

ON OUR KNEES IN HIS HANDS



Saints Louis & Guerin Martin

(Parents of St. Therese)

Memorial: 12 July

JULY 2023 | DAILY READINGS & REFLECTIONS



ON OUR KNEES IN HIS HANDS

JULY
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“Remember that nothing is
small in the eyes of God.
Do all that you do with
love.”

St. Therese of Lisieux

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The Word of God

From a homily of Pope Francis

“The Word of God is for everyone. The Gospel presents us with Jesus always on the move, on his way to others. On no occasion in his public life does he give us the idea that he is a stationary teacher, a professor seated on a chair; on the contrary, we see him as an itinerant, we see him as a pilgrim, travelling through towns and villages, encountering faces and their stories. His feet are those of the messenger announcing the good news of God’s love (cf. Is 52:7-8).

In Galilee of the Gentiles, on the sea route, beyond the Jordan, where Jesus preaches, there was – the text notes – a people plunged into darkness: foreigners, pagans, women and men from various regions and cultures (cf. Mt 4:15-16). Now they too can see the light. And so Jesus “enlarges the boundaries”: the Word of God, which heals and raises up, is not only destined for the righteous of Israel, but for all; he wants to reach those far away, he wants to heal the sick, he wants to save sinners, he wants to gather the lost sheep and lift up those whose hearts are weary and oppressed. In short, Jesus ‘reaches out’ to tell us that God’s mercy is for everyone. Let us not forget this: God’s mercy is for everyone, for each one of us. Each person can say, “God’s mercy is for me.” (Pope Francis)

May the sweet joy of proclaiming the Word of salvation be a consolation and reward for all of us.

Saturday July 1

Twelfth Week in Ordinary Time

Genesis
18:1-15

Luke
1:46-50,53-55

Matthew
8:5-17

The Lord has done great things for us.

We see how great and merciful our God is, when he blessed Abraham and Sarah with a child in their old age. Abraham held on to God’s promise and he was counted as righteous because of his unshakeable faith. The Blessed Mother sings to our Lord “the Mighty One has done great things for me, holy is his name.” God is doing great things among us. We only have to hold on to his promises like Abraham, our Blessed Mother and the centurion. What faith was demonstrated by the centurion in the Gospel proclamation when he said “Lord I am not worthy to have you enter under my roof, but only say a word and my servant will be healed.” It all happened to fulfill what had been said by prophet Isaiah “He took away our infirmities and bore our diseases”. Let us hold on to this great promise believing that Jesus has already taken our sins and diseases on that cross 2000 years ago. He has completely healed us and forgiven us. There are countless times that many believers experienced his mercy and healings through this promise.

Prayer: Abba Father, thank you for setting us free from our sins and healing us.
Amen.

Sunday July 2

Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

2 Kings
4:8-11,14-16

Psalm
89:2-3,16-19

Romans
6:3-4,8-11

Matthew
10:37-42

Sacrifice and pain are part of the journey.

As with all the events and miracles in the life and ministry of Elisha, today's first reading explains and teaches several helpful truths. It strongly illustrates the loving and divine care of God for all his holy ones: young and old, rich, or poor, weak, or powerful. It shows God's concern in the lives of people in all walks of life if they respond to his loving grace. It also reveals the necessity of faith for everyone regardless of their social standing or financial position in life. It explains, "the just shall live by faith," that "without faith it is impossible to please God," and "that which is not of faith is sin."

Today's responsorial psalm explores God's promise to David, a promise based on his love and faithfulness, which says that through a great heir of David God would establish his rule of justice and love forever in our world. We will see that this promised king, also called the Messiah is none other than Jesus Christ who calls us to follow him as our Savior, Lord and King.

Today's Gospel proclamation concludes Jesus' teaching on mission. It is clear that if we are going to walk with Jesus, we have a price to pay. Sacrifice and pain are part of the journey. Discipleship of Jesus develops and expands our vision of the world. Our daily duties of work, community and society opens up to new possibilities when we walk with Jesus. We are welcomed beyond the surface, outside the narrow limits of our selfishness. We are called to enter the depths of life where we meet the wonder of God's love in the normal flow of life.

Today's Gospel proclamation says that those who seek themselves are on the road to self-destruction. Our relationships with God, our loved ones, our community and our world only find life through self-giving. Jesus is clear about this, in the gospels. The way to life is through sacrifice, self-denial, and our daily cross. Our great and continuing temptation is to create a new Jesus in our own image that frees us from the ruthlessness of this clear message.

Let us treat others as if they are Jesus himself. Even if we give a glass of water for someone in need, let us do it lovingly in the name of Jesus. As Saint Teresa of Calcutta said, "Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love." So, what matters is the amount of love we put into our actions. No deed is insignificant in the Lord's eyes. Let us do everything with love and the God of love will reward us accordingly. Let us seek our eternal rewards from the Lord.

Prayer: Abba Father, your love for me means everything.
Help me to put you first today. Amen.

Monday July 3

Feast of Saint Thomas, Apostle

Ephesians
2:19-22

Psalm
117:1-2

John
20:24-29

Do not doubt but believe.

The dignity that we are given in being members of God's household is not something that we have deserved or earned - it is God's gift. Think of all who are estranged, left out or feel marginalized. Think of how our words and attitudes can remind them of their true dignity, can help them to realise that we are called into one family in God. We are connected with the apostles, saints and prophets. Let us remember that we are a dwelling place for God. Let us try to reflect God's generosity by how we live. "To see is to believe." Proof is needed to accept something as a fact. We need some sort of validation. Yet, faith is anchored in what is unseen. Jesus told his disciples that he will rise from the dead on the third day. His words are truth. Why did St. Thomas ask for proof? He is like us. Yet instead of putting him in a bad light for his unbelief, we should thank him for bringing out our own doubts into the open. Because of him, Jesus uttered our assurance: "Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed".

Prayer: Abba Father, I believe in you.
Amen.

Tuesday July 4

Thirteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Genesis
19:15-29

Psalm
26:2-3,9-12

Matthew
8:23-27

Trust in the Lord.

At times, fear makes us feel stuck in our lives. Fear about the future, fear to take a risk, fear to be with someone we love. As a matter of fact, fear for our own life due to these uncertainties, makes it difficult to move forward in faith. I also have come across similar situations, where I feared about my future and that is normal for anyone. However, we should know that we are believing that God is greater. He created everything in the universe and everything is possible to him. In the Holy Scriptures, Joshua 1:9 says: "Do not tremble or be afraid, because the Lord, your God, is with you wherever you go." We have his assurance all the time, wherever we are in this world, what is crucial is our faith. In my life I still have no idea, what the future will bring to me but I have a strong faith which consoles my heart that my God will do something beautiful. He will never leave us orphans. Therefore, let us walk this journey together in faith, no matter what comes along the way since we have God with us. If God is with us who can be against us.

Prayer: Abba Father, let me hold onto you even when it feels difficult.
Amen.

Wednesday July 5

Thirteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Genesis
21:5,8-20

Psalm
34:7-8,10-13

Matthew
8:28-34

The Lord hears the cry of the poor.

In the book of Genesis, we see Abraham acceding to Hagar's request of sending the slave girl and Ishmael away, because Isaac was 'the son of the promise'. God promises a great nation from Ishmael who was Abraham's offspring as well. In the Gospel proclamation, we see the demonic acknowledging Jesus as the Son of God and pleading to be sent into the swine. Meanwhile the drive to eliminate Jesus who was disturbing the peace of that city had begun. God has shown his power and love in our midst many times. Yet there are times when we respond by turning our hearts away. Jesus wants us to experience healing and freedom from our sins of self-centeredness, anger, deception and lust. He wants to enter the darkness in our lives and dispel it with the radiance of his love. Fear turns us away from God. Fear of change and fear of the unknown can paralyze us. Salvation is all about Jesus dying on the cross so that we can be released from these fears and experience the fullness of life, life in its abundance.

Prayer: Abba Father, may the power of your love dispel fears in our lives that we may have life in abundance. Amen.

Thursday July 6

Thirteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Genesis
22:1-19

Psalm
115:1-6, 8-9

Matthew
9:1-8

Sacrifice leads to glory.

The title of today's first reading is: "The testing of Abraham". This title speaks volumes to us. We have certain experiences and challenges in life. These are surprises and often they are not pleasant surprises. Abraham was given such a surprise. In the first reading, there are two important factors we need to emphasize on; Abraham trusted in God's providence, even though the visible sacrifice was Isaac. Also Abraham laid the wood for the holocaust on Isaac's shoulders. The Lord Jesus carried his wood (Cross) on the way to Golgotha to become the holocaust. Often we have a desire to be at the centre of miracles but we do not like to carry the wood (cross). This shows that we have a problem within. We love to be glorified but do not like to become a sacrifice. In the Gospel proclamation Jesus is rebuking the evil thoughts of the scribes. Our critical minds need healing because we harbor evil thoughts. Let us become another Christ by becoming a sacrificial offering and allow him to perform miracles through us.

Prayer: Abba Father, I desire to become another Christ. Therefore let me become an offering. Amen.

Friday July 7

Thirteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Genesis 23:1-4,19;
24:1-8,62-67

Psalm
106:1-5

Matthew
9:9-13

Transforming love.

Today's Gospel proclamation reveals the Lord's heart for sinners and social outcasts. Matthew was a tax collector, working for the Roman authorities who did not pay him much and it was the custom of tax collectors to overcharge people and take the profits for themselves. Matthew would have been seen as socially and morally corrupt and would have made his living through defrauding others of money. But Jesus does not ask him to change. He just says, "follow me". He does not say, "You can only follow me if you give up your sinful lifestyle." There are no conditions to his call. Jesus accepts Matthew as he is and loves him as he is. In the same way Jesus calls us to come to him as we are. We may be sinful, broken or addicted but Jesus calls us to come to him as we are. We may be great sinners but he loves us anyway. He is calling us to come to him and be changed like Matthew. We need to spend more time growing in intimacy with him. In his presence we will be changed and transformed to the person he wants us to be.

Prayer: Abba Father, thank you for your unconditional love that liberates us from our bondages. Amen.

Saturday July 8

Thirteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Genesis
27:1-5,15-29

Psalm
135:1-6

Matthew
9:14-17

Fasting.

In today's Gospel proclamation, Jesus is questioned about fasting. There are various reasons for fasting: humbling oneself before God (Is 58:3-9), strengthening prayer (Tobit 12,8; 2 Chr 20,3), related to almsgiving and as an expression of mourning (Mt 9:15). However the essential point is that a fast is directed towards God and not towards human beings. Jesus is saying to his disciples, since he is with them at that moment, it is a joyful time and there cannot be room for fasting. But he says, a time will come that he will be taken away from them and then they will fast. Similarly in our lives also there are times when we are filled with the love and mercy of Jesus and we experience joy and peace. We also experience chapters in our life, where Jesus seems far away from us. Thus there are various times in our journey. In between times of tribulations and joy are occasions for fasting, to mourn for moving away from God, to strengthen our prayer life, to be charitable towards others and to humble ourselves before God.

Prayer: Abba Father, help us to seek you earnestly in prayer and fasting. May we find joy in knowing, loving and serving you. Amen.

Sunday July 9

Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Zechariah
9:9-10

Psalm 145:
1-2,8-11,13-14

Romans
8:9,11-13

Matthew
11:25-30

What does it mean to truly 'live'?

In his wisdom, God the Father created all that we see and do not see. He gave us an imagination to imagine the unseen. We are all blessed equally but possess different attributes that differentiate us from one another. So then, what does it mean to 'live'?

We all have different definitions to the words 'live/living' that stem from the inner most of our being. Some of us are nurtured by the pressures of this world and some are nurtured by the word of God.

To some 'living' would encompass all that is seen in the physical world and its comforts. To some others 'living' would mean simply being, to allow the circumstances of life to rule their senses. To others, 'living' would mean to take charge over your senses and align it or subject it to the word of God.

Let us look at St. Paul and his message to the Romans in today's second reading: "Consequently brothers and sisters we are not debtors to the flesh to live according to the flesh - for if we live according to the flesh we die - but by the Spirit we put to death the deeds of the flesh."

St. Paul is talking about a life in the Spirit which makes us rise above the pulls of the flesh. What are the pulls of the flesh? In essence is it not an inner most urge to be accepted, appreciated and exalted by people? And if we consider what that really gains us, is it not a temporary feeling of happiness?

When St. Paul says we are not debtors to the flesh, is he not saying that we do not have to prove anything to ourselves, or to people, or those that we mistakenly hold in high esteem?

If we continue living in the flesh we are never going to have perfect peace. We will have strife in the storm, sadness in the plenty and instability in relationships.

On the contrary, a life in the Spirit will be a true and better way to live. A life where we will have peace in the storm, contentment in relationships and joy unending because the Spirit of God that lives inside us will empower us to experience a life of abundance that Jesus talks of. So which way would we choose to live?

The Lord invites all who labour and are burdened to come to him and rest. Let us take up this invitation, surrender our ways of thinking and acting, and learn from him. His example is one of humility. If we are humble, the world might ridicule us, but it is the way that the Lord has shown us. Will we choose the Lord's way?

Prayer: Abba Father, empower us to make the right choices every day.
Amen.

Monday July 10

Fourteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Genesis
28:10-22

Psalm
91:1-4,14-15

Matthew
9:18-26

Strong faith.

Today's readings have a common theme of what God will do in response to our faith. In the First reading, Jacob is given a promise by God in his dream, and he is told that God will bless him with land and descendants as numerous as the dust of the earth. Jacob showed his faith in him by believing in God's promise and immediately worshipping the Lord by erecting a monument to him. In the Responsorial Psalm, the psalmist writes that the Lord said he will rescue and protect anyone who loves and trusts him. It goes on to promise that God will be with us in trouble, and not only will he rescue us, but will also honour us and reward our faith in him. The Gospel proclamation speaks of two people who are healed and brought back to life as a result of their faith. The woman who touched the hem of Jesus' garment was healed of her bleeding and Jesus said that the woman was healed because of her faith. The girl who everyone thought was dead was brought back to life because her father had faith in Jesus.

Prayer: Abba Father, give us the gift of faith.
Help us to hold on to your promises with an unwavering faith. Amen.

Tuesday July 11

Memorial of Saint Benedict, Abbot

Genesis
32:23-33

Psalm
17:1-3,6-8,15

Matthew
9:32-38

The Lord intervenes to conquer us.

The first reading describes the wrestle between Jacob and the angel of God, where God had to get Jacob alone before he dealt with him. Once he was alone, God demanded his attention and he sent his angel to contend with Jacob. Jacob did not wrestle with the man. Instead, a man wrestled with him. Jacob did not start out wanting anything from God; God wanted something from him. God wanted all of Jacob's proud self-reliance and fleshly scheming, and God came to take it, by force if necessary. Before Jacob could be delivered from the hand of his brother, he had to be delivered from his own self-will and self-reliance. Jacob was reduced to the place where all he could do was to hold on to the Lord with everything he had. This is an invaluable place for us to come to: where God conquers us. Even in our lives, the Lord intervenes to conquer us, because we serve a God who is greater than us, and we cannot conquer much of anything until he conquers us.

Prayer: Abba Father, may I hold on to you like Jacob.
Conquer my old nature to bring a new level of trust in you. Amen.

Wednesday July 12

Fourteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Genesis 41:55-57;
42:5-7,17-24

Psalm
33:2-3,10-11,18-19

Matthew
10:1-7

Love leads to repentance.

In today's Gospel proclamation, Jesus is describing the importance of repentance in our discipleship. Repentance is not a one time event in our discipleship. It is a process. It has to take place every day. We cannot say that we have finished repenting and it is complete, but it has to take place frequently. Further, it is not something unusual, the message is also mentioned by Jesus in the parable of the Fig tree and the gardener. We need to know that God's mills grind slow but surely. Repentance is an invitation to believe in the Gospel. Repentance does not happen because of a commandment, it is not an outcome of the knowledge of good and evil. It is about my relationship with God. The more I love God it will lead me towards repentance. Jesus' warning indirectly shows the loving heart of the Father. God's love follows us day in and day out. We are to be vigilant to his voice, beyond signs and symbols. Repentance is the call because God loves us, and how much am I ready to respond to his love?

Prayer: Abba Father, forgive me.
Amen.

Thursday July 13

Fourteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Genesis 44:18-
21,23-29; 45:1-5

Psalm
105:16-21

Matthew
10:7-15

The kingdom of heaven is at hand.

In today's Gospel Proclamation the Lord Jesus speaks to us of our mission here on this earth. We are called to proclaim the Good News, heal the sick and bring deliverance in the mighty name of the Lord Jesus. The power and the authority has already been given to us and we are expected to make known the name of the Lord Jesus and to glorify his mighty name in the world we live in. As it is said "Without cost you have received; without cost you are to give". As we take that step of faith in saying "yes" to the mission to which we have been called, we are assured that we do not have to worry about our own life as every need will be met by the Lord Jesus. In the first reading we see Joseph, sold to slavery by his own brothers. At that time it would have been seen as a cruel act. At the outset it feels as if God abandoned Joseph but God used Joseph to save thousands of lives in Egypt and to deliver his own family from the famine. As I look into my life, can I say that I am carrying out the mission of the Lord?

Prayer: Abba Father, I ask for your grace to be ready to say "Yes" to the mission you have called me to. Amen.

Friday July 14

Fourteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Genesis
46:1-7,28-30

Psalms 37:3-4,
18-19,27-28,39-40

Matthew
10:16-23

Following Christ comes at a price.

In today's Gospel proclamation Jesus warns his disciples of the hardships that are to come. As much as there are blessings in following the way of the Lord, there is also a fair share of suffering. Our sinful ways begin to wither away and a new person starts to emerge from the ashes. As a new creation in the Lord we think, speak and act differently. We no longer despise our enemies, or crack dirty jokes in the office or gossip about others. This change can put us on the bad books of the people we love and share our lives with. Following Christ comes at a price but that is a cross we need to carry willingly. When I started journeying with the Lord I realized I was no longer like my friends. I was at times ridiculed for my beliefs and rumours started to spread. Some even thought I had gone crazy. Carrying this cross among our family, friends and colleagues is not easy. But the Lord gives us the strength of the Holy Spirit. There is true joy in being his disciples even though we may be despised and ridiculed. Are you ready to be his disciple?

Prayer: Abba Father, give me the strength and the grace to persevere as your disciple. Amen.

Saturday July 15

Memorial of Saint Bonaventure, Bishop and Doctor of the Church

Genesis
49:29-32; 50:15-26

Psalms
105:1-4,6-7

Matthew
10:24-33

We are precious in God's eyes.

Jacob and Joseph died confident in God's promises. Joseph trusted God with his circumstances allowing God's perspective of them to lead him. We are invited to walk in surrender and trust in God's plan and timing as we navigate this life full of trials. In my own life's crisis, being the mother of a child living with a long-term medical condition, I assumed God would set me free to worship in joy by first healing my child. I have encountered him at my stumbling moments, I have had a front row seat to his awesome wonder. God has set me free within my crisis to worship in peace and joy as I still wait in hope. Today's word is my Lazarus moment. He is calling me to be bold, to sing his praises and to tell the world of his works. To speak of the things he has done in the darkness of my pain, of the whispered knowledge and understanding of God's truths gently ingrained in my spirit as he leads me in peace and hope. Though I question my worthiness, he whispers "Do not be afraid", he knows all that I truly am and yet he values me.

Prayer: Abba Father, may your glory shine through the scars of my pain. Amen.

Sunday July 16

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Isaiah
55:10-11

Psalms
65:10-14

Romans
8:18-23

Matthew
13:1-23

God sows in abundance.

Today's Gospel proclamation is about the Parable of the Sower. Without a doubt, most of us have read this particular passage of scripture, heard it being proclaimed and listened to the many interpretations of the parable over the years.

Our Lord unpacks the parable so clearly and precisely and there seems to be no room for any more addition. It is so evident that we should receive the seed, which is the Word of God, with an open, receptive heart for it to take root, grow and last. The more we open our hearts in eager yearning, the greater is the opportunity for the seed of the Word of God to produce rich fruits in our lives.

However, what attracts my heart today is not the seed or the condition that it requires to thrive but the Sower. I notice how ignorant and irresponsible he seems to be with the precious seeds, scattering them without giving any thoughts to where they might land.

Putting this into perspective, we see that the Sower is none other than the Lord Jesus himself and what we glimpse today is the nature of his generosity. He is so intent on giving the opportunity to anyone and everyone to hear his precious words, irrespective of the readiness on the receiving end.

As we hear in today's first reading, his word shall not return to him empty but shall accomplish its purpose on earth. In our lives, we have this amazing assurance that the words he has spoken over our lives will produce fruits if we allow them to sink in.

St. Paul in his letter to the Romans speaks about the glory that is revealed to us; our redemption and our adoption as sons and daughters of the Most High.

How privileged we are to be called children of God. We have received such a great calling therefore let us bear fruit.

The sufferings that we go through in this present life, the difficult circumstances we have to face, the never-ending troubles that crop up one after the other, financial difficulties, sickness, mental and physical agonies and the injustice of the world, whatever it may be, let us lift them up to the Father and ask him to speak his word over us.

Let us not allow the cares of the world to rob the joy of God's word that is waiting to take root in our hearts. In a special way, let us remember the many promises our God has given us and believe that these words will bear fruit in our lives.

Prayer: Abba Father, may your Word spoken over our lives take root in our hearts and bear fruits in abundance. Amen.

Monday July 17

Fifteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Exodus
1:8-14,22

Psalm
124:1-8

Matthew
10:34--11:1

Judge not, and you shall not be judged.

Pharaoh feared that the Israelites would one day overpower them and wage war against them with their enemies. One Israelite Son (Moses) was instrumental in liberating the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. Jesus the Son of God redeemed the whole world from slavery to sin. Truly children are a blessing from the Lord, thus we must make all efforts to bring them up according to God's plan. There cannot be any comparison between the sun and moon. This truth applies to our children as well, because they shine in their own time. As the Gospel proclamation further illustrates we need to be open to accept even a little one who comes in the name of the Lord. Anyone, be it a righteous person, a child or any person big or small who comes in the Lord's name has to be accepted and treated right. Whatever we do to such servants of God will surely pay us off and give us a reward. Thus, we need to be careful not to judge or criticize them. May the Lord have the last say or the judgment to reward each of us according to what we have done.

Prayer: Abba Father, let the Holy Spirit guide us with the right attitude and mindset to be your true disciples. Amen.

Tuesday July 18

Fifteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Exodus
2:1-15

Psalm
69:3,14,30-31,33-34

Matthew
11:20-24

Cherish life.

The first reading speaks about the story of Moses, how his mother's intention to save her baby was part of God's plan, to save a nation from the bondage of slavery. Later, as we know Moses was called to liberate the Israelites from oppression in Egypt. Such is the potential of a human life, therefore every life matters in God's eyes. There is dignity and value in every person. It is the right of all human beings to live, thus ways that destroy life are crimes displeasing to God. The Gospel proclamation speaks of repentance. Recalling us to be mindful of all instances where we have not chosen life but have opted for death in our adamant decisions. Moses' mother, and the Blessed Mother are shining examples of opting to do what is pleasing to God, protecting and preserving life generated in their wombs. Their offspring were instrumental in the plan of salvation. Even in impossible situations they stayed firm. Let us pray for all mothers that they may stand firm while facing difficult choices and do what is pleasing to God.

Prayer: Abba Father, bless all mothers, may they be good and prudent women filled with the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Wednesday July 19

Fifteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Exodus
3:1-6,9-12

Psalm
103:1-4,6-7

Matthew
11:25-27

Listen to the Lord.

Being led by the Lord's voice is a gift unlike any other. However, listening to his voice could be a struggle. In Moses' encounter with God, we see that God does not speak until Moses had given him his attention. What we must realise is that God pursues us and makes endless efforts to draw our attention, whether it be through the words of a friend or a scripture verse. The struggle to hear his voice, is our own doing. For he is always speaking and always revealing, but we are not always looking nor listening. Unless we are attentive, we will walk right past the burning bushes he sets aflame to catch our gaze. In today's Gospel proclamation, Jesus declares that God reveals the hidden things to the childlike. Often, we are childish, but not childlike: distracted, stubborn and immature, and not curious, nor pursuant for the ways of God. Childishness will make us run away from a supernaturally burning bush, while childlikeness will make us run to it, eager to learn, and excited to be transformed. Let us enter his presence and listen to him.

Prayer: Abba Father, open my eyes and awaken my soul to recognise your voice. Amen.

Thursday July 20

Fifteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Exodus
3:13-20

Psalm
105:1,5,8-9,24-27

Matthew
11:28-30

God will take care of us.

When we hit a crisis, do we turn to God first? Or do we turn to him when other avenues have failed? Often, I do not turn to God until I have hit rock bottom. If you are in this situation, you are not alone. Today's readings are a comfort for us. God is saying, "Come to me, I will take care of you." In the First Reading, when Moses asks God for his name, God answers "I am who I am" (Exodus 3:14). This name signifies his presence. He wants the Israelites to know that he is there to take care of them and will save them from their oppressors. He not only wants to save his people, but he also wants to provide for them. He says "I will even make the Egyptians so well-disposed toward this people that, when you go, you will not go empty-handed." This is the God the Israelites believed in, and this is the same God we believe in. He wants to take care of us, save us and provide for us. The Lord is calling us to come to him once again. He gives us an assurance that when we come to him, he will give us rest. He will take care of us.

Prayer: Abba Father, I pray that in the deepest crisis of my life, I will find my way to you. Thank you for always taking care of me. Amen.

Friday July 21

Fifteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Exodus
11:10--12:14

Psalm
116:12-13,15-18

Matthew
12:1-8

Love gives life.

The Gospel proclamation shows the human and practical side of Jesus. The Lord asks us to move away from being legalistic about the word of God and to understand it in its true spirit. "The way, the truth and the life", is over and above the law. The Lord teaches us that we need to serve others than be constricted by the Law. I recall how our family decided at one point that we will try to help people who come to our home seeking financial help, and that we will try to not judge nor turn away when a beggar approaches us. We believed that one day the person asking will have to answer to God if what was given was misused but we would try not to turn a blind eye to someone in need just because one or two have been dishonest. Many are the instances that the Lord healed and delivered people on a Sabbath day. If I go for Church services and refuse to help someone who is in a medical emergency and needs my time and resources to go to a hospital on a Sunday, what good is it? Above everything else, let us love others.

Prayer: Abba Father, bless me with the same compassion you have so that I may serve as you desire. Amen.

Saturday July 22

Feast of Saint Mary Magdalene

Song of Songs
3:1-4

Psalm
63:2-6,8-9

John
20:1-2,11-18

I found him whom my heart loves.

I am reminded of this iconic line from season 1 of the TV series "Chosen", where the actress who plays Mary Magdalene shares her experience of her encounter with Jesus; "I was one way, and now I am completely different, and the thing that happened in between...was him." Beautiful words which summarize what it is like for anyone who encounters Jesus. Mary Magdalene was a great saint of God, called as 'the Apostle to the Apostles'. Like many of us, in her hour of deep turmoil and sadness she did not recognise the Lord who was near her. But she stayed on instead of giving up, seeking him with all her heart. And the Lord met her face to face, heart to heart, calling her by name and entrusting her with the message of his resurrection. As King Solomon writes can we also truly say of the Lord, "I have found him whom my heart loves?" On this feast day let us bring to mind and lift a prayer of thanksgiving for all the people who have reflected Christ in our own lives and inspired us to journey deeper with him.

Prayer: Abba Father, heal me of my inner wounds and empower me to share the message of the resurrection with those I encounter. Amen.

Sunday July 23

Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Wisdom
12:13,16-19

Psalms 86:5-6,
9-10,15-16

Romans
8:26-27

Matthew
13:24-43

Be guided by the Spirit.

Today's readings have a message for those who desire true wisdom, not that of this world but divine wisdom. We who have been baptised into Christ, have this wisdom stamped in our hearts, and this wisdom is a person, namely the Holy Spirit.

Today's readings are yet another proof that all instructions we need to live this life in peace, joy and victory are found nowhere else other than in God's Word. Yet, how often do we suffer simply because we do not know his Word and his ways.

As I reflected on today's First Reading, my mind went to the time of my children's infancy, how their helplessness and absolute dependence on me as their mother made me soft and tender towards them.

My heart was big enough to smile at any mess they created, freeing them from being accountable for any action of theirs though I had power and authority over them. If I was that generous, how much more would God be, when he deals with us his children, and with the whole creation, knowing we are totally defenceless before him.

Today's Gospel proclamation is related to the same principle, namely God's sovereignty and mercy. He is powerful to act when he chooses, and that makes him mild and gentle, quick to forgive and slow to anger. As our Father, he invites us to do the same.

Yet, how often do we do just the opposite, being too quick to get angry and react, wielding power over those under our authority instead of giving mercy and forgiveness.

As was said in the parable of weeds, how often do we destroy the good in people, trying to correct them at the wrong time in the wrong manner. How many parents are suffering because they did not use this wisdom when they disciplined their young children. Along with their wrong ways they ended up destroying their personality and confidence as well.

We need to learn from the scriptures and not from the world. If we seek the Lord's ways our actions will be more fruitful and we will not hurt others.

Let us repent and turn towards our Merciful Father, who takes us in his arms, the moment we take the first step towards him. Let us ask the Holy Spirit, to give us his Wisdom, so that we can be filled with his fruits: love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Then we will be able to live our earthly life victoriously and not as victims of our circumstances.

Prayer: Abba Father, fill us anew with the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Monday July 24

Sixteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Exodus
14:5-18

Exodus
15:1-6

Matthew
12:38-42

Do not worry.

In today's first reading, we see how the Israelites were unable to keep their faith when their enemies were coming closer to them. It may sometimes be easy to cling to the Word of God or trust in him when things are going well. But the hardest hurdle is when we are overwhelmed by problems and we feel like there is no escape. The Lord is aware of what we are going through. Therefore, we should not worry about anything. We have the Lord beside us. We need to take one day at a time and leave the rest in his hands. The Gospel proclamation reminds us of the biggest sign God gave us - his own Son. He is living with us and coming to us through the Holy Eucharist to live within us and fight for us. We need to believe in his passion, death and resurrection. We need to cling to this truth in our lives. Though problems are behind us, chasing us to be miserable, be assured that they can never overwhelm us, that God's power is going to be above our issues, and that his glory is about to unfold in our lives.

Prayer: Abba Father, forgive me for letting the noise of this world drown your voice. I believe you are here with me and you are aware of everything. Amen.

Tuesday July 25

Feast of Saint James, Apostle

2 Corinthians
4:7-15

Psalm
126:1-6

Matthew
20:20-28

The road less travelled.

We often prefer to travel on the easier road in life, the road which is triumphant, the road which gives us quick results, the road which brings recognition and acceptance. But what about the road less travelled? The road of suffering. This is the cup the Lord Jesus is talking about in today's readings. The mother of Zebedee's sons, longed for her sons to be accepted, recognised, and receive the best seats in the Kingdom of heaven. But little did she know that in the kingdom of God, people are exalted by God when they are humble before others; when they take the road less travelled. This path is only possible to those who choose to live, walk and talk like the Lord Jesus did. When we choose to say "yes" to him, it comes at a price, for it is the road less travelled. But this road, brings us joy and fulfilment at the depths. It helps us experience true peace in our hearts even when there is turmoil around us. Our eternal reward is when we meet our King and are crowned in his glory.

Prayer: Abba Father, fill me with the Holy Spirit and give me the grace to walk on the path you have chosen for me. Amen.

Wednesday July 26

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

Exodus
16:1-5,9-15

Psalm
78:18-19,23-28

Matthew
13:1-9

What type of ground am I?

God satisfied the hunger of his chosen people in the desert by giving them bread from heaven. It challenges us to see who we depend on, to satisfy our needs. The Psalmist refers to manna as 'Heavenly Bread'. As Jesus said, the true bread is his body. In today's Gospel proclamation, the parable of the sower speaks of the importance of listening to God's Word as it is fruitful and effective. The Word of God is symbolised by the Sower as Jesus Christ himself. Jesus tells us of four types of ground the seeds could fall upon. First is the path where the word is taken away by worldly distractions. Second is stony ground when we hear the Word with enthusiasm and fade away due to disturbances and discomfort. Third is thorny ground where it is choked and does not bear fruit. Fourth is good ground as it takes root and bears much fruit, representing those who hear the Word, embrace it, safeguard it and practice it. Each one of us is ground on which the seed falls. We can ask ourselves what type of ground our hearts are.

Prayer: Abba Father, prepare my heart to receive the words of your Son and live it. Amen.

Thursday July 27

Sixteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Exodus
19:1-2,9-11,16-20

Daniel
3:52-56

Matthew
13:10-17

God chooses people.

Today's first reading describes God's revelation of himself to his people. Moses was the chosen person for God to minister to his people. The role of the chosen person is to carry out the necessary instructions, which Moses did. People were prepared to meet their God. The presence of God made them tremble and they experienced the presence of God. It was important for God that his people trust Moses. One way that we could identify God's chosen people is the life conduct and obedience to God's instructions. Those who adhere to the Word of God are chosen persons. At present we see the thirst of the people to see and hear God. Majority of people often see and hear God through the chosen instruments of God. We see an important dialogue in the Gospel proclamation. Figurative speech is used for people to understand. God who is in human form was explaining the secrets of heaven. Those who would hear the Word and wait upon the Lord would be given more wisdom. Let us be vigilant.

Prayer: Abba Father, grant me grace to hear and see you through your Word and become a doer of your Word. Amen.

Friday July 28

Sixteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Exodus
20:1-17

Psalm
19:8-11

Matthew
13:18-23

Spend time with God.

The Lord always speaks to his people, showing them the path of righteousness for their own good. Today's first reading, sets out the ten commandments to the Israelites coming out of slavery to teach them and form them into a nation that lives in righteousness. Listening to the word of God and adhering to it makes our lives bear much fruit. Today's Gospel proclamation sets out the explanation given by Jesus of the parable of the sower. God's word is freely available to us at all times. However the question is whether our hearts are ready to receive the word of God and act on it. Today we live in a world that is captivated by a busy lifestyle. Therefore, it is important that we consciously set time aside to sit at the feet of the Lord in prayer, read the scriptures, attend Holy Mass and receive the sacraments. Failing to do so, will easily lead us to a life that is unfruitful. Let us make a firm decision to constantly keep nourishing ourselves with the word of God, that we may live a life pleasing to him and bear fruit for his glory.

Prayer: Abba Father, fill me with your Holy Spirit that I may be enlightened by your word. Amen.

Saturday July 29

Memorial of Saints Martha, Mary and Lazarus

Exodus
24:3-8

Psalm 50:1-2,
5-6,14-15

Luke
10:38-42

The Lord is waiting to enter our homes.

In today's Gospel proclamation, the Lord enters the house of Martha, Mary and Lazarus. His presence makes it a holy and rewarding place. Our home too is meant to be such when we welcome the Lord. Welcoming him entails listening to his words and abiding by it. The purpose being to allow the Lord to be involved in looking after the family. Thus our's too could become a holy and blessed family. Many families do not listen to his teachings. No wonder we are anxious, worried and troubled. Then shocked when drugs, misbehavior, disobedience, broken marriages and unfaithfulness enter our homes. The Lord invites us to listen to the secrets of the Kingdom. Thus we need to live and teach our spouse and children to tell the truth, forgive one another and fight against personal dishonesty and cheating. God would then reign supreme in our homes. Marriages shall remain secure, children become capable leaders, having the backbone and wisdom to stand up for what is right and be fearless in going against every form of injustice.

Prayer: Abba Father, we surrender our families to you.
Amen.

Sunday July 30

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

1 Kings
3:5,7-12

Psalm 119:57,
72,76-77,127-130

Romans
8:28-30

Matthew
13:44-52

The kingdom of heaven.

Today's Gospel proclamation gives us some of the parables Jesus used to explain the "kingdom of heaven".

A kingdom needs a king. Living under the lordship of Jesus Christ is living in the kingdom of heaven. Some of the characteristics of this kingdom are: inner peace even in the midst of turmoil, experience of love that makes one feel secure and joy that comes from within even in the midst of loss, pain and crisis. Let us examine our hearts and see if this is true to us. If not we need to find our way back into the kingdom. Even if we are experiencing peace, love and joy at this moment, we need to hold onto it, as even trivial matters may make us lose it.

Jesus says that the kingdom of heaven is hidden and it has to be found. This is the reason that many Christians are unable to grasp the importance of spiritual exercises. An invitation to a social event is accepted gladly, whereas an invitation to a spiritual program is rejected and may even be ridiculed. This is the blindness to the kingdom of heaven. Baptism and remaining in the Holy Spirit opens the kingdom to us.

We cannot serve two masters. One could be a slave to money, desires and addictions or live under the lordship of Christ. What we think about mostly and what captures our mind is our master and idol.

Jesus says the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant searching for fine pearls. We cannot find the kingdom by leading mediocre lives. Falling at the feet of Jesus in repentance at every fall is the path to trod. Jesus is clear, that sacrifice is necessary to be in the kingdom.

As we journey, we may detect through life experiences, the areas in our lives that are not under the lordship of Christ. Prayer, repentance and surrender brings us back to the kingdom. The sacrament of reconciliation will fill us with the Holy Spirit.

Jesus tells about a net that is let down into the lake. People of different races from all the world are baptised as Christians. They are in the net that was let down. But it is clear that not all will receive eternal life as there is a judgement.

Although the Church has given us the opportunity to enter the kingdom through the sacrament of baptism, we have our free will to decide whether we want to continue on that path or not.

Today let us pray for those who are blind to the kingdom of heaven, that God in his mercy will make a way for them to rediscover the path and return home.

Prayer: Abba Father, fill us with the Holy Spirit
and give us the grace to seek your kingdom. Amen.

Monday July 31

Memorial of Saint Ignatius of Loyola, Priest

Exodus
32:15-24,30-34

Psalm
106:19-23

Matthew
13:31-35

What are you doing in your moments of waiting?

Moses had gone to fellowship with God on Mount Horeb and he took some time to return. It was during that time that the people lost patience with Moses and urged Aaron to fashion a golden calf. Like the people of Israel, we also fellowship with an unseen but loving God. Because we fail to see him or recognise his presence around us, we lose track and begin to fashion our own idols thereby displeasing God. In today's Gospel proclamation, the mustard seed signifies the kingdom of God within us. This seed, unseen to the human eye, along time, takes root and branches out into a significant plant. Often in times of plenty and smooth sailing we may fail to feel or see the tree growing within us. What is meant to give shade and comfort to others becomes forgotten and neglected. It was when St Ignatius of Loyola was made to lie on a hospital bed that the call of God came to him. What could have been considered a waste of time, was the time of his renewal and growth. What are we doing in our moments of waiting?

Prayer: Abba Father, while I am waiting for your light to shine may I light a candle of faith and love and hold on no matter what the odds are. Amen.

Doctors of the Church?

These are saints who, through their research, study, and writing, have advanced the Church's knowledge of our faith. To be declared a Doctor of the Church implies that the whole body of their work, taken together serves to advance the cause of Christ and his Church.

The title was first given in the Middle Ages, and originally, there were four great Doctors of the Church: St. Ambrose, 4th century bishop of Milan, St. Augustine, 5th century bishop of Hippo, St. Gregory the Great, who was pope at the start of the 7th century, and St. Jerome, the 5th century biblical scholar and translator. Over the years the church has added about 30 additional saints with the title "Doctor of the Church," including St. Bonaventure, whose feast day is celebrated on July 15.

Since 1970, four women have also been declared "Doctors of the Church": St. Teresa of Avila; St. Catherine of Siena; St. Thérèse of Lisieux; and St. Hildegard of Bingen, who was declared a Doctor of the Church by Pope Benedict XVI. Most recently, in February 2015, Pope Francis declared Armenian poet and monk, St. Gregory of Narek, a Doctor of the Church.

All these Doctors of the Church advanced the knowledge of God through their writing on theology, spirituality, mysticism, or through their defense of the faith in the face of heresy and schism.

Let the peoples recount the wisdom of the Saints,
and let the Church proclaim their praise. (Sir 44:15,14)

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Sts. Louis & Guerin Martin

Louis Martin, born on 22 August 1823, and Guérin Martin, born on 23 December 1831, were a French Roman Catholic couple and the parents of five nuns, including Thérèse of Lisieux.

Louis was the third of five children. He intended to become a monk, wishing to enter the "Augustinian Great St. Bernard Monastery", but was rejected because he did not succeed at learning Latin. Later he decided to become a watchmaker.

Guérin was the second daughter of Isidore Guérin. She had an older sister, Marie, who became a Visitandine nun, and a younger brother, who was a pharmacist. She wanted to become a nun, but was turned away by the "Sisters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul" due to respiratory difficulties and recurrent headaches. She then prayed to God to give her many children, so she could consecrate them to God. She later decided to become a lacemaker. She fell in love with Louis and married him in 1858.

Although the couple lived celibately for ten months after their wedding, they decided to consummate their marriage after a spiritual director encouraged them to do so. They had nine children, but only five daughters survived, while the other four children died at infancy.

Guérin died of breast cancer on 28 August 1877, aged 45, leaving her husband and daughters. Her funeral was held in the basilica where she had married Louis. In 1889 Louis suffered two paralyzing strokes, and was hospitalised for three years. In 1892 he returned to Lisieux, where two of his daughters looked after him until his death on 29 July 1894. He was 70 years old.

Louis and Guérin Martin were canonized as saints by Pope Francis on 18 October 2015.

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.

