God can be reached only through the narrow gate, while the world tempts us to take the comfortable highway, at the cost of our souls. We need to think about it, most of the time we lose sight of God's kingdom and ask God to fulfil our worldly desires, but God is inviting us to something beyond our human understanding. His kingdom is filled with love, peace and joy. That kingdom is not on the clouds or in the sky but the kingdom of God is here with us, but why cannot we experience it? As the first reading mentions, we need to return and go back to him as we are, that is where we can find the true treasure in our lives, it melts our unworthiness, sinfulness and makes us a new creation in the Lord and it gives great value for our existence. Let us seek his kingdom with all our hearts and minds until we experience it in and around us.

Prayer: Abba Father, I want to experience your love, peace and joy, make me humble and fill me with the Holy spirit to enter your kingdom. Amen.

Thursday July 28

Seventeenth Week in Ordinary Time

Jeremiah
18:1-6

Psalm
146:1-6

Matthew
13:47-53

There is room for improvement.

Often we sing hymns saying: Lord, you are the potter, I am the clay in your hands. What does this mean? We need to be ready to be shaped by the Lord, as he sees fit. We have our own plans and personalities, but we need to be humble and open, so that the Lord can fashion us to become the best version of ourselves. As we say in the Responsorial Psalm, our help comes from God alone. Let us not have any doubts that the Lord who created us can also re-shape us. In today's Gospel Proclamation, the Lord Jesus explains that the kingdom of God is like a fishing net. Where do we stand? Are we good fish or bad fish? What is the criteria that is used to judge us? It is not our external actions or engagement in religious rituals, but our inner life. How did we treat our neighbors? Did we have a personal connection with the Lord in prayer? We are not perfect, there is always room for improvement. Let us ask the Lord to empower us so that we will be willing to change and become true disciples.

Prayer: Abba Father, strengthen me in your Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Friday July 29

Memorial of Saints Martha, Mary and Lazarus

1 John
4:7-16

Psalm
34:2-11

John
11:19-27

OR Luke
10:38-42

God himself is love.

In today's Gospel proclamation Jesus asks a question from Martha, "Do you believe this?" This seems to be a recurring pattern in most of Jesus' miracles. 'I know what I can do, but do you believe it?' And this belief is a key part of drawing down God's power into our lives. Part of faith is a gift from God, another part of faith should come from within us, using our free will that God has given us, we can proclaim this faith through our mouths and our hearts. When we are full of faith, it leads to love, hope and charity. In the first reading, we see the most important of them all: Love. We are called to love one another, as God himself is love. Let us bring to our minds, the hardest people to love in our life, they are quite often the people closest to us. Remember that Jesus gave his life for all of these people too. Love must be the most difficult thing to do out of everything written in the Bible, yet it is the most important of all, because, love is without discrimination, we cannot pick and choose whom to love, because God loves all humanity.

Prayer: Abba Father, increase our faith, so that we can love each other as you love us. Amen.

Saturday July 30

Seventeenth Week in Ordinary Time

Jeremiah
26:11-16, 24

Psalm 69:
15-16,30-31,33-34

Matthew
14:1-12

Listen to the voice of the Lord.

Today's readings speak about the persecution of God's servants. Jeremiah suffers, while John the Baptist is killed for speaking the truth. Working for God is not always a warm and rewarding life, seldom a life lived with perfect and pleasant people. We can take this seeming inconsistency to mean that we are on the wrong path in our service of God, that everyone else is in the wrong, or that God is asleep or needs our guidance on how to run this world. We can lose heart or even lose sight of why we are living as Christians. We fail to remember that this is God's world and that God is in charge of our salvation: and our contribution is primarily a matter of us following God's lead. We must keep our eyes fixed on God and deal with the frequently difficult conditions as only secondary if we are rooted in him. We might get to the point where we can welcome a tough life as a gift from God. We will then pray "Your will be done" and rejoice in everything he calls us to and face our troubles as a chance to engage in faith and trust.

Prayer: Abba Father, help us to understand hardships of life and to live our lives to its fullness. Amen.

Sunday July 31

Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Ecclesiastes
1:2; 2:21-23

Psalm
90:3-6,12-14,17

Colossians
3:1-5,9-11

Luke
12:13-21

Soften our hearts, that we may hear your voice.

In today's society we are constantly driven to accumulate more. The parable in Luke 12 of the rich fool is truly the parable of our times. We may not be greedy as that man in the parable to accumulate wealth, possessions and status, but perhaps at times we had placed our trust on material possessions or found security in a bank balance and sources of income. Let us also remember, that greed takes on different appearances in today's context, it could be greed for more connections on social media.

Perhaps this may also sound a bit unfair or unrealistic, given the financial crisis of our times and the many responsibilities we may face on a daily basis. But the real challenge remains, in the midst of it all, do we hear God's voice of assurance?

In the Gospel proclamation, Jesus assures us as He did his disciples by saying, "Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or about your body, what you will wear...consider the birds, who neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, yet they are fed by God." How much more will Abba Father clothe and feed us, His children? When we lose sight of God's presence, we lose sight of His miracles and wonders. The possibilities that are His and through Him to us His children, seem a distance away. We begin to see doom and gloom. This is when our hearts have begun to be hardened towards God and we stop hearing his voice.

When that happens, someone's unkind words or actions provoke us to reject and not love them. When insecurity creeps in, we act from fear and mess things up and momentarily lose His vision for our lives and for others.

The Lord challenged me, I was serving Him but had neglected the basic command to love others as God loves me. I had stopped hearing His voice which first and foremost calls me to simply love above all else. Bro Lalith once mentioned that we become rebellious when we stop hearing God's voice. As the Psalm reminds us, "if today we hear his voice, let us not harden our hearts."

St Paul exhorts, that we ought to seek the things above, laying aside evil desires, greed, anger, malice and slander, as we have been raised with Christ. Obviously we cannot do this by our strength, only by His grace. How do we hear His voice? Jeremiah 29:13 shows how: when we search for God we will find Him, if we seek God with all our hearts, we begin to hear Him. At the end of our days, we will not be asked what our earthly treasures are, rather what spiritual riches we have accumulated.

Prayer: Abba Father, soften our hearts that we may hear your voice, be assured of your providence and find spiritual treasures in you. Amen.

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Sts. Eulita & Kyriacos

Eulita was born in Asia Minor (present-day Turkey) at the end of the third century. She spent her time in prayer and helping the poor. Eulita was married at a young age, and she bore a son, named Kyriacos. However, shortly after his birth, tragedy struck the family when Eulita's husband suddenly died.

When Kyriacos was about three years old, Emperor Diocletian began his persecutions against the Christians. Worried about her son, Eulita took Kyriacos, along with two of her maids, and traveled to Tarsus. The governor of Tarsus, Alexandros, was also very cruel, and was known for killing Christians with his bare hands.

Eulita and Kyriacos, together with other companions, were soon arrested and brought before Alexandros. Since she could not escape persecution, Eulita realized that it was an invitation from God to martyrdom. She decided in her heart to remain faithful, and to endure all kind of pain until the end. Her only concern was little Kyriacos.

When Eulita was presented to Governor Alexandros, he asked her, "So you follow Jesus whom the Jews crucified!" Her reply was, "I call upon His holy name, though I am not worthy". Alexandros said, "Aren't you scared of death?" Eulita replied, "Governor, you must know by now that all Christians are willing to die for their Lord the Christ. Your cruel tactics and severe abuse will only strengthen their faith". Alexandros became angry, telling his men, "Bring me that child from the Christian woman, and then throw her on the ground, and whip her with lashes made of cow's nerves". The soldiers grabbed Kyriacos from the arms of his mother and gave him to Alexandros. Eulita was then thrown to the ground, and they began to whip her.

The governor looked at Eulita and said, "If you agree to sacrifice to the idols, I promise to release both of you". She replied "Even a child like my son would not accept". He looked at Kyriacos and said, "Son, would you agree to worship the idols?" To everyone's surprise, Kyriacos answered, "Your idols are made of stone and wood. My real God is Jesus Christ". When Eulita heard her son's words, she was filled with courage, and shouted, "I am Christian; I worship the real God Jesus Christ who made heaven and earth". Kyriacos then started yelling, "I am Christian, I am Christian". The governor became angry and threw Kyriacos with all his power to the ground. Kyriacos hit his head against the concrete steps, and died instantly. He was only three years old. She lifted up her eyes to heaven and prayed, "Thank you my Lord for considering Kyriacos worthy of receiving this glorious crown. I ask you now my Savior to take me also". Eulita's words angered the Roman governor, who had her beheaded.

Eulita and Kyriacos were martyred on July 22, 305. Today, parts of Eulita and Kyriacos' relics are preserved at St. Mary's Monastery in the valley of Nitron, Egypt.

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

