

The background of the cover is a photograph of three wooden crosses standing on a dark, silty mound. The sun is setting or rising directly behind the central cross, creating a bright, golden glow that illuminates the scene. The sky is a mix of soft pinks, purples, and blues. The text 'THE Catholic News' is at the top, with 'THE' in small white letters, 'Catholic' in large white letters, and 'News' in white letters inside a red rounded rectangle. Below this, the title 'Lent Companion Edition' is written in large, bold, orange letters with a black outline. At the bottom, two bullet points in white text are separated by orange squares.

THE Catholic News

# ***Lent Companion Edition***

- Stations of the Cross ▪
- Daily Reflections ▪



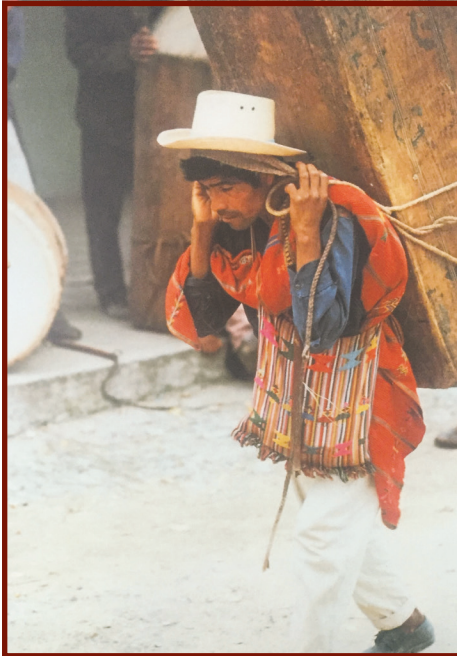


### **The First Station: Jesus is condemned to death.**

#### **Prayer**

*Jesus, we see You being condemned today, in those who stand up for justice, those Church leaders who said 'no' to child marriage and are ridiculed, those who say 'no' to sexual harassment in the workplace and yet have lost their jobs, those who work for gender equality, and human rights in this country and are seen as hypocrites.*

*Lord, give us the courage and the will to remove the wooden beams and blinders from our eyes that we may see what hope Your love holds for us, so that we may never be afraid to follow You in justice and in truth.*



### **The Second Station: Jesus takes up His cross.**

#### **Prayer**

*Jesus, You said take up our cross and follow You. Sometimes, our cross seems too heavy to carry, like the mother who lost her child in the fire at Beetham Gardens, or the parent who lost their three children trapped in their burning home, or children losing their parents days apart from Covid-19. Lord, how are we to carry these? Lord, may they be comforted knowing that in carrying their cross they carry Yours with You. May they come to know You through their pain and suffering, in an intimate way during these times by the people who show love, care and compassion.*

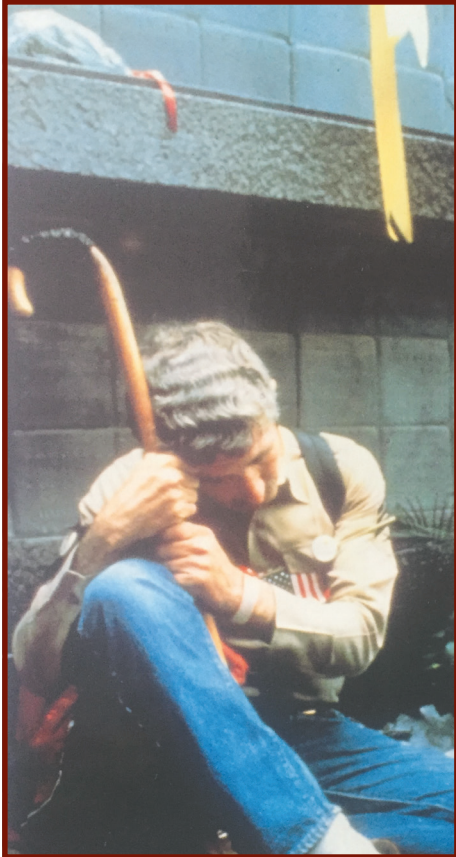
# THE STATIONS OF THE CROSS

**The Stations of the Cross are a 14-step Catholic devotion that commemorates Jesus Christ's last day on Earth as a man. The 14 devotions, or stations, focus on specific events of His last day, beginning with His condemnation.**

**The Stations of the Cross are commonly found in churches as a series of 14 small icons or images. They can also appear in church yards arranged along paths. The stations are most commonly prayed during Lent on Wednesdays and Fridays, and especially on Good Friday, the day of the year upon which the events occurred. (Adapted from catholic.org)**

**After a moment of reflection at each station, say...**

*We adore You, O' Christ, and we praise You:  
Because of thy holy cross You have redeemed the world.  
**Offer the prayer then recite...**  
Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father.*



### **The Third Station: Jesus falls the first time.**

#### **Prayer**

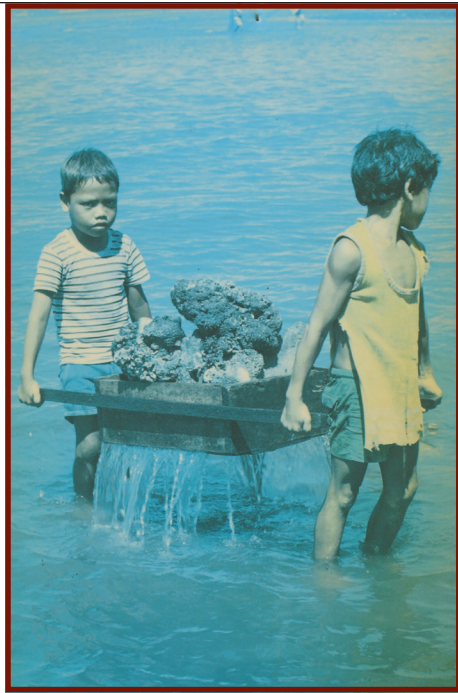
*Jesus, help us who are overcome with grief, especially after burying our loved ones "virtually" during the pandemic and despair to stand again. We cling to those who have lost their jobs, lost hope, and opportunities, and are afraid of now losing their livelihoods. Farmers have lost crops through floods, and children who have lost learning opportunity. Lord, give them the courage to believe in Your mercy and start again. May we trust in Your knowledge. May we always listen and, like You, get up and start again.*



### **The Fourth Station: Jesus meets His Mother.**

#### **Prayer**

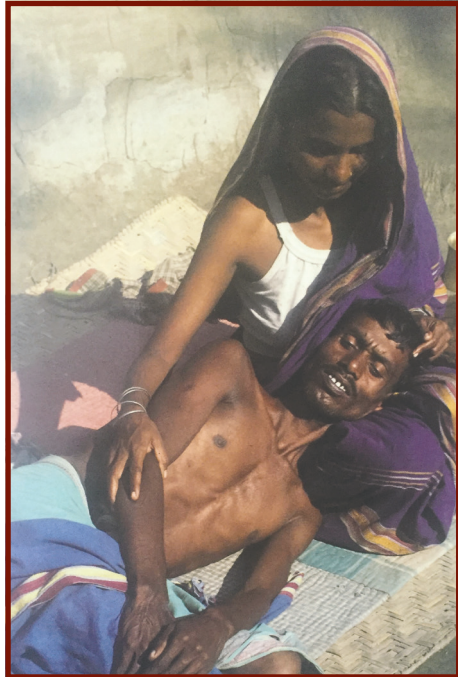
*In this station, Jesus meets His afflicted mother—mothers who must identify the bodies of their sons and daughters, decomposed bodies found in abandoned areas or at the morgue, mothers of missing children, the migrant mother whose child was killed, and mothers of sexual abused children. These are Jesus' mothers, and He meets them on their journey, through the support of persons and groups who stand by them.*



### **The Fifth Station: Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus to carry His Cross.**

#### **Prayer**

*Jesus, we see You unable to carry Your cross in children who lose their right to play or study because of child labour, in young girls who are forced to expose their bodies under the guise of barmaids, or taxi drivers who use their trade to pounce on young children robbing them of their innocence. Lord, may our hands be helping hands for those who can no longer carry their cross. Like Mary who hurried to assist her cousin Elizabeth, may we be always ready to assist. May we never be afraid or unwilling because of our fatigue and weariness, for our true rest is in serving our neighbour.*



### **The Sixth Station: Veronica wipes the face of Jesus.**

#### **Prayer**

*Lord, we see Your face today also in abandoned children, young men shot and left to die on the side of the road, while others post these traumatising moments live on social media. People are badly wounded in vehicular accidents, women who are physically abused. Lord, we thank You for the 'Veronicas' who wipe their faces. Many 'Veronicas' are on the frontline wherever suffering exists. Lord, it is hard and it calls for courage and self-sacrifice, but we are weak and blind. Please give us strength, don't let us run away because of fear.*





**The Seventh Station: Jesus falls the second time – crushed by threats of war, hopelessness, another strain of Covid-19 and famine.**

**Prayer**

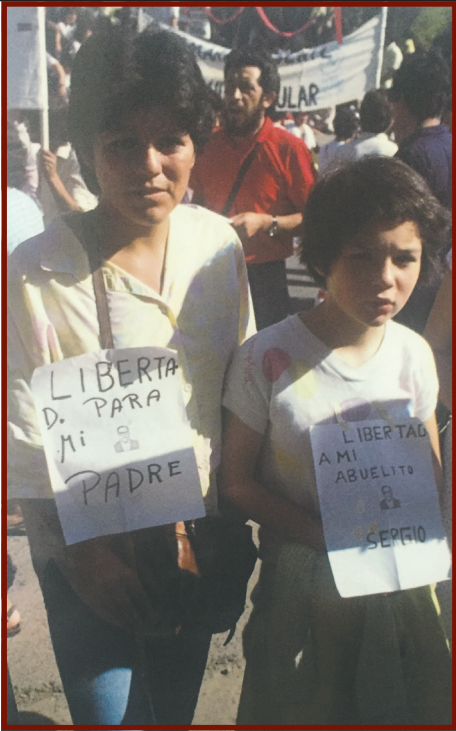
Lord, how many times have we fallen because of greed, pleasure, prestige, possessed by possession, glamour? And the list goes on. This fall tests the will, we give up, or give in. We forget all our years of commitment to family, to spouse, to loyalty to country, to service to the poor and faithfulness to what we know to be right, to our dreams. Lord, we ask for the courage to persevere, in time of hopelessness, when we feel overburdened. May we hear Your call to come to You. We know that we must not cease but persevere in doing good but help us, Lord. Alone there is nothing we can do.



**The Eleventh Station: Jesus is nailed to the cross with nails of indifference toward the ageing.**

**Prayer**

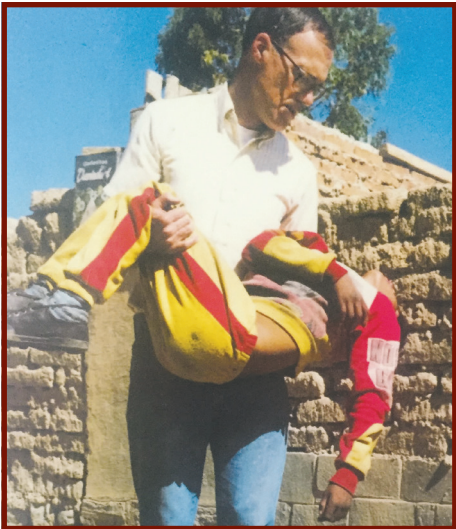
Lord the nails of indifference, ingratitude and disrespect bore deep in a world that no longer honours the aged. We have become a throwaway society, nothing is made to last anymore, so we use and discard. We forget that they were the ones who toiled the fields, built the bridges and roads. The hands and feet that toiled, cared, and loved are now nailed to a cross of humiliation and our feeling of entitlement. Let us learn to be compassionate with each other. Let us learn to pray for them.



**The Eighth Station: Jesus comforts the women.**

**Prayer**

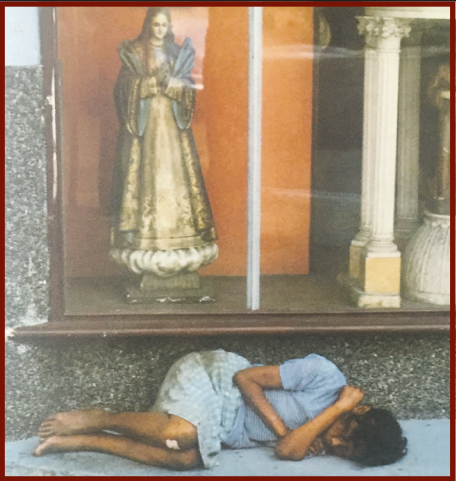
There are many women today who bear the burden of the shame of abortion, the shame of selling their bodies, the suffering of abandonment, the lack of a presence to love and be loved. Lord of all kindness, You do not abandon Your children in their trials of life. You are a God of consolation. Teach us, and help us, to be more like You. Lord, when we feel hurt by ridicule or hindered when we are misunderstood, help us to curb our tongue. Make us gentle, make us kind like You. We accept Your comforting words.



**The Twelfth Station: Jesus dies on the Cross of addiction, poverty, exploitation, and neglect.**

**Prayer**

Today Jesus dies, of drug abuse, from poverty, domestic violence, exploitation, gang warfare, being brutalised and neglected. Look... look around at the face of Jesus, in the young men gunned down in East Dry River, look at His battered bodies in the women who died of domestic violence. What can we say or do? My God, my God, forsake us not. We know not what we do. Christ suffered in freedom, alone, out of public eye and in disgrace. Lord, we lift up to You the many persons who suffer against their will, who called out and no-one heard. Lord, You heard them, listen to our cry for them and remember them when You come into Your Kingdom.



**The Ninth Station: Jesus falls the third time. This time we fall under Your tabernacle because ‘church people’ ignore Your image in each other.**

**Prayer**

To fall as an adult is shameful enough, but to fall over and over again is itself a kind of condemnation: ‘my will is mine’. Our quest for power, pleasure, popularity and to be loved completely drains our strength and presses us down. We feel that we cannot get up. When all our strength is gone, and guilt and self-reproach press and seem to hold us, we will not despair. Lord, never let us feel that any sin of ours is greater than Your love. No matter what the past has been, we can begin anew. Sustain our staggering steps when we fall, give us consolation and hope so that our wounds may be healed.



**The Thirteenth Station: Jesus is taken down from the cross - nobody is embarrassed to help.**

**Prayer**

In this Covid-19 pandemic, the body of Jesus is taken down from the cross by the funeral attendants; the family must give total control to a stranger. Mary can still cradle the lifeless body of her Son, but in these times, this is not possible. What pain, what grief for mothers, for wives, for husbands, for children, who cannot even come close to their loved ones. Lord, give us, like Mary, the courage to let go knowing that You have called them to Yourself. Lord, may we live our lives in accordance with Your will, so that in life and death we will belong to You.

**The Tenth Station: Jesus is stripped of His garments, stripped of His dignity with each naked, abandoned outcast in our world.**

**Prayer**

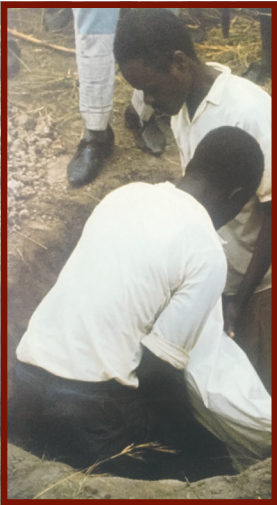
Jesus, You stand naked before us in the vagrants, in the mentally ill, in the migrants. In women who are raped, in children who are sexually abused, in human trafficking, in domestic violence, in broken families. Lord, You came to give dignity to the human person by becoming one like us, but we do not recognise You in each other. We want to be extraordinary and while we exalt ourselves, we strip others naked. We gossip and lie, we publish half-truths knowingly, we put information on social media not caring of the effects it will have on the lives of families. We crave position, wealth, and prestige. We envy our neighbours and go to lengths to bring them down only because we think they have more than us. You taught us to love but we turned away because of prejudice, pride, and greed. Lord, You taught us the richness of possessing nothing, and gave us the freedom to love. But because of our attachment to things, we strip persons of their dignity, we use them, we abuse them for our selfish desires. Teach us detachment, root out from us all traces of envy, and release us from the vice of pride.



**The Fourteenth Station: Jesus is buried in the tomb, in a pauper’s unnamed grave in nowhere.**

**Prayer**

So ends Jesus’ mortal life. His body is prepared for burial by those who knew Him; the body of Jesus is placed in a new unmarked tomb. Today, death seems more final, because of Covid-19. Many bodies must be burnt. They must be buried in the cemeteries that are assigned for Covid burial, not in a family plot. Countries have buried bodies in mass graves. Oh, what pain, what pain it is; worse than the unmarked new tomb where Jesus’ body was laid. The road of hope is paved with small steps of hope. The life of hope is made with brief moments of hope as You, Jesus, always pleased Your Father. Every minute I want to say: “Jesus, I love You, and my life is always a new eternal covenant with You.”





# LENTEN REFLECTIONS 2022

THE Catholic News

## Steps for Lectio Divina of prayerful reading of the Word of God

### Sacred Scripture is...

#### The written Word of God

#### Inspired by the Holy Spirit

#### Entrusted to the Church for our salvation

### READ

*What does the Bible text say?*

To understand the Word. To discover what God is teaching us through the inspired author.

### MEDITATE

*What does the Lord say to us through His Word?*

To accept the Word. To question our life, to understand its meaning, to inspire our mission and to strengthen our hope.

### PRAY

*What do we say to the Lord in response to His Word?*

To respond to the Word. To dialogue with the Lord & celebrate our faith in family and/or community.

### CONTEMPLATE

*To what conversion and intimacy does Jesus invite us?*

To inspire life in the Word. To pray in silence and enjoy the love that God gives us through His Word.

### ACT

*What actions can we offer Jesus?*

To respond to the Word. To respond to God's call and share my invitation and answer with the group.

## Thursday, March 3

### Luke 9:22-25

*Dear God, I pray for the strength and courage to live a selfless life.*

I think I want to be a follower of Jesus, and then I read this *Bible* passage. It scares me. *Lord, I do not want to suffer.* I tell everyone I know, I am not afraid of dying, I really don't want to suffer.

I love being accepted by my peers and my bosses. *Lord, I do not want to be rejected especially by the hierarchy of the Church.*

I don't want to be condemned to death, the shame and humiliation would kill me. How am I to follow God?

My prayer is: *Dear God, I pray for the strength and courage to take up my cross and follow You daily, please just do not make it too heavy. Let me always think of pleasing You and not others. Let me always remember my goal, which is to be happy with You in Heaven.*



## Friday, March 4

### Matthew 9:14-15

John's disciples asked Jesus why His disciples did not fast when they and the Pharisees did. Jesus' answer was surprising because it gives the impression He did not believe in fasting. The truth is, He did. He did say there will come a time when they will fast (Matt 9:15). He also said there are some works that require fasting and prayer (Matt 17:21).

Fasting is not for itself. One Pharisee boasted that he fasted twice a week (Lk 18:12). Fasting must bear fruit such as joy and compassion. If Jesus' life taught the disciples anything, it is that those who increase in the Holy Spirit, as a result of fasting, are joyful and compassionate.

The fasting associated with this Lenten season, which we are now beginning, cannot be reduced to a simple, 'we did it'. Instead, it should lead to deeper growth in God. The more we make room for God by fasting, the more our lives, thoughts, attitudes, and actions will reflect the joy and compassion of God.



## Ash Wednesday, March 2

### Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

*"Your Father will reward you."*

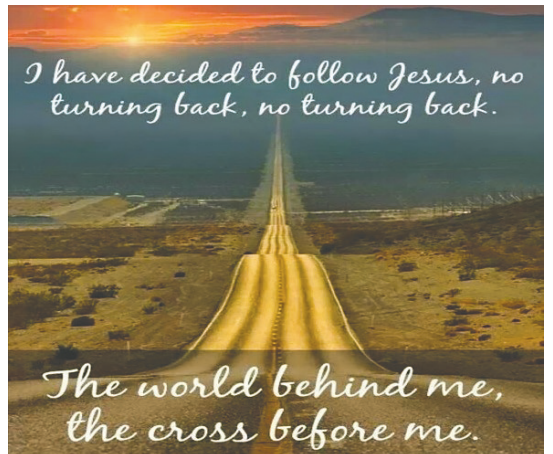
We have the opportunity, during Lent, to focus on prayer, fasting and almsgiving. We should be practising these all year through, but at this time we can truly repent and seek God's mercy.

Matthew, in today's gospel, points out that we must be careful not to do them to be honoured by others since *"your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you"*.

Giving to the needy without others knowing can sometimes be a challenge. I would think however, it is the intention that counts.

I saw a video recently where a street dweller received \$20 from a passerby. He, in turn, gave it to another person. It turned out that that person was a CEO of a large company, culturally immersed to experience what it was like to be on the street for a day.

The first guy was handsomely rewarded. In the same way, when we give to the poor, our Father will reward us. Let's all reach out to the needy in secret.



## Saturday, March 5

### Luke 5:27-32

*"It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick."*

How many are sick now...of worry, fear, grief, physical and or mental illness. In this wilderness, Lord, You will speak to our hearts and Your call will reassure us of Your love. You have promised to never forsake us and to those who hope in You, our reward is eternal life.

For some, today may be the last call; let us not despair but look death bravely in her eye and ask, where is your sting? For our hope is in You Lord, who made Heaven and Earth.

Your love for us, Your pitiful and sick creatures, compels You and draws down Your Mercy and compassion, like a magnet to metal. Let us not mourn the loss of the things of this world, nor cling to our lives since we are pilgrims on a journey back to the source of our creation, where we will partake in the everlasting banquet.

## Monday, March 7

### Matthew 25:31-46

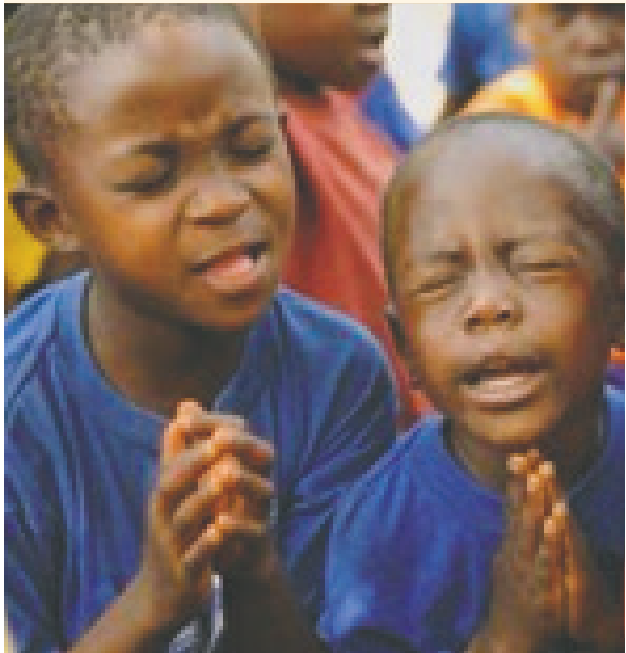
On our island here, when we hear a story about sheep and goat it would probably go like this, "Dat curry goat was bess" or "Dat stew lamb hit the spot".

However, in this exhaustive parable, Jesus uses the method of a shepherd who separates his sheep from his goats to help His followers understand what judgement will be like. The straightforward message is to attend to the needy around you. Jesus identifies Himself with the person in need. Every time we neglect to help a brother or sister in need, we neglect Jesus Himself.

Let us not forget to reach out to others as we are asked to, otherwise, we are missing the whole point of living.







**Tuesday, March 8**

**Matthew 6:7-15**

*“You should pray like this.”*

In the gospel today, Jesus is teaching us how we should pray. We remember the greatest commandment that we should love God and our neighbour.

We can consider this ‘Our Father’ as a template for our prayers for He follows the teaching of this great commandment.

Firstly, with His opening, He brings us together as one family praying with each other. We start our prayer by praising God: *may your name be held holy*.

We also notice that the Kingdom starts here on Earth: *“your Kingdom come...on Earth as in Heaven”*.

After praising God, we turn to our neighbour and show our love by pleading for the family and praying that we should treat them as we treat ourselves. In other words, we pray that we love them as we love ourselves.

Finally, we beg for mercy and salvation for us all.

There is no need for many words, and Jesus’ advice is: *“you should pray like this”*.

**Wednesday, March 9**

**Luke 11: 29-32**



*“...something greater than Jonah is here!”*

Unbelief and unrepented sin are among the biggest barriers to healing of mind, body, soul, and spirit. This is why Jesus rebukes the people for their unbelief when they ask for a sign that He is the Messiah.

He emphasises to them the absolute need for repentance, since unbelief can easily lead to unconfessed sin. Whenever unconfessed sin enters our lives, it solidifies itself and forms an unhealthy bond with us.

Too often, we do not realise it but, if left unattended, this unhealthy bond extinguishes the Light of Christ from within us and we walk in darkness.

The good news is that we are never beyond the forgiving mercy of Christ. We are all called to experience this mercy through the wonderful and priceless gift of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

In this Lenten season, let us each ask God for the virtue of humility so that we can acknowledge our need for repentance and reconcile ourselves with Jesus Christ, our Redeemer. Let us be always ready to pray, *“Lord, I am sorry! Forgive me.”*



**Thursday March 10**

**Matthew 7:7-12**

The onus is on us. We have to do the work that is contained in Jesus’ commands: Ask, Seek, Knock, Enter. It is up to us to obey what the commands tell us to do.

These commands are like invitations to act. When we do act, only then will ‘it be given to us’; only then will we ‘find’; only then will ‘the door be opened to us’.

There is a beautiful movement in the commands too. We first stand where we are, and we ask—entreating God. Then we begin to seek—we have to get up and get, seeking, under the guidance of God, for the right way to what we asked for. Then we arrive at the place where we want to go, and it is up to us to knock the door that God has led us to.

It is not over yet. We then have to enter—put one foot in front the other and enter into the promise God has for us—enter into the answer we sought in the first place. The onus is on us.

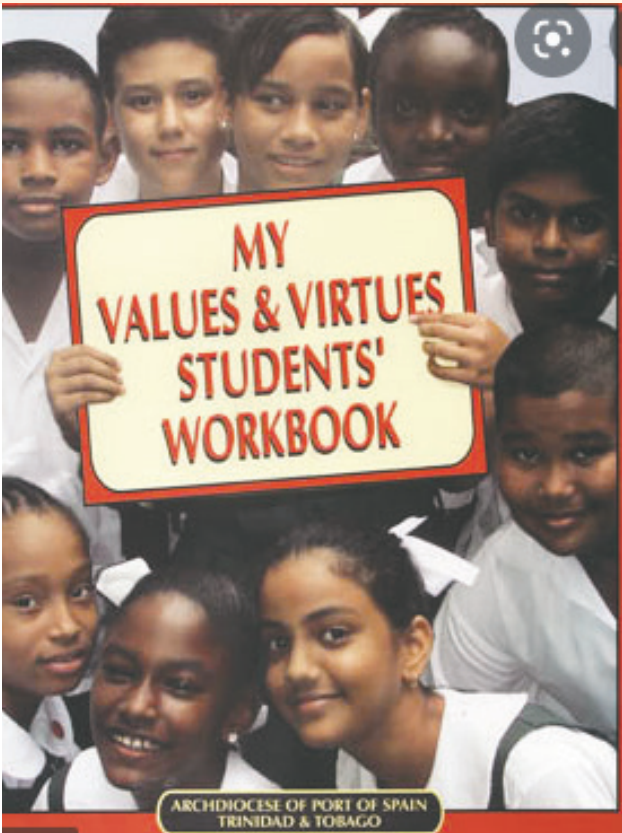
**Friday, March 11**

**Matthew 5:20-26**

Virtue is a good habitual act and giving the best of oneself. Jesus told the disciples: *“If your virtue goes no deeper than that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never get into the kingdom of heaven.”*

Clearly Kingdom life demands a high standard. Part of the formation of every disciple is developing virtues. A virtue is two things: a good habitual act and giving the best of oneself (§1803, CCC). Therefore, the standard Jesus expects of disciples is to be consistently good and going beyond themselves for others.

Discipleship cannot be about physical actions or omissions alone. It is not merely about doing the right thing or avoiding the bad. It is also about developing those hidden parts of ourselves, our minds, and



hearts. After all, our Father in Heaven sees all that is done in secret.

Disposition towards others is just as important as doing good works or avoiding wrong. We may not be guilty of killing anyone, but we may be guilty of thinking ill of them, wishing them bad, plotting against them, destroying their reputation, or accusing them falsely.



**Saturday, March 12**

**Matthew 5: 43-48**

*“He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good.”*

There is this man in church who does not like the best bone in my body and he is always doing things to discredit me.....You want me to pray for he?

One day, I did start praying for him, praying that God would strengthen his ministry and I prayed for whatever was causing him pain and for his healing from whatever trauma may have led him to be this person.

Then one day, he said that God had answered his prayers for a job opportunity abroad and he was migrating. He shared he was happy for a new start.

The lesson for me, was to always put my trust in God. It does not matter who your enemy is. Many times, it is not an evil person but a person just like you whom God is protecting and covering.

So, pray that God will help them to find their way; pray for them as you would wish that someone would pray for you, and it would all work out in the end.





**Monday, March 14**

**Luke 6: 36–38**

*“Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.”*

In Luke: 6, Jesus defines the culture of the Kingdom of God, and it goes counter to the prevailing culture of the world. He describes God’s identity as merciful as He is just.

Justice and mercy may sound contradictory. How can God be both? Yet in Jesus’ parable of the day’s wage, the master is both just and merciful. He pays an agreed just wage to those he hires early. Yet he is merciful to those he hires at the eleventh hour (Mt 20:1–16).

In today’s gospel, Jesus is challenging us also to be merciful—in our own payment of wages, to migrants who arrive illegally, to those who have wronged us.

For God is merciful to us by forgiving our sins, even to going to the cross. *“Forgive them Father for they know not what they do”* (Lk 23: 34).



**Tuesday, March 15**

**Matthew 23:1–12**

*“Everything they do is done for people to see.”*

“A picture paints 1000 words.” This saying might not be as accurate now, as we are flooded with Facebook, Instagram or Snapchat ‘staged’ pics, memes, and of course fake news.

It is sometimes easy to get caught up in the exterior, at face value, especially when it gives the impression

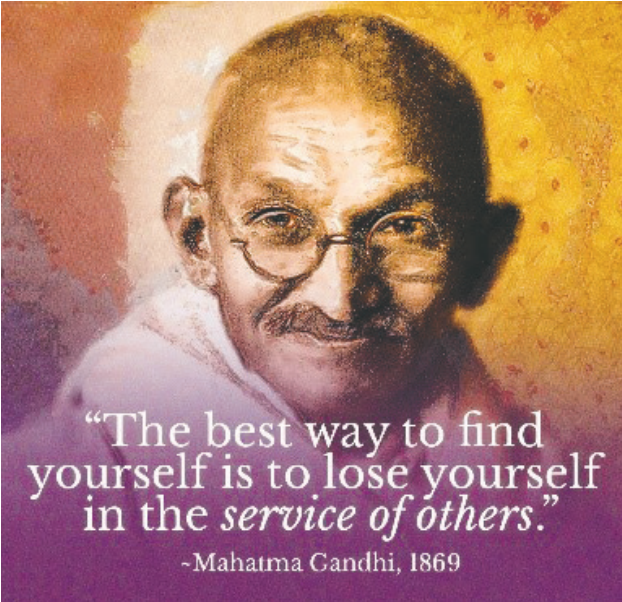
that everything is okay. Though it is easy to hide behind pictures, Jesus is interested in what’s going on inside of our hearts.

As we settle into the Lenten journey, God is calling us to focus on what is out of sight.

We are called to dig deep and identify not just the sinful areas in our hearts, but also, the hurts, traumas, and perceptions, that have hindered us from fully receiving Jesus, loving fully, forgiving as God called us, being more generous and humbler.

How can we do this? Through prayer, through reflection on the Word, and through spending more time with the Blessed Sacrament.

*Jesus, help us to dig deeper so that we can find ways of becoming better versions of ourselves.*



**Wednesday, March 16**

**Matthew 20:17–28**

*“... anyone who wants to be great among you must be your servant”*

Jesus was anxious to prepare His disciples for His impending torture and death in Jerusalem as this was the third occasion He spoke about it. Yet two of His followers, James and John, had missed the implications of His words.

They were more focused on the afterlife and wanted guarantees as to their position when He came into His Kingdom. They felt, since they could “drink the cup” Jesus would drink, they were entitled to such a position.

Jesus set them right by focusing on the here and now. If anyone wanted to occupy a distinctive position in this earthly life, then they must be at the service of others. Any position of true leadership or authority is one where service is the foundation, and the focus is this present life.

We are challenged to keep our feet firmly planted here and to be humble in our service of one another, like Jesus. There is no sense in focusing on the beyond which is out of our hands.



**Thursday, March 17**

**Luke 16: 19–31**

*“Between us and you, a great gulf has been fixed, to stop anyone if he wanted to, crossing from our side to yours.”*

Jesus always teaches us by telling stories and today’s story tells about what happens when God comes into our lives.

It reminds me of a teacher assigned to a school in a marginalised community. The students had very low self-esteem, were poor, unloved, and ignored. Their truant behaviour was a cry for help, but no-one recognised that. They yearned for kindness and love.

The teacher restored their dignity. They recognised their true worth and were motivated to achieve their God-given potential.

This passage challenges us to put the gifts at the service of those in need. The teacher used the blessings he received from God to bless his students, a blessing that nobody can take from them, for now they know they are loved and feel as if they are cradled in the bosom of Abraham as Lazarus did.

*Lord, open our eyes so that we can see You in the face of the poor and the dejected and show us how to bring comfort by our service and care. Amen.*



**Friday, March 18**

**Matthew 21:33–43, 45–46**

God expects all disciples to produce the appropriate fruits. The parable of the vineyard owner and the hostile tenants is a summary of the God/people relationship.

The parable is rich in symbolism: the landowner is God, the vineyard is the House of Israel, the tenants are the People of God, the servants are the prophets, and the son is Jesus.

Whatever is said in the parable of the God/people relationship then is applicable today. God gives disciples everything they need to live a good, holy life. And as He did in olden times, God expects that disciples would honour their commitment by producing the appropriate fruits at their appointed times.

The fruits necessary for disciples to maintain a healthy, life-giving relationship with God come from the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we are speaking of love, joy, peace, goodness, kindness, etc. The parable frowns upon rotten fruits such as selfishness, greed, hostility, antagonism and so on.

The only way to preserve the relationship with God and produce the appropriate fruit is to turn towards Him, not away from Him.





**Saturday, March 19**  
**Solemnity of St Joseph**  
**Luke 2:41–51**

*“Your Father and I have been looking for you.”*

Are you feeling lost? Imagine being in the temple that day and our Blessed Mother saying to us, *“Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety.”* At first, we might be tempted to think, ‘Who me? Why would the Holy Family be looking for me?’

Then, we remember that Joseph was a carpenter. When a carpenter has a plank of wood, he visualises what he can make. The carpenter in him sees what no-one else sees—what the tree without the leaves can be. He perceives the rare beauty that the untrained eye sees as ordinary, and slowly starts to carve this otherwise artless plank.

Today, the Holy Spirit may be calling you to surrender to the patronage of St Joseph. Our world, families and churches are very much in need of empowered, resourceful, skilled, and creative people like St Joseph. We especially need people with vision who can fix what’s broken, who build, create, and protect. Under his mantle, we become more malleable, and we grow in wisdom, grace, and stature, just like Jesus.



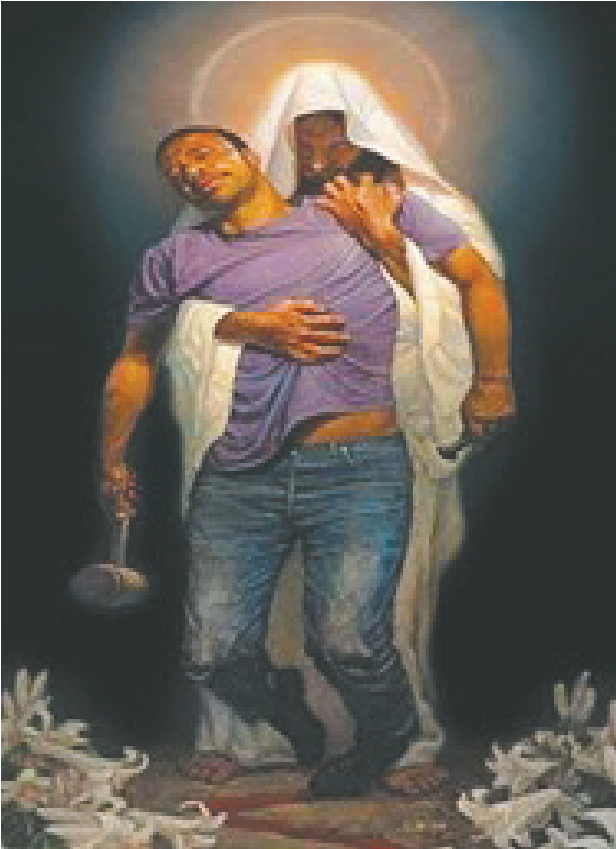
**Monday, March 21**  
**Luke 4:24–30**

*“Elijah was sent, but only to a widow in Zarephath; only Naaman was cured.”*

The Caribbean was hit hard by Covid-19; many lost their jobs. In today’s gospel, Jesus is speaking to us asking us to revive our region by accepting local above foreign. We must not see our region as an unaccepted prophet.

By choosing local, we would boost our economy and encourage the creativity of our people. By doing this, we can invoke the blessings that the widow of Zarephath and Naaman received.

*Lord, we pray that we would support the growth and development of our region by the choices we make and the use of our gifts and talents. Help us to bring this Good News to our people in this region, letting them know that they are accepted and loved. Amen.*



**Tuesday, March 22**  
**Matthew 18:21–35**

*“How often must I forgive?”*

The message in the gospel passage today, ‘There is no limit to forgiveness.’

Jesus’ concern is with our relationship amongst family, community, Church. He knows about the lovelessness, unforgiveness, coldness, the incompatible relationships, and the nature of our heart.

Jesus’ call is *“forgive seventy times seven”*. Generosity in forgiveness is essential to our relation and journey with Christ. Forgiveness must be without limit. God’s forgiveness is limitless.

Forgiveness is from the heart; Jesus is asking us to forgive from the heart.

Jesus is asking us to do it. He knows how hard it is to forgive when we are hurt especially by those who are close to us.

Today, we are burdened by guilt, and we rationalise what has happened. It’s difficult to forgive our brothers. The Sacrament of Reconciliation provides the healing we need to forgive. It gives grace to forgive.

Jesus stands ready to forgive. Forgive your brother today.

*Lord, help me to put into practice the forgiveness I receive in the Sacrament of Penance.*

**Wednesday, March 23**  
**Matthew 5:17–19**

*“Whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.”*

Sometimes I feel like I am going through the motions as a Catholic: Mass on Sundays, a quick prayer at night and in the morning, and maybe, going through Lent without deep reflection on the meaning of this season.

Jesus invites me, us, to enter more fully into God’s

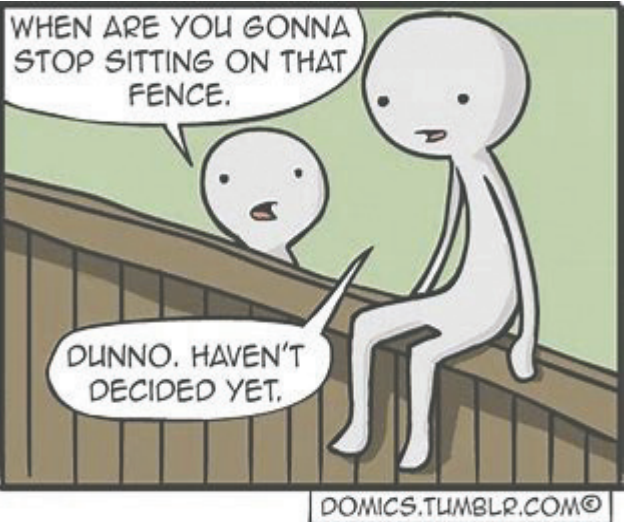


laws—to discern God’s calling to us; to know the meaning of following God’s laws, His commandments and to allow for transformation.

God’s law was given in love for us to become a people of love. We must know what it means to love and how to love others—the poor, the outcast.

We are called to speak against injustice—human trafficking, corruption, discrimination, crime, and violence. But also, to listen, reflect, discern, and then ACT out of love. Only then is the law fulfilled; we are transformed, and communities are places of peace and love.

I thank God for those who have taught me God’s ways and pray that I may be such a person for others—one who demonstrates Kingdom values.



**Thursday, March 24**  
**Luke 11:14–23**

*“Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters”* ( Lk 11:23).

We are in the middle of Lent. Today’s gospel takes us back to the beginning and reminds us of Jesus’ temptations in the desert.

Pride, vanity, and sensuality are at the root of all our sins. That is why we say and do the foolish things that we do. That’s why some in the crowd, after seeing Jesus cure a dumb man, said such outrageous things. They went as far as accusing Jesus of healing by the power of Beelzebul.

The Jews found the oldest trick to attack Jesus. When they could not attack Him on facts, they resorted to personal attack. Are we brave enough today, to search our hearts and see how much we are like those Jews to others who are doing good deeds, but we judge them as evil?

Jesus wants to cast out whatever evil is gripping us. He wants to cure us physically, spiritually, and emotionally. He is the stronger man who wants to fill us up with His strength in our weaknesses.





**Friday, March 25**  
**Solemnity of The Annunciation of the Lord**  
**Luke 1:26–38**

Mary trusted God and co-operated with Him. The Feast of the Annunciation is the root of all the other special feasts and celebrations in the Church. The Annunciation speaks of the Archangel Gabriel announcing to Mary that she would give birth to the Saviour. Nine months later, we celebrate the birth of Christ.

The word that comes to mind is ‘co-operation’. At the Annunciation, Mary demonstrated that despite the limitations of not fully understanding and wondering how, she co-operated with God to bring about the birth of the Saviour.

God always wants and depends on our co-operation. If we do not co-operate with Him, how would God work in the world?

Like Mary, we do not always understand or are fully prepared. But like Mary, we can trust God that if He asks, He will also give the means to accomplish the task. Co-operation depends on trust.

Mary trusted God and she teaches us to do the same. God wants to announce Good News through us. We cannot miss these special opportunities because of fear or unwillingness.



**Saturday, March 26**  
**Luke 18:9–14**

*“For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”*

In today's gospel, Jesus tells the parable of the tax collector and the Pharisee. The Pharisee, focused on his holiness and righteousness, and looks down on the tax collector, a despised character. He lists all his good deeds, yet it is the humble, repentant prayer of the tax collector which touches the heart of God.

How many times are we caught up in our acts of righteousness and holiness that we become proud, looking down at others we deem ‘less holy’? The God we serve is full of mercy and love and He exalts the humble.

*Lord, give us a spirit of humility. That everything we do will be done with love for others and with great humility. Give us eyes and hearts of mercy that see You in the rejected and those despised in society. Amen*



**Monday, March 28**  
**John 4: 43–54**

*“The Galileans received Him well, having seen all that He had done.”*

When Jesus first went back to Galilee, the people found it hard to listen to His teaching, preoccupied with His lineage and occupation. “Isn’t this the carpenter’s son?” (Matt 13:55).

Now after seeing all He had done in other towns, they were quite glad to welcome Jesus back to Galilee so He could perform these same miracles for them. *“So you will not believe unless you see signs and portents!”*

I sometimes feel guilty to turn to God in times of need, wondering if I had truly been faithful during the good times. Do I deserve to turn to Him now?

I pray that Jesus always looks with favour on me during my times of need, as He still cured the court official’s son. I pray also that these serve as reminders during the good times to praise and thank Him always.



**Tuesday, March 29**  
**John 5:1–3, 5–16**

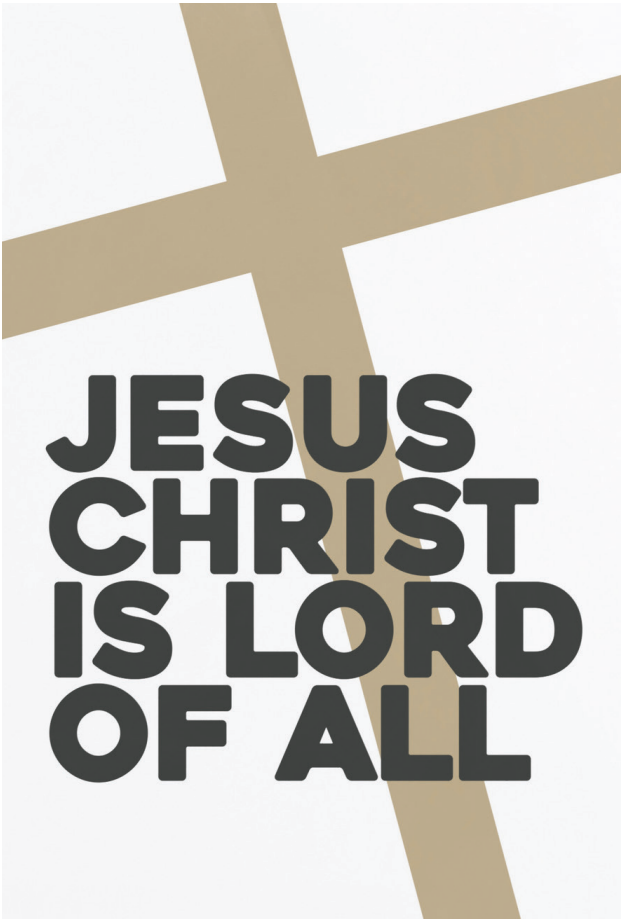
*“Do you want to be well again?”*

I am there. Totally disgusted at the smells, the noises, the general atmosphere, I wanted to walk away. Just then I heard Jesus ask one of the sick: *“Do you want to be well again?”*.

That was obvious, but the sick man didn’t answer ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ or ‘Not yet’. His reply was the complaint that he had had no-one to put him in the pool at the appropriate time. To which Jesus simply told him to pick up his sleeping mat and walk! Just like that, he was healed. He walked away with not another complaint on his lips.

Later, I was at the temple where Jesus met the healed man and cautioned him not to sin anymore or a worse thing may happen to him. Hmmm...

Speaking to me, Lord? I want healing, but...is it blocked because of my own complaint/s, my sins? I pondered the times when I prayed for healing and didn’t get what I wanted but now in retrospect, I did receive the grace to count my blessings. No complaints!



**Wednesday, March 30**  
**John 5:17–30**

*“The Son can do nothing on His own.”*

Whenever truth is spoken, the hearer must take notice. While truth can be discomforting or disconcerting, it should always oblige us to take needed action.

When He spoke to the people in the temple, Jesus only spoke the truth, declaring Himself to be the Son of God the Father, and taking all authority from the Father. To the people, His words seemed bold indeed!

But Jesus could do no less than declare what was true, since He always does the Father’s will, and He is Truth itself.

*“I am the Way...”* Undoubtedly, when He equated Himself with the Father, His words further scandalised them. His words echoed the “I am” of God the Father and continues to do so.

If we believe that Jesus is not only the Son of God, but that He is Lord, then our whole lives should be centred firmly on Him.

May Jesus Christ always be the foundation of our lives, as we pray daily, *“Jesus Christ is Lord, to the Glory of God the Father!”*.





Thursday, March 31

John 5:31–47

“You are truly the Son of God!”

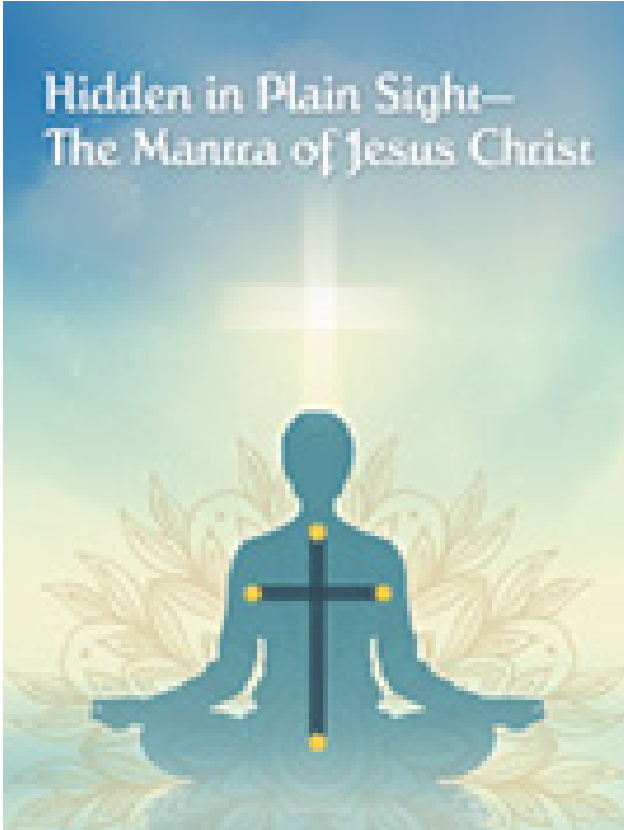
Presenting one’s credentials is uncomfortable particularly if there is lack of authenticity. Jesus didn’t have that problem; He confidently gave a fantastic account of His authenticity and authority, much to the consternation of the religious leaders, whose burning question was no doubt, “Who he think he is?”.

Today, just like them, we subject others who have bonafide missions to similar scrutiny, if we find that they ‘farse and out of place’, if we consider them too big for their shoes or an upstart.

But weren’t Jesus’ critics aware that He was the fulfilment of Old Testament scriptures? Had they forgotten the voice of the Father declaring, “*This is my Beloved Son*”? And what about His many signs **and** John the Baptist’s testimony pointing Him out as the ‘Lamb of God?’.

As we often say, what more they wanted? Blood? Well, He gave that willingly on Calvary’s cross and further corroborated His identity!

*Lord, during this Lent we thank You for the testimony of Your shed blood. You are truly the Son of God! Forgive our disbelief.*



Friday, April 1

John 7:1–2, 10, 25–30

Jesus avoided the Jewish authorities. The gospel mentioned, twice, that Jesus avoided confrontation with Jewish leadership. He went to Jerusalem and remained hidden. The people saw Him and wondered if the authorities had finally made up their minds about Him.

Making up our minds about Jesus is an important aspect of the Lenten season. The Lenten disciplines we undertake are not for themselves, but to facilitate a deeper encounter and relationship with the Lord.

We do not want Him to avoid us or remain hidden, nor do we want to avoid Him. Though Jesus avoided the Jewish authorities, He could not remain silent. The Word of God, whether it is the person of Jesus or His message, cannot remain silent or hidden.

Jesus’ message is just as important to us as is His presence since every aspect of His life and preaching is valuable.

This Lenten season is an opportunity to renew ourselves in Him, hence the importance of making up our minds about Him.



Saturday, April 2

John 7:40–53

“Prophets do not come out of Galilee...”

Not too long ago, there was a news story ‘out of Laventille’. A young woman was highlighted for her accomplishments in philanthropy and charity despite being from Laventille. She explained not only her drive and determination, but also the stigmatisation society places on persons coming out of Laventille.

I have even heard persons having separate mailing addresses for résumés because some employers won’t consider applicants from at-risk communities.

The hard thing is if people put you down enough, you start to believe it as the bad stuff is somehow easier to believe. So, it also requires an extra emotional strength to fight these stigmas.

Today, we see Jesus facing a similar challenge, “*prophets do not come out of Galilee*”. People are so caught up with where Jesus is from, they ignore the teachings and message.

I pray today for an end to prejudice and oppression of any kind and that God grants each of us the strength to endure.



Monday, April 4

John 8:12–20

“I am the light of the world.”

This pandemic experience has many people asking the question, “Where is God? How can He allow so much suffering and death?”.

Yet we know that He is present in this literal darkness. The Pharisees in today’s gospel challenged Him, accusing that His testimony is not valid. We too may at times find it difficult to explain.

Jesus tells them that He knows where He came from and where He is going. The Word is present in all circumstances, even when things appear chaotic. This is not easy to absorb by any means. Faith and trusting in our loving Father is our hope.

Lent is a period for us to do some deep introspection. We have the experience of Mary who was able to ponder all things and play her role in salvation.

Let us call upon her to help us at this time, to intercede to her Son who is “*the Light of the world*”, so we can all appreciate the good that surrounds us.



Tuesday, April 5

John 8:21–30

*Lord, I pray for understanding and courage.* There are so many times in the gospels that the listeners of Jesus do not understand what He is saying or just don’t believe Him.

I sometimes feel like these people. I marvel at the courage of Jesus to preach the Word of God, knowing that those who are listening to Him do not believe Him or think He is mentally ill.

I pray to the Holy Spirit, to truly know God is with me at all times. It is sometimes so difficult for me to remember this.

I would like to live a life pleasing to God. I would love to be the kind of person who is convinced of the Father’s will for me and then have the courage and conviction to do His will, without regard to what anyone else may think.

I envy the single-mindedness of Jesus.







**Wednesday, April 6**

**John 8:31–42**

*“You will know the truth and the truth will set you free!”*

No room! No room! As it was over 2,000 years ago, so it is now. No room in the inn of our hearts for God. Young and old are filled with the voices from the internet. Our minds and hearts have been conditioned, the Word has been replaced by the world of cyberspace where there are many voices without faces.

There are many paths leading to the same destination they say, so we forget the way: Jesus –the Way, Truth and Life. We find ourselves lost and in bondage in a series of slipknots, unable to break free.

If only we seek Jesus in His Word, hearing His voice in this conundrum will be easy. His voice indeed shall pierce the darkness and He will set us free indeed.

*Precious Blood of Jesus, save us, heal us, free us. Amen.*



**Thursday, April 7**

**John 8: 51–59**

*“... I tell you, before Abraham was, I am.”*

We should constantly take note when we sight the word ‘glory’, or any word derived from the Latin word Gloria (fame, renown) as it is used to describe the manifestation of God's presence.

Jesus stated in the passage that His Father (whom His audience of that time referred to as Our God) gives glory to Him and it is His divinity that the Son manifests. In doing so, the Son glorifies the Father. He knew His Father and He knew His purpose.

In the statement *“Before Abraham was, I am”*, Jesus claims both pre-existence as Abraham lived 2,000 years before Him, and also that He was one with God and thus had knowledge of His/Our Father.

Jesus is present; He is saying: ‘If you want to see God, here I am!’



**Friday, April 8**

**John 10:31–42**

We believe that Jesus is God, equal to the Father. The Jews accused Jesus of blasphemy; they wanted to stone Him. ‘Blasphemy’ is the act of insulting or showing contempt or lack of reverence for God or claiming to be God. Jesus claimed to be God, and this scandalised the Jews.

Catholics accept that Jesus is God. In our Creed, we profess that we believe in Jesus Christ because He is the only Son of God. He is God from God, light from light, true God from true God, and consubstantial with the Father.

Our salvation depends on Jesus being God since He could not save us otherwise. We can receive salvation by no other name but the name of Jesus.

Acknowledging that Jesus is God and Saviour, does not require Him to prove Himself to us. It simply requires us to trust and hope in Him. Since we believe Jesus is Lord and Saviour, we confidently place our lives in His hands. If not, what is the point of our faith and the Lenten obligations we are undertaking?



**Saturday, April 9**

**John 6:45–56**

*“Jesus...left the district for a town called Ephraim.”*

The gospel today is an example of what happens to people when they see their power being taken away.

The chief priests and the Pharisees were afraid that the people would give their allegiance to Jesus and no longer follow them.

Caiaphas, rationalising on the situation, makes a pronouncement with which they all agree: *“It is better for one man to die for the people, than for the whole nation to be destroyed.”* This is a situation that is evident not only in politics but in our communities and clubs.

We become extremely jealous when we notice that we

are losing power to someone who is not of our clan, and we will do anything to get rid of them. This is often how gossip and ‘bad talk’ starts.

Jesus, however, shows us that we should move away from such situations. He left the district for a town bordering the desert.



**Monday, April 11**

**John 12:1–11**

The man who was to betray Him. I often wonder why Judas Iscariot was allowed to stay. Jesus must have known his heart.

Could it be that Jesus hoped Judas would change and miraculously accept Him and not be the one that betrays Jesus? Or, as with Pharaoh, was Judas’ heart truly hardened to fulfil his destiny of betraying Jesus.

I am always saddened by how Judas’ story ends. His choice to take his own life shows, despite all the time spent listening to Jesus, that he never truly understood the message of Jesus.

If God can take Saul, one of the greatest persecutors of the Church, and convert him to one of the great evangelisers of the Church, what could Judas have become if he chose to repent and seek mercy from God?

I pray today for anyone weighed down by sin and guilt, at the point of contemplating suicide, that God opens our minds and hearts to His Word for healing and mercy.





## Tuesday, April 12

### John 13:21–33, 36–38

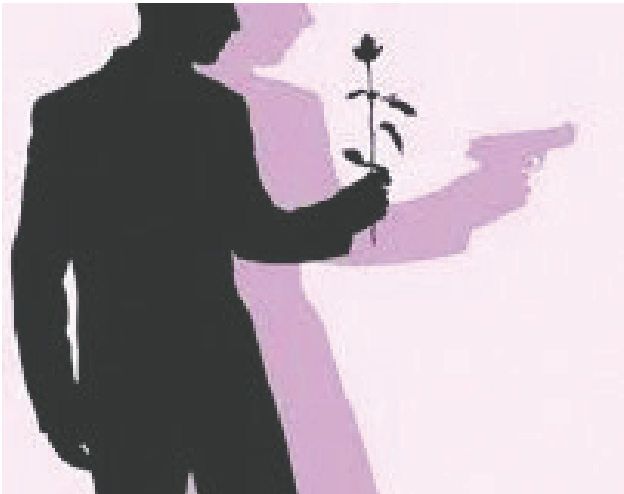
Night has fallen. This gospel passage evokes sad feelings –even Jesus *“was troubled in spirit”*. The passage highlights three ‘separations’ of different degrees.

The first separation comes from deep betrayal fuelled by Satan. Judas hasn’t yet actually betrayed Jesus with the kiss, but Jesus knows that his heart is already separated. Jesus knows *“night has fallen”*.

The second separation comes from betrayal fuelled by the need to go with the crowd, so Peter denied knowing Jesus even though he loved Jesus and expressed the desire never to be separated from Him. But Jesus, who knows His ‘little children’, knows that Peter would still deny Him to save face.

Then comes the third separation fuelled from love, leading to salvation. Jesus is to be separated from the ones He loves and who have walked with Him, to fulfil His mission. Even in this separation, He comforts the disciples and tells them they will follow Him later.

*Jesus, for the times I have separated myself from You, betrayed You or denied You, I am sorry. Please forgive me.*



## Wednesday, April 13

### Matthew 26:14–25

*“Surely you don’t mean me, Lord?”*

(Old me) “Jesus different, yes! You think I eating with anybody who trying to mash me up? Steups! If it was me, I woulda done tell the whole crew about Judas, watch nah! Nobody in that squad was talking to he again! But Jesus, really different!”

I read this scripture passage with greater compassion now. I am grateful for the loving God we serve, for I am often like Judas, going to Mass every Sunday appearing to be the perfect friend to Jesus, and sometimes (even before I leave the church) I betray Him with my thoughts, words, and deeds.

Judas betrayed Him for 30 pieces of silver. Sometimes I do it just for a sweet gossip or the promise of a Julie mango.

Sometimes, we share unkind stories about others, revelling in their demise. We see their sins but not ours; not realising how we betray our heavenly Father.

The good news is that we serve a loving God who never condemns but continues to break bread with us despite our failings.



## Thursday, April 14

### Holy Thursday

#### John 13:1–15

*“Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.”*

This evening as we start the Easter Triduum, focusing on the Passion, death, and Resurrection of our Lord, we can miss Jesus’ revolutionary act of leadership, that of washing His followers’ feet.

Jesus’ symbolic act of service and humility sets the standard for all leadership, not only in Church but also in the secular realm and in our own lives. As Christians, we are called to wash the feet of our family members and, figuratively, that of all persons.

We do this by pausing in any given situation to reflect before we act and then respond with an attitude of service and humility, in our thought, word and deed.

We wash each other’s feet when we participate in household chores, help each other with school or on the job, contribute to neighbourhood upkeep and get involved in parish social action.



## Friday, April 15

### Good Friday

#### John 18:1–19, 42

The cross is a symbol of self-emptying. St Paul spoke of Jesus’ emptying Himself when He accepted death on the cross (Phil 2:7). We can confidently say that the cross is the symbol of self-emptying.

Jesus, like many others, must have seen crucifixions before. Therefore, we can presume He knew what to expect when He accepted His own cross. The descriptions in the gospels confirm that crucifixion was pure agony. Yet, Jesus did not hesitate to embrace His cross when the time came.

To Jesus, self-emptying was more important than self-preservation. Self-emptying is about putting aside self, personal needs and comforts, pride and so many other aspects of one’s life for something greater. Self-emptying is not for itself. It is a personal sacrifice that benefits others.

The cross of Jesus is the sign of how much He loved us. He loved us to the point of dying on the cross so that we may have life. If Jesus did not embrace His cross as He did, we could not be saved.



## Saturday, April 16

### Gloria Saturday

#### Luke 24:1–12

*“...and they remembered his words.”*

Imagine, the women who had come from Galilee with Jesus, needed to be reminded of what Jesus had told them when He was still in Galilee.

Sometimes, it is so easy to forget words of advice or encouragement when faced with challenges.

We too, sometimes need to be reminded of Jesus’ words, especially in the most difficult situations; for example, as we navigate this Covid-19 pandemic, which seems to be lasting forever, leaving nothing but grief in its path.

One of the things I love about Catholicism is how journeying through Lent and Holy Week, sets the stage for the most beautiful celebration of God’s love: the Easter Triduum.

Every year, we are reminded of the sacrifice made for us; how Jesus conquered death by dying on the cross for us, sinners. It is so important for us to remember this, that from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday, the salvation story is retold more than once.

*Jesus, help us to always remember Your love for us.*