

Homily Notes

September 3, 2017: XXII Sunday of the Year
Jer 20: 7-9; Rom 12:1-2; Matthew 16:21-27

Following Jesus

“If any want to become my followers let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me” (Mt: 16:24).

“Deny” and “cross” both words seem to be risky and challenging in the Christian life. Cross symbolizes that the cross of Christ was a cross of love and a manifestation of God’s love for lost humanity. Moreover, the way of Christian is the way of the cross, a way of self service and self giving. The word “deny” implies that one should say yes to God and no to oneself. It means to dethrone earthly desires, affections and sufferings in order to enthrone God’s love. As a Christian you and I should face these two tasks in our daily lives. The more a person denies his wealth the more that person grows spiritually and he or she will become more human. God’s generosity is beyond our shallow calculations and shabby expectations. Let’s try to be more human to be the face of Christ for others by denying ourselves and to take up our own cross with Jesus.

In the first reading, we see that God instigates the spirit in our hearts: His mission which we can’t refuse at any cost. Most importantly, when we speak what he has asked us to speak, we are becoming His voice. We are really carrying not only His Words but also His feelings, moods, attitudes etc. when I turn out from the mission He has entrusted me, my wholeness will be made stumble and something like the burning fire start to gnaw my bones. Thus, my wholeness itself stands as a witness for the mission for which I am entrusted.

In the second reading, St. Paul speaks of spiritual worship which presents our bodies as holy, living sacrifice. He reminds us not to go one with the world rather always seek the will of God and discern it for our lives. All people are one in Christ and the gifts which we are gifted depend on the grace given by God.

-Selvam

September 8, 2017: Nativity of Blessed Virgin Mary

Micah 5: 1-4a; Ps 12:6ab.6c; Matthew 1:1-16, 18-23

Mary: Born to Be the Part of Salvation

One's existence should not be a burden to the universe rather it should become a grace to the universe. All Generations will call me blessed (Lk 1:48). Blessed are you among women and blessed is the Fruit of your womb (Lk 1:42). Birthday of Mother Mary is a birthday very dear to us because she is our mother and she is the one who intercedes for us. Every human being is born into this world in time and space. In these two space and time, we specifically call time as a birthday and it is the day that the life of being is begun in this cosmos. Birthday of Mary is the happiest day for all and one day she will be the mother of Christ and the mother of the universe. In this day, Anna actualizes the fruit of her hard work and love, prayer are fulfilled in the form of Mary. Our life should become a blessing to the society like Mary. God has a plan for every one of us, we have to realize and recognize that plan of God to fulfill as Mary had done it. God had a special plan for Mary from the beginning of the history of salvation. Through the birth of Mary the roots of salvation has sprouted. We can play a special role either in the family or in the society but Mother Mary played a graceful role in the universe and in the salvation history by giving birth to the Son of God. Our birthday brings happiness to our family but Mary's birthday brings happiness not only to her family but also to the universe.

Church traditionally celebrates September 8th as the birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary and after that on 8th December we celebrate her immaculate conception. She is the child of St. Joachim and St. Anne. Saint Augustine described Mother Mary as the

flower of the field from who bloomed the precious lily of the valley. On the nativity of our Lady we can think how great the joy of this day was, not only for Joachim and Anna but also for God. The most joyful person would be Jesus. St. Paul tells us that he has chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and immaculate in his sight. Philosopher Heidegger says as long as life exists so also death. Death is inevitable of every human being before we die we have to do the best. in order to be the faithful of god, our behavior should be the behavior of sinless the is the gift that we are giving to Mary on this day . She always did selfless service to God. When we think of Mother Mary, she evokes a lot of feelings and emotions by revealing her virtues of life-giving, care providing, consoling functions.

The greatness of Mother Mary doesn't stem from her personal reputation rather it is the fruitfulness of her preserving and faithful consent do to God's will and the glory that comes from being united to her son. We are blessed because the mother of God is gifted to all and she leads us to her son. She is constantly telling us to do whatever He tells us (John 2:5). On this day we have to ask ourselves: Do we pray like Mary? Are we ready to do God's will? If not let us ask the lord to grant us the grace to be a true faithful like Mary our mother. May all our lives of sanctity be our gift to our heavenly Mother on her birthday.

-Songa

Sept 14, 2017: Exaltation of the Holy Cross

Num 21:4b-9; Phil 2:6-11; John 3:13-17

Salvific Value of Suffering

The immediate idea that comes to our mind when we think of the Cross is that of suffering. The solemnity of the Exaltation of the Cross is not merely the exaltation of suffering, but the exaltation of the One who suffered, Jesus Christ. The cross has no value; the cross has no glory and fame; the cross has no meaning, without the One who was crucified, without him who shed his precious blood for the sins of all human beings.

In today's first reading, Moses intercedes for the people who sinned against God, and God saves them from the poisonous serpents. Moses pointed to the bronze serpent erected for the people and they were saved only because they repented and turned to God in faith and humility. The second reading invites us to imitate the One who is the best example of humility. He is our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Gospel tells us that the Crucified Christ was prefigured in the bronze serpent lifted up by Moses. Jesus however is much superior to Moses because Jesus offered himself to be lifted up. The suffering that Jesus endured was not without any cause. The cause was noble and divine. God willed that His Son should suffer. Jesus emptied Himself so that all of us might enjoy the fullness of life. The suffering which accompanies the cross is sanctified by Christ. So, we don't need to panic about the sufferings in following Jesus Christ, our Lord. Suffering is the mark of discipleship that Jesus asks of us – "Deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow me" (Mt. 16: 24).

In the words of Thomas A Kempis – "Why then are you afraid to take up that cross, which leads to the Kingdom? In the cross there is salvation; in the cross there is life; in the cross there is protection from your enemies; in the cross there is infusion of heavenly sweetness; in the cross there is strength of mind; in the cross there is spiritual joy; in the cross there is the compendium of virtue; in the cross there is the perfection of sanctity." Therefore, there is no other way for us to attain eternal life, but only in taking up our cross and following Jesus, the Crucified and Resurrected Christ, our Lord.

-Denu Sangma

September 17, 2017: XXIV Sunday of the Year

Sir 27:30-28:7; Rom 14:7-9; Mt 18:21-35

Be Merciful and Forgiving

What is your reaction when somebody frowns at you for no fault of your own or how quick are you to forgive your enemy? Do you hold on to or keep an account of the taunts and insults?

These are the questions that can help us to calculate our HQ (Happiness Quotient). My friend sent me a text message that read like this, “Generally we believe our memory is weak, but when we want to forget someone’s mistake, then we realize how powerful our memory is.” Isn’t it true?

Here is a story from the life of Buddha that will teach us how to be cool and serene on the face of anger, insult and mockery.

A man came and spat on Buddha’s face while he was meditating. He wiped it off and asked the man, “What next? The man was a little puzzled because he himself never expected that when you spit in someone’s face he should ask “What next?” Buddha was neither angry, nor in any way offended. There was no reaction on his part. But Buddha’s disciples became angry and insisted on punishing the man. The man went home perplexed and guilty. Fully tense and in remorse, he could not sleep the whole night. The next morning he went back to Buddha and threw himself at his feet and cried saying, “Forgive me for what I did yesterday.” Buddha, full of compassion took him by the river and said, “Every human being is like this river that goes on flowing, never the same again. The man you spit upon is not me. I look just like him. The river has flowed so much. So I cannot forgive you because I have no grudge against you.

If we meditate on the readings of today, the book of Sirach calls anger and wrath as abominations which a sinner holds on to. We are called to forgive and forget one another’s faults and wrongdoings for there is someone up there, the Lord Almighty, who will keep an account of our anger and wrath. Our job is to be merciful and patient like the king that Jesus mentions in the parable who felt pity for his slave and forgave his debt. If God can remove our transgressions so far, as the east is from the west (Ps 103:12) then why can’t we do likewise with our neighbours? We need to give time to people before branding them as ‘enemy’ to realize his or her faults, for everyone deserves a second chance to change and rectify ones behaviour. Don’t expect the other to

change immediately. Wait, relax, don't react, and don't lose your temper!

-Heston Ferrao

Sept 24, XXV Sunday of the Year

Is 55: 6-9; Phil 1: 20c-24.27a; Mt 20: 1-16a

Mysterious Ways of God

The readings of the day, speak to us about the mysterious ways of God and the vast abyss between the human ways of thinking and that of God. In the first reading taken from the Book of Isaiah, we see the prophet telling the people that the difference between the ways and thoughts of the humans and those of God is like the distance between the heavens and the earth. This calls for amending our ways and turning back to the Lord who is rich in forgiveness.

In the second reading, we see the zeal of the Apostle Paul, in serving the Lord. So much is his love for Jesus that he could say that life for him is Christ. He is caught up between two things at the dusk of his life as he became old: To live and serve Christ or to be gone and be united with Him. Finally, he says that staying alive for the sake of the his faithful is more urgent need, thus setting an example that it is more important for every Christian to win more souls for Christ, than to be united with him.

The Gospel reading of the day is one of the most challenging parables for every Christians. The average daily wage of a worker during Jesus' time was said to be one denarius a day. So, a worker who works the whole day would earn one denarius at the end of the day. The Landlord is not being unjust in giving one denarius to those who came in the morning and had agreed upon one denarius with the Landlord. If we read the whole parable from the perspective of the workers who were hired in the evening, we would know their agony. They were standing in the marketplace from the morning till evening, yet could not find any work. It is therefore, no fault of theirs that they were not hired. At the end of the day they too need to feed their hungry wives and children.

It is in this context, that the generosity of the Landlord and his justice comes into play, hiring servants even at the evening, shows the inclusiveness of the Kingdom of God and the universality of salvation. Further, like Jesus said, the Father who clothes the lilies of the field knows how to take care of his children. The hiring of the workers indicates the mission; those who were hired in the morning indicate the Scribes and the Pharisees who are jealous of the generosity of Jesus and his love for the poor and the marginalized. The workers hired at the end of the day indicate the sinners, poor and the Samaritans. Can we be generous like our Father? Can we stop grumbling and complaining like the workers hired in the morning? Can we wait the whole day patiently for doing the work of the Father? **-Bhanu Yeshwanth**

October 1, 2017: XXVI Sunday of the Year
Ezek 18:25-28; Phil 2:1-11; Matthew 21:28-32

The Parable of the Two Sons

The parable that we see in today's Gospel is an elaboration of what Jesus teaches in Mt 7:21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord', will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in Heaven."

This parable sets before us a picture of two very imperfect sets of people, of whom one set were none the less better than the other. Neither son in the story was the kind of son to bring full joy to his father. But the one who in the end obeyed was considered better than the other.

Firstly, it tells us that there are two very common classes of people in this world. First, there are the people who promise anything; make great declarations of piety and fidelity; but their practice lags far behind. Second, there are those whose practice is far better than what they speak. They claim to be tough, hard-headed, but somehow they are found doing kind and generous things, may be in secret as if they were ashamed of it. So, when it comes to the bit, they live more Christian lives than many professing Christians. All of us might have encountered these two sets of people in our lives. But the real point of the parable is that

the really good man or woman is the one in who words and deeds meet and match.

Secondly, promises can never take the place of performance, and fine words are never a substitute for fine deeds. Christian way cannot be complete with mere promises and pompous declarations alone, performance also matters. Our promises don't count unless they are performed.

Thirdly, both these sons in the parable are two possibilities in each one of us. Sometimes we say 'yes' to God, but then get distracted or tired and our 'yes' accidentally turns into a 'no.' And sometimes we start with a loud 'NO' and then we better ourselves and turn it round into the beginning of a 'yes'- maybe a little shaky at first, but a beginning. And that can make our God proud of us, because the change of our heart matters more to our God than what we were in the past.

God wants to change our hearts so that we will show by our speech and by our actions that we respect his will and we are ready to do what he commands. That's why Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord', will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in Heaven."

-Arun Abraham CST

Oct 8, 2017: XXVII Sunday of the Year

Is 5: 1-7; Phil 4:6-9; Mt 21: 33- 44

Serving in the Vineyard of the Lord

Today's readings explain to us the real nature and purpose of the Kingdom of God. The word of the Lord speaks of two vineyards today: one which the Lord directly maintained and another one that he had entrusted to the tenants to take care. The first vineyard which the Lord directly nurtured has got much resemblance with the house of Israel, the vineyard which the lord made up on the hill (Is 5:1). He planted with the choice vines as YHWH chose Israel. He had made the watch tower over them. The watch tower directly pointing out the presence of the Lord

amidst them as it was in the Ark of the Covenant. The Lord chose his people from the wicked and unformed and then he himself formed them to a great nation as the vineyards story tells in the book of Isaiah (Is 5:2). But the fruit which given by the vines were wild grapes (Is 5:2). The second vineyard (Mt 21:33) which the Gospel presents to us is a good one. It represents the word of God and the tenants that the owner appoints to guard his vineyard were we ourselves. God has handed over to us the mission of spreading its fruit. But we all failed to do our duties and forget the one who created us. That is how we all want to become god for ourselves.

We were unformed. God made us formed. We were fools. God made us wise. We were bad workers in the vineyard. God made us His sons and daughters. He had given us family, social status, circle of relationships, etc. God has given us everything that helps to grow and we had grown. After growing what we made ready to our Lord as the fruit? Is it really a good fruit or the wild fruit? He had given us the word that which provides good fruits and the mission to spread God's message to the world. Though we fail to do the will of God, still we have the hope. "Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanks giving let your request be made known to God. And the peace of God, surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (Phil 4: 6-7).

-Vipin Raj

October 15, 2017: XXVIII Sunday of the Year
Is 25: 6-10a; Phil 4: 12-14, 19-20; Matthew 22: 1-14

Being Part of a Community

The mother church today welcomes each one of us to reflect on the gratuitous gift of being in the community of the chosen, the great banquet of a communion.

The readings of today from Isaiah, Paul's letter, and Matthew, all three, share with us a vision of how our gracious God wants to show his care for us. They all use images of bounty, a feast of rich food, green pastures and restful waters, being well-fed,

and then finally a royal marriage feast. A common theme that runs throughout all the readings is about being a part of a community. A communion which has certain conditions that needs to be fulfilled.

God of the Old Testament who is usually portrayed as a punishing father has a new face in today's reading. He is shown as one who is ready to wipe away all the tears and pains of his children, a compassionate father who is very inclusive to love without discrimination. But to be a part in his chosen flock one has to have the wedding garment. The pre-condition of the wedding garment here today our mother church thinks that our Abba Father expects us to wear is the garment of faith; the faith in that compassionate father who sacrificed his son for us. He expects us to wear the garment of humanity when we come to the banquet which would show us how humane and inclusive are we when it comes to the needs of our fellow brethren, how compassionate are we to understand the needs and shortcomings of our neighbours. He expects us to wear the garment of love which shows how ready we are to forgive and forget the mistakes done by others and done to others and come together and live in love.

Let us reflect on this gift of life as we are part of the great banquet of this world hosted by the Lord. Are we wearing the garment that our loving Father expects of us when we live in a community of differences? Am I concerned about my neighbour who faces great tyranny and suffers daily different types of atrocities in my society?

-Jerine Joyson

October 22, 2017: XXIX Sunday of the Year

Is. 45:1, 4-6; 1 Thess. 1: 1-5; Mt. 22: 15-22

Give to God What Belongs to God

“To give to God what belongs to God is to share the goods of the earth.” Today's liturgy of the word invites us to reflect on our belongingness to God and world. In the first reading from the Book of Isaiah, 45:1, 4-6, the Lord God addresses His anointed one, Cyrus. By His infinite power, nations had been subdued and kings stripped of their robes. Doors had been opened for

His anointed one and the gates shall not be closed. He loved, His servant Jacob and Israel His chosen, He calls us by our names. Though we do not know Him, He surnames us. Through our Baptism, He has opened the doors to Heaven for us to enter, promising never to close them. How true it is that we know very little about God the Father. Even though we do not know Him, he remembers each and every one of our names, knowing us personally. We belong to Him and He wants us!

In the second reading from the First Letter of Paul to the Thessalonians, 1 Thess. 1:1-5 we learn more about the greatness of God. Saint Paul gives thanks to God in prayer for all the blessings that the Thessalonians had received. He mentioned their works of faith, their labour of love and their steadfastness of hope in Jesus Christ. The labour of love is a reflection of active charity. As such, the prayer of thanksgiving to God embraces the virtues of faith, hope and charity that had been bestowed upon the Thessalonians. Paul also emphasized that it was not just his words that transformed the Thessalonians, but the “power” of the Holy Spirit. Giving credit where it rightfully belongs, Paul made it clear that it was the Holy Spirit who was responsible for all the spiritual manifestations of righteousness. Paul is a holy example to all of us. He shined as a saintly model who always acknowledged that there is only One God and we belong to him.

In the Gospel reading Jesus is being asked about taxes and politics and shifts things further. He knows he is being trapped by the Herodians. He moves on to higher questions. Where do we belong; to the world or to God? This belonging is the centre of our human family and community is that we are God’s. God doesn’t want to control us but to love us. But there’s a saying – belonging to God means belonging to each other. We have rights and duties of love. Give to others what belongs to others; give to the poor what belongs to the poor. Our work for hunger, education etc is not a charity for people; it is justice. Everyone has a right to the food of the earth and the food of the mind. It’s not charity when people are given food, education, a home, freedom of religion, freedom of speech – it is justice. To give to God what belongs to

God is to share the goods of the earth with one another!

Today's message is: let us appreciate what God has given us. By the power of the Holy Spirit, let us preserve our gifts and blessings with all our souls, our minds, our spirits, our hearts and our strength. In the Most Holy Name of Jesus, let us keep these gifts stainless so that one day, when we will appear before the Lord God, we will proudly give Him back what He gave us. Then, we will rightfully inherit the assurance of our salvation.

Let us pray: Lord Jesus, we thank you for the word that has enabled us to understand better our belongingness to God. May Your Spirit enlighten our actions and grant us the strength to practice that which Your Word has revealed to us. May we, like Mary, Your mother, not only listen to but also practice the Word. Amen.

-Ciril Vallomkunnel

October 29, 2017: XXX Sunday of the Year
Ex 22:20-26; 1Thess 1:5-10; Matt 22:34-40

Loving Neighbours is Equivalent to Loving God

Jesus was tested many times during his life on earth. Just after his baptism, he was led by Satan and tested for three times in different places. Even human beings tested the Lord. The people of his time, especially the Sadducees and the Pharisees wanted to trap Jesus, because they felt threatened by him. Therefore, they looked for the opportunities that Jesus would speak against the law of the scripture and become a blasphemer. Jesus the almighty and the source of all knowledge and wisdom gains victory over all the tests put before him.

Actually, the whole scripture is the law given by the good Lord. The first reading of today clearly states that one is not supposed to oppress any alien or stranger, not to abuse any widow or orphan and not to exploit any poor, but the Jews used to do so. Their observation on the law was very shallow. They were not interested in taking care of the poor brothers and sisters who