



## Homily Notes

### **Sept. 04, 2016: XXIII Sunday in Ordinary Times**

Wis. 9:13-18b/ Philm. 9-10, 12-17/ Lk. 14: 25-33

#### **He will Walk With Us**

Today's Gospel passage is a clear exposition of what Christian discipleship is all about. Jesus is making it clear that his discipleship is not of worldly power and glory, rather is an invitation for a loyalty which would sacrifice the dearest things in life.

Perhaps, we must not take his words literally. When Jesus tells us to hate our nearest and dearest, it means that no love in life can be compared with the love we must bear to him. Jesus needs full commitment and fullest love oriented towards him. Jesus wants real disciples; not who follow him distantly. It is one of the supreme handicaps of the church that in it there are so many distant followers of Jesus and so few real disciples. Jesus is making it clear that His church doesn't need quantity today; but needs quality priests. He doesn't need half-hearted followers.

Hence, to be a real disciple it is obligatory to count the cost of following Christ. Our God is not a cheap God, rather He is expensive. Discipleship is a serious business. If we tell Jesus that we want to take up our cross and follow Him as His disciples, then He wants us to know exactly what we are getting into. He wants no false expectancy, no illusions, no bargains. He wants to use us as stones for building His church, soldiers for battling His enemies, and salt for bettering His world; *and He is looking for quality.*

In every sphere of life we are called upon to count the cost. Even in marriage a man and woman have to sacrifice lot of their personal interests for the other. A man and woman must count the cost for a life-long commitment. Hence, it is so with the Christian way also. But if a man or woman is daunted by the high demands of Christ let us remember that we are not left alone to fulfil the demands of Christin Discipleship. He who called us to the steep road will walk with us in every step, strengthening and guiding. The choice is ours, but the Lord does not leave us alone if we choose to follow him.

**Arun Abraham CST**

**Sept. 11, 2016: XXIV Sunday in Ordinary Time**

Ex. 32:7-11, 13-14, I Tim. 1:12-17, Lk. 15:1-32

**Idle or Ideal Way of Life**

The first reading of today displays the impatience of Israel which led them to move away from God. They refused Yahweh and made a god to go before them in the wilderness. Wilderness here symbolizes the tough times in our life. “Crises contain exceptional opportunities,” says Robin Sharma in his book “The Leader Who Had No Title.” The tough times allow us to grow psychologically and spiritually. In this corporate era, we all are moving towards the idolatry of comfort. We are in search of comforts like wealth, luxurious living and so on.

Are we not deviating from the very meaning of our life? Are we not giving importance to the idols of money and wealth? You cannot serve God and wealth (Matt 6:24) says the Lord and the next verse adds that we should not be worried about food or cloth because life is more than these things. These idols make our life idle. The ideal way of life is to spread love. Jesus gave us a new commandment to love one another as he loved us (Jn. 13:34). This love is witnessed only through relating with other.

In today’s gospel, we have to note that the three parables are not simply stating the same thing. However, there is a difference. The sheep went lost through its own foolishness. It did not think of anything. Many of us fall into sinful living because we did not think in time. The coin was lost

not because of its own fault. Most of us are led wrongly through the tempting voices of the world. The son deliberately went lost through the act of turning back on his father. It clearly states that the love of God can defeat the foolishness of man, the tempting voices and even deliberate act of sinning. We are also cautioned of not to be like the elder brother whose obedience to his father had been merely duty rather than of loving service. He portrays a kind of self-righteous Pharisee who would rather see a sinner destroyed than being saved.

Jesus invites us through the parables to lead an ideal way of life by loving others even if they stood against us. He tells us to love our enemies and do good to those who hate us. We have to show our concern towards others. Raymon Panikkar in his Cosmotheandric vision speaks of the relationship (love) with God, human and nature. The three lost things in the parables are sheep (plants and animals), drachma (earth) and son (human beings) which explain the loss of love with God. The passage also indicates the quality of the forgiving God who is waiting and watching us to return to Him. God gave us the freedom to choose our own way of life. The more freedom we enjoy, the greater the responsibility we bear, toward others as well as ourselves. There is a Universal Paradox which all has to accept which goes like this: You are free to choose but you are not free from the consequence of your choice. I also affirm this by saying that we are free to choose idle or ideal way of life; however we are not free from the consequences of our choice.

**Joseph Stalin R.**

### **Sept. 18, 2016: XXV Sunday in Ordinary Time**

Amos 8: 4-7, Tim 2:1-8, Lk. 2: 1-8

#### **Jesus Christ our Karma**

Once on a construction site, the manager from the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor wanted to convey an urgent message to one of his employees, who was working with the sow-machine at that time. The manager called for him several times but the man didn't respond to him, being too engrossed in his work. So the manager threw a ten rupee note at him which fell right before him. The man picked up the note and got busy with his work

without looking up. Then manager threw a hundred rupee note and the man did the same. Again the manager, so frustrated, threw a thousand rupee note, thinking now he might look up but the man picked up the note and got in to his work again. Lastly the manager picked up a small piece of stone and threw at him and the stone hit him right on his head and now he looked up and saw his manager.

All of us realise that God too gives us the opportunities and equips us with required necessities to do right acts and live our lives fruitfully under His providence. But many times we get too much engrossed with our worldly engagements that we become unmindful of God. And then, God sends prophets and right leaders to convey His message and when we still do not look at him, God, like the stone in the story, may throw some chastisements or hardships to gain our attention so that we may rectify our Karma.

Similarly in today's first reading, God is sending Amos a Shepherd and dresser of Sycamore fig trees, from Tekoa, Judah, during the reign of King Jeroboam II of Israel (793-753 B.C.) and King Uzziah (Azariah) of Judah (792-740 B.C.), to be his prophet to his people and announce his judgement on Israel for her unfaithfulness and rebellion against His authority. Amos pronounces their damnation and doom unless they turn away from immoralities and mend their karma as per the will of God. Karma (sanskrit- Karm) means action, work or deed. In Indian theology it also refers to the spiritual principle of cause and effect, where intent and actions of an individual (cause) influence the future of the individual (effect). Good intent and good deed contribute to good karma and future happiness while bad intent and bad deed contribute to bad karma and future suffering. 'Karma' is also our potential for spiritual and personal growth. We can transmute the raw material of karma into wisdom, understanding and virtue.

The second reading instructs us to prayer, especially for the people in authority who tend to neglect their true Karma and remain unconcerned towards the poor and needy. It is the right call for everybody to do the right things so that, all may live with peace, devotion and propriety. Because, as a person sows, so himself/herself reaps. The fruit is of the same quality as the action. We have to be accountable and responsible for every act we do. In today's gospel, Jesus wants us to inculcate this fundamental logic very profoundly. As the steward mismanages his

master's money and consequently is punished for his misdeed, so also we, if we fail to take a lesson from this parable. Though the shrewdness of the steward is applauded but that is only a chance not the way.

Hence, we have to be true followers of Christ. Only through Jesus we have the salvation. For he says, "I'm the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the father except through me (Jn 14:6)". Let us not replace Jesus Christ, our saviour, with temporary achievements and allurements of the world. Let us be the Light to illuminate the world, a hand to help the needy and a tree to give fruits and shade to all. Amen.

**Ranjeet Joseph**

**Sept. 25, 2016: XXVI Sunday in Ordinary Times**

Amos 6: 1A, 4-7/ 1 Tim 6: 11-16/ Luke 16: 19-31

### **The Sin of Indifference**

Today the mother church invited us to ponder over the theme, which is the sin of indifference. The gospel passage is very familiar to us, which is the story of rich man and Lazarus. The Lazarus is a poor man. He is physically weak, socially degraded, he is living a shameful situation, and he is economically in a pathetic condition. On the other hand, there is a Rich man, who has no name. He is living a luxurious life. He is materially happy man. But the important thing is that both are in the same place that is in the Richman's house. The Lazarus is lying at the gate of rich man's house. The second phase of this story tells about a spatial displacement of both Richman and Lazarus. At this phase the rich man is in hell, where he is being tormented, and the Lazarus is now with Abraham in heaven. And also, between these two places there is a great chasm. What is the reason behind this separation? Bible never says the rich man did any evil acts, rather he is well appreciated for his love for his own brothers, so that he can say to Abraham for sending Lazarus to his own brothers, that Lazarus may warn them, so that they will not also come into this place of torment. Then, what happened to this rich man? The reason is the sin of indifference. In his earthly life he was indifferent to the condition of poor Lazarus.

This indifference leads to luxurious life. This is what prophet Amos Criticizing in today's first reading, that "alas for those who lie on beds of Ivory, alas for those who drink from the bowls and anoint themselves with the finest oils." This sin of indifference is what the present pope Francis always condemning. According to the catechism of the Catholic Church, there are four types of sins. Sin by thoughts, words, and deeds and by omission. The sin by omission means avoiding the chance of doing good things. The rich man failed in this dimension of morality. He neglected doing good things or service to Lazarus who was lying in front of his eyes. The rich man was indifferent to the tragic situation of the poor Lazarus. Dear friends don't be indifferent to others' suffering, be open to the situations and see what can be done and confront those situations and transform it.

**Joseph Pallattil**

**Oct.2, 2016: XXVII Sunday in Ordinary Times**

Hab. 1:2-3; 2:2-4, 2 Tim-1:6-8, 13-14, Lk. 17:5-10

### **Always Have Sound Faith in God, Your Cry Will Be Heard**

Once in a village, people had been waiting for the rains to cultivate their fields but they didn't have even a drizzle. One day all the villagers planned to visit Swami, who was living in the same village to pray for rains. Swami told the villagers to come the following evening for special Yagna. All people went as Swami told but one person took umbrella and went for the prayer. After some time there was a heavy down pour, all people got wet including Swami except the one who had umbrella. Dear friends in Christ, this small story tells us how we keep faith in God and in His deeds. Among many, only one person had really believed in the words of Swami that God will hear their prayers.

In today's readings we observe how prophet Habakkuk is complaining to God for his help. And in the second reading Paul tells Timothy to keep faith in Jesus. But today's gospel describes the lack of faith of disciples in him and asking to increase their faith. Faith provides us goals and hopes which reach far beyond our human abilities. We are called to achieve these things by working hard with all the gifts and talents God has entrusted to us. We are invited to cooperate actively with what God's

spirit wants to accomplish in and through us. Yet it is not at all easy, and many are the times we are hounded with questions and doubts. However, the just person lives by faith.

Paul reminds Timothy of the gifts of the Holy Spirit that he had received when he was ordained. He must stir into flames or not idle those gifts in the midst of all difficulties and oppositions. Paul told him that such things should never dampen his fervour. The Holy Spirit is a spirit of courage that strengthens him or her to grow in faith. The apostles too sensed the great difficulties Christian vocations entailed. When they perceived the gigantic nature of their task, they cried out to the Lord, “Lord increase our faith”, and it was never easy to be a loyal follower of Christ. It never will be. Yet those who follow him are in the right road. They have to fight the good fight and then be humble enough to say, “We are unworthy servants, we have only done what was our duty”. “How long shall I cry and you will not hear?” is the anguished tormented cry of the righteous from Abel. Centuries later the same cry was echoed from the cross where Jesus the just man burst out in an anguished sense of abandonment. “My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?” the cry of Abel the psalmist and Jesus reverberates through the length and breadth of planet earth. Life for the righteous never was and will never be easy. The righteous man has to have a firm faith.

Dear friends, in Jesus Christ today let us think, “Has my faith made me generous and active in the service of God and God’s people? And am I afraid of and ashamed to witness to Christ among the people I live with? Am I living in the right faith that God has given me?”

*Kanna Sagar Thomas Thambi*

**Oct 09, 2016; XXVIII Sunday in Ordinary Times**

2Kgs 5:14-17; 2Tim 2:8-13; Lk 17:11-19

### **Faith brings Salvation**

In today’s gospel we see Jesus, on his journey to Jerusalem healing the ten lepers. This parable depicts a lesson about faith and it reminds us that faith is sometimes found in unlikely places. These ten men afflicted with

leprosy cry out to Jesus for his mercy. Jesus having struck with pity and compassion heals all the ten. However, only one is described as glorifying God and returning to thank Jesus. The one who returns is a Samaritan, a foreigner. All the ten lepers were given the same gift of healing, but in his gratitude to God for this gift, the Samaritan found salvation in returning to thank Jesus.

In the first reading of today we see, Naaman is being cleansed from his leprosy. It is only because of his faith that he is being cleansed. He went down and immersed himself seven times in the Jordan, as Elisha had ordered. And in return as gratitude he chooses to serve the God of Israel.

The readings of today are very much applicable in our day to day life. Today, we may not suffer from our physical diseases like leprosy but we do suffer from our spiritual diseases one way or the other. We suffer from selfishness, jealousy, hatred and ego-centredness but Jesus is always beside us to cleanse us from these sufferings, every time we call out to Him in faith. Indeed we are loved and blessed with the gift of faith. “For God so loved the world that He gave his only son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish but may have eternal life” (Jn. 3:16).

We are also endowed with many gifts and talents, we have many achievements and successes but forget to regard that all these are from God. We often become like the other nine lepers. We forget to return to the one for whom all things are possible. Therefore it is necessary for every Christian to reflect upon his or her life, whether he or she is grateful to the Lord for all His graces and blessings. Each Christian is called to live by faith, and if we have true faith in the Lord, surely it will bring us salvation. Those who remain faithful to Christ will share in His glory.

**Derhasat Narzary**

### **Oct. 16, 2016: XXIX Sunday in Ordinary Times**

Ex.17: 8-13/ 2Tim.3:14-4:2/ Lk.18:1-8

#### **Our Needs and Theirs**

Today’s liturgy invites us to deepen our prayer life. Today’s readings are mainly about prayer and particularly about perseverance and constancy



in prayer. By introducing the parable of the unjust judge and the persistent widow in today's gospel, Jesus emphasizes the necessity of praying unceasingly and not losing heart. Jesus presents the widow in today's gospel as a model of trust and persistence with which his disciples are to pray. In the first reading Moses is presented as making tireless intercessions for his people while Joshua leads them in the fight against the Amalek. Both Moses and the widow teach us how we should pray. In the second reading St. Paul instructs Timothy to persevere in his ministry of preaching the Word of God in all situations with patience.

The Word of God teaches us that just as our parents want what is best for us and will give us what we ask for, God, our heavenly Father, too hears and answers our requests. We are living in an instant world and so when we ask for something, we want God to say yes to our requests instantly. Through this significant parable of the widow and the unjust judge Jesus conveys a striking message to all of us that we should always pray and should never give up. Prayer was central in the life of Jesus Christ and be supposed to be central in our lives too.

For most of us, prayer means asking God for something when we are in need. We conveniently overlook the more important aspects of prayer that are adoration, praise and thanksgiving. How many of us remember to say, "Thank You, Lord, for giving me another day," when we get up in the morning? How many of us express our gratitude for our well-being, our professions, our food and our further daily necessities? As long as our earthly life runs along smoothly, we tend to forget God. When adversity strikes, however, we suddenly remember that there is a God and we want Him to come to our support instantly. God, however, judges fairly. He gives to each according to one's merit. If we have forgotten God through our years of prosperity, how can we expect him to take notice of us in the times of adversity? So my dear brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ! Let us seek God first in our prayers of praise and thanks, and place others' needs on an equal footing with our own. In this way, we can always grow in our prayer life.

**J. Rino**

## Oct. 23, 2016: XXX Sunday in Ordinary Times

Sir. 35:12-14, 16-18/ 2 Tim. 4:6-8, 16-18/ Lk. 18:9-14

### Striving to fulfill Christ's mission

Every Mission Sunday is a reminder of Christ's mission entrusted to the Church. The Church is commissioned to 'go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything... (Mt. 28:19-20) that Christ has commanded. Christ's mandate to go out should emerge from the experience of the Risen Lord. The verbal proclamation should emanate from the inner life, from **witnessing**. We are called to give witness by letting our light shine in the world. In other words, every Christian is a missionary by virtue of his life in Christ. Jesus commands us to be the salt and the light of the world. Living out the gospel and giving witness through our life is, in fact, a broader understanding of mission. The Church has the task of carrying out Christ's mission in the world. Yet the present scenario of globalization and many other factors compel us to introspect our involvement and commitment to this mission.

Today, we see rampant violence, abject poverty, neglect of the suffering, consumeristic attitude, religious fundamentalism etc. in our societies, the countries and the world at large. All these should not hamper our mission; rather move us all to act generously and prudently. These should inspire us to imitate the Apostles and saints, the great missionaries, as St. Paul exhorts us to do. However, these may at times affect our spiritual life if we are not careful.

Jesus, in today's gospel, presents two totally opposing attitudes. Our attitude reveals our spirituality. One attitude that we see in the gospel is that of self-righteousness and pride. Such an attitude makes a person hate the other especially the marginalized. The Church has the primary mission of reaching out to **the marginalized**. But if the Church adopts the aforementioned attitude, how could it fulfill its mission? The other kind of attitude is of humility and self-effacement. Such kind is non-judgemental and ever ready to acknowledge one's faults and mistakes. This makes us accessible to others especially to those who are looked down upon in the world. We can flourish in our spiritual life only in

humility, not in pride. In carrying out the mission, what we need is to humble ourselves so that the world will learn a lesson from us.

**Denu Sangma**

**Oct. 30, 2016: XXXI Sunday in Ordinary Times**

Wis. 11: 22-12:2/ 2 Thes. 1: 11-2:2/ Lk. 19: 1-10

**The God Who Comes to Our House**

“He will not break a bruised reed or quench a smouldering wick” (Mt.12:20). There is only one religion which can claim a God who comes to his people and bring them salvation. When all other religions go in seeking gods, our God comes to us. It can be a contradiction to the so called definition of God but actually this immanence of the transcendent completes the real understanding or meaning of God. That is God is beyond our understanding and God’s mercy is beyond the horizons.

The readings of the day all show the God who approaches each and every one without any exclusion. He does not consider the lowliness or the worthiness. We often think God as blind by seeing the growth and wellbeing of criminals, corrupted politicians etc. we even ask why God nurture them, why God do not punish them. There we see the difference of the love of God and the love of man. God loves everything and hate nothing. So we may think that God loves sin. Absolutely not the sin, but the sinner, to make him repent and lead him to salvation. When we go through the salvation history we can see three elements, sin, punishments and mercy.

This does not mean that we can be passive in our ways. Because our God is the One who takes hundred steps towards us when we take one step towards Him. We see Zaccheus in the gospel of Luke. When Zaccheus only wishes to see Jesus, Jesus calls him and goes to his house. When we ask for a flower God gives a spring and we also have to remember that salvation is not something which we gain ourselves. Second Vatican says that grace of God is necessary to receive salvation.

So, our duty is to take a step towards Him, or invite him into our lives and He will come and bring us to salvation, because He loves all and hates none.

**Jijo**

**Nov. 6, 2016: XXXII Sunday in Ordinary Times**

2 Mac 7:1-2, 9-114; 2 Th 2:16-3:5, Lk 20:27-38

**The Power of Resurrection**

One of the most important characteristics of Sadducees is that they do not believe in resurrection. Since their thinking looks like in the line of materialistic way Jesus' teaching on resurrection was contradictory for them. So they approached Jesus to clarify their doubts on this matter. Their argument literally stands only in the realm of reason and intellect. Therefore, Jesus tries to correct their way of thinking and affirms the reality of resurrection. Here we need to ask a question to ourselves when we read and reflect on this passage how is it relevant for me today? For a Christian, belief in the resurrection is the most important aspect of Christine life. The reason behind this emphasis is only because of the resurrection of Jesus, our master whom we follow. Resurrection is the most essential factor which makes Jesus different for all other religious leaders and revolutionaries. For all of them, the lives ended with death whereas Jesus was risen from death and still He lives with us. Therefore, this gospel passage invites us to transcend from the level of reason to faith and understand the meaning of resurrection. We don't try to confine God to our understanding. As Pope Francis says "Our God is God of surprises" so we cannot comprehend HIS ways. Therefore, let us bow our lives before all HIS surprises.

In this passage, Jesus tells "now HE is God not of the dead, but of the living, for to him all of them are alive". Our God is the one who lived in history, lives and guides each moment of our lives. The most important aspect of incarnation is to reveal the

world who God is. When we think in this line Jesus tries to present God as a person for each Christian. It is an opportunity to reflect upon the concept of God which I hold in my life. How much am I experiencing the personal presence of God in each step of my life? Our God is not the one who sits in the heaven, instead one who is always with me in my happy and sad moments of life. As Abraham, Isaac and Jacob experienced, this gospel passage radically invites us to experience presence of the living God in my life. So let us pray God that grant the grace to walk with His personal presence throughout our lives and to deepen our faith in the reality of resurrection.

**Ebin CST**

**Nov 13, 2016: XXXIII Sunday in Ordinary Times**

Mal 4:1-2

2 Thess 3:7-12

Lk 21:5-19

**God of Surprises**

Pope Francis visited the Central African Republic last November where the violence between Christians and Muslims has claimed thousands of lives. But the danger didn't stop Pope from preaching at a mosque in a besieged community there proclaiming, "God is Peace and he Brings us Hope." He also visited a refugee camp where he blessed the displaced children. Pope Francis strongly believes that "faith is an encounter with Jesus, and we must do what Jesus does: encounter others, no matter where they are."

In the first reading Prophet Malachi (**Malachi 3:19-20a**) speaks of the Sun of Justice who will rise with his healing touch. The meaning of the name Malachi is "My Messenger." Thus the prophet speaks of the message of hope for his people. In the Second reading St. Paul (**II Thes 3:7-12**) urges the people to make him as model to imitate. He wants the people to be disciplined in their lives.

In the Gospel the author instill in us a hope and Jesus assures us that we will not be perished. What we have to do is to stand firm and hold fast to what we believe. Luke (**Luke 21:5-19**) brings us the message of hope through today's passage like Pope Francis. The Jews were completely attached to the temple of Jerusalem. For them temple and land gave them identity. Once they are lost, the identity is lost. The temple was utterly destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD, this event had disoriented them. They even felt that it was the end of the world. Luke uses this imagery to focus on the end times, in his eschatological discourse. This is the chief message that there will be distrust, disharmony, destruction, trouble, violence and even persecution, not only from outside but from your own also. But Jesus actually instills in us hope; he assures us that we will not be perished. He exhorts us to stand firm and believe that he is with us, even though it may seem that all is lost.

First we stand firm, trying our best to live the life, God has given us in the present and not worrying about the future. God's kingdom is at hand, whether we are scrubbing pots or writing reports, driving carpools or hauling trash. We stand firm by being faithful to what we have been called to do, making the most of God's presence in the midst of our daily activities.

Are you anxious about unresolved relationships? Worried that you aren't ready to meet Jesus? Each day offers the chance to draw closer to him, to mend broken relationships and to care for his people. If you are trying to do this each day your fears about the Lord's coming will slowly dissolve. You will grow in confidence that you are living each day to its fullest. You will be more peaceful.

Secondly we hold fast. We know the lord. God is our everlasting, almighty and faithful father. So we hold fast to that truth in the face of anxiety and trials. When you have "shaky" moments in your lives remember the words and assurance of Jesus. "You will be hated universally on account of my name, but not a hair of your head will be lost. Your perseverance will win you your lives."

So dear friends, Our Lord is the Lord who keeps his promise. Because he kept his promise to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and finally he fulfilled his promise through his only son, by sending him to save us from the clutches of sin. He knows us personally and he never abandons us. Thus we shall put our full confidence and trust in him who shows us the way, truth and gives us life in abundance.

**Shinoj Joseph SVD**

**Nov. 20, 2016: Christ the King**

2 Sam 5:1-3 Col 1:12-20 Lk 23:35-43

**Reigning with Christ the King**

A boy was not doing too well in public school. So his parents got him into a Catholic school to see if he would improve. Immediately the boy stopped watching TV and playing computer games and spent all his time in studies. At the end of the year he was the best student in class. His baffled parents asked him what happened. “The first day I went to school,” he explained, “and saw that man hanging up on the cross, I knew you couldn’t fool around here.”

The sight of the crucified Christ might have spurred our young man to success, but the crucifixion, humanly speaking, depicts failure. It signals a brutal and disappointing end to the life and work of Jesus. When Jesus cried, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46) his God did not take him down from the cross. When he cried, “Eli, Eli,” and the bystanders waited to see if Elijah was coming to save him, nothing happened. One of the thieves crucified with him even challenged him, “Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!” (Luke 23:39) and he was still hanging there. By every observable, measurable, human standard, the crucifixion was a disappointing end for Jesus whom we acclaim today to be our King.

But Jesus has said that his kingdom is not of this world. By this he means to say not simply that his kingdom is not localized in this world but that the ways and standards of his kingdom are not the ways and standards of the world around us. One of the first people to appreciate this mystery is the repentant thief on the cross about whom we read in today's gospel. Choking with the pains of crucifixion and imminent death, he turns and says to Jesus, his fellow convict hanging on the next cross, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom" (Luke 23:42). Unlike the third convict who asks to be delivered from the cross, this holy criminal knows that success in God's kingdom is measured by a different set of standards. He knows that to get into the kingdom of Christ one has to be saved not from the cross but on the cross.

How often we, followers of the Crucified, make the mistake of the unrepentant thief, of seeking to vindicate ourselves by a show of power, wealth or connection!

A certain knight dragged himself back to the king's court after a narrow escape from a wearisome campaign. The king ran out to meet him. "What is wrong, Sir Erasmus?" asked the king. "My Lord, the king," answered the knight, "I have been out fighting your enemies to death." "Which enemies?" asked the king. "Your enemies on the western border," replied the knight. "But," countered the king, "I have no enemies on the western border." "Well," replied the disillusioned knight, "now you do." In his zeal for the king, the knight has been going about sowing seeds of enmity and discord in the kingdom whose peace and harmony he was supposed to safeguard.

Aren't we often, like this knight, so different from our King? As soldiers of Christ when shall we learn to fight with the same weapons used by our Master? What weapons did Jesus use to wage the spiritual war of the kingdom of God? He used the weapons of



Truth and Love. The truth of the word of God is a sharp sword against all the forces of the enemies of the kingdom. Salome, the mother of James and John wanted to add her financial power to propagate Jesus' teaching. Jesus turned it down. The people wanted to make Jesus king and so to prop up the power of his words with the power of royalty. Jesus ran away from them. The sword of the word of God, wielded with love and meekness as Jesus did is all that we need to spread the kingdom of Christ on earth.

As we celebrate the kingship of Christ today, Jesus invites us as he did 2000 years ago: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart" (Matthew 11:29). Today is the day to ask ourselves how far we have responded, as individuals and as a community, to this invitation to cultivate the mind of Christ in our dealings with one another, especially in our dealings with those we perceive to be different from us. This is the way to show in our daily lives that Jesus Christ is indeed our king: by cultivating and living out in our lives the gentle and humble mind of Christ. And so, let us conclude with a prayer: Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make our hearts like unto thine.

**Munachi E. Ezeogu, cssp** (Internet)

### **Nov. 27, 2016: I Sunday of Advent**

Is. 2: 1-5/ Rom. 13: 11-14a/ Mt. 24: 37-44

#### **Be Prepared!**

Today, as we are entering into the season of Advent, Holy Catholic Church is welcoming each and every children of her to prepare oneself to welcome the incarnate word once again into the manglers of our hearts. Gospel of Mathew beautifully creates an apocalyptic atmosphere to grasp the complete meaning of readiness which was of prime concern for the society of his time. As the gospel of Mathew was written to the people with Jewish background, the community of Mathew had the expectation of the world coming to the end and that day is not too distant

future, God would suddenly and dramatically establish divine rule over human affairs. The Jewish and Christian literatures have beautiful variety of ideas about what this day might involve. So are we prepared for it?

The problem of the second coming of the son of man is of utmost importance. It is because, we don't have a proper knowledge of the arrival of the son of man. The time could be anytime; it can be now, tomorrow or some years ahead. But in such a context what we can do or what our duty ought to be is to be ready and watchful beforehand itself. The evangelist uses apt pictures to describe this ideology very well. He brings in the idea of flood during the time of Noah from the Old Testament, where bad consequence was inflicted on those who were not prepared. He goes to extent of comparing the coming of son of man as to that of a thief who never drops in to a house by prior informing. The two women preparing meal and the two men in the fields highlight the suddenness of the coming and the separation it will be bring.

Jesus through this imageries is cautioning everyone to take proper measure for all the warnings that come across in our life. It is not just of the natural calamities that Jesus is speaking, but also of the awareness of the spiritual warnings we receive in our life. We Christians all over the globe are called to live for what we believe. Even unto the point of death we are called to be docile to the beliefs rooted in our hearts. No one knows when our throats will be slit for the sake of the kingdom of heaven or when we will be brutally tortured for the Christ we believe. Though little harsh, the gospel reading of today carries a clear warning: *Be Prepared!* If we are still in slumber, let's wake and prepare our drooping spirit in all the ways we can to have an encounter with Christ our Lord. Amen

**Jerine**

## **Dec. 4, 2016: II Sunday of Advent**

Is. 11: 1- 10, Rom. 15: 4-9, Mt. 3: 1- 12

### **Am I the Message?**

Prophet Isaiah comforted the Israelites that with the appearance of the long awaited King and the real Judge, they will be delivered justice which they owe. The Judge, upon whom rest the spirit of the Lord shall judge and decide with equity for the meek of the earth. “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth (Mt, 5:5).” Having obtained justice, prophet continued to console the exiled Israelites that there shall be endless peace. God’s creation is filled with His expression of life and joy. Cosmic power is being revived. The whole Cosmos is in perfect harmony. The covenantal relationship restored whereby the Israelites becomes Yahweh’s people and He, their God.

John the Baptist, the Forerunner of Jesus Christ appeared on the desert and proclaimed about the advent of the Christ, “the Prince of Peace” (Isa, 9: 6-7). He proclaimed that every receptive heart received the message of the Kingdom of Justice, truth and love. He voiced the people to prepare a way, a straight paths. He called for the conversion of heart (Mt, 15: 18-19).

In a world today, where the sense of virtues are slowly and gradually disillusioned by the heavy apparent throbbing advertisements, our reality of life is greatly challenged. There is in every individual the bi-polar pull which goes on to affect the greater lives in the society. The society with its structures and divisions, expectations and restrictions creates certain atmosphere which shape the lifestyle of the person. The wide gap between those affluent and the powerful on one hand and the poor and the marginalized on the other makes one to ask the old and the same question, “**Why this?**” Are we living in a just and a peaceful society where equity is shown to those in real need?

The dignity of a person is almost gone in a society where God is objectified and used as when one is in need. As **Pope Francis** states that it is no longer the person (God’s image and likeness) who commands, but money, money, cash commands. God the Father gave us task for

protecting the earth not for money but for our peaceful living. Nevertheless, men and women are sacrificed and stripped of from their dignity to the idols of profits and consumption. The rich continues to prosper and the poor are deprived in the same society.

Can we be that voice shouting in our own little ways to awaken the sleeping consciences and lukewarm and corrupted spirits? The message of God's **LOVE** must be made heard in a distracted minds, disturbed soul and superficial world of ours today. It is the name, the face and the mercy of God that unites all creation. Can we be that message? **I AM THE MESSAGE.**

May the Lord grant us the grace of perseverance and comfort as we await the word becoming flesh and living among us, "**Emmanuel.**"

**C. Peingam Augustine**

### **Dec. 11, 2016: III Sunday of Advent**

Is. 35:1-6, 10; Jam. 5:7-10; Mt. 11: 2- 11

#### **Changing our Thinking**

The common theme in the above readings is one of joy & encouragement, and the need for patience. The prophet Isaiah encourages the exiled Jews to believe that God is going to save them and transform them. In James the Apostle encourages the early Christians to be patient "*because the coming of the Lord is at hand.*" Finally, in the Gospel, Jesus cast away the popular expectations about the Messiah and simply to accept His healing and preaching ministry as the fulfilling of the messianic prophecy of Isaiah.

John's doubts in the gospel can have two possible explanations: 1) John knew who that Jesus was and he wanted his disciples to follow Jesus as their new master presuming that once they met Jesus they would see the Messiah and become his followers. 2) John began to doubt Jesus' identity as the promised Messiah.

Jesus' quoting from Isaiah clearly speaks of the deaf hearing & blind seeing: (Is.29:18), lame leaping (Is.35:6), dead becoming alive

(Is.26:19), good news for the oppressed (Is.61:1), etc. These were signs of the Messiah's coming.

Therefore, Firstly, this entire episode helps us understand how the experience of a faith crisis can play a role in our spiritual and emotional development. If John the Baptist, who had direct encounter with Jesus the Messiah, can doubt and revise his faith, then so can we. If disillusionment is a necessary precondition for a more resilient faith, then we too must be open to its possibilities.

Secondly, we rejoice at the thought that Jesus is going to be reborn in our lives as Love, Mercy, Forgiveness and spirit of Humble and Sacrificial service during this Christmas season. During this season, let us joyfully share God's bountiful grace, Forgiveness, and **Mercy** with others. This is what Jesus commanded John's disciples and to us today: *Go and tell others what you hear and see.*

Finally, let us reflect whether the gospel reports create *metánoia* (a change of thinking about God, ourselves, and the world) in us during Advent?

**Sunny Thomas**

### **Dec. 18, 2016: IV Sunday of Advent**

Is. 7:10-14, Rom. 1:1-7, Mt. 1:18-24

#### **Christ our Goal & Focus**

In the saintly imageries and pictures we use in our churches of saints like Mary, St. Joseph, St. Anthony etc. are always depicted with their fingers pointing towards Jesus. We venerate them and strive to live a life as they lived, in line with true values of Christ.

In the scripture too, angels, prophets and apostles pointed towards one thing and that is Christ. In the first reading we have prophet Isaiah who prophesized about the coming of the Messiah

In the letter to the Romans we have the servant of Jesus Christ, an apostle, St. Paul. He was always talking about Christ; his epistles are filled with Christ; Christ in his ministry and message, was everything.

In the gospel too, Angel of the Lord conveyed the coming of Christ to Joseph in a dream.

All those people who received the prophesy were upright, humble and genuine repentants. King Ahaz's humility is expressed when he is told by the Lord to ask for a sign, he says "...I will not ask, I will not put the Lord to the test". St Paul, once a persecutor is now a servant of Christ. And we have Joseph and Mary, the obedient, lowly and humble servants of God.

We Christians are called to be angels, prophets, apostles, disciples, saints and servants of Lord Jesus Christ. We are called to preach Christ through our words and deeds. We are summoned to be messengers of Christ, to deliver his good news to the poor and humble of hearts. We are called to be prophets, to spread peace, justice and challenge the evil structures in the society. Last but not the least we are called to repent, change our lives and become humble, obedient servants of Christ so that like the psalmist we can stand before the Lord, in his holy place with clean hands and pure hearts and prepare for his glorious coming.

**Heston Ferrão**

## **Dec. 25, 2016: The Nativity of the Lord**

Is 52:7-10, Heb 1:1-6, Jn. 1:1-18

### **God Is Truly with Us**

Christmas is a time we celebrate the birth of our Lord, the mystery of the incarnation of the Almighty God as a little baby in the hands of a Mary of Nazareth. The meaning of Immanuel is 'God is with us'. Thus the incarnation of the Lord brings God to the people, the closest that could be possible. We see in many religions that God takes the form of a human being-for a particular cause. But the impact that this man called Jesus made, no one else can replicate. Its simply because, in spite of being God himself, he made himself like us in every way except sin. This is the greatest consolation that the humanity can have, that it is not alone in its journey of this world.

The first reading of today, tells us that God has shown mercy on Jerusalem and at last the time for its salvation has come, implicitly through the birth of Jesus himself. The wait of the people of God for

their Saviour as God promised has at last been fulfilled. As St. Paul tells us in his letter to the Hebrews today that God has spoken to us directly through his Son Jesus. It is in Jesus that the culmination of God's plan of salvation lies. That is what John tells us in the Gospel reading of today. The word has become flesh and lived among us. God gave the law through Moses but grace and truth has come through Jesus.

When we celebrate the birthday of someone, it is their presence in our life that brings us closer to them when we celebrate their birthday. Christmas is not the birthday of Jesus but the celebration of the birth of Jesus. Our new clothes, our candles, our cakes, our cribs, our Christmas cards, all of these make sense if and only if Jesus is there in our lives. Otherwise Jesus becomes a concept that comes and goes along with every Christmas that we celebrate. May this Christmas bring us more closer to ourselves, our neighbours and God. After all, our Immanuel is with us.

**Bhanu Yeswanth Kumar**