

Homily Notes

March 4, 2018: III Sunday of Lent

Exodus 20: 1-17; 1 Cor 1: 22-25; John 2: 13-25.

Experiencing Love of God

Once a Zen guru told to a new comer: when you are in a journey to join in Buddhism, if the Buddha comes against you, then you must kill the Buddha and continue the journey. Otherwise you will begin to worship and spend time for him. Consequently you forget the real Buddha who really lives in your mind. In this gospel passage we can see an angry Jesus, instead of a merciful and kind Jesus. If we look at the context of this incident, we can see that it was not the anger, but a deep mourning of Jesus for His loving Father. Israel was His beloved children but they did not show their love and affection to their Father. God once spoke to them, "I am the Lord, Your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery: you shall have no other God before me" (ex: 20-2). But what happened to them actually they built a temple for Him. They started worshipping Him through the sacrifice. This brought a lot of wealth for them. When wealth and power accumulated in their hands through these rituals, their hearts slowly diverted to wealth, rather than God. They started to gain more wealth in the name of their Yahweh. They gave the holy place for trade. They started to bargain in the name of God. God became a matter of money. This is why Jesus took a revolutionary step. Dear friends, it can happen in our life also. God loves us very much. But sometimes the attraction of worldly worldly happiness can draw a veil before his unlimited love. Sometimes we will go behind the extreme ritual to please God. If we can't see the true love of Jesus in the people around

us, then all these things are worthless. So believe and experience in the true love of God. Because, as St. Paul says, for those who are called, Christ is the power of God and wisdom of God (1 Cor:1:24). -**Amal**

March 11, 2018 : IV Sunday of Lent

2 Chronicles 36: 14-16, 19-23; Eph 2: 4-10; John 3: 14-21.

Be Faithful to God

In 2 Chro 36:14-16, 19-23 we find that the heads of the priesthood including people of God had done all shameful practices of the nation and defile the temple of Jerusalem. They did not change their evil practices and behavior in spite of prophet's interventions to their sinful ways of life. Their infidelity to God led them to sin after sin and finally it caused burning of the temple of God and demolition of the walls of Jerusalem once that was their security.

Even though people go astray from the Lord but God never gives up. He accompanies them in their every moment of life and each step they take because He loves the humanity so much. Therefore, he sent his only son to draw us out of sin and bring us to life. We are called to lead a good life in Christ. Because it is not through our own merit, but through grace and faith in Jesus Christ that we are being saved. As baptized Christians we are called children of light and through our life of love, mercy, compassion, respect and forgiveness we need to keep the Christian identity intact. If we do commit sins or fall into temptations but do not turn back to God with repentant heart we become children of darkness or Satan. When we linger to such kind of life we kill our own self and conscience thus we become lovers of night or dark.

Today through our sinful thoughts, words and deeds we fail to promote life of self and of others. Therefore, let us be mindful that we are the temple of God and keep our heart pure so that God's reign may be established in our heart and life too. -**Sunil Kujur**

March 18, 2018: V Sunday of Lent

Jer 31: 31-34; Heb 5: 7-9; Joh 12: 20-33

Drawing All People to Himself

“When I am lifted up from the earth,” he said, “I will draw everyone to myself” (John 12:32). These words, which are so full of promise and hope, show us that Jesus didn’t come just to forgive our sins. He also came to bring us into a relationship with him. He came so that we could be “drawn” to him and “lifted up” with him to the presence of his heavenly Father.

Lift Up Your Heart! The story of Abraham and Isaac can help us understand just how much God wants to lift us up. More than two thousand years after God spared Abraham’s only son, Isaac, he chose not to spare his only Son, Jesus—even after Jesus prayed that “this cup” would pass him by (Mat 26:39). Surely God loved his Son even more deeply than Abraham loved Isaac. But he loved us so much—and so did his Son—that he freely gave him up for us. God’s willingness to sacrifice his only Son for us demonstrates the lengths to which he will go to save us, to teach us, and to lift us up to his side.

At every Mass, we are invited: “Lift up your hearts,” and we respond by saying, “We lift them up to the Lord.” What do you think would happen if each of us used this moment to actually do just that? What would the church look like if we all set our position at every Eucharist, saying, “Jesus, I want to be drawn closer to you. I don’t want anything to get in the way. Come, Lord, and lift all of us up so that we can know you better and love you more.” (https://wau.org/archives/article/i_will_lift_you_up/)

March 25, 2018 : Palm Sunday of the Lord’s Passion

Isa. 50:4-7; Philip. 2:6-11; Mk 14:1-15:47

Lord, Come and Save us

We begin the ‘Holy Week’ of our Lord’s Passion, Death and Resurrection from today. This year we had our Ash Wednesday on Valentine’s Day and Easter coincides with April fool. What a coincidence? Yet it has a beautiful message for us. “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!” The crowd exclaimed joyfully at Jesus as he entered Jerusalem. A beautiful welcome for the Lord. In remembrance of Jesus’ triumphant entry to Jerusalem we celebrate today Palm Sunday. In our liturgy especially in the songs we sing today by waving our olive and palm branches we have expressed our praise and our joy, our desire to receive Jesus who comes to us, singing “Hosanna”. We marked this Lenten season beginning by saying, “Jesus, you are my valentine!” What does Hosanna signify? The meaning of the word is SAVE US, WE PRAY. By acclaiming it from our heart we are asking Jesus to come and save us. The Gospel passage narrates how he saved us. It was a saving from the clutches of sin. For that Jesus had to go through a terrible passion – not only in his body, but emotionally too. In the long proclamation of passion narration from the Gospel according to Mark, we listen to how the enemies plot against Jesus, the betrayal by Judas and denial by Peter, standing for trial and acquitted for a crime which he has not done, mocking and ridiculing by the Roman soldiers, the walk to Calvary in the way of the cross and finally the crucifixion. Jesus’ passion is summed up in his cry on cross – Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani, My God, My God, why have you forgotten me? It is a prayer of the one who entrusts everything to God, the father. It is not a cry out of desperation. It is a recitation of Psalm 22 which is the psalm given as the responsorial psalm. Jesus had to suffer for our salvation. Suffering is not without gain. It brings transformation. In our sufferings we are called and invited to adhere to the pain of the Lord so that it becomes salvific to us and the people around us. It is when we persevere in our suffering to stay closer to the lord, we declare our faith. The lord will not desert us or give up on us even when there had been times where we denied him like peter. True repentance will bring us closer to him. Many of us experience doubt, especially on April 1 for the fear of being fooled. Easter is not such a message. Even the disciples didn’t believe it

at first and ran to the tomb to find Jesus. Yet the Risen Christ became an experience to them and their fear was transformed into joy. Our fears and failures will be transformed in Christ. In him we have a sure foundation. In that faith our singing “Hosanna” will become meaningful. Lord, Come and Save us! **-Rejin**

April 1, 2018: Easter Sunday

Acts 10: 34, 11:37-43; Col. 3:1-4, Jn. 20:1-9

Christ has Conquered All

Easter is the greatest and the most important feast in the Church. The Resurrection of Christ is the basis of our Christian Faith. It marks the birthday of our eternal hope. It is the greatest of the miracles - it proves that Jesus is God. That is why St. Paul writes: “If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain; and your Faith is in vain..” (I Cor 15:14). If Jesus Christ did not rise from the dead, then the Church is a fraud and faith is a sham. All the basic doctrines of Christianity are founded on the truth of the Resurrection. “Jesus is Lord; He is risen!” (Rom 10:9) was the central theme of the kerygma (“preaching”), of the apostles.

Firstly, Easter is a feast which gives us hope and encouragement in this world of suffering, sorrow and tears. It reminds us that life is worth living. It is our belief in the Real Presence of the Risen Jesus in our souls, in His Church, in the Blessed Sacrament and in Heaven that gives meaning to our personal, as well as to our common, prayers. Our trust in the all-pervading presence of the Risen Lord gives us strength to fight against temptations and freedom from unnecessary worries and fears.

Secondly, we are to be Resurrection people. It gives us the joyful message that we are a “Resurrection people.” This means that we are not supposed to remain buried in the tomb of our sins, evil habits and dangerous addictions. It gives us the Good News that no tomb can hold us down anymore - not the tomb of despair, discouragement, doubt or death itself. Instead, we are expected

to live a joyful and peaceful life, constantly experiencing the real presence of the Risen Lord in all the events of our lives.

Thirdly, we need to seek our peace and joy in the Risen Jesus. The living presence of the Risen Lord gives us lasting peace and celestial joy in the face of the boredom, suffering, pain and tensions of our day-to-day life. “Peace be with you” was Jesus’ salutation to his disciples at all post-Resurrection appearances. For the true Christian, every day must be an Easter Day lived joyfully in the close company of the Risen Lord. Finally we need to remember Easter in our Good Fridays. Easter reminds us that every Good Friday in our lives will have an Easter Sunday, and that Jesus will let us share the power of his Resurrection. Each time we display our love of others, we share in the Resurrection. Each time we face a betrayal of trust and, with God’s grace, forgive the betrayer, we share in the Resurrection of Jesus. Each time we fail in our attempts to ward off temptations but keep on trying to overcome them, we share in the Resurrection. Each time we continue to hope even when our hope seems unanswered, we share in the power of Jesus’ Resurrection. In short, the message of Easter is that nothing can destroy us; not pain, rejection, betrayal or death, because Christ has conquered all these, and we, too, can conquer them if we put our Faith and trust in the Risen Lord. Amen. **-Ciril Vallomkunnel**

April 8, 2018: II Sunday of Easter

Act: 4: 32-35; 1 John 5: 1-6; John 20: 19-31.

Faith in Risen Christ

The liturgy of the word is inviting us to reflect upon the theme “Faith in Risen Christ.” However, it points out a vivid picture as to what the early church aspired. More than some utopian dream, these verses should serve as a standard by which our churches today might be measured. “They held all of their possessions “in common.” The disciples of Jesus were very much energetic in

witnessing about the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. We too are being invited to have the great desire to proclaim the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Having given up everything, we can own Christ as our wealth and power. The disciples were being filled with the power of Holy Spirit. Thus, “everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God and everyone who loves the parent loves the Child. (1 John 5:1). To be an unthematic Christians or Disciples of Christ one need to have deep faith in Christ Himself. We are called to love one another. This is the way that we will be recognized as true Christians or a true disciples of Christ. Today, the life of a religious has become very indifferent in following of Jesus. We need to give up our sinful ways and obey His very commandments. When we obey his statues and make an intimate relationship with Him, then we become true Disciples of Christ. Once we become the true disciples of Christ then we are able to project ourselves that have conquers the whole world. This love of God precedes the gospel passage that centered on the Christ’s invitation “peace be with you.”

However, when we read this passage it is easy for us to single out Thomas as the doubting fearful disciple but the truth is that they were all hiding fearfully behind locked doors. Similar to the shadows of our lives wall, the disciples had some rather large and looming “monsters” in their hearts and minds as well. The gospel paints a picture of the resurrection’s hope and power. A dark grave and a mighty stone can’t keep Jesus out either. He appears in the midst of doubt, fear, hopelessness and the falling darkness of evening with peace. Similar to us inviting our fearful daughter to the comfort of our big safe bed, Jesus comes into the darkness and chaos and binds it with peace. He comes into our darkness and chaos still today. When we can no longer cover up our cracks of human brokenness with lies. He stands among us and speaks the peace of the resurrection and invites us to believe that he is Lord. Let’s believe that Christ is risen from dead and is with us today and forever. We need the inner peace in our hearts. Hence, it will bring to us the rest in the warmth and comfort of

the son who brings peace to those who believe in Him. **-Binod Hembrom**

April 15, 2018: III Sunday of Easter

Acts 3:13-15; 1John 2:1-5a; Lk 24:35-48.

Risen Lord as Source of Peace

Jesus our Lord, the author of Life and our Creator of the Universe was and is among us. St. Peter, in the first reading, speaks to the people from the Solomon’s portico that they executed the author of Life. However, he was raised by God. He invites them to repent for what they had done in ignorance and have faith in Jesus who will give them life in abundance and forgive their sins for what they had done. In the second reading we have St. John giving us hope by signifying that we have an advocate with the Father not only for our sins but for the whole word. We have an obligation to follow his commandments and all the more to have faith in him. The one who has faith in him will have life. And in the gospel we find, Jesus’ appearance to the disciples but they are terrified and startled looking at Jesus thinking that they were seeing a ghost. All the three readings of today invite us to ensure our strong faith in Christ Jesus, as an advocate for Peace and all the more as our Lord and saviour.

Do I really believe in Jesus and in his words? Or am I terrified when He appears? St Theresa of Kolkata said, “We need to find God and he cannot be found in sounds and restlessness. We need to be silenced and touch the souls.” Let us find risen Lord within us for he came for all and to establish peace on earth. Let us question ourselves the source of peace around me or cause for the disharmony? **-Agnel Baretto**

April 22, 2018: IV Sunday of Easter

Acts.4:8-12; 1 John 3: 1-2; John 10:11-18

Shepherd with the Smell of Sheep

Love is above everything in the world and the ultimate expression of love is sacrifice. This is what Jesus taught us through His

life. The readings of today also talk about this unending love of God. In Acts we see Peter being filled with the spirit of God and courageously preaching about the risen Lord and says that only through Him everyone can be saved. All the miracles they do is also by the power of Jesus whom they have crucified. The gospel also speaks about Jesus who loves everyone. He says that He is the good shepherd and a good shepherd will sacrifice his life for his sheep. Because he loves them as his own. He is not like a servant or a butcher who is primarily concerned about himself. He loves them from his heart. So that he is ready to do anything for them, even to sacrifice his own life for them if any wolves or any other animal come to attack them. Each of the sheep is important to him and therefore he protects them so carefully without being separated from the group. Another characteristic of a good shepherd is that he knows everyone of him personally. He calls them by their name. He can identify them by their voice. This shows the attachment that he has with them. He is very close to them and therefore he cannot leave them.

The love of God towards us also is like that of a good shepherd. He knows each one of us and protects us with His divine providence. He is with us wherever we go and guide us in our actions. Understanding this fact King David prayed that “God is my shepherd and I shall not want” (Ps.23:1). The question before us is the same. Are we recognizing the love of that good shepherd who loves us abundantly? Are we ready to proclaim Jesus to others like David and Peter in our lives too? When he loves us He also desires that we must be faithful to Him. Let us try to be the good sheep who understands the mind of the shepherd and follow Him as he wishes. -**Jithin**

April 29, 2018: V Sunday of Easter

Acts 9: 26-31; 1 John 3: 18-24; John 15:1-8

Call to be with Jesus

Today, God is asking us through these readings that where are you? Are you with me?.....

Everyone is called and chosen by God. As Christians we are all members of one body, the Church, and “we have been grafted onto Christ as members and have become temples of the Holy Spirit (1 cor 6:19). On the other hand Jesus Christ to whom we are attached in terms attached to His Father too. Here one could see a flow of unbroken relationship that’s started from God as a father to the son and to his people or church who are temples of Holy Spirit. Therefore, it is a call to abide in Jesus or in this Trinitarian communion of Love. This communitarian aspect is very much portrayed in the Gospel of today. Jesus is the true vine and we are the branches and Father is the vine grower and we see if the branch is not producing any fruit then the vine grower cuts away that branches or if it is not producing sufficiently, then the vine grower prunes that branches.

Therefore we as branches of the vine are called to produce fruits. What is that fruits? Which is explained in today’s second reading, that is love one another in truth and action. We can produce this fruit if only we obey the commandments given by God the Father. First reading shows very concretely the result obeying such command that is “the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria had peace and was built up. Living in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit it creased in numbers”. Here we see church was growing because it was built in the strong foundations of love and truth such foundations will be unshaken even in times of difficulties and problems. Therefore all the three readings first of all calling us to be with Jesus, secondly love others in truth and actions, thirdly let others see you as a point of attraction to Christ himself. - **Tony**

May 6, 2018: VI Sunday of Easter

Acts 10: 25-26, 34-35, 44-48 & 1 Jn 4: 7-10; Jn 15: 9-17

Being Loved

Christ’s greatest command, according to the Gospel of John, is that we love one another as Christ has loved us. When we think about the implications of such a love we may quietly admit to

ourselves, “I could never love others to the full extent that Jesus loves me.” Can anyone actually fulfill this commandment?

In the passage that precedes Jesus’ command to “Love each other, as I have loved you” Jesus speaks about the foundation of that love. In John 15:1ff He says, “I am the true vine; you are the branches... Abide in me... and bear much fruit...”

There’s something fundamentally important about the concept of a vine or a vineyard in Israelite thought. The vine has become a symbol of Israel as the people of God. Israel is pictured in the Old Testament writings as the vineyard or the vine of God.

When Jesus made the statement, “I am the true vine”, we can just see all of their defenses go up.

Jesus was actually saying to them, “Listen my friend, you think that you are a branch and a vine just because you belong to the people of Israel. You think that you are the real thing just because you are a part of a special nation... because of your birth and nationality.”

The prophets saw a vine that was in desperate need of pruning. And they were right. Again and again the people of Israel strayed from their intended purpose as God’s chosen people. Jesus, however, has a legitimate claim to the title of “true vine”, because his fruits were rooted in the power of God. Israel had lost its rootedness in God their Savior.

But Jesus was firmly rooted in the love of God. Jesus was firmly established in an intimate living fellowship with God and faith in God. His actions and teachings had their life-source in God’s love. The secret of the life of Jesus was his connectedness with God. He withdrew regularly into a solitary place to meet and have fellowship with God. Jesus was always abiding in God.

“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you...”, says Jesus in verse 9. That begs the question, “How, exactly, did Jesus experience His Father’s love?” What did he get from God in exchange for his obedience?

But, we know also that the heavenly Father gave his son Jesus an infinite sense of belonging and being rooted in his love. “You are my beloved son in whom I am well pleased”, we hear the blessing spoken at the time of his baptism. God gave Jesus a firm foundation... the conviction of His Presence, his counsel and his faithfulness in times of trial and temptation. Jesus received from His heavenly Father a peace that far transcends the restlessness of this world. The Father’s love assured him of a sense of security and safety (Geborgenheit) in a harsh world.

That is the affirmation that we too can experience through the love of Jesus. “As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you...” As we experience the love of Jesus, we are the recipients of a love that goes far beyond material things. It is a love that transcends human comprehension. It is a love that cannot be earned... a love that knows no boundaries... A love that we couldn’t get if we chose it...

The secret of Christ’s claim that he is the true vine lies in his connectedness with God. We too are a part of this wonderful vine as we remain/abide in Christ. In Jesus God has chosen us to for his divine purpose, namely for Joy, for expressing act of love, to be his friends, and to be his advertisements.

May we, as friends and partners, rooted in Christ bear much fruit as we obey the command to love. Let us abide in Christ and bring forth the richest fruits of his blessing. (<https://sermons.faithlife.com/sermons/113759-john-159-17-commanded-to-love>)

May 13, 2018: The Ascension of the Lord

Acts 1: 1-11; Eph 1: 17-23; Mk 16: 15-29

Receiving His Grace Trustfully

Generally, when any one of our family members goes abroad and returns with money and costly gifts, we might be tempted to ask: “Can you take us abroad with you and get us a job? The person is likely to reply that it is not very easy to get a job abroad.

Then, the person will give a long explanation that, to get a job, one needs to work hard, needs to learn the skills, needs to have patience, needs to have self-discipline, etc., etc. While all these explanations are going on, the person who listens gets tired. But, only one who is really dedicated and is prepared to work very hard can hope to go through the grind and one day become like the one who has got a job abroad.

In today's readings, we hear a similar story where Jesus' disciples look up to him when he is ascended. Today, through the readings the Lord is telling us that we need to work hard to become disciples of our Lord in order to proclaim his Word to the ends of the earth.

Today's first reading speaks about Ascension of the Lord. Here we see Jesus giving three gifts to the believers and to his disciples: (a) the gift of the Holy Spirit, (b) the gift of spreading good news to the ends of the world, and, (c) the gift of the return of Jesus. Here we see a particular name 'Theophilus' which means "lover of God" or person who loves God. We see his name in the gospel of Luke 1:3. The only book which speaks about the duration of 40 days between resurrection and ascension of Christ is the 'Acts of the Apostles'. This number, forty, reminds us of the Israelites in the wilderness for 40 years, and 40 days of the fasting of Jesus Christ. So generally, the number 4 or 40 refers to universality and completeness as we see here the risen Lord spending 40 days with his disciples to strengthen them, to fill them with his Holy Spirit and to make them aware of his mission. Christ instructed them to baptize with the Holy Spirit and preach the good news to the ends of the earth. For example Acts 8:12 "when people believed Philip, who was proclaiming the good news about the kingdom of God and in the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized both men and women". We also see that Christ is taken up into heaven along with two men. These two men could be two angels or either Moses and Elijah. Here the Lord taken up in the clouds refers to the glory and presence of the Lord. The cloud has a specific meaning as seen in Exodus 40:39 – "Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting and the glory of the Lord filled the

Tabernacle". This reminds us that as the Lord was taken up in glory; today lord is calling us to live an upright life, where at this moment disciples started to look upwards, which indicates that one day we would be the citizens of heaven.

In the second reading we see Christ blessing each of us with different gifts and graces; we see this in Verse 11 and also in 1st Cor 12:4-11. Brothers and sisters, each of us is blessed with different graces and it's time to analyze whether we use these for the development of our ministry or for our own development. In Psalm 68:18 God assures his graces to both believers and non-believers, so that one day we will use them for the betterment of the kingdom of God.

We see Jesus taken up into heaven and sitting at the right hand of God, the Father. In II Kings 2:11 we see Elijah taken up into the whirlwind. In Luke 24:51 we also see Lord taken up into heaven. In Psalm 110: 1 Jesus is seen sitting at the right hand of the Father "The Lord says to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool' ". In Ephesians 1:20 we see "God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him up from the dead and seated him at his great power".

The gospel reading clearly calls each of us today to repent and live a just life; and to get baptized in the name of Jesus so that we might inherit his kingdom, where he sits at the right hand of God, the Father. Today's gospel instructs us to "go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptize them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit" (Mt 28:19). It reminds us in 1st Peter 3:21 that those who are baptized will inherit the kingdom of God and John 3:18b tells those who don't believe will be condemned. This reminds us of our mission of proclaiming and baptizing so that people might be saved.

We are all invited to participate in the mystery of the Ascension of the Lord. We are all invited to sit before the Lord who sits at the right hand of the Father. This happens only, when we bear each other in love, maturity and patience. We become part of God's kingdom when we utilize our blessings and graces in

bringing the kingdom of God down, here-and-now. In this holy Eucharist let us ask Christ; to strengthen us to proclaim his good news to all the ends of the earth... Amen -**Anand**

May 20, 2018: Pentecost Sunday

Acts 2: 1-11; 1Corinthians 12: 3-7, 12-13; John 20: 19-23

Love, Life and Holiness

The church was made manifest to the world on the Pentecost by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The gift of the spirit ushers in new era in dispensation of the mystery – the age of church, during which Christ manifests, makes present and communicates his work of salvation through the liturgy of his church, ‘until he comes’. In this age of the church Christ now lives and acts in and with his church, in a new way appropriate to this new age.

There are three basic elements marking the event: the sound of a mighty wind, tongue of fire and the charism of speaking in other languages. All these three elements are rich in symbolic meaning. First, the sound of a mighty wind. In Hebrew as in Greek, “wind” is a synonym of “spirit”. It also means “breath”. In the bible a strong wind announces the presence of God. It is the sign of theophany. The second element of the Pentecost event is fire. ‘Divided tongues as of fire appeared among them’. Fire is always present in the manifestations of God in the Old Testament. We see this in the covenant between God and Abraham. The memory of the special manifestation of God in the form of fire was alive in the soul of Israel. St. Paul tells us in the second reading of the liturgy of word. The third element marking the event of Pentecost, tongues of fire and the charism of speaking in other tongues. The words that come from the Holy Spirit are like fire. In this we see Holy Spirit is giving himself to people, produces in them an effect which is both real and symbolic. The symbolism of multiplication of languages is very significant. According to the bible the diversity of languages was the sign of the multiplication of peoples and nations and indeed of their dispersal following on

the construction of the tower of Babel. The word “Babel” means confusion.

In the church, language is not a barrier. The people gathered around the upper room asked: “are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us in our own native tongue? We hear them speaking out God’s deeds of power: so the Holy Spirit is person, the Holy Spirit is breath, wind and fire. The Holy Spirit is gift, grace, and glory. The Holy Spirit is openness, power and activity. The Holy Spirit is love, life and holiness. - **Kumar**

May 27, 2018: The Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity

Dt 4:32-34, 39-40; Rom 8:14-17; Mt 28:16-20

Relevance of the Doctrine of Trinity

Is the doctrine of the Trinity relevant today? If Christianity were simply a religion of keeping the law, the inner life of the lawgiver would not matter. But if Christianity is about personal relationship with God, then who God really is matters totally. Common sense tells us that some supreme being made the universe and that we owe Him homage. But that the creator is a trinity of persons who invites us to intimate friendship with Himself.

God Is Love: A Community of Three Persons: God is love, says 1 John 4:8. If God were solitary, how could he have been love before he created the world? Who would there have been to love? Jesus reveals a God who is eternally a community of three persons pouring themselves out in love for one another. The Father does not create the Son and then, with the Son, create the Spirit. No, the Father eternally generates the Son. And with and through the Son, this Father eternally “breathes” the Spirit as a sort of personalized sigh of love. “As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be.” That’s what the conclusion of the Glory Be really means, that the self-giving of the three divine persons did not begin at a moment in time, but was, is, and is to come.

We in God’s Image & Likeness: If we are truly to “know” our God, we must know this. But if we are ever to understand our-

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selves, we must also know this. For we were made in the image and likeness of God, and God is a community of self-donating love. That means that we can never be happy isolated from others, protecting ourselves from others, holding ourselves back selfishly from others. Unless we give ourselves in love, we can never be fully human. And unless we participate in the life of God's people, we can never be truly Christian either. Because Christianity is about building up the community of divine love which is called the Church.

The family, the domestic Church, is a reflection of trinitarian love – the love of husband and wife, distinct and very different persons, generates the child who is from them but is nonetheless distinct from them, indeed absolutely unique.

Personhood: Dignity, Individuality, Freedom: One of the greatest treasures of Western culture is the concept of the uniqueness and dignity of the individual person. The concept of the irreplaceable uniqueness of each person came into Western culture straight from the doctrine of the Trinity, three who possess the exact same divine nature but who are yet irreplaceably unique in their personhood. (www.crossroadsinitiative.com)

June 3, 2018: The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ

Exodus 24: 3-8, Hebrews 9:11-15, Mark 14: 12-16, 22-26

The Mystery of Eucharist

“Take, this is my body..... He took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many’ (Mk.14: 22-24).

Eucharist: The Fullness of God's Love: Today, we are in a world of celebrations. Celebrations begin with the birth of a child and continue with his or her baptism, confirmation, wedding and even for death anniversaries. It was also the customary of the Jews to celebrate ‘the feast of the Passover’ in Jerusalem even coming from far away cities as pilgrims. The feast of the Pass-

over is celebrated on the 15th of the month of Nisan according to the Jewish calendar. This is in view of remembering the blessings and mercy that Yahweh has shown to Israel while they were under Egyptian slavery.

In the first part of the Gospel reading, we see the disciples enquiring to Jesus where to make preparation to celebrate their Passover feast. As Jesus knew that it was his last supper with the disciples and he was to hand over himself to the authorities on the following day and be crucified, he had made enough preparations earlier and only asked his two disciples to make sure that an upper room to be ready to have their Passover meal.

In the second part of the Gospel, we see some unusual things happening during the Passover meal. Jesus takes a loaf of bread, gives thanks, blesses and breaks it and gives to them saying that it is his body. He repeats the same procedure with the cup of wine saying that it is the blood of the new covenant which is poured out for many. In Hebrew ‘Rab - many’, means all. We know that these are the words of consecration which we hear in the Eucharistic celebration when the bread and wine become the body and blood of Jesus through transubstantiation. The four actions that Jesus performed here has great theological significance. Taking the bread symbolizes that he is not compelled but willingly accepts to be handed over to the authorities and be crucified. Secondly, he gives thanks to the father because of his assurance that the whole humanity will be saved from their transgressions of sin by the blood that he is going to shed as an expiation. Thirdly, the verb ‘break’ signifies that he will be crucified on the cross and fourthly, the act of giving implies the love Jesus had for his own disciples who represent humanity. Through these theologically significant actions, Jesus desired that all humanity should take part in the redemption that was offered through his own kenosis, self-emptying on the cross. Consequently no one is exempted from the salvation.

In the first reading, we see the ritual of the first covenant, the covenant that was conditional. However, Yahweh establishes

his covenant with them to be their God and Israel His chosen race only when they accepted to obey the commandments of the Lord. As a sign of the covenant, Moses sprinkles the blood of the animal that is being sacrificed on the altar and the people. In the Gospel reading, when Jesus says that the cup of wine is offered to many, it becomes a sacrificial offering reminding a new covenant; a covenant that unites between him and the entire humanity. In the new covenant, Jesus does not put any condition but embraces the entire humanity through his kenotic love.

If blood is used conventionally as a medium of expiation that was mediated only through the high priest who could enter into the Holy of Holies only on the day of Yom Kippur, the day of atonement. We see in the second reading that Christ himself comes as high priest from the order of Melchizedek entering into the Holy of Holies by sacrificing his own blood for the eternal redemption and liberating us from all the transgressions.

Dear friends, as we celebrate the Eucharist, what is important is to enter into the mystery dimension of the Eucharist and feel the depth of the love of God manifested in the Eucharist. As St. John Maria Vianney says, “If we really understand the mystery of the Eucharist, we would die of joy”.

At this juncture, we ask ourselves, whether we are able to break ourselves and to offer ourselves to the other, especially to those who are in most need, and thus to become a selfless person, a kenotic person for others. Let us pray that we may understand the mystery of the Eucharist and get nourished through our active participation in it. Amen -**Shebin C.S**

June 10, 2018: X Sunday in Ordinary Time

Gn 3: 9-15; 2 Cor 4: 13-5:1; Mk 3:20-35

Reaction of Jesus' Relatives

The New Testament preserves evidence suggesting that Jesus' relationship with his family was rather strained. An important source is Mark 3:21, which says: “When his family heard what was happening, they came to take control of him. They were

saying, ‘He’s out of his mind’!” (translation: Common English Bible).

Yet, Christian tradition has had a difficult time reckoning with the perhaps troubling idea of family strife between Jesus and his kin. Consider what translators and even other Gospel authors have done with Mark 3:21:

- The King James Version totally removes Jesus' family from this part of the scene, saying: “And when his friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold on him: for they said, ‘He is beside himself.’”
- The New Revised Standard Version puts the disparagement of Jesus in the mouths of others, saying: “When his family heard it, they went out to restrain him, for people were saying, ‘He has gone out of his mind.’”
- The authors of the Gospels according to Matthew and Luke, whose books were produced after the Gospel according to Mark and who included scenes similar to Mark 3:20-35, omitted from their narratives any suggestion that Jesus' family thought he was crazy.

The story told in the wider context, Mark 3:20-35, sets Jesus' family in comparison to influential religious leaders (legal scholars based in Jerusalem). Both groups express an inability to understand who Jesus really is. The religious authorities conclude he is possessed by Satan. His family assumes he has lost his sanity. In an ancient setting, these diagnoses were roughly equivalent to each other.

The scene underscores how those who presumably were in great positions to make sense of Jesus still were not immediately able to see him as God's agent. As Jesus announced and re-inaugurated God's intentions for human flourishing, many could not overcome the disorienting character of his message. Even close relatives and religious insiders were bewildered by what he said, which threatened to disrupt so many aspects of human society (Matthew L Skinner, *Huffington Post*).

June 17, 2018: XI Sunday in Ordinary Time
Ezekiel, 17:22-24; 2 Cor. 5:6-10; Mk. 4:26-34

Focus to Please the Lord

In today's readings Jesus invites us to redirect our focus on the Kingdom of God and to change the course of our actions. What is really the kingdom of God? Is it the same as the earthly kingdoms? The kingdom of God is the reign of God. It is the life in which God's will govern our actions and He becomes the centre of our lives. Through today's readings God gives us the clear image of the Kingdom of God. The first reading from the Ezekiel, 17: 22-24, we get an optimistic prophesy and a grace note on the exultation of Israel. It is a portrait of the peaceful kingdom where amid the great cedar's branches every bird nests in safety. This portrays Yahweh's unrivalled sovereignty over the history. The Kingdom of God or the reign of God will be established according to His will. Human effort cannot delay or hasten its coming.

The two parables about seeds - the parable of the seed of growing itself and the parable of the mustard seed in today's Gospel also reveals the secret of the kingdom of God. The parable suggests that the kingdom of God can be present like the seed prior to the appearance of the ripe fruit. No one notices its presence until it is fully revealed. But, once it is revealed it is easily noticeable. The seed growing secretly is a call for being alert about the suddenness of the coming judgement. "Be alert; I have told you everything" (Mk. 13:23). The kingdom of God or the reign of God is there in our midst. Many a times we fail to recognise this in our struggles and sufferings. In the time of God, the kingdom that has been hidden will be manifested. The parable of the mustard seed reveals God's protection covers our lives irrespective our life situations.

Is this experience of the kingdom of God and His protection simply a future promise? It is not a future promise. The Kingdom of God can be found by us in our present day experience of God's protection and care. It gives us a certainty and hope for God's protection in our sufferings.

Does the passiveness of the human figures lead us to be simply idle waiting for the establishment of God's kingdom with the end of sufferings? No. The passivity of the human figures reminds us that the experience of the kingdom of God is a gracious gift of God. But, He invites human effort and participation to live the kingdom values like faith, hope, love, forgiveness etc. and thereby share the experience of God's kingdom. It calls for continuous redirection of our lives to the focus of the kingdom and a rededication to the commitment to God. St. Paul gives two keys for living with focus on the kingdom of God in the reading from 2-Corinthians, 5:6-10. One is to orient our lives to the Lord than to our body remembering our life here on earth as in a temporary tent and the other one is to do the acts pleasing to the Lord. So, our present life should be a life toward Christ with the hope of eternal home.

Paulo Coelho reminds us in his best seller 'The Alchemist', "We are travellers on a cosmic journey, star dust, swirling and dancing in the eddies and whirlpools of infinity. Life is eternal. We have stopped for a moment. It is a little parenthesis in eternity". So, when we lose this understanding and this focus what guides us is the craving to fulfil the bodily desires that cannot be fully satisfied. Can our smartphones replace God? Can the junk food satisfy our hunger forever? Can we enjoy the real happiness becoming a millionaire? No. As we read in 'The Alchemist', "A truly happy man is a man who carries God within him and the happiness can be found in a simple grain of desert land. We read in Matthew, 6:33, "But, strive first for the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well". Again we read in Mt. 16:26, "For what it will profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life?" The growth of the kingdom of God and the work of God is there in our midst. Let us not become blind by closing our eyes to it. Let us not forget that the body and spirit are designed to honour God and the temples of God's presence. So, our destiny is to please the Lord, do His will living out

the kingdom values with the full focus on the eternal home. May God bless us to live in the Spirit. Amen. -Tony

June 24, 2018: Solemnity of Nativity of Saint John the Baptist

Is 49:1-6; Acts 13:22-26; Lk 1:57-66, 80

St John the Baptist as Witness to Jesus

St. John the Baptist was the last and greatest of the Old Testament prophets sent to “prepare the way of the Lord.” Jesus called him the greatest of all the prophets because of his direct involvement in the earthly life and ministry of the Messiah.

St. John the Baptist, Forerunner of Jesus: In St. John the Baptist, the Old Testament meets the New Testament: Before his time, the Law and the Prophets were proclaimed; from his life and to the end of time, the Gospel of Christ is proclaimed.

We remember Saint John the Baptist each time we pray the Holy Rosary, our prayerful meditations on the life of Christ. In the Second Joyful Mystery, the Visitation, the Virgin Mary went in haste to visit her cousin Elizabeth following the Annunciation. John the Baptist leaped in the womb of his mother, Saint Elizabeth, as soon as they were greeted by the Virgin Mary, who then was pregnant with the Child Jesus. We also remember St. John the Baptist in the First Luminous Mystery, as he was the one who baptized Jesus in Jordan river.

St. John the Baptist was from the womb until his death a witness to Jesus Christ as the Messiah and Son of God. At the greeting of the pregnant Mother of God to his mother Elizabeth, he was filled with the Holy Spirit (i.e. baptized in the womb) which caused him to be born without Original Sin.

As the divinely appointed “Precursor” of Jesus Christ, his life was closely intertwined with the earthly life of Jesus. On this feast day of St. John the Baptist we can reflect on how much like Jesus he truly was (www.catholiccompany.com).

Foreword to “Francis Effect”

The episcopal motto of Jorge Mario Bergoglio was *Miserando atque eligendo* (“because he saw him through the eyes of mercy and chose him”). He told me during my interview of 2013: “I always felt it as very true for me”. The motto is taken from the Homilies of St Bede the Venerable. Commenting on the gospel episode of the calling of St Matthew he writes: “Jesus saw a publican and, since he looked at him with a feeling of love, he said: ‘Follow me’.” And he added: “The Latin gerund *miserando* seems to me untranslatable both in Italian and in Spanish. I like to translate it with another gerund: *misericordiando* (‘mercyng’).”

For Pope Francis, mercy requires a language that doesn’t exist, it stimulates his linguistic creativity. Here he turns a noun (mercy) into a verb in the form of a gerund (mercyng). The Pope loves, in general, verbs more than nouns. The noun refers to the “substance” and has the value of the object, actually, of the thing considered in its fixity. The verb, instead, denotes flow of time, action, dynamism, in a word, experience. Therefore, with this simple linguistic operation Pope Francis wants to say that mercy must lose its fixity of an “act” to become an “action”, that is a “process,” or dynamism. Not “er’gon” (an act, a position, a stand) but *energheia*, energy. Process and energy develop in time. Bergoglio intends the “work” of mercy as an element in an open process, defined by two verbs: loving and building. Work of mercy is never an isolated gesture. Mercy expresses an energy that unfolds in time more than space: it starts the process more than being an isolated and defined fact closed in on itself. And time is greater than space because the development of growth unfolds in a process, in the real life.

Obviously, whoever is merciful is “near” to whomever is nearby, is spatially close, touches him or her. But not only that: