

2014 Jun 1 SUN: ASCENSION OF THE LORD S (Seventh Sunday of Easter)

Acts 1: 1-11/ Ps 47: 2-3. 6-7. 8-9 (6)/ Eph 1: 17-23/ Mt 28: 16-20

Why did Jesus leave his beloved apostles forty days after his resurrection? Forty is a significant number in the scriptures. Moses went to the mountain to seek the face of God for forty days in prayer and fasting. The people of Israel were in the wilderness for forty years in preparation for their entry into the Promised Land. Elijah fasted for forty days as he journeyed in the wilderness to the mountain of God. For forty days after his resurrection Jesus appeared numerous times to his disciples to assure them that he had risen indeed and to prepare them for the task of carrying on the work which he began during his earthy ministry.

Jesus' departure and ascension into heaven was both an end and a beginning for his disciples. While it was the end of Jesus' physical presence with his beloved disciples, it marked the beginning of Jesus' presence with them in a new way. Jesus promised that he would be with them always to the end of time. He assured them of his power - a power which meant to overcome sin and death. Now as the glorified and risen Lord and Saviour, ascended to the right hand of the Father in heaven, Jesus promised to give them the power of his Holy Spirit, which we see fulfilled ten days later on the Feast of Pentecost (Luke 24:49 and Acts 2:1-4). When the Lord Jesus departed physically from the apostles, they were not left alone or powerless. Jesus assured them of his presence and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus' last words to his apostles point to his saving mission and to their mission to be witnesses of his saving death and his glorious resurrection and to proclaim the good news of salvation to the entire world. Their task is to proclaim the good news of salvation, not only to the people of Israel, but to all the nations. God's love and gift of salvation is not just for a few, or for a nation, but it is for the whole world for all who will accept it. The gospel is the power of God, the power to forgive sins, to heal, to deliver from evil and oppression, and to restore life. Do you believe in the power of the gospel?

This is the great commission which the risen Christ gives to the whole church. All believers have been given a share in this task to be the heralds of the good news and ambassadors for Jesus Christ, the only saviour of the world. We have not been left alone in this task, for the risen Lord

works in and through us by the power of his Holy Spirit. Today we witness a new Pentecost as the Lord pours out his Holy Spirit upon his people to renew and strengthen the body of Christ and to equip it for effective ministry and mission world-wide.

2014 Jun 2 Mon: Easter Weekday/ Marcellinus and Peter, mts

Acts 19: 1-8/ Ps 68: 2-3ab. 4-5acd. 6-7ab/ Jn 16: 29-33

How did Jesus convince his disciples that he was the Son of God? Jesus could read their hearts like an open book. He answered their questions before they could even speak them out. And he showed them the glory of God. For a Christian, believing in God cannot be separated from believing in the One he sent, that is his beloved Son, in whom the Father is well pleased. We can believe in Jesus because he is himself divine and human, the Word made flesh. Because he has seen the Father, Jesus is the only one who knows him and can reveal him. Our faith is certain because it is founded on the very word of God who cannot lie. Faith is already the beginning of eternal life. Basil the Great says: "When we contemplate the blessings of faith even now, as if gazing at a reflection in a mirror, it is as if we already possessed the wonderful things which our faith assures us we shall enjoy one day."

In spite of their belief, Jesus warned his disciples that their faith would be put to the test and that they would fail. Jesus spoke plainly about the tragedy of betrayal and the triumph of the cross. Jesus knew the hearts of his disciples better than they knew. He knew they would desert him in the hour of trial. Such knowledge could have easily led to bitterness and rejection. Jesus met the injury of betrayal and disloyalty with supreme love and trust in his disciples. He loved his disciples to the very end even when they left him alone to die on the cross. He knew that the cross would not bring defeat but victory over sin and death. Jesus speaks the same word to us today. "My love for you is unconditional and I will never abandon you". While we cannot avoid all pain and suffering in this life, Jesus, assures us that he will guide us safely through any difficulty or trial we may have to undergo for his sake. Jesus calls each of us to take courage, because he has overcome the world. The Holy Spirit gives us a living hope in the power of the resurrection and a confident trust in God's abiding presence. Nothing can overcome this faith

and hope in Christ's victory -- no trial, suffering, temptation, or testing. The Holy Spirit gives us the strength and courage we need to overcome adversity and to persevere in faith.

2014 Jun 3 Tue: Charles Lwanga & co., mts M

Acts 20: 17-27/ Ps 68: 10-11. 20-21/ Jn 17: 1-11a

In his Last Supper discourse Jesus speaks of his glory and the glory of his Father. What is this glory? It is the cross which Jesus speaks. How does the cross reveal his glory? In the cross God reveals the breadth of his great love for sinners and the power of redemption which cancels the debt of sin and reverses the curse of our condemnation. Jesus gave his Father the supreme honour and glory through his obedience and willingness to go to the cross. The greatest honour, trust, and love any person can give one's leader is through his obedience even to the point of sacrificing his own life. In warfare the greatest honour belongs not to those who survive but to those who give the supreme sacrifice of their own lives for their fellow countrymen. Jesus also speaks of the Father bringing glory to the Son through the great mystery of the Incarnation and Cross of Christ. God the Father gave us his only begotten Son for our redemption and deliverance from slavery to sin and death. There is no greater proof of God's love for each and every person on the face of the earth than the Cross of Jesus Christ. In the cross we see a new way of love — a love that is unconditional, sacrificial and generous beyond comprehension.

Jesus also speaks of eternal life. What is eternal life? It is more than simply endless time. Science today looks for ways to extend the duration of life; but that doesn't necessarily make life better for us here. Eternal life is qualitative more than quantitative. To have eternal life is to have the life of God within us. When we possess eternal life we experience here and now something of God's majesty, his peace, joy and love and the holiness which characterizes the life of God. Jesus also speaks of the knowledge of God. Jesus tells his disciples that they can know the only true God. Knowledge of God is not simply limited to knowing something about God, but we can know God personally. The essence of Christianity, and what makes it distinct from Judaism and other religions, is the knowledge of God as our Father. Jesus makes it possible for each of us to personally know God as our Father. To see Jesus is to see what God is like. In Jesus we see the perfect love of God — a God who cares intensely and who yearns over

men and women, loving them to the point of laying down his life for them upon the Cross. Jesus is the revelation of God a God who loves us completely, unconditionally and perfectly.

2014 Jun 4 Wed: Easter Weekday

Acts 20: 28-38/ Ps 68: 29-30. 33-35a. 35bc-36ab/ Jn 17: 11b-19

In today's reading he begins by reminding them that they are to carry out the responsibility implied in their title. So he instructs them to take to heart all the teachings he gave them over a period of three years. On the other hand, he is not in debt to them. He never asked for money or clothing from anyone. His needs and those of his companions were served by his own hands. This is something he has mentioned more than once with some pride and satisfaction. On the contrary his concerns have always been those who are weak and in need. And he quotes words of Jesus: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." A saying which, incidentally, is not quoted in any of the gospels but there must be many of Jesus' sayings which did not get recorded in writing. The passage concludes with the highly emotional departure scene with prayers and tears and much kissing and embracing. They believed they were never more to see the father of their church. In fact, they were to meet briefly once more. There certainly is a good deal here for our own reflection. We have to be ready for our Christian communities today to come under attack, but hopefully without good reason. We have to admit, too, that there are often divisions among us and that we can twist the words of the Gospel to suit ourselves and our own interests. We need to ask to what extent we really do take care of the weaker ones among us. We cannot separate the needs of the body from that of the spirit.

In the gospel reading we see Jesus praying for his loving disciples. We can just imagine Jesus' desire to share with us all that He received from the Father. "I have given them Your Word, and the world has hated them for it." In our baptism, Jesus has literally infused in us a new life, not of our own making but the very life that makes God live. Of course we are going to value things very differently from the rest of the world. Jesus doesn't give a new philosophy or way of thinking that affects the way we live. He is Himself our very life. Give me Christ: I need no more. When the scales are lifted from our eyes and our heart becomes less of a prison of all the appetites that inflict the soul of a person, we come to know that there is only one Good, and that is God Himself as He is revealed so perfectly in Jesus. There can be no other word uttered by mankind that will express more perfectly the love God has for us. Jesus is that final Word of God's sacrificial love for us.

We keep that Word true and are consecrated or set apart by allowing all of our thinking, planning, deciding and actions to be penetrated by God's Holy Word. Anything, thought, feeling or action that helps us to experience God's greatness and loveliness in Jesus is to be cherished. We can never have too much of this kind of thinking and behaviors that make Christ so present to us. It's not that we have to do anything extraordinary, but everything we do, even the most menial of tasks become jewels on the crown of our soul when done out of love for God Who is so worthy of our constant attention and desires. Indeed, our consecration to this Truth in Christ

Jesus is a great gift that God wants to be ablaze in all of our life. What are your plans for the rest of the day? Pick one thing, and let the Lord know you are so grateful for His gift of life and love in Jesus. Let Him know that you intend to do this one task just out of love and appreciation to Him. As we do, watch the joy of the Lord burst in your heart, even when God's love requires great sacrifice on your part.

2014 Jun 5 Thu: Boniface, bp, mt M

Acts 22: 30; 23: 6-11/ Ps 16: 1-2a and 5. 7-8. 9-10. 11/ Jn 17: 20-26

In the first reading we see Paul's behaviour in this situation is a good example of Jesus' advice to his disciples to be simple as doves and as wise as serpents! Paul was more than ready to suffer for his Lord but he was no pushover. While we, too, are to be prepared to give witness to our faith even with the sacrifice of our lives, and never to indulge in any form of violence against those who attack us, we are not asked to go out of our way to invite persecution or physical attacks. That is not the meaning of the injunction to carry our cross. Jesus himself often took steps to avoid trouble. Joan of Arc defended herself as did Thomas More and, indeed as Jesus himself did during his trial: "If I have said something wrong, why do you strike me?" But, like them, we will try never to evade death or any other form of hostility by compromising the central teaching of our faith.

The Gospel reading is part of Jesus' prayer for unity among his followers. It comes from his long discourse during the Last Supper as given to us in John's gospel. In this particular part of the prayer, he is praying not for those disciples who are with him at the supper but "for those who will believe in me through their word". Jesus prays that "they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you sent me". For this is the way that people will come to recognize the true identity of Jesus. To be a follower of Jesus is not simply to believe in him and lead a good life. It is not to see the Church as some kind of organization outside of me but to which I go to get the 'graces' I need to be a good person, to keep the commandments and as a place where I can carry out my 'religious obligations' and in the end 'save my soul'.

This prayer for unity among the followers of Christ reflects the life work of Irenaeus. He spent his life dealing with false interpretations of the Christian messages, whether it was the Montanists, or the Gnostics as well as others. All these movements tended to bring great divisions and were a cause of confusion among many Christians. To be a follower of Jesus is essentially to be a follower with and through others. The Christian life is essentially communal. And Jesus is saying here that the most potent witness we can give of who he is, is that we who claim to follow him do so as part of a fellowship. It is said that in the early Church there was a saying: "See those Christians how they love one another!" That was one of the most striking characteristics to the pagan eye, namely, that people who came from different ethnic and social backgrounds could live together in such harmony. This was something strange to societies which strongly and defensively identified with their own group.

2014 Jun 6 Fri: Easter Weekday/ Norbert, bp, rf

Acts 25: 13b-21/ Ps 103: 1-2, 11-12, 19-20ab/ Jn 21: 15-19

The main point of dispute in the first reading is a dead man named Jesus who Paul claimed was alive. The phrasing reveals Festus's attitude toward Christ's resurrection and innocently communicates the prominent role it played in Paul's defense. Though more general references to "resurrection of the dead" have peppered Paul's defense, we now know that Jesus' resurrection is the central point of contention. Paul certainly made that clear in his speech before the temple mob. Paul began with the objective historical fact of the resurrection, and so must we. It is the essential foundation for any supernatural working whereby we come to our "defining moment" of meeting our risen Savior and entering into a personal relationship with him. Paul became a real witness of Christ. It is the fulfillment of the words of Jesus before his ascension: "You will be my witnesses not only in Jerusalem but throughout Judea and Samaria, and indeed to the ends of the earth." Once again, we see the finger of God behind every action of every person in the story. His finger is in our life stories too. Can we see that? And where will we find him in today's experiences?

In the gospel reading we see Jesus asked to his disciple. "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" Jesus is thinking that Peter must speak the words out in a loud declaration for his own good. Especially after he loudly denied our Lord three times. Peter affirms: "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Now it is time for Jesus to give Peter directions. Jesus is preparing for his Ascension and he appears to give Peter singular responsibility. Jesus asks Peter to "Feed my lambs." Peter must feed Jesus' flock. Jesus is not finished. "Do you love me?" Didn't Peter just answer this? Doesn't this seem to be a "really?" from Jesus? Or is he simply pushing Peter for a deeper meditation on what it means to love Jesus? So Peter again affirms "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus asks him to "Tend my sheep." Is there a difference between tending the sheep and feeding them? Does it mean to guard them as well as teach them? Jesus does not explain.

"Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" Wouldn't we be grieved if our beloved Jesus asked this three times? After all, we don't want to consider that he may doubt our love. And yet, let us think of our own lives for a moment. Have there been times when we turned away from Jesus? In our sinfulness have we denied Jesus our whole hearts? Have we placed worldly things ahead of him? Have we at times focused our lives on sex, power or money instead of our relationship with God? Are we always deeply aware of, and bold in our gratitude for, all that God has done for us? No? Then perhaps Jesus may be moved to ask us more than once "do you love me?" Maybe he is asking us this every time we turn away from him. Hundreds or thousands of times in our lives. How many times has he had to ask me "do you love me?" Perhaps, as with Peter, our Lord wished us to replace every denial, every sin, with a statement of love for him. "And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep." Jesus asks for Peter to answer the question. But Jesus clearly asks Peter not just for words, but also for action. Feed my lambs (little ones?), tend my sheep, feed my sheep. Love is fulfilled by action. Love without action is dead.

2014 Jun 7 Sat: Easter Weekday

Acts 28: 16-20. 30-31/ Ps 11: 4. 5 and 7/ Jn 21: 20-25

In today's first reading we have the scene of Paul meeting with Jews in Rome. Here Paul is concerned about clarifying his position with regard to Jews because he does not want the accusations brought against him and the trial to make him seem like a traitor to his nation. By doing this he was able to live two more years without any hindrance there. He was able to proclaim the Kingdom of God and taught the truth about Jesus Christ quite openly. This reading invites us to speak out in times of misunderstanding and make ourselves clear to others this will enable ourselves to be free before others.

In the Gospel reading we see the fundamental Mission of the beloved disciple. His task is to remain in the love of the master and to bear witness to the revelation of Jesus, linking the community to the world. In this passage Peter is keen to know the mission of the other apostle known as the beloved disciple of Jesus. The answer of Jesus to Peter suggests in a way that he should not be too much preoccupied with this. However the answer has the following significance in the context of witnessing Christ. It does not matter how long we live but how we live our life matters much more than this. Peter became a Martyr for Christ and John gave witness to Jesus through a life of fidelity and faithfulness. How we die is as equal as how we lived our life. John was able to give witness to God's love. All of us are called to witness to God's love in different ways. It does not matter how we witness, what matters is whether we are ready to witness it or not.

2014 Jun 8 SUN: PENTECOST S

Vigil: Gn 11: 1-9 or Ex 19: 3-8a. 16-20b or Ez 37: 1-4 or Jl 3: 1-5/ Ps 104: 1-2. 24. 35. 27-28.

29. 30/ Rom 8: 22-27/ Jn 7: 37-39. Day: Acts 2: 1-11/ Ps 104: 1. 24. 29-30. 31. 34/ 1 Cor 12: 3b-7. 12-13/ Sequence Veni Sancte Spiritus/ Jn 20: 19-23

Today is a great day of rejoicing for the Church. The Holy Spirit has been poured out on us. Divine life has been infused into human hearts! The Holy Church of God was born today. The whole Church rejoices for the gift of God's own Spirit who is her Comforter and Counsellor.

On the first Pentecost the Holy Spirit encircled the disciples with love. The Holy Spirit whispered encouragement to the disciples. The Holy Spirit transformed the feeble efforts of the disciples into something powerful. Holy Spirit can take whatever we have and transform it into something powerful and beautiful. The Holy Spirit lives within us. Pentecost Sunday reminds us to encircle our dear ones with more love. Today we are reminded to whisper some more encouragement to them. Our love and encouragement can transform their feeble efforts into something beautiful and powerful.

For the apostles the descent of the Holy Spirit was something very powerful. For them, this event meant they were no longer same fear-stricken, ignorant men. Fear had given way to courage. Until then they had stayed behind closed doors. But now they were ready to march out boldly into the open. They stepped out with undying faith in the indwelling spirit and were constantly amazed at His power working in and through them. Nothing could stop them, so animated were they by the Spirit.

The out pouring of the Holy Spirit had an effect on the community as a whole as well. After Jesus' death the disciples were in disarray. Now they found new strength in their oneness. "They were united in heart and mind" (Acts 2:45). At first feeling utterly helpless and leaderless without Jesus, they were now ready to venture forth, at the prompting of the Holy Spirit, with a new self confidence, enthusiasm and initiative.

In the second reading, Paul reminds us that the gifts of the Spirit are given for the purpose of building up the Body of Christ. In our baptism and confirmation we too received the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes we too use these gifts selfishly rather than for uniting and strengthening our faith community.

Often it is a feeling of insecurity over the gifts of others that force us to act in such a way. This results in defensiveness and division. On this day of Pentecost the Spirit comes again to free us from this fear and insecurity.

Another obstacle to forming a loving community of believers is lack of forgiveness. Given the fact that each of us is different from others in many respects, conflicts do arise. If there is to be unity in diversity, we must be willing to forgive one another again and again. Each time we recognize the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives and accept His help, we experience Pentecost in our lives.

Today we pray for the gifts of the Spirit, which help us to overcome prejudices and divisions. May the Spirit lead us to understand those who are different from us, and come together in acceptance and in mutual help, in a community of faith, hope and love.

2014 Jun 9 Mon: Ordinary Weekday/ Ephrem of Syria, d, dr

1 Kgs 17: 1-6/ Ps 121: 1bc-2. 3-4. 5-6. 7-8/ Mt 5: 1-12

In the first reading we see how earnestly Prophet Elijah prophesies faithfully to Yahweh. The extraordinary way in which the Lord takes care of the prophet is an invitation for us to believe in the promises and blessings of the Lord and witness the miracles in our lives. When we are faithful to the Lord and do his work without fail there is no reason for us to worry about all our needs because the Lord will take care of us. The attitude of Elijah in obeying the Lord is something that is to be noted. Surely there must have been doubts in his mind but he makes the choice to obey without doubt and questioning. Obedience to the commandment of God resulted in receiving all that was needed. How do we experience the Lord's intervention in our life and how do we respond to them?

Matthew presents Jesus as the fulfillment of Mosaic Law. Jesus does not do this by adding anything new to the Old laws but by fulfilling the old laws with the new law of love. In the Gospel reading today we have the beatitudes. Through the presentation of the new value system in beatitudes Jesus is presented as the Messiah. The values that are presented in the beatitudes

are antithetic to the spirit of the world because they overturn its expectations and demands. Persons, who are poor, humble, just, merciful, pure and peaceful, suffering yet remain faithful, are said to be the subjects of the Kingdom of God. People who do this are called blessed because they are saved or in other words God's salvation is already operative in them. The Gospel reading invites us to make a movement from worldly values to the values of the Kingdom of God. We need to make special efforts and choices to belong to this Kingdom though it may be really difficult for us as we live in a world which holds a value contrary to the values of the Kingdom of God.

2014 Jun 10 Tue: Ordinary Weekday

1 Kgs 17: 7-16/ Ps 4: 2-3. 4-5. 7b-8/ Mt 5: 13-16

Through the grace of baptism, we have become the children of God. We have received the light of Jesus since we have accepted him to be the lord and savior. People who walk in darkness have seen a great light because the light of the world has come. Yet some refuse to walk in the light and choose to walk in the darkness of sin. In today's gospel Jesus affirms us that we not only have received the light but we are like the light of the world who will give light to the people who sits in darkness. In a way Jesus entrust us with the mission that we have to be the light and bring more people to him. There are many people who still live in the darkness of poverty, ignorance, illiteracy, oppression, sins, injustice and inequality. They are still waiting for the beam and ray of light to shed on them, a ray of hope and consolation from the people. Hence our mission today is to bring some ray of light, ray of hope, ray of love and compassion, ray of consolation and ray of justice and equality. By our charity and good works that we do to them we fulfill the mission of Jesus that he entrusted to us. It is our duty to show them the way how to come out of the darkness of evil and ignorance, and the darkness of poverty and hunger. It is our Christians duty to be concern for the poor and the marginalized because Christ himself has shown us the way to follow.

Similarly, there are many people who don't find meaning in life. There are many people who don't find hope and consolation in life. They struggle to live life because they find no purpose in living. Here we have the mission to be the salt of the earth, to give meaning and hope to people who don't find any. Our life should add taste to the life of others and others should feel happy and joyful to meet us and when we visit them. People should feel accepted and welcome when they meet us and when we interact with them. However, the most important thing is that we have to come down at their level and becoming one with them, so that they feel that they are being cared and respected. By so doing we are fulfilling the mission that God has entrusted to us and by seeing our good works people will be happy and praise God for the good things that they

received. Hence their faith in God may be restored and they may come back to God if they have gone astray.

2014 Jun 11 Wed: Barnabas, ap M

Acts 11: 21b-26; 13: 1-3/ Ps 98: 1. 2-3ab. 3cd-4. 5-6/ Mt 5: 17-19

Matthew the evangelist is written the gospel to the Jewish community and therefore, the Mosaic Law and the prophets is very much appearing in the gospel. The reason is that the Jewish people are very much familiar with these laws and prophets and they are very much committed and faithful to them. In practicing and observing the law they tend to forget the spirituality of the law for which it is meant to be. In the process the law is placing above everything and thus becomes a burden to the people. Hence, religiosity and external practice comes to the forefront while injustice and social evil is prevalent in the society.

Jesus comes to the scene and makes the things upside down, for God is not interested with the external practice but rather looking at the heart of a person. Good intention, mercy and compassion are matter to God and not the outward appearance. This led to the misunderstanding of the Pharisees regarding with Jesus. They could not accept this fact and the change that Jesus brought. Therefore, Jesus clarified his intention by saying that, “do not think that I have come to annul the law and the prophets. I have not come to annul them, but to fulfill them.” That is why god’s plan of salvation comes to perfection in Jesus. In today’s context and terminology we can say that Jesus has come to update the law which is outdated and to make it applicable for all times and places. That is why the word of god is ever alive and active; it is fitting for all generations to come. And because it is alive and active in all contexts and situations, it remains and stands firms for ever. It depends on the individual to recognize and listen to its promptings of the daily events and situations.

Today as Christians, we are invited to keep the word of god in our hearts and teach to others to do the same. It is our duty to fulfill and to bring to perfection in our daily life. God never created thins without a purpose, and therefore, the purpose that God has for each one of us has to be fulfilled by us and through us. It is the purposefulness of life that makes us to keep going in life.

2014 Jun 12 Thu: Ordinary Weekday

1 Kgs 18: 41-46/ Ps 65: 10. 11. 12-13/ Mt 5: 20-26

Today, Jesus instructs with new things which we never realized and aware of, though it is there deep down in our hearts. May be because we tend to live our Christian life lightly and there is no zeal and enthusiasm in it. Jesus is also trying to tell us that we should keep our hearts and

mind pure and holy and to avoid sinfulness. If at all we commit sin we have to reconcile it as soon as possible and repair the damage that creates by the sin.

Rituals, religious practices, other practice of piety and novenas that we make, have no sense and no meaning if we cannot live with our neighbor peacefully and in good relationship. God looks at the purity of our hearts and the holiness of our hearts and not at the external holiness and pious living. Love of God has to be extended to the love of neighbor; hence before we develop our relationship with God, we have to see that our relationship with our neighbor is set right. That is why today Jesus says very clearly, "So, if you are about to offer your gift at the altar, and you remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar, go at once and make peace with your brother, and then come back and offer your gift to God". This shows that Jesus is not interested in our religious practices unless we live peacefully with our fellow brothers and sisters. Therefore, our minds and hearts have to be pure and holy in practicing our religious rituals and piety. Prophet Amos would say, "Away with the noise of your chanting, away with your strumming on harps. But let justice run its course like water, and righteousness be like an ever flowing river".

This is very true, because our religious practices, feasts and novenas that we practice should help us to reach God. They should help us to develop our personal relationship with God and neighbor as well. Love of God has to be extended to the love of neighbor. The problem with us is that, we get stuck only with our mere practice of our religious duty, rites and rituals. We fail to go beyond these things. We fail to look at their spirituality that lies behind. Hence our religious practices have not helped us to reach God and to develop our personal relationship with him. That is why we profess one thing, we pray one thing, we practice one thing, but we live our life just the opposite. We forget of what we pray, we forget of what we profess and we forget of what we preach. We become Christian in name and doing the Satan's work.

2014 Jun 13 Fri: Anthony of Padua, p, r, dr M

1 Kgs 19: 9a. 11-16/ Ps 27: 7-8a. 8b-9abc. 13-14/ Mt 5: 27-32

In today's gospel reading Jesus is prohibiting divorce in an incomparably graphic fashion. For Jesus "Adultery" meant unfaithfulness to one's spouse, and remarriage is adulterous here precisely because in God's sight the original couple remains married. In practice, this text demands that we love and serve our spouse. If integrity forbids us to violate vows in general this principle applies most plainly to marriage vows, but at the same time the principle that Jesus teach us today in the gospel reading is the principle of being chaste when we have taken our vows.

This vow of chastity that married people and religious people have taken up right at the very beginning of their vowed life is to symbolize that through our sexuality we are incomplete

human being and that is the reason we need someone else to complete our lives. It is here that God and our life's partner come into the picture.

2014 Jun 14 Sat: Ordinary Weekday/ BVM

1 Kgs 19: 19-21/ Ps 16: 1b-2a and 5. 7-8. 9-10/ Mt 5: 33-37

In this world of today as we can see and experience daily, questions therefore arises whether we as Christians were influenced by the Words of Jesus. As always Jesus' teachings are meant to challenge the way we think, the way we act. Today he brings up an issue of the law which can be interpreted as "Do not lie," in different words where it says, "Do not bear false witness against your neighbor." By this command Jesus is calling upon the people to say the truth about one another. That we do not falsify a person's reputation or speak of them in an untruthful way! In today's world where people seems to be telling all the lies and also seems to be the mighty and rich prosper with all their untruthful ways , this question each one of us too. So to speak untruthfully about a neighbor is to undermine the very idea of justice.

Jesus says, "I say don't swear at all." Again Jesus is always taking people beyond the accustomed, usual way of thinking. The accustomed, usual way of thinking is that if I'm not deliberately lying, I'm telling the truth. And that's what Jesus wants to challenge. He wants us to make a different in our life as His true disciples bearing his name. So the relation to truth he sees is we can be in submission to the truth, and the truth can make us free; but we cannot contain the truth. We cannot hold the truth. Our convictions can never embrace the truth because we're too small! So he says, "Do not swear at all. Just say, 'Yes' or 'No.' When we say, "Yes" or "No" we mean "honest" in so far as we can know anything. "But beyond that is from the evil one." Therefore, from our part we need to be aware and pray constantly.

2014 Jun 15 SUN: THE HOLY TRINITY S

Ex 34: 4b-6. 8-9/ Dn 3: 52. 53. 54. 55. 56 (52b)/ 2 Cor 13: 11-13/ Jn 3: 16-18

Every men and women in the past and present have made an attempt to understand the truth. Yet no matter how much truth one has learned, there is always more truth to learn. Even then, the greatest master in the world of any subject knows that all their learning has only shown them how much they do not know. Every answered question leads to more questions. So is with our understanding about God.

Being the Trinity Sunday, we remember that God is one God and yet God is three persons. This is a mystery. It is easy to repeat this formula: one God, three persons, but impossible to completely understand the mystery of the Trinity. The mystery of the Trinity is more than anyone can understand. But this does not mean that the Trinity is whatever we want it to be or whatever we happen to think is best. The Trinity is something very definite, the most definite truth in the whole universe. The Trinity's existence in no way depends on our ability to understand the mystery. The simple teaching, revealed to us through Jesus Christ, handed on by the Church, is trustworthy. First we believe the teaching, which is far more important than understanding how such a thing is possible. Then we try to understand, using analogies: the Son is to the Father as the light from a star is to the light in a star, light from light, true God from true God.

God who has revealed himself in Jesus Christ want us to be saved in and through His Son's death and Resurrection and the constant working of the Holy Spirit. Let us pray that we may understand the work of God in our lives experiences and His ways of revealing to us that each day of our lives will be a manifestation of God's love to our neighbours.

2014 Jun 16 Mon: Ordinary Weekday

1 Kgs 21: 1-16/ Ps 5: 2-3ab. 4b-6a. 6b-7/ Mt 5: 38-42

Today, Jesus teaches us that forgiveness can overcome hate. Talion's law meant some progress, as it limited the wish to retaliate down to a fair proportion: do unto others as you would have them to, unto you; otherwise, it would be unfairness; this is what the aphorism «eye for eye, tooth for tooth» actually means. It was, however, a limited progress, as Jesus Christ emphasizes

in the Gospel the need that love overcomes revenge; this is how He expressed it when, on his Cross, He interceded for his executioners: “Father, forgive them, they know not what they do” (*Lk 23:34*).

Nevertheless, truth should always accompany forgiveness. We do not just forgive because we feel helpless or gravely embarrassed. Quite often, the expression “to turn the other cheek” is misinterpreted as waiving our legitimate rights. Certainly, nothing of the sort. To turn the other cheek means to denounce and interpellate, with a peaceful but categorical gesture, whoever has done the injustice committed; it is like saying: “You slapped me on the cheek, now what, you want to slap me on the other too? do you really think you are behaving rightly?”. Jesus replied serenely to the high priest's rude servant: “If I said something wrong testify as to what is wrong. But if I spoke the truth, why did you strike me?” (*Jn 18:23*).

We can, therefore, see what our Christian behaviour must be: not to retaliate, but to stay firm; to be open to forgiveness but clearly say things. It is certainly not an easy task to accomplish, but it is the only way to put a stop to violence and show the world the Divine Grace it is lacking of, so often. St. Basil advises us: “Believe me and you will forget the offences and insults you get from your fellow man. You will see how differently you will be named; he will be called angry and violent while you will be cited as meek and peaceful. One day, he will repent of his violence, but you will never regret your meekness”.

2014 Jun 17 Tue: Ordinary Weekday

1 Kgs 21: 17-29/ Ps 51: 3-4. 5-6ab. 11 and 16/ Mt 5: 43-48

Today's Gospel exhorts us to the most perfect love. Loving is wanting to do good to others, and here lies our personal fulfillment. We do not love for our own sake, but for the sake of doing good to our neighbor, and on doing it to improve as persons. The II Vatican Council said, “human beings cannot reach their prime but by sincerely giving in themselves to others”. Sainte Therese of the Infant Jesus said, ‘This is making an holocaust of our life’. Love is a human vocation. Our whole behavior, to be truly human, has to be the expression of the reality of our being while fulfilling our vocation for love. As John Paul II has written, “a man, cannot live without love. He becomes incomprehensible. His life does not make sense if love is not revealed to him, if he does not find love, if he does not experience love and makes it his, if he does not intensely participate in it”.

Love has its foundation and reaches its highest form in God's love in Christ. We are invited to a dialogue with God. We exist for the love of God, Who created us, and for the love of God which keep us, “and we can only say we live in full realization of the truth when we freely recognize this love and fully trust our Creator” (II Vatican Council): this is the most important

reason of its dignity. In other words, human love must remain under the custody of the Divine Love, which is where it comes from, where it finds its reflection and brings it to its fullest. This is why, love, when truly human, loves with God's heart and can even embrace its foe. Otherwise, one does not truly love. To such an extent that the exigency of our giving ourselves sincerely, becomes a divine precept: "For your part you shall be righteous and perfect in the way your heavenly Father is righteous and perfect" (*Mt 5:48*).

2014 Jun 18 Wed: Ordinary Weekday

2 Kgs 2: 1. 6-14/ Ps 31: 20. 21. 24/ Mt 6: 1-6. 16-18

Today is the first day of Lent: "Now is the day of salvation!" (*2Cor 6:2*). The application of ashes reminds us of two ideals; the ancient one: "Remember, man, that you are dust, and to dust you will return"; and the one which the Council's renewed liturgy has introduced: "Repent, and believe in the Gospel". Both thoughts are an invitation to look at our own life in a different way - normally, so superficial. Pope Saint Clement I reminds us that "our Lord wants all whom He loves to become converts".

In the Gospel, Jesus is asking us to give to the needy, to fast and to pray far from any hypocrisy: "Do not announce it with trumpets" (*Mt 6:2*). Hypocrites, strongly condemned by Jesus Christ, are characterized by their heart's falsehood. However, today, Jesus warns us not only against subjective hypocrisy but also against the objective one: that is, to fulfill, even in good faith, all that God's Law and the Scriptures command, but doing it only for those who may be watching, without the corresponding intimate conversion.

It is then, when alms -reduced to "a mere tip"- are no longer a fraternal act but they are limited to a soothing gesture that does not modify the way we look at our brother nor let us experience the charity of paying to him the attention he deserves. Fasting, on the other hand, remains as the formal compliance of an obligation, that does no longer reminds us of the need to restrain our compulsive consumerism nor of the necessity to be cured of our "spiritual bulimia". Finally, praying -reduced to a sterile monologue- is no more the authentic Spiritual overture, the intimate dialogue with the Father, the attentive listening to the Gospel of the Son.

Hypocrites' religion is sad, legalist and moralist, of a big narrow-mindedness of spirit. Alternatively, our Christian Lent is every year's Church's invitation to a more intimate deepening, to a demanding conversion, to a humble penance, so that, while producing the pertinent fruits our Lord expects from us, we may fully live Easter's joy and spiritual pleasure.

2014 Jun 19 Thu: Ordinary Weekday/ Romuald, ab

Sir 48: 1-14/ Ps 97: 1-2. 3-4. 5-6. 7/ Mt 6: 7-15

Prayer can mean only two things: “Help me Lord” and “Thank you Lord.” When we are having a hard time in life because of family or personal problems, mistakes and failures in the past, our “dis-eases,” and other factors what makes us too weak and needy, we usually pray “Help me Lord.” But when life seems too light and happy because of the presence of our loving family and friends, our work achievements, our financial stability, etc. then our prayer becomes “Thank you Lord.” And in most instances, we pray both because of the intertwining good and not-so good experiences.

But what most people overlook at times is that prayer is NOT simply a noun or a verb. In a deeper reflection, prayer should be “persons.” Some spiritual writers would describe this as “prayers” Meaning, by our life, we should reflect to others as the living prayers. In that sense, prayer is not anymore separate from us but it becomes you, me, and us. Because the whole point of prayer is not simply to help us understand God, or help us in our needs but to make us like God and one day be ONE with Him.

2014 Jun 20 Fri: Ordinary Weekday

2 Kgs 11: 1-4. 9-18. 20/ Ps 132: 11. 12. 13-14. 17-18/ Mt 6: 19-23

Christ the Teacher’s lesson of the lamp and the eye is simpler than it seems. In Christ’s metaphor, the eye stands for our desires (our eyes show us good things, which we can then desire). These desires are meant to bring light (joy, meaning, goodness) to our souls, just as a lamp gives light to a dark room.

In other words, we were created with a healthy yearning for happiness. Happiness consists in a life well lived, a life lived pursuing good things in the right way – a virtuous life that gradually puts our whole mind and heart in fuller and fuller communion with God, the source of all good things. That is what we were created to do. In God’s original plan, this desire for happiness through doing good things well is the lamp that gives the light of hope, joy, and meaning to the soul as it journeys towards God.

But when sin entered the picture, it disrupted the inner harmony of the human person. We still yearn for happiness, but we have a tendency to seek it in the wrong places – to desire wrongly, to seek the good through self-indulgence instead of through self-forgetful love. That wrong desire darkens the soul, filling it with frustration, anger, depression, and anxiety.

Jesus gives this lesson in the context of teaching us what we ought to desire, what treasures we ought to set our hearts on: not the passing material fancies of self-centered indulgence, but the everlasting satisfaction that comes from a life of generosity and self-forgetfulness. He came to relight the lamp that sin had maliciously extinguished.

2014 Jun 21 Sat: Aloysius Gonzaga, r M

2 Chr 24: 17-25/ Ps 89: 4-5. 29-30. 31-32. 33-34/ Mt 6: 24-34

Jesus admits we have worries. We know that some worries are silly, about weather and what people think of us. Others are huge. People have huge fears about the future at the moment. The advice of Jesus is to be concerned, to help each other, but not to allow them take over. He has some examples like fashions and clothing, food and drink... he is hinting we can get by on a lot less than we thought.

Trying as well to balance the money tensions – first sentence was about money. How we can spend on a wedding – he might say – don't worry about your wedding day – set your hearts on love and all else will be given you. We are right to be concerned for the future but need also to live a day at a time.

Being grateful for what we have can help develop this attitude. Give a prayer of thanks for the ordinary and extraordinary in our lives each day. Why? The first reading... God does not forget us, like mothers never forget their children. Letting in the love of God can affect us deeply day to day.

We have images for it... carved on the hand, branded on the forehead, names written in a book of life, and our names are 'tattooed' with love in the heart of Jesus.

2014 Jun 22 SUN: THE BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST S

Dt 8: 2-3. 14b-16a/ Ps 147: 12-13. 14-15. 19-20 (12)/ 1 Cor 10: 16-17/ Optional Sequence Lauda, Sion/ Jn 6: 51-58

Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ

“Continue to live in Him, rooted and built up in Him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught....”—Colossians 2:6–7

There were three lessons concerning manna. **First**, no one was to gather more than they needed. Each person was allotted one omer of manna a day, a little less than a gallon. Everyone ended up with one omer per person and those with too much shared with those who did not have enough,

the lesson for us is the same: we should not take more of this world's resources than we need. If we have too much, we should share with those who do not have enough to satisfy their needs. **The second lesson** of the manna is that it must not be kept overnight. The Israelites had to trust that the manna would be out on the ground again the next morning. From this rule we should learn not to hoard the riches of this world. It is very reasonable to save money: to save enough in case of a surprise car repair, to save enough in case you lose your job, but do not hoard money. Some people collect money and property as if they only wanted to see how much they could have, as if they were competing in a game with the other rich people of this world. We Christians should look in horror at the idea of spending time and money. We are travelers in this world; pack lightly!

The third lesson of the manna is that on Friday the Israelites gathered enough for two days so that they would not go out on the Sabbath. This is a lesson we ought to take to heart. There is so little respect today for resting on the Lord's Day. Six days a week have been given us to work; we must rest on the seventh day to thank and praise to give us strength for another six days to work.

But the usual forms of rest in our culture (ball games, shopping, and restaurants sit at home and watch TV? The point of Sunday is to worship God. Anything else we do is peripheral.

Together, the three lessons of the manna teach us that we were not made for survival. The point of our lives cannot be getting through to tomorrow at any cost. We certainly were not made to succeed as the world sees success, with piles of money and stuff. Survival is secondary to praising God. As Jesus puts it, "Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes forth from the mouth of God."

The lessons of the manna were so important, so foundational to the Jewish religion that Moses took one omer of manna and placed it in the Ark of the Covenant, a box covered in gold. The Ark was placed at the center of worship. The Jewish Temple was merely a house for the Ark, and the Ark was a container for the manna. So really, the manna was at the center of Jewish worship, this special bread which God had given to his people.

The bread is a sacrament, which is to say, it does not only symbolize this, but it in reality is Jesus Christ: Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity. When we receive the symbol of bread, we actually receive Jesus Christ. When we see bread and kneel down in worship, we are actually worshipping Jesus Christ. This is a mystery. It is not clear to us how something can have the accidents of bread, the sight, the smell, the taste of bread, the atoms and molecules of bread, but in reality be the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. It is not clear to us, but that is not important. Jesus did not give us this sacrament and say, "Take and understand; this is my body." No, he said "Take and eat; this is my body." Christianity without the Eucharist would be like Judaism without manna, just a lot of laws. From the Eucharist we receive our mission from God and the spiritual energy to complete that mission. If we receive the Eucharist with faith in the mystery,

and we receive it acknowledging that we want to serve God above all else, confessing every sin we have committed, rejecting any plans to commit sin in the future, then we will be transformed.

Jesus Christ came to earth to give his life for us and to us. He gave his life for us on the Cross. He gives his life to us in the Eucharist. When we receive the Eucharist, we hold the life of God in our hands. We eat the life of God. We become what we eat. Eventually we do not live anymore ourselves, but Christ lives in us. That is what the Eucharist is about. May the body and blood of Christ strengthen us in our faith.

2014 Jun 23 Mon: Ordinary Weekday

2 Kgs 17: 5-8. 13-15a. 18/ Ps 60: 3. 4-5. 12-13/ Mt 7: 1-5

In today's Gospel we continue to meditate on the Sermon on the Mountain found in chapters 5 to 7 of the Gospel of Matthew. The three chapters, 5, 6, and 7 offer an idea of how the catechesis was done in the communities of the converted Jews in the second half of the first century in Galilee and in Syria. Matthew unites and organizes the words of Jesus to teach how the new way of living the Law of God should be.

Matthew 7, 1-2: Do not judge and you will not be judged. The first condition for a good life together in community is not to judge the brother or the sister, that is, to eliminate the preconceptions which prevent a transparent community life. What does this mean concretely? John's Gospel gives an example of how Jesus lived in community with the disciples. Jesus says: "I shall no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know the master's business; I call you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have learnt from my Father" (Jn 15, 15). Jesus is an open book for his companions. This transparency comes from his total trust in the brothers and sisters and has its origin in his intimacy with the Father who gives him the force of opening himself up totally to others. Anyone who lives in this way with his brothers and sisters accepts others as they are, without any preconceptions, without previously imposing any conditions, without judging. Mutual acceptance without any pretension and with total transparency! This is the ideal of the new community life, which has come from the Good News which Jesus has brought to us: God is Father and Mother and, therefore, we are all brothers and sisters. It is a difficult ideal but a very beautiful and attractive as the other one: "Be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect.

Matthew 7. 3-5: You observe the splinter in your brother's eye and never notice the great log in your own. Immediately Jesus gives an example: Why do you observe the splinter in your brother's eye, and never notice the great log in your own? And how dare you say to your brother, 'Let me take that splinter out of your eye, when look, there is a great log in your own? Hypocrite! Take the log out of your own eye first, and then you will see clearly enough to take the splinter out of your brother's eye'. When hearing this phrase we usually think of the Pharisees who despised the people, considering them ignorant and they considered themselves better than others (cf. Jn 7, 49; 9, 34). In reality, the phrase of Jesus serves for all of us. For example, today many of us Catholics are less faithful to the Gospel than the non-Catholics. We observe the splinter in the eye of our brothers and we do not see the big log of collective powerful pride in our own eyes. This log causes many persons today to have much difficulty to believe in the Good News of Jesus.

- Splinter and log: which is the log in me which makes it difficult for me to participate in the life of the family and in community?

2014 Jun 24 Tue: NATIVITY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST S

Vigil: Jer 1: 4-10/ Ps 71: 1-2. 3-4a. 5-6ab. 15ab and 17/ 1 Pt 1: 8-12/ Lk 1: 5-17.

Day: Is 49: 1-6/ Ps 139: 1b-3. 13-14ab. 14c-15/ Acts 13: 22-26/ Lk 1: 57-66. 80

Our God-Given Names

“Among those born of women no one is greater than John” (Luke 7:28). These words which our Lord said about John the Baptist are probably behind the solemn feast of the birthday of John the Baptist which we celebrate today. As a rule, the church celebrates the feast of a saint once a year, on the anniversary of the saint’s death. In the case of John the Baptist we celebrate his death as well as his birth. John is the only saint after Christ whose birth we celebrate with a solemn feast. This is the church’s way of saying with Jesus that “among those born of women no one is greater than John.”

The gospel story of the birth of John focuses on the naming ceremony. Why does the gospel show such an interest in the naming of the child? In biblical times, and still today in many African cultures, personal names function the way business names do, that is, they aim to convey what the bearer of the name stands for. When Simon shows that he could be relied on as a leader of the apostles, he gets the name “Rock.” When the sons of Zebedee, James and John, petition Jesus to call down lightning from heaven to burn up the inhabitants of a Samaritan village who do not welcome Jesus, they get a new name “Sons of Thunder.” Names reveal an essential character or destiny of the bearer.

The name John means “God is gracious.” God himself gave John that name and it was revealed to his father Zachary in a vision (Luke 1:13). That this name was given to the child already before his birth shows that God has a purpose and plan for the child. The words of Isaiah in the first reading apply equally to John: “The lord called me before I was born, while I was in my mother's womb he named me. ... he formed me in the womb to be his servant (Isaiah 49:1, 5). In the birth of John we see that the people come into the world without a purpose, and that it is by exercising their freedom, and so the challenge of life is for them to discover this purpose and to be faithful to its demands.

God’s purpose for his life dictated even the minutest details of how he would dress and eat, since he had to dress in rough animal skin and eat the vegetarian food of locusts and wild honey. He adopted a lifestyle that would enhance his calling in life. He did not go for any unnecessary trappings that would weigh him down or encumber his life. To discern what God is calling us to be we need to cultivate some sort of desert in our lives where we can listen to God. We need to make Samuel’s words to the Lord, “Speak, your servant is listening” (1 Samuel 3;10) part of our daily prayer. And, to be faithful to the call of God, we need the courage and discipline to keep away from any choice of association or lifestyle that does not help us along the path to which God has called us. John is great today not just because God called him to a special vocation but because he walked faithfully in the path that leads to the goal that God had set for him. As we celebrate the birth of John the Baptist and read the marvellous story of how

he got his God-given name, let us ask ourselves: If I am now to receive a new name, a name that represents my God-given identity and calling in life, what would that name be? If you do not know your God-given name, the name which represents all that God sent you into the world to be and to accomplish, then it is time to find out by listening in prayer.

2014 Jun 25 Wed: Ordinary Weekday

2 Kgs 22: 8-13; 23: 1-3/ Ps 119: 33. 34. 36. 37. 40/ Mt 7: 15-20

The setting for the first reading is near the end of the Seventh Century before Christ. Babylon has destroyed Assyria, and now Babylon (or the Chaldean Empire) threatens to destroy Judah. The king of Judah is Josiah (who with Hezekiah was one of the only good kings of Judah.) An old book is found in the Temple. Very likely, it is the substance of our present book of Deuteronomy; it has been brought south when the northern kingdom of Israel was destroyed. Unfortunately, it had lain in the Temple collecting dust for nearly a century. When discovered, Josiah wept. He made this the basis of a genuine religious reform of the nation. He renewed the covenant with Deuteronomy as the basis. Unfortunately, the reform was short-lived. Josiah died young, and the reform collapsed. Because of the rejection of genuine reform, the nation would be destroyed. In the gospel, Jesus urges us to be wary of false prophets. In the Old Testament, it was very difficult to distinguish between true and false prophets. About the only way to know was that the message of the true prophets came true. But how did you know in the mean while? One had to discern carefully. False prophets usually told people what they wanted to hear. False prophets seldom (if ever) asked for sacrifice. Finally, part of the discernment was to look at the fruits of the prophets: What were their lives like? Were they completely faithful to the Lord in every way? People do not like to hear a hurtful truth. Yet often the hurtful truth is the sign of a true prophet. Let us follow the Lord even when he called us to sacrifice.

The gospel warns us to beware of those who appear to be good, but really are evil: wolves in sheep's clothing. We shall recognize the truth by deeds, and not by words. History is filled with deceivers, charlatans, and "medicine men." Even in the holy Church of God, there have been those who deceived many by smooth talk, by wonderful personalities, and by attractive techniques. We must be careful. Always pray that we may follow truth and righteousness, and that we may never be swayed by an attractive message of falsehood.

2014 Jun 26 Thu: Ordinary Weekday

2 Kgs 24: 8-17/ Ps 79: 1b-2. 3-5. 8. 9/ Mt 7: 21-29

Today, Jesus' categorical claim strikes us: «Not everyone who says to me: 'Lord! Lord!' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my heavenly Father» (*Mt 7:21*). If nothing else, these words demand, in our condition as Christians, our responsibility while letting us feel the urge to bear witness to our faith.

Building the house on rock is a clear image that invites us to value our commitment to our faith, which cannot be limited to just a few nice words, but must be based on the authority of our achievements, impregnated with charity. With the strength of charity, Jesus expresses his authority with the clear word that dumbfounds people: «The crowds were struck by the way he taught, because he taught with authority unlike their teachers of the Law» (*Mt 7:28-29*). Today's contemplation and our prayer, must be followed by a serious consideration: how do I speak and behave like a Christian in my life?; how do I define my testimony?; how do I undertake the commandment of love in my life, whether personal, family, professional, etc.? Words and prayers without any commitment do not count, but only our desire to live in accordance with God's Project. Our prayer should always be an expression of our craving for doing good deeds along with a request for help, because we recognize our own failings.

Let our prayer, O Lord, to be always joined by the strength of charity.

2014 Jun 27 Fri: SACRED HEART OF JESUS S

Dt 7: 6-11/ Ps 103: 1-2. 3-4. 6-7. 8. 10 (see 17)/ 1 Jn 4: 7-16/ Mt 11: 25-30

The feast of the sacred heart of Jesus is the celebration of the salvific love of our God. Symbolized though the heart of the incarnate son of God. Today, two realities define Jesus in this Gospel: no one knows the Father except him, and He is «gentle and humble of heart» (*Mt 11:29*). We can also discern in this Gospel two attitudes that we require to properly understand and enjoy what Jesus is offering us: simplicity and the desire to get close to Him.

Wise and learned men often find it difficult to disclose the mystery of God's Kingdom for they are not too receptive to the divine revelation; God keeps on manifesting himself, but as they believe they know all the answers, they consider God may not surprise them anymore. However, the simple of heart, like infants in their best moments, are pervious like a water-imbibed sponge, and they have the capacity to be surprised and admiring. Exceptions can be

found, though. Thus, we can even see experts in human relations that can be quite humble regarding their knowledge of God.

Jesus finds his own rest in his Father, and his peace may be the safe haven sought by those life has mistreated: «Come to me, all you who work hard and who carry heavy burdens and I will refresh you» (Mt 11:28). Jesus is humble and humility is the sister of simplicity. When we learn how to be happy through simplicity, many complications are dispelled, many needs disappear, and we can rest, at long last. Jesus invites us to follow him; and He is not deceiving us: to be with him is to take his yoke upon us, to assume the demands of his love. We shall not be spared any suffering, but his load will be light, and our suffering will not be a consequence of our own selfishness but, because of love and with the Spirit's help, we shall suffer only what we should and no more. Furthermore, let us not forget that, «the tribulations we suffer for God are softened by the hope» (St. Ephraem).

2014 Jun 28 Sat: Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary M

Rdg 1/ Ps/ Lk 2: 41-51

In today's gospel reading Luke gives us an ideal picture about Jesus as a human being, but at least in doing so he retains a genuinely human Jesus in a genuinely human context. It is this Jesus (and this kind of Jesus, not one who dropped in complete from outer space) whom God anoints to declare and live out the good news of liberation and salvation.

Secondly today's gospel tells us that we must find time to listen to the words of God. Being busy with our earthly concerns is not an excuse for not finding time for God; it is our duty that we must find time for God. All duties which we owe to men, even though they are not to be neglected, but they are not to be preferred before the glory of God.

Thirdly the message of the gospel today is, that In the midst of the usual things that we are doing there are opportunities to find something more than we ever expected, because God continues to reveal himself in different ways. In order to find God we must read the signs of the time and act accordingly even if sometimes our actions may be subjected to ridicules and mockery of others.

2014 Jun 29 SUN: PETER AND PAUL, APS S

Vigil: Acts 3: 1-10/ Ps 19: 2-3. 4-5/ Gal 1: 11-20/ Jn 21: 15-19. Day: Acts 12: 1-11/ Ps 34: 2-3. 4-5. 6-7. 8-9/ 2 Tm 4: 6-8. 17-18/ Mt 16: 13-19

Today's gospel reading tells us of the different views of Jesus by those who are around him. This is also to tell us that recognition of Jesus as a prophet is inadequate because as those who follow Jesus closely we need to know him as the Christ, and the Son of God by proclaiming him as not simply a motivator for us politically; a teacher to us intellectually; a power for us miraculously;

nor a program for us in mission ministry but by accepting him as everything that one needs in this world.

Today's gospel also challenges us with a question of how firm is your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Through the gift of faith Peter recognized that Jesus was the "anointed one" and the only begotten Son of God sent by the Father in heaven to redeem a fallen human race. Are we also being able to proclaim Jesus likewise? Are we also ready to risk our lives in the process and gladly give it up for the cause of Jesus? These should be the questions that should linger in our minds while we attend the mass today.

**2014 Jun 30 Mon: Ordinary Weekday/ First Martyrs of the Church of Rome
(Thirteenth Week in Ordinary Time)**

Am 2: 6-10. 13-16/ Ps 50: 16bc-17. 18-19. 20-21. 22-23/ Mt 8: 18-22

In today's gospel reading, we see that one of the scribes was too hasty in proffering himself to be a close follower of Christ. He seems to be very resolute and, his many resolutions for religion were produced by sudden conviction, and taken up without due consideration. When this scribe offered to follow Christ, one would think he should have been encouraged because one scribe might do more credit and service than twelve fishermen; but Christ saw the scribe's heart, and answered to its thoughts, and therein teaches all how to come to Him and follow Him.

Today just as Jesus challenged the covetous principle of the scribe in desiring to follow him so also he challenges us that we must not expect to gain worldly attention by following him.

When Jesus said to the scribe "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man has not where to lay his head" he said this to convince the Scribe of his mistake; who expected much worldly grandeur and wealth, by becoming his disciple. Christ, in reply proclaimed his own poverty, and dashed the hopes of the avaricious scribe.