

2021

# DIDACHE

*Daily Bible Reflections for Catholics*





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DAILY BIBLE REFLECTIONS FOR CATHOLICS

*DIDACHE* (dee-da-ke), the Greek word for teaching, is a Catholic daily Bible reflection guide published annually. It wishes to encourage the use of Sacred Scriptures among Catholics. It also aspires to reach the entire Christian people.

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# God Speaks Through His Prophets

God sends prophets into your life. But often, you don't recognize them as coming from Him. Why? Because they don't look like prophets. They don't wear robes or have long beards.

Let me tell you a story. I was giving a seminar one day when two guys came up to me. The first one said, "Brother Bo, I have a gambling addiction. The moment the office finds out, I'm dead. I might go to jail. I will lose my job."



The second guy said, “I’m taking drugs. And my wife is about to leave me, taking our baby with her.”

The gambler has an officemate who knows what he does and constantly tells him, “What are you doing? Stop throwing your life away through gambling!” The officemate would pull him away from the casino but he’d go anyway.

The drug user has a wife who says, “What are you doing? Stop using drugs!” The wife kept pulling him back but he refused.

The officemate and the wife are the prophets.

We could be ignoring the prophets in our lives—those who love and care for us, those who speak the truth for us.

But we don’t listen because we don’t hear God’s voice in them.

As you read *Didache*, I pray you will have the humility to listen and recognize God’s voice in each reflection. I pray for listening ears and an open attitude. May you be transformed with the message God imparts in this devotional.

May your dreams come true,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bo Sanchez". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "B" and a long, horizontal flourish at the end.

Bo Sanchez

# Jan 1

FRIDAY

Numbers 6:22-27

Psalms 67:2-3, 5-6, 8

**Galatians 4:4-7**

Luke 2:16-21

**Solemnity of the Blessed  
Virgin Mary, Mother of God**

## CELEBRATE WHO YOU ARE

So you are no longer a slave but a child,  
and if a child then also an heir,  
through God. – Galatians 4:7

In the story of David and Goliath,  
the latter challenged King Saul and his  
army to a duel. But not a single soldier

was brave enough to step forward to fight him.

Until David, the errand boy who came just to give a lunch  
box to his brothers, heard about the challenge and volunteered  
to fight the giant. That was the pivotal moment when he  
became a warrior.

In your life, you'll also have destiny-defining moments  
thrust before you. Your ability to seize your next big thing  
comes from giving your all to the small thing that is already in  
front of you. David became a great warrior because he was a  
great shepherd boy and a great errand boy. He celebrated his  
past wins. He celebrated who he was—he knew he was God's  
champion.

Friends, it's the start of the New Year. May you engrave  
deep in your heart this truth: you are God's heir and  
champion. Bo Sanchez ([bosanchez@kerygmfamily.com](mailto:bosanchez@kerygmfamily.com))

### reflect

Are you facing giant problems today? God wants you to look for  
times when He rescued you from similar giants.

*With gratitude, I face the New Year confident of Your loving  
providence and mercy, O Lord! Amen.*

Mary, Mother of God, pray for us.

# Jan 2

SATURDAY

**1 John 2:22-28**

Psalm 98:1, 2-3, 3-4

John 1:19-28

**Memorial of Sts. Basil  
the Great and Gregory  
Nazianzen, bishops and  
Doctors of the Church**

## WHO DO YOU SAY I AM?

Who is the liar? Whoever denies that Jesus is the Christ. Whoever denies the Father and the Son, this is the antichrist. – 1 John 2:22

Our journey with the Lord is to know Him and His truth. This way, He uncovers the lies that shape our life. We become vulnerable to deception

by what we allow into our minds: music we listen to, books we read, movies we watch, and of course, social media.

You've heard it said, "Garbage in, garbage out." I also learned the reality of think-feel-act. What I think influences the way I feel, and the way I feel influences the way I act. Proverbs 4:23 says, "Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it" (NIV).

In my walk with Jesus, I try to keep a rhythm of prayer that allows me to know Jesus, love Him more, and let others know Him more. This way, I allow myself to be soaked in God's Word, which has a way of filtering truth from lies. I find this truth most helpful in being clear about who I am before God and why I'm here on earth. Without God's truth, our identity and purpose will be in danger. *Omy Romero (omyromero@gmail.com)*

### reflect

Take time to converse with the Lord and ask, "Lord, who am I to You—my identity, my purpose, and my destiny?"

*Lord, You asked the Apostles the question, "Who do you say I am?" Today, I reverse the question and ask You to reveal to me: Who do You say I am? Establish in me my identity and Your purpose for me.*

Sts. Basil the Great and Gregory Nazianzen, bishops and Doctors of the Church, pray for us.



# Jan 3

SUNDAY

**Isaiah 60:1-6**

Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8,

10-11, 12-13

Ephesians 3:2-3, 5-6

Matthew 2:1-12

**Solemnity of the  
Epiphany of the Lord**

## I SAW JESUS

See, darkness covers the earth  
and thick darkness is over the peoples,  
but the Lord rises upon you and his glory  
appears over you. – Isaiah 60:2, NLT

Believe it or not, I saw Jesus. During the time of the pandemic, when people were forced to stay inside their homes, Jesus went around. He didn't stay put.

I saw Him roaming around hospitals, healing through the doctors and health workers. I chanced upon Him at the supermarket in the eyes of the baggers and cashiers who did tiring but selfless work. Jesus was in the delivery personnel bringing supplies and orders right to people's doorsteps. Jesus was in the policemen and soldiers who worked in the sweltering heat to keep us safe. He was present in the people who kept our electricity, water, and Internet running smoothly.

And surely, Jesus was in the people who did little acts of love, feeding the poor and those suffering much as the pandemic continued. Jesus was in our leaders and public servants who were true to their oath to faithfully put their countrymen first.

Jesus was everywhere! He was not locked down. His glory shone during the darkest of nights so we may rise. Open your eyes of faith. Then you will also say, "I saw Jesus." Arun Gogna

(gognuts@yahoo.com)

### reflect

See Jesus in the people who will help you today.

*Open the eyes of my faith, O Lord, so I may see You. Amen.*

St. Genevieve, pray for us.

# Jan 4

MONDAY

1 John 3:22-4:6  
Psalm 2:7-8, 10-12  
**Matthew 4:12-17,**  
**23-25**

## REPAIR

### YOUR RELATIONSHIP

From then on Jesus began to preach,  
"Repent of your sins and turn to God,  
for the Kingdom of heaven is near."  
– Matthew 4:17

I corrected my brother in our office group chat because we both had different information on how to do a task for our employees. The next day, when I received the full details of what had to be done, I realized I was wrong. To make things worse, I humiliated my brother in our company group chat.

I knew I had to apologize, but I also had to do it publicly to retract my “correction.” It was tough because I’m the boss.

Eventually, I admitted my mistake in our group chat and apologized to my brother and the team. It was hard but it was freeing. It also made our employees feel that they could trust me because I admitted my mistake.

God asks us to repent not because He’s angry and wants to punish and condemn us with fire and brimstone. He calls us to repent because our brokenness deprives us of the best He has in store for us. That’s why our God is perfect in humility—He chases after us to repent and give our lives to Him because of His massive love for us. JPaul Hernandez (jpaulmh@yahoo.com)

### reflect

What habitual sins can’t you let go of?

*Father, for my many mistakes that have offended You, I’m sorry. I ask that You purify me with Your love and make me brand new.*

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, religious, pray for us.

# Jan 5

TUESDAY

1 John 4:7-10  
Psalm 72:1-2, 3-4,  
7-8  
**Mark 6:34-44**

## YOU ALWAYS HAVE SOMETHING

He asked them, "How many loaves do you have? Go and see." And when they had found out they said, "Five loaves and two fish." – Mark 6:38

When I was 16, God called me to serve. I said, "But I'm not a great preacher." He replied, "But you can arrange chairs, carry speakers, and clean the venue." When I was 26, God called me to get married. I said, "But I don't have enough savings for our wedding." He replied, "But you have a small business. Just grow it. Reduce your spending and simplify your wedding."

When I was 30, God called me to be a father. I said, "But I don't know how to be a good father." He replied, "But you know how to love. And I am always here to guide you."

Just like the disciples in today's Gospel, whenever God calls me to do something, my knee-jerk reaction is to say that I lack resources. But with every lousy excuse of mine, God reminds me that I'm never empty-handed. I always have something at hand. It may not be much, but it is more than enough. Is God calling you to do something? Remember: When God gives a mission, He sends provision. You always have something to give, to share, and to offer. Put it in God's hands and He will multiply it. Velden Lim (veldenlim@gmail.com)

### reflect

You are gifted. You are blessed. Just open your eyes.

*Jesus, thank You for calling me, equipping me, and multiplying the little that I have. Amen.*

St. John Neumann, bishop, pray for us.

# Jan 6

WEDNESDAY

1 John 4:11-18  
Psalm 72:1-2, 10,  
12-13  
Mark 6:45-52

## WITH YOU ON THE BOAT

Then he climbed into the boat with them,  
and the wind died down. – Mark 6:51

We all know and love this story of Jesus walking on water. Why? Because it tells us that nothing is impossible with Him.

He can calm the storm. He can walk on water. If we believe in Him, then nothing is impossible in our lives, too.

But we fail to recognize the beautiful truth that this story is also trying to tell us. What beautiful truth is this?

Jesus can just as easily calm the storm from a mile away. He is all powerful so He only has to say the word and it will come to pass. *But He chose to climb into the boat.*

What does this tell us? The boat symbolizes our lives. During our roughest and toughest times, when our boats are crashing into big rocks and buffeted by big waves of problems, He is with us. He journeys with us, holding our hands and making sure that no storm will bring us down.

Let this truth give you courage when times are tough. We are never alone on this journey. Jesus is always with us in this boat called life. Do not be afraid. He will see us through.

Monching Bueno (ramon\_bueno@yahoo.com)

### reflect

“Don’t be afraid, for I am with you. Don’t be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you.” (Isaiah 41:10)

*Jesus, thank You for holding our hand, especially when the going gets tough. Amen.*

Blessed André Bessette, religious, pray for us.

# Jan 7

THURSDAY

1 John 4:19-5:4

Psalm 72:1-2,  
14-15, 17

Luke 4:14-22

## LOVE IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

Whoever loves God must also  
love his brother. – 1 John 4:21

Wash your hands. Observe social distancing. Enhanced community quarantine. PUI. PUM. Lockdown.

These are some of the terms we've gotten used to when the COVID-19 pandemic hit us last year.

Here in the Philippines, before and even during the lockdown, I must say many of our countrymen didn't seriously take the safety precautions and guidelines hammered on us every single day. This resulted to more and more cases of infected people as well as deaths.

This made me reflect how we, as a people, say we love God and one another. Sure, there are heroic ways of doing so, like shielding a group of students from a grenade-throwing madman, rescuing family members in a burning house, and so on.

What the pandemic taught us is how we can show our love for others in simple ways—like washing our hands, social distancing, and staying at home when asked to—so other people may simply live. Tess V. Atienza (theresa.a@shepherdsvoice.com.ph)

### reflect

How do you show your love for God through other people today?

*Teach me the ways of Your love, O Lord. Amen.*

St. Raymond of Peñafort, priest, pray for us.

# Jan 8

FRIDAY

**1 John 5:5-13**

Psalm 147:12-13,

14-15, 19-20

Luke 5:12-16

## BE A LIVING TESTIMONY

Whoever believes in the Son of God has this testimony within himself. – 1 John 5:10

Years ago, my cousin asked me to deliver a speech as one of his groomsmen in his wedding. Some of his guests were playmates from our basketball group. But we only knew each other on the court. In my speech, I shared a simple godly lesson and then I prayed for the married couple.

After I got down the stage, someone from our basketball group approached me and asked, “Are you a Christian?” I smiled and said yes. Then he said something I will never forget. “No wonder you’re the only one who doesn’t curse or lose his temper while on the court.” That evening, I realized a powerful truth. It’s one thing to be identified with Christ based on your words, but it’s another thing to be known for Him because of how you live. What a great feeling to be known not by who you are but by Who’s in you.

If you’ve been saved by Jesus, go show the world! The best way to testify is not just with your lips but with your life. Live a humble and sincere Christ-filled life so when people see you, they’ll know Who is in you—even without using any words.

Audee Villaraza (audee@homediscovery.com.ph)

### reflect

How can you testify to God’s goodness without using your lips but your life?

*Lord, align my life with what my lips say. May I decrease so You may increase in me. May others see You in me. Amen.*

St. Gudula, pray for us.

# Jan 9

SATURDAY

**1 John 5:14-21**

Psalms 149:1-2, 3-4,

5-6, 9

John 3:22-30

## GO TO JESUS

This is the confidence we have  
in approaching God. – 1 John 5:14

I rushed to catch the last Mass for the day to celebrate the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. I had a list of petitions in my head, worries and concerns included. In the quiet church, I found myself relaxing after battling through traffic. The moment I prayed, I forgot all about my list. It was as if Jesus waited for me that day. I allowed Him to silence my thoughts and renew trust in my heart that everything would be OK.

It is such a grace and a gift to be able to experience prayer in that way. Sometimes, there will be an overflow of gratitude. Other times, there's a lot of asking and begging. And then there will be tears from anger, exhaustion, or sorrow. But whatever it is, the Lord is always ready to listen to our honest conversations with Him. He looks forward to our moments alone with Him so He can give us His grace and peace.

When I walked out of the church that day, I felt so much better—I hadn't felt that kind of peace for a long time. Indeed, when we go to Jesus and approach Him in full confidence, we have everything we'll ever need. Ruby Albino (r\_jean07@yahoo.com)

### reflect

Ask Jesus to give you peace that brings trust, mercy that brings joy, and grace that brings strength.

*Lord, when I'm overwhelmed, teach me to come and seek You first.  
Amen.*

St. Adrian of Canterbury, priest, pray for us.

# Jan 10

SUNDAY

**Isaiah 55:1-11**

Isaiah 12:2-3, 4, 5-6

1 John 5:1-9

Mark 1:7-11

**Feast of the Baptism  
of the Lord**

## LISTEN

"Listen to me, and you will eat what is good. You will enjoy the finest food. Come to me with your ears wide open. Listen, and you will find life." – Isaiah 55:2-3

I was almost sure we would win the team-building activity. It took us a long time to complete it, but we did.

We were rejoicing as a team when the host announced that we were disqualified. We didn't follow the instructions. We heard but we didn't listen.

*Listen.* Merriam-Webster defines listening as "to be alert to catch an expected sound."

Many times we fail to listen to the more important things because we hear too much noise.

Today's reading in Isaiah offers us a promise of the finest food and good life with one simple prerequisite. *Listen.*

We are exhorted to have ears wide open. We are first asked to be alert to catch an expected sound from God. Then the blessings flow. That's how it works.

God's promises are sure. God's blessings are available. God's voice will give us instructions on how to receive them.

Randy Borromeo (randyborromeo@gmail.com)

## reflect

When did you last pause to listen to what God has to say? Do you know His voice? Have you heard God's instructions?

*Jesus, speak to us. We want to hear Your voice. May we be alert always to listen and be blessed. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

St. John Camillus the Good, pray for us.



# Jan 11

MONDAY

**Hebrews 1:1-6**

Psalm 97:1, 2, 6, 7, 9

Mark 1:14-20

## FOLLOW SUIT

For to which of the angels did God ever say: "You are my son; this day I have begotten you"? Or again: "I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me"? - Hebrews 1:5

The first time I held my son in my arms, it was surreal. It was a mix of excitement, doubt, joy, and fear. I knew I wanted to love him as best as I can and raise him up to be the best that he can be.

But through the years, it hasn't always been good. I would fail. There were times when I'd get angry and shout. Then my son would follow suit. It got to the point where he did it more often because I did it more often.

And that hit me. I wanted him to be the best—even better than me. But I, his father, was modeling to him, my son, the opposite.

God calls us His children. As such, we take after Him. He Himself told us that we are made in His image and likeness. His image of love and goodness.

Question is, do we manifest His essence as His children?

He showed the way. So, we ought to do it, too—not just to our kids but to the rest of the world.

I know I have to. Paolo Galia (pgalia@gmail.com)

### reflect

Do you reflect God's image? In what areas of your life do you need to show it more?

*Dear Lord, help me to follow Your example on how to love and live every single day. Amen.*

Blessed William Carter, pray for us.

# Jan 12

TUESDAY

**Hebrews 2:5-12**

Psalm 8:2, 5, 6-7,  
8-9

Mark 1:21-28

## UNDER HIS CONTROL

In "subjecting" all things [to him], he left nothing not "subject to him." Yet at present we do not see "all things subject to him," but we do see Jesus "crowned with glory and honor." – Hebrews 2:8-9

Do you sometimes feel things are careening out of control? A parent is sick in the hospital and you, the breadwinner, unexpectedly gets laid off from work. Or maybe your business was slowly recovering when the pandemic hit, and now you're bankrupt. Or your marriage is crumbling and your child attempts suicide.

Yes, things do go from bad to worse, even for believers like us. And even when things look bleak and hopeless, we can rest in the knowledge that Jesus has "left nothing not 'subject to him.'" Everything—including your unwinnable situation—is under His control. So what to do in the midst of panic?

First, look to Him who is behind the controls. Trusting in the judgment of the One who sits on the throne reminds us that all these will have a happy ending. Second, pray about your concerns. Turn your worries into worship and you'll soon see them vanish. Third, work and wait for your answered prayer.

Do you already see "Jesus 'crowned with glory and honor'"? *Rissa Kawpeng (rissakawpeng@gmail.com)*

### reflect

"The saints did not all begin well, but they ended well." (St. John Mary Vianney)

*Lord, I lay all my anxieties at Your feet. There's nothing You and I can't handle together. Amen.*

St. Marguerite Boureoyoys, virgin, pray for us.

# Jan 13

WEDNESDAY

**Hebrews 2:14-18**  
Psalm 105:1-2, 3-4,  
6-7, 8-9  
Mark 1:29-39

## HOW DO YOU FEEL GOD'S LOVE?

For this reason he had to be made  
like them. – Hebrews 2:17, NIV

For the longest time, I grew up measuring God's love with answered prayers. I still remember that time in my youth when I got packs of goodies from a nearby *sari-sari* store, not for free, but on a pay-when-able agreement between my mom and the store owner.

I looked down at my bike, gave a sigh, and thought, "Why is God not giving us enough?" I knew He loved me by giving me air to breathe, friends, family members, and life itself. But why couldn't I feel His love when it came to provision for our other needs? I would later learn that God's love goes beyond answering our prayers. If that was the basis, then those who are waiting for their miracles can say that God doesn't love them.

First John 4:10 (NCV) says, "This is what real love is: It is not our love for God; it is God's love for us. He sent His Son to die in our place to take away our sins." He gave us our free will, knowing that we will make wrong decisions, yet He sent His Son to be like us. In our weaknesses, He who created us can continue to love us by saving us. Dreus Cosio ([andreas.cosio@gmail.com](mailto:andreas.cosio@gmail.com))

### reflect

Count your blessings today. It goes beyond what you're asking for.

*Lord, thank You for our life. Continue to guide us as we follow You, so we may be aware of Your presence and love in all circumstances.*

St. Hilary of Poitiers, pray for us.

# Jan 14

THURSDAY

Hebrews 3:7-14  
Psalm 95:6-7, 8-9,  
10-11

**Mark 1:40-45**

## **GO SPREAD THE GOOD NEWS!**

The man went away and began to publicize the whole matter. – Mark 1:45

I am a person who usually wants to keep a low profile. I shun recognitions in gatherings or being

singled out in a crowd.

One December, when my family distributed Christmas goodies to poor families, we encountered a young mother who used to attend the prayer meetings where I preached. She shared how the Lord touched her life when she was a teenager and praised me in front of the other families. I instantly “shrank” and politely asked her not to mention my name, as it was the Lord who had moved in her life.

She was like the man whom Jesus healed. He continued to publicize his experience despite being warned not to do so.

I believe this is all our calling, too: to be witnesses for the Lord. Like that young mother, her storytelling was an effective way of sharing Jesus. By sharing our experiences of healing, provision, protection, and victories, our friends may desire to know Jesus, too. This is a subtle way of preaching the Good News so it may reverberate to the ends of the earth. Danny Tariman

(dtariman.loj@gmail.com)

### **reflect**

How do you share your God experiences with your friends, relatives, and neighbors at every opportunity?

*Jesus, grant me the grace to be bold in sharing Your goodness. Amen.*

St. Felix of Nola, pray for us.

# Jan 15

FRIDAY

Hebrews 4:1-5, 11  
Psalm 78:3-4, 6-7, 8  
**Mark 2:1-12**

## CREATE YOUR BREAKTHROUGH

"Stand up, pick up your mat, and go home!"  
– Mark 2:11, NLT

How can we have breakthrough in our lives to reach our dreams and surpass our challenges? I learned these three points to a breakthrough from life strategist Tony Robbins:

First, *strategies*. Find ways and solutions around you that can work in your life. Second, *story*. Our expectation controls our focus, perceptions, and the way we feel and act. We either tell empowering stories or limiting ones to others and ourselves. It's time to tell a fresh new story that moves us forward. Finally, *state*. Where focus goes, energy flows. We shift our emotions and disposition by changing our physiology through breathing, standing tall, walking, and dancing, etc.

In today's Gospel, four men carried a paralyzed man through a hole in the roof as their strategy. Jesus saw their faith and granted the healing and forgiveness that changed the paralyzed man's story. He changed the man's state by asking him to stand up, pick up his mat, and walk toward his new life.

Never rely on your own ways to get a life breakthrough. Instead, believe in the power of Jesus at work in your life. JC Libiran

(coachjclibiran@gmail.com)

### reflect

What kind of breakthrough do you need in your life right now?

*Jesus, break through all my doubts, fears, pain, guilt, and shame.  
Break through like only You can do. Amen.*

St. Paul the Hermit, pray for us.

# Jan 16

SATURDAY

**Hebrews 4:12-16**

Psalm 19:8, 9, 10, 15

Mark 2:13-17

## COMPASSION

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has similarly been tested in every way, yet without sin. – Hebrews 4:15

In the Ministry of Exorcism in the Archdiocese of Manila, most of the lay volunteers who assist the exorcists are former “clients.” In other words, they also went through spiritual liberation with the help of the exorcist.

According to Fr. Jocis Syquia, the chief exorcist in the Archdiocese of Manila, these people are effective helpers because they know how it is to be oppressed by the devil. They are able to empathize and to patiently journey with the energumen (a person believed to be possessed by the devil) because they have been in their situation, too. They also know what it takes to be completely prepared spiritually before the exorcist prays over them so the exorcism will be effective. It takes a former patient to understand what it means to be sick.

In the same way, Jesus understands all of our weaknesses, temptations, and problems because He, too, was tested in every way. That’s why He invites us to confidently approach Him in our time of need. Just say, “Lord, I am sick. I need help.” That’s like music to His ears. *Ronna Ledesma (ronna\_ledesma@yahoo.com.ph)*

### reflect

“God . . . comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us.” (2 Corinthians 1:3-4, NLT)

*Lord, I am sick. I need help!*

St. Valerius, pray for us.

# Jan 17

SUNDAY

Isaiah 9:1-6  
Psalm 98:1, 2-3, 3-4,  
5-6  
Ephesians 1:3-6, 15-18  
**Mark 10:13-16**

**Feast of the Sto. Niño**

## OOTD

"Let the children come to me; do not prevent them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these." – Mark 10:14

When my children were just about knee-high, a trip to the theme park would trigger an entirely out-of-this-galaxy OOTD (Outfit of the Day)

for me. I would wear a neon-colored reflectorized shirt. I'm sure you're now wondering why.

Universal Studios and Disneyland get my children wilder than wild. They prance around, go on all the rides, and take photos of all the characters. They never intend to, but they always get lost. That's when their loud laughter turns to ear-shattering cries of "Daddy!" So, the OOTD becomes most important!

I stand on a bench with my shiny, shaven head and let the ultra-bright shirt do its work. Then my children run to me. Their troubled hearts are back to fun mode again. Why the OOTD? Because I want to be found. A loving father always wants to be found.

Have feelings of loneliness and loss overwhelmed you? Have the pressures of life overtaken you? Hey, He's near. He wants to be found. He says, "Come to Me." Jon Escoto

(faiththatworkjon@gmail.com)

### reflect

Are you hopeless, depressed, and lost? Do you feel God is nowhere and silent? Like a child, you can cry and look for Him today. Then He finds you.

*Father, make me experience Your reality and presence in my life.*

St. Anthony, abbot, pray for us.

# Jan 18

MONDAY

Hebrews 5:1-9  
Psalm 110:1, 2, 3, 4  
**Mark 2:18-22**

## GLOBAL BAYANIHAN

"New wine . . . into fresh wineskins."  
– Mark 2:22

A "little" virus became the great equalizer in 2020. It embraced without discrimination everyone along its path, sometimes with fatal results. Learning from this pandemic, I hope these Fs will be the "new wine in fresh wineskins" of a more caring, interconnected world:

**F-aith** of all beliefs should be deepened. As Pope Francis said in his extraordinary *Urbi et Orbi* message, humanity is all on the same boat. Our faith in Jesus calms our fears.

**F-itness.** Our bodies, as temples of the Holy Spirit, should be strengthened to protect us in dire times.

**F-inance** should be seriously studied. With lockdowns and quarantines, emergency funds spelled the difference between survival and want.

**F-amily** and friends were rediscovered and strengthened.

**F-un** creativity was unleashed to cope with enforced minimized activity. Necessity is the mother of invention.

Finally, the Filipino *bayanihan* spirit of collective heroism for a common cause, called solidarity, was unleashed through an internationally coordinated effort to find a cure to the lethal virus. Grace Princesa (grprincesa@yahoo.com)

### reflect

Nothing happens by chance. Everything happens for a reason.

*Jesus, may we always remember that everything works out for good for those who love You and those You've called according to Your will.*

St. Jaime Hilario Barbel, pray for us.



# Jan 19

TUESDAY

Hebrews 6:10-20  
Psalm 111:1-2, 4-5,  
9, 10  
**Mark 2:23-28**

## LOVE OVER RITUALS

"The Sabbath was made for man, not man made for Sabbath." – Mark 2:27

My wife, Reng, was in the middle of her chemotherapy sessions when her doctor advised her to avoid crowds because she was immunocompromised. So we decided to skip attending our Sunday Feasts and simply hear our Sunday Masses in our parish. One hot afternoon, right before the consecration, Reng suddenly collapsed to my side and lost consciousness. Good thing, we were beside the choir and a young couple who were doctors helped me bring Reng to her seat. They assisted in reviving her until she regained consciousness.

In the process, we missed the consecration and most of the Mass, including Communion. For others, it may seem that we weren't able to comply with our Sunday obligation.

I believe Jesus was with us when Reng lost consciousness and also when she regained it. We may not have received His Body in Holy Communion, but I'm sure we received His Spirit during the time Reng was being attended to. Hermie Morelos (hermie.m@svrvtv.com)

### reflect

Do you feel guilty if you are unable to attend Mass or a prayer meeting because you have to attend to an ailing parent or sibling? Know that the Lord sees your worshiping and caring heart.

*Lord, whatever we do to the least of our brethren, we do it to You. That act of love is the very essence of the Holy Eucharist. Amen.*

St. Fillan, pray for us.

# Jan 20

WEDNESDAY

Hebrews 7:1-3, 15-17

Psalm 110:1, 2, 3, 4

**Mark 3:1-6**

## ANGER MANAGEMENT 101

He looked around at them in anger.

– Mark 3:5

When I was younger—not too long ago—I pictured Jesus as the kind, loving, meek, and mild Savior who suffered and died for us. So, when I got a little older and I started reading the Bible, I was surprised when I first read Mark 3:5. Whoa! Jesus gets angry, too?

Those days, I had quite a temper—dark, volcanic smoke would burst out of my ears, nose, and mouth as I lashed out at the poor victim of my indignant tantrum. Then, when my conscience gnawed on me for such bad behavior, I reasoned, “Oh, well, Jesus got angry, too!”

But by God’s grace, listening to talk after talk on anger management, especially at The Feast, the weekly faith gathering of the Light of Jesus Family, I finally learned that being angry is not bad in itself. It’s like other emotions we humans feel—which has a purpose.

Like in today’s reading, Jesus’ anger leads Him to the point on what the Sabbath really means: to do good, not evil.

That’s what He wants us to do—even when we’re angry.

Cynthia U. Santiago (loj.cusantiago@gmail.com)

### reflect

“Be angry, but do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your anger.” (Ephesians 4:26)

*Lord, forgive me when I fail to do good. Hold me, especially my tongue, when I am angry. Amen.*

St. Fabian, martyr, pray for us.

# Jan 21

THURSDAY

Hebrews 7:25-8:6  
Psalm 40:7-8, 8-9,  
10, 17  
Mark 3:7-12

## TRUE PRIORITIES

But he gave them strict orders not to tell others about him. – Mark 3:12, NIV

In the social media world, success is defined by the number of likes, views, shares, and followers. Everything's measured virtually. You can have a million followers and not even know a single one of them personally.

During Jesus' time, people followed Him because He healed the sick, preached with authority, and exorcised demons. His schedule must have been jam-packed, but He was able to do so much in a short span of three years.

Many of us complain that twenty-four hours is not enough. When I compare my activities with Jesus', I have no reason to complain that I am too tired to spend time with my kids or my gorgeous wife, or visit loved ones who are far from us.

Jesus was the perfect example of someone who knew His priorities. He was never after popularity—He even instructed people not to tell others about Him. But because He truly changed people's lives, they shared about His great works.

How about us? Where do our priorities lie? Anthony Rodriguez

(anthony.r@svrtv.com)

## reflect

Do you use your time to further the Kingdom of God or for your personal gains?

*Lord, I sometimes doubt my capacity to follow Your example. Please remind me always that I am made in Your image and likeness.*

St. Agnes, martyr, pray for us.

# Jan 22

FRIDAY

**Hebrews 8:6-13**

Psalm 85:8, 10,

11-12, 13-14

Mark 3:13-19

## OUR APOSTOLATE

"I will instill my laws in their minds, and I will inscribe my laws on their hearts."

– Hebrews 8:10

Today is a day of prayer for the "Legal Protection of Unborn Children."

I remember one cold October day as we toured the city of Riga in Latvia, we found two women out on the street carrying a placard that had Lithuanian words on it. Although I did not understand the words, I saw the image of an unborn baby and I knew they were Catholic women fighting against abortion. I concluded that they were Catholics because just across the street was a perpetual adoration chapel where we stopped and prayed, including the cause that these women espoused.

I was pleasantly surprised to find Catholics in these areas of Eastern Europe, which used to be Communist, and especially on the street fighting for the cause of our Church.

At Mass every Sunday, we recite the Creed. Toward the end, we say: "I believe in one holy, catholic, and apostolic Church." This is what it means to be an apostolic Church—we stand and fight for what we believe. Donna España (donna.espana@yahoo.com)

### reflect

When you open your life to the Lord, you open your eyes to the lost.

*Father God, You are the giver of life. Help me to stand on Your laws and live out a faith that's life-giving. Amen.*

St. Vincent, deacon and martyr, pray for us.

# Jan 23

SATURDAY

Hebrews 9:2-3, 11-14

Psalm 47:2-3, 6-7,

8-9

**Mark 3:20-21**

## OCCASION TO LOVE

One time Jesus entered a house, and the crowds began to gather again. Soon he and his disciples couldn't even find time to eat. When his family heard what was happening, they tried to take him away. "He's out of his mind," they said. – Mark 3:20-21, NLT

On one occasion, Jesus was so busy with His ministry that He and His disciples couldn't even find time to eat. When His family heard of this, they tried to take Him away. "He's out of his mind," they said.

Ouch! In our service to God, we cannot avoid criticism. The most difficult to take is those that come from our very own family. Jesus was not exempted from this. They thought He had gone crazy, and that hurt Him for sure.

It hurts to be criticized, but it can also be a good time to look into ourselves and assess if what others say about us is true or not. Jesus spent much of His time in ministry being misunderstood even by His own family, some of whom would not believe until the end that He is the promised Messiah.

Do not lose heart but ask Jesus to show you and lead you to love, serve, and respect more those who throw stones at you. Let it be a reminder to remain humble and to love those who misunderstand us. Randel Joseph Serrano (forzazrof@gmail.com)

### reflect

Find comfort in Jesus when you receive criticism from others. If the world hates you, remember that it hated Him first.

*Lord, help me see that every criticism is an occasion to love.*

St. Marianne Cope, pray for us.

# Jan 24

SUNDAY

Jonah 3:1-5, 10  
Psalm 25:4-5, 6-7, 8-9  
1 Corinthians 7:29-31  
**Mark 1:14-20**

## LEAVE EVERYTHING FOR HIM WHO HAS EVERYTHING

At once they left their nets and followed him.  
– Mark 1:18

I've always preached about how and why the first disciples left everything to follow Jesus. Yes, it must be their obedience and humility. Yes, it must be our Lord's divine authority and inspiring leadership. Yet I also say that these unschooled fishermen showed so much wisdom (and practicality)—because they left everything for the One who has everything.

It's been more than 20 years since I followed Jesus. I was a catechist at age 13 and a religion teacher at age 18. But my turning point was when I had a terminal illness and was losing everything. That's when I truly and personally found Him who has everything—including my healing.

I may not have left everything just as the first Apostles did, but I did start a more serious life journey of following Jesus. And when I think of what I left for Him, He shows me that I actually gained everything in following Him.

It's still January. Resolve to leave everything you need to leave and follow Jesus. You'll be surprised at how you'll actually gain everything you need in Him. Alvin Barcelona (apb\_ayo@yahoo.com)

### reflect

What do you need to leave behind so you can truly follow Jesus? Make that decision and take a leap of faith now.

*God, help me to leave the things that hinder me from living a full life in You. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

St. Francis de Sales, bishop and Doctor of the Church, pray for us.

# Jan 25

MONDAY

Acts 22:3-16  
(or Acts 9:1-22)  
Psalm 117:1, 2  
**Mark 16:15-18**

Feast of the Conversion  
of St. Paul, Apostle

## THE CALL

"Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature." – Mark 16:15

The common theme in our readings today is the commissioning. You'll see in the Gospel of Mark that right before Jesus ascended into heaven, He tasked His disciples to go out into the nations and spread the Good News of salvation. The same thing happened in the First Reading. The Lord called Paul (then called Saul) to be baptized and do His work.

Some might focus on the call, but I'd like to reflect on *who* was called. Paul, in his old life, was a righteous man to a fault. He was well-educated and passionate for his beliefs, but he used those traits in persecuting the followers of Jesus. He imprisoned men and women and even killed people—all in the name of religion. Yet Jesus called Paul to follow Him.

You see, that's the thing about God's love and mercy. Everyone is welcome. It didn't matter what Paul's sins were in the past—and neither do yours. Because God doesn't call the worthy. He makes worthy those whom He calls. And all it takes is for you to turn your life around and choose Him. Patrick

Gamo (charlespatrickgamo@gmail.com)

## reflect

Where is God calling you this New Year? What do you need to give up to choose Him?

*Lord God, help us to embrace our past so we may embrace You and Your plans for us. Amen.*

St. Peter Thomas, pray for us.

# Jan 26

TUESDAY

2 Timothy 1:1-8

(or Titus 1:1-5)

Psalms 96:1-2, 2-3,

7-8, 10

**Luke 10:1-9**

(or Mark 3:31-35)

**Feast of Sts. Timothy  
and Titus, bishops**

## GOD HAS HIS WAYS

"Ask the Lord of the harvest." – Luke 10:2

An atheist and a Christian were neighbors. Every day, they would argue about God. One day, the Christian lost everything and had nothing to eat. She prayed aloud, "Lord, I know You will not leave me hungry. Help me!"

The atheist shouted back, "Quiet! Your God doesn't care about you!"

Still, the Christian continued to pray, "Thank You, God. You will provide!" The next morning, the Christian found a bag full of grocery items. She looked up and shouted, "Thank You, Lord, for this miracle! You heard my cry."

The atheist shouted back, "Fool! Your God didn't send those. I did. I told you He doesn't hear you."

The Christian continued to pray out loud, "Thank You, God! You even made the devil pay for it!"

We can't limit the way God provides for our needs. He uses channels of blessings to get His provision to us. If we only open our eyes, we will see the earth is full of goodness of the Lord. Chelle Crisanto (ellehcmaria@gmail.com)

### reflect

"God has promised to supply all our needs. What we don't have now, we don't need now." (Elizabeth Elliot)

*Lord, open My eyes so I may see Your abundance in the midst of lack. Amen.*

Sts. Timothy and Titus, bishops, pray for us.



# Jan 27

WEDNESDAY

Hebrews 10:11-18  
Psalm 110:1, 2, 3, 4  
Mark 4:1-20

## A CALL OUT OF IGNORANCE

"So that they will look intently and not see,  
listen carefully and not understand, lest  
perhaps they repent and be forgiven."  
- Mark 4:12

If I were one of the crowd who listened to the parable of the sower and the seed, I wonder if I would conclude that the seed is the Word of God. Unlike the Apostles, I would not be among the privileged to hear Jesus explain the parable's meaning.

What does Jesus have up His sleeve? Why did He not explain its meaning to all His listeners?

My guess is that Jesus used these parables to "force" His listeners to ponder and seek deeper to understand. He wanted to draw them closer to God by asking Him to reveal these things to them.

Maybe Jesus was calling them out of their ignorance. He called on the crowd to seek Him and prayerfully think about the parable. Once enlightened, they would find themselves, recognize their sinfulness, repent, and be forgiven. *Cristy Galang*

(cristy\_cc@yahoo.com)

### reflect

Do you seek Jesus? Do you hunger for a closer encounter with Him?

*Thank You, Lord, for Your guidance so we may grow in wisdom and understanding. Amen.*

St. Angela Merici, virgin, pray for us.

# Jan 28

THURSDAY

Hebrews 10:19-25

Psalms 24:1-2, 3-4,

5-6

Mark 4:21-25

## WHAT YOU WISH FOR

He said to them, "Is a lamp brought in to be placed under a bushel basket or under a bed, and not to be placed on a lampstand?"

– Mark 4:21

When the word *lamp* is mentioned, what immediately comes to my mind is a genie, like with Aladdin. As we already know, a genie grants only three wishes. Aladdin's third and final wish came unexpectedly for the genie—he set him free.

I find this somewhat similar to what Christ did for us. He gave us freedom. It was the Father's greatest wish. But to make this happen, it wasn't a simple "snap of a finger." Christ had to go through unbearable pain, shame, betrayal, and death on the cross. Mary, too, had to endure emotional suffering.

You may be wishing for a better life right now. Perhaps you're feeling deep emotional pain and you wish to be free of the hurt and problems at a snap of a finger. Hey, Christ feels you. Trust that there's a higher purpose in your suffering. You may be in a dark place right now, but there's hope.

Christ is that hope, and His light is not hidden. He will guide you toward true freedom. Kirby Llaban (kirby@kirbyllaban.com)

## reflect

What hidden areas and pains in your life do you need Christ's light to shed on? Bring them to light through confession and experience freedom.

*Lord, I know that You're not a genie. You're real and You always grant my prayers in Your time. In my dark moments, be my light.*

St. Thomas Aquinas, priest and Doctor of the Church, pray for us.

# Jan 29

FRIDAY

**Hebrews 10:32-39**

Psalm 37:3-4, 5-6,

23-24, 39-40

Mark 4:26-34

## JUST SELL A BURGER

Remember the first days when you were enlightened. You had to undergo a hard struggle in the face of suffering. . . .

Be patient in doing the will of God.

– Hebrews 10:32, 36, CCB

When I first moved to a newly developed community in the south, the clubhouse was used every Sunday for morning Mass. It didn't take long before my neighbors and I organized for an ambitious dream—to build our own chapel.

To raise the funds needed, we did movie premieres, garage sales, dinner for a cause, and bingo socials, to name a few. On one occasion, I went house-to-house to distribute flyers for a Christmas project. An old lady received the flyer, read, crumpled, and threw it on the street in my full view. Already tired from the walk, I was annoyed by her rude conduct. But I quickly put myself in check to let the incident pass and continue with my rounds. It was then I realized that it's easier to sell a burger than solicit support for the Church.

Today, Saint Joseph the Worker Chapel has been serving the spiritual needs of our growing community. It's also a testimony of the passion and perseverance of pioneering lay persons who worked tirelessly for the Lord, unfazed by challenges. Marie Franco (marief franco\_pie@yahoo.com)

### reflect

Do you do God's work only when it's convenient?

*Father God, stay with me as I do Your work according to Your will.*

St. Blath, pray for us.

# Jan 30

SATURDAY

Hebrews 11:1-2,  
8-19

Luke 1:69, 70-72,  
73-75

**Mark 4:35-41**

## GOD OUR PROTECTOR

Then he asked them, "Why are you terrified?  
Do you not have faith?" – Mark 4:40

Psalm 91 is a song that I have prayed since I was a young Catholic growing in my faith.

We had just moved to an unfamiliar area south of Metro Manila, in a house that barely had any form of security. The verses in the psalm were the only thing we held on to for protection, literally. My two sisters and I would start our prayer with it every single night. In no time, we had memorized its entirety and could declare it by heart.

Thirty years later, I found myself hanging on to it like the only lifeline as the entire humanity faced an unseen enemy—COVID-19—last year. I became anxious and fearful. The future had never been more uncertain. Then I noticed the Bible sitting on top of a cabinet at home. I got it and turned it to the page where Psalm 91 was.

Right there, I began declaring the psalm every night with my mother. Before long, my spirit was filled with that familiar, comforting grace that could only come from the God who protects His children. Eugene Cailao (eugeneccailao@gmail.com)

### reflect

“(God) will rescue you from the fowler’s snare, from the destroying plague, He will shelter you with his pinions, and under his wings you may take refuge; his faithfulness is a protecting shield.” (Psalm 91:3-4)

*Grant me the grace, Father, to always gaze at You whatever my situation is. May Your love and light overcome me.*

St. Savina of Milan, pray for us.

# Jan 31

SUNDAY

Deuteronomy 18:15-20

Psalms 95:1-2, 6-7, 7-9

1 Corinthians 7:32-35

**Mark 1:21-28**

## BAD NIGHT'S SLEEP

"He even gives orders to impure spirits and they obey him." – Mark 1:27, NIV

A few years back, I would often experience sleep paralysis and nightmares at past midnight.

Sometimes, my dreams were gory. Sometimes, there were enraged spirits. Sometimes, it's just pitch black where I'd be tempted to give in to sleeping, but if I did, I had a gut feeling that I would no longer wake up.

How did I fight these even if my body was static—even if I was afraid and helpless? The only answer was prayer. During those times, I trusted that only God could save me. I'd pray The Apostles' Creed to let the evil forces know that I believe in a powerful and loving God who is above all things. Next is the Our Father, Hail Mary, then Glory Be. And they worked every single time. Never have these prayers failed me. When I'd wake up, I'd thank God for saving me from a long, frightening night.

We may sometimes feel weak, hopeless, and vulnerable. At such moments, we need to turn to a power above and beyond ourselves. In God's reign, there is always room for love, hope, and protection. Elle Silvestre ([marialouise.s@shepherdsvoice.com.ph](mailto:marialouise.s@shepherdsvoice.com.ph))

### reflect

Evil is present in many ways even when we are asleep. Call on Jesus' name to help you overcome fear and unpleasant thoughts. There is victory in the Cross.

*From the ends of the earth I call to You, I call as my heart grows faint; lead me to the rock that is higher than I. For You have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe. (Psalm 61:2-3)*

St. John Bosco, priest, pray for us.

# Feb 1

MONDAY

**Hebrews 11:32-40**  
Psalm 31:20, 21, 22,  
23, 24  
Mark 5:1-20

## GOD IS YOUR GREATEST WIN

Out of weakness they were made powerful.  
– Hebrews 11:34

Twenty years ago, I had an overwhelming feeling of self-rejection. I didn't like myself. So I turned to God for consolation. Then I felt God whisper to me three messages.

“Bo, I celebrate who you are.” The words bewildered me. I asked myself, “What was there to celebrate?” Because all I saw were my failures. His second message was, “You're My masterpiece, and I'm proud of My masterpiece.”

As if those messages were not enough, I felt God urging me to write down a list of “I am” descriptions based on His wonderful work in my life. So I wrote: “I'm a loving husband.” “I'm a good brother.” “I'm a good friend . . .” I was tempted to write my faults and failures, too, but I felt it wasn't the time for that. After I wrote my list, I heard God's third message: “When you celebrate who you are, you're celebrating Me.”

And that's when I understood that having God in my life, being in a relationship with Him, and following Jesus is the greatest success I can ever have in my life.

Friend, God is your greatest win. Because of Him, you're already a winner. Bo Sanchez (bosanchez@kerygmfamily.com)

### reflect

Who are you now because of God's work in you?

*I am beyond grateful, dearest God, for all You have done and are doing in my life. Amen.*

St. Brigid of Ireland, pray for us.

# Feb 2

TUESDAY

Malachi 3:1-4  
Psalm 24:7, 8, 9, 10

**Hebrews 2:14-18**

Luke 2:22-32  
(or Luke 2:22-40)

**Feast of the Presentation  
of the Child Jesus**

## PASS IT ON

Now he can help those who are tempted because he himself was tempted and suffered. – Hebrews 2:18, GNT

I remember the first time I attended The Feast. I couldn't stop laughing because of the preacher's humor. But when he shared about his relationship with his father, my laughter turned to tears. I could relate to his pain because I felt the same way, too.

I found myself coming back to The Feast because I learned how to deal with my struggles through our preacher and the Scripture. When I had the chance to know him more, I grabbed the opportunity to keep learning from him. He generously shared with me his experience, wisdom, and strategies. Having a spiritual dad like him equipped me in building a better relationship with my father. After following his advice and through God's grace, my father and I have a more loving relationship now.

Today, it's my joy to accompany my friends who have the same struggles I had before. Just as my spiritual dad has been instrumental to my healing, I pray that with God's guidance, I could also help other people overcome their trials. Ericson T. Trinidad

(erix.trinidad@gmail.com)

## reflect

God doesn't waste a hurt. One day, all your pains will have a purpose.

*Father, empower me to be a wounded healer. Amen.*

St. Joan de Lestonnac, pray for us.

# Feb 3

WEDNESDAY

Hebrews 12:4-7,  
11-15

Psalms 103:1-2,  
13-14, 17-18

Mark 6:1-6

## GOD'S DISCIPLINE

"For whom the Lord loves, he disciplines."

– Hebrews 12:6

We all have experienced some form of discipline in our lives from people who care about us to guide us toward the right path. It's the same with our Heavenly Father—"Whom the Lord loves, He sets right."

Author Karen Miles said that children who fare best are raised by parents who believe in their innate goodness. We have the most loving Parent in the whole universe who created us in His likeness and believes in our goodness. He knows everything about us yet overlooks our faults. His motive in disciplining us is so we could be with Him forever.

Interestingly, the word *discipline* comes from the old French word, *descepline*, which means "teaching, suffering, martyrdom."

The next time you hear those voices in your head telling you to control your temper, to get up and pray, or to not compare yourself with that successful colleague, know that you are being taught—because you are loved. When we welcome this "tough love" into our hearts, we may be well on our way to sainthood. Lallaine Gogna (lallygogna@yahoo.com)

### reflect

In what area of your life has the Lord been disciplining you lately?  
Are you heeding His guidance?

*Lord, make me into the person You want me to be. Change me even if I am not ready. Amen.*

St. Blaise, bishop and martyr, pray for us.



# Feb 4

THURSDAY

Hebrews 12:18-19,  
21-24

Psalms 48:2-3, 3-4,  
9, 10-11

Mark 6:7-13

## TURN OR BURN

They went out and preached that people should repent. – Mark 6:12, NIV

“REPENT! TURN TO JESUS OR BURN IN HELL!” This was written on a signage held up by a street preacher screaming, “Turn or burn!”

People walked past him, irritated. Sadly, this is how many of us Christians call people to repentance. No wonder the message of repentance is not that popular these days. In fact, it has a negative connotation and people don't like it. Could it be because it's done in such a hypocritical, judgmental, and negative manner? I believe the problem is not in the message, but in the delivery. Because repentance itself is beautiful.

Repentance in Greek is *metanoia*, which means a change of heart. The Hebrew and Aramaic word for repent means “to return to God and leave your sins behind.” So, repentance is a spiritual conversion that triggers sorrow for past sins and a decision to redirect one's life toward Jesus.

Do you know someone who needs to repent? Call them to repentance with deep care, concern, and compassion. If you want true, lasting, and life-changing repentance, a personal call for repentance should be founded on a relationship of trust and love. Mike Viñas (mikemichaelfcv@yahoo.com)

### reflect

Repentance is not a one-time thing. It's a constant decision. What do you need to repent of?

*Lord Jesus, I receive Your mercy that leads me to repentance. Use me to mercifully call others to do the same. Amen.*

St. Joseph of Leonissa, pray for us.

# Feb 5

FRIDAY

**Hebrews 13:1-8**

Psalm 27:1, 3, 5, 8-9

Mark 6:14-29

## ANGELS IN OUR MIDST

Do not neglect hospitality, for through it some have unknowingly entertained angels.

– Hebrews 13:2

I knew he was around because I could smell him—literally. For some reason, Iloy took a bath only once a year during Good Friday, with much prodding from my grandmother who threatened to beat him up with a broomstick. Though his odor bothered me, I grew up appreciating the delicious and hearty meals he prepared for us, the way he kept our house and garden spic and span, and other chores he did for us. He proved his commitment as foreman in the construction of our home and as our trusted *katiwala* and helper. Despite his dislike for baths, he was “clean” in mind and in heart. Ever since my grandmother took him in as a young boy, he embraced and lived as one of us. He served us until he became old and weary. Even if he was not related to us by blood, he was family.

The Lord sends His angels to live among us. I may not recognize them right away since they blend in the crowd, so to speak, but the kindness I receive from people like Iloy reminds me that, indeed, there are angels in our midst. Dina Pecaña

(dina.p@shepherdsvoice.com.ph)

### reflect

“The footprints of an angel in your life are love.” (Genevieve Gerard)

*Angel of God, my guardian dear, to whom God's love commits me here. Ever this day, be at my side, to light and guard, to rule and guide. Amen.*

St. Agatha, virgin and martyr, pray for us.

# Feb 6

SATURDAY

Hebrews 13:15-17,  
20-21

Psalms 23:1-3, 3-4,  
5, 6

**Mark 6:30-34**

## REST FOR A WHILE

"Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest for a while."

– Mark 6:31, NRSV

Busy. That word is one of the most common responses to the question, "How are you?" In today's reading, the Apostles just came from being busy. They gathered around Jesus and "told Him all that they had done and taught" (verse 30). Jesus' response was calming. "Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and *rest* for a while" (verse 31, italics mine).

We sometimes take that as, "Go on a vacation at a beach, and just lie down on a hammock doing nothing." That's because we focus on the words *deserted place*. Instead, focus on the words *all by yourselves*. Because rest doesn't come from a place. Rest comes from the companions you're with.

We can be in a "deserted place" and not be rested at all. Because our companions are deadlines, debts, and problems. At the same time, we can be busy, but we can always take time to rest.

How? Go and find a corner in the room, all by yourself, and rest in the Lord for a few minutes. Soon, you'll find you're not alone. There are actually four of you: you, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Pour your heart out. Rest and be at peace with our God. [Boggs Burbos \(boggsburbos@yahoo.com\)](mailto:boggsburbos@yahoo.com)

### reflect

Close your eyes. Where is Jesus in all your busyness? Can your heart see Him at this moment?

*Jesus, grant me peace and rest amidst my busyness. Amen.*

St. Paul Miki and Companions, martyrs, pray for us.

# Feb 7

SUNDAY

Job 7:1-4, 6-7

Psalms 147:1-2, 3-4,  
5-6

1 Corinthians 9:16-19,  
22-23

Mark 1:29-39

## POWER BANK

Rising very early before dawn, he left and went off to a deserted place, where he prayed. – Mark 1:35

Do you want this to be better than last year? Then answer this question: who will you depend on in 2021—yourself or Jesus Christ? You can do it all by your strength. Or you can do it by His grace.

You can choose to “rise early before dawn,” which does not necessarily mean waking up early to pray. No matter what time you wake up, have the habit of putting Jesus first by praying before working. Seek His will before yours or others. Depend on His strength, instead of yours.

Decide daily to get fully “charged” by connecting to God’s love for five minutes or more. Then carry a “power bank” for quick charges all day by praying, “Jesus, help me! Jesus, guide me!”

Make prayer your first recourse, not your last. Connect with the Vine (John 15), knowing that apart from Him you can do nothing.

Let Jesus love you like never before! Marc V. Lopez

(marcvlopez88@gmail.com)

## reflect

How often do you pray? The more you pray, the more you rely on Jesus. The less you pray, the more you rely on yourself.

*Jesus, take over my entire year. Not by my strength but through Your grace. Not my will but Yours be done. Amen.*

St. Luke the Younger, pray for us.

# Feb 8

MONDAY

Genesis 1:1-19

Psalms 104:1-2, 5-6,  
10, 12, 24, 35

Mark 6:53-56

## EYES OF FAITH

As they were leaving the boat, people immediately recognized him. – Mark 6:54

During the early days of my cancer treatment, I cried buckets of tears and had bouts of overwhelming sadness. In the midst of the emotional turmoil that cancer wrought, it was difficult to see or hear God, unlike the people in the Gospel who “immediately recognized Him.” I was so focused on myself and my own capacity to get well. A friend, who was also going through some health concerns, advised, “Look for God. Trust Him.” That pushed me to turn to the Lord and see my illness with eyes of faith.

Through Scripture and prayer, I learned to accept cancer as a momentary interruption, a reminder that God is in control, that His grace is sufficient to get me through each day. Yes, the medical procedures were challenging, but I always felt Him walking with me, holding my hand throughout the difficult journey.

My cancer experience was a divine opportunity to grow in grace. It helped me take my eyes off myself and fix them on God. It taught me to wait on Him, to open my heart and see His blessings unfold every day. Marie G. Ferrer (smgferrer@gmail.com)

### reflect

“Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in you. Show me the way I should go, for to you I entrust my life.” (Psalm 143:8)

*Dear Lord, help me open my eyes and see You at work in my life.*

St. Josephine Bakhita, pray for us.

# Feb 9

TUESDAY

Genesis 1:20-2:4

Psalms 8:4-5, 6-7,  
8-9

Mark 7:1-13

## WALK THE TALK

So the Pharisees and the teachers of the law asked Jesus, "Why is it that your disciples do not follow the teaching handed down from our ancestors?" – Mark 7:5

Not everything in the past is applicable to our present. My husband and I long to pass to our two Gen Z kids the values instilled in us when we were growing up, but their generation needs to know the what, why, and how those values are relevant to them. Therefore, we have to upgrade our parenting skills so our children know not just the rules, but their essence.

The *pagmamano* (raising an elder's hand to your forehead as a sign of respect) is converted to kisses and hugs when our kids greet us. Saying "po" and "opo" is essential, but I often encourage them to be respectful in manner, not just in words. We let them speak their mind and share their feelings, but they have to speak appropriately and lovingly—minus the angst.

Importantly, values are caught, not taught. Since kids look up to social media influencers for world trends, I believe we can only share about Jesus and the faith to them if we walk the talk. We become the strongest influencers if we engage them with love the way Jesus did. *Ichel Alignay (michele.alignay@gmail.com)*

### reflect

Are you walking your talk?

*Lord, empower us to live out Your teachings and become strong influencers to the people around us. Amen.*

Blessed Anne Catherine Emmerick, pray for us.

# Feb 10

WEDNESDAY

Genesis 2:4-9, 15-17

Psalm 104:1-2,

27-28, 29-30

Mark 7:14-23

## LESSONS

### FROM A TRAIN RIDE

Out of the ground the Lord God made grow every tree that was delightful to look at and good for food, with the tree of life in the middle of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. – Genesis 2:9

My friends and I were on our way to attend our first Hillsong Conference in Sydney, Australia in 2016. We left the house where we stayed and when we got to the bus stop, the bus was already there. We were just in time for the next train ride to the Olympic Village, the conference venue.

What we thought as smooth and quick rides turned into a long detour because we rode a point-to-point train that didn't stop at our destination. What we thought was a blessing turned into a learning experience. Nonetheless, we arrived at the Olympic Village when we got on the right train.

In the Garden of Eden, God provided all the resources that Adam and Even needed, but He did instruct them about a certain fruit that was forbidden. Just like our train ride, when we make the wrong choice, we go astray.

Not everything that comes our way is a blessing. We have to do our part to pray and discern if we are on the right path. Maria Paz

Jimenez-Balayan (pazjb0117@gmail.com)

### reflect

The road is not always smooth, but God always provides a way.

*Lord Jesus, grant us wisdom so we may choose the right direction that leads to You.*

St. Scholastica, virgin, pray for us.

# Feb 11

THURSDAY

Genesis 2:18-25

Psalms 128:1-2, 3,

4-5

Mark 7:24-30

Feast of Our Lady  
of Lourdes

## INSANELY IN LOVE

“Lord, even the dogs under the table eat the children’s scraps.” – Mark 7:28

During the apparitions of our Lady in Lourdes, Bernadette did some things that made people think she was crazy. She walked on her knees to the back of the grotto and kissed the muddy ground. This symbolized the Incarnation of Jesus that God lowered Himself to become human to show the world His love.

She also ate bitter grass to signify that God has taken upon Himself all bitterness and our sins. She smeared mud on her face to show what Isaiah said, “Because he carried on Himself all our sins, we thought him stricken, struck down by God and afflicted.” Yes, Bernadette must have been crazy to do all those things at the bidding of our Lady.

But what’s actually more insane is that God would actually love someone as filthy as you and me. He stooped so low to become just like us in order to save us. Couldn’t He just have ordered the legions of angels to do the dirty work? But thank God, He’s not like you and me. He is the omnipotent God who will do anything crazy just to save us—because He’s insanely in love with you and me. Ronna Ledesma (ronna\_ledesma@yahoo.com.ph)

### reflect

What was the craziest thing you’ve done to show your love for God?

*Lord, forgive me for the times I took Your love for granted. I pray that I may also love You with everything I’ve got. Amen.*

Our Lady of Lourdes, pray for us.



# Feb 12

FRIDAY

**Genesis 3:1-8**

Psalm 32:1-2, 5, 6, 7

Mark 7:31-37

## CASTING ASPERSIONS

"Did God really say, 'You shall not eat from any of the trees in the garden?'"

– Genesis 3:1

Rick is one person who says what he means and means what he says. You can mark his words on stone because he always fulfills his promises. Unlike him, Mike is someone who will swear to do something for you but he doesn't have a good track record when it comes to keeping his word.

We all know people like Rick and Mike. Unfortunately, we don't always know *which* of our friends are a Rick or a Mike. So we take them at their word and become disappointed when they don't deliver.

If there's anyone we can take at His word, He's God. He has made thousands of promises to us and has not broken a single one. But sadly, we don't always claim His promises. That's like having a winning raffle ticket but not claiming the prize. And the devil is ever ready to make you doubt what God said.

What did God promise you? Stand on His word and await its fulfillment. [Rissa Kawpeng \(rissakawpeng@gmail.com\)](mailto:rissakawpeng@gmail.com)

### reflect

"The best praying man is the man who is most believably familiar with the promises of God. After all, prayer is nothing but taking God's promises to him, and saying to him, 'Do as thou hast said.' Prayer is the promise utilized. A prayer which is not based on a promise has no true foundation." (Charles Spurgeon)

*Jesus, You are the Promise Keeper. I trust in Your Word. Amen.*

St. Julian, pray for us.

# Feb 13

SATURDAY

Genesis 3:9-24  
Psalm 90:2, 3-4,  
5-6, 12-13  
Mark 8:1-10

## HOW MANY LOAVES DO YOU HAVE?

The people ate and were satisfied.  
– Mark 8:8, NIV

I struggled to breastfeed my newborn, Anya. It was heartbreaking for me to see her not gaining much weight. After a checkup, I was advised to immediately supplement her with formula as she was not getting enough milk from me. My husband and I went to different places to ask for breast milk from friends and parent support groups.

I'm grateful to have people who didn't hesitate to give us breast milk and empathized with my situation. Generous moms helped me until Anya reached six months. I knew it was God's provision through them that my supply overflowed.

It's humbling to ask for help and sometimes cause inconvenience to others. But God knows my heart. He blessed the milk that I had and multiplied it, just like the seven loaves. Seeing how Anya is growing healthy and happy is all worth it.

God can create something out of our nothing. But just imagine how much He can do when we give our all. Indeed, little is much when God is in it. [Love Cosio \(lovelynmcosio@gmail.com\)](mailto:lovelynmcosio@gmail.com)

### reflect

What is in your hands right now? Do you feel a lack in your life? Allow God to multiply what you have and watch Him turn scarcity into abundance.

*Lord, bless my all. I surrender to Your grace. I believe that in You, my little is more than enough. Amen.*

St. Catherine de Ricci, pray for us.

# Feb 14

SUNDAY

Leviticus 13:1-2, 44-46

Psalm 32:1-2, 5, 11

1 Corinthians

10:31-11:1

**Mark 1:40-45**

## DIE TO LIVE

Moved with pity, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, "I do choose. Be made clean!" – Mark 1:41

Last year, I attended the 70th wedding anniversary celebration of my wife's grandparents.

Imagine that? Seventy years of marriage. Seventy years of living with the same person. Of going through tough times with the same person. And of choosing to love the same person every day. It *is* possible! They are living proof. What an honor for me to witness such love.

One time, I asked *Lolo* and *Lola* what their secret is for a long and lasting relationship. They told me, "Jan, it's all about dying to yourself." For *Lolo*, it meant giving up things for *Lola*—like his precious sleep because he wants to be awake for rosary time, which is often later than his bedtime. For *Lola*, it means having to attend to *Lolo's* needs before hers—like choosing to stay home to be with him because he loves it when *Lola* is in the house. It's a decision they make every day. It's dying to what they want for the person they love.

Friends, if you want to have a lasting relationship, learn to die to yourself so others may live. Jan Carlo Silan (jcsilan@gmail.com)

## reflect

Are you willing to let go of what you want for the sake of another?  
Are you willing to love like Jesus?

*Lord, teach me to love just like You—to die to myself and to give life to others. Amen.*

Sts. Cyril and Methodius, bishops, pray for us.

# Feb 15

MONDAY

**Genesis 4:1-15, 25**

Psalm 50:1, 8, 16-17,  
20-21

Mark 8:11-13

## GIVE YOUR BEST

Abel also brought a gift—the best portions.

– Genesis 4:4

She was my favorite teacher. Funny and intelligent, she got along with my classmates and eventually became my very good friend. After many years, we even became colleagues in the college faculty.

Time passed. I shifted careers and entered corporate life. Unfortunately, due to my busyness, I wasn't able to connect with her often. I didn't know she had resigned due to diabetes complications, which rendered her blind.

Our high school batch organized a fund-raising drive to help her—to which I only gave a modest contribution. My intention was to visit her and to help her the soonest.

Then a text message came. She was gone. I was in shock. I couldn't accept I wasn't able to visit her, nor even give a substantial contribution for her condition. No amount of flowers or beautiful words at her funeral could possibly make up for my neglect. I wanted to honor her with love and affection.

Friend, don't postpone love. Give your best while you still can. Jonathan Yogawin (coachj@jyogawin.com)

### reflect

Have you postponed giving your best—at work, in school, or at home? Who are the people in your life who deserve the best from you?

*Lord Jesus, You gave Your best for me. May I do the same for You.*

St. Claude de la Colombiere, pray for us.

# Feb 16

TUESDAY

**Genesis 6:5-8;**

**7:1-5, 10**

Psalm 29:1, 2, 3-4,  
3, 9-10

Mark 8:14-21

## YES, LORD!

Noah complied, just as the Lord had commanded. – Genesis 7:5

I wonder what Noah felt when God told him to do all the things He asked of him. Was he scared? Worried? Doubtful?

The Bible doesn't say much about Noah's feelings, but one thing's for sure: He did what God commanded. He didn't make excuses and say, "God, I'm already 600 years old! I'm too old for this. Please ask someone else to do the job."

Noah reminds me a lot of my dad. As of this writing, he is 72 years old. Ever since he and my mom decided to follow Jesus in a deeper way many years ago, he has always done what God commands of Him. (At least he tries to!)

For example, the year he turned 70, he was asked to go on long-term mission in one of the islands of Indonesia. He dealt with many physical discomforts but he never complained. I actually discouraged him from continuing with his mission, but he told me, "God will take care of me. It is our privilege to be called to serve Him."

This made me realize I need to be as faithful to God as my dad is. Tina Santiago Rodriguez (trulyrichandblessed@gmail.com)

### reflect

Do you always do what God commands you to do? Believe that He will equip you for the work He has called you to do.

*Lord, thank You for calling me to follow You. May I be faithful to You till the end of my days. Amen.*

St. Onesimus, pray for us.

# Feb 17

ASH WEDNESDAY

Joel 2:12-18

Psalms 51:3-4, 5-6,

12-13, 14, 17

2 Corinthians

5:20-6:2

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

## GEORGE OF THE JUNGLE

"But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face." – Matthew 6:17

Jungle trailers are smart. They know the terrain of the jungle—sure of their destination and the path to get there. They are wise, but they know that however smart they are, they can get lost, too. When this happens, they know what to do.

The team navigator climbs up a tall tree. Once there, he finds answers to the most important questions of the journey: Where am I now? From here, how do I get to my destination?

Friend, this is fasting. It's a humble admission that however smart and learned I may be in this journey called life, I can be lost. Worse, I can be lost without even knowing it. Fasting gets me to climb up a tall tree, validate my location, and recalculate my direction.

Then I rediscover these truths: God still is faithful. The most important things in life are not things. Life can be simple, and there are many things I can live without. It is relationships that make me happy. Serving the poor is a path to joy. So, whatever you fast on, enjoy God and love someone today.

Jon Escoto (faithatworkjon@gmail.com)

### reflect

What are you fasting on today? What actions of love are you replacing this with?

*Father, as I make space for You in my time and in my wallet today, I experience Your embrace in a way I've never experienced You before.*

St. Alexis Falconieri, pray for us.

# Feb 18

THURSDAY

Deuteronomy

30:15-20

Psalms 1:1-2, 3, 4, 6

**Luke 9:22-25**

## NOTHING ELSE MATTERS

"What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self?" – Luke 9:25

This year, it will be two years since my husband and I decided to manage a business together.

It started out great. Clients were coming in, sometimes even more than we could manage. We had money in the bank and investments, too. We were able to travel. We were comfortable.

But in late 2019, our clients started to decrease for various reasons. Our cash flow was badly hit. One day, we realized we were in a financial crisis. We asked the Lord why. We work hard, we follow Him, we serve Him. *Why?*

Then one prayer time, we decided to change our question from why to what. What is the lesson He's teaching us in this season of emptiness?

We looked back at the many challenges we've faced and recalled how God provided for us every single time. Our problems suddenly become a way for us to count our blessings, to be reminded again that we only need God and not any other worldly things. Tintin Taton (kristinetaton@gmail.com)

### reflect

"Remember that your real wealth can be measured not by what you have, but by what you are." (Napoleon Hill)

*Jesus, let us not be distracted by materialism so we can focus on You.*

St. Simon, pray for us.

# Feb 19

FRIDAY

Isaiah 58:1-9

Psalm 51:3-4, 5-6,  
18-19

**Matthew 9:14-15**

## DINE AT THE WEDDING FEAST

One day the disciples of John the Baptist came to Jesus and asked, "Why don't your disciples fast like we do and the Pharisees do?" – Matthew 9:14, NLT

Two years ago, one of our sons got married. We carefully went through the caterer's menu and did a food tasting before deciding on what to serve. So it warmed our hearts that guests complimented us on the yummy feast that was prepared for the occasion.

In today's Gospel, John's disciples asked Jesus why His disciples didn't fast. Jesus replied by saying, "Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them?" In Jewish tradition, wedding festivities lasted for a week with the bride and the groom's closest friends in attendance. Food and wine overflowed and there was much rejoicing.

Every day, Jesus invites us to a wedding banquet like no other. It is a feast where His Body and Blood is the food served to us. It is the most lavish and costly of meals because it cost Him His life. Let us not waste this great opportunity to feast with the Groom. Reng D. Morelos (norinamorelos@gmail.com)

### reflect

"Recognize in this bread what hung on the cross, and in this chalice what flowed from His side." (Saint Augustine)

*Lord, enkindle in me the desire to receive the most Holy Eucharist daily. Amen.*

St. Belina, pray for us.



# Feb 20

SATURDAY

Isaiah 58:9-14

Psalm 86:1-2, 3-4,

5-6

Luke 5:27-32

## BREAKTHROUGH

Then the Lord will guide you always and give you plenty even on the parched land.

– Isaiah 58:11

When I received the invitation to speak at *Breakthrough*, The Feast SM Santa Rosa's solo parents retreat, I was in a bad place. I was going through all

the “solo” trials:

1. Solo homemaker (no househelp) beset by health issues like vertigo, cough, and fever;
2. Solo child caring for an aged parent;
3. Solo niece (all my cousins are abroad) given the responsibility over a sick aunt in the hospital.

I felt more of a flop than HIP (Hero Independent Parents, the solo parents ministry of The Feast Alabang). I feared my talk would be uninspiring. But when I poured out my insecurities to my cousin Belle, she said, “Maybe these harassments are happening because people will be blessed by your story.” She reminded me that God equips those whom He calls. I heeded His call to serve, and by His grace, several people told me they were inspired by my sharing. I even spotted a tear or two.

This shows that despite being in a desert situation, God showers us with His mercies so we can break through parched land and bear fruit to nourish others. Lella M. Santiago (lellams88@gmail.com)

### reflect

God will make water spring forth in the driest spell to help us be fruitful. What desert are you in now? Seek God's living waters.

*Lord, I can only be brought to perfection through You. Help me.*

Sts. Jacinta and Francisco Marto, pray for us.

# Feb 21

SUNDAY

**Genesis 9:8-15**

Psalm 25:4-5, 6-7,  
8-9

1 Peter 3:18-22

Mark 1:12-15

**First Sunday of Lent**

## RAINBOW CONNECTION

"I set my bow in the clouds to serve as a sign of the covenant between me and the earth."

– Genesis 9:13

There is something about rainbows that catches everyone's fancy. Seeing one in the horizon with seven colors interspersed elicits some kind of gleeful reaction.

Rainbows typically appear after a rainstorm when the sun breaks through the clouds. They are produced from the reflection, refraction, and dispersion of light in the water droplets present in the atmosphere. Rainbows represent many things—hope, peace, positivity, new beginnings, transformation, even prosperity. (An Irish proverb says there is a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.)

Today's reading reveals to us the rainbow—the “bow in the clouds”—as a symbol of God's promise to never end all life with a flood again. In other words, life will go on. He reminds us of His great love and mercy and assures us that whenever challenges come our way, no matter how difficult, He will see us through. We only need to trust Him to deliver on His promise. So, when the next storm comes, know that not only will the sun shine again, but that a rainbow will also be there.

Erwin Rocoles (erwin\_roceles@yahoo.com)

### reflect

“God is faithful and will not let you be tried beyond your strength; but with the trial he will also provide a way out, so that you may be able to bear it.” (1 Corinthians 10:13)

*Lord, fight my battles for me. I know I will overcome because of You.*

St. Peter Damian, bishop and Doctor of the Church, pray for us.

# Feb 22

MONDAY

1 Peter 5:1-4  
Psalm 23:1-3, 4, 5, 6  
**Matthew 16:13-19**

Feast of the Chair  
of St. Peter, Apostle

## 'WATCH YOUR STEP'

"But who do you say that I am?"  
– Matthew 16:15

I went to the restroom after eating breakfast at a restaurant. I didn't notice that there was a small step going into the toilet and I tripped. I almost fell flat on my face and could have been hurt seriously. After I fell, I saw the sign on the door: "Watch Your Step!"

In life, there are such notices and signs that warn us of hidden dangers. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI cautioned us of relativism that has become a dominant state of mind in our generation. "What is true for you is true for you, and what is true for me is true for me" and other similar phrases are evidence of this. This line of thinking believes there are no absolute truths or standards and has led people to do their own thing regardless of consequences. This kind of thinking led to the Nazi Holocaust, ethnic genocides, and even personal tragedies.

Jesus said, "I Am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." He sets the standards for our lives. If we do not allow Him to guide the way we live, we will always be in imminent spiritual—and physical—danger. [Rolly España \(rollyespana53@gmail.com\)](mailto:rollyespana53@gmail.com)

### reflect

Yielding to God's Spirit within us prevents us from conforming to the way the world thinks.

*O Holy Spirit, You are the giver of gifts. Give me wisdom that I may always walk in Your ways. Amen.*

St. Margaret of Cortona, pray for us.

# Feb 23

TUESDAY

Isaiah 55:10-11  
Psalm 34:4-5, 6-7,  
16-17, 18-19  
**Matthew 6:7-15**

## UNLOAD YOUR CARGO

"For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you." – Matthew 6:14, NIV

During one of my talks at a major gathering, I preached while carrying a heavy dumbbell on one hand. I didn't explain the gimmick even as I began to talk, still holding it on one hand and a microphone on the other. I shifted it from one hand to the other as it got heavier the longer I held on to it.

At the end of the talk, I asked, "Noticed something I've been carrying the whole time?" The audience said yes. "The last point of my talk is about forgiveness. You forgive not just for the person who wronged you, but also for yourself. Because the longer you carry it, the heavier it becomes. Unforgiveness is the cargo you carry. Forgiveness is the burden you bury."

In today's Gospel, what struck me right after Jesus taught His disciples how to pray was His next statement explaining just one part of the prayer: about forgiveness. It's as if He was emphasizing it, showing its importance in our lives.

God is telling you now that it's time to forgive. Bury that burden. Unload that cargo. And when you put that weight down, you'll notice life is lighter and you can soar higher.

Toh Relova (tohrelova@gmail.com)

### reflect

Who do you need to forgive? Do it now.

*Lord, forgiving is not easy. It's one of the toughest things we'll ever do. But knowing that You forgave me of my own sins, give me strength to do the same and let go. Amen.*

St. Polycarp, bishop and martyr, pray for us.

# Feb 24

WEDNESDAY

Jonah 3:1-10  
Psalm 51:3-4, 12-13,  
18-19  
Luke 11:29-32

## READ THE SIGNS WELL

"This is a wicked generation. It asks for a sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah." – Luke 11:29

I thought I was doomed to die when I got seriously ill. Then the Lord showed me signs of healing—during my prayer time and at the Divine Mercy Shrine where I heard testimonies of people who got well.

I became helpless and desperate when we went through a serious financial crisis. Then God showed His signs by sending people who helped us out of it.

What our Lord directly referred to as wicked are those who tested Him to prove Himself through miraculous signs. The irony is that they were standing before The Sign Himself and missed it. There are signs around us every day. When the sun rises, when there's food on the table, when you see a person help someone in need—all these are signs of God's continuing hope for mankind. Of course, an erupting volcano, the spread of a deadly virus, and wars can also be signs.

We should, therefore, focus on the ultimate sign—the Cross of Jesus—where He offered His life, and after three days, rose again. Jesus, our Lord, is The One and True Sign of God's mercy and love for all of us. Alvin Barcelona (apb\_ayo@yahoo.com)

### reflect

Are you waiting for a sign? Look at the Cross of Jesus. What is it telling you? Read it well.

*Lord, may I see Your daily signs to love You and others more.*

Blessed Tommaso Maria Fusco, pray for us.

# Feb 25

THURSDAY

Esther C:12, 14-16,

23-25

Psalms 138:1-2, 2-3,

7-8

**Matthew 7:7-12**

## BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU WISH FOR

"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you." – Matthew 7:7, NIV

A girl was fed up with her life. She had been a devoted servant of God, following every rule in the book, hoping to find her one true love from the heavens above. One day, she got impatient, went to church, and asked God, "Where is he? You told me to follow You and You'll give him to me! I don't want this life anymore! You promised to take care of those who love and serve You!"

That same day, a random guy messaged her and she took it as a sign that he was the one. It was a whirlwind crazy relationship that didn't end well because she wasn't ready to give up her own selfishness to submit and live life as part of a pair.

Have you ever asked God for something but you weren't ready when it was handed to you? The Lord loves us so much that He would do anything to make us happy. But sometimes, we're not yet ready to receive His blessings.

That girl who lost her chance with her supposedly one true love? That was me.

Now, I'm ready! Ara Fernando (beautyischange@gmail.com)

### reflect

Are you ready? What actions are you taking to prepare yourself to receive the blessings God has in store for you?

*Lord, open up my heart and prepare me to receive Your blessings. Let me thrive in Your abundant grace. Amen.*

St. Ananias II, pray for us.

# Feb 26

FRIDAY

Ezekiel 18:21-28  
Psalm 130:1-2, 3-4,  
5-7, 7-8

**Matthew 5:20-26**

## PET PEEVE

"Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter into the kingdom of heaven." – Matthew 5:20

My wife and I have the habit of praying together when we're in the car. It's one of those things that make us feel blessed in the midst of the rush and jams of Metro Manila traffic. But even after practicing this heavenly habit for almost 25 years of marriage, we still find ourselves engaged in petty automobile spats. Many of these are caused by my pet peeves over drivers who trigger my emotional and abrupt reactions. Drivers who don't follow rules and would suddenly cut in front of our vehicle, buses that swerve from side to side, a car that eats up our lane because of a narrowing road—these are just some of the things that get to me.

My "justifiable" reactions cause my wife to call my attention, which may be the start of an interesting "discussion."

Today's Gospel is a reminder that I am called to a higher standard as a Christian. Many do complain about the traffic in Manila and, like me, lose their cool. But I realize it's one of the best settings to grow in my walk with the Lord—to bear fruit in the area of patience. And by His grace, I can move forward and "surpass the righteousness" of the scribes and Pharisees.

Ariel Driz (adriz77@yahoo.com)

## reflect

What areas of your life fall short of God's standards for you?

*Father, in Jesus' name, I claim Your grace to be patient and to respond in love, especially when I feel I'm right. Amen.*

St. Isabel of France, pray for us.

# Feb 27

SATURDAY

Deuteronomy

26:16-19

Psalms 119:1-2, 4-5,

7-8

**Matthew 5:43-48**

## TALA

"So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect." – Matthew 5:48

The mealtime spent with our two-year-old granddaughter, Tala, quickly turned into a learning experience for my husband, Raul, and me. We were

accustomed to the traditional spoon-feeding of toddlers. But we learned that baby-led weaning or BLW is the latest trend in infant self-feeding among young parents, including my own daughter, Trina, and her hubby, Jang, who belong to this fast-growing international online community.

So, we watched Tala eat by herself from her high chair, grappling to transport small bits of food with her fingers—from her food tray to her mouth. She was a royal mess at the end of her meal. But somehow, Tala can never do wrong in our eyes. Once her beautiful face breaks into a smile and fondly calls me "LaMa," my heart melts and I'm smitten. She is absolutely perfect!

This must be the same way with our heavenly Father whenever we commit an offense of commission or omission. Full of forgiveness and unconditional love, He overlooks our iniquities and sees right through our perfect hearts. Mari Sison-

Garcia (mari\_sison\_garcia@yahoo.com)

### reflect

"He will be your God, and you will walk in his ways" (Deuteronomy 26:17). Let this be your covenant with God.

*Today, Lord, I thank You for Your unconditional love that knows no bounds. Amen.*

St. Anne Line, pray for us.



# Feb 28

SUNDAY

Genesis 22:1-2, 9,  
10-13, 15-18

Psalms 116:10, 15,  
16-17, 18-19

Romans 8:31-34

**Mark 9:2-10**

**Second Sunday of Lent**

## THE MANY FACES OF GOD

There he was transfigured before them.

– Mark 9:2, NIV

I love the God whom I see when I close my eyes in prayer and meditation. There, He is often the warm, comforting Light emanating from within and without, connecting me and His

entire creation to Himself.

I love the Blessed Sacrament and the sacred spaces for pilgrims like me who seek to be physically closer to God, whom I cannot see nor touch. I love the beauty of nature, for it shows me God in all His glorious creation. I love the arts, like poetry, music, dance, and visual creations from gifted people whom God chose to become channels of His wonderful expressions.

I love people who respond to the Holy Spirit within and share their light for the world to see. We are all expressions of God, in the image of a perfect Father, though we're perfectly imperfect so we rely on each other and no one is separate from another.

I love all the different faces of God whom I see in constant transformation. He reveals Himself to every seeking heart in assurance of His steadfast presence and undying love. Cecil Lim

(cez\_lim@yahoo.com)

### reflect

“With Peter, James, and John, we too climb the Mount of the Transfiguration today . . . for we too can be transfigured by Love. In reality, love is capable of transfiguring everything.” (Pope Francis)

*Lord God, let Your face shine upon Your servant who loves You.*

Blessed Villana de'Botti, pray for us.

# Mar 1

MONDAY

Daniel 9:4-10  
Psalm 79:8, 9, 11, 13  
**Luke 6:36-38**

## YOU ARE BIG IN GOD'S HEART

"Be merciful, just as also your Father  
is merciful." – Luke 6:36

When I was in Grade two, my report card had red marks. I went to Mom and showed it to her. She simply said, "Show it to your dad." Oh, no! Dad was my hero, and I was going to disappoint him. With fear gripping my heart, I walked up to Dad and handed him my card.

He read it, nodded his head, handed it back to me, and said, "Son, just study some more." He said it so calmly I wanted to ask, "You won't scold me or spank me or lecture me?" Then he stood up and said, "Let's eat."

That day, I realized my grades weren't a big deal to Dad. I was the big deal in his heart. And his unconditional love for me led me to discover my brilliance elsewhere. (Ahem.)

Dear friends, your Father in heaven relates to you in the same way. He loves you and accepts you no matter what sin you committed. He forgives them. And this unconditional love will bring you to repentance. This love will cause you to live a new life.

You are big in God's heart. Don't ever forget that. Bo Sanchez

(bosanchez@kerygmfamily.com)

### reflect

Is anything holding you back from getting closer to God?

*I am afraid that You will reject me, Lord, but here I am—sinful and sorrowful. Please help me see Your great love for me. Amen.*

St. David of Wales, bishop, pray for us.

# Mar 2

TUESDAY

Isaiah 1:10, 16-20  
Psalm 50:8-9, 16-17,  
21, 23  
**Matthew 23:1-12**

## PRACTICE WHAT YOU PREACH

"For they don't practice what they teach."  
- Matthew 23:3, NLT

Studying at the University of Santo Tomas means taking units in theology. As I try to recall my very first theology professor for Church and Sacraments, all I can remember is I didn't want to attend her class. She barely smiled, she was so strict, and she always seemed angry. I can still picture her face whenever she spoke. It was as if she carried the world on her shoulders.

Serving in ministry for more than 20 years, I realized that the best way to disciple and lead someone to Jesus is not with what we say but with what others see in us.

If you want to talk about how Jesus loves someone, then love that person the same way He loves you. It is by our actions, not our words, that we influence others. It's how we make them feel and what they experience through us that will lead them to follow Jesus.

How can we become Jesus to every person we meet? Joel N.

Saludares (joelsaludares@yahoo.com)

### reflect

"Faith moves mountains, love transforms hearts." (John Paul Warren)

*Father, we pray that we don't just speak about You, but more than that, may others experience Your love through us. Amen.*

St. Agnes of Bohemia, pray for us.

# Mar 3

WEDNESDAY

Jeremiah 18:18-20

Psalms 31:5-6, 14,

15-16

**Matthew 20:17-28**

## STAND-IN

"Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant."

- Matthew 20:26

Not everyone knows that I started my public speaking career as the "no-choice stand-in" for my lady boss in the Entrepreneur School of Asia when she was either abroad or unavailable. That was in 2014. The same thing happened in Go Negosyo every time founder Joey Concepcion would request me to fill in for him to do the briefing of our advocacy. Fast-forward, it was through these activities and advocacies that I met Bo Sanchez during a youth entrepreneurship conference.

Today, I'm part of Bo's Mastermind Group and Power Mornings. Bo and I have written two bestselling books together (*Turn Your Passion into Profit* and *Be Happy, Healthy, and Wealthy Today*), while two of my bestsellers were published by the Philippine Center for Entrepreneurship.

My role as alternate remains, like when Bo is abroad and they request me to speak at The Feast Bay Area. He has made me both a teacher and a preacher.

The position of influence is tested through your ability and availability. The seat of influence is found with the sincerity to serve. Dean Pax Lapid ([mentors@lead-more.com](mailto:mentors@lead-more.com))

## reflect

Don't mind what role or position you have as long as you can serve the Lord.

*Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me and know my thoughts and intentions as I serve You and Your mission. Amen.*

St. Katherine Drexel, pray for us.

# Mar 4

THURSDAY

Jeremiah 17:5-10  
Psalm 1:1-2, 3, 4, 6  
**Luke 16:19-31**

## MAKE YOUR LIFE COUNT

"The rich man shouted, 'Father Abraham, have some pity! Send Lazarus over here to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue. I am in anguish in these flames.'"

– Luke 16:24

March 2020 was a tough month for people around the world. It was the start of lockdowns and quarantines for most cities because of the coronavirus outbreak.

During the community quarantine in Manila, my wife and I thought about how fragile and short life is. We were profoundly grateful that God blessed the career risks we took when we were single so we could have the kind of life we have now. It allowed us to have a lot of time for family, opportunities to continue serving in ministry, and a business that provided well for us.

Don't be like the rich man in the Gospel who didn't make his life count. Personally, I believe that the purpose of wealth is to serve God and others with what we have. As Catholics, we need to take care of our needs, but more importantly, we need to follow and serve God.

You have a mighty purpose from God and you are called to pursue it. Make your life count and bring good to this world by following Jesus. JPaul Hernandez (jpaulmh@yahoo.com)

### reflect

What comfort is God asking you to sacrifice?

*Jesus, I want to know You more. I want to be in constant communion with You. I want to know how Your heart beats so I can be more like You.*

St. Casimir, pray for us.

# Mar 5

FRIDAY

Genesis 37:3-4,

12-13, 17-28

Psalms 105:16-17,

18-19, 20-21

**Matthew 21:33-43,**

**45-46**

## KILLER ENVY

"But when the tenants saw the son, they said to one another, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and acquire his inheritance.'"

– Matthew 21:38

There are two levels of envy. First level: "Why don't I have what you have?" Second level: "If I don't have it, you shouldn't have it, too." First level says, "I'm sad because you're happy." Second level is worse because it says, "I'm happy because you're sad."

Envy kills. But what we don't realize is that when we let it enter our hearts, it doesn't only destroy and kill the one being envied; it also destroys and kills the one who envies. Why? Because envy steals our joy and peace.

It's much easier to be envious nowadays. Just scroll through your Facebook or Instagram feeds and you can't help but be jealous of another friend's latest #travelgoals, a celebrity's #relationshipgoals, or an influencer's #successgoals.

Cut envy immediately before it kills you. How?

First, stop comparing. You have your own journey. Their race is not your race. Their pace is not your pace.

Second, be grateful. When you are genuinely thankful for what you have, other people's success and blessings won't make you feel insecure. Velden Lim (veldenlim@gmail.com)

### reflect

God has blessed you beyond measure. Focus on what you have, not on what you lack.

*Father, whenever I feel inferior and insecure, may Your love reassure me.*

St. John Joseph of the Cross, pray for us.

# Mar 6

SATURDAY

Micah 7:14-15,  
18-20

Psalms 103:1-2, 3-4,  
9-10, 11-12

**Luke 15:1-3, 11-32**

## **DON'T BE AFRAID TO COME HOME**

"... He was lost and is found."  
- Luke 15:32

One day, I was at a vacant lot beside our house that was piled with tons of garbage and unused stuff when something caught my eye. I saw a black book in the pile of rubbish. I pulled it out and opened it. It was a Holy Bible! I brought it home, cleaned it, and kept it safe.

God spoke to me that day. We are that book. We can be covered in a pile of garbage of addiction, lust, money, power, and worldly things. The world may see us as dirty and unworthy, but God sees us otherwise. He pulls us out of that pit, cleans us, and takes us back home.

No matter how lost we might see ourselves, in the eyes of the Father, we are never a lost cause. In Him, we can have hope that there will always be a chance to start again. Don't be afraid to go back to Him. Don't be afraid to come back home.

Monching Bueno (ramon\_bueno@yahoo.com)

### **reflect**

Do you feel ashamed of your past? Do you feel unworthy because of what you've done? We have the most loving and forgiving Father in the universe. Accept Him in your life once more. He will run as fast as He can to welcome you back home.

*Father God, we are unworthy but still You see the best version of us. Thank You for Your unconditional love. Help us to be more like You one day at a time. Amen.*

St. Colette, pray for us.

# Mar 7

SUNDAY

**Exodus 20:1-17**

**(or Exodus 20:1-3,  
7-8, 12-17)**

Psalm 19:8, 9, 10, 11

1 Corinthians 1:22-25

John 2:13-25

Third Sunday of Lent

## THE LONG REST

But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord, your God. – Exodus 20:10

I was on a sabbatical leave from work when the community lockdown was declared in Metro Manila last year. The year 2019 had been extra exhausting for me—not only because of the additional heavy responsibilities in the office but also because I prioritized work ever since I joined Shepherd's Voice Publications in 2008. I considered my work as my ministry, so I gave it my all, always thinking that I serve my heavenly Boss.

If there was a conflict between a gathering with friends and a work demand, I'd choose the latter. If I needed to see a doctor, I'd first make sure my work schedule is clear. Whenever I went on vacation, I still kept in touch with my team to make sure we were meeting our deadlines.

What I forgot was that my Boss is not a slave driver. In fact, the Bible shows us many instances when Jesus made way to rest, away from the crowd, but in communion with His Father. That was something I had neglected to do these past few years, and something which the community lockdown helped me to do. Tess V. Atienza ([theresa.a@shepherdsvoice.com.ph](mailto:theresa.a@shepherdsvoice.com.ph))

### reflect

Do you find time to commune with God despite the busyness of your world?

*Lord, let me apply the lessons of the pandemic and be still enough in this noisy world to hear Your voice. Amen.*

Sts. Perpetua and Felicity, martyrs, pray for us.



# Mar 8

MONDAY

2 Kings 5:1-15

Psalms 42:2, 3;

43:3, 4

**Luke 4:24-30**

## HOMETOWN PROPHETS

"No prophet is accepted in his hometown."

— Luke 4:24, NIV

"I'm here because I see the change in my friends."

This is what one of the "lambs" I was shepherding told me decades ago when I asked him why he decided to take the Youth Life in the Spirit Seminar.

His close friends had just taken it the year before and he was the only one in their college freshman group who had not. He couldn't believe that the guys he knew so well were actually praying, reading the Bible, and attending worship gatherings every Saturday. And when they talked about God, it seemed so sincere. He had to see what this was all about. He ended his answer with, "If they changed, then I guess this thing must be the real deal."

It's difficult to evangelize the people we're closest to because they know our flaws, inconsistencies, background, and history—but it's possible. If they see an authentic change in us, they will wonder, and hopefully, want the same.

So, let's be careful how we act around those whom we want to witness to. We may be the only Jesus they'll ever see.

George Tolentino Gabriel (georgetgabriel@gmail.com)

### reflect

Your family and friends know you're a Christian. Do they see it, too?

*Lord, may I bring glory to Your name at all times. Amen.*

St. Stephen of Obazine, martyr, pray for us.

# Mar 9

TUESDAY

Daniel 3:25, 34-43

Psalm 25:4-5, 6,  
7, 8, 9

**Matthew 18:21-35**

## CHOOSE TO FORGIVE

Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven."

– Matthew 18:22

Apologies come in many forms. Sometimes, they are expressed explicitly with tears or jokingly with a nudge of the elbow. In my daughter's case, it once came in the form of a heart-shaped chicken nugget. Sincere apologies often help along the process of forgiveness. What happens, though, if there is no apology at all? What happens when the offender, who doesn't care to make amends or keeps on offending or worse, is unaware that they have done you wrong?

"Small" repeated offenses by family and friends are the hardest to forgive. Constant reminders of our weight gain, condescending remarks about our flaws, and disregard for our feelings or suggestions cause us to feel insecure and can create deep hurt over time. This, I believe, is the reason Jesus had to tell us to forgive "seventy times seven."

To empathize with the one who did wrong, to wish them well, to let go of the right to be angry—that's what forgiveness is all about. And He asks us to do it over and over again because forgiveness leads to freedom, health, and peace of mind. May we find grace to choose it today. Geraldine G. Catral (catral.geegeee@beaconschool.ph)

### reflect

There is much literature on the power of forgiveness and its benefits for mental and physical health. Who is the Lord leading you to forgive today?

*Lord, grant me the grace to forgive others the way You've forgiven me.*

St. Frances of Rome, religious, pray for us.

# Mar 10

WEDNESDAY

Deuteronomy 4:1,  
5-9

Psalms 147:12-13,  
15-16, 19-20

Matthew 5:17-19

## GOD IS NEAR

For what great nation has a god as near to them as the Lord our God is near to us whenever we call on him?  
– Deuteronomy 4:7

The room was dark except for green rays of laser. “Dad, I’m scared.”

I sensed the fear in my five-year-old son’s voice. He was about to go on a laser mission on his own for the first time.

A million things must have been going on in his mind: *Will I make it to the other end? It’s too dark! Will Dad be there to help me?*

“Dad will just be here,” I lovingly reassured him. “Just call me. I will be glued to the CCTV so I know your every move.”

That was enough to make him enter the room and complete the mission.

“God, I’m scared.” I don’t know how many times you’ve said that. And I know you will be saying that more in the future. But know that He will always be there, glued to the heavenly CCTV to know your every move. All you need to do is to call on Him.

He will never leave us nor forsake us. He is quick to listen. He is near us. All the time. Randy Borromeo (randyborromeo@gmail.com)

## reflect

Just because you don’t feel God doesn’t mean He’s not there.

*Jesus, thank You for assuring me that You will be with me till the end. When I go through life’s missions, always remind me that You will be there on the other side. In Jesus’ name. Amen.*

St. John Ogilvie, pray for us.

# Mar 11

THURSDAY

Jeremiah 7:23-28

Psalms 95:1-2, 6-7,

8-9

**Luke 11:14-23**

## STRONGER

"But if it is by the finger of God that I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you." – Luke 11:20

There was a time when I led a small youth camp. We were a team of five, tasked to facilitate a group of 30 teenagers. We were camping in a secluded area, full of trees, and had minimal lighting.

On the last night, one camper went missing. We went through the dark, eerie forest, with our flashlights on, and walked about.

After half an hour, we found him sitting above on a tree branch. I called him down and talked to him.

While I was talking to him, his voice and body language didn't seem normal. Something was up.

We prayed the Our Father together and his voice would turn monster-like. Then he would skip the part where we say, "Forgive us our sins."

I was scared. But I knew God was with me. So who can stand against me?

I prayed more, and told my team to pray the rosary, too.

And soon enough, he got better. Paolo Galia (pgalia@gmail.com)

## reflect

Reflect on the times in your life when God manifested His power over your fear.

*Lord, thank You for always being with me and for me. You are my protector and I trust You. Amen.*

St. Aengus, pray for us.

# Mar 12

FRIDAY

**Hosea 14:2-10**

Psalm 81:6-8, 8-9,  
10-11, 14, 17

Mark 12:28-34

## **FOLLOW THE PATTERN**

Straight are the paths of the Lord, the just walk in them, but sinners stumble in them.

– Hosea 14:10

I recently started to crochet. The first time I learned to do this handicraft was in high school. I've forgotten how to do it and I don't even have a book of patterns. So I searched for it on YouTube and found some projects that looked easy enough. By following the video tutorials carefully, I've been able to make several coasters, doilies, and a few scarves so far. Not bad for someone who's not into arts and crafts!

The success of a crochet project lies in carefully following the instructions. When you make a mistake and realize it, the best thing to do is to undo what you've done. Otherwise, you'll have more problems in following the rest of the pattern and the outcome won't be as expected.

God demands obedience not for His benefit but ours. When we walk in His ways, we experience the fullness of the abundant life He desires for us. And when we sin, He forgives us so we can return to His path. Rissa Singson Kawpeng

(rissakawpeng@gmail.com)

### **reflect**

“Obedience is a choice between our limited knowledge and God's unlimited knowledge and power.” (L. Tom Perry)

*Lord, help me to understand that when I obey, I put myself in the path of Your miracles. Amen.*

St. Seraphina, pray for us.

# Mar 13

SATURDAY

**Hosea 6:1-6**

Psalm 51:3-4, 18-19,

20-21

Luke 18:9-14

## GOD IS MERCY

"For I desire mercy, not sacrifice."

– Hosea 6:6

When my dad was lying on his bed, suffering from lung cancer, a temptation came to my mind. It asked, "Why take care of him now when he did not take care of you when you were growing up?" It was a valid feeling but a very uncharitable one. It was not from God.

The Pharisee in me would have said, "He deserves to suffer because he sinned against you and made you suffer." But God's Spirit within me said, "I desire mercy." Praise be to Jesus that His Spirit prevailed. God placed His compassion for my father in my heart. How can I not give mercy when God has been merciful to me? "While I was still a sinner, Christ died for me" (Romans 5:8). I was the one who sinned, but He was the one who died.

While the world would exact a cruel judgment for a wrongdoing—an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, hate for hate, and vengeance for every hurt—God asks us to respond with mercy and compassion. His divine mercy stops evil dead on its tracks, replacing hate with love and breaking the cycle of hate.

Because I chose to be merciful to my father, he was healed in his soul—and so was I. Marjorie Duterte (writersretreatph@gmail.com)

### reflect

To whom do you need to show mercy today?

*Dearest Lord, help us to dispense Your mercy to those who need it the most. Amen.*

St. Ansovinus, pray for us.

# Mar 14

SUNDAY

2 Chronicles 36:14-16,  
19-23

Psalm 137:1-2, 3,  
4-5, 6

Ephesians 2:4-10  
**John 3:14-21**

Fourth Sunday of Lent

## LOVE FORWARD

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son . . . - John 3:16

“You know, Aslan, I’m a little disappointed in you. Did you honestly think by all this that you could save the human traitor? So much for love.” I was struck by this line from the movie, *Narnia: The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe*. The witch was mocking Aslan, the great lion, for sacrificing himself to save a character who betrayed his siblings. Through worldly lens, she had a point. What’s the use of giving yourself up for someone who’s not worth it? As I watched Aslan die in the hands of the witch, the face of Jesus hanging on the cross came to my mind. Oh, Jesus, what’s the use of giving Yourself up for us who are not worth it?

John 3:16 gives us the answer: For God so loved the world. Perhaps I’ll never fully comprehend God’s immense love because my capacity to love is limited by sin and selfishness. But I pray that I’ll also use every chance given to me to rectify my ways and love forward. A good way of honoring His great love for us is to love the way He does—even if it’s inconvenient. Even if it’s sacrificial. Maymay Salvosa Trinidad ([christiane.trinidad@gmail.com](mailto:christiane.trinidad@gmail.com))

### reflect

What do you need to let go of so you can fully love the people around you—pride, resentment, laziness? Surrender it to God.

*Jesus, give me the grace to share with others the love that You unconditionally give me.*

St. Mathilda, pray for us.

# Mar 15

MONDAY

**Isaiah 65:17-21**

Psalms 30:2, 4, 5-6,

11-12, 13

John 4:43-54

## FRESH START

"Look! I am creating new heavens and a new earth, and no one will even think about the old ones anymore." – Isaiah 65:17, NLT

A fresh start means an opportunity to begin something again. Whenever I think of having a fresh start, I think of prisoners who got paroled, a student who finished his disciplinary sanction, a person moving forward from heartbreak, a man who just got a second chance from his family after failing them, newlyweds, and so on.

I thank God for the many opportunities He has given me to start anew. Most special to me was the time I lost my job and my father at the same time. It was devastating, and I didn't know what to do. That was the time God sent people to guide and walk with me through that dark valley in my life. I was able to find my way back and start afresh after a vacation that opened up my eyes to God's bigger plan.

Today, my advocacy is to guide and support people who want to have a fresh start in life through coaching, retreats, seminars, workshops, and uplifting books and articles.

A fresh start is possible for you and me because God's love is new every morning.

Receive His fresh love today. JC Libiran (coachjclibiran@gmail.com)

### reflect

"Every new beginning comes from some other beginning's end."  
(Seneca)

*Jesus, I receive Your grace and fresh love today. Amen.*

St. Louise de Marillac, pray for us.



# Mar 16

TUESDAY

Ezekiel 47:1-9, 12  
Psalm 46:2-3, 5-6,  
8-9  
John 5:1-16

## DO WE REFRESH AND GIVE LIFE?

Where these waters flow they refresh;  
everything lives where the river goes.  
- Ezekiel 47:9

This coming April 2021, I will celebrate my fifth anniversary as a full-time employee of a publishing ministry.

I strongly believe that our work spreads God's Word and makes people feel loved. But the river mentioned in today's First Reading made me reflect if I have truly refreshed others through my work.

Couple this with the origin of my full name, Krizelle. My mother got it from Keziah, the second daughter of Job. The Bible says Keziah means a kind of flower used as perfume. If my name was inspired by something that spreads fragrance, I wonder if I have really lived spreading good news and kind deeds around me.

Given my flaws and shortcomings, I can't take full credit. If people have been blessed by what I say or do, then all glory belongs to God. After all, He is the source of and the reason for everything.

May the refreshing and life-giving waters from the Lord continue to flow in everyone of us. Kring Talladen (kringtalladen@gmail.com)

### reflect

Recall the events of the past weeks. Did you refresh others through your actions? Did the words you speak give life?

*Dear God, may Your presence in us refresh others and give life.*

St. Dentlin, pray for us.

# Mar 17

WEDNESDAY

Isaiah 49:8-15  
Psalm 145:8-9,  
13-14, 17-18  
**John 5:17-30**

## WORKAHOLIC GOD

"My Father is at work until now,  
so I am at work." – John 5:17

"God didn't report for work today. He's absent," quipped a self-proclaimed atheist after losing his son to a major tragedy. Human suffering is the single biggest argument of those who question the existence of God.

"I still don't understand why God took my father!" says my good friend Dan. "But this I know: My siblings, who used to be alienated from each other by bitter jealousy and hatred, are now reunited. We are closer to the Lord more than we've ever been."

"These miracles would not have happened if we were not gathered around my father's sickbed. It was there where forgiveness was asked and given. It was there where our relationships were healed," he added. "We prayed for Dad's healing, and it never came the way we wanted it. But now, Dad is with the Lord. No more pain and suffering for him, only pleasure and eternal comfort. Can there be any other healing better than this? Maybe my prayers were too narrow, and God has this greater miracle in mind."

We may question God's ways, but never His love. We can trust that He's always at work—for the greater miracle. *Jon Escoto*

([faiththatworkjon@gmail.com](mailto:faiththatworkjon@gmail.com))

### reflect

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. (Isaiah 55:8)

*Lord, many times I don't understand Your ways. But I still rest in Your love. Help me to trust You more. Amen.*

St. Patrick, bishop, patron of Ireland and Nigeria, pray for us.

# Mar 18

THURSDAY

**Exodus 32:7-14**

Psalm 106:19-20,

21-22, 23

John 5:31-47

## LOVE OVER WRATH

The Lord relented in the punishment he had threatened to inflict on his people.

– Exodus 32:14

I have a brother who often gets into trouble, and my mom and I do not always agree in handling the family conflicts he has caused.

“He’s old enough to know what’s right and what’s wrong, yet he chooses to do wrong. So, let him suffer and learn his lesson the hard way,” I would always argue. But my mom, while expressing disappointment and frustration over my brother, would always counter, “He’s my son, and no matter what, I am not going to give up on him because I love him.”

It’s disconcerting how she gets so upset yet forgiving. But then, the love of a parent for a child goes beyond reason, just as God’s love for us is without measure.

We often ask ourselves when bad things happen, “Lord, is this a punishment for my sins?” Instead of repenting, we blame God for everything. But sin itself is a punishment that we, not God, bring upon ourselves. Lest we forget, He is our loving Father. No matter how many times we turn away from Him, He welcomes us back because He gives in to love instead of wrath. Jane Gonzales-Rauch (mgr516@gmail.com)

### reflect

Struggles and challenges are not punishments but tests of our faithfulness.

*Forgive me, Lord, for giving in to weakness that keeps me away from You. Thank You, Father, for Your unchanging love and mercy.*

St. Cyril of Jerusalem, bishop and Doctor of the Church, pray for us.

# Mar 19

FRIDAY

2 Samuel 7:4-5,

12-14, 16

Psalms 89:2-3, 4-5,

27, 29

Romans 4:13, 16-18, 22

**Matthew 1:16, 18-21,**

**24 (or Luke 2:41-51)**

**Solemnity of St. Joseph,**

**Spouse of the Blessed**

**Virgin Mary**

## LOVING OR PROVIDING?

He did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife. – Matthew 1:24

There are three adjectives that perfectly describe Saint Joseph. He was righteous, compassionate, and obedient. His righteousness dictated that he cannot take Mary as his wife as she was already bearing a child. Yet his compassion pushed him toward a plan to dismiss Mary silently so as not to expose her to community judgment and ridicule. However, when the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, he obeyed with faith and conviction.

He took Mary for his wife and raised the Son of God as written in the Scriptures. His role in the life of Jesus was a major one, establishing the standard of fatherhood here on earth.

As I reflect on the life of Saint Joseph, I think of how I live my role as a husband and a father. Oftentimes, I realize that I usually focus more on being a provider. I know this is important, but it's not enough. I have to consciously think of ways to honor my wife and exert effort to ensure the holistic growth of my children. Indeed, providing is such a small subset of loving. Rex Mendoza (rex.mendoza@rampver.com)

### reflect

How can you honor your loved ones and ensure their growth in the Lord?

*Lord, please guide and help me become a better partner, parent, and friend. Amen.*

St. Joseph, spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary, pray for us.

# Mar 20

SATURDAY

Jeremiah 11:18-20

Psalms 7:2-3, 9-10,

11-12

**John 7:40-53**

## IMPERFECT FAITH, PERFECT GOD

Others said, "This is the Messiah."  
But others said, "The Messiah will not come  
from Galilee, will he?" – John 7:41

It had only been three months into 2020 and so much had already happened. Taal Volcano erupted in January. There was an uncontrollable bush fire in Australia. There were whispers of a third world war. And then a deadly virus took lives all over the world.

Our peace was disturbed daily, our faith shaken regularly. Every day, I participated in an online rosary prayer hosted by The Feast Ortigas. But as I prayed, I also wondered: *Does God ever hear our prayers? What's He doing now? How will He save us from this global crisis?* My lips uttered prayers, but my heart continued to doubt. It's easy to proclaim, "Jesus is my Savior." But when we're in the dark, we can't help but wonder where Jesus is in all this. We can't help but doubt that He can and will save us from our trials.

But even if we doubt and falter in our faith, God's goodness never does. When we can't understand the work of His hands, we can trust in the faithfulness of His love. Karren Renz

Seña (karren@projectbeautifulwords.com)

### reflect

Replace your doubt with God's promise: All will be well. This, too, shall pass.

*"Lord, I believe! Help my unbelief." (Mark 9:24)*

St. Maria Josefa Sancho de Guerra, pray for us.

# Mar 21

SUNDAY

Jeremiah 31:31-34  
Psalm 51:3-4, 12-13,  
14-15

Hebrews 5:7-9  
John 12:20-33

Fifth Sunday of Lent

## YOUR WILL BE DONE

Even though Jesus was God's Son, He learned obedience from the things He suffered.  
– Hebrews 5:8

A week before our scheduled wedding day, my fiancé was brought to the hospital because of a persistent high fever. I rushed to the hospital feeling scared, but at the same time, hopeful that it was nothing serious. To our dismay, we found out that he had dengue. We stayed in the hospital for one week and ended up postponing our wedding to a later date.

I've been a Christ follower my whole life. I've been serving Him since my youth. So, I couldn't help but question God, "Why do we have to go through this? This is so unfair."

Many of us think that once we become Christ followers, we automatically get a free pass from life's suffering. But that's not how God operates. Even Jesus wasn't spared from suffering. Instead of looking at our trials as God's punishment, we should see it as His way of transforming us. From our suffering, we learn to be humble and obedient to Him. We learn to surrender our own will to give way to His will for us. Because at the end of the day, His plans are still better than

**OURS.** Chai Santiago-Gamo (chaisantiagogamo@gmail.com)

### reflect

What is God's message to you through the trials you face today?

*Father, we bow to Your will and plans for us, knowing that You make all things work for our good. Amen.*

Blessed Maria Candida of the Eucharist, pray for us.

# Mar 22

MONDAY

Daniel 13:41-62  
(or Daniel 13:1-9,  
15-17, 19-30, 33-62)  
Psalm 23:1-3, 3-4, 5, 6  
**John 8:1-11**

## ALONE WITH JESUS

So he was left alone with the woman  
before him. – John 8:9

During Mass, before praying the Lord's Prayer, Father Vince of St. Rita de Cascia Parish in Quezon City would always say, "Together with Jesus, let us pray," instead of the usual words, "Let us pray with confidence to the Father in the words our Savior gave us."

He says that every time he celebrates Mass. But one particular Monday morning, it just hit me and the Lord's Prayer became more meaningful. I realized that every time I pray it, Jesus prays with me—pleading with me to the Father. I am not alone. That's how powerful and wonderful, mighty and strong this prayer is.

I know I have to be specific in my prayers, but whenever I have a burden to pray, I just murmur these words that Jesus taught us. The details of my prayers are in my heart and mind. I'm sure He knows about them.

And as a bonus, I've never prayed the Hail Mary the same way again, too. Because now when I pray it, I know I am praying with Saint Gabriel and Saint Elizabeth whose words of greetings to Mary are so much a part of this prayer. Rene Espinosa

(drekki@gmail.com)

### reflect

Jesus, Mary, and the saints are with us whenever we pray.

*Thank You, heavenly Father, for the presence of Your Son Jesus who is always with us. Amen.*

St. Nicholas Owen, pray for us.

# Mar 23

TUESDAY

Numbers 21:4-9  
Psalm 102:2-3,  
16-18, 19-21  
**John 8:21-30**

## LORD, I NEED YOU

"I am going away, and you will search for me." – John 8:21, NLT

After my philosophical studies in San Carlos Seminary, I took time off for two years. I worked for a fast-food chain and there I met my wife.

I totally detached myself from the Church and from the spiritual activities I used to do in the seminary. I lost my sense of purpose and became unchurched—just going with the flow.

After facing a lot of setbacks from the business we put up, I felt like a wandering soul in search of something. The first time I attended The Feast, I felt awkward seeing people lifting up their hands and crying. But every word from Bo Sanchez hit me hard. I cried and knew this was what I was looking for. All along, I was searching for God and I needed Him.

In today's Gospel, Jesus declares He is going away because He knows where He came from, and He is from the Father.

Friend, you are from God. If you lose your way and you feel that there is no sense in your life, go back to Him.

Live your design. Live your purpose. Go back to your **Manufacturer**. [Randel Serrano \(forzazrof@gmail.com\)](mailto:forzazrof@gmail.com)

### reflect

"There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of each man which cannot be satisfied by any created thing but only by God the Creator, made known through Jesus Christ." (Blaise Pascal)

*Lord, I need You every hour, every minute, and every second of my life. Amen.*

St. Turibius of Mongrovejo, pray for us.



# Mar 24

WEDNESDAY

Daniel 3:14-20,  
91-92, 95

Daniel 3:52, 53, 54,  
55, 56

**John 8:31-42**

## THE TRUTH

"Then you will know the truth,  
and the truth will set you free." – John 8:32

"What is the truth?" Pilate asked Jesus. Today, we continue to seek the truth—in government, business, social media, church, and society. We expect

the truth in our personal relationships—with family and friends.

Why is truth so important? Because the truth sets you free. Like everyone else, I have committed mistakes—little ones, medium ones, big ones. And one of the most difficult things to do for a preacher is to go up the stage and tell people how to rectify their lives when you know that you, too, need to put things aright. It's like speaking with a huge lump on your throat or a big chain around your neck.

That's why our founder, Bo Sanchez, taught us preachers and modeled us to get real—to be vulnerable, to unmask ourselves, and not to be afraid to admit our own weaknesses and struggles. And that's what connects most with people—authenticity, vulnerability, the truth.

It's also a huge relief to the preacher that he doesn't come from a platform of self-righteousness or a holier-than-thou attitude. He is there to point people to Jesus—the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Alvin Barcelona (apb\_ayo@yahoo.com)

### reflect

Are you living a life of truth? Come to Jesus, the Truth, and He will set you free.

*God, may I realize that I cannot hide anything from You. I come to You as I am, and by Your mercy, I believe You are setting me free.*

St. Aldemar, pray for us.

# Mar 25

THURSDAY

Isaiah 7:10-14; 8:10

Psalms 40:7-8, 8-9,

10, 11

Hebrews 10:4-10

**Luke 1:26-38**

**Solemnity of the  
Annunciation of the Lord**

## IMPOSSIBLE!

"For nothing will be impossible for God."

– Luke 1:37

When my birthday comes around, my wife and my family always have a hard time figuring out what to get me. When they ask, I'd always say, "I don't really want anything."

Ever since I started working, I've learned to save up so I could get whatever I want—a new gadget, a new video game, an addition to my collection of drum- or music-related things. I'd get them for myself because I think that whatever I want might be unreasonable to ask from anyone else.

There are times we think the same thing of God—that the things we need or want are too big for Him to give us. We say, "Oh, I think it would be really nice if I could get a new house for my family," but end with, "but that's too big to ask from God. Maybe just a new job will do."

Mama Mary had a similar disposition in today's Gospel. "How will this be?" she asks when Angel Gabriel announces Jesus' conception.

Often, we limit how big and amazing God can be in our lives. But like Mama Mary, let's make the decision to trust in God and in His word that never fails. Patrick Gamo

(charlespatrickgamo@gmail.com)

### reflect

What miracle is God speaking into your life in this season?

*Father in heaven, humble us enough to allow You to work miracles in our lives. May Your Word in us be fulfilled. Amen.*

St. Dismas, pray for us.

# Mar 26

FRIDAY

Jeremiah 20:10-13

Psalms 18:2-3, 3-4,

5-6, 7

**John 10:31-42**

## BAD FOR GOOD

"I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of these do you stone me?" – John 10:32

Have you ever experienced doing good, and yet the same people who benefited from your kindness spoke ill or did something hurtful toward you? I've experienced this many times even as I serve in the different groups and communities where I have chosen to give my time, talent, and resources to.

Did I feel hurt and disappointed? Yes.

Did I feel discouraged? Yes. But only for a while.

Did I stop serving? No.

When we do good things for God and others, it does not mean that we are exempted from criticism or persecution. Sometimes, as we become more involved and busier in doing good for God and His Church, it's possible to experience more persecution.

Our consolation is that Jesus experienced this, too. He understands our feelings. He's been there. So, like Jesus, let us be resolute in doing what is right and good. Let us draw strength from Him who suffered for doing good. He knows what's in our hearts. Teresa Gumap-as Dumadag (teregmps@yahoo.com)

### reflect

Do your actions and words witness for God? How can you be a better witness to others on how to be a good Christian?

*Father, help us to do good works for Your glory and not for ours. Supply us with the right words when we speak about You. Amen.*

St. Ludger, pray for us.

# Mar 27

SATURDAY

Ezekiel 37:21-28

Jeremiah 31:10,

11-12, 13

John 11:45-56

## THE RIGHTEOUS TRIUMPH

"If we let Him go on like this, all men will believe in Him. . . ." So from that day on they planned together to kill Him.

– John 11:48, 53, NASB

Jem, a talented young man, joined a faith community. As he served well, his elders noticed his potential. They appointed him to lead a ministry whose head had just migrated to the West. This, however, did not sit well with a handful of servants who had been in the ministry before him. They refused to cooperate, questioned his capabilities, spread half-truths, and later convinced the elders that one of them, being more mature and experienced, could better lead the ministry. With humility and faith in God's will, Jem accepted the relegation.

At that time, a choir member, not knowing that Jem could sing, was inspired to ask him to audition for the music ministry, which was searching for more members. Jem, who loves praise and worship songs, passed the audition and did his best to serve using the gift of song. In no time, he was promoted to assistant music ministry head.

Months passed. Much bickering within Jem's first ministry surfaced. One by one, his bashers left the community.

Personal glory gained by putting others down will never last. Giving God the glory due His Name will. *Bella Estrella (blestrella@gmail.com)*

### reflect

"Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." (Matthew 13:43)

*Father, grant us all graces we need to succeed in doing Your will.*

St. Rupert, pray for us.

# Mar 28

PALM SUNDAY

Isaiah 50:4-7

Psalm 22:8-9, 17-18,  
19-20, 23-24

**Philippians 2:6-11**

Mark 15:1-39  
(or Mark 14:1-15:47)

## TWO-TIMER

"He humbled himself."  
- Philippians 2:8

Jervis was on a roll, sending messages to two different girls. He just came from a breakup where he had overlapping romantic relationships that broke the hearts of the girls.

His best friend, Cisco, told him he was making these two new girls fall for him at the same time, and he was at it again. But Jervis said he was just trying to get to know them as friends. So, Cisco pointed out the messages Jervis sent: *Let's make this work; I have a crush on you; and will you turn me down if I apply to be someone special in your life?*

Jervis was uneasy but he humbled himself and recognized that he was indeed making the two girls fall for him. Admitting this was already a major breakthrough.

Cisco has faith that one small act of humility would lead to the next, especially since he, too, was once like Jervis. He prays the hearts of those girls would be spared from unnecessary heartache and for them to learn that they should always be on guard from men who seem to be in a rush to get them.

Carlo Lorenzo (carloflorenzo@gmail.com)

### reflect

Humility comes in different forms and sizes. What small act of humility have you witnessed today?

*Holy Spirit, please use even the smallest act of humility so heartbreaks may be avoided. Amen.*

St. Conon of Naso, pray for us.

# Mar 29

HOLY MONDAY

Isaiah 42:1-7

Psalms 27:1, 2, 3,  
13-14

John 12:1-11

## WANT TO GIVE UP?

"Here is my servant, whom I uphold,  
my chosen one in whom I delight."

- Isaiah 42:1, NIV

Because of the pandemic that led to cancellations of big gatherings, we had to go online with our weekly Feast. We recorded our Feast Online in a studio. The pressure was there because it was my first time, but it went well. The following week, we decided to record the music and talk in our respective homes to obey the government's order to stay home and for everybody's safety, too.

There, the problems arose. My neighborhood is noisy for most of the day. My mirrorless camera and selfie phone can't filter background noise. Distracted and distressed, I wanted to cancel The Feast for that week. I wanted to give up. But my team called to present another option. We pushed through with our live streaming and were able to reach thousands of viewers even abroad!

Unwanted circumstances are tests of faith and perseverance. They're opportunities for the Lord to show how much He cares for us. So, no matter how many times you want to give up, remember that He upholds you and delights in you, His faithful servant. [Aben Garlan \(mailto:AbenGarlan@mail@abengarlan.com\)](mailto:AbenGarlan@mail@abengarlan.com)

## reflect

In what ways do you give pleasure and delight to the Lord?

*Father God, thank You for reminding me how much You care for me. May I always bring glory to You even on the verge of giving up.*

St. Ludolf of Ratzeburg, pray for us.

# Mar 30

HOLY TUESDAY

**Isaiah 49:1-6**

Psalm 71:1-2, 3-4,  
5-6, 15, 17

John 13:21-33,  
36-38

## GOD'S UNFAILING LOVE

"I have toiled in vain, I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity; yet surely the justice due to me is with the Lord and my reward with my God." – Isaiah 49:4, NASB

A decade ago, I gave up my corporate life to focus on my family.

It was a hard decision as my three kids were still young then. A strong prompting from within led me to surrender to God's will. What happened next was a rollercoaster ride. Our family enjoyed debt-free living, travels, businesses, and investments. We lived comfortably. All seemed perfect—until things turned sour.

Marriage on the rocks. Ventures crashed. Debts escalated. We hit rock bottom. At our lowest, God remained faithful. He manifested His love through our earthly angels who never left us and supported us continuously. They were Jesus in the flesh.

After hibernating from corporate life, our awesome God made the impossible possible through my kindhearted boss who invited me back to work with her technology group.

Unexpected. Unfathomable. Unfailing.

Seven years of desert experience gave us unmatched wealth of lessons learned that pruned us, strengthened our faith, and made us stronger. God's unfailing love sustains. He is faithful.

Mary Jo Ann Catapusan-Fauni (joannfauni@gmail.com)

### reflect

When you hit rock bottom, turn it into a sacrifice and share in the passion of Jesus Christ, the Rock of our salvation.

*Jesus, I know You are for me. You make a way when there's no way. You are true to what You say. Your faithfulness, O God, will never fail.*

St. Peter Regalado, pray for us.

# Mar 31

HOLY WEDNESDAY

**Isaiah 50:4-9**  
Psalm 69:8-10,  
21-22, 31, 33-34  
Matthew 26:14-25

## PASTORAL CARE

The Sovereign Lord has given me a well-instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary. – Isaiah 50:4, NIV

One of my first ministries is serving in The Light of Jesus Pastoral Care Center (LOJPCC). After attending the Basic Pastoral Care and Advance Pastoral Care training courses, I volunteered as a telephone pastoral carer every Wednesday with Ana, my sister in community.

LOJPCC is one of the mercy ministries of the Light of Jesus Family that serves to give wisdom and comfort to the emotionally and spiritually wounded. It started in 1993 with a handful of volunteer pastoral carers. By God's grace, LOJPCC has grown and has served thousands of people in crisis.

Our vision is to be a Christ-centered ministry for life transformation. Our mission is to nurture and empower people through pastoral care.

Jesus commands us to “help carry one another’s burdens, and in this way you will obey the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2). This verse is being carried out by the loving and selfless volunteer pastoral carers of the ministry. They give their time to serve through telephone sessions, face-to-face sessions, and online chat. They give their skills to listen and to speak “words that sustain the weary.” Meann Tee (meanntytee@yahoo.com)

### reflect

How are you using your tongue to speak “words that sustain the weary”?

*Lord, may we use the gift of our tongue to bring life to others. Amen.*

St. Guy of Pomposa, pray for us.



# Apr 1

MAUNDY THURSDAY

Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14  
Psalm 116:12-13,  
15-16, 17-18  
1 Corinthians 11:23-26  
**John 13:1-15**

## THE BUTT WASHER

"If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet." – John 13:14

Many years ago, little Bene or little Francis would run to me, tug at my pants, and scream for the whole world to hear, especially when we're in a mall: "Daddy, I'm going to poo!"

In muffled tones, I'd tell the boy, "You don't have to announce to everyone." But he doesn't hear me and he'd say it again, louder this time.

When I say OK, his little feet would run off to the toilet, pulling me after him. After I wait outside the cubicle for 30 seconds, I'd hear his high-pitched voice shout, "Daddy, I'm doooooone!" So I'd go in and wash his butt. I, Bo Sanchez, washed another person's butt.

One day, I reflected on this experience. I was a butt washer. I could have put it in my business card: Bo Sanchez, professional butt washer. Goodness, I don't even enjoy washing my own butt, but I washed other people's butts.

When Jesus washed the Apostles' feet, He showed us how it is to be a servant. His greatest reward is seeing us wash one another's feet—or butts, if you may. Bo Sanchez

(bosanchez@kerygmfamily.com)

### reflect

How do you serve the people around you?

*May I learn to serve as You did, dearest Jesus. Amen.*

St. Hugh of Grenoble, pray for us.

# Apr 2

GOOD FRIDAY

**Isaiah 52:13-53:12**

Psalm 31:2, 6, 12-13,  
15-16, 17, 25

Hebrews 4:14-16;  
5:7-9

John 18:1-19:42

## NO MATCH

But he was pierced for our sins, crushed for our iniquity. He bore the punishment that makes us whole, by his wounds we were healed. – Isaiah 53:5

My morning drive to work used to take only 20 minutes. Now, it takes me at least an hour. Traffic is always my first trial each day. Today, I faced my second trial when I arrived at the office building. The elevator wasn't working. I was late for my meeting, so I had no choice but to climb 20 floors! Oh well, that was a good workout.

Trials—life is filled with them. I asked God during my lunch break, “Lord, what’s Your message for me today?”

God’s reply was the verse in today’s reading, “By his wounds we were healed” (Isaiah 53:5). Jesus also experienced suffering. He was betrayed by Judas, denied by his friend Peter, punished by Roman soldiers, and killed by crucifixion. Jesus didn’t deserve any punishment yet He took it for us.

I realized that my suffering is nothing compared to what Jesus received. God calls us to “consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us” (Romans 8:18). So if you are suffering now, do not lose hope. Have faith! Alvin Fabella (alvinfabella@yahoo.com)

## reflect

What trials are you facing now? Pray about them and offer them up for God’s glory.

*Lord, help me to endure my sufferings—big and small—inspired by the glory that awaits me after I’ve persevered. Amen.*

St. Francis of Paola, hermit, pray for us.

# Apr 3

HOLY SATURDAY

Genesis 1:1, 26-31  
(or Genesis 1:1-2:2)  
Psalm 104:1-2, 5-6, 10,  
12, 13-14, 24, 35  
Romans 6:3-11  
Psalm 118:1-2, 16-17,  
22-23  
**Mark 16:1-7**

## SILLY QUESTIONS

On the way they were asking each other, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?" – Mark 16:3, NLT

In today's Gospel, Mary, Mary Magdalene, and Salome were headed to the tomb to anoint the corpse of Jesus. On the way, they were worried. They asked, "Who will roll the stone away?" It was a difficult task, especially for women.

I find it silly that they asked this. Several times, Jesus spoke to them of His resurrection while He was alive. For instance, in Luke 9:22, Jesus said, "The Son of Man . . . must be killed and on the third day be raised to life." It was the third day since He had died. Had the women lost count? Had they forgotten what Jesus said that He would rise again? Or did they just not take Jesus' words seriously? Moreover, they witnessed Jesus rolling away the stone of Lazarus's tomb. How could they forget that astonishing event and that He could do it again?

Sometimes, we ask God silly questions, too. Why did You abandon me?" But didn't the Lord promise us in His Word, "It is the Lord who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not fail you or forsake you" (Deuteronomy 31:8)?

Friends, hold on to what Jesus said. No word from Him returns void. Veia Lim-Viñas (veiallim@gmail.com)

## reflect

Listen to "Even Now" by Feast Worship on Spotify or YouTube.

*Jesus, we trust that You can roll away the stones of our lives.*

St. Richard of Wyche, pray for us.

# Apr 4

EASTER SUNDAY

Acts 10:34, 37-43

Psalms 118:1-2, 16-17,  
22-23

Colossians 3:1-4  
(or 1 Corinthians 5:6-8)

**John 20:1-9**

**The Resurrection of  
Our Lord and Savior  
Jesus Christ**

## NO LONGER THERE

Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. – John 20:1, NIV

In today's Gospel, Mary Magdalene was looking for something that was no longer there. She was looking for a dead man who was already alive.

One night, one of my friends realized that he left his cell phone on his motorbike in the parking lot. Fearing that it might be stolen, we rushed back to his bike only to find out that the cell phone was no longer there. We asked the nearby security guard if he had seen it. After a few questions to verify ownership, the security guard revealed a phone he had found, and it was my friend's cell phone! We were both relieved that the guard took it and kept it for the rightful owner.

You may be facing a battle right now, and you think all is lost. You feel defeated and you find yourself in the valley of dead dreams and dead ends. Today, as we celebrate Resurrection Sunday, may you be reminded that you have a God who can make a way and breakthrough even beyond death.

He can bring the dead back to life—in your life. So, let your hope in the risen Christ revive you today!

Happy Easter! Mike Viñas (mikemichaelvcv@yahoo.com)

### reflect

“O Death, I will be your plagues! O Grave, I will be your destruction!” (Hosea 13:14, NKJV)

*Lord Jesus, by Your resurrection grace at work in my life, I claim victory.*

St. Isidore of Seville, bishop and Doctor of the Church, pray for us.

# Apr 5

MONDAY

Acts 2:14, 22-33  
Psalm 16:1-2, 5, 7-8,  
9-10, 11  
**Matthew 28:8-15**

## FALSE OR TRUE?

"You are to say, 'His disciples came by night and stole him while we were asleep.'  
– Matthew 28:13

The tomb was empty and it only meant one thing. Jesus had risen! Even though He appeared before the women of Jerusalem and then to His disciples, still the good news of His rising was stifled by a lie. The chief priests and elders bribed the soldiers to spread about the empty tomb: His disciples came by night and stole Him while everyone was asleep. Believable? The answer is found at the end of today's Gospel.

The same thing is happening today with viral fake news. Sensational but bogus headlines catch our attention and lure us into the web of fabricated news and misinformation. How then can we tell which is true or false? Apart from checking and rechecking the "facts," confirming the author's credibility, and verifying for sources and citations, we need to read, listen to, and understand the news with an objective mind and a discerning heart.

Never believe anything hook, line, and sinker except what is of God. The risen Jesus is of God, so believe when He says, "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25). Dina Pecaña

(dina.p@shepherdsvoice.com.ph)

## reflect

"He is risen; He is not here." (Mark 16:6)

*Jesus, make my faith strong and my hope sure. May I, who am redeemed by Your suffering and death, always rejoice in Your resurrection. Amen.*

St. Vincent Ferrer, priest, pray for us.

# Apr 6

TUESDAY

Acts 2:36-41

Psalm 33:4-5, 18-19,  
20, 22

**John 20:11-18**

## WE WANT TO SEE JESUS

"I have seen the Lord." – John 20:18

When I was a child, my elders would tell me to stay silent during Holy Week. The repetitive words I heard were, "Keep quiet! Christ is dead today!" Now that I'm older,

I realized that we are encouraged to be silent not because Jesus dies every Holy Week, but because we are invited to commemorate His death and resurrection 2,000 years ago.

Saint Augustine said, "We are an Easter people, and 'Hallelujah!' is our song!" We celebrate because we have seen the risen Christ who is victorious over sin and death. Read again John 20:17: "I am ascending to My Father and *your* Father, to My God and *your* God" (italics mine). Jesus is sharing His Father with us. His victory is our victory!

We, as Easter people, don't have grieving faces. Easter people have rejoicing, triumphant faces. We claim victory through Jesus. We are victorious over death. We have conquered our favorite sins. We have temporary sufferings and problems. We have heaven and it is waiting for us.

May you see the risen Jesus. Claim victory in Him today.

Boggs Burbos (boggsburbos@yahoo.com)

### reflect

Now is a great time to see and accept Jesus. Repent and believe in Him.

*Heavenly Father, thank You for Jesus. Grant me the grace to accept Him and reflect Him in my life. Amen.*

St. Paul Tinh, pray for us.

# Apr 7

WEDNESDAY

**Acts 3:1-10**

Psalm 105:1-2, 3-4,

6-7, 8-9

Luke 24:13-35

## PRAYERS THAT GOD WILL NOT ANSWER

"In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazorean,  
rise and walk." – Acts 3:6

There are some prayers God will never answer. Why? Because He expects you to answer them yourself!

Pray for what is in heaven. Command what is on earth. Guidance, favor, grace—these are in heaven. Money, health, a taxi—these are on earth.

As His child, Jesus has imparted His authority to you. It is your responsibility to command health to flow into your sick relative's body. Like Peter and John, you are to say, "I command healing to flow into this person's body, in Jesus Christ's name. Amen." You continue claiming this until you see results—whether you feel a tingling "faith sensation" or not.

As God's beloved, it's also our responsibility—not just of the community elders or priests—to use our sonship or daughterhood in Christ to manifest God's will on earth as it is in heaven.

With faith and prayers, we bring what is in the heavenly realm into our earthly territory. Marc V. Lopez (marcvlopez88@gmail.com)

### reflect

Do you hesitate when people ask you to pray for them? Do you fear the results?

*Heavenly Father, thank You for the authority You have given me as Your child to bring Your blessings to others. Who do You want me to pray over today?*

St. John Baptist de la Salle, priest, pray for us.

# Apr 8

THURSDAY

Acts 3:11-26

Psalm 8:2, 5, 6-7,

8-9

**Luke 24:35-48**

## PEACE BE WITH YOU

Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."

- Luke 24:36, NRSV

Among the many lines that we say every Mass, "Peace be with you" is my favorite. Before, I'd translate this to "I wish you peace" or "I hope your troubles would go away." But after I discerned for my vocation, got into a vehicular crash accident, and experienced quarter-life crisis, I felt like there was more to "peace be with you" than what I understood.

Peace is a sign of God's will, of God's presence, and of God's heart.

I knew it was God's will for me to leave the convent when I was at peace about my decision. I knew He was with me when I was at peace while preparing for bone surgery. I knew He worked through me when I felt peace after giving a memoir writing class. Jesuit spiritual director and author Fr. Thomas Green said that even God's rebuke brings peace.

Today, I think of "peace be with you" as a short prayer that hopes for a person to see God's will, to feel God's presence, and to live with God's heart.

This Easter, may the risen King of Peace be with all of us.

Elaine Marie R. Factor (elainemarietfactor@gmail.com)

### reflect

What disturbs your peace? What should you do about it?

*Jesus, King of Peace, reign in my mind, my heart, and my soul.  
Amen.*

St. Julie Billiart, pray for us.



# Apr 9

FRIDAY

Acts 4:1-12  
Psalm 118:1-2, 4,  
22-24, 25-27  
John 21:1-14

## TAKE THE PLUNGE

So he said to them, "Cast the net over the right side of the boat and you will find something." – John 21:6

After I left the auditing firm, I applied in several companies except in banks. When nothing happened, I applied in a bank, but only after much prodding from my dad. The salary offered was way below my asking price, but the department head assured me of a promising career. As I went up the corporate ladder, I received more than what I asked for.

I was searching for ways to augment my income when I received an e-mail from a woman looking for a freelance editor and writer to work on their series of Catholic prayer books. After praying about it, I submitted my résumé online. The company president interviewed me and I was hired.

The disciples went out fishing all night but caught nothing. Then Jesus appeared and told them to throw their nets over the right side of the boat. They obeyed and caught a big number of fish. It's difficult at times to act on something because we've had a prior bad experience or we're paranoid or just plain stubborn. If we sincerely pray about our decisions, we can trust God and take the plunge. A big number of fish may just be waiting to be hauled. Judith Concepcion (svp\_jmc@yahoo.com)

### reflect

Is there anything that you still haven't acted upon? You may be missing out on God's blessings.

*I don't know what's around the corner, Lord, but I know that You'll be there. I have nothing to fear. Amen.*

St. Adrian of Canterbury, priest, pray for us.

# Apr 10

SATURDAY

Acts 4:13-21

Psalms 118:1, 14-15,  
16-18, 19-21

**Mark 16:9-15**

## NOT JUST ANOTHER DAY

He said to them, "Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature."

– Mark 16:15

My family and I were on the third day of our tour in South Korea and we were scheduled to ride a tour bus to our destination. While it was customary for us to occupy the front seats for best view of the sites for picture taking, the taxi that we rode missed our stop, so we had to take a long walk to where our bus was waiting. Because of that, we missed the front seats and ended up sitting somewhere in the middle of the bus.

We fell asleep in transit. When I woke up, we were already on our way to the hospital. What happened was that our bus figured in a big accident that sent our vehicle to the edge of a cliff. Because I was asleep during the impact, my face slammed onto the seat in front of me, making me unconscious. The passengers on the front seats of the bus were seriously hurt and were brought to a bigger hospital.

I believe it was God's grace that caused our delay and made us miss getting the front seats on the bus. It was not just another day. It was a day that God gave us new life to treasure and live to tell the world of His goodness and grace. Maria Paz

Jimenez-Balayán (pazjb0117@gmail.com)

### reflect

Life's detours can be God's ways of saving us and protecting us from trouble.

*Lord, thank You for the detours that come my way. I treasure them now knowing that You are in control of my life and You know what is best for me.*

St. Fulbert of Chartres, pray for us.

# Apr 11

SUNDAY

**Acts 4:32-35**

Psalm 118:2-4,

13-15, 22-24

1 John 5:1-6

John 20:19-31

**Second Sunday of Easter**

## **BAYANIHAN**

All the believers were united in heart and mind. And they felt that what they owned was not their own, so they shared everything they had. – Acts 4:32, NLT

*Bayanihan* refers to the Filipino culture of working together as a community to achieve a common goal. And this became quite evident during the time of the enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) last year.

As I write this, we are on day 40 of the ECQ and I'm amazed at how God moves in the midst of this global pandemic. Inspiring stories abound as people help others—through cash, in kind, and lots of prayers. There are those who even risk their lives like the frontliners.

I'm a witness to the people's generosity in the ministry where I serve. When there's a call to help others, people are always ready and willing to extend a helping hand. Oftentimes, they say, "This is not my money but His, and I'm just returning it," or "God is faithful to His children. He will return this a hundredfold." Or, "I am happy to share my blessings." These people are living proofs that as we bless others, we are richly blessed as well. Rosalie De Silva (saliedesilva.fba@gmail.com)

### **reflect**

Are you willing to give everything you have, knowing that they all come from God?

*Thank You, Father God, for all the blessings. Teach me to have a generous heart like Yours. Amen.*

**St. Stanislaus, bishop and martyr, pray for us.**

# Apr 12

MONDAY

**Acts 4:23-31**

Psalms 2:1-3, 4-7, 7-9

John 3:1-8

## JUST BELIEVE!

Reach out your hand to heal, and grant that wonders and miracles may be performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.  
– Acts 4:30

I vacationed in the U.S. and visited my relatives in the East Coast. During one dinner, I was so disturbed at how my then 14-year-old nephew, Noel, looked. He had rashes and bruises all over his face and body, as if he had just come from a fight. I was told he had skin eczema since he was a kid. He had been to several skin specialists and tried all sorts of medication. Noel's life revolved only around school and the house because he felt insecure about his looks.

I couldn't help but pull him in front of the altar of their house and asked him just one question: "Do you believe that Jesus can heal you?" He said yes. I prayed over him with much fervor and intensity that I felt energy leave my body.

The next day, he wasn't able to go to school because he had a high fever. When his mom arrived from work, she noticed that all his rashes and bruises were gone! To this day, Noel is a living testimony that if we believe first, then we will surely see God's wonders and experience His healing and miracles! Adrian Panganiban (andresignatures@yahoo.com)

## reflect

"Faith is not born from miracles, but miracles from faith." (Fyodor Dostoevsky)

*Jesus, I know I will see because I believe! Amen.*

St. Zeno of Verona, pray for us.

# Apr 13

TUESDAY

Acts 4:32-37

Psalm 93:1, 1-2, 5

John 3:7-15

## A CHILD'S TRUST

"Whoever believes in Him should not perish  
but have eternal life."

– John 3:15, NKJV

My friend was having financial difficulties. I asked if she was praying for spiritual assistance. She replied, "There's no need. I can handle it." But a second child on the way added to her worries.

Baby Maisie's arrival was a happy distraction. Her little *Ate* adored her as if she played with a live doll. One day, my friend overheard *Ate* whisper to the baby, "I've waited for you for so long!" Little *Ate* prayed not just for a sister—she simply believed Maisie would come into their lives even if it took her over three years of praying to God every night.

Through her daughter's touching faith, my friend's heart melted. She realized her blessings were greater than her problems. She finally surrendered her cares to the Almighty who was just waiting for her to ask of Him.

Our faith may falter sometimes, and we may forget to pray. The Lord is always there for us, but we need to keep an active faith. We can share with our Father God, not just our big problems and triumphs, but also the minor hurts and small joys of our daily life. Gina J. Verdolaga (mgjver@yahoo.com)

### reflect

"We all have in our hearts some areas of unbelief. Let us say to the Lord: 'I believe! Help my unbelief.'" (Pope Francis)

*Lord, help my unbelief. Come into my heart. Amen.*

St. Martin I, pope and martyr, pray for us.

# Apr 14

WEDNESDAY

Acts 5:17-26

Psalms 34:2-3, 4-5,

6-7, 8-9

John 3:16-21

## BELOVED

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only son." – John 3:16, NIV

"It's like seeing a loved one about to get hit by a truck and you push them to safety, but you're the one who gets run over and dies." That was the

analogy my sister Elaine gave me as she tried to explain Jesus dying on the cross to save us all.

I head a grief support group called the Mourning to Morning Ministry, and I've heard all kinds of stories of unbearable grief. There is a common heartbreaking, desperate prayer said by most parents who watch a sick child slowly dying of a terminal illness. It goes something like, "Lord, if You would, just give me all the pain my child is going through. Take me instead. Spare my child . . . let him live."

What loving parent wouldn't give their own life for their child? In my life, I've come to realize that I am a daughter of God—His Beloved—literally translated as *Be loved*.

He loves me so much that I am worth dying for! How can I ever top that?

Maybe just by trying to know Him better and love Him the way He loves me. Cheri Roberto (cheriroberto@gmail.com)

### reflect

How much do you love your child? Are you willing to die for him or her? Guess what? Jesus loves you a gazillion times more! And yes, He gave up His life for yours.

*Dearest Lord, teach me to love You and others—just the way You love me.*

Blessed Peter Gonzalez, pray for us.

# Apr 15

THURSDAY

**Acts 5:27-33**

Psalm 34:2, 9, 17-18,

19-20

John 3:31-36

## BELIVE!

"We are witnesses of these things."

– Acts 5:32

What do you believe? No, that wasn't a typo you just read. You read my question right: What do you believe? You see, beliefs are powerful.

A belief is a thought repeated and given attention and considered as true.

Consciously or unconsciously, it forms a central and significant force behind all that we say and do. Whatever we believe in, whether we know it or not, influences and determines much of our behavior. It, therefore, establishes how we live our lives.

How we are to *be* and how we actually *live* are determined by our beliefs. Indeed, our beliefs form our reality.

Peter and the Apostles in the reading today were so driven by their conviction that no amount of warning from the Pharisees could prevent them from witnessing about Christ. Despite the ire of Jewish religious society, these disciples lived as they believed.

This Easter week, could the same be said of us? Of you?

Jonathan Yogawin (coachj@jyogawin.com)

### reflect

Would your actions convict you of your belief in the risen Lord?

*O Holy Spirit, search my heart and grant that I live what I believe.  
Amen.*

St. Hunna, pray for us.

# Apr 16

FRIDAY

Acts 5:34-42

Psalm 27:1, 4, 13-14

**John 6:1-15**

## WHY ARE YOU HERE?

A large crowd followed him because they saw the signs he was performing on the sick.

– John 6:2

When my son was diagnosed with a terminal heart condition, I would go to a famous healing priest whenever he was near my area. There were always large crowds that gathered, so it would usually take five to six hours before your turn came. People patiently waited for that hope to receive a healing miracle.

It was the same during the time of Jesus. People followed Him wherever He went for a chance to see Him perform a miracle.

Why do you follow Jesus? Are you asking for help in your troubled relationship? Are you begging to be delivered from all your debts? Are you asking Him to heal you or someone dear to you? Will you still follow Him if none of your prayers get answered? What if you're praying for the healing of your son like I was, and he dies? Will you still continue to trust Him?

Mother Teresa didn't feel God's presence for almost 50 years until she died. Yet she spoke as if she gazed on His face every day. Can we do the same? Can we still believe in Him if our petitions fall on deaf ears or if we are stripped of all blessings and possessions? Can we still say, "Even though He slay me, yet will I trust Him"? Ronna Ledesma (ronna\_ledesma@yahoo.com.ph)

### reflect

"But He knows the way that I take; when He has tested me, I will come forth as gold." (Job 23:10)

*My only desire, Lord, is that I may gaze upon Your face when I have finished this race called life. Amen.*

St. Bernadette Soubirous, virgin, pray for us.



# Apr 17

SATURDAY

Acts 6:1-7  
Psalm 33:1-2, 4-5,  
18-19  
John 6:16-21

## THE GIFT OF FEAR

But he said to them, "It is I. Do not be afraid."  
– John 6:20

In Scriptures, the sea is a symbol of the great unknown. It also connotes a powerful force to be feared. Try standing on a beach and get overwhelmed by the vast spans that make you feel microscopic and insignificant. Try listening to the sound of the waves that can obliterate anything on its path. So, imagine when it's roused up to anger with a storm. And all these happening in the dark of night. Tell me, who would not be scared?

Here are three important truths about fear: First, to fear is to be human. Someone who's not scared of anything is either a liar or an extraterrestrial. Second, fear makes you wise. If you're scared of getting sick of the virus, you wear an N95 face mask. Third, fear makes you run to the One who gives you courage.

Yes, the future can be the "sea of the unknown," because high waves and powerful storms of today are battering you in the dark. It's OK to be scared. Just make sure you run to Him, the Lord of the Unknown, whose steps are above the waves and whose word the winds obey.

Then hear Jesus say, "It is I. Do not be afraid." Jon Escoto  
(faiththatworkjon@gmail.com)

### reflect

What high waves and powerful storms are battering you now?

*Jesus, You are the Lord of the Unknown. Calm the storms of our hearts, as we place our trust and our lives in Your hands. Thank You. Amen.*

St. Donan, pray for us.

# Apr 18

SUNDAY

Acts 3:13-15, 17-19

Psalms 4:2, 4, 7-8, 9

1 John 2:1-5

**Luke 24:35-48**

Third Sunday of Easter

## SUFFICIENT GRACE FOR THE PRESENT TRIAL

“Peace be with you” . . . “Why are you troubled? And why do questions arise in your hearts?” – Luke 24:36, 38

“Happy New Year!”

We all say those words as the year comes to a close and a new one begins.

In the past, I'd say those words but they would be accompanied by a certain weight at the pit of my stomach—I was afraid. A part of me would wonder, “Oh no, it's the new year! What bad news will this new year bring?”

In 2019, my fears came to pass. A very close aunt died on the first quarter of the year. Then in July, I had to rush home from New Zealand where I live to bury my father in Cebu. While in the Philippines, an unexpected problem with my immigrant's visa forced me to stay longer there than expected—separating me from my husband for the longest time since we've been together. Then another close aunt died.

At the end of that period back in New Zealand, I reflected on the events and realized something: I have nothing to be afraid of. God provides sufficient grace for the present trial.

Indeed, God is faithful and true. Joyce Roa (jsosoban@gmail.com)

### reflect

Is there anything that's making you worried and anxious? Have you taken time out to remind yourself of God's faithfulness?

*Dearest Lord, thank You for being faithful and true. I resolve to trust You more for every circumstance of my life. Amen.*

St. Athanasia of Aegina, pray for us.

# Apr 19

MONDAY

Acts 6:8-15  
Psalm 119:23-24,  
26-27, 29-30  
John 6:22-29

## JUST JESUS

Jesus answered them and said, "Amen, amen, I say to you, you are looking for me not because you saw signs but because you ate the loaves and were filled." – John 6:26

We all want a good future. We all want what's good for us. This is why many Christians desire to have the fruit of the Spirit. We all want love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

In today's reading, Jesus exposed the real motives of the crowd who followed Him. "You want to be with me because I fed you, not because you understood the miraculous signs" (John 6:26). This made me ask myself if I am like the crowd. Do I want to be with Jesus because of the good things that come when I follow Him? Do I desire Jesus more than I desire the fruit of the Spirit that go with my relationship with Him?

Often, following Jesus is the total opposite of comfortable. But if our lives are rooted in Him and our relationship with Him, then despite the hardships, uncertainties, and discomforts, we will find true peace.

Because the Giver is better than the gifts. Erika Ventura  
(erika.m@srvrtv.com)

### reflect

Do you desire Jesus more than you desire the fruit of the Spirit?  
Do you follow Jesus just for Jesus Himself?

*Lord, sorry for the times that we didn't put You first. We want to follow You for who You are in our lives. Amen.*

St. Alphege of Canterbury, pray for us.

# Apr 20

TUESDAY

Acts 7:51-8:1

Psalms 31:3-4, 6-7,  
8, 17, 21

**John 6:30-35**

## QUARANTINE BREAD

"What sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you?" – John 6:30

When the coronavirus was wreaking havoc worldwide this time last year, we heeded the call not to panic buy. We just bought the usual food we needed for the week. But with the enhanced community quarantine on the entire island of Luzon, we worried that our food supply would not last a month.

Then, to our surprise, our barangay distributed quarantine food packs not only for the poor but also for us not-so-poor residents—just so we would stay home. Then, a cousin sent us five kilos of rice and more canned goods.

I could hardly believe the blessings, just like the people who followed Jesus. But even if they had witnessed the miracles He had performed, they asked Jesus to show them a sign so they would believe in Him. Perhaps a miracle like the manna from heaven (Exodus 16)? So, Jesus told them He is the miracle—He is the Bread of Life.

My family and I have enjoyed this Bread—food, job, money—provisions that we receive just when we need them.

Quarantine or no quarantine, crisis or no crisis, Jesus is the miracle who makes all other miracles possible in our lives.

Cynthia U. Santiago (loj.cusantiago@gmail.com)

### reflect

"None of you will ever believe unless you see miracles and wonders." (John 4:48)

*Lord, grant me the grace to believe in You, to have faith in You, to trust You!*

St. Agnes of Montepulciano, pray for us.

# Apr 21

WEDNESDAY

Acts 8:1-8

Psalms 66:1-3, 4-5, 6-7

**John 6:35-40**

## FILLED AND SATISFIED

"Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." – John 6:35, NIV

Fixed expenses are a given so you set aside a budget for them. But not with expenses that shout, "Surprise!"

Mind you, this is the kind of surprise that is difficult to celebrate.

Surprises could be the need to purchase a new aircon unit to replace your "retired" unit (essential for your son who has asthma), or the immediate need to buy a new battery for your car (which you keep postponing), or urgent repair of the roof (which started to leak after it rained hard). More serious is when the doctor says your mother needs a surgery (after she had a bad fall). All these and more affect a family whose financial status is not that stable.

Yet amidst whatever difficulties we go through, God always makes a way. We can trust in His goodness and guidance. He is Yahweh Jireh, the God who provides—not only for our physical needs, but moreso, the needs of our spirit and soul.

He provides in ways and through people from whom we don't expect or hope for anything. Before we know it, we are already filled and satisfied. We just have to come to Him and believe. Sol Saura (sol\_saura@yahoo.com)

### reflect

Are you in a difficult situation right now? Where do you run to for provision and help?

*Heavenly Father, we place our trust in You. When we are hungry or thirsty, fill us with Your love. Satisfy the longings of our heart. Amen.*

St. Conrad of Parzham, pray for us.

# Apr 22

THURSDAY

**Acts 8:26-40**

Psalm 66:8-9,

16-17, 20

John 6:44-51

## GO AND PROCLAIM

Philip came to Azotus, and went about proclaiming the good news to all the towns until he reached Caesarea.

– Acts 8:40

When I was younger, I had a mortal fear of standing in front of a group of people. So, my high school yearbook write-up said that I was the girl who managed to give a report without fainting.

But when I became part of a prayer community, we were encouraged to come in front to share about blessings we received from the Lord. Before I could stand up, I would feel my heart beating excessively fast. As years in community passed, I gained confidence in speaking before people.

I knew this was not something I achieved on my own. It was a grace from God. I learned to share His Word not only in front of a group but with people one-on-one. The more I sought the Lord in my life, the more He blessed me with the confidence to share about Him and how He has moved in my life.

We don't have to stand in front of a group of people to share God's Word. We can testify about Him through our words and actions. We can do it in big and small ways. Rissa

Espinosa (rissa\_d\_espinosa@yahoo.com)

### reflect

Are you able to share God's Word with the people around you?

*Lord, grant me the grace to share Your Good News with the people who need to know You. Amen.*

St. Theodore of Sykeon, pray for us.

# Apr 23

FRIDAY

Acts 9:1-20  
Psalm 117:1, 2  
John 6:52-59

## YOUR STORY, YOUR PURPOSE

"Go, for this man is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before Gentiles, kings, and Israelites."— Acts 9:15

After 30 years of serving God and 19 years of marriage, my wife and I still don't have a child. We had five crushing miscarriages that made us ask why a good God would allow bad things to happen to good people. Weren't our decades of serving Him enough for Him to bless us with our dream? But eventually, He turned our sulking to trust. We realized that we may not know His plan, but we know His heart only wanted what's good for us.

Coming from this situation, I wondered if people would believe in me as a preacher if my own prayers weren't answered. Then I realized, God called me to preach a different message—that even if my prayers weren't answered, I continue to serve Him. This encouraged a lot of people who doubted God's goodness to believe again. Paul also preached a different message to a different audience. Compared to the fisherman Apostles, Jesus used Paul's background to reach the "Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel."

God can use us differently to bless the world.

What's your message? [Toh Relova \(tohrelova@gmail.com\)](mailto:tohrelova@gmail.com)

### reflect

Allow God to use your story for His glory.

*Lord, help me realize that You can use who we are and what we've experienced for Your greater glory as we share it to the world. Amen.*

St. George, martyr, patron of England, pray for us.

# Apr 24

SATURDAY

Acts 9:31-42

Psalms 116:12-13,

14-15, 16-17

**John 6:60-69**

## LAST STOP TO ETERNITY

"Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." – John 6:68

There's a saying in Filipino: "*Sa hinaba-haba man ng prusisyon, sa simbahan pa rin ang tuloy.*" Translation:

No matter how long the procession is, you'll always end up in church. It also means that you'll ultimately have to face your Maker, your God. (As sooner or later you'll end up in church—in a coffin.) So what's keeping you from coming to Him now? (I don't mean dying now.)

In our Gospel today, people turned away from Jesus because they couldn't accept what He told them about Himself. So, when Jesus asked His Apostles, "Do you also want to leave?" Peter answered Him with our verse above.

I, too, at times turn my back on God's words every time I sin. Yet I ask myself, where else will I go from here? Where else will I ultimately end?

So, always, the answer should be God. Always, the answer to our last stop to eternity is Jesus. But like Simon Peter, you don't need to wait for the last minute or for the last stop.

Today, you can—and should—start eternity by choosing Jesus. [alvinbarcelona \(apb\\_ayo@yahoo.com\)](mailto:alvinbarcelona@apb_ayo@yahoo.com)

### reflect

When did you turn your back on God and chose something or someone else? Was that choice worth it? Is it a choice that will last for eternity?

*Lord, may I choose You now and for eternity. Amen.*

St. Fidelis of Sigmaringen, priest and martyr, pray for us.



# Apr 25

SUNDAY

**Acts 4:8-12**

Psalm 118:1, 8-9,  
21-23, 26, 28, 29

1 John 3:1-2  
John 10:11-18

Fourth Sunday of Easter

## RISE ABOVE IT ALL

"He is the stone which was rejected by you, the builders, but which became the chief corner stone." – Acts 4:11, NASB

A person's world can go crumbling down with four big words: "You're not good enough."

There are two possible reactions to this: One could easily be discouraged by that statement—it could lower self-esteem causing anxiety, depression, and lack of drive to move forward. The second reaction can be a powerful motivation to strive for excellence and prove them wrong.

One girl I know is a fighter. She grew up hearing the mantra, "You will never become successful," from one of her parents. Her life could have taken a nosedive from there, but instead, she used it as her springboard to aim high. Fueled by this drive to succeed, she runs her own business even if she's under 18 and will be the youngest self-made millionaire I know.

There will always be people who want to pull you down. They will try to break you and make you feel inadequate. Know that God loves you and you are worthy of His Kingdom. He has great plans for you beyond what you can ever imagine.

Choose to be an overcomer. Fight! Ara Fernando

(beautyischange@gmail.com)

### reflect

Was there ever a time when you encountered a roadblock and lost faith in yourself? How did you overcome it?

*Father in heaven, I am Your humble servant. Fill my heart with Your love so I may keep striving to fulfill the plans You have for me. Amen.*

St. Mark, evangelist, pray for us.

# Apr 26

MONDAY

**Acts 11:1-18**

Psalm 42:2-3;

43:3, 4

John 10:1-10

## DARK PASTS

"God has then granted life-giving repentance to the Gentiles too." – Acts 11:18

I was a naughty kid. Once, I chewed gum and stuck it to my playmate's hair. Sometimes I threw tantrums when I did not get what I wanted. I failed some subjects in college and graduated a year later than my peers. I got into a complicated relationship that nearly wrecked a family. My younger self made lots of mistakes and wrong decisions. I had a past that I wasn't proud of.

Yet somewhere along the road, I met Jesus and came to experience His forgiving love. Despite my faults—past, present, and future ones—He embraces me and allows something good to come out from them. And I believe He makes me contribute in His great story of salvation. He allows my life to be a blessing to others.

Friends, whatever your past is, know that you are never defined by it. You are important to God and He is writing a beautiful story for your future.

You will be a testament of how good God is, and generations will know of His greatness through your life. Accept His forgiveness, find your worth in Him, and cling to Him. *Osy Erica (osy.eric@gmail.com)*

### reflect

Surrender your past to the Lord and receive His forgiveness.

*Thank You for seeing beyond my faults, Lord. Thank You for Your reassuring love. I accept Your forgiveness, and I forgive myself, too. Amen.*

St. Riquier, pray for us.

# Apr 27

TUESDAY

**Acts 11:19-26**

Psalm 87:1-3, 4-5,  
6-7

John 10:22-30

## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

It was in Antioch that the disciples were first called Christians. – Acts 11:26

Names are powerful. It means a lot to the persons bearing them. When you're in a loud crowd and your name is called, you hear it no matter how

noisy it is. More importantly, names have meaning.

Most people during Jesus' time expected people to live their lives according to the meaning of their names. Or—oddly enough—people's lives ended up the way their names meant.

Jesus' name means "God saves." And He lived up to that name. Michael means "who is like unto God." So, when Satan wanted to be like God, this archangel battled against the devil and sent him to hell.

My name Stephen means "crown bearer." To me, a crown means success of the fruit of my labors. I am determined to live out my name, or better yet, to make my life a true reflection of my name. Only by God's grace can I do that.

We are called Christians and that name means something very important. Without Christ, we are nothing.

Are we living the true meaning of our name? Stephen Nellas

(hacksfordads@gmail.com)

## reflect

What does being Christian mean to you?

*Jesus, thank You for saving us. I know that without You, we are nothing. Be my everything. In Your Name, I pray. Amen.*

St. Zita, pray for us.

# Apr 28

WEDNESDAY

Acts 12:24-13:5

Psalm 67:2-3, 5, 6, 8

**John 12:44-50**

## MIGHTY TO SAVE

"I did not come to condemn the world  
but to save the world." – John 12:47

In 2017, after the announcement that skateboarding got included in the Tokyo Olympics, the Olympic Council of Asia listed the sport in the

2018 Asian Games in Palembang, Indonesia.

As president of the skateboarding association then, the Philippine Olympic Committee asked me to submit the names of possible national team members. I initially submitted seven names who had impressive credentials when it came to the sport. Then, it was chopped down to three. But our lineup was rejected twice because they said that our skateboarding athletes were not qualified in the Asian Games. After making two appeals, we were still rejected.

Months later, the Philippine Olympic Committee had a new board of directors, and they assigned a new chef de mission for the Asian Games. When the new head reviewed our appeal, he immediately called me for a meeting and included three of our skateboarders in the Asian Games. They won the fourth gold medal for the Philippines.

Are you facing rejection or issues in life right now? Trust that God will send a savior to save you. Monty Mendigoria

(montymendigoria@yahoo.com)

### reflect

Not all angels have wings. How can you be an angel to someone today?

*Lord Jesus, thank You for being our Savior. You know what's best for us.*

St. Peter Chanel, priest and martyr, pray for us.

# Apr 29

THURSDAY

**Acts 13:13-25**

Psalm 89:2-3,

21-22, 25, 27

John 13:16-20

## CHARACTER

"Then he removed him and raised up David as their king; of him he testified, 'I have found David, son of Jesse, a man after my own heart; he will carry out my every wish.'" – Acts 13:22

One sure way to be a person after God's own heart is to be a person of character.

Character is the courage to do what is right no matter what the cost. And this is essential in winning people's trust. People may follow me because of my position in my family, community, and organization. But at the end of the day, if the people around me don't trust me, then it's impossible for me to be in a meaningful relationship with anyone.

To be a person of character means that there is no turning it off.

What I mean is that we must do the right thing in all areas of our lives. Whether we are with family, friends, or coworkers, whether we are at work or play, or we are alone or with company, we must always be persons who are trustworthy.

Orange V. Garcia (orange.garcia@olpmc.edu.ph)

## reflect

Character is the courage to do what is right all the time—every time.

*Lord, teach me to be a person of character so I may grow to be a person after Your own heart.*

St. Catherine of Siena, virgin and Doctor of the Church, pray for us.

# Apr 30

FRIDAY

Acts 13:26-33  
Psalm 2:6-7, 8-9,  
10-11  
**John 14:1-6**

## JESUS SAVES CHRISTMAS

Jesus said to him, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." – John 14:6

My mother and I always spend the holidays in Australia ever since my father passed away in 2009.

We fly out right before *Simbang Gabi* to maximize bonding time with my siblings and their families there. It's always a time with God to be with family on Christmas. But in 2015, a major delay in visa release almost foiled our plans.

We prepared and submitted our visa applications on schedule, but due to unknown reasons, it never came out on the expected date.

What normally takes two weeks max was already taking more than four weeks, and we were clueless as to why.

By December 21, we were resigned to stay and spend the holidays in Manila. But we continued to pray hard to Jesus and thought that maybe God had a different plan for us that year.

Then on December 22, voilà, our visas arrived! It gave us just enough time to fly out and arrive in Australia for Christmas eve. Phew!

Thank God for the courier who decided to report for work that day. His name? Jesus. Eugene Cailao (eugeneccailao@gmail.com)

### reflect

How well do you know Jesus Christ, the Son of God?

*Father, make this season a time for me to dwell on the passion of Christ, so I may get to know Him more than the Child born on Christmas Day. Amen.*

St. Pius V, pope, pray for us.

# May 1

SATURDAY

**Acts 13:44-52**

Psalm 98:1, 2-3, 3-4

John 14:7-14 (or

Matthew 13:54-58)

**Feast of St. Joseph  
the Worker**

## THE ROOT OF ALL ENVY

When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy. – Acts 13:45

Emily and Pam were both sales agents. But after two years, Pam got promoted as manager. Emily was happy for her best friend. Or at least, she pretended to be. They even celebrated Pam's promotion.

But as the weeks went by, problems came up. Pam couldn't believe Emily's transformation. From being her best friend, Emily became her worst enemy. She would criticize Pam in front of others. She would gossip about her and tell all kinds of lies about her.

What was Emily's problem? Envy—the kind of envy that made Cain pick up a rock and bash it on his brother's head (see Genesis 4:2-8). We don't use physical rocks but we use something as deadly—the rocks of our words.

A person who is happy and profoundly satisfied with himself cannot envy others. Envy is only a symptom. The root of all envy is emptiness. Envy isn't about the other person but is always about a deep dissatisfaction with yourself.

Friend, if you have God in your life, you're already blessed—no matter what the world says. Bo Sanchez

(bosanchez@kerygmfamily.com)

### reflect

“Jealousy is when you count someone else's blessings instead of your own.” (ChristianWomenFriends.com)

*Dearest Lord, may I be content in having You in my life because You are more than enough for me. Amen.*

St. Joseph, the worker, pray for us.

# May 2

SUNDAY

Acts 9:26-31

Psalms 22:26-27, 28,  
30, 31-32

1 John 3:18-24

John 15:1-8

Fifth Sunday of Easter

## NO PLACE FOR LONE RANGER CHRISTIANS

It was being built up and walked in the fear of the Lord, and with the consolation of the holy Spirit it grew in numbers. – Acts 9:31

It is God's design for us to live within the context of a body together with others—never alone. No place for lone rangers. Psalm 133 tells me that dwelling together as brothers and sisters in unity triggers the Lord's blessings to come upon us.

When the Lord is present among us, He allows times of pruning to make us bear good fruit. Sometimes, the pruning process could mean adding people to our number who are not like us or who are simply unlikeable. Believe it or not, the Lord builds us up as a body even through such uncomfortable situations. In all of these, the Lord has one purpose: to build us up and to make us fruitful.

The process of pruning can only be fruitful as we abide in Jesus. During times of pruning, we no longer aim to simply get through the difficulty; instead, we open ourselves to what God is doing and cooperate with Him. The call is for us to remain in His presence. Recognize that He is the vine and we are the branches, not the other way around. [Omy Romero \(omyromero@gmail.com\)](mailto:omyromero@gmail.com)

### reflect

At present, what circumstances can you consider as pruning from the Lord?

*Father, show me areas of my life that need pruning. Help me cooperate with Your Holy Spirit to make me pleasing and fruitful for You. Amen.*

St. Athanasius, bishop and Doctor of the Church, pray for us.



# May 3

MONDAY

1 Corinthians 15:1-8

Psalm 19:2-3, 4-5

**John 14:6-14**

**Feast of Sts. Philip  
and James, Apostles**

## SATISFY YOUR UNBELIEF

Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." – John 14:6, NLT

Do you know a person who refuses to believe anything until given a proof? We call such a person as a Doubting Thomas.

Thomas, an Apostle of Jesus, was far too honest to be satisfied by vague, pious expressions. He had to be sure. So, he asked. And his doubts gave us one of the greatest truths Jesus has ever said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life."

In the Gospel of John, Thomas represents those followers of Christ who have not seen Him. They became Christians long after the resurrection. Their faith was based on the preaching of the disciples who saw Christ.

We are all Thomases. We never saw Christ. Yet we believe in Him. Do not be ashamed when you doubt or when you need proof for your belief. Whenever you find yourself questioning your faith, imitate Thomas.

Go and ask Jesus to satisfy your unbelief. Get answers from Him. Seek Him.

And I know, you will believe. Arun Gogna (gognuts@yahoo.com)

### reflect

What one question do you want to ask Jesus now?

*My Lord and my God, help my unbelief. Amen.*

Sts. Philip and James, Apostles, pray for us.

# May 4

TUESDAY

Acts 14:19-28  
Psalm 145:10-11,  
12-13, 21  
John 14:27-31

## HEIRLOOM

"I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid." – John 14:27

My paternal grandfather passed away in 2006, and I miss him until today because I grew up with him.

When I was a kid, we lived in a family compound. When my parents were at work, I spent a lot of time with my grandparents until I was in high school.

When I was preparing for my wedding in 2016, I asked my parents if my grandfather had a watch or an heirloom that I could bring with me when I moved out of the house to start a family. Sadly, there wasn't any. But I realized, my grandfather had already given me the best gift many years ago—that gift is Jesus in my life.

My grandfather gave his life to Jesus, and then led my dad to the Lord. My grandfather also taught me a lot about Jesus when I was growing up.

I believe salvation is better than any heirloom that you can inherit.

Friend, you have the favor of God with you. Do not be afraid anymore. JPaul Hernandez (jpaulmh@yahoo.com)

### reflect

What's more important to you—material gifts or eternal gifts from God?

*Jesus, thank You for the gift of peace in my life. I know You are sovereign and You are in charge. I entrust to You all my worries, sorrows, and struggles.*

St. Venerius, pray for us.

# May 5

WEDNESDAY

Acts 15:1-6  
Psalm 122:1-2, 3-4,  
4-5  
John 15:1-8

## NO 'SELF-MADE' MAN

"Remain in me, as I remain in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me." – John 15:4

I believe the biggest lie some motivational gurus try to sell is the idea of the "self-made" man. They try to make us believe that success is about believing in yourself, making plans, and putting in the hard work. While I agree with all that, I also believe no one can do it without the "God factor."

Interestingly, the word *success* can't be found in the Bible. The closest thing we can find is *fruitfulness*. That's why the imagery of Jesus as the vine and we as branches speaks a lot. To be fruitful, one should remain in the vine. When we try to grow apart from God, our successes are short-lived. No matter how huge the growth is, it will eventually die. And when we try to live apart from the Church and God's people, we find ourselves lost and meaningless. We were never meant to live alone.

Saint Paul provided a great imagery in 1 Corinthians 3:6: "I planted, Apollos watered, but God caused the growth." Do you want a fruitful life? Remember: We can plant and work hard, but we need others to water us. And ultimately, after everything we have done, we can never cause a plant to grow. Only God can do that. Velden Lim (veldenlim@gmail.com)

### reflect

Is your life falling apart even after you've done your best? Go back and reconnect to the Vine.

*Father, when I try to make it on my own, lead me back to You. Amen.*

St. Hilary of Arles, pray for us.

# May 6

THURSDAY

Acts 15:7-21

Psalms 96:1-2, 2-3, 10

**John 15:9-11**

## COMPLETE YOUR PUZZLE

"I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete."

– John 15:11

My daughter loves to play with puzzles. I usually buy her the easy ones with Disney princess characters on it.

One time, she couldn't complete her puzzle. She was missing a piece. We turned our house upside down looking for that puzzle piece. We found it hidden under the bed. She was filled with joy when her puzzle was finally completed.

Our lives are just like a big puzzle. We have so many pieces that we want to put together and work together. We have our family, friends, career, relationships, finances, and many more. At the end of the day, all the pieces that we try to put in our lives will never fit perfectly until we find and put into our lives the most important piece of all—Jesus Christ.

Only by putting Jesus at the center of the puzzle and of our lives can we be truly happy. Complete your puzzle today. Complete your life. Find true joy with Jesus Christ. Monching Bueno

(ramon\_bueno@yahoo.com)

### reflect

Are you having a hard time fitting in the pieces of your life? Put Jesus in the center of it all and see how everything will fall into place.

*Father God, thank You for bringing joy into our lives. Thank You for giving us Jesus to bring this joy into reality. Give us the strength to always make You the center of our lives now and forever. Amen.*

St. Benedicta, pray for us.

# May 7

FRIDAY

Acts 15:22-31

Psalms 57:8-9, 10,  
11, 12

**John 15:12-17**

## THE ULTIMATE SACRIFICE

"No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends."

– John 15:13

My heart broke as I heard news about frontline healthcare workers here and abroad who were dying from coronavirus infection. I imagine how they died—alone in a cold room, perhaps wanting to hold a warm hand or to say goodbye to loved ones.

I also imagine how their families must have felt—helpless in their grief, wanting to at least hug and say goodbye for the last time, and in anguish at the sudden void left by their loved ones. At the height of the pandemic, their commitment to their profession did not deter them from serving despite the risks. To me, that's perfect love for the people they had vowed to serve.

It's not easy to lose a loved one in normal circumstances; how much more during a pandemic? My heart goes out to them, and through this reflection, I salute them for their heroic sacrifice.

May Jesus, who gave His life for us, lead them into the Father's embrace. May He console, too, the families they left behind. Tess V. Atienza ([theresa.a@shepherdsvoice.com](mailto:theresa.a@shepherdsvoice.com))

### reflect

Remember at least one frontline worker who died during the pandemic and offer a prayer for him or her.

*Dearest God, You allowed the pandemic to happen, which caused the death of so many. I trust in Your great plan—and pray that I may see it through Your eyes. Amen.*

St. Rose Venerini, pray for us.

# May 8

SATURDAY

Acts 16:1-10

Psalms 100:1-2, 3, 5

**John 15:18-21**

## BE LIKE CHRIST

"If the world hates you, realize that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, the world would love its own; but because you do not belong to the world, and I have chosen you out of the world, the world hates you." – John 15:18-19

Do you want peace in your life?

Say this with me: "I cannot please everyone."

I've arrived at an age in my life when I realized that the best way to have peace is to accept the fact that some people will like you, but there will also be those who won't like you no matter what you do. But that's OK because even Jesus had enemies. And we are called to respond the way He responded.

Even though some people don't like you, that shouldn't stop you from loving them even at a distance (or for some people, at a very loooooooooooooong distaaaaaaaance).

Just because they don't like you, that shouldn't stop you from praying for them. When people show you hatred, respond with love. When people show you aggression, respond with compassion. When people are mean, respond with kindness.

This is what happens when you are raised to life with Jesus. He changes you. Then He calls you to serve like Him, to love like Him, and to be like Him. Audee Villaraza (audee@homediscovery.com.ph)

### reflect

Do you serve people only because they like you? How can you be more like Jesus to others?

*Lord, give me the grace to love without any conditions. Humble me and teach me to be more like Jesus. Amen.*

St. Peter of Tarentaise, pray for us.

# May 9

SUNDAY

Acts 10:25-26,  
34-35, 44-48

Psalms 98:1, 2-3, 3-4

1 John 4:7-10

**John 15:9-17**

Sixth Sunday of Easter

## TRUE FRIEND

"Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends." – John 15:13

I heard a story about a young soldier and his friend during World War I. The young soldier's friend was badly wounded in a no man's land.

The young soldier asked permission from his officer to rescue his friend. The officer agreed but said it wasn't worth it since his friend was probably dead and it may cost him his own life.

Despite the imminent danger, the young soldier went and found his friend near enemy lines. He brought him back to their trench but was mortally wounded. The officer told the rescuer, "I told you it's not worth it. Your friend is dead and you're mortally wounded!" The young soldier replied, "Sir, it was worth it because when I reached him, he was still alive and he said, 'Jim, I knew you'd come.'"

This is real friendship—to risk one's life to save another. This is exactly what Jesus showed us when He carried upon Himself all our sins and laid down His life so we may be saved. Even if we were dead because of sin, He rescued us and will bring us to the safest and most peaceful trench called heaven.

Hermie Morelos (hermie.m@svrtv.com)

### reflect

What little act of love and kindness can you do to your friends to remind them that Jesus died for them?

*Lord, teach me to reach out to those who are in need. May I not be oblivious to the needs of others. Amen.*

St. Hermas, pray for us.

# May 10

MONDAY

**Acts 16:11-15**

Psalm 149:1-2, 3-4,

5-6, 9

John 15:26-16:4

## GATHERED TO PRAY

On the Sabbath we went a little way outside the city to a riverbank, where we thought people would be meeting for prayer, and we sat down to speak with some women who had gathered there. – Acts 16:13, NLT

Women love to talk and gather. I recall mornings in the office restroom, putting on makeup, and getting ready together. Virtual chat groups are spaces where I stay connected with friends from school. Offline, many *barkada* lunches have extended to *merienda*. When it's time to go, goodbye happens thrice before anyone ever actually leaves.

It's typical for women to gather. But something extraordinary happens when women gather to pray.

My friends and I agreed to do video calls precisely for that. It was a schedule challenge to attend a prayer group so we did the next best thing—whoever was available just showed up. No pressure. We would laugh, cry, support, and pray together online.

After 10 years of being friends, we did something we never knew we always wanted and needed.

Praise God for friends who are part of my spiritual journey! Kitty Dulay-Ferreria ([kittydulay@yahoo.com](mailto:kittydulay@yahoo.com))

### reflect

Who are the people in your life who help you grow spiritually?

*As we gather, may Your Spirit work within us. As we gather, may we glorify Your name. Amen.*

St. John of Avila, pray for us.



# May 11

TUESDAY

**Acts 16:22-34**

Psalm 138:1-2, 2-3,

7-8

John 16:5-11

## STORIES FOR FREEDOM

So they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to everyone in his house. – Acts 16:32

I've shared my life story countless times, especially to the youth. I've spoken of the pain I experienced with my family that affected everything

else. And every time I would prepare for my testimony, I would hesitate. I was shy. I was embarrassed. It was still painful to speak about it. I wanted it to remain private.

But I would always choose to push through, believing that maybe there's a reason why I got invited to speak in the first place. After every sharing, people would come up to me with tears in their eyes to thank me.

To this day, even if I'm no longer active in youth ministry, some would still acknowledge those times when I bared my soul to them and showed how God's love is. I take it as an affirmation that if we believe in the Lord and let His will be done, He will rescue us.

And when we do, no matter what our history is, no matter what our pain is, He will use that story for a greater purpose. To set you free. And to set others free. Paolo Galia (pgalia@gmail.com)

### reflect

What's your experience of God's love that He can use to bless and heal other people? Share it with one person this week.

*Jesus, thank You for loving and choosing us despite our wounds and our pain. Help us help others see that as well. Amen.*

St. Ignatius of Lanconi, pray for us.

# May 12

WEDNESDAY

**Acts 17:15, 22-18:1**

Psalm 148:1-2,

11-12, 13, 14

John 16:12-15

## UNKNOWN GOD

"You Athenians, I see that in every respect you are very religious . . . I even discovered an altar inscribed, 'To an Unknown God.'"

– Acts 17:22-23

"I have an altar here with the Sacred Heart and Mama Mary. And I have statues of my favorite saints.

Over there, I have some *anting-anting* (amulet). And to make sure, I also put a feng shui mirror outside our house. Doesn't hurt to cover all my bases, right? *Wala namang mawawala.*"

This is something I hear now and then. People think that by subscribing to every god, belief, and superstition out there, they bulletproof their lives. But practicing superstitious or anti-Christian beliefs gives the devil a foothold in their lives.

When you put your faith in that feng shui mirror to ward off bad luck, did you trust in God's blessings and protection?

When you wear an amulet to protect you from accidents and you dodge one, who gets the honor? Your amulet or God?

When you read your horoscope and follow it, who reigns in your life—the stars that dictated your horoscope or the God who made the moon, the stars, and the heavens?

Friend, let's get to know the one and only true God we worship. Let Him not remain an Unknown God. Rissa Singson

Kawpeng (rissakawpeng@gmail.com)

### reflect

"I do not get to know God, then do His will; I get to know Him more deeply by doing His will." (Philip Yancey)

*Lord, I want to know You more. Teach me to walk in Your ways. Amen.*

Sts. Nereus and Achilleus, pray for us.

# May 13

THURSDAY

Acts 18:1-8  
Psalm 98:1, 2-3, 3-4  
**John 16:16-20**

## HE NEVER LEFT

"In a little while you will see me no more,  
and then after a little while you will see me."  
- John 16:16, NIV

I was the class president in kindergarten. Tasked to ensure order, I started to walk in circles around class tables. Then two boys from a higher level peeked into our class window to tell me that my parents already went home with my siblings. I started to panic and cry. All the more they taunted me that I was left alone and wouldn't be able to go home.

Tears continued to flow. My teacher was upset. Then my parents arrived. When I told them what happened, they said they never left.

There were times in my life when I thought God left me. When I accidentally joined a fraternity. When I had financial problems. When we struggled for years waiting for a baby. When my mom died. Only to find out that He never left.

The world wants us to worry, making us feel that there is no God. But always remember to trust that His love always brings out the good in any situation. At times, He does this even before He answers our prayer. It starts with the presence of His peace. Dreus Cosio (andreas.cosio@gmail.com)

### reflect

Was there a time when you thought God was absent, then a miracle happened? He never left you before, and He will never leave you now and in the future.

*Dear Lord, thank You for Your gift of life. May I always have the strength and grace to follow and trust You. Amen.*

Our Lady of Fatima, pray for us.

# May 14

FRIDAY

Acts 1:15-17, 20-26

Psalms 113:1-2, 3-4,

5-6, 7-8

**John 15:9-17**

**Feast of St. Matthias,  
Apostle**

## CHOSEN AND APPOINTED

"It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain . . ." – John 15:16

"Why me, Lord? Why us?" My wife and I were alone in front of the chapel's altar, crying to God in humility and gratitude. We were out of town then, chosen to represent our diocese in a regional conference for families. Those extraordinary moments were my very personal encounter with the Lord. He was near, listening to me. And I just poured out my heart.

I felt inadequate and unqualified to serve in a family ministry in this capacity. Ours was not a perfect family. Ours was not a perfect marriage. It was only by God's grace that we were one happy family and our marriage remained strong.

While my eyes were drenched in tears, asking Him why He chose us, the Lord spoke to my heart, "I want you to go and be a witness for Me amongst families. It is I who chose you, and I will be with you. Be strong!"

After a long moment of silence, peace engulfed my heart. All I could say was, "Here I am, Lord, use me as You please!"

Danny Tariman (dtariman.loj@gmail.com)

### reflect

Are you having second thoughts about your calling? Do you feel inadequate and unqualified to serve in His ministry? He equips whom He calls.

*Jesus, thank You for calling me to serve. Grant me the grace to do Your will.*

St. Matthias, Apostle, pray for us.

# May 15

SATURDAY

Acts 18:23-28  
Psalm 47:2-3, 8-9, 10  
**John 16:23-28**

## IN JESUS' NAME

"Ask, using my name, and you will receive,  
and you will have abundant joy."  
– John 16:24, NLT

I was on an airplane for a mission trip when we had a terrible and frightening turbulence that lasted for five minutes. All the passengers, including me, were visibly scared. Right at that moment, I prayed. At a loss for words, I just kept on saying, "In Jesus' name!"

In an instant, I felt peace in my heart. Afterwards, the seatbelt sign had been turned off and our flight was back to normal. Thank God we landed safe and sound that day. I will never ever forget how the Lord gave us protection and peace.

Having been in community for over two decades, praying "in Jesus' name" has become automatic for me. I confess that being overly familiar with it has lost its essence over time. But that turbulent flight helped me rediscover the power of Jesus' name.

Today's Gospel reminds us to renew our faith in the Lord amidst turbulence in our lives. We don't just pray with words we've gotten used to saying. Instead, let's be intentional in our prayers and mean what we say, believing that nothing is impossible in Jesus' name. JC Libiran (coachjclibiran@gmail.com)

### reflect

Do you like name-dropping? Jesus has the name above every other name.

*Jesus, You are all I need in my life. When I have You, I have everything.*

St. Isidore the farmer, pray for us.

# May 16

SUNDAY

**Acts 1:1-11**

Psalm 47:2-3, 6-7, 8-9

Ephesians 4:1-13 (or

Ephesians 4:1-7, 11-13)

Mark 16:15-20

**Solemnity of the  
Ascension of the Lord**

## BE HIS WITNESS

“You will receive power when the holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

– Acts 1:8

My husband and I used to be full-time missionaries when we were younger. Back then, as a single missionary filled with zeal and courage, I could easily pray, “Lord, send me wherever You want me to go! And if it’s Your will, let me die a martyr’s death!” But now that my husband and I have five kids, it’s not something I can comfortably say. I would more likely say, “Lord, let me and my family serve You together. But don’t make me a martyr yet!”

After reflecting on today’s readings, I realized that we are all called to be God’s witnesses to the ends of the earth—no matter what our state of life is. With the blessing of technology, we can even be His witnesses anywhere and at any time. In fact, I believe God calls all of us to be His media missionaries by sharing His Word online, especially through social media. Let’s ask the Holy Spirit to come upon us every day so we can proclaim His love both online and offline. Tina Santiago Rodriguez

(trulyrichandblessed@gmail.com)

## reflect

“The minute you walk outside of your church on Sunday, you’re in mission territory.” (Bishop Robert Barron)

*Jesus, grant me the courage and strength to be Your witness to the ends of the earth, starting with my own family and community. Amen.*

St. John Nepomuceno, pray for us.

# May 17

MONDAY

Acts 19:1-8  
Psalm 68:2-3, 4-5,  
6-7  
John 16:29-33

## BROADWAY MUSICAL

"But I am not alone, because the Father is with me." – John 16:32

It was my family's first time to watch a Broadway musical in Manhattan, New York. We left early from the upstate but still missed the matinee. We waited for the gala. The show was heavenly. The play ended late in the night. The train ride back to our borrowed vacation house was on its last trip.

Too tired of the long walks and long waits, we all slumped on the train seats. My wife and kids immediately fell asleep. My eyelids automatically drooped. But my barely-awake brain reminded me, "If you sleep, you'll miss your stop and your family will sleep on the benches of the station until the train resumes trips in the morning." I'm no saint, but I'm a father. I won't let this happen to the people I love most. Determined to stay awake, I stood up again on my tired legs while clutching the train pole. As my family slept peacefully, my smiling eyes kept watch. We got home safely and happily.

Friend, your Heavenly Father is always with you. He never sleeps. So, even if you fall asleep on the journey, He makes sure He leads you home—safely and happily. Jon Escoto

(faiththatworkjon@gmail.com)

### reflect

You may feel God is absent and you're going through it all alone, but know that He is always with you. He never sleeps.

*Father, make me experience Your presence even if I fall asleep in this journey called life. Thank You for making sure that I arrive safely home.*

St. Paschal Baylon, pray for us.

# May 18

TUESDAY

Acts 20:17-27  
Psalm 68:10-11,  
20-21  
John 17:1-11

## AKO AY PILIPINO

"I gave them the message that you gave me."  
— John 17:8

Pope Francis' 2020 Easter homily reminded us to go back to Galilee, a place of everyday life, and remember where the disciples and we first heard Jesus' call. Mine was to love God and others, specifically our country and Filipinos during our centennial anniversary. Studies show we are gifted with a sense of God and the sacred. Our spirituality overflows in a kind, joyful hospitality. We are rooted in democracy and gender balance.

But despite our wealth potentials, greed and corruption have bred poverty. Out of necessity, our hardworking and caring countrymen are in diaspora, but they love and lighten up the world as unwitting missionary migrants.

Nehemiah and his Jewish countrymen rebuilt the Jerusalem walls through a visionary moral transformation. Perhaps, if we heed 2 Chronicles 7:14—to pray and repent, rebuild our hearts—then we can heal our land. In the *bayanihan* spirit of solidarity—our faith in action—we can journey toward our Promised Land. Grace Princesa (grprincesa@yahoo.com)

### reflect

"You, Lord, give perfect peace to those who keep their purpose firm and put their trust in You." (Isaiah 26:3)

*Dear Lord, please stop me if I am self-driven, but bless, guide, and protect me as I follow Your leading. Amen.*

St. John I, pope and martyr, pray for us.



# May 19

WEDNESDAY

**Acts 20:28-38**

Psalm 68:29-30,

33-35, 35-36

John 17:11-19

## SHEPHERDING SHEPHERDS

Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. – Acts 20:28

I was the overseer of the Oceania Feasts for seven years until I retired in 2019. As shepherd of our faith community there, my wife and I visited the different Feasts in these countries at least once a year and would stay there for more than a month to spend time with our leaders and servants. We gave discipleship, leadership, and character formation talks that focused on relationship building. We did life together as a community and family—all striving to follow Jesus.

Mistakes, relationship problems, and misunderstandings happened along the way, but in the end, love and God's grace always prevailed. We taught them the virtues of humility, honesty, integrity, and what it means to love and follow Jesus. My wife and I would sometimes stay up till the wee hours of the morning to listen to our top leaders so they could, in turn, shepherd and bless their flock. When the time came to say goodbye to them as their leaders, we prayed together and blessed each one of them.

In those seven years, we tried to cascade God's love to them. What a gratifying and learning experience to pastor and shepherd our Oceania Feasts. Hermie Morelos (hermie.m@svrtv.com)

### reflect

When you hear God's call for you to follow Him, you will soon inspire others to follow Him as well.

*Lord, teach me to listen to You and respond to Your call to discipleship.*

St. Theophillus of Corte, pray for us.

# May 20

THURSDAY

Acts 22:30; 23:6-11  
Psalm 16:1-2, 5, 7-8,  
9-10, 11  
**John 17:20-26**

## WIP (WORK IN PROGRESS)

"I in them and you in me, that they may be brought to perfection as one." – John 17:23

In one of my reflections last year, I wrote about being greatly disappointed when the opposite of almost everything I prayed for happened. I ended the reflection with, "So, I wait for my appointed time to understand why, trusting God has His reasons."

After I wrote that, I continued to seek for answers, especially by attending Masses almost daily. One time, the homily zeroed in on my confusion about the need to go on praying when my prayer wasn't being answered anyway. The priest said, "The purpose of prayer is not to change God's mind in your favor; it is to change you."

When my prayer remains unanswered, I sometimes sulk and think it's because God doesn't favor me. It's hard to think that God's delay could mean He's working on me so He can mold me into the perfect design He originally created. The work may take ages considering my stubbornness, flaws, and shortcomings. But there's hope. I've noticed some teeny tiny progress in me. Until my heart is fully changed, I'll keep reminding myself I am God's WIP. Lella M. Santiago (lellams88@gmail.com)

### reflect

God does not play favorites. We are all His favored children. We just have different rates of growth from each other.

*Jesus, change my heart. Perfect me as I become one with You. Amen.*

St. Bernardine of Siena, priest, pray for us.

# May 21

FRIDAY

Acts 25:13-21  
Psalm 103:1-2,  
11-12, 19-20  
**John 21:15-19**

## LOVE IS A CHOICE

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." – John 21:17, NIV

In today's Gospel, Jesus asked Peter three times: "Do you love Me?"

I tried to put myself in Peter's shoes to see how I would react. The human side of me felt annoyed that the Lord would ask me that question even if I had spent almost 10 years serving Him in youth ministry. I even became a full-time missionary, serving Him here and abroad for 13 years. Three years ago, He even called me to build a Feast in Ortigas. But I realized that what I do for God doesn't matter if I don't truly love and follow Him.

Love is not a feeling or emotion. It is a choice that we make. We may say we love Jesus today yet fail to do so tomorrow. We may choose Jesus when we are comfortable, then deny Him when things become difficult. But like Peter, we can choose to follow Jesus even after we fall. Peter denied Jesus three times yet He forgave him. Jesus even made Peter our first pope!

So come to Jesus today and tell Him, "Lord, I love You." Choose to follow Him today. Anthony Rodriguez ([anthony.r@svrtv.com](mailto:anthony.r@svrtv.com))

### reflect

Jesus sees beyond our failures. What He wants is for us to love and follow Him.

*Lord, I see Your unbounded mercy and forgiving love for me. Thank You for reminding me that all my shortcomings in this world are redeemed by Your victory on the cross. Amen.*

St. Cristobal Magallanes and companions, pray for us.

# May 22

SATURDAY

Acts 28:16-20,  
30-31

Psalms 11:4, 5, 7  
John 21:20-25

## DON'T EVER STOP

... Preaching the kingdom of God and teaching ... with all faithfulness, without prohibition. – Acts 28:30-31

In a trip to Malta, we had the privilege of visiting Saint Paul's prison cell— a creepy, dark, and cold

catacomb.

Saint Paul was on his way to Rome to be tried by a Roman court, but he was shipwrecked on the way to Malta. That didn't stop him from evangelizing the Maltese. In Rome, although in prison, he continued to evangelize the Romans and wrote the famous epistles. Even while waiting for his trial, he went to Spain; and from Spain, the faith came to the Philippines. No prison, no shipwreck, or persecution could stop Saint Paul from carrying out his calling.

We have a service team in our Bible study classes where we strive to apply Saint Paul's relentless zeal and enthusiasm to inspire us in this work of evangelization. In many ways, we try to replicate what Paul had done. We may not be as successful as Paul, but we realize that success is a state where we optimize God's gifts and keep answering His call.

Donna España (donna.espana@yahoo.com)

## reflect

Jesus Christ is God's message of love to us. Discover His love through the study of the Word.

*Lord, deepen my passion to spread Your Word to many.*

St. Rita of Cascia, pray for us.

# May 23

SUNDAY

Acts 2:1-11

Psalms 104: 1, 24, 31,  
34, 29-30

1 Corinthians 12:3-7,  
12-13

(or Galatians 5:16-25)

John 20:19-23

(or John 15:26-27;  
16:12-15)

Solemnity of the  
Pentecost

## THE SPIRIT OF RELATIONSHIPS

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy,  
peace, patience, kindness, generosity,  
faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.  
— Galatians 5:22-23

One Christmas break, there was some miscommunication during an out-of-town trip with my classmates. I was hurt, and unfortunately, I hurt the feelings of others, too. When we returned to the seminary, we were

cold to one another. A part of me wanted to pull aside certain people and tell them how offended I was. Another part of me also wanted to apologize to those I had hurt. But I couldn't do it because I was afraid it was not the right time or I might offend some more. On the outside, we were all smiling, but deep within, there was a rotting uneasiness.

We finally had the chance to open up during our scheduled class sharing. Someone had the courage to address the elephant in the room. He shared his feelings about what happened. After a few more sharers, I, too, opened up. A sudden change in the spirit of the room emerged—lighter, happier, freer—and only the Holy Spirit made it possible. Migs Ramirez (emiguelframirez@gmail.com)

### reflect

Do you manifest the fruit of the Spirit in your relationship with others?

*Father, thank You for Your Spirit of love that always orders my relationships with others and leads me back to You. Amen.*

St. Michael the Confessor, pray for us.

# May 24

MONDAY

Sirach 17:19-24

Psalm 32:1-2, 5, 6, 7

**Mark 10:17-27**

**Memorial of Mary,  
Mother of the Church**

## I'MPOSSIBLE

"All things are possible with God."

– Mark 10:27

The title above has been one of my battle cries for years. I believe this because of a man who came to me six years ago. He suffered from two kinds of leukemia. He was dying. But now, not only is he alive and well; his life has even prospered as photographer and staff of Senator Manny Pacquiao. His wife even had a baby two years ago.

I believe this because of a six-month-old baby brought to me five years ago. That baby was dying, too, because of liver failure. One of the *I'MPossible* concerts raised some amount that helped her to have a liver transplant abroad. Now, that baby has started going to school.

And I believe this because I myself was supposed to have been dead because of a serious colon problem that was suspected to be cancer. That was 25 years ago.

I have seen impossible things become possible in the lives of so many and in my own—whether it be in the area of health, finances, relationships, or spirituality. Indeed, all things are possible with God. So if your case seems impossible, just turn it to I'MPossible with God. Alvin Barcelona (apb\_ayo@yahoo.com)

### reflect

Are you facing a seemingly impossible task, challenge, or situation? God can and will make a way—in His perfect time and way.

*Dear God, I put my full trust in You as I surrender to Your perfect will on when and how You will make things possible for me. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

St. Joanna, pray for us.

# May 25

TUESDAY

Sirach 35:1-12  
Psalm 50:5-6, 7-8,  
14, 23  
Mark 10:28-31

## EVEN WHEN IT'S HARD

"There is no one who has given up a house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel's sake, who will not receive a hundred times as much now . . ." – Mark 10:29-30, AMP

I was scared of this verse. I don't like the feeling of going against my most important relationships. But to fulfill God's call, I realize it's sometimes necessary. Writing my second book *Why Is My Forever Taking Forever?* was a tough call because I had to share about what's dearest to my heart—my family. I knew God was calling me to write about how He healed me, especially from my "father wound." But at the same time, I didn't want to offend anyone. I was in a quandary. When I asked Bro. Bo Sanchez what to do, he told me to try asking them for permission. I gulped and knew deep within this was the right thing to do.

I wrote my manuscript and asked my dad, mom, and sister to read it, knowing the risk that was involved. I can't even put into words how nerve-racking that was for me. A year after launching my book, I looked back and saw how faithful God is. They fully supported my book, attended my launch and talks, and our relationship is solid, based on authentic love.

Marianne Mencias (marianne.mencias@gmail.com)

## reflect

Is God asking you to do something difficult for Him? His grace will carry you through and His rewards are out of this world!

*Father, help me walk on water and keep my eyes on You.*

St. Bede the Venerable, priest and Doctor of the Church, pray for us.

# May 26

WEDNESDAY

Sirach 36:1, 4-5,

10-17

Psalms 79:8, 9, 11, 13

Mark 10:32-45

## WHO IS JESUS?

Thus they will know, as we know,  
that there is no God but you. – Sirach 36:4

A child lived with his parents in a farm. Each morning, before plowing the field, the father would talk to the child about Jesus and they would pray together. The child grew up knowing about Jesus, but not really understanding why He was important in their lives.

Years later, the child was now a man and was assigned to work in Africa where he worked with a Christian who loves Jesus. Each day, he saw the Christian pray before work, before meals, and read a book. One day, he confronted his office mate: “What does Jesus have to do with us? Why do you talk to Him about many things? What’s in that book that you read every day?” The Christian began to tell him the story of Jesus. The story was so interesting to him that he would remind the Christian every day after work to continue the story. The man’s hunger for Jesus became so intense that he, too, would speak of Jesus to everyone and encourage them to give their lives to Him.

When we know the God whom we love, we can’t help but tell others about Him. [Chelle Crisanto \(ellehcmaria@gmail.com\)](mailto:ellehcmaria@gmail.com)

### reflect

“Once you become aware that the main business that you are here for is to know God, most of life’s problems fall into place of their own accord.” (J.I. Packer)

*Jesus, as I get to know You more, empower me to share You with others.*

St. Philip Neri, pray for us.



# May 27

THURSDAY

Sirach 42:15-25  
Psalm 33:2-3, 4-5,  
6-7, 8-9  
**Mark 10:46-52**

## THE SIGHT OF HOPE

On hearing that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, son of David, have pity on me." – Mark 10:47

I remember getting lost when I was small. Good thing I was with my brother. Nevertheless, not knowing where Mommy was in the crowd, made me cry in fear. We were far from home and we searched in a crowded and busy street somewhere in Quiapo for 15 minutes. Then finally, Mommy found us. I remember my cry of relief! The sight of her was my definition of rescue at that young age.

The thought of being rescued is hope. It's a feeling I can imagine Bartimaeus had when he heard that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. Could this Teacher be his chance to finally see?

As Bartimaeus heard the crowd stirring as Jesus approached, he grabbed his once-in-a-lifetime chance. He cried out! He knew Jesus was the answer to his blindness. He was the cure to his ache to see. And Jesus didn't disappoint. What a happy day for Bartimaeus!

What do you need Jesus to rescue you from? Don't hesitate to call out to Him. *Cristy Galang (cristy\_cc@yahoo.com)*

### reflect

"Outside of the cross of Jesus Christ, there is no hope in this world. That cross and resurrection at the core of the Gospel is the only hope for humanity. Wherever you go, ask God for wisdom on how to get that Gospel in, even in the toughest situations of life." (Ravi Zacharias)

*My Jesus, save me from my pitiful condition. Amen.*

St. Augustine of Canterbury, bishop, pray for us.

# May 28

FRIDAY

Sirach 44:1, 9-13  
Psalm 149:1-2, 3-4,  
5-6, 9  
**Mark 11:11-25**

## MOVE THE IMMOVABLE

"Amen, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be lifted up and thrown into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it shall be done for him." – Mark 11:23

I love the view from a mountaintop. I enjoy the landscape of a city and see how small the buildings, houses, and people are. From my perspective, they could fit in the palm of my hands.

From God's perspective, that's how small our problems are. He sees our concerns as puny compared to the power of His mighty hand. If only we ask His help and trust in His ways.

Jesus sees the smallness of our faith and tells us that we can move mountains with Him. What are the immovable problems you are experiencing right now? These may be concerns that you think can't be solved because they've been stuck with you for a long time—like debts to pay, relationships to mend, or bad habits and vices to break.

Start believing and stop doubting. When we believe, we become problem solvers. When we doubt, we become idle and tend to blame others. There is no problem too great that you can't handle with God. Tell your big problem that your God is infinitely and immeasurably bigger. Kirby Llaban (kirby@kirbyllaban.com)

### reflect

Are you doing something about your "immovable" problems? Ask God to give you the strength you need to face them.

*Lord, I feel the heavy weight of my problems on my shoulders. Help me to carry them and to surrender all to Your mighty hand. Amen.*

St. Justus of Urgel, pray for us.

# May 29

SATURDAY

**Sirach 51:12-20**

Psalm 19:8, 9, 10, 11

Mark 11:27-33

## MODERN-DAY JOB

"And so I thank you and praise you."

– Sirach 51:12

Romulo was a gay hairstylist who led a colorful life. He was introduced to the Cenacle, a weekly gathering of Marian devotees for the Holy Mass and the rosary. Through the years, he was the life of the group with his upbeat spirit, as he grew spiritually with a deep devotion to the Blessed Mother. But diabetes left him jobless, bedridden with an amputated leg and another with gangrene, and unable to attend the Cenacle. Living alone, neighbors took turns caring for him while the group contributes for his subsistence. But despite his agony and pitiful condition, he has remained upbeat, joyful in praises, and grateful to God.

Romulo reminds me of Job, the wealthy and upright man in the Bible. Satan subjected him to a lot of suffering, reducing him to nothingness to test his goodness. But Job weathered through his trials and remained faithful to God.

When things go our way, we praise and thank God. But when we are at our lowest, we question His wisdom. How fickle is our faith in the Lord, yet our Lord remains constant in His love and mercy for us! Marie Franco (mariefranco\_pie@yahoo.com)

### reflect

When you're tempted to doubt God's wisdom when you go through life's storms, remember Job.

*Father God, send forth my guardian angel to shield me from Satan as I journey toward my purification and redemption. Amen.*

St. William Arnaud, pray for us.

# May 30

SUNDAY

Deuteronomy 4:32-34,  
39-40

Psalms 33:4-5, 6, 9,  
18-19, 20, 22

Romans 8:14-17

**Matthew 28:16-20**

**Solemnity of the  
Holy Trinity**

## WITH YOU

"And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." – Matthew 28:20

One weekend when I was five years old, I begged Papa to take me to his rice field. He was reluctant at first but relented when Mom asked. When we got to the paddies the following morning, he gave specific instructions.

"Walk in front of me, stay on the paddy wall, no running. I'll take care of you." To my five-year-old ears, that was enough.

But like all adventures, things didn't go as planned. To make the long story short, I fell into what seemed a swirling black blob of mud and misery that swallowed my foot whole. I was in tears as I tried to pull myself out. But my father, in all his grace, quickly pulled me up by my arm until I was out of that murky water. He kept his word to take care of me.

Before His ascension, Jesus gave specific instructions on witnessing about Him. Sandwiched within those instructions are assurances—about His nature and being with us even "to the end of the age."

Jesus promised to watch over you. And He does. He never fails to keep His Word. Rod Velez ([rod.velez@live.com](mailto:rod.velez@live.com))

## reflect

If Jesus said it, you can count on Him to fulfill it.

*Grant us the grace to always trust in Your words and promises, Lord. May we live up to the conviction of trusting and believing in You as our true Lord.*

St. Joan of Arc, pray for us.

# May 31

MONDAY

Zephaniah 3:14-18

(or Romans 12:9-16)

Isaiah 12:2-3, 4, 5-6

**Luke 1:39-56**

**Feast of the Visitation of  
the Blessed Virgin Mary**

## VISIT

At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. – Luke 1:39-40

Elsa was one of our faithful and zealous servants at The Feast. When she got sick, she resigned from her job and went back to her hometown. Our community visited her in Tarlac to pray with her and give her joy, comfort, and strength.

Our sister and friend, Chiki, served for many years in Anawim, one of the mercy ministries of the Light of Jesus Family for the abandoned and poor elderlies. When she got sick, our brothers and sisters in community visited her several times in the hospital and in her home in Laguna.

When my Uncle Alfonso got sick, our family visited him in the hospital. His hemoglobin was low and he needed blood transfusion. By God's grace, though fearful, I was able to donate a bag of blood for him.

It brings joy when we visit our sick brothers and sisters. But the blessing isn't just for them but also for us who visit them. Visiting and caring for the sick is a corporal work of mercy that shows our love in concrete ways. Who needs your care today? Who do you need to visit today? Meann Tee (meanntyte@yaho.com)

## reflect

“For I was . . . ill and you cared for me.” (Matthew 25:35-36)

*Father, thank You for the opportunity to demonstrate Your love by visiting and caring for the sick. Please heal and comfort all of them. Amen.*

**St. Mechtildis, pray for us.**

# Jun 1

TUESDAY

Tobit 2:9-14  
Psalm 112:1-2, 7-8, 9  
**Mark 12:13-17**

## ARE YOU READY TO CHANGE YOUR HEART?

"Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar  
and to God what belongs to God."  
- Mark 12:17

In one of our gatherings, a woman came up to me and asked, "Bo, why don't you love your country?" I asked, "Why do you say that?" She said, "You don't preach about political issues. Don't you care that the country is going to the dogs? You should follow what another community is doing. Their leaders are going around the country, campaigning for senatorial candidates."

I replied, "Running for politics, campaigning for specific candidates, and preaching about political issues are some ways of loving this country. I deeply honor religious leaders who do that—it's their calling. But I have a different call."

I view things not in years but in decades. You don't like a king now? Don't worry. Kings and queens will come and go, but God will remain. I believe the only way you can change our country is by changing hearts. And my personal call is to do that, so I build small communities of transformation called Feasts. I'm helping raise up the next generation of young leaders for those communities. And I help people live out the Gospel in every area of their lives. Bo Sanchez (bosanchez@kerygmfamily.com)

### reflect

Has your spiritual life influenced the way you live as a citizen of your country?

*Lord, I pray for the grace to stand up and do my share in nation building.*

St. Justin, martyr, pray for us.

# Jun 2

WEDNESDAY

**Tobit 3:1-11, 16-17**

Psalm 25:2-3, 4-5,

6-7, 8-9

Mark 12:18-27

## FAITHFUL ONE

You are merciful in all you do,  
faithful in all your ways. – Tobit 3:2, GNT

In December 2018, our grandmother, Mommy Rose, was rushed to the hospital because of her liver problem. My wife and I rushed to the hospital to check on her. According to the doctor, she only had a 30 percent chance to survive. He also told us to prepare our hearts because we didn't know what might happen soon.

Our hearts broke when we visited Mommy Rose in the ICU. There were tubes all over her body. She tried to open her eyes, and I saw that they had already turned yellow. It was a painful sight. I prayed harder that night and the following days. I knew nothing was impossible with God.

After months in the ICU, Mommy's condition improved so we transferred her to a regular room. Aside from her medicines, we learned that singing her songs and making her laugh were effective ways to help her recover. By God's grace, she did.

As I write this, we just finished celebrating Mommy's 73rd birthday—all of us filled with gratitude for God's miracles in her life. In sickness, in trials, and in stormy days—His faithfulness stands. Ericson T. Trinidad (erix.trinidad@gmail.com)

### reflect

Praying for something? Keep the faith and claim it in Jesus' name.

*In trial or triumph, in sickness or strength, in end and beginning,  
You will never fail. (from the song "Never Fail" by Feast Worship)*

St. Marcellinus and Peter, martyrs, pray for us.

# Jun 3

THURSDAY

Tobit 6:10-11; 7:1,  
9-17; 8:4-9  
Psalm 128:1-2, 3, 4-5  
**Mark 12:28-34**

## JUST THE WAY YOU ARE

"You are not far from the kingdom of God."  
– Mark 12:34

One servant in the production team of The Feast Bellevue is a seasoned bank manager who claims she "bosses" everyone in her branch the whole week.

"I decided to serve after a year of attending The Feast because I want to remind myself that I'm not really in charge."

She served in the morning sessions of our Feasts. She started as an ever-attentive stage manager and runner. Soon, a change of leadership left the events coordinator post vacant. The top choice for the job? This take-charge lady who had the innate ability to lead, was attentive to details, and covered all bases. She later became head of the team. The boss on weekdays still became the head servant on Sundays. Why? Because she was made for it! With all her talents and skills, God used her just as she is.

Hillsong Church's Brian Houston said, "God didn't make you one way to use you another way." You don't have to be a person you are not to be used by God. You are a perfect instrument in His hands! You want His Kingdom to come? Do your unique part. Perform the task none of us can do, because it's suited perfectly for you. Lallaine Gogna (lallygogna@yahoo.com)

### reflect

Only you can bring heaven near in your unique way. Don't delay. Don't refuse. Tell the world the Kingdom is at hand.

*Lord, make me part of Your work here on earth. With all I am, use me.*

St. Charles Lwanga and companions, martyrs, pray for us.



# Jun 4

FRIDAY

**Tobit 11:5-17**

Psalm 146:1-2, 6-7,  
8-9, 9-10

Mark 12:35-37

## PREACH WHAT YOU LIVE

Tobit praised God and told everyone how God in his mercy had restored his sight.  
- Tobit 11:17, GNT

As a preacher, my life is usually a source of preaching content. Every time I mess up or something unfortunate happens to me, I tell myself, "This will make a good story because God makes all things work for good."

By God's grace, He literally turns my mess into a message.

Once, I was on an elevator going to the 24th floor. It stopped on the 21st floor for some people to get down. The elevator was full and I was in front, so I had to step out. But when I was going back in, the door shut so fast that I was left behind. I was a bit irritated, but then I thought, I might as well use this story for my talk. So, at The Feast, I shared the story and said, "Maybe there's a door in your life that has been shut . . . but God is leading you to another door that will get you closer and faster to your dream."

Friend, if you have a story about your journey, don't hold back. Because your story might just change someone else's life.

Mike Viñas (mikemichaelfcv@yahoo.com)

### reflect

Living an inspiring life is not so much about accomplishments but authenticity. Share with someone or post on social media your most recent blessing or breakthrough.

*Father, grant me the courage to be a good witness of what You have done in my life. Lead me to share Your goodness to those who need to hear my story.*

St. Nennoc, pray for us.

# Jun 5

SATURDAY

Tobit 12:1, 5-15, 20

Tobit 13:2, 6, 6, 7, 8

**Mark 12:38-44**

## ENOUGH TO GIVE

"But she from her poverty, has contributed all she had, her whole livelihood."

– Mark 12:44

*Aling* Rosalina is an unexpected heroine. She's a 61-year-old seamstress who lives a simple life in Lipa, Batangas.

She used her talent for sewing scraps of cloth to make face masks during the Taal Volcano eruption.

From an initial 100 masks, *Aling* Rosalina sewed 400 more and generously gave the masks for free to neighbors and all those in need. She not only filled a practical need but also became a stellar example of true generosity in action.

Through *Aling* Rosalina and the widow in today's Gospel who both gave to God their whole livelihood, I am also reminded to give whenever I can and to whoever is in need. No need for heroics or publicity—just a sincere and generous heart.

You have enough to give whether you are abundant or lacking. You have enough time to give. You have enough talent to give. You have enough comfort and care to give.

Giving of yourself is enough. Dina Pecaña (dina.p@shepherdsvoice.com.ph)

## reflect

"No one has ever become poor by giving." (Anne Frank)

*Dearest Lord, teach me to be generous. Teach me to serve You as You deserve; to give and not to count the cost." (St. Ignatius of Loyola)*

St. Boniface, bishop and martyr, pray for us.

# Jun 6

SUNDAY

Exodus 24:3-8  
Psalm 116:12-13,  
15-16, 17-18  
Hebrews 9:11-15  
**Mark 14:12-16,  
22-26**

**Solemnity of the Body  
and Blood Christ**

## JUST GO

"Make preparations for us there."  
– Mark 14:15, NRSV

Kobe (not his real name) was a muscled, tattooed guy whom I first met in one of our gatherings. His demeanor was very macho. His speech was straight to the point. His poker face covered a harsh past. He'd enter a room and his presence would speak loudly.

He validated my first impressions of him when he started telling his story. This guy had been through a lot. In fact, we almost have identical pasts. But our personalities are entirely different. I'm the loving, smiling, wordy, low-key type of guy.

I could sense God planted a burden in me that day. He said, "Boggs, disciple Kobe for Me." I was hesitant, "Are You sure, Lord? We're different. He won't respond to me." Nevertheless, I obeyed. Kobe and I met again. This time, I told my story.

Tears welled up in his eyes as he listened. I was in disbelief! His parting words floored me, "I'd like to be mentored. Let's eat out again." God prepared Kobe's heart for this meeting.

Is God asking you to do something difficult? Go. Just go! Because He has prepared the way for you. Boggs Burbos

(boggsturbos@yahoo.com)

## reflect

What's God telling you to do that's difficult? Nurture it. Pray about it.

*Jesus, grant me love and courage to respond to Your divine appointments.*

St. Norbert, bishop, pray for us.

# Jun 7

MONDAY

2 Corinthians 1:1-7

Psalms 34:2-3, 4-5,

6-7, 8-9

**Matthew 5:1-12**

## FULLNESS OF LIFE

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs  
is the kingdom of heaven."

– Matthew 5:3

In January 2020, I would often catch myself singing the Feast Worship song, "Thy Will Be Done."

Then barely two weeks into the year, I noticed a blurring in my left eye. My ophthalmologist informed me that the trauma on my eye from a car accident in 1994 had slowly damaged it. If not cared for, I could lose my sight!

"Father, is this Your will?" I asked.

In my heart, I sensed Abba telling me, "You have Me. Do you still feel incomplete?" I wept. Not out of shame, but out of joy!

Even if I lose my eyesight, I still feel complete. I'm His, and He is mine.

The Lord didn't allow my sight to be damaged. I had an operation and my eye is now OK.

Fullness of life has nothing to do with what's around you. It has everything to do with Who is inside you. Fullness of life is oneness with God. Marc V. Lopez (marcvlopez88@gmail.com)

### reflect

Are you poor in spirit? *We* need to be, so we can be rich in Christ!

*Jesus, I pray for the Holy Spirit's wisdom and revelation to show me today that I am truly complete because I have You. Amen.*

St. Willibald, bishop and missionary, pray for us.

# Jun 8

TUESDAY

2 Corinthians

1:18-22

Psalms 119:129, 130,

131, 132, 133, 135

**Matthew 5:13-16**

## LIGHT OF KINDNESS

"In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."

– Matthew 5:16

Daddy came to live with us when his failing competence had become noticeable and he needed closer care. Thus began the challenging shift in our relationship. I had become the parent and he, my child. Soon, we found our rhythm as we took on our reversed roles. While I relished the time with him, I knew it wasn't easy for him to let go of many things. Used to being in charge, he wasn't comfortable finding himself at the receiving end. But he was always kind, appreciative of every little thing, never irritable. One morning, we had this conversation:

Me: Do you like *taho*, Daddy?

Daddy: Sure, I like *taho*. (Slurp) Nice. (Smile, slurp). Do you have one more of this? Not for me. For Paulo (pointing at his caregiver), my sparring partner.

Old age may have impaired Daddy's physical competency but his kindness remained. Until the end, even when the pain of illness was too much to bear, he showed me how the light of God's love can shine from the heart. Marie G. Ferrer (smgferrer@gmail.com)

### reflect

"You may think your light is small, but it can make a huge difference in other people's lives." (Anonymous)

*Dear Lord, use me today. As You guide my thoughts and actions, use me to bless others. Help me to live out my life in a way that honors You. Amen.*

St. William of York, pray for us.

# Jun 9

WEDNESDAY

**2 Corinthians 3:4-11**

Psalm 99:5, 6, 7, 8, 9

Matthew 5:17-19

## I DO TO FOREVER

For if there was glory in that which lasted for a while, how much more is there that lasts forever. – 2 Corinthians 3:11, GNT

In February 2020, we were part of Bo Sanchez's Holy Land pilgrimage. Along with other couples in the group, my husband and I exchanged "I do's" in the Church of the First Miracle in Cana.

Before the wedding, my husband planned a surprise, with our friend as accomplice and videographer. At the Mount of Beatitudes' parking lot, overlooking the Sea of Galilee, he knelt and asked me to marry him again, complete with a new ring—classic proposal! I was blissful not only because of the events, but because of his renewed declaration of intentional love for me. It became his way of hitting the refresh button that promises a deeper and more authentic marriage.

It's the same with God's laws. It was not only an event when He wrote the laws on the stone tablets, which only lasted for a while. What's more important is the Spirit of God—His love through Jesus working in us each day to forever. Forever is not an event—we say "I do" to the Lord every moment, despite difficulties. We live with and breathe Him in our daily life—in our joys and crosses. [Ichel Alignay \(michele.alignay@gmail.com\)](mailto:michele.alignay@gmail.com)

### reflect

Do you focus on the event or do you focus on the spirit of the event and how it brings you closer to God?

*Lord, make me realize that Your Spirit works in me every day to forever.*

St. Ephrem, deacon and Doctor of the Church, pray for us.

# Jun 10

THURSDAY

2 Corinthians 3:15-

4:1, 3-6

Psalm 85:9-10,

11-12, 13-14

Matthew 5:20-26

## LET THEM SEE CHRIST IN ME

"Let light shine out of darkness"

- 2 Corinthians 4:6

One year ago, the whole world stood still, literally, because of the spread of the coronavirus.

One year ago, everything was difficult and different. No one was spared from its effect. We all feared for the days ahead.

And one year ago, I wrote this reflection during the height of the pandemic, claiming everything will be a thing of the past and we will all come out from this crisis stronger than ever.

The whole world watched this virus affect so many lives across the world. But it was also during this time that the goodness of humanity shone brightest. Help came from different sources and people reached out to frontliners and the poor. Fundraising activities sprouted to help ease the burden of those in the peripheries.

For some, God may have seemed dead during this dark time in history, but I saw Him in the face of so many people. I do not know how you waded through the crisis last year, but I know you came out stronger and your heart became bigger for other people. Thank you for being Jesus to others. Ruby Albino

(r\_jean07@yahoo.com)

### reflect

God will never abandon you in a crisis. In trying times, believe that He will always pull you through. Accept His rescue so you, too, can be a blessing to other people.

*Lord, remove the indifference in my heart. Help me to magnify Your love to others.*

St. Maximus of Naples, deacon and Doctor of the Church, pray for us.

# Jun 11

FRIDAY

Hosea 11:1, 3-4, 8-9

Isaiah 12:2-3, 4, 5-6

Ephesians 3:8-12,

14-19

**John 19:31-37**

**Solemnity of the Sacred  
Heart of Jesus**

## CAN'T STAY SILENT

The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He . . . testifies so that you also may believe. – John 19:35

I've always been the quiet one, speaking only when spoken to, very calculated and reserved. The one person I could talk to about anything

was my mother. So, when she passed away in 2011 because of cancer, I became even more comfortable with silence.

I found myself talking about her more and more as years went by. I felt the need to introduce her to my new friends, knowing that they would have liked her. I'd talk about the time when she stopped along Libis when an old woman had mistaken her car for a taxi, and she drove this stranger to her destination without asking for anything in return. I'd boast about her love and compassion for her family and even strangers.

She was, and still is, Jesus to me.

I experienced His love through my mom, and I couldn't stop talking about God. I would gladly take every chance I get to talk about Jesus and my personal encounters with Him through the people around me. Because when you experience the kind of love and grace only He can give, you run out of reasons to stay silent. Issa Rodriguez (issarodriguezmusic@gmail.com)

## reflect

“Silence is very dangerous, especially when your words can be the only source of healing at a moment.” (Israelmore Ayivor)

*Lord, let my life song testify to Your love.*

St. Barnabas, Apostle, pray for us.



# Jun 12

SATURDAY

2 Corinthians 5:14-21

Psalms 103:1-2, 3-4,

9-10, 11-12

**Luke 2:41-51**

(or Matthew 5:33-37)

**Memorial of the  
Immaculate Heart of the  
Blessed Virgin Mary**

## EVERYWHERE

And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" – Luke 2:49

When I was young, I found You only in church. Yes, I prayed the prayers I learned but I didn't really feel Your presence. But as I came to know You in a personal way, I found You in

Scripture. And as I lived it out, I saw it come alive in my life.

I served You and saw You in those who gave up their lives to carry out Your mission. I saw You at work in our prayer meetings, Bible studies, renewal seminars, and outreaches. You came alive for me during Mass and I began to attend it daily.

Then darkness overtook my life when I struggled with my faith. I thought I would stop seeing You at work in my life. But even in the dimmest of nights, I felt You—comforting me through a friend, encouraging me through my family, leading me to start a new life I hadn't known before.

Today, I see You everywhere. In the perseverance of my daughter in doing a challenging task. In a successful new recipe set on our table. In the yoga exercise that hit the right spot on my painful hip. Now, I can't stop seeing You everywhere. Rissa

Singson Kawpeng (rissakawpeng@gmail.com)

## reflect

"Nature is too thin a screen; the glory of the omnipresent God bursts through everywhere." (Ralph Waldo Emerson)

*Jesus, all creation shouts Your glory!*

St. Gaspar Bertoni, pray for us.

# Jun 13

SUNDAY

**Ezekiel 17:22-24**

Psalm 92:2-3, 13-14,  
15-16

2 Corinthians 5:6-10  
Mark 4:26-34

## TWO LINES

It shall put forth branches and bear fruit,  
and become a majestic cedar.  
– Ezekiel 17:23

God's grace met our faith as husband and wife after four-and-a-half years of fervently praying for a child. I went through stages of sadness as I questioned God's faithfulness to us until I fully surrendered to His will for us.

It was one glorious morning when the pregnancy test produced two lines. We were pregnant—finally!

In retrospect, I was so focused on getting my prayer answered that I forgot to enjoy the season of waiting.

I failed to revel in the journey toward God's sweet yes. I realized that His pruning was necessary to strip me of my insecurities and doubts. He had to remove my pride and discontent so He could replace it with hope and trust.

Sometimes, God takes our woundedness and uses them as seeds to bring forth fruitfulness and beauty in our life. Trust that He never fails to fulfill His Word and everything happens in His most perfect time. Love Cosio (lovelynmcosio@gmail.com)

## reflect

Are you too focused on the destination that you forget to appreciate the beauty of your journey?

*Lord, search my heart and make it like Yours even if it means experiencing pain to purify my soul. Amen.*

St. Anthony of Padua, priest and Doctor of the Church, pray for us.

# Jun 14

MONDAY

2 Corinthians 6:1-10

Psalms 98:1, 2, 3, 3-4

Matthew 5:38-42

## TRUSTING GOD THROUGH GRIEF

But, as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities. – 2 Corinthians 6:4

I can still remember that day when my wife handed me a pregnancy test with two clear lines. Yahoo! We were having another baby! Our youngest then was just turning a year old, then here comes another. But a few weeks later, on my wife's ninth week of pregnancy, we lost our baby.

It was, by far, the most devastating news we had ever received. I remember crying as we drove home from the hospital. The pain was unbearable. Immeasurable. It left us shattered. It removed our gaze from the Lord. We were angry. We took offense at our loss and even on those who tried to comfort us. We were lost. We couldn't push ourselves to pray.

But the Lord saw us through it all. He made a way to heal our family. He took over our lives. He straightened our path. He showed us that He knew better. He spoke to us through different opportunities—through our battles and victories. He allowed these to happen because He wanted us to put our trust in Him. Jan Silan (jcsilan@gmail.com)

### reflect

Do you question God's plan? Are you hurting because you don't understand? Trust His heart.

*Lord, hold my hand in this journey of life. Please bring peace to my heart, especially when I do not understand. Amen.*

Sts. Valerius and Rufinus, pray for us.

# Jun 15

TUESDAY

2 Corinthians 8:1-9

Psalm 146:2, 5-6,

6-7, 8-9

**Matthew 5:43-48**

## PERFECT LOVE

"But you are to be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." – Matthew 5:48

Perfectionism—I thought this was what the above Bible verse meant. Little did I know that such mindset and standard wasn't part of the

Christian ideal nor did it even support mental health.

Perfectionism is an irrational behavior that simply requires oneself and others to be, well, "perfect." Needless to say, it's a lost cause, as no one can measure up to perfection. Perfectionism, therefore, is considered a neurotic symptom since it indicates the absence of flexibility in one's dealings with self and others.

In a way, perfectionism is the opposite of the verse above. The Lord calls us to be perfect in the way our Father in heaven is perfect—that is, to be perfect in loving.

The Lord has commanded: "Love your neighbor as yourself." This doesn't only talk about the quality of love we give our neighbor, but moreso, expands the concept of self to include the other. Therefore, to love one's neighbor is to love one's self. This is *perfection*.

Do you measure up to it? Jonathan Yogawin (coachj@jyogawin.com)

### reflect

How have you been judgmental? How can you love better?

*Lord, teach me to love as You love. Amen.*

St. Alice, pray for us.

# Jun 16

WEDNESDAY

2 Corinthians 9:6-11

Psalms 112:1-2, 3-4, 9

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

## FOCUS ON WHAT MATTERS MOST

"When you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you." – Matthew 6:6

In the past, I would usually go online and post photos or quotable quotes from Scripture and devotionals when I do my morning prayer time. But I would get very distracted. I'd end up browsing through social media in between my posts until it was already time to hurry for work. I would feel frustrated for not finishing my prayer time and even more frustrated when no one would like my posts.

Since then, I've tried my best to stay offline while having my prayer time and just post afterwards, if at all. Of course, it's good to share beautiful words in the midst of all the negativity online. But I also remind myself that I should do it not for the likes and comments but to bless even just one person.

I also realized that there can be days when I don't have to post anything about my prayer time and just keep them between me and the Lord. After all, more than the likes and comments on social media, what matters most is we spend time with God, act on our prayers, and live out His Word.

Kring Talladen (kringtalladen@gmail.com)

### reflect

Will you still pray and do good even if no one is watching?

*Dear Lord, I am often distracted with many things. Help me to focus on what matters most. Amen.*

St. John Francis Regis, pray for us.

# Jun 17

THURSDAY

2 Corinthians 11:1-11

Psalms 111:1-2, 3-4,

7-8

**Matthew 6:7-15**

## JUST TODAY

"Give us today our daily bread."

– Matthew 6:11

After 18 sessions of chemotherapy, Carla needed to go through further treatment that would last six more months. With a face weary over the bad news, she said, "Jon, I'm too tired and too weak. I don't think I can make it through another six months." I silently listened to her. I hugged her tight to say what words couldn't.

Then I shared with her God's promise. "You don't have to go through this for six months. Just go through this today. God gives us the strength that we need for today. Tomorrow's grace will come tomorrow. Then we'll do tomorrow, tomorrow. *We'll do this one day at a time!* Then, you'll be surprised, we're done with this whole thing."

Friend, you have enough strength for the day.

Think about this: Yesterday was the tomorrow you were worried two days ago. Your breath today is proof that you made it through yesterday!

My friend, God is faithful. You'll win it today!

(Spoiler Alert: I'll declare this again tomorrow. I'll declare this one day at a time.) Jon Escoto (faithatworkjon@gmail.com)

### reflect

Do you feel too weak to make it through this day? Friend, God's grace is sufficient for today. Go through this journey one day at a time.

*Father, give us today our daily bread. Amen.*

St. Albert Chmielowski, pray for us.

# Jun 18

FRIDAY

2 Corinthians 11:18,  
21-30

Psalm 34:2-3, 4-5, 6-7

Matthew 6:19-23

## WHO DO YOU FOLLOW?

If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness. – 2 Corinthians 11:30

It's so easy to get insecure and even depressed in today's social media era. All we see are travel photos, expensive apparel, delicious food, and other beautiful things that many of us can only dream of.

However, I am thankful that some online celebrities are also bold enough to declare that not all these posts are true. Many of them are even paid and scripted.

So, for the sake of my mental health and self-confidence, I decided to filter the online influencers I follow. I now follow more women who talk about body acceptance and those who share about affordable self-care because they have to stick to a budget. I like women who talk about the real struggles of entrepreneurship, those who share their vulnerabilities and show the realities of life.

By following them, I learn new ways to love and accept my imperfections instead of questioning why I don't have a glamorous life. Tintin Taton (kristinetaton@gmail.com)

## reflect

Who do you follow on social media? Do they help you celebrate your life or do they make you feel insecure?

*Lord Jesus, teach us to focus on what we have and not on what we don't have. Amen.*

St. Guy, pray for us.

# Jun 19

SATURDAY

2 Corinthians

12:1-10

Psalms 34:8-9, 10-11,

12-13

**Matthew 6:24-34**

## GOD HAS YOU COVERED

"That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life." – Matthew 6:25, NLT

My annual medical insurance coverage was about to end in a few days when out of the blue, my husband decided to increase it from P200,000 to P300,000. Then the next day, he changed his mind and increased it to P500,000.

One week later, we had our annual physical examination. My test results showed that I had cancer.

What led my husband to increase it when I hardly used my medical insurance in previous years?

I believe it was all part of God's provision. He made sure we had funds ready to address my needs. My new coverage answered for a big chunk of my medical expenses.

I love today's Gospel because it reassures me that no matter what comes my way, God has me covered. I have peace in my heart that He will always provide.

God didn't promise to shield us from problems and trials, but He did assure that He will be with us through it all. That's exactly what He showed me during my cancer journey.

Reng D. Morelos (norinamorelos@gmail.com)

### reflect

When trials come your way, be at peace knowing that God will see you through.

*Lord, may I continue to put my trust in You—that no matter how big or small my concern may be, You will walk beside me. Amen.*

St. Romuald, abbot, pray for us.



# Jun 20

SUNDAY

Job 38:1, 8-11  
Psalm 107:23-24,  
25-26, 28-29, 30-31  
**2 Corinthians 5:14-17**  
Mark 4:35-41

## A LIGHTHOUSE WITH NO LIGHT

So whoever is in Christ is a new creation: the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come. – 2 Corinthians 5:17

I had been taking photos of the lighthouse for hours when it hit me: it wasn't working anymore. Then I wondered, "What good is a lighthouse that gives no light? What purpose does it serve?"

I had these thoughts because I was feeling a little out-of-sorts lately, as if I had lost my purpose in life. I was in Batanes for a few days with Mama and her friends—all hardcore photographers. We'd get up at 2:30 in the morning to get shots of the Milky Way and wait to shoot the sunrise. After breakfast, we'd go out again at mid-afternoon to take shots of the sunset.

One night, we decided to use a lighthouse as a foreground for our Milky Way shots. That's when another thought hit me: Maybe the lighthouse no longer serves its previous purpose as a beacon for sailors, but now serves a new one—as one of the most popular photoshoot locations in the province.

If you feel as if you've lost your purpose, come back to the Purpose Giver. Your previous purpose might have already been fulfilled, and it's time for a new one. Karren Renz Seña

(karren@projectbeautifulwords.com)

### reflect

Are you feeling a little lost now? Come back to God. He is ready to plant a new dream in your heart.

*Lord, when it feels as if I've lost my fire and my purpose, send me the Holy Spirit that You may ignite in me in a fresh, new way. Amen.*

St. Florentina, pray for us.

# Jun 21

MONDAY

Genesis 12:1-9

Psalms 33:12-13,

18-19, 20, 22

Matthew 7:1-5

## BLESSINGS

### FOLLOW OBEDIENCE

"Go forth from your land . . . to a land that I will show you . . . and I will bless you."

– Genesis 12:1-2

Recently, I met up with friends I hadn't seen in 25 years. They, too, migrated from the Philippines around the time I did. Looking back on those early years and where each of us are today, we agreed it's all been worthwhile.

My wife, Candy, and I trusted that migrating was God's plan for our young family then. In our hearts, we knew blessings were forthcoming. While God faithfully provided for our physical and material needs, the bigger blessing was He also nourished us spiritually to prepare us to serve Him.

We became heavily involved in Our Lady of Angels Catholic Church in Allen, Texas, serving in various ministries. We also became active in Missionary Families of Christ (MFC), serving as household heads and youth parent coordinators. Our kids, Trisa and Josh, only six and four when we moved, would grow up strong in their faith and respond to God's call. Today, the four of us continue to serve our parish and MFC.

Our journey abroad continues, and we eagerly await what else God has in store. Erwin Rocoles (erwin\_roceles@yahoo.com)

### reflect

The family that prays and serves together, stays together.

*Dear Lord, we entrust our plans to You. In difficulty and trouble, may we not lose sight of You. Remind us that Your favor will always be upon us.*

St. Aloysius Gonzaga, martyr, pray for us.

# Jun 22

TUESDAY

Genesis 13:2, 5-18  
Psalm 15:2-3, 3-4, 5  
**Matthew 7:6, 12-14**

## THE NARROW GATE

"Enter through the narrow gate.  
For wide is the gate and broad is the way  
which leads to perdition." – Matthew 7:13

On the island of Gozo in Malta are many cliffs and caves by the ocean. Part of our trip was to ride a small boat through these caves. As we stood by the quay, we saw the narrow entrances to the caves. We couldn't help but be a little anxious.

We passed through dimly lit caverns, and after a while, we could see light. What met our eyes as we exited was one of the glorious sights we have ever seen—the vast ocean against clear blue skies.

The colors of the waters were amazing—emerald greens and crimson reds mixed with fuchsia. The colors were because of corals that grew on the rocks underneath the water.

Such also is our life journey.

We go through struggles, tests, and hardship like going through dark, narrow doors. But if we hold on to our faith and unwavering trust in God, our narrow gates will lead to a crown—**eternal life.** Rolly España (rollyespana53@gmail.com)

### reflect

There are many easy ways to hell, but only one narrow way to heaven. But as Scripture promises, the present suffering is nothing compared to the glory that awaits us (Romans 8:18).

*Father in heaven, make my faith steadfast and strong so I will be able to overcome all trials and temptations in life. Amen.*

St. Thomas More, martyr, pray for us.

# Jun 23

WEDNESDAY

Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18

Psalms 105:1-2, 3-4,

6-7, 8-9

**Matthew 7:15-20**

## UNMASKING BROKENNESS

"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves." – Matthew 7:15, NRSVCE

Being vulnerable isn't something that comes easy to me. As a seminarian and an achiever, it's hard for me to admit my brokenness. During one of our evaluations in the seminary, my priest-formator called me for an individual colloquium, a one-to-one conference. He asked, "How are you?" I had been writing my undergrad thesis for the last couple of days so he knew I was going through a tough time. At first, I said I was OK with a poker face. But I was caught off guard when he said, "When are you going to stop lying to yourself and admit what you really feel?"

The room fell silent. I broke down as I ranted about my frustrations and disappointments over my plans that wouldn't happen. I was pressured by the demands of my academics.

After my spiritual direction with him, I realized how arrogant I was. It was difficult for me to admit that I wasn't OK and I needed help. I hid behind a Superman mask and concealed my woundedness because I wasn't used to accepting help. Red Dioso (redantejrdioso@gmail.com)

### reflect

"If we want greater clarity in our purpose or deeper and more meaningful spiritual lives, vulnerability is the path." (Brené Brown)

*Jesus, You came into the world in human form. Teach me to embrace my vulnerability so I may learn to ask help from You and others. Amen.*

St. Joseph Cafasso, pray for us.

# Jun 24

THURSDAY

Isaiah 49:1-6

Psalms 139:1-3,  
13-14, 14-15

Acts 13:22-26

**Luke 1:57-66, 80**

**Solemnity  
of John the Baptist**

## WONDER CHILD

Everyone who heard this wondered about it, asking, "What then is this child going to be?"

For the Lord's hand was with him.

– Luke 1:66

John the Baptist was a wonder child. The verse above referred to him. But I believe all of us were born as wonder children. I know, because I'm a parent of two kids. Moreover, I've been a teacher-educator for more than three decades. I've literally seen thousands of children grow up right before my eyes.

They were full of wonder as kids. But so were their parents and teachers who wondered at what they would become. Many have indeed become "wondermen" and "wonderwomen." But some have also just wandered all their lives, and their parents and teachers continue to wonder, "What happened?" A crucial key for children to become the wonder that they should be is also in the above verse: "For the Lord's hand was with him."

Parents, teachers, and people tasked with the important role of raising a child should know the key: raise them up with the Lord's hand with them—and they will be wonders of God!

Alvin Barcelona (apb\_ayo@yahoo.com)

## reflect

"Train the young in the way they should go; even when old, they will not swerve from it." (Proverbs 22:6)

*Dear God, thank You for the people who raised me with Your hand upon them and upon me. May I do this to my own children and to children that I may be involved in raising. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

St. John the Baptist, pray for us.

# Jun 25

FRIDAY

Genesis 17:1, 9-10,  
15-22

Psalms 128:1-2, 3, 4-5

**Matthew 8:1-4**

## I WILL SING FOREVER OF YOUR LOVE

"See that you tell no one." – Matthew 8:4

On August 15, 2005, I was scheduled to have my thyroid operation after being diagnosed of cancer. The diagnosis came three months after I gave birth to my second child.

My family decided to postpone the operation for a month and go on an immune-boosting program coupled with lots of prayers from family and community. I could lose my voice from the operation since the nodule was attached to my voice box.

At that point, I decided to testify to our community about God's goodness while I still had my voice. I used to put off sharing about my blessings, belittling what He has given me.

Two days before operation, a repeat diagnosis from a pool of oncologists cleared me of cancer. I no longer needed an operation! The nodule had shrunk from 2.5 centimeters to 1.2 centimeters and continues to become smaller to this day.

Since then, I never stopped singing and speaking praise God for His goodness. I will live to tell the world of His miracles by being a miracle to others. Maria Paz Jimenez-Balayan

(pazjb0117@gmail.com)

### reflect

Defeat the enemy by testifying about what God is doing in your life.

*While I have breath, while I have life, I will live for You, my King.  
(from the song, "While I Have Breath")*

St. Eurosia, pray for us.

# Jun 26

SATURDAY

Genesis 18:1-15

Luke 1:46-47, 48-49,  
50, 53, 54-55

**Matthew 8:5-17**

## 'IMPRESSING JESUS'

"Amen, I say to you, in no one in Israel have I found such faith." – Matthew 8:10

As a consultant, I train and coach engineers, managers, and executives to equip them to make their processes more efficient. Part of the program is a three- to six-month project they will work on, which they need to review with their general manager (GM) and other executives before presenting to me.

One engineer presented her project, but the GM revised it. When they were about to present their projects, this engineer took me aside and described to me her original project idea. But I promptly revised her project, saying exactly what the GM told her to do. The GM overheard this and said, "Didn't I tell you that?" Ooops. She was in effect telling the boss of her boss, "I didn't trust you and your inputs!"

Maybe the Lord feels that way with me sometimes. In today's reading, Jesus was impressed with the Roman centurion's faith and complimented him. He was amazed at the man's faith because he trusted His words. He didn't need Jesus to touch his servant or show up at his home. Jesus' word was enough and all was well! Ariel Driz (adriz77@yahoo.com)

### reflect

Do your words and actions reflect your total trust and faith in Jesus' words?

*Lord, I am not worthy to have You under my roof, but only say the word and I shall be healed. Amen.*

St. Josemaria Escriva de Balaguer, pray for us.

# Jun 27

SUNDAY

Wisdom 1:13-15;  
2:23-24

Psalms 30:2, 4, 5-6, 11,  
12, 13

2 Corinthians 8:7, 9,  
13-15

**Mark 5:21-24, 35-43**  
**(or Mark 5:21-43)**

## TALITHA KOUM

At that, they were utterly astounded.  
– Mark 5:42

The telltale signs were there and the scene was depressingly familiar. My sister, Nancy Girlie, was confined at the intensive care unit for multiple lung infection. Everything came back to me in a flash. My mom spent four months in a similar unit before she finally left us. When Girlie's children, based in the U.S., flew in, I silently expected the worst but prayed for the best. My fear turned to sadness when she got intubated and she started "seeing" my brother who had passed away.

I clung to the Lord's promise in Matthew 21:22: "Whatever you ask for in prayer with faith, you will receive." Our big Sison clan prayed incessantly for her healing. Our community, Bukas Loob sa Diyos Catholic Charismatic Community, was one with us storming heaven for her.

One day, after five weeks in the ICU, the Lord took Girlie by the hand and said to her just as He did to Jairus's daughter: "*Talitha koum*, which means . . . arise!" (Mark 5:41). She was miraculously snatched out of death and is now on her way to full recovery. I was utterly astounded and forever grateful.

Mari Sison-Garcia (mari\_sison\_garcia@yahoo.com)

### reflect

Jesus said to the synagogue official, "Do not be afraid; just have faith." (Mark 5:36)

*Thank You, Lord, for Your promises are true and Your Word endures forever.*

St. Cyril of Alexandria, bishop and Doctor of the Church, pray for us.



# Jun 28

MONDAY

Genesis 18:16-33  
Psalm 103:1-2, 3-4,  
8-9, 10-11  
**Matthew 8:18-22**

## A TIME OF CHOOSING

“Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead.” – Matthew 8:22, NIV

During the pandemic last year, Fr. Luis Sierra, O.P. recounted that many had asked him to pray for the end of COVID-19. He answered, “I doubt if it’s the best prayer we can offer the Lord.”

Instead, he prayed, “Lord, You know what is best. It’s not what we want, but what You want. You never promised to keep us from trouble, but You did promise to be with us in trouble. Be with us. We need You more than ever. Never mind what we have to go through, but Lord, use this for us to go back to You, to accept You deep into our hearts, to welcome You as the center and meaning of our lives, and that would suffice. You suffered far more than we do, though innocent, for our sins. We would have to pay for our mistakes. Give us a sorrowful heart.”

Too often, we’re not aware how self-serving our petitions are. It is only when we are willing to give up this world that our hearts are moved to utter the best prayer. Cecil Lim (cez\_lim@yahoo.com)

### reflect

“You are calling on us to seize this time of trial as a time of choosing. It is not the time of Your judgment, but of our judgement: a time to choose what matters and what passes away, a time to separate what is necessary from what is not. It is a time to get our lives back on track with regard to you, Lord, and to others.” (Pope Francis, *Urbi et Orbi*, March 2020)

*“Do not despise our pleas—we who are put to the test—and deliver us from every danger.” (Pope Francis)*

St. Irenaeus, bishop and martyr, pray for us.

# Jun 29

TUESDAY

**Acts 12:1-10**

Psalm 34:2-3, 4-5,

6-7, 8-9

2 Timothy 4:6-8, 17-18

Matthew 16:13-19

**Solemnity of Sts. Peter  
and Paul, Apostles**

## THE WAR ROOM

So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him.

– Acts 12:5, NIV

Like Peter who was kept in jail in today's reading, I, too, became a prisoner of a deadly disease twice in two months.

I was confined in Cagayan de Oro while my family was in Manila. Instead of flying to take care of me, we allocated the money for my hospitalization. So it was the Light of Jesus Family who took care of me in my sickness. There were those who took turns to watch over me. Some brought food while others did my laundry. Some gathered at the gazebo outside to pray for my healing. It became their war room for several nights as they battled in prayer for my healing.

An angel of the Lord appeared and Peter miraculously escaped from prison. And after 30 days of confinement and a bill of P500,000, I was finally discharged, released from the prison of disease!

When you are at your worst, somewhere, somehow, someone is praying for you. [Aben Garlan \(aben@abengarlan.com\)](mailto:aben@abengarlan.com)

### reflect

“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” (Matthew 18:20)

*Thank You, Jesus, for the gift of people who love me and pray for me. They are like angels disguised as friends. Amen.*

Sts. Peter and Paul, Apostles, pray for us.

# Jun 30

WEDNESDAY

Genesis 21:5, 8-20

Psalm 34:7-8, 10-11,  
12-13

Matthew 8:28-34

## HE IS WITH YOU

His angel guards those who honor the Lord  
and rescues them from danger.

– Psalm 34:8, GNB

Have you ever faced imminent danger but was surprisingly saved?

I had this experience recently. I was on my way home from work aboard a passenger van. We stopped at a gas station to discover that the right rear tire of the van was loose—it was only held by one screw! Imagine that! If that tire got out while we were on the road, there could have been a major accident and serious injuries.

But because of that one screw that held on, we were saved from a disaster. It was as if an angel carried the van and protected all the passengers. That night, I heard a voice in my head telling me, “Trust in Me. I am with you.”

There are many ways that God shows His love and protection for us even in our ordinary, daily lives. He sends His angels to protect us, and He himself comes to our aid in times of need.

Today, be reminded that there is a God who lovingly watches over you and protects you. Trust in Him. He is with **YOU**. Sam Timbreza (sttimbreza@up.edu.ph)

### reflect

What are you afraid of? Lift it up to God for He loves you and wants to protect you. Best of all, He can definitely handle it!

*Thank You, Lord, for constantly watching over us, protecting us and our loved ones. We lift up to You our daily lives and praise You, knowing we are under Your wings of protection. Amen.*

The First Martyrs of the Holy Roman Church, pray for us.

# Will You Accompany Others in Their Journey?

By Bo Sanchez

Marilyn Monroe was the pinup girl of the 1950s. She is considered one of the most beautiful women of her time. Guys had her picture on their lockers. Every man wanted her. Every woman envied her.

But in 1952, at the young age of 36, she took an overdose of drugs. She wrote these words in her personal diary: “Can anyone love me as I am, not just for my beautiful blond hair?” More than food, more than shelter, more than clothing, people need love. I believe there are many Marilyn Monroes in the world today.

Let me tell you one of my favorite stories.

One day, a man had some puppies to sell. He put a large sign in front of his house: “Puppies for Sale—P5,000 only.”

One morning, the man saw a little boy looking at the sign. He asked, “What do you want?”

“I want to buy a puppy,” he said, then pulled out his little hand from his pocket and opened his palm—on it were a few coins.

The man said, “I don’t think you have enough money.”

The little boy said, “Will this be enough just to take a look at the puppies?”

The man said, “Sure.” He whistled and called out, “Here, Dolly!” And out came Dolly from the doghouse. Following Dolly were the pups, like four balls of fur, running after their mother.

The little boy pressed his face on the fence, his eyes bulging, filled with joy. And that was when he noticed something still moving in the doghouse. A little puppy came out, much smaller, much slower. It limped its way to its mother.

“I want that one,” said the little boy.

The man knelt in front of the boy and said, “Son, you don’t want that dog. He was born with a short leg. He won’t be able to run with you nor play with you.”

The little boy took one step backward, bent down, and rolled up the leg of his blue jeans.

The man was surprised to see a steel brace on the little boy’s leg. It started above his knee all the way down and attached to a custom-made shoe.

“I don’t run too well, sir,” the boy said, “and the dog needs someone who can understand him.”

I've got news for you: All of us are like that little puppy. Because all of us have a limp. We just have different kinds of limps.

What's your limp? Accept it. Unless you do, you won't be able to accept the limp of others. You'll always be judging, condemning, looking down, being irritated by the weaknesses of others.

In America, there was a survey done among young people ages 16 to 29, and they were asked what they thought of Christianity. Their answers were tragic. Eighty-seven percent of them said Christianity was judgmental. And 85 percent said Christianity was hypocritical. One out of four non-Christians said that modern-day Christians were no longer like Jesus.

Why? Rick Warren explained it this way: "Christians are more known for what we are against than what we are for." Because we love to tell people what's wrong with them.

If you're a religious person, everyone instantly knows what you're against. You're against abortion, homosexuality, premarital sex, pornography, gambling, drunkenness, and many more.

But are you known for your kindness? Your humility? Your selflessness? Your love?

Will you be God's love to others?

Big question: will you journey with them to experience God's love?

Source: *Kerygma Magazine*, August 2018 issue

**But are you known  
for your kindness?  
Your humility?  
Your selflessness?  
Your love?**

# Jul 1

THURSDAY

**Genesis 22:1-19**

Psalm 115:1-2, 3-4,

5-6, 8-9

Matthew 9:1-8

## KEEP MOVING FORWARD

Then the two continued going forward.

– Genesis 22:8

There are times when you feel like you're in some forsaken desert. Because you think you were ready for that new business, or that job, or that promotion, or that boyfriend or girlfriend—but it never happened. The company never called back. The business opportunity fizzled. The girl rejected you. The guy never texted.

Listen, if you're not ready, God will allow a detour. But through that detour, He will mature you, shape you, equip you, and prepare you. Here's my belief: God uses detours as doorways to your destiny.

Are you going through a detour in your career? Are you going through a detour in your financial plans? Don't be discouraged. You have a God who knows when you're ready. Trust Him, but you have to keep moving forward just like Abraham did. He was about to sacrifice his own son—as the Lord commanded—and God blessed him for his obedience.

Bo Sanchez (bosanchez@kerygmfamily.com)

### reflect

Is there anything unclear in how God wants you to proceed in your life right now? Just keep moving forward and He will show you the way.

*Dearest God, may I always be attentive to Your direction for my life. Help me to always trust that You are in control. Amen.*

St. Junipero Serra, pray for us.



# Jul 2

FRIDAY

Genesis 23:1-4, 19;

24:1-8, 62-67

Psalms 106:1-2, 3-4,

4-5

**Matthew 9:9-13**

## FROM A SINNER TO A SAINT IN THE MAKING

"For I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners." – Matthew 9:13

I met Ian at The Feast more than five years ago. He seemed arrogant and angry at the world. I got to know him more as he started attending and even serving in a ministry. He shared to me how much of a bully he was in school. He spent six years finishing college, failing one subject after the other. He would cut classes to drink and gamble, and so much more. He had a very low self-esteem.

Years have passed and today, Ian has transformed into one of the most dedicated servants of our Feast. His heart grew big for discipleship. He leads our pastoral ministry and brings people to a personal relationship with the Lord through our Light Groups. Indeed, God didn't come to call the righteous but those who knew they were sick and admit they needed Jesus. From a sinner, now I see Ian as a saint in the making.

Are you ready to acknowledge your sins before God? He has come to save the sinner and the lost. Joel N. Saldares (joelsaldares@yahoo.com)

### reflect

In your sinfulness, are you ready to acknowledge Jesus as your Redeemer and Savior?

*Jesus, thank You for the gift of freedom from my sins. Thank You for dying on the cross for my salvation. Amen.*

St. Ariston and companions, pray for us.

# Jul 3

SATURDAY

Ephesians 2:19-22

Psalm 117:1, 2

**John 20:24-29**

Feast of St. Thomas,  
Apostle

## NO DOUBT

"Peace be with you. Put your finger here. Stop doubting and believe." – John 20:26-27

At the Kerygma Conference 2018, Bo Sanchez stretched my heart and mind to serve as his Saturday morning plenary speaker before an

audience of 12,000.

I would normally prepare for big lectures way ahead of time. However, this time, as the KCon week approached, I was still blank. No matter what I did, I couldn't craft my talk and the team was pressing me for my materials.

A couple of days before the conference, a soft whisper said, "Trust Me and put your mind in My presence."

Whenever I'm anxious, I read Psalm 23. Believe me, it was an insight from the Holy Spirit to rephrase the whole psalm as I understood it. I was even inspired to write this poem:

When you live in trust, you don't have to rush.

When you live in faith, good things come in the wait.

When you have God's hope, any challenges you can cope.

Whatever you do and plan, lift it up to God's hand.

That morning, Bo and I were happy. The audience was happier. But God was happiest. Dean Pax Lapid ([mentors@lead-more.com](mailto:mentors@lead-more.com))

### reflect

What's keeping you from fully trusting God and the work of His hands?

*Lord Jesus Christ, forgive my unbelief and my failure to trust in Your limitless love and abundance for me. Amen.*

St. Thomas, Apostle, pray for us.

# Jul 4

SUNDAY

Ezekiel 2:2-5

Psalms 123:1-2, 2, 3-4

**2 Corinthians 12:7-10**

Mark 6:1-6

## WHEN YOU FEEL LIKE GIVING UP

"My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness." So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me.  
– 2 Corinthians 12:9

When I was a beginner in CrossFit, there was a hero workout that helped me to stick to this training regimen. It's called the Randy workout—75 power snatches, where you lift the barbell from the floor to above your head. After 40 repetitions, I already wanted to give up. But my judge and the people around me cheered me on. They gave me the strength to finish the workout in 12 minutes.

That's what I love about CrossFit. Instead of boasting about who's the strongest, we help each other become stronger.

Speaker and author Fr. Mike Schmitz said that the Church should learn from the culture of CrossFit, where people notice when you've been absent from the gym. They welcome you back with smiles and ask why you've been gone. Father Mike said he wishes that parishioners would behave more like that. Instead of just coming to attend Holy Mass and go home, we should be able to notice who's absent and have a pastoral heart to encourage them. JPaul Hernandez (jpaulmh@yahoo.com)

### reflect

When you are past your breaking point, that's when God is most powerful. Trust in His divine power.

*Father, please fill me with Your Spirit every time I feel like giving up. You are my strength, I believe in You. Amen.*

St. Elizabeth of Portugal, pray for us.

# Jul 5

MONDAY

Genesis 28:10-22

Psalms 91:1-2, 3-4,

14-15

**Matthew 9:18-26**

## ALL IT TAKES IS ONE MOMENT

"If only I can touch his cloak, I shall be cured."

– Matthew 9:21

When Neil Armstrong landed on the moon, he said, "One small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind."

That small step—and quotable quote—changed the whole of humanity. Such is the power of one moment.

If you look back at your life, you will recall precious moments that changed you forever. Your college graduation, your first paycheck, your wedding, giving birth to your child, and the list goes on.

Today's Gospel is the story of the healing of a woman with hemorrhage who was ill for 12 long years. She waited for a cure but nothing worked. Good thing Jesus passed by. However, Jesus' agenda that day was to heal the official's daughter. The hemorrhagic woman's healing seemed like an inserted tale in a bigger healing story. But the woman's faith was remarkable. She didn't need a healing appointment with Jesus, not even a conversation with Him. All she needed was one teeny touch at Jesus' cloak to be healed. In one moment, her life completely turned around. Do you need a life-altering miracle? All it takes is one moment with Jesus. Velden Lim (veldenlim@gmail.com)

### reflect

God unleashes His power for your life at every moment.

*Jesus, I believe that even small and ordinary things lead to Your great plans for me.*

St. Anthony Zaccaria, priest, pray for us.

# Jul 6

TUESDAY

**Genesis 32:23-33**

Psalm 17:1, 2-3, 6-7,  
8, 15

Matthew 9:32-38

## YOU ARE GOD'S CHAMPION

But Jacob said, "I will not let you go until you bless me." – Genesis 32:27

Joe Jeanette was one of the best heavyweight boxers of the early 20th century. Why was he one of the best?

In 1909, he fought Sam McVey in a match that lasted three-and-a-half hours and ran for 49 rounds—the longest and greatest marathon in boxing history.

In this fight, Joe was knocked down 27 times, but giving up was never an option for him. In the end, he was declared the winner with a technical knockout.

In today's reading, Jacob wrestled with an angel until the break of dawn. He was tired, beaten up, and wounded. Amidst all that, he was determined to win and to get his blessing. The angel was surprised by his determination that, in the end, he blessed him and changed his name to Israel.

Are you currently wrestling challenges in your life? Have you been beaten down more than you can even count? Never give up. Stand up again. Never let go until you get what you are praying for. There is a great blessing waiting for you in the end. Live up to your name—you are God's powerful champion!

Monching Bueno (ramon\_bueno@yahoo.com)

### reflect

Has life beaten you down again and again? You are stronger than you think you are. Keep fighting and you will soon seize your win!

*Father, thank You for challenges. They make me better and stronger. Grant me the grace to hold on to You so I may finish strong. Amen.*

St. Maria Goretti, virgin and martyr, pray for us.

# Jul 7

WEDNESDAY

**Genesis 41:55-57;**

**42:5-7, 17-24**

Psalm 33:2-3, 10-11,

18-19

Matthew 10:1-7

## **BAYANIHAN SPIRIT**

When hunger came to be felt throughout the land. – Genesis 41:55

When rumors circulated that there would be a lockdown in Metro Manila, a friend aired her concern. Her family's business was manufacturing office uniforms and their workers would definitely be affected. She said they could give some support but not for long since they were a small business.

True, I said, but I reflected to her the many times our country experienced crisis—the super typhoons, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, and so on—and how we survived them all. And it's mainly because we Filipinos are known for our *bayanihan* spirit.

The cycle of generosity kicked in—in big and small ways. Large corporations, no matter how badly hit their businesses were, didn't delay in sending their help to hospitals and local government units. Residents of gated villages pooled their resources and gave food packs to developmental areas outside their perimeter walls.

Minus politics, I still have faith in the Filipinos' capacity to give when the need arises. I still believe that God is in our midst even in our most difficult times. Tess V. Atienza

(theresa.a@shepherdsvoice.com.ph)

### **reflect**

How has God shown His face to you during times of crisis?

*I feel Your presence, O Lord, through the people around me. Thank You for sending them to me. Amen.*

Blessed Maria Romero Meneses, pray for us.

# Jul 8

THURSDAY

Genesis 44:18-21,  
23-29; 45:1-5

Psalms 105:16-17,  
18-19, 20-21

**Matthew 10:7-15**

## KURIPOT

### COUNTERMEASURE

"Freely you have received; freely give."

– Matthew 10:7-8, NIV

Last December 2019, we went home for Christmas and I had planned to buy a pair of sneakers if I chanced upon a good deal. But instead of buying one, I went home with three pairs without spending a single peso! All courtesy of my uber generous brother-in-law, Louie. Two of them were pairs he owned that caught my fancy. On the spot, he said, "Take them, they're yours. I haven't worn them yet." The third was a pair I was looking at in a store but I hesitated to buy. He went ahead and bought them for me.

Whenever I'm tempted to be *kuripot* or stingy, especially with my tithing, I recall the people in my life like Louie and all the times I had been blessed by the generosity of others. It gets pretty overwhelming when I start counting all I've received without cost: airline mileage points transferred to my name, free trips abroad for work and ministry, sponsorships from event suppliers, timeshare at resorts, material gifts I could never afford, and many, many more.

When I think of all of this, how can I not give back?

George Tolentino Gabriel ([georgetgabriel@gmail.com](mailto:georgetgabriel@gmail.com))

### reflect

Think of 10 things you've been given for free. Done? Think of another 10. Done? Keep going.

*Lord, may I be an outlet of Your generosity. Amen.*

St. Withburga, pray for us.

# Jul 9

FRIDAY

Genesis 46:1-7,  
28-30

Psalms 37:3-4, 18-19,  
27-28, 39-40

**Matthew 10:16-23**

## PROPHETIC DUTY

"But when they hand you over, do not worry about how or what you are to say . . . For it is not you who speak, but it is the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you." – Matthew 10:19-20

A government employee came forward to blow the whistle on fellow officers who were allegedly involved in granting illegal passage of foreigners into our country. This bold act prompted investigations. Since then, the whistleblower has received death threats and has been placed under the Witness Protection Program.

There are many others before him who have stepped forward bravely to expose corruption. They have put their lives on the line to rectify wrong and make this world a better place.

In today's Gospel, Jesus sent His disciples to spread the Good News. He bluntly warned them that the road ahead was not an easy one. He warned that they will be "sheep in the midst of wolves." These men went anyway with courage, knowing "the Spirit of the Father that speaks" through them.

Today, I hope to be inspired by the Apostles. As a Catholic with a prophetic duty, may I talk about God with enthusiasm and confidence. May I speak up for what is right when it is needed. And may I proudly profess that I am a follower of God.

Geraldine G. Catral (catral.geegee@beaconschool.ph)

### reflect

When you see injustice in your workplace, or notice a friend being bullied, or hear of lies being spread, what do you do?

*Lord, increase my faith to carry out my prophetic mission to spread the Gospel.*

St. Joseph Zhang Dapeng, pray for us.



# Jul 10

SATURDAY

Genesis 49:29-32;

50:15-26

Psalms 105:1-2, 3-4,

6-7

**Matthew 10:24-33**

## FEARLESS BECAUSE OF MY FATHER

"But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows."

- Matthew 10:30-31

I took my kids to the playground.

I followed my three-year-old son until

I got tired and found a bench on one side of the garden. He was totally enjoying his freedom on the slide, climbing the jungle gym around big kids, and running in circles.

Then he must have remembered that I was with him. I saw him looking around and when he couldn't find me, he anxiously shouted, "Mommy!"

I answered and waved my hands. He caught my eye, smiled, and resumed his play.

He could see me, and I could see him. His sense of security returned. When I am attentive and present as a parent, he is fearless.

No one can match the attentiveness and presence of our Father. He knows us down to the smallest detail of our lives. "Do not fear" is a message of today's Gospel. We must be confident and fearless, especially in telling people about His love. Kitty Dulay-Ferrera ([kittydulay@yahoo.com](mailto:kittydulay@yahoo.com))

### reflect

In what areas of your life can you be fearless today?

*Help me realize, Father, how deeply You know and see Your children.  
Move me to share this truth to others. Amen.*

St. Amarberga, pray for us.

# Jul 11

SUNDAY

Amos 7:12-15  
Psalm 85:9-10,  
11-12, 13-14  
Ephesians 1:3-14  
**Mark 6:7-13**

## YOU HAVE THE AUTHORITY

He summoned the Twelve and began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over unclean spirits. – Mark 6:7

There have been countless times in my life when I was called to serve together with another youth leader.

Two by two, we served. It was always challenging. It would be a new place, a new environment. We didn't know the youth we'd be serving nor the servants who'd be helping us.

How will they react? Will they take us seriously? Can we do this?

But we always remind ourselves that Jesus gives us authority to do this.

He chose us. He called us. He called us by name to do this. That makes us secure.

So, we head on to our mission, ready to do whatever needs to be done.

Friends, Jesus gives you that same authority, too.

Even if you're not a missionary or a preacher, whatever is your role now, Jesus gives you authority—to bless, to heal, to give hope, to inspire, and to empower.

Just believe Him and in Him. Heed His call and go on your way. Paolo Galia (pgalia@gmail.com)

### reflect

Where do you think God is calling you to share His Word?

*Dear Lord, thank You for using us. Guide and empower us to fulfill this mission that You've called us to do. Amen.*

St. Benedict, abbot, pray for us.

# Jul 12

MONDAY

Exodus 1:8-14, 22

Psalms 124:1-3, 4-6,

7-8

**Matthew 10:34-11:1**

## A SWORD, NOT PEACE

"Do not think that I have come to bring peace upon the earth." – Matthew 10:34

Serving the Church was not an easy decision for me. As a solo parent, I had to work doubly hard to send my kids to good schools, put food on the table, and care for my elderly parents. What time would I have left to even consider serving in a ministry? But in the tug-o-war between ministry, career, and family, God always found a way.

When my high-profile, ultra-lucrative job in a conglomerate ate up my Church time, I had to make a difficult choice. I left the dream job and settled for one that would leave me more time for ministry and family.

Now the coop is empty. My expat kids are based abroad with my grandchildren. A beloved dog is the only other living presence in the house where I used to step on countless Lego bricks. I thought it was time to slow down and write a book. But God had other plans. He called me again to a new ministry in a parish where I didn't know anyone. Do I still have the energy? Do I still have the focus? Do I still have this in my heart?

A sword, not peace. OGK. Only God knows. In the end, I just always choose Him over everything else. Tessa Mangahas

(mtgmangahas@gmail.com)

### reflect

"Sometimes your plans don't work out because God has better ones." (Anonymous)

*Lord, there has never been a time when I chose You and got the shorter end of the stick. You are the best choice I've ever made. Amen.*

St. John Jones, priest and martyr, pray for us.

# Jul 13

TUESDAY

**Exodus 2:1-15**

Psalm 69:3, 14,

30-31, 33-34

Matthew 11:20-24

## DIRTY SECRETS

He killed the Egyptian and hid him  
in the sand. – Exodus 2:12

A friend was with her boyfriend in his condo when the doorbell rang. She panicked while he calmly got her stuff and brought them to his bathroom. My friend followed, locked the door behind her, and turned off the lights. She stayed there for 20 minutes while he talked to his sister who came unannounced.

My friend was having an affair with this guy who had another girlfriend. No one knew about the affair. He never introduced her to his family or friends. They kept the affair for four long years until the guy finally ended things and got married to his girlfriend. The breakup left my friend devastated. It was as if she died. But thank God for His saving grace, she has healed and learned a valuable lesson. She said, "If he's hiding you from people and if you're also hiding him, that's not love." It's called lust. "Love gives freedom and not captivity," she added.

It's the nature of sin to remain hidden in the dark. It's a telltale sign that you shouldn't be doing what you're doing. Friend, God wants what's beautiful, true, and good for you. You deserve His best. Be free. Marjorie Ann Duterte (writersretreatph@gmail.com)

### reflect

Search your heart today. What are you trying to hide? Bring it to the light.

*Dear God, heal us of our hidden wounds, free us from our dark secrets, and give us true love. Amen.*

St. Henry II, pray for us.

# Jul 14

WEDNESDAY

Exodus 3:1-6, 9-12

Psalms 103:1-2, 3-4,

6-7

Matthew 11:25-27

## BLUES AND BLESSINGS

"I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth."

– Matthew 11:25

Two years ago, we planned an October trip to Japan to celebrate our anniversary and my husband's birthday. It was a delayed celebration because August, our wedding month, had been a very challenging one. But a string of inevitable events led us to move our vacation to November. Initially, we were dismayed because it was already so delayed. We just claimed that God had a purpose. True enough, He had.

Months later, on the weekend we were supposed to be in Japan, Typhoon Hagibis pummeled the country. I prayed hard for Japan as well as thanked God for not allowing our plans to push through. What we thought as a setback was actually God's saving act. He rescued us from something that would probably harm us. Thank You, Jesus!

That day, I was reminded that God can see everything from His vantage point. Even if my plans fail, I know I can still thank Him for what He's doing behind the scenes. I just have to remember that my God is for me. That's enough. He's enough. Maymay Salvosa Trinidad ([christiane.trinidad@gmail.com](mailto:christiane.trinidad@gmail.com))

### reflect

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways." (Isaiah 55:8-9, NIV)

*Teach me to trust Your ways knowing that You work all things for my good.*

St. Kateri Tekakwitha, pray for us.

# Jul 15

THURSDAY

**Exodus 3:13-20**

Psalm 105:1, 5, 8-9,  
24-25, 26-27

Matthew 11:28-30

## GOD'S ID

"I am who I am." – Exodus 3:14, NLT

If God has an ID, I wonder what would be on it? What would His name and background be?

Scripture gives us a better way to understand and answer this. In the Old Testament, Moses stumbled upon a burning bush that gave him the opportunity to get to know who God is. He identified Himself as "Yahweh, the God of your ancestors—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. . . . this is my eternal name, my name to remember for all generations."

In the New Testament, Jesus quizzed His disciples on His identity by asking, "Who do people say I Am?" Then He continued to ask, "Who do you say I Am?" Simon Peter had the answer and he said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16).

Until today, God continues to reveal Himself to us. We just need to open our eyes and hearts to His movement in our lives. God is with us through our ups and downs. He is not just behind us to back us up. He is not just before us to lead the way. God journeys beside us. He is the same God yesterday, today, and tomorrow. JC Libiran (coachjclibiran@gmail.com)

### reflect

What is God's image in your life right now?

*Jesus, I want to know You more and in my life. Amen.*

St. Bonaventura, bishop and Doctor of the Church, pray for us.

# Jul 16

FRIDAY

Exodus 11:10–12:14

Psalm 116:12-13,  
15-16, 17-18

Matthew 12:1-8

## TALISMAN

### OR SACRAMENTAL?

"And the blood shall be unto you for a sign in the houses where you shall be: and I shall see the blood and shall pass over you; and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you."

– Exodus 12:13

St. Simon Stock had a vision of the Virgin Mary giving him the brown scapular with the promise that anyone who dies wearing it has a filial relationship with her and imitating her virtues will be saved from hell.

When Moses led the Israelites out of captivity from Egypt, their last night was marked by the passing over of the angel of death, which struck down all the firstborn males of the Egyptians and their animals. The only thing that saved the Israelites from the slaughter was the symbol of a cross painted with the unblemished lamb's blood on the doorpost of their house.

Wearing the scapular or hanging a cross in our homes will not protect us from death or hell if we don't grow in virtues. If we put our faith in those things alone, then it's no different from wearing an amulet or a lucky charm. What saves us is our faith in God and Mama Mary who promised to protect us. Without faith and inner transformation brought about by our devotion to them, then you might as well just carry a rabbit's foot for good luck! Ronna Ledesma (ronna\_ledesma@yahoo.com.ph)

### reflect

Do you treat your rosary, scapular, or Saint Benedict medal like an amulet?

*Lord, smack me on the head when I put my trust in objects rather than in You.*

Our Lady of Mount Carmel, pray for us.

# Jul 17

SATURDAY

Exodus 12:37-42  
Psalm 136:1, 23-24,  
10-12, 13-15  
**Matthew 12:14-21**

## THE WRONG CHERRY

When Jesus realized this, he withdrew from that place. – Matthew 12:15

Matthew Emmons dominated the 50-meter rifle three-position target event and is considered the best in the world. He was so far ahead of the others in the 2004 Athens Olympics that all he needed was to place his last bullet anywhere in the inner ring of the target to seal the gold medal. The bullet passed right through the bull's-eye! But the tone indicating a hit didn't sound. That's because the bull's-eye he had hit was on the wrong target. And he lost all medal chances. The right shot hitting the wrong target will not win you the gold. Winning doesn't matter when you're fighting the wrong battle.

Why Jesus "withdrew from that place" where the Pharisees were plotting his death baffles many. Isn't He supposed to die for the world anyway? Reason: Jesus was choosing His battles.

Starting a mega business may not be the right target for now if your health is at high risk due to unwanted stress. Leaving your decent-paying job for a career opportunity abroad is not bad but is the wrong cherry if your wife is in deep depression and needs you badly by her side now. Jon Escoto  
(faithatworkjon@gmail.com)

### reflect

Do you feel you're taking more than you can handle? You may be fighting the wrong battles.

*Father, You promised to give me strength for my battles. Lead me out of the battles that are not mine to fight. Thank You!*

St. Alexis, pray for us.



# Jul 18

SUNDAY

Jeremiah 23:1-6  
Psalm 23:1-3, 3-4,  
5, 6

**Ephesians 2:13-18**  
Mark 6:30-34

## ONENESS IN CHRIST

For he is our peace, he who made both one and broke down the dividing wall of enmity, through his flesh – Ephesians 2:14

There are things in life slated only for the favored—the VIPs, as we call them. Front-row seats in concerts, exclusive access to crowded places, and other forms of class distinction can foster displeasure from the disfavored. It's impossible to bring together people of different backgrounds, and social and economic status without eliciting the feeling of superiority, discord, and hostility among them. But Christ made this happen when He proclaimed the Good News to all and gathered His disciples. He mingled with tax collectors, fishermen, prostitutes, physicians—some poor, others wealthy, some smart, others ignorant. They were all different but what they had in common was Jesus.

When He died on the cross, Jesus offered us His peace and asked us to love one another despite our differences. So, next time we go to church and see someone we don't like for whatever reason, look up to the cross and remember that we are all sinners in need of God's grace. Instead of animosity, let's bring in peace and harmony. Jane Gonzales-Rauch (mgr516@gmail.com)

### reflect

Bring down the barriers of hatred, bitterness, distrust—anything that keeps you from seeing others with the love of Christ.

*Jesus, thank You for accepting us all in spite of our differences. Teach us to see others as You see them and love them the same way You do. Amen.*

St. Camillus de Lellis, pray for us.

# Jul 19

MONDAY

**Exodus 14:5-18**

Exodus 15:1-2, 3-4,  
5-6

Matthew 12:38-42

## THE BLAME GAME

"Is this not the very thing we told you in Egypt,  
'Let us alone and let us serve the Egyptians'?"  
- Exodus 14:12

The Israelites blamed Moses when the Pharaoh's troops cornered them. How easy is it to blame someone or something whenever things don't go as planned!

One day, long time ago, I did the same thing as I was talking to a professor in school. I told him I didn't deserve our low group grade because I did my part. Our project was below par even as I did more work to cover up for my groupmates' inadequacies within the limited time given to us.

My professor's response was something I will never ever forget. "Was this because of your groupmates or the lack of time allotted for the task? Rex, whenever you find anything or anyone to blame, you give up responsibility and accountability."

That statement had such an impact on me that it affected the way I worked with and led teams for the rest of my life. It dawned on me that no matter what the situation is and no matter what the givens are, the whole group and I have the power to perform and deliver. We all have to do our best, then let go and let God. Rex Mendoza (rex.mendoza@rampver.com)

### reflect

Do you play the blame game when things hit a snag? What can be a better response?

*Lord, give me the strength to assume responsibility and accountability for my work and duties. Amen.*

Sts. Justa and Rufina, pray for us.

# Jul 20

TUESDAY

Exodus 14:21-15:1

Exodus 15:8-9, 10,

12, 17

**Matthew 12:46-50**

## WHO ARE OUR CHILDREN?

"For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother." – Matthew 12:50

"You're spending too much time for ministry. Give more time to your children."

A friend didn't even knock first when she threw me this bomb. OK, perhaps it's what we can call well-meaning advice.

My husband, Ed, and I have been serving in the media ministry of our faith community, the Light of Jesus Family—Ed as photographer, I as writer-editor.

No, we didn't give our children 100 percent of our time. Yes, we kind of feel we have been remiss in some of our parenting duties. But, well, I'm kind of smiling as I read Matthew 12:46-50 when Jesus defended His ministry, saying, "Who is My mother, and who are My brothers?"

Perhaps I should have also snapped at my friend, "Who are my children?" Then pointed to the beneficiaries of our ministry and say, "Here are my children!"

But no, the bottom line: What Ed and I must focus on is doing the will of our Father so we may be called truly the brother and sister of Jesus. Cynthia U. Santiago (loj.cusantiago@gmail.com)

### reflect

"Faithful servants never retire. You can retire from your career, but you will never retire from serving God." (Rick Warren)

*Lord, You call us to serve You and Your people. Help us to serve You faithfully. Amen.*

St. Agnes of Montepulciano, pray for us.

# Jul 21

WEDNESDAY

Exodus 16:1-5, 9-15  
Psalm 78:18-19,  
23-24, 25-26, 27-28  
**Matthew 13:1-9**

## THE JOURNEY

"Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand." – Matthew 13:9

I once had the privilege of attending an Ignatian retreat called the Retreat in Daily Life. One facilitator said that the longest spiritual journey we could ever take is the journey from the mind to the heart.

I realized how true it is. In our faith life, there's a huge gap that exists between our mind and our heart. We may hear God's Word every Sunday, but by Tuesday, we've already forgotten what we've learned.

We could be reading and highlighting passages in the Bible every day, but those messages could just bounce off from our foreheads and never reach our hearts. Sometimes, we think it's good enough that we know a lot about God and His Word, but the truth is, the wisdom we receive is only as good as our willingness to be transformed by it—and it can only be seen through our thoughts, words, and actions.

Perhaps today is the day we intentionally take on the journey from the mind to the heart.

May His Word bring lasting transformation to our life.

Chai Santiago-Gamo (chaisantiagogamo@gmail.com)

### reflect

Slowly read each of the Scripture passages and take time to listen to God. Write down God's message for you today.

*Father, I pray for graced understanding as I read and reflect on Your Word. Please mold me and help me to become like You. Amen.*

St. Lawrence of Brindisi, priest and Doctor of the Church, pray for us.

# Jul 22

THURSDAY

Song of Songs 3:1-4

(or 2 Corinthians  
5:14-17)

Psalm 63:2, 3-4,  
5-6, 8-9

**John 20:1-2, 11-18**

**Memorial of St. Mary  
Magdalene, disciple  
of the Lord**

## THE LORD IN MY FATHER

"I have seen the Lord." – John 20:18

At 91, my *Tatang* Bienvenido passed away after being bedridden for a few months due to emphysema. *Tatang* was a farmer, a jeepney and taxi driver, and was the handyman at home. When I was growing up, my young mind didn't see the sacrifices he made. He worked like a horse and was a father to the family. I didn't see beyond that. But now that he's gone, I know better.

Whenever I hear Mass every day, the Holy Eucharist reminds me that he shared in the Lord's sacrifice as a farmer and a driver.

Whenever I eat rice, I'm reminded he was a farmer all his life. When we were young, he made sure we'd understand how hard it was to be one by making us plant and harvest with farmers during no-school days. We dried *palay* grains harvested during the wet season on concrete roads. We were little farmers, fast and furious.

Now, I see gold in every grain. Now, I appreciate every bit of lesson there was to learn. Now, I remember that it was the Lord I've seen in my father. Rene Espinosa (drekki@gmail.com)

### reflect

Look around. The Lord can be found.

*Lord, help me to see You in the people around me.*

St. Mary Magdalene, disciple of the Lord, pray for us.

# Jul 23

FRIDAY

Exodus 20:1-17  
Psalm 19:8, 9, 10, 11  
**Matthew 13:18-23**

## A HARD, ROCKY, AND THORNY HEART

"But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty." – Matthew 13:23, NRSVCE

Many times, God tried planting seeds in my heart. I know the seeds were good. But my heart was hard and was filled with anger and bitterness.

The rich seeds just fell on the hard ground and never grew. And you know what's funny? My heart is sometimes rocky, too! I'm always interested in God's Word and I get inspired whenever I leave the church. But most of the time, this excitement fades away because I was just entertained by the homilist. My understanding of God's Word was too shallow. It never took root because it fell on my rocky heart. And when anxiety or the temptations of the world disturb me, the seed in my heart no longer thrives. It's choked to death by the thorns.

I am far from having a heart that is rich and good enough for God's seeds to grow. Nonetheless, I still hope and pray that the Divine Sower will not get tired of sowing seeds in my seemingly rocky and thorny heart. Tots Navarro (tots\_navarro@yahoo.com)

### reflect

What is the state of the soil in your heart?

*Dear Father, please give me the grace to have a heart like Jesus, the Divine Sower. Amen.*

St. Bridget, religious, pray for us.

# Jul 24

SATURDAY

Exodus 24:3-8  
Psalm 50:1-2, 5-6,  
14-15  
**Matthew 13:24-30**

## JUDGMENTAL

“Let both grow together until the harvest.”  
– Matthew 13:30

Oftentimes, people are more judgmental than God Himself. They're much like the servants in the parable who were asking the sower if he wanted them to immediately pull up the weeds that grew in his field.

These people judge you as if you no longer have a right to live on this planet and you're doomed to hell. And mostly it's because you don't believe, think, see, speak, or act like them. But look at the Lord's way of dealing with weeds: “Don't pull them yet. You may uproot the wheat with them.”

Isn't Jesus saying that the weeds are interconnected with the wheat and they might have some purpose, too? He says, “Let both grow together until the harvest.” Doesn't that give hope to the weeds? Weeds will always be weeds, but people who became bad can be good again. People can change. People have hope. People have God!

So, the next time you judge someone as a weed, think of how God sees that person, how God gives him much hope. Weren't we all weeds once that God didn't give up on?

Alvin Barcelona (apb\_ayo@yahoo.com)

### reflect

If God gives you a second chance, don't wait for a third.

*Dear God, may I not judge others as hopeless cases. May I not see their sins as bigger than mine. May I instead see how You see them—with much hope, mercy, and love. Amen.*

St. Kinga of Poland, pray for us.

# Jul 25

SUNDAY

2 Kings 4:42-44  
Psalm 145:10-11,  
15-16, 17-18  
Ephesians 4:1-6  
**John 6:1-15**

## A GENEROUS DAD

And twelve baskets were filled with the leftovers! – John 6:13, TLB

I believe our Father gives us only the best. On Monday, I was seated across none other than my idol in speaking and writing, Bo Sanchez.

We were at a café together with his two sons. I felt like his only daughter! On Wednesday, I was right beside Anthony Pangilinan, my idol in training and branding, for our biweekly Bible study. Call it petty, but these used to be just dreams in my heart—to work and learn straight from these two amazing men.

I believe God sent them in my life as the best spiritual fathers so I would also know what kind of man I should say yes to someday. As a single woman waiting for her lifetime love, there's always the temptation to settle for something less. But a friend raving about her love life said, "I can't believe this is happening; it feels like it's too good to be true." At a Valentine's wedding I attended, the bride said, "I couldn't ask for more. God sent me a man who's a perfect fit to my heart."

Our heavenly Father is in the business of overflow. How blessed are we to be called His children. Marianne Mencias  
(marianne.mencias@gmail.com)

### reflect

In what areas of your life do you still doubt God's goodness?

*Father, I pray for an increased faith in Your goodness. Give me unwavering hope and expectation for all the great things You have in store for me. Amen.*

St. James, Apostle, pray for us.



# Jul 26

MONDAY

Exodus 32:15-24,  
30-34 (or Sirach 44:1,  
10-15)

Psalms 106:19-20,  
21-22, 23

**Matthew 13:31-35**  
(or Matthew 13:16-17)

**Memorial of Sts. Joachim  
and Anne, parents of the  
Blessed Virgin Mary**

## FROM SMALLEST TO LARGEST

"The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that a person took and sowed in a field. It is the smallest of all the seeds, yet when full-grown it is the largest of plants."  
– Matthew 13:31-32

Last year, among the big dreams I wrote in my *Novena to God's Love* booklet was to write a new e-book, launch it in Amazon, enter it in the Cardinal Sin Catholic Book Awards' e-books category, and win an award. But I wasn't able to work on the book for months. I was busy homeschooling my kids, working on my HR consulting business, and managing our household.

I was about to give up on my dream when God moved me to sit down and write one day. I finished the e-book in one sitting. It also became number one in Amazon during its virtual global launch and won the e-book category at the Cardinal Sin Catholic Book Awards in 2019.

All I had was a little faith to dream big. But our God specializes in making the tiniest seeds grow into the largest of plants. Cooperate with Him to turn your seemingly impossible dreams into reality. Teresa Gumap-as Dumadag (teregmps@yahoo.com)

### reflect

How is God calling you now to express your faith? What is the big picture or vision He has revealed to you and asks you to pursue in faith?

*Lord Jesus, help me to grow in faith. Help me to walk by faith and not by sight.*

Sts. Joachim and Anne, parents of the Blessed Virgin Mary, pray for us.

# Jul 27

TUESDAY

Exodus 33:7-11;

34:5-9, 28

Psalms 103:6-7, 8-9,

10-11, 12-13

**Matthew 13:36-43**

## DISLIKED

## BUT APPRECIATED

"Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears ought to hear." – Matthew 13:43

During my childhood days, I grabbed a playmate by the collar when I caught him cheating in our game. As a parent, I strictly reprimanded my children when they showed bad behavior while growing up. As a supervisor, and later as manager, I implemented disciplinary measures to erring employees. I've not been afraid to speak in trying to straighten things out.

I felt people disliked me for doing so. Some people would be aloof toward me. Later, however, I realized that my efforts were appreciated after all. My words left marks in their minds that made them careful with what they did.

I just have to hold on to my resolve to always aim to do what is good for my brethren. It isn't easy. Some people may react negatively. God Himself, in His great love and compassion, has set the example. Jesus suffered in the hands of sinners. He died to save all of us from damnation. And God wills that we resurrect with Him to eternal life. *Bella Estrella*

(blestrella@gmail.com)

### reflect

"If you on your part warn a wicked man to turn from his way and he does not turn from his way, he will die in his iniquity, but you have delivered your life." (Ezekiel 33:9)

*Father, give us the gift of fortitude to stand for truth and righteousness.*

St. Pantaleon, pray for us.

# Jul 28

WEDNESDAY

**Exodus 34:29-35**

Psalm 99:5, 6, 7, 9

Matthew 13:44-46

## INNER GLOW

"They saw that his face was radiant."

– Exodus 34:35

During the awards night, Jacqui exuded an aura of peace and contentment. People felt it. It was no surprise when she won at the Carlos

Palanca Memorial Awards for Literature that evening.

She lifted all the glory to God.

The audience and other nominees had no idea she was a cancer survivor and that she braves daily migraine attacks. The pain and struggles she endures every single day are not visible on her face. She says it's because of the daily conversations she has with God.

I believe her. She reminds me of Moses whose face turned radiant after his conversation with God. But not like Jacqui's. His face literally glowed that he had to cover it with a veil.

Although light didn't shine from Jacqui's face, her inner glow inspires many to have meaningful daily conversations with God. Carlo Lorenzo (carlolorenzo@gmail.com)

### reflect

What did you talk to God about today?

*Dear God, You are my Friend. Help me pour out my heart to You in deep conversations, even if I sometimes feel that there's no response from You. I know You are there. Amen.*

St. Samson, pray for us.

# Jul 29

THURSDAY

**Exodus 40:16-21,  
34-38**

Psalm 84:3, 4, 5-6, 8, 11  
John 11:19-27  
(or Luke 10:38-42)

**Memorial of St. Martha,  
disciple of the Lord**

## COMMAND

Moses did just as the Lord had commanded him. – Exodus 40:16

It seemed we were well on our way out of bankruptcy. But the next thing I knew, I was standing in front of a judge pleading against the bank that was foreclosing our facility. And

I felt lost since the only reason why I said yes to helping this ailing organization was the belief that God had planted me here.

Despite our circumstance back then, God pushed me to keep moving under His direction. Today, it has been over a year since we closed our negotiations with the bank and are back on track with our rehabilitation plan.

If you go through the First Reading today, Moses followed what God commanded. How often do we have the same disposition of following God all the way through? To follow God is to take action. But what stops us is our fear—whether it's fear of failure, of rejection, or of not being good enough.

They say information is power. But the true source of power is informed action. We may know everything there is, but if we fail to take action, then nothing ever happens.

Orange V. Garcia (orange.garcia@olpmc.edu.ph)

## reflect

“Nothing happens unless something moves.” (Albert Einstein)

*Lord, give me the courage to always follow and take Your command.  
Amen.*

St. Martha, pray for us.

# Jul 30

FRIDAY

Leviticus 23:1, 4-11,  
15-16, 27, 34-37

Psalm 81:3-4, 5-6,  
10-11

**Matthew 13:54-58**

## FAITH HEALS

And he did not do many deeds of power there, because of their unbelief.

– Matthew 13:58

I got redundated. Fortysomething and busted—it was depressing. And it wasn't supposed to happen to me. But

it did. My wife worried, my mother-in-law panicked, and my Starbucks barista was devastated.

But what I lost in dignity that day, I made up for in faith. It was my prayer after all for God to guide my way. He closed all the doors He could find until I was left with an open window I couldn't refuse.

“This is a blessing, too,” I remember thinking, “and I trust Him to make things right.” It took four months before I got a job offer. But God blessed me not only with a bigger salary, a nicer car, and travel opportunities. He blessed me with less stress at work but more time with my family.

Faith is a wonderful thing. But you need to believe He will always take the best care of you. Know He will never tire of opening your eyes to all the wonder He does in your life. May you never tire of standing in awe and trusting Him completely.

Rod Velez (rod.velez@live.com)

### reflect

“Faith is not belief without proof, but trust without reservation.”  
(D. Elton Trueblood)

*In the easiest and most difficult circumstances in my life, help my unbelief, Lord. Grow my faith and never let me tire of seeing the wonders You do.*

St. Peter Chrysologus, bishop and Doctor of the Church, pray for us.

# Jul 31

SATURDAY

**Leviticus 25:1, 8-17**

Psalm 67:2-3, 5, 7-8

Matthew 14:1-12

## JUBILEE

"Proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants" – Leviticus 25:10

Jubilee is when a high school batch celebrates their 25th anniversary, right? Well, I've learned a deeper meaning of jubilee.

Jubilee is a call to create heaven here on earth. It is when the land is given rest, debts are forgiven, and slaves are set free. And because I'm writing this during the COVID-19 quarantine, I've seen more beauty in life. Instead of the usual murky waters and thick smog enveloping the metro, I now see the blue waters of Manila Bay and a clear horizon above the city. Wow! The quarantine has given Mother Earth some rest.

I also took this opportunity to help my tenant. She's been in debt for years. Her seafarer husband lost his job. Her OFW daughter is their sole breadwinner. So I did something very difficult—I let go of the rent money she's due to pay me. I forgave her debt.

I still have my own bills to pay, yet there's lightness in my heart and a smile on my face. Because out there is one less slave to debt. And in me, one less slave as well. Edwin S. Soriano

(edwin@edwinsoriano.com)

### reflect

In life, what have you allowed yourself to be enslaved to? What can you do to free yourself from this bondage?

*Lord, thank You for reminding me to rest, to let go, to forgive, to love. Show me, Lord, how else I can create heaven here on earth. Amen.*

St. Ignatius of Loyola, priest, pray for us.

# Aug 1

SUNDAY

Exodus 16:2-4, 12-15

Psalms 78:3-4, 23-24,  
25, 54

**Ephesians 4:17, 20-24**

John 6:24-35

## SOMEONE LIVES IN YOU

Put on the new self, created in God's way in  
righteousness and holiness of truth.  
- Ephesians 4:24

In 3000 B.C., philosopher Aristotle said, "Nature abhors a vacuum." Space doesn't want to be empty.

I hear this excuse all the time, "Brother Bo, I can't go to The Feast yet. I need to clean up my act. When I'm able to get rid of my sins, I'll start going to The Feast."

Sorry to burst your bubble, but that won't happen. Fact is, it's impossible to remove a bad habit. The only way to remove a bad habit is to replace it with a good one. In the same way, you can't remove an evil spirit in your life—it will just return. You need to replace it with the Holy Spirit.

But I've got good news for you. If you're following Jesus, you're not empty. There's already Someone living in you. The Bible says, "Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God?" (1 Corinthians 6:19). You are God's house. And He will fight for you.

Friend, go ahead and put on that new self. Be God's blessing to the world. Bo Sanchez (bosanchez@kerygmfamily.com)

### reflect

Who lives in you?

*Dearest God, I am often at war with the evil one. Help me to always remember that You live in me and You will lead me to victory. Amen.*

St. Alphonsus Liguori, bishop, pray for us.

# Aug 2

MONDAY

Numbers 11:4-15

Psalms 81:12-13,

14-15, 16-17

**Matthew 14:13-21**

## **KASOY AT SUMAN**

"There is no need for them to go away; give them some food yourselves."

– Matthew 14:16

He approached me right after I led the worship in a major prayer meeting event.

"Alvin! It's so good to worship!" His words were truly encouraging. But his generosity was more incredible. "This is for you—and it's good, too!" He handed over a paper bag with *suman* and cashew nuts. "That's from Antipolo. I hope you and Christine like it. Don't stop evangelizing, OK?"

I shook his hand and thanked him. His parting words were, "There are a lot of people who are hungry for His Word. We need more events like this one to share the Good News to more people!" I smiled back at him and said, "I think we also need more people with the same zeal like yours, *Kuya Danny*."

*Kuya Danny* was the eldest in our group yet he continued to serve with us. He only took a break when he suffered a stroke. He passed away at 73 years old in December 2019. He lived a good life for God. He taught me how to live out the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20). God gives us the command to feed the hungry people in the world with His Word. Alvin Fabella ([alvinfabella@yahoo.com](mailto:alvinfabella@yahoo.com))

### **reflect**

When was the last time you shared about God to someone?

*Lord, give me the boldness to share the Gospel to the ends of the earth—or across the street. Amen.*

St. Eusebius of Vercelli, bishop, pray for us.



# Aug 3

TUESDAY

Numbers 12:1-13

Psalms 51:3-4, 5-6,  
6-7, 12-13

**Matthew 14:22-36**

(or Matthew 15:1-2,  
10-14)

## FROM THE PROBLEM TO THE PROBLEM SOLVER

But when he saw the strong wind and the waves, he was terrified and began to sink.

– Matthew 14:30, NLT

News flash! There's another man who walked on water besides Jesus—Peter. And though his doubting and sinking is usually highlighted in this Gospel, the fact is, Peter is the only other man who walked on water. It may have been short, probably just a few steps, but still, he did it.

How? Peter focused on Jesus. It didn't matter if the waves were crashing. Peter had his eyes glued on Jesus. As his eyes steadied on Him, Peter steadied his feet on the sea. But as soon as he looked at the roaring waves and gushing wind, he began to sink.

Similarly, it's easy to look at our troubles as they loom closer and closer to us. But didn't Jesus say to walk by faith and not by sight? Shift your gaze from the problem to the Problem Solver. The One who stands with us and in us is greater than any wave that can crash against us.

And if we ever lose sight of Jesus and begin to sink, He is right beside us, ready to grab our hand and get us out of the waters. *Veia Lim-Viñas (veiallim@gmail.com)*

### reflect

Listen to the song "Above the Waters" by Feast Worship on Youtube or Spotify.

*Save us, Lord. Keep our heads above the waters. Amen.*

Sts. Philip and James, Apostles, pray for us.

# Aug 4

WEDNESDAY

Numbers 13:1-2,

25-14:1, 26-29,

34-35

Psalm 106:6-7,

13-14, 21-22, 23

Matthew 15:21-28

## BEAUTIFUL, BRILLIANT, BELOVED, AND BIG

"We even saw giants there, the descendants of Anak. Next to them we felt like grasshoppers, and that's what they thought, too!" – Numbers 13:33, NLT

One Monday, my wife and I decided to have lunch in a restaurant near our condo. Since it was our rest day, I just wore shorts, slippers, and a faded shirt.

At the restaurant, there were diners from a table who suddenly asked for a selfie with us. They were attendees from various Feasts who were on lunch break from nearby offices. I suddenly felt so small, because they were in formal business attire while I looked like a beggar beside them. Thankfully, they were still glad to have a photo with us.

In today's First Reading, the Israelites got intimidated by the giants living in the land God promised to them. They were terrified by their size; they began to feel small and insecure.

At that restaurant, I got a glimpse of how God looks at us. Friend, When God sees you, He doesn't focus on your flaws. He doesn't focus on your sins. He focuses on your beauty and brilliance as His beloved child. You are big in God's eyes. Mike Viñas (mikemichaelfcv@yahoo.com)

### reflect

God sees greatness within you, and He tells you today, "It's time for you to open your eyes and see it, too."

*Father God, thank You for planting greatness in me. Help me see what You see in me and the glorious future ahead. Amen.*

St. John Mary Vianney, priest, pray for us.

# Aug 5

THURSDAY

**Numbers 20:1-13**

Psalm 95:1-2, 6-7,  
8-9

Matthew 16:13-23

## LEADERSHIP FAILURE

"Because you did not have confidence in me to acknowledge my holiness before the Israelites, therefore you shall not lead this assembly into the land I have given them."

– Numbers 20:12

If you are a leader at work or in ministry, I'm sure you can relate to what Moses and Aaron experienced at Meribah. At a crucial time in his ministry, Moses failed to trust God and acted on his own impulses. God had instructed them to "command the rock to yield water." Instead, Moses scolded the complaining people and in a fit of impatience, struck the rock with his staff twice. This displeased God and consequently, they were not allowed to enter the Promised Land.

Like Moses, I, too, am vulnerable to the pitfalls of leadership: Pride that makes me feel I have all the answers and don't need to talk to God; passiveness that makes me reluctant to challenge the status quo and implement change; and success that makes me complacent. But in His mercy, the Lord vindicates leadership failures like Moses. Hebrews 3:5 (CEV) says, "Moses was a faithful servant and told God's people what would be said in the future." I may be an imperfect leader, but I hold on to the hope that the Lord will bring out the good in every failure. [Dina Pecaña \(dina.p@shepherdsvoice.com.ph\)](mailto:dina.p@shepherdsvoice.com.ph)

### reflect

"A great man is always willing to be little." (Ralph Waldo Emerson)

*Lord, we pray for all leaders, so we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. Amen. (1 Timothy 2:1-4)*

St. Hilary of Arles, pray for us.

# Aug 6

FRIDAY

Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14

Psalm 97:1-2, 5-6, 9

2 Peter 1:16-19

**Mark 9:2-10**

**Feast of the  
Transfiguration of the Lord**

## STARSTRUCK

He did not know what to say,  
for they were terrified. – Mark 9:6

I remember vividly the day I met Catholic lay preacher Bo Sanchez. He spoke in three sessions at The Feast in Valle Verde. He had a bad sore throat

and didn't chat with others to preserve his voice for his talks.

When I was introduced to him, he just waved his hand, smiled, and didn't say anything. That's why to this day, I jokingly tell people that Bo was speechless when he met me.

Kidding aside, I was speechless myself. I was starstruck! Who wouldn't be? Right in front of me was my long-time "idol!"

Friends, think about this: When we are at prayer, right in front of us is our one and only idol—Jesus Himself! How do we react before Him?

Sometimes, I'm guilty of blabbering and yawning during my prayer time, not fully aware of the Presence before me. But here's the surprise: Jesus smiles at me, waves, and says, "It's OK. I appreciate your effort to come before me in prayer."

Next time we pray, let's be still, close our eyes, and allow the fear of the Lord overcome us. Remember, you are in Jesus' presence. Boggs Burbos (boggsburbos@yahoo.com)

### reflect

How's your prayer time? Do you feel His presence in your prayer time?

*Jesus, I thank You for this moment to come before Your Presence in prayer. Grant me the grace to accept the love, mercy, and grace You have for me.*

St. Hormisdas, pope, pray for us.

# Aug 7

SATURDAY

**Deuteronomy**

**6:4-13**

Psalm 18:2-3, 3-4,  
47, 51

Matthew 17:14-20

## LOVE = OBEDIENCE

"Therefore, you shall love the Lord, your God, with your whole heart, and with your whole being, and with your whole strength."

– Deuteronomy 6:5

"If loving God means obeying God, why is it so hard to love God?"

a friend of mine once posted on social

media. It got me thinking.

"Why is it so hard to obey God?"

I have a few answers.

I think only of today, but He thinks of eternity. He answers my prayer—not just for my good—but for the good of His whole universal (catholic) family.

As He Himself says, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, My ways your ways" (Isaiah 55:8-9). Many times, I feel this is the right direction, but He has another plan in mind.

Add to that the answer of John who calls himself, "the one whom Jesus loved."

"We love because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19). Only His love in us can make us love Him and consequently obey Him. Marc V. Lopez (marcvlopez88@gmail.com)

## reflect

Have you received the love of God?

*Heavenly Father, I receive Your love for me today. Fill me with a fresh anointing of Your Holy Spirit—the spirit of love Himself. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

St. Cajetan, priest, pray for us.

# Aug 8

SUNDAY

**1 Kings 19:4-8**

Psalm 34:2-3, 4-5,

6-7, 8-9

Ephesians 4:30-5:2

John 6:41-51

## ANGEL IN THE WILDERNESS

Suddenly an angel touched him and said to him, "Get up and eat." – 1 Kings 19:5, NRSV

I don't like talking about my career. When people ask what my profession is, I always say I am three things: nurse, teacher, and writer.

They would wow at that, "A Renaissance woman, she is!" But frankly, that's just a result of years of confusion, exploration, and quarter-life crisis.

This is why, like Elijah in today's reading, I got to the nadir of my confidence many times. There were nights when I looked back at the two decades of my existence and felt like a failure. Sometimes, I'd check my pocket and would get mad at myself for spending my youth unwisely. The wilderness was paralyzing. But God, like how He was to Elijah, sent me angels to persistently remind me of my strengths, to push me to move forward, and to slap some sense into me. Without those people, I may have not reached the peak of the mountains I tried to climb.

Today, I want to thank my family, relatives, and friends who helped me become the nurse, teacher, and writer that I am. I pray that we may also be God's angel to an Elijah.

Elaine Marie R. Factor (elainemarietfactor@gmail.com)

### reflect

Do you know Elijahs in your life? Are you encouraging or discouraging to them?

*Lord God, thank You for sending us angels in the wilderness. May we be one of them today.*

St. Dominic, priest, pray for us.

# Aug 9

MONDAY

Deuteronomy

10:12-22

Psalms 147:12-13,

14-15, 19-20

**Matthew 17:22-27**

## BLIND FOLLOWER

"Doesn't your teacher pay the temple tax?"

– Matthew 17:24

Years ago, I consulted a health mentor, then a naturopathic doctor, because I wanted to have a healthy lifestyle. After three months, my weight dropped to 88 pounds. Because I avoided foods they labeled as unhealthy, my required daily calorie intake for my built was cut into half. I lost not only fat but also muscle. I was skin and bones, and had sunken cheeks. Friends and relatives thought I was ill.

My immune system was compromised; I got sick more often. I even had dengue. I focused so much on the diet change that I took other areas of my life for granted.

Jesus paid the temple tax even if He was exempted. He did this so as not to offend the officials. I followed strictly the prescribed regimen to avoid being "scolded" if I cheated. I later realized I didn't want to be labeled as irresponsible.

Laws, rules, and guidelines serve a particular purpose. But if we follow blindly without understanding the spirit behind them, we get ourselves into trouble. Judith Concepcion

(svp\_jmc@yahoo.com)

### reflect

Do you follow because you believe it's the right thing to do, or is it because you're afraid? Check your motives.

*Your laws, O Lord, are before me always. Grant me the grace to follow Your commandments out of love and not of fear. Amen.*

St. Candida Maria of Jesus, pray for us.

# Aug 10

TUESDAY

2 Corinthians 9:6-10

Psalms 112:1-2, 5-6,

7-8, 9

**John 12:24-26**

## TRUE HONOR

"Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds." – John 12:24

In December 2019, I officially retired from all my pastoral responsibilities in the Light of Jesus Family. I joined the community in 1987. Through the years, I served in the different ministries and outreaches—from the couples group all the way to being overall presiding elder.

In my journey, I've committed mistakes here and there, and had to ask for forgiveness. It taught me a lot more about humility. I also had loads of lessons in putting the interest of others above self, how to value kindness, and making sure that our members realize that relationships are more important than our functions and roles. Above all, it made me a better father and husband to my family as I had to walk the talk and be an example of how to serve God and others.

As I walked out of my office in the final hours of my stint, I looked back with gratitude for having been given the opportunity and honor to serve. I pray that when I see God face to face, He will say to me, "Well done, My faithful servant." That's highest honor I long to receive. Nothing more, nothing less. [hermie Morelos \(hermie.m@svrtv.com\)](mailto:hermie.m@svrtv.com)

### reflect

In serving, do you desire honor and accolade from your co-servants?

*Jesus, teach me to focus on the Lord of the service rather than my service to the Lord. Teach me to follow You with all humility and trust.*

St. Lawrence, deacon and martyr, pray for us.



# Aug 11

WEDNESDAY

Deuteronomy

34:1-12

Psalms 66:1-3, 5, 8,

16-17

**Matthew 18:15-20**

## LET THE POWER OF LOVE UNFOLD

"If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you."

– Matthew 18:15

We are in an era dominated by social media. In this platform, it's easy to compliment and criticize people. Bashing has become a common term, but common doesn't necessarily mean right. Correcting somebody needs to have more than just the right words, but moreso, the right level of relationship.

One sad part of being human is wanting to criticize and correct people when our emotions and impulses take over us. But the Gospel teaches us the right way to correct others. "Go and point out their fault, just between the two of you"—not between you and a whole room of people, your whole family, or your entire social media friends list.

Correcting means we want that person to change something. Words cannot change a person. Only love can. We must then show our sincere desire to help them by loving them first, surrendering everything to the Lord, and allowing the power of love unfold. Mia Bueno (buenos@yahoo.com)

### reflect

Do you often follow your emotions and impulses when correcting people? Pause and let your heart speak. Let the power of God's love create the transformation in His time.

*Father God, thank You for loving us much more than we deserve. We have wronged You so many times, yet You still choose to love us even more. Thank You for being a model of how it is to truly love and forgive. Amen.*

St. Clare of Assisi, virgin, pray for us.

# Aug 12

THURSDAY

Joshua 3:7-10, 11,  
13-17

Psalm 114:1-2, 3-4,  
5-6

**Matthew 18:21-19:1**

## UNLI FORGIVENESS

"Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive him?" . . . Jesus answered, "I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times." – Matthew 18:21-22

Before she founded a congregation, St. Jane Frances de Chantal was a housewife who struggled to forgive her husband's murderer. When she finally found it in her heart to forgive, she even became godmother to the assassin's child.

Some say that true forgiveness means burying the transgression forever in your memory. Yet there are those who say they can forgive but never forget a hurt. But forgiving should not equate to memory loss. The ultimate test of forgiveness is the ability to remember how deeply you were hurt—but without the bitterness. Jesus told Peter to forgive "seventy times seven times." He wanted His disciples to cultivate a culture of "unli forgiveness" just as God shows us "unli mercy" for every single time we sin and repent.

In the same manner, we should also learn to forgive ourselves. Acknowledging our mistakes and having the confidence to know that God loves us so much to forgive us, allows us to move forward and become better persons. Only then, as St. Jane Frances de Chantal tells us, shall we find true happiness and be "ravished with joy." Tessa Mangahas (mtgmangahas@gmail.com)

### reflect

"To forgive is the highest, most beautiful form of love. In turn, you will receive untold peace and happiness." (Robert Muller)

*Father, forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Amen.*

St. Jane Frances de Chantal, pray for us.

# Aug 13

FRIDAY

**Joshua 24:1-13**  
Psalm 136:1-3,  
16-18, 21-22, 24  
Matthew 19:3-12

## PROMISED LAND

"So I gave you a land on which you did not toil  
and cities you did not build."  
– Joshua 24:13, NIV

My friend Lloyd got downsized from his job in Dubai when expats were the first to be let go. He prayed for guidance and felt the urge to return to the Philippines. But returning seemed like an admission of defeat. What would other people say? So, to prolong his stay abroad, he settled for lower-paying work.

Before long, he became discontent and unhappy. His new employer was taking advantage of him. Lloyd prayed hard again and the Lord reminded him to have faith, to believe in his own capabilities just as his family believed in him. Finally, he listened. If the Lord was pointing him home, then so be it.

Back in Manila, Lloyd began a consultancy. He started with one client—me—and acquired successive projects through word of mouth. He realized that when he yielded to follow God's call, divine grace was his. The Promised Land was there all along.

The fear for our uncertain future can be crushing. But if we lift up our heads in gratitude for what we have, appreciate who we are and those who support us, we will surely overcome.

Gina J. Verdolaga (mgjver@yahoo.com)

### reflect

Do you accept and love yourself? Only then can you fully love.

*Lord, thank You for the beauty You created in me. Help me value my special light. Amen.*

St. Benilde, pray for us.

# Aug 14

SATURDAY

**Joshua 24:14-29**

Psalm 16:1-2, 5,

7-8, 11

Matthew 19:13-15

**Memorial of St. Maximilian  
Kolbe, priest and martyr**

## MARY WAS QUARANTINED

"But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord." – Joshua 24:15

As I write this, it's day 61 of the lockdown in Metro Manila due to the coronavirus pandemic. Our world has turned upside down, and yet I've never felt so much peace.

Before the quarantine, it was my family's turn to be visited by the image of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal. The Feast's Marian ministry brought Mama Mary to our home where we would pray the rosary and novenas for two weeks before she would be transferred and grace another home.

We prayed together as a family every day for the first time, and it was wonderful! I really felt Jesus, through Mary, unifying our family and transforming our hearts to be a little more kind, patient, and loving to one another.

On the day the image was supposed to be picked up, the lockdown was announced. So her image has remained in our home for the duration of the quarantine. What a blessing!

In a time full of fear and anxiety, Our Lady's presence brought us peace and love as our family gathered every night, gazing into her beautiful face as we prayed for healing for our world and especially my family. Cheri Roberto (cheriroberto@gmail.com)

### reflect

The family that prays together stays together.

*Dearest Jesus, we cannot love You completely without loving Your Mother, too.*

St. Maximilian Mary Kolbe, priest and martyr, pray for us.

# Aug 15

SUNDAY

Revelation 11:19;

12:1-6, 10

Psalms 45:10, 11, 12, 16

1 Corinthians 15:20-27

**Luke 1:39-56**

Solemnity of the  
Assumption  
of the Blessed Virgin Mary

**120/80**

"You are blessed because you believed that the Lord would do what he said." – Luke 1:45

I was dizzy. I was preaching on stage at The Feast when I suddenly felt the world spin. Fortunately, I was able to balance myself and complete the session with no problems. However, I later found my blood pressure was dangerously high. After taking medication, I had to rest at a nearby clinic, praying for immediate recovery since I still needed to be on stage again.

Unfortunately, the BP numbers remained high and I was resigned to skip the succeeding session. But after a providential prayover, I asked the Lord to normalize my BP if He still wanted me to preach to His people.

Five minutes after that prayer, the doctor took a look at my BP and said the unexpected: 120/80—exactly within normal range.

In a few minutes, I was on stage, on fire, grateful, and overwhelmingly blessed. Sure, there may be natural explanations to what happened, but for me, that was no less than a miracle. Jonathan Yogawin (coachj@jyogawin.com)

## reflect

Like Mary, will you believe? Get ready to be blessed.

*Lord, I believe in You and in Your plans for me.*

St. Alipius, pray for us.

# Aug 16

MONDAY

**Judges 2:11-19**

Psalm 106:34-35,  
36-37, 39-40, 43-44  
Matthew 19:16-22

## GOD FIRST

They followed other gods, the gods of the peoples around them, and bowed down to them, and provoked the Lord.  
– Judges 2:12

I usually think of myself as a good person. I try to follow God's commandments. I do my best to share Him with others. I serve Him with my husband at The Feast and in other ways. We both strive to teach our kids to know, love, and serve Jesus. Yet when I read today's First Reading, I felt as if lightning struck me.

You see, there are times when I seem to follow "other gods" like the Israelites did. When I put other things before God and don't make Him my top priority, those "other things" become like gods. Things like work, social media, chores, and even what I do for our Feast and my different advocacies. These are all good things, but if they take me away from Jesus, then I'm missing the point, right?

So, I invite you today: Take some time to search your heart. Are there other gods that you tend to follow? Is God always first in your life? Be honest. And if your answer is yes, come before God and seek His forgiveness. He's waiting for you. Tina Santiago Rodriguez (trulyrichandblessed@gmail.com)

### reflect

"Who except God can give you peace? Has the world ever been able to satisfy the heart?" (Saint Gerard Majella)

*Lord, help me to put You first always. Let there be no other gods in my life but You. Amen.*

St. Stephen of Hungary, pray for us.

# Aug 17

TUESDAY

Judges 6:11-24

Psalms 85:9, 11-12,  
13-14

Matthew 19:23-30

## THE FIRST GOAT

"But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first." – Matthew 19:30

Michael Phelps is the GOAT (Greatest Of All Time) not just in swimming but in all sports! He garnered 28 Olympic medals, 23 of them gold. He

was the first of all firsts. He was winning them all, but he was losing it on the inside.

For him, the excitement of winning was just a flash. The sheer thought of giving more than what he has already given to the sport terrified him. The fear of losing the title "champion," the only identity that has defined his personhood, had sucked out all joy from his spirit. With an identity too tiring to keep and a purpose eroding thin, he tweeted, "I struggled with anxiety and depression, and questioned whether or not I wanted to be alive anymore."

Friend, the key to winning your life back is to admit you are losing it. Michael became the first (again!) champion to admit he needed help. He shared, "As an athlete, we're supposed to be these big macho people that don't have any problems and we're not supposed to show weakness, but that's so wrong. I'm so thankful I can ask for help. This saved my life."

Friend, reach out to someone for help *now*. Jon Escoto  
(faiththatworkjon@gmail.com)

### reflect

Don't keep your struggles to yourself. It's time to get help.

*Father, I thought I could pull through this alone. But right now, I'm so broken. Give me the honesty and courage to seek help and send me the right person.*

St. Paschal Baylon, pray for us.

# Aug 18

WEDNESDAY

Judges 9:6-15  
Psalm 21:2-3, 4-5,  
6-7

**Matthew 20:1-16**

## THE GENEROUS END OF THE STICK

"Am I not free to do as I wish with my own money? Are you envious because I am generous?" – Matthew 20:15

An anonymous man gave away money to people who shopped in Walmart in Alabama. The man paid a total of US\$65,000 layaway balance. He left a note saying, "God loves you. Jesus paid the price." We applaud stories like these, and we do our own bit at being generous, too.

But there are forms of generosity that try us. When you are in a hurry and the driver in front of you seems to be taking his or her sweet time, will you give way? You have worked hard at your company, then find yourself bypassed for promotion. When it seems unfair, will you be happy for the person who got the generous end of the stick?

Many of us feel we are actually the elder son rather than the prodigal son. Because we feel we deserve generosity while the others not as much. And there's the rub.

We measure things with our own eyes. We often forget that God knows everything and His wisdom is unlike ours. There is still so much more to learn about being generous.

Joyce Roa (jsosoban@gmail.com)

### reflect

Do you sometimes feel that you have been treated unfairly? That the world is unfair? That God is unfair?

*Lord, I easily delude myself into thinking I'm more on the right than others. Forgive me, Lord. Continue to mold my heart and make it more like Yours.*

St. Helena, pray for us.



# Aug 19

THURSDAY

Judges 11:29-39

Psalm 40:5, 7-8,

8-9, 10

**Matthew 22:1-14**

## ARE YOU READY?

'Friend,' he asked, 'how is it that you are here without wedding clothes?' But the man had no reply. – Matthew 22:12

I am the eldest of two siblings. My brother is five years younger than me. As in any Filipino family, being the eldest has its unspoken responsibilities. I am expected to be the more responsible one. Because of this, I am always on my toes whenever there are family concerns, such as money and our family properties.

Today's Gospel reminds us about preparation and being on our toes. When the king noticed a man not wearing the proper wedding clothes to the celebration, he found this disrespectful since he came unprepared for the occasion.

This made me reflect on how important it is for us to always be on our toes not only for the physical things, but most importantly, the things that are eternal.

We waste so much of our time on the things of the world—money, power, properties. We often forget that what truly matters is readying ourselves for the time we finally see God face to face. How prepared are we for that occasion?

Let's prepare by repenting of our sins and follow Jesus' example. Erika Ventura (erika.m@svrtv.com)

## reflect

Are you prepared to meet God today?

*Lord, I am sorry for my sins. Purify my desires as I prepare to meet You someday. Amen.*

St. John Eudes, priest, pray for us.

# Aug 20

FRIDAY

Ruth 1:1, 3-6,  
14-16, 22

Psalm 146:5-6, 6-7,  
8-9, 9-10

Matthew 22:34-40

## MONSTER-IN-LAW

But Ruth said, "Do not ask me to abandon or forsake you . . . your people shall be my people, and your God my God." – Ruth 1:16

The movie *Monster-in-Law* is about a snooty mother's hilarious battle with her future daughter-in-law.

In real life, it wouldn't be as funny to get a monster-in-law. Do you know I almost got one? My ex-boyfriend's mother was from an old-rich clan. She probably thought I wasn't good enough. In the four years I was with her son, she spoke to me only once!

So, before I met my husband's mother, I prayed she'd be the exact opposite. It was granted. Our relationship was generally gracious even after my husband's death.

Like Naomi, I'm a widow with two sons. I wish for daughters-in-law like Ruth—loyal and God-loving. Years back, I already included my future daughters-in-law in my daily prayers even if, as I write this, my sons don't have girlfriends yet. I've read that by doing this, my Ruths are being prepared and protected. These prayers give assurance my sons will find their TOTGA (The One That God Anointed).

You want the right kind of people to be part of your life? Pray for them. Lella M. Santiago (tellams88@gmail.com)

### reflect

Even if they're not yet a part of your life, pray for the people God will bless you with in your future. This early, their hearts and yours can be prepared to love.

*Lord, surround me with people who will mirror Your face and teach me the grace to love them as You do. Amen.*

St. Bernard of Clairvaux, abbot and Doctor of the Church, pray for us.

# Aug 21

SATURDAY

Ruth 2:1-3, 8-11;

4:13-17

Psalms 128:1-2, 3,

4, 5

**Matthew 23:1-12**

## A CALL TO SERVE

"The greatest among you will be your servant. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted." – Matthew 23:11-12, NIV

When Taal Volcano erupted in the Philippines in January 2020, many residents were displaced from their homes and had to stay in evacuation centers. But in the midst of this disaster, I vividly witnessed miracle after miracles.

"Angels" collected and sorted all kinds of relief goods. Throngs more soared to evacuation centers in Cavite, Batangas, and Laguna. They traveled through the muddy streets amidst the ashfall and smell of sulfur in the air to distribute clothes, food, water, medicines, hygiene utility kits, mats, blankets, even coloring books and crayons to keep the kids busy.

It was heartwarming to see families, office workers, communities, NGOs, and various groups wholeheartedly offering time, talent, and treasure. They cooked food for the evacuees, offered medical service, taught and played with the children, and even entertained them with songs and dances.

We were all witnesses to these people from all walks of life who joyfully went out of their way to share God's embrace. A call to serve is a call to love. Sol Saura (sol\_saura@yahoo.com)

### reflect

Do you willingly say yes whenever you are called to serve? What hinders you from serving?

*Father, make us Your humble servants. Grant us the strength and give us the will to grab every opportunity to serve.*

St. Pius X, pope, pray for us.

# Aug 22

SUNDAY

Joshua 24:1-2,  
15-17, 18

Psalms 34:2-3, 16-17,  
18-19, 20-21

Ephesians 5:21-32 (or  
Ephesians 5:2, 25-32)  
John 6:60-69

## FRONTLINE

### OR BEHIND THE SCENES

"As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord." – Joshua 24:15

Our family comes together every night to recite the Psalms and intercede for people who ask for prayers and those whom we feel need them. If one member is out of town, we still pray together through video calls.

This is how we serve the Lord. We intercede for people. We rejoice together when those whom we pray for receive the answer to their prayer, and we pray more fervently for those whose prayers were not answered.

You need not serve the Lord in the frontlines, like leading worship or singing in the choir. In your own small way, you can serve the Lord. You may do so by preparing the presentation slides of songs for the Mass or prayer meeting, or dusting the pews in your parish church.

You may be serving God behind the scenes, but the Lord is pleased to see the desire in your heart to serve Him.

Rissa Espinosa (rissa\_d\_espinosa@yahoo.com)

## reflect

"One of the greatest rewards that we ever receive for serving God is the permission to do still more for Him." (Charles Spurgeon)

*Lord, thank You for calling me to serve You. May I be able to serve You with my whole heart, mind, and soul. Amen.*

St. Andrew the Scot, pray for us.

# Aug 23

MONDAY

1 Thessalonians

1:1-5, 8-10

Psalms 149:1-2, 3-4,

5-6, 9

**Matthew 23:13-22**

## WHAT MATTERS MOST

“You blind fools! For which is greater, the gold or the sanctuary that has made the gold sacred?” – Matthew 23:17, NRSVCE

I once had the chance to live with the indigenous people in the mountains of Nueva Vizcaya.

Throughout my immersion, I lived their everyday life—farming and gardening, drinking coffee throughout the day, retiring to bed as early as 9 P.M. because there was no electricity, and waking up as early as 4 A.M. to start work in the fields.

My foster parents and even the families I interacted with were enthusiastic whenever they'd tell their stories. Through their smiles, laughter, and sincerity, I felt peace in their hearts. They weren't living the life I have in the city, but they sure know how to really live. They taught me about what matters most—family, friendship, being true to oneself, joy, love, and peace.

Jesus calls us to live an authentic and evaluative life, unlike the hypocrites in the Gospel. He desires nothing more than our real self. We may have a lot of desires, wants, and needs, but Jesus reminds us of what matters most. Oftentimes, “what is essential is invisible to the eye,” as the Little Prince reminds us. May we always fix our gaze on Jesus! JM Nuqui (jmnuqui14@yahoo.com)

## reflect

How can you turn your distractions into directions and inspirations—all in love and service for the Kingdom of God?

*Jesus, may my heart be always directed to You, who are my everything.*

St. Rose of Lima, virgin, pray for us.

# Aug 24

TUESDAY

Revelation 21:9-14

Psalms 145:10-11,

12-13, 17-18

**John 1:45-51**

**Feast of St. Bartholomew,  
Apostle**

## BRING SOMEONE TO JESUS

"Come and see," said Philip." – John 1:46

How did you find Jesus? Chances are someone brought you to Him—through a prayer meeting, a Bible study, a moving testimony, or a life that somehow modeled Jesus.

How will others find Jesus? Through you. And sometimes all it takes is to tell that person, "Come and see," just like what Philip told Nathanael in today's Gospel.

You can invite that person to The Feast, a retreat, or tell him how the Lord changed your life. You can even share Jesus without words—by how you live your life modeling Jesus.

But here's the catch. Philip was able to bring Nathanael to see Jesus because Philip was Nathanael's friend. Even if the latter was hesitant at first and asked, "What good can come out of Nazareth?" they had some established relationship, enough to convince Nathanael to go with Philip.

By all means, bring someone to Jesus. But one of the most effective ways to convince that person to come is to befriend him first. Love him first instead of proselytizing, judging, or even threatening him. In doing so, you have already shown him a glimpse of Jesus. Alvin Barcelona (apb\_ayo@yahoo.com)

### reflect

"It is not primarily out of compassion for humanity that we share our faith or pray for the lost; it is first of all, love for God." (John Piper)

*Lord, may my love for You and others drive me to bring them to You. Amen.*

St. Bartholomew, Apostle, pray for us.

# Aug 25

WEDNESDAY

1 Thessalonians

2:9-13

Psalms 139:7-8, 9-10,

11-12

**Matthew 23:27-32**

## SEEING THROUGH LOVING EYES

"You try to look like saintly men, but underneath those pious robes of yours are hearts besmirched with every sort of hypocrisy and sin." – Matthew 23:28, TLB

We were at a gigantic park in Sydney. I saw my nine-year-old niece, her back turned from me, spilling her water on the grass. I thought, "Oh, this girl! So naughty! Why is she playing with her water?" But I felt ashamed and guilty when I learned that somebody playing in the park hit her tummy with a ball, so she accidentally spilled her water.

Another time, I reprimanded my six-year-old nephew for not wearing his slippers. Later on, my niece talked with me and told me about "shifting perspective." She said, "For example, *Tita*, you were disappointed at Rari because he wasn't wearing his slippers. But what if he ran the moment he found out you were home because he was so excited that he forgot to wear them?" Again, I bit my lip, utterly disappointed with how I failed to see with loving eyes.

These are the moments God humbles me in monumental ways. He reminds me how imperfect I still am—that there is so much work to be done in me and there's no room to judge others. Marianne Mencias (marianne.mencias@gmail.com)

### reflect

Where do you need a shift in perspective? Ask the Holy Spirit for help, so you can see with loving eyes.

*Father, help me to cooperate with Your grace as You continually transform me.*

St. Louis of France, pray for us.

# Aug 26

THURSDAY

1 Thessalonians

3:7-13

Psalms 90:3-4, 12-13,

14, 17

**Matthew 24:42-51**

## WHILE WE'RE STILL HERE

"Therefore, stay awake! For you do not know on which day your Lord will come."

– Matthew 24:42

January 2020 didn't look like a fair welcome to the New Year. Taal Volcano erupted, forcing thousands to leave their way of life. A virus outbreak claimed thousands of lives. Kobe Bryant and his daughter died in a helicopter crash, leaving basketball fans devastated and loving parents heartbroken.

I myself feared for my life through all these. I worked from home during the Taal eruption. I bought all the face masks and alcohol bottles I could find to avoid contracting the virus. Unknown to my family, I'm fearful when they leave the house because of my aunt's death 10 minutes after she left home.

But I realized I have no control over my life or that of my loved ones. I live by God's grace and mercy. If I wake up tomorrow, then good; God must still have something up His sleeves for me. If not, then I hope I had done enough good to glorify God and merit eternal life. We don't know when our time is up. But we know that a much better life awaits us. While we store up riches in heaven, let's not forget to put meaning in our life here on earth. *Osy Erica (osy.eric@gmail.com)*

### reflect

Live passionately. Laugh heartily. Love generously. While we are still here.

*Father, remind me to always live with intention that I may glorify You. Amen.*

Blessed Thomas Percy, pray for us.



# Aug 27

FRIDAY

1 Thessalonians

4:1-8

Psalms 97:1-2, 5-6,

10, 11-12

**Matthew 25:1-13**

## WHAT ARE YOU BRINGING?

But the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps.

– Matthew 25:4

The power of expectation is a wonderful thing, especially when we see it happen in our lives. We literally make things happen based on our

expectations.

There was a story of a village that experienced drought for many years. The crops were dying, so the townspeople decided to pray to God as an assembly so it would rain. The chieftain asked everyone to go out of their houses and head to the middle of the field to pray for rain.

One family hurriedly went out, but the youngest child decided to go back inside to get something.

The mother went after him and met him on his way out of the house. “What did you go back for, son?”

“I brought an umbrella with me, Mama. Didn’t you say we’ll pray for rain?”

The mother could only smile at the wisdom of her little son. Stephen Nellas (hacksfordads@gmail.com)

## reflect

What do you expect God to do for you? Are your actions aligned with your expectations?

*Jesus, I expect You to be with me always. My actions will be prompted by the knowledge and certainty that You are always here. I expect nothing but the best from You. Amen.*

St. Monica, pray for us.

# Aug 28

SATURDAY

1 Thessalonians

4:9-11

Psalms 98:1, 7-8, 9

Matthew 25:14-30

## HEART OF GOLD

"For to everyone who has, more will be given and he will grow rich . . ." – Matthew 25:29

Skateboarding athlete Margielyn Didal won a gold medal in the 2018 Asian Games. She had many TV guestings after the event.

After one show, she ate lunch with us. We went to a restaurant in front of the TV station. While we were ordering food, Margielyn suddenly went out. We thought she didn't like the food. But we soon learned that it was because she saw a poor old lady begging for alms beside the restaurant we were in.

The old lady was with her three grandchildren. We thought Margielyn would give them food. To our surprise, she brought the kids and the old lady into the restaurant and made them eat with us. Before we left the restaurant, she gave them money, too. I was floored when I witnessed her kindness.

Then she told us her story. She was once a street kid in Cebu who had nothing. She had to work as a parking attendant to earn money for food and to rent a skateboard. Now that she's earning from winning in skateboarding, she wants to give back to those in need. Monty Mendigoria (montymendigoria@yahoo.com)

### reflect

How can you pay forward the blessings you richly receive from the Lord?

*Father, make me a channel of Your love and kindness in my daily life. Amen.*

St. Augustine of Hippo, bishop and Doctor of the Church, pray for us.

# Aug 29

SUNDAY

Deuteronomy 4:1-2,  
6-8

Psalm 15:2-3, 3-4, 5

**James 1:17-18, 21-22, 27**

Mark 7:1-8, 14-15,  
21-23

## POSTINGS FOR PRAYER

Be doers of the word and not hearers only,  
deluding yourselves. – James 1:22

In 2019, a colleague went through a difficult medical condition that also plunged his family into an emotional, spiritual, and financial crisis.

Our Viber group became active with daily medical updates, calls for fundraising, and prayers for his healing. Scrolling down the thread of communication, I wondered who in the group went beyond Viber to personally visit our colleague, comfort his family, and voluntarily pitch in some aid without publicity.

Calls for prayer in social network are very much welcome. These could trigger a wave of action from readers to storm the gates of heaven. It's an easy way to get more people praying for an intention.

But beyond liking or replying, the Lord also wants us to take action—to walk and live out our faith, not for our deeds to be seen by others, but for others to see Christ in us through our acts. Marie Franco (mariefranco\_pie@yahoo.com)

### reflect

When you text, “I’ll pray for your speedy recovery,” do you mean it or is it just lip service?

*My guardian angel, block off every temptation for me to be contented with just clicking my keyboard and not do real acts of kindness. Amen.*

St. Medericus, pray for us.

# Aug 30

MONDAY

**1 Thessalonians**

**4:13-18**

Psalm 96:1 and 3,

4-5, 11-12, 13

Luke 4:16-30

## LOVE LIKE NO OTHER

We want you to know the truth about those who have died, so that you will not be sad.

– 1 Thessalonians 4:13, GNB

The news of Kobe and Gigi Bryant's death, together with their fellow passengers, from a helicopter

crash shocked the world. I can only imagine the pain that their families went through.

It reminded me of the first time I experienced death in the family when my *Lolo* Gerry, who was very close to me, passed away. I was 12. Three years later, his wife, my *Lola* Ine, died. As they say, there is no pain like the pain of missing someone in heaven.

But God, the King of heaven, reminds us that Jesus died and rose again, and He will take back with Jesus those who have died believing in Him (1 Thessalonians 4:14). This is consolation to us because even though we are no longer physically with our loved ones who died, they continue to live—and with God! And their love for us, joined with the love of God, remains in our hearts. That is love like no other. It is the love that heals.

May we find comfort knowing God's love knows no bounds—not even death. Sam Timbreza (sttimbreza@up.edu.ph).

### reflect

“It is not length of life, but depth of life.” (Ralph Waldo Emerson)

*Dear God, please send our hugs and kisses to our loved ones who are with You now. We miss them but we rest and rejoice knowing they are in Your care. Amen.*

St. Jeanne Jugan, pray for us.

# Aug 31

TUESDAY

1 Thessalonians

5:1-6, 9-11

Psalm 27:1, 4, 13-14

Luke 4:31-37

## FACE THE STORM

Therefore, let us not sleep as the rest do, but let us stay alert and sober.

- 1 Thessalonians 5:6

On our way to Talim Island for our Feast Light outreach program, the dark clouds warned us of a storm that was about to come. We still proceeded but made sure all our gifts to the community were covered to keep them from getting wet during the boat ride to the island.

As we sailed, strong waves battered our boat. It took all the boatman's might to turn the boat and face the strong waves. Water splashed on us, getting us all wet.

It was then we learned that the front curve of the boat is intended to keep the boat steady even if it hits the waves head-on. If the waves hit the side of the boat, it can cause it to turn and capsize.

In life, we need to face our problems and trials up front. Yes, things can get messy, but it's the only way we will combat our problems. Avoiding them would only cause more trouble.

We were thankful we arrived at the place safely. By God's grace, the storm stopped and we had a joyful celebration.

Maria Paz Jimenez-Balayan (pazjb0117@gmail.com)

## reflect

"Smooth seas do not make skillful sailors." (African Proverb)

*Lord, the waves may be rough and intimidating, but with You at the helm, I have nothing to fear. Amen.*

St. Raymond Nonnatus, pray for us.

# Sept 1

WEDNESDAY

Colossians 1:1-8

Psalm 52:10, 11

**Luke 4:38-44**

## WHO ARE YOU PAYING ATTENTION TO?

But he rebuked them and did not allow them to speak. – Luke 4:41

I remember giving an entire series on spiritual warfare at The Feast held at the Philippine International Convention Center (PICC). In the middle of the series, PICC management called to tell us that we couldn't use the venue for the coming Feast because Meralco was cutting off all electric power the following Sunday. This was two days before The Feast.

From all angles, it was an impossible situation. How could we look for another venue in two days to fit 3,500 people? Some of my friends said, "This is a demonic oppression! This is a demonic attack. The devil clearly hates our series."

My answer: It's possible. But whether the devil did it or not isn't the most important question. It's this: "What is God doing?" I've always operated in this way. I don't pay attention to what the devil is doing but to what God is doing.

In the nick of time, before that Sunday, we found a temporary venue for The Feast—at the Manila Hotel.

My message to you: Don't be afraid of the devil. Don't pay attention to him. Don't glorify him. Glorify God instead.

Bo Sanchez (bosanchez@kerygmfamily.com)

### reflect

What is God doing in your life today?

*Father, grant me the grace to know the work of the Holy Spirit in me.*

St. Giles, abbot, pray for us.

# Sept 2

THURSDAY

Colossians 1:9-14

Psalm 98:2-3, 3-4,

5-6

**Luke 5:1-11**

## GOD'S UNMISTAKEABLE CALL

After he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch." – Luke 5:4

Oftentimes, the Lord's call comes to us when we least expect it.

Mine happened at age 16 circa 1972. I was invited to a prayer meeting in Baguio.

When I heard the word *prayer*, I immediately resisted because I had become cynical about anything religious. But because of my friend's insistence, I went. For the first time, I saw people praying in a personal way to the Lord—in ways I've never seen. I got curious so I kept going until I was invited to join a discipleship training school. I resisted at first but eventually gave in and never regretted it.

Giving in to that invitation bore good fruit. I found myself having a desire to grow deeper in my walk with the Lord.

It's been almost 50 years since I responded to God's call. It's been a journey of seeing the Lord work in ways I've never imagined. It made me see that to live for Jesus is to have fullness of life. Jesus came so I might have life and life in its fullness. Omy Romero (omyromero@gmail.com)

### reflect

In what ways are you experiencing the call of Jesus? How are you responding to Him? Ask Jesus to reveal Himself to you—and believe He will.

*Father, help me heed and respond fully to Your call. Let me be sensitive to Your voice. Let me see Your action in my life. In Jesus' name, I pray.*

St. Zenó, martyr, pray for us.

# Sept 3

FRIDAY

Colossians 1:15-20

Psalm 100:1-2, 3,

4, 5

**Luke 5:33-39**

## BALANCED DIET

"The disciples of John fast frequently...  
but your disciples eat and drink."

- Luke 5:33, GNB

A young man told his girlfriend,  
"You look like a goddess."

The girl asked, "Really? Who?

Venus or Aphrodite?"

"No," the boy replied, "you look like Buddha."

What's the difference between a diet and religious fasting? Both involve refraining from eating, but there's a huge difference. Dieting is about your body and health. Fasting is about your soul. The goal of dieting is for you to look great. Fasting, on the contrary, helps you become closer to God.

The crucial question is, "Can you mix fasting with dieting?"

The answer is yes!

We can stick to days when we can have a healthy and enjoyable diet, then add days of fasting. During a fast, we can use the time for meals to pray and commune with God instead.

Remember, dieting creates a stronger body and fasting creates a stronger soul. When we do this, we create a balanced diet. Arun Gogna (gognuts@yahoo.com)

## reflect

What is your attitude when you deny yourself of something?

*When I look at the blessing of food in front of me, I thank You, Lord, who provided all this for me. Amen.*

St. Gregory the Great, pope and Doctor of the Church, pray for us.



# Sept 4

SATURDAY

Colossians 1:21-23

Psalms 54:3-4, 6, 8

**Luke 6:1-5**

## IT'S OK TO BE UNPOPULAR

But some Pharisees said, "Why are you breaking the law by harvesting grain on the Sabbath?" – Luke 6:2

Whenever I hear about someone bashing Catholic lay preacher Bo Sanchez, it really breaks my heart—especially when they say all he does is “ask for your money” and those kinds of things.

Sometimes, I want to reply and tell them, “Hey, don’t you know how humble and generous this person is? Why do you hate him?”

But knowing Brother Bo, he wouldn’t want me to get into an argument. Instead, he’ll encourage me to love his haters because that’s what Jesus would do.

Jesus, the unblemished Lamb of God, was bashed and hated to the point of death—even when He came to save us all.

Friend, you might be the kindest or most helpful person in the world, but there will always be people who won’t like you. And that’s OK because it’s not your job to please them.

Our main goal is to please God—the reason we should focus on what God says, not what other people say about us.

JPaul Hernandez (jpaulmh@yahoo.com)

### reflect

How do you respond with love to the people who don’t like you?

*Jesus, I ask You to increase my capacity to love. Fill me with Your love so I can learn how to love like You. Amen.*

St. Rosalia, pray for us.

# Sept 5

SUNDAY

Isaiah 35:4-7

Psalms 146:6-7, 8-9,  
9-10

James 2:1-5

Mark 7:31-37

## DO NOT FEAR, GOD IS HERE

Say to the fearful of heart: Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God, he comes with vindication; with divine recompense he comes to save you. – Isaiah 35:4

When I was a kid, I was afraid of many things—the dark, cockroaches, ghosts, and a host of other things.

Every time I was afraid, my parents would try to embolden me by saying, “You can do it. You’re a big boy now,” or “Don’t be afraid. Just be brave.” But none of those encouraging words worked. The only thing that would calm my fears was when my parents would say, “Don’t worry, Daddy and Mommy are here.”

That’s the power of presence. As a kid, it’s so much more comforting to know that someone bigger and stronger is fighting with me and for me. Plus, I know my parents are willing to lay down their lives for me.

Now, imagine God is with you. Wouldn’t it make you indestructible?

Is there fear in your heart? Go to God. Let Him embrace you. He whispers to you, “Don’t worry, I am here. I will save you.” Velden Lim (veldenlim@gmail.com)

### reflect

Knowing you are not alone in your battle gives you supernatural strength in the face of fear. God is with you. You can do this together.

*Father, in the face of fear, reassure me with Your loving presence. Amen.*

St. Teresa of Calcutta, pray for us.

# Sept 6

MONDAY

Colossians 1:24–2:3

Psalms 62:6-7, 9

**Luke 6:6-11**

## I LOVE YOU JUST THE SAME

Then Jesus said to them, "I ask you, which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?" – Luke 6:9

My daughter came home one day shaking with fear. I was worried as I asked what she was afraid of.

She extended her hand and there it was—her report card. I browsed through it and saw a couple of subjects with grades under 80. I immediately swung my hand. She closed her eyes in anticipation of a spanking. Instead, I smiled and placed my hand on her shoulder. "It's OK, *anak*. You are more than your grades. I love you just the same."

The world gives us so many rules to follow. We should act like this, we should follow that, we should parent our children this way, children must have grades like this, and so on. These are all but guidelines. At the end of the day, what matters is what's inside our hearts and how we make the world a better place.

More than keeping score of our successes and failures, our Father in heaven looks at how much we have loved. He says to us, "It's OK, My child. I love you just the same." Monching

Bueno (ramon\_bueno@yahoo.com)

### reflect

Do you love people based on their performance? Or do you love them for who they are?

*Father, thank You for Your love. Grant us the grace to forgive and love like You. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

St. Dionysius, pray for us.

# Sept 7

TUESDAY

**Colossians 2:6-15**

Psalm 145:1-2, 8-9,

10-11

Luke 6:12-19

## MAJOR LOCKDOWN BLESSINGS

Abounding in thanksgiving. – Colossians 2:7

For the longest time, I've wanted to go back to daily Mass but never got to do so for several reasons—OK, maybe excuses!

The first Sunday that actual Masses were disallowed during the pandemic, I wondered: *How do we survive this difficult time without the grace of the Eucharist?* But a day after the enhanced community quarantine was declared, I was relieved. Because every single day, there were several Masses online that I could attend. I'd join the morning Mass before starting work—a big blessing even if I could only receive Jesus spiritually.

On Easter Sunday, I got the biggest blessing when our parish priest brought the Blessed Sacrament around the village. Jesus passed by our house twice! The feeling of seeing Him again physically in the Blessed Sacrament was something I didn't anticipate. I cried as I bowed in front of Him.

It was definitely one great Easter blessing that I will forever treasure—that in the time of COVID-19, Jesus visited us. Tess V. Atienza (theresa.a@shepherdsvoice.com.ph)

### reflect

What greatest blessing did you receive during the COVID-19 pandemic?

*Thank You, dearest Jesus, because You remembered to stay with us throughout our COVID-19 journey. Amen.*

St. Regina, pray for us.

# Sept 8

WEDNESDAY

Micah 5:1-4  
(or Romans 8:28-30)

Psalm 13:6, 6

**Matthew 1:1-16,  
18-23 (or Matthew  
1:18-23)**

**Feast of the Nativity  
of the Blessed Virgin Mary**

## STAY WHERE GOD PLANTS YOU

"Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home."  
— Matthew 1:20

Life has never been the same since I started serving the Lord. I attend at least two meetings during weekdays, and weekends are my busiest because I have to prepare for Sunday service. I'm at The Feast on Sundays from 8 A.M. to 2 P.M.—sometimes longer if I have a meeting. I work full time in our real estate business, but I spend so much time in ministry that it feels like my real full-time work.

At one point, my friend asked me, "Don't you ever get tired of giving so much of your time to ministry?" I smiled and gave an honest answer, "Yes, sometimes I get tired. But it's not enough to make me stop. My God-purpose is to serve people."

Joseph almost walked away from God's purpose by divorcing Mary. But he didn't. Instead, he took her as his wife. Many times I also wanted to walk away from ministry. And I'm glad I remained where God called me to stay.

There's always a purpose why we are where we are and why we're doing what we're doing. Audee Villaraza (audee@homediscovery.com.ph)

### reflect

Ask yourself these questions: What am I doing here? Why did God allow me to be in this place and situation? What is His purpose for me at this stage of my life?

*Lord, reveal Your purpose for my life and give me endurance to follow it.*

St. Adrian, pray for us.

# Sept 9

THURSDAY

Colossians 3:12-17

Psalms 150:1-2, 3-4,

5-6

**Luke 6:27-38**

## GRACE TO FORGIVE

"Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you." – Luke 6:27

We disagreed with each other's ideas at work and got irked by our respective requests. We tried to discuss about these differences and arrive at a compromise, but still, we disagreed on so many other things. So, I decided to just let it go and ignore him. This cold treatment went on for years.

Then one day, he submitted his resignation letter. I couldn't let him leave without patching things up, so on his last day, I approached him. With a shaky voice, I sincerely apologized for the times we argued and hated him in my heart. He accepted my apology. There were a few tears, but there was laughter too. Now, even if we no longer work together, we still ask how the other is doing. When we bump into each other on special occasions, we'd give each other a hug and catch up.

Loving our neighbor is one of the greatest commandments, and living it out can be our greatest struggle, too. Some people are easy to love while others are not. Yet Jesus calls us to do so, however difficult it may be. With a humble heart and His grace, it's possible. [Ruby Albino \(r\\_jean07@yahoo.com\)](mailto:r_jean07@yahoo.com)

### reflect

Are there people in your life that you find hard to forgive? Remember them in prayer today and ask God how to love them.

*For the many times You have looked past my misgivings, Lord, thank You. Help me to do the same to others. Amen.*

St. Peter Claver, priest, pray for us.

# Sept 10

FRIDAY

1 Timothy 1:1-2,  
12-14

Psalms 16:1-2, 5,  
7-8, 11

**Luke 6:39-42**

## LIKE BODY ODOR

“Why do you notice the splinter in your brother’s eye, but do not perceive the wooden beam in your own?” – Luke 6:41

There was a time when I would always notice the wrong things my sons would do. Many times, I’d catch them with their hand in the proverbial cookie jar. As a parent, it’s my duty to lead them back to the right path toward God.

One day, they became cold to me. Even in casual conversation, I would feel they were not listening. They avoided me. When I sit with them on the sofa, they’d go to their rooms and leave me in the living room alone. It was as if they were repelled by my body odor!

With mixed emotions, I wanted to confront them. But God intervened and I realize I was too hard on them. Maybe because I was hard on myself, too. So I changed and, slowly, things between us changed for the better.

One day, one of my sons told me, “Dad, I flunked a subject in school.” I said, “Don’t worry about it. Take the subject this coming summer and do better next time.” It felt good to respond without judgment. Edwin Marcelo (edwin.m@svrtv.com)

## reflect

Do you look at yourself first before pointing out the fault of others?

*Lord, help me to catch people doing good. Help me to see the good they do more than their faults. Amen.*

St. Peter Martinez, pray for us.

# Sept 11

SATURDAY

1 Timothy 1:15-17

Psalms 113:1-2, 3-4,

5, 6-7

**Luke 6:43-49**

## ROCK-SOLID FAITH

"That one is like a person building a house, who dug deeply and laid the foundation on rock . . ."

– Luke 6:48

I've always considered myself as a man with a strong faith. But that changed when my mom died.

I was in pain, hurt, and broken. I couldn't believe it. I was angry and hated everything. I was depressed and questioned all things. My faith wasn't strong after all.

I've tried to pick myself up since then, but I know my faith isn't still where it used to be.

I need to strengthen it and trust God more again.

Here's what I've realized—despite the grief, sadness, doubt, and hatred, God was and is still there.

He allowed me to cry and to scream at Him.

He also allowed me to rise once again.

Maybe one day, this experience will make my faith stronger than ever.

Because I know God is my rock.

My refuge. My steady, safe place.

And I will build my faith on Him again.

Piece by piece, day by day. Paolo Galia (pgalia@gmail.com)

## reflect

What experience in your life made your faith in God stronger?

*Dear Lord, thank You for using both the good and the bad to teach us. Help us lean on You more so our faith will grow strong. Amen.*

St. Theodora of Alexandria, pray for us.



# Sept 12

SUNDAY

Isaiah 50:4-9

Psalms 116:1-2, 3-4,  
5-6, 8-9

**James 2:14-18**

Mark 8:27-35

## INSEPARABLE

So it is with faith. If it is alone and includes no actions, then it is dead. – James 2:17

A Frank Sinatra song goes like this: “Love and marriage go together like a horse and carriage. This I tell ya, brother, you can’t have one without

the other.” This is also true when we talk about faith and action. They can’t be separated but should go together.

Time and again, I’ve been asked why we preach about financial literacy at The Feast. Does God really want us to be prosperous especially when it comes to money?

Let me answer that with a story from our head servant, Bo Sanchez. When he was still a poor missionary, a lady approached him at a prayer meeting asking for prayers because she didn’t have money even for their next meal.

The woman walked out feeling blessed after Brother Bo prayed over her, but he felt the exact opposite. He felt bad because he couldn’t give her anything tangible aside from the prayer—he himself was financially poor. This became a wake-up call that fueled him to earn more so he can increase his standard of giving.

Faith without action is dead. Keeping the faith is good, but we shouldn’t stop there. Adrian Panganiban (andresignatures@yahoo.com)

### reflect

How do you translate your faith into action?

*Jesus, may my faith not just be an assent of the mind but the witness of my life. Amen.*

St. Ailbhe, pray for us.

# Sept 13

MONDAY

1 Timothy 2:1-8  
Psalm 28:2, 7, 8-9  
**Luke 7:1-10**

## SHAKE HANDS, EMBRACE

"For I do not deserve to have you come under my roof." – Luke 7:6, NIV

If there's something I regret after having a fight with my older brother when we were kids, it was those long sermon cum conversations with our mom. *What happened? What should you have done? How were you supposed to react or respond in that situation? What should you do next?*

And the worst part was the reconciliation. We had to shake hands and embrace. Oh, what an awkward moment for two young boys. But it was one of the best things that happened to us as we were growing up. This developed our character and improved our family relationship.

It's not easy to acknowledge the wrong things we've done. Our pride and ego get in the way of admitting our faults and shortcomings. But in today's Gospel, it is the centurion's humility before Jesus that caused him to receive his miracle. His faith knew what God can do and it led him to act accordingly.

We don't deserve God's favor, but He works His miracles anyway. Let's bow humbly before Him and let Him be God.

Dreus Cosio (andreas.cosio@gmail.com)

### reflect

Let God's love and forgiveness lead you to change. What is He calling you to do? What's stopping you from obeying Him?

*Dear Lord, only say the word and I shall be healed. Amen.*

St. John Chrysostom, bishop and Doctor of the Church, pray for us.

# Sept 14

TUESDAY

Numbers 21:4-9  
Psalm 78:1-2, 34-35,  
36-37, 38  
Philippians 2:6-11  
**John 3:13-17**

Feast of the Exaltation  
of the Holy Cross

## THE BEST AND ONLY THE BEST

"For God so loved the world  
that he gave his only Son." – John 3:16

What a profound expression of one's love—to give the best and the most important to the one you love.

We are called to love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our strength, with all our mind (Luke 10:27). Yet my experience, especially in ministry, is we only give God a miniscule of what is asked of us. When we are asked for our time, many of us find an excuse: I need to fix my car, I have to do laundry, I have a lot of work, etc. When asked for skills for an event, again with the alibis: my voice is cracking, I have two left feet, my hands are not for that, etc. When there is a need for cash donation, we find the smallest amount to give. We tremble when we give a P1,000 bill.

This is what I used to do before, not knowing that when I give, it returns to me good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over (Luke 6:38). Only when I came to know the Lord in a personal way did I start to change how I give. When you experience extreme generosity, you can't help but respond likewise. Danny Tariman (dtariman.loj@gmail.com)

### reflect

Are you giving your best to the One who gave His life for you?

*Lord Jesus, thank You for coming into my life. Renew my mind, renew my heart, and give me the grace to give back to You what You and only You, deserve. Amen.*

St. Notburga, pray for us.

# Sept 15

WEDNESDAY

Hebrews 5:7-9  
(or 1 Timothy 3:14-16)  
Psalm 31: 2-3, 3-4, 5-6,  
15-16, 20 (or Psalm  
111:1-2, 3-4, 5-6)  
**John 19:25-27**  
(or **Luke 2:33-35**)

Memorial of Our Lady  
of Sorrows

## THE RISE OF THE NONES

And he said to this disciple, "Here is your mother." And from then on this disciple took her into his home. – John 19:27, NLT

More and more young people choose not to have a religion. When they answer a form that asks for their religion, they write the word *none*. At first, I felt sad and mad about this. But

after searching my heart, I found in me a sense of compassion for the younger generation.

I'm not giving up hope on them because I have a daughter to whom I want to pass on my legacy of faith, hope, and love in the context of a spiritual family. This is what The Feast is about—it gives young people the chance to experience God's love through our weekly gathering. We teach our members to do life together through discipleship.

In today's Gospel, it was a painful experience for Mary to see her Son suffer, but having companions during this difficult time comforted her. Symbolically, Jesus entrusted the Church—represented by John—to her.

Let's counter the rise of the nones and lead them to discover the faith. This journey may be rough, but we draw strength from Mother Mary and the Church who walk with us. JC Libiran

(coachjclibiran@gmail.com)

### reflect

What steps can you take to rediscover your faith?

*Mama Mary, pray for us and lead us closer to Jesus. Amen.*

Our Lady of Sorrows, pray for us.

# Sept 16

THURSDAY

**1 Timothy 4:12-16**  
Psalm 111:7-8, 9, 10  
Luke 7:36-50

## DON'T GIVE UP

Do not neglect the gift you have.  
- 1 Timothy 4:14

In late 2019, I almost gave up on my passion for writing and poetry. I deleted my Wordpress blogs that I've been updating since 2014 without thinking if I had to back up its contents. I also deleted the Facebook pages of those blogs. I even stopped working on my poetry collection, not meeting my December 16, 2019 target launch, and stopped going to poetry events.

At one point, dancing seemed to be the only thing that kept me sane. Transitions in the different areas of my life took a toll on me and made me want to give up on what I love to do. But God rescued me from that challenging season and sent people to help and encourage me. He led to me discover my niche as an author and poet and made me realize my priorities. I had to let go of the unnecessary things so He could take over once again.

We're easily tempted to quit when nothing good seems to be happening in our lives. We focus on the gifts and forget about the Giver of those gifts. Let's align our lives with His will, remembering His encouraging words in Scripture. Kring Talladen

(kringtalladen@gmail.com)

### reflect

"God gave you ten gifts. Why are you using only eight?" (Arun Gogna)

*Dear Lord, refresh me and lift me up whenever I feel like giving up. Amen.*

Sts. Cornelius, pope, and Cyprian, bishop, martyrs pray for us.

# Sept 17

FRIDAY

1 Timothy 6:2-12  
Psalm 49:6-7, 8-10,  
17-18, 19-20  
**Luke 8:1-3**

## SOFT LAUNCH

Afterward he journeyed from one town and village to another, preaching and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. – Luke 8:1

Imagine how weird things looked in Jesus' days. The men accepted the women, who were culturally second-class citizens, in the same crowd. The uneducated fishermen came together with the intellectual analyst Judas. The classy Susanna mixed with the "low-flying" Mary Magdalene. The political rebel Simon the Zealot dined with the wife of a Roman crony, Joanna. And in today's Gospel, we witnessed the soft launch on a universal centerstage of what's to be known later on as the Christians.

Let me clarify: Jesus' followers are not a community of holy people and like-minded friends. The only reason it works is it's a family whose sole purpose is to reach out to the unholy, irreligious, and spiritually lost atheists, agnostics, freethinkers, and New Agers. In other words, those who were declared "unfit for church." People were not required to believe before they belonged. Jesus and His followers loved them first. They didn't love because they wanted them to be Christians. They love because they *are* Christians. Jon Escoto (faiththatworkjon@gmail.com)

## reflect

Reflect on the depth and beauty of your calling as a member of the Church. What can you do to live up to your calling?

*Father, make me hear You call me again. Give me the grace to respond to this call in an entirely new and deeper way. Thank You. Amen.*

St. Robert Bellarmine, bishop and Doctor of the Church, pray for us.

# Sept 18

SATURDAY

1 Timothy 6:13-16

Psalm 100:1-2, 3,  
4, 5

**Luke 8:4-15**

## GOOD SOIL

"The seeds that fell in good soil stand for those who hear the message, retain it in a good and obedient heart, and they persist until they bear fruit." – Luke 8:15

In the Parable of the Sower, we aspire to be counted among the fourth class, which is the good soil. These are those who ponder upon God's Word with a good and obedient heart and persevere until they bear good fruit. Faced with the devil's temptations, testings, and worldly treasures, they stayed rooted in the message and the Messenger.

According to my favorite (and only) daughter, PA, who's a budding horticulturist, fertilizer helps the soil produce bountifully. In my observation of fruitful Christians, the following seem to be their faith nutrients:

- daily dedicated prayer time with a silent, listening heart;
- daily reading of the Word, and if possible, attendance at the Holy Eucharist;
- regular reception of the other sacraments;
- focused fellowship with kindred hearts, like attendance at The Feast and similar prayer gatherings;
- service, which is faith in action—the Filipino *bayanihan* spirit of solidarity for a common cause as we did during the COVID-19 pandemic. Grace Princesa (grprincesa@yahoo.com)

## reflect

What kind of soil are you?

*Dear Lord, please help me to become good soil that hears Your message, obeys, and bears fruit to bless others. Amen.*

St. Joseph of Cupertino, pray for us.

# Sept 19

SUNDAY

Wisdom 2:12, 17-20

Psalms 54:3-4, 5, 6, 8

James 3:16-4:3

**Mark 9:30-37**

## FIRST CLASS

Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, "Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all."

– Mark 9:35

My wife, Reng, and I were flying home from Paris on her birthday. As it was my business trip, I had a business class ticket but she was in economy. I managed to convince her to take my seat as all our attempts to get her upgraded had failed. As I walked to the economy section, a man was seated on Reng's seat, busily talking with an old woman.

I courteously told him that he was in my assigned seat. He requested if it was possible to exchange seats with me since he had not seen his friend for 20 long years and would really like to catch up with her. I agreed without any hesitation as I did not want to spoil their surprise reunion. Wonder of wonders, when he handed me his boarding pass, it was a business class seat!

I happily went to business class only to find out that my wife was upgraded to first class. Hallelujah! So, there we were, still separated in our seats but joined together in joyful spirit as we relished the amenities of traveling in comfort—all because I gave in to the request of an unknown angel.

Hermie Morelos (hermie.m@svrtv.com)

### reflect

Selfless living and giving is an everyday call to Christians. It may be difficult and inconvenient at times but what inexplicable joy it gives.

*Lord, teach me to be selfless and mindful of others. Only Your grace will enable me to do this daily.*

St. Januarius, bishop and martyr, pray for us.



# Sept 20

MONDAY

Ezra 1:1-6

Psalms 126:1-2, 2-3,  
4-5, 6

**Luke 8:16-18**

## THE BROKEN LAMP

"No one who lights a lamp conceals it with a vessel or sets it under a bed; rather, he places it on a lampstand." – Luke 8:16

I was wallowing in bed when a text from my good friend Tin came: "Can you lead worship for Power Mornings?"

I've been leading worship for years, but when she asked, I had been hiding from God for months. I hadn't been going to Mass and The Feast (our weekly prayer gathering), and I wasn't even praying properly. I was going through spiritual dryness.

I was going to say no because I was ashamed. I felt unworthy. But I also had a strong desire to just sing again for God, so I said yes. My worship that day was broken but heartfelt. It felt like coming home. This was also the day I met Jewel and Hero, heads of Feast Ortigas music ministry. They needed more vocalists so I volunteered. I now serve regularly at the same Feast as a vocalist and worship leader.

My friends, we are the lamp, and God is the One who lights us. He wouldn't allow us to stay in the dark for long because He has plans to use us to bring light to His people. And in any case you don't know how to go back to God, trust that He Himself will meet you where you are and bring you back to His presence. Karren Renz Seña ([karren@projectbeautifulwords.com](mailto:karren@projectbeautifulwords.com))

### reflect

Have you been away from God's presence for a long time? Open your heart to His call. Let Him bring you back home.

*Lord, I'm sorry for the times I failed to bring Your light to Your people. Help me get out of this darkness and use me again to shine Your light to the world.*

Sts. Andrew Kim Taegon, Paul Chong Hasang, and companions, pray for us.

# Sept 21

TUESDAY

Ephesians 4:1-7,  
11-13

Psalms 19:2-3, 4-5  
**Matthew 9:9-13**

**Feast of St. Matthew,  
Apostle**

## CALLED

"Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him. – Matthew 9:9, NIV

Why did Jesus call Matthew? I'm sure there were more reputable people out there. Why call a tax collector who represented a profession that was not respectable during those times? I had similar questions when I was first asked to serve the Lord. I was called to be a leader in our youth ministry, even if I had just joined it a few months earlier.

At first, I asked God, "Why me? I don't know anything about Your work! I am a sinner!" But then I decided to trust in His plan and in His ways. I just said yes and let Him use me. And He's still doing so now despite my brokenness and weakness.

When Jesus told Matthew to follow Him, Matthew did so without any hesitation. He could have refused, citing his unworthiness. But he didn't. He didn't make excuses. And neither should we.

God calls us to follow Him today. What will our response be? [Anthony Rodriguez \(anthony.r@svrtv.com\)](mailto:anthony.r@svrtv.com)

## reflect

"The saints did not all begin well, but they ended well." (St. John Vianney)

*Lord, may I hear Your call in the midst of the noise around me. And when I do, may I not hesitate to get up and follow You. Open my heart today to the many ways I can love, serve, and honor You. Amen.*

St. Matthew, Apostle, pray for us.

# Sept 22

WEDNESDAY

Ezra 9:5-9

Tobit 13:2, 3-4, 4, 6,  
6, 7-8

Luke 9:1-6

## FROM FEAR TO FAITH

He gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases. – Luke 9:1

In 2020, the global community was plagued by a coronavirus, which reportedly originated in Wuhan, China. It gripped the world with fear and anxiety, bringing global travel and tourism to a standstill. Gatherings were prohibited as a measure to prevent its spread.

When the first case was reported in the Philippines, I prayed hard, like many others, that the female patient would be healed to stop the virus from spreading. It was tragic that at a time when we needed it the most, Eucharistic celebrations were suspended. Schools and businesses were closed. People stayed home, afraid for their lives.

When people are in fear, we turn to man-made solutions. But in this situation, we needed God's intervention. The Eucharistic celebration brings God's presence to us. Through it, we receive His power and healing. We believe that with God, all things are possible and we trust that He is in control in all circumstances.

Although Masses were suspended, every home became a Church where we encountered the Lord through spiritual communion. Donna España (donna.espana@yahoo.com)

### reflect

When the devil is at work, God and His heavenly army are working harder.

*Jesus, I believe that when we invoke Your name, miracles happen.*

St. Lioba, pray for us.

# Sept 23

THURSDAY

**Haggai 1:1-8**

Psalm 149:1-2, 3-4,

5-6, 9

Luke 9:7-9

## INCONVENIENT GOODNESS

Is it a time for you yourselves to live in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins?

– Haggai 1:4

We were relaxing after a day of preaching at one of the food stalls around the parish. I carried my piping hot siomai, fishballs, and barbecue to our table when a young boy held hand rags to my face. “Sir, please buy. Three for P50.”

All I could think of then was I was tired and hungry, and rags really didn't look appetizing. “No, thanks,” I said. I tried to get past him, albeit awkwardly, so I could begin eating. But he was insistent. In my mind, I felt I “deserved” the snack and this time alone, since I had already done a good deed by serving God. Then it hit me. What's the use of all these good things if I would only do them on my terms? Can I still do good even if it makes me uncomfortable, pushes me out of my routine, and surprises me when I least expect it?

I invited the urchin to our table and treated him to a full meal that evening. My friends also gave him some of their food and made him laugh with their stories. Finally, before we stood up, we made sure we bought all his rags for the night. We walked home blessed. Migs Ramirez (emiguelframirez@gmail.com)

### reflect

“Never worry about numbers. Help one person at a time, and always start with the person nearest you.” (Saint Mother Teresa)

*Father, before we serve ourselves, help us to reach out to our neighbors in need even though it's inconvenient. Amen.*

St. Padre Pio de Pietrelcina, pray for us.

# Sept 24

FRIDAY

Haggai 1:15-2:1-9

Psalm 43:1, 2, 3, 4

**Luke 9:18-22**

## PERSONAL GOD

"But what about you?" he asked.  
"Who do you say I am?" – Luke 9:20

I knew about Jesus as a child. My mom was a Religion teacher and I would become one, too, for decades.

But it was when I got a terminal illness and held on to Him desperately that I truly got to know Jesus. I encountered and experienced Him not just in my head, but in my heart and soul. It was then that I started a personal relationship with Him.

Yes, you may claim to know Jesus because your parents introduced Him to you. Yes, you know Jesus as you might have learned about Him in school. Yes, you know Jesus as your church and your Bible taught you. But personally, "*Who is Jesus to you?*"

When Jesus asked His disciples about Himself, He had two questions. "Who do they say I am?" and "Who do you say I am?"

Yes, we should continue to learn about Jesus from other sources. But ultimately, Jesus will ask us about our personal knowledge of and relationship with Him.

Again, "*Who is Jesus to you?*" Alvinbarcelona.com (apb\_ayo@yahoo.com)

## reflect

Do you have a head knowledge of Jesus? That's important. But do you have a personal relationship with Him? That's more important.

*Dear God, grant me the grace to continue to know You, love You, and serve You by deepening my personal relationship with You. Amen.*

St. Rupert of Salzburg, pray for us.

# Sept 25

SATURDAY

Zechariah 2:5-9,  
14-15

Jeremiah 31:10,  
11-12, 13

**Luke 9:43-45**

## HAPPY DEATH

"Pay attention to what I am telling you. The Son of Man is to be handed over to men."  
– Luke 9:44

In year 2000, the film *Final Destination* became a huge hit. It was about a group of high schoolers who died horrible deaths one after another. I believe its popularity was largely due to how their demise was shown in an entertaining manner.

In real life, death is a subject we're not too enthusiastic about. Understandably, fear of death is valid for it brings us from a place that we greatly know to a world that we hardly know. Even Jesus Christ prayed to be spared of its pain when He said, "Father, if You are willing, take this cup from me" (Luke 22:42, NIV).

Jesus' foreknowledge that His passion would shortly lead to His resurrection could have allowed Him to just relax, but instead of being carefree, He chose to care. Instead of taking the life of His enemies, He gave His life. Instead of doing His will, He chose the Father's will.

Someday, we will reach our final destination. We can worry about it or worship about it by living the full life Jesus gives. The choice is ours. [Lala Uy \(lala.uy@svrtv.com\)](mailto:lala.uy@svrtv.com)

### reflect

"We die a happy death when we die in honesty, irrespective of circumstance or weakness." (Fr. Ronald Rolheiser, OMI)

*Father, as I keep my eye on the prize of being with You, help me to not lose sight of the journey—for You are in it, too.*

St. Cleophas, pray for us.

# Sept 26

SUNDAY

Numbers 11:25-29

Psalm 19:8, 10,

12-13, 14

James 5:1-6

**Mark 9:38-43, 45,**

**47-48**

## GIVE UNTIL IT HURTS

"Anyone who gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ, amen I say to you, will surely not lose his reward."

– Mark 9:41

My mom, known as Tita Pilar to many, is not a saint. But her ways are similar to one. We used to tease her because of her penchant for helping the “needy, downtrodden, the sick, and the dying,” as the Lord commands.

A woman comes with a sob story, she gives money. A mother of three small kids cries on her shoulder, she gives milk, bread, and clothes for the kids. A beggar knocks and she hands out the last coins in her purse. A man has no job, and she asks me to call a friend so he can have work. Our house is open to anyone who is in need—and to tricksters, too.

When we tell Mom not to believe all who ask from her, she'd scold us and say, “You should help!” Mom didn't only give material things, but would also give her time to lift someone's spirit, listen and talk, and shell out advice, suggestions, and counsel.

To us, she is a saint. Saint Pilar, pray for us! Chelle Crisanto (ellehcmaria@gmail.com)

## reflect

“God's extravagant generosity toward us compels us to be extravagantly generous toward others.” (Andy Stanley)

*Teach me, Lord, to open my heart to those who need my help. Help me not to be critical, to be more gracious, and to give even if it hurts. Amen.*

Sts. Cosmas and Damian, martyrs, pray for us.

# Sept 27

MONDAY

Zechariah 8:1-8  
Psalm 102:16-18,  
19-21, 29 and 22-23  
**Luke 9:46-50**

## UNITY AMONG CHURCHES

"Whoever is not against you is for you."

- Luke 9:50

The speaker showed slides of Protestant groups practicing devotion to the Divine Mercy. I liked that. But there was more.

I learned that a Muslim participated in the rites of the Divine Mercy group in El Salvador, Cagayan de Oro. The story goes that the Muslim just wanted to thank Jesus, the Divine Mercy, for the healing he had received.

Actually, many miracles take place at the Divine Mercy Shrine in El Salvador. Most likely, this Muslim was willing to try anything to get healed.

All these got me. This is surely an authentic devotion that Jesus Himself started. He is consistently nondiscriminatory. And why not? We ought not to be against each other just because of different beliefs.

When the Catholic Church declared 2020 a Year of Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue, the Holy Spirit must have inspired it.

God wants us to unite. [Cristy Galang \(cristy\\_cc@yahoo.com\)](mailto:cristy_cc@yahoo.com)

### reflect

Do you carry any prejudice for others who don't belong to your religion? Why? What should you do about it?

*Open my heart, Lord Jesus, to Your Spirit that You may lead me in all I think, do, and say. Amen.*

St. Vincent de Paul, priest, pray for us.



# Sept 28

TUESDAY

Zechariah 8:20-23

Psalms 87:1-3, 4-5,

6-7

**Luke 9:51-56**

## REJECTION

### OR REDIRECTION?

On the way, they entered a Samaritan village to prepare for his reception there, but they would not welcome him because the destination of his journey was Jerusalem.

– Luke 9:52-53

My family and I applied for visas for a sponsored mission trip to a European country. It was our first time and we were excited. We prayed to get approval, but we got denied. It was heartbreaking.

Have you ever felt denied and rejected? Have you been turned down by someone you hoped would help? It's disappointing, and we can be driven to anger and despair.

In the Gospel, Jesus was also denied entry. It must've been humiliating and provocative that James and John wanted to call down fire from heaven to consume them. Of course, Jesus rebuked them. Don't we also want to call down fire from heaven on those who reject us? But Jesus' way is one of peace and acceptance. Disappointments can teach us to be humble.

Believe in your heart that rejections are God's redirections for your life. He is faithful and will always accept you. Most importantly, He has something (or someone) better for you. **Trust Him.** Kirby Llaban (kirby@kirbyllaban.com)

### reflect

Do you still act in a Christian way when denied or rejected?

*Lord, help me to accept that some things are not meant for me. May I learn to put my hope and trust in You and know that You're preparing something better for me. Amen.*

St. Wenceslaus, martyr, pray for us.

# Sept 29

WEDNESDAY

Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14  
(or Revelation 12:7-12)

Psalms 138:1-2, 2-3,  
4-5

**John 1:47-51**

**Feast of Sts. Michael,  
Gabriel, and Raphael,  
Archangels**

## VISIONARY MOM

"You will see greater things than that."  
– John 1:50, NIV

Both my parents were street vendors in Quezon City. We sold banana cue and sliced green mangoes on carts. We lived in an apartment in front of the highway, surrounded by air and noise pollution. It also had a *sari-sari* store that was open 24/7.

As a teenager with many insecurities, I was ashamed of my home. But during those times, Mama and Papa frequently visited Bulacan. They would bring construction materials to build our future home in an acquired property.

Mama envisioned a compound where we—their six children—would live close to each other as we grew older. Though impatient, I relied on Mama's vision.

Two decades later, we finally moved to Bulacan. That home has been the venue for our weekend gatherings and holiday reunions. It's also my safe haven, a quiet place of retreat from the work and ministry demands here in Cagayan De Oro.

What dreams have you been praying for? If my visionary mom had a great dream for us, all the more the Lord who has a great vision for your life. Just be patient and trust in His ways.

Aben Garlan (mailto:abengarlan.com)

### reflect

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." (Jeremiah 29:11, NIV)

*When everything fails, I trust in Your ways, O Lord. Amen.*

Sts. Michael, Gabriel and Raphael, archangels, pray for us.

# Sept 30

THURSDAY

Nehemiah 8:1-4,

5-6, 7-12

Psalm 19:8, 9, 10, 11

**Luke 10:1-12**

**Memorial of St. Jerome,  
priest and Doctor of the  
Church**

## GOD'S WHISPER

After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others whom he sent ahead of him in pairs to every town and place he intended to visit.

– Luke 10:1

It took me a while to follow God's voice. I was once a coward who couldn't spare time and effort for those in need—until I heard Him call. At the time, I felt incomplete—as if something was missing in my life. So, I always asked Him, "Father, what do You want me to do?" I prayed every day, asking Him to use me as His instrument of love. I discerned His plan for me, and He answered in an unbelievable way.

I couldn't turn a blind eye when I learned that more than 60 dogs would be killed at a Bacolod pound. God sent me to act and help those innocent creatures. I realized it was only the start. I am now a volunteer and advocate of animal rescue, rehabilitation, and adoption. Stray animals are often neglected and overlooked, but let's not forget that they are God's creation, too. Because of this, it has become easier for me to help other people even if I have to give up some things.

I thought this mission would change the lives of the strays; instead it changed mine. Elle Silvestre (marialouise.s@shepherdsvoice.com.ph)

### reflect

"As you grow older, you will discover that you have two hands, one for helping yourself, the other for helping others." (Maya Angelou)

*Lord, may I be a good steward of Your creation. May there be a kinder environment for all the creatures You love. Amen.*

St. Jerome, priest and Doctor of the Church, pray for us.

# Oct 1

FRIDAY

Baruch 1:15-22  
Psalm 79:1-2, 3-5,  
8, 9  
**Luke 10:13-16**

## **OBEY FIRST AND THE BLESSING WILL COME**

"Whoever listens to you listens to me."  
- Luke 10:16

During Jesus' time, lepers didn't live in the village. They were rejected by society for having a contagious disease. Not only that, they believed they were cursed by God, so touching a leper was like touching a dead person and becoming ritually unclean.

Only a priest could declare someone clean. That was why Jesus told them to go to the priest: "As they went they were cleansed." They obeyed Jesus. And the blessing of God came in the journey. It could come at the start of the journey, at the middle, or at the end. Theirs came in the middle.

My question is this: what if the lepers didn't listen to what Jesus told them? What if they complained, "Jesus, heal us first. And then when there is proof that healing has taken place, that's when we start walking to the priest." They would have missed their miracle.

A lot of us miss our miracle because we don't take the first step of obedience. We don't listen to God. But I tell you, obey first. Follow first. Act first. And the blessing will come.

Bo Sanchez (bosanchez@kerygmfamily.com)

### **reflect**

Has God been telling you something that you haven't obeyed yet? Obey now and open the dam of His blessings for you.

*Grant me courage, dearest God, to act on Your promptings for me. Amen.*

**St. Therese of the Child Jesus, virgin, Patroness of Missions, pray for us.**

# Oct 2

SATURDAY

**Baruch 4:5-12, 27-29**

Psalms 69:33-35,

36-37

Luke 10:17-24

(or Matthew 18:1-5, 10)

**Memorial of the  
Guardian Angels**

## HIS WORK

"Take courage, my children, and cry out to God for help." – Baruch 4:27, GNT

Years ago, I was given the chance to share God's Word in front of thousands of youth at The Feast for the very first time. To prepare, I'd sit still after office hours to read the related

Bible verses, reflect on them, and write my reflections on my notepad. I would then practice delivering the message at home.

I was about to practice a few nights before the talk when my notepad went missing. I wrote a new outline, but to my dismay, the same thing happened. As the day of the talk came closer, I experienced more discouraging events. I cried out to God in frustration, "Why are these things happening?"

After a while, I felt a calming presence within. I felt God's embrace. I took a deep breath and, with a refreshed heart, I wrote and practiced again. Something great was about to happen. And great it was! The talk turned out better than what I prayed for. I couldn't take any credit for it because I knew it was all Him. My heart felt secure because I have a God whom I can always turn to for help—a Father who never lets His children down. Ericson T. Trinidad (erix.trinidad@gmail.com)

## reflect

"Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." (Isaiah 41:10)

*Father, when things get out of hand, may I learn to entrust them to Your hands. Amen.*

Guardian Angels, pray for us.

# Oct 3

SUNDAY

Genesis 2:18-24

Psalm 128:1-2, 3, 4-5, 6

Hebrews 2:9-11

**Mark 10:2-16**  
**(or Mark 10:2-12)**

## SOAR TOGETHER

"So they are no longer two but one flesh."

– Mark 10:8

*Quaretreat*—*Online Reflections in Quarantine* was a nightly live show my husband, Arun, and I did on Facebook during the total lockdown in Manila

last year. "It has to be the two of us," he said with conviction.

My husband is a preacher; I'm not. He is used to being in front of the camera; I was not. But ever since our wedding 22 years ago, I follow his lead wherever God's mission takes him.

We had 62 unforgettable, blessed days of *Quaretreat*. Only God could have provided the words of wisdom and Spirit-inspired reflections. The faith when we had slow Internet connection. The bonding as we thought of content day after day to help viewers become a little less afraid. The overwhelming support from people who even created *Quaretreat* T-shirts, mugs, and other souvenir items. No doubt, my yes turned out to be one of the greatest blessings amidst the COVID-19 backdrop.

Arun has always brought me to a fuller understanding of my calling. I cannot fulfill it without holding his hand. His mission is my mission. He has the right wing and I have the left—and together we soar. And that's what a marriage does. That's what a marriage is. Lallaine Gogna (lallygogna@yahoo.com)

### reflect

What is God calling you to do as His follower?

*Give me a clear picture of my vocation, Lord. Holy Spirit, reveal to me the path I should take to reach You. Amen.*

St. Theodore Guérin, pray for us.

# Oct 4

MONDAY

Jonah 1:1-2:1-2, 11

Jonah 2:3, 4, 5, 8

**Luke 10:25-37**

Memorial  
of St. Francis of Assisi

## LOVE SOMEONE (DIFFERENT) TODAY

"Which one of the three men who saw the wounded man proved to be the true neighbor? . . . "The one who demonstrated kindness and mercy." Jesus said, "You must go and do the same as he."

– Luke 10:36-37, TPT

In the time of Jesus, Jews looked down on non-Jews (Gentiles). Why? Just because they were different. They didn't believe what Jews believed. For them, the worst Gentiles were Samaritans. So, Jesus told the story of the Good Samaritan to break the wall between Jews and Samaritans.

A friend told me about a guy who was gay, atheist, and militantly against Christianity. My friend told me that once upon a time, this guy was very active in church. Coming from a religious family, he headed ministries, evangelized people, and helped grow their church. But when he came out of the closet, his parents didn't accept him and his church disowned him. He was deeply hurt.

It's sad how we, followers of Christ, treat people in unchristian ways. Friends, by Christ's example, let's learn to love people who are not like us. When we do, we will experience profound peace that only comes from seeing people like Jesus did. Mike Viñas (mikemichaelfcv@yahoo.com)

### reflect

Reach out to people in your life who are different from you in belief and lifestyle. Befriend them. Be Jesus to them.

*Father, remind me that each person is Your child, regardless of race, religion, gender, or lifestyle. May we all journey toward community, toward family.*

St. Francis of Assisi, pray for us.

# Oct 5

TUESDAY

**Jonah 3:1-10**

Psalm 130:1-2, 3-4,  
7-8

Luke 10:38-42

## JONAH IN ME

When God saw by their actions how they turned from their evil way, he repented of the evil he threatened to do to them; he did not carry it out. – Jonah 3:10

Have you ever tried to test God's patience? I know I do every time I become cheeky, proud, and sinful.

There is a Jonah in me that does what I'm not supposed to do. Like Jonah, I've run away when problems overwhelmed me. And like Jonah, God always brought me back to my Nineveh to face the music, so to speak. Because facing the problem and the brokenness is the only way for healing to begin.

The reluctant Jonah went to Nineveh in the end. There, he encouraged the king and his people to repent of their sins. The Lord would have destroyed Nineveh, but when He saw how "they turned from their evil way," He had a change of heart. I wonder if the people knew the depth of God's forgiveness? Or how blessed they were to receive afresh His tender mercy? Or what a gift it was for God to restore His relationship with them?

I will continue to make mistakes and fall into sin. Whenever I do, I'll remember God's graciousness toward Jonah and Nineveh and seek His unending mercy. *Dina Pecaña*

(dina.p@shepherdsvoice.com.ph)

### reflect

"His mercies never come to an end. They are new every morning."  
(Lamentations 3:23)

*Have mercy on me, O God, in Your faithful love, in Your great tenderness wipe away my offences; wash me clean from my guilt, purify me from my sin. (Psalm 51:1-2)*

St. Anthony Zaccaria, priest, pray for us.



# Oct 6

WEDNESDAY

Jonah 4:1-11

Psalms 86:3-4, 5-6,  
9-10

**Luke 11:1-4**

## FORGIVENESS AND HEALTH

"And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves  
forgive everyone indebted to us."

– Luke 11:4, NRSV

Oftentimes, we underestimate the power of forgiveness. We shirk from forgiving people, thinking that forgiveness is tantamount to weakness or acknowledging we are at fault. Then we become depressed, anxious, and stressed. Worse, we get chronic diseases like diabetes, cancer, or a heart attack. All because we don't want to forgive!

An article on HopkinsMedicine.com says, "Studies have found that the act of forgiveness can reap huge rewards for your health." According to research, forgiveness is directly linked to good sleep, reducing pain, lowering blood pressure, and decreasing cholesterol levels. It also includes reduced levels of anxiety, depression, and stress.

Sometimes, you have to forgive for your own sake. Forgive so you may reap the benefits. Pope Benedict XVI says, "Where there is forgiveness, there is also healing."

Friends, I invite you to forgive so you may be healed. Boggs Burbos (boggsturbo@yahoo.com)

### reflect

Is there a simple spat or long-held resentment that you're running away from? How has it affected your physical health? Forgive that person today.

*Jesus, grant me the courage to forgive and the grace to forget in my heart the pain it has caused me. Amen.*

St. Bruno, priest, pray for us.

# Oct 7

THURSDAY

Malachi 3:13-20  
Psalm 1:1-2, 3, 4, 6  
**Luke 11:5-13**

Memorial of Our Lady  
of the Rosary

## MODERN-DAY MIRACLE

"For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened." – Luke 11:10

"Tell them to pray the rosary seriously and sincerely." That was the message Edsol Celestial, an artist in

Bacolod, received in a dream the day after he was supposed to be baptized into a different Christian denomination.

He decided to remain Catholic.

A couple of years later, he had a recurring dream where a voice would say, "I want you to paint this." As a struggling artist, he lacked the funds to buy a four-foot-by-eight-foot canvas as instructed, so he didn't follow the inspiration. Instead, as soon as he woke up, he sketched the painting of Our Lady in the dream by memory. Eventually, someone financed the painting.

A visitor from Manila went to see it. She got misty-eyed. She had visited the apparition hill in Medjugorje a couple of years earlier. After praying the rosary, a sad-looking lady held her hands and said, "Keep praying the rosary."

The Lady in Edsol's painting looked exactly like the lady on the hill. Marc V. Lopez (marcvlopez88@gmail.com)

## reflect

Jesus invites you to pray the rosary.

*Jesus, thank You for giving me Our Lady—your Mom—to be my Mom, too. Amen. Hail Mary . . .*

Our Lady of the Holy Rosary, pray for us.

# Oct 8

FRIDAY

Joel 1:13-15; 2:1-2  
Psalm 9:2-3, 6, 16, 8-9  
**Luke 11:15-26**

## STRONG AND FAITHFUL

"Whoever is not with me is against me."  
– Luke 11:23

In the book of Daniel, we learn the story of three courageous men—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—who defied the king by refusing to bow down to worship his image. They were willing to go into the fire for what they believed. The story concludes with these three men coming out of the furnace unharmed—with not a single hair on their heads singed. God was with them in the fiery ordeal they went through.

Life is an exhausting battle of choices. Even if we want to live God's way, worldly enticements attempt to set up camp in our heart. There are times when we need to make tough decisions—when we are asked to cover up something illegal, lie to a customer, or do something unethical.

In these situations, we have to exercise that same conquering faith even if it leads us through the fiery furnace. We must stand firm in our convictions, deliberately choosing and trusting God. He is faithful and present even in our toughest times. Marie G. Ferrer (smgferrer@gmail.com)

### reflect

"Be on guard. Stand firm in the faith. Be courageous. Be strong."  
(1 Corinthians 16:13)

*Dear Lord, guard my heart with Your strength so I may not give in to discouragement, deception, and doubt. Help me honor You in all my ways.*

St. Benedicta, pray for us.

# Oct 9

SATURDAY

Joel 4:12-21  
Psalm 97:1-2, 5-6,  
11-12  
**Luke 11:27-28**

## A PARENT'S MISSION

A woman spoke up from the crowd and said to him, "How happy is the woman who bore and nursed you." – Luke 11:27

As mothers, we're proud of our children—their achievements, skills, and all they're becoming. When they ascend the stage for a recognition, people comment, "You must be so proud of your kids." Of course! Who wouldn't be?

But the mission of parents isn't to achieve happiness because of their children. The accomplishment of our children and what they become is for themselves, not for us parents. We may be there to help them maximize their gifts, but whatever they achieve is their accomplishment, not ours. (That's the reason I do not post my children's report cards—it's "theirs.")

Jesus answered the woman in our key verse with this: "Rather, how happy are those who hear the word of God and obey it" (verse 28).

Our mission as parents is to help our children obey the Lord. We need to guide—not hover over—them in fulfilling their life purpose, aligned to what the Lord wants for their lives, not what we want for them. Ichel Alignay ([michele.alignay@gmail.com](mailto:michele.alignay@gmail.com))

### reflect

As parents, our hearts should be directed toward God's mission for our child and not in our own ambitions for them.

*Lord, always help me fine-tune my intentions to help my child (or other people I lead) to find You and their mission in this world. Amen.*

St. Denis and companions, pray for us.

# Oct 10

SUNDAY

**Wisdom 7:7-11**

Psalm 90:12-13,

14-15, 16-17

Hebrews 4:12-13

Mark 10:17-30

(or Mark 10:17-27)

## **FORGIVENESS ISN'T EASY**

"Realizing that I was only human, I prayed and was given understanding." – Wisdom 7:7

Have you ever wrestled with the pain of betrayal? Betrayal hurts. I mean, it really, really hurts. The pain strikes deep into the heart and it can last a long time. It hurts even more, especially when it's inflicted by someone you trust.

On January 1, 2020, I found out that a very good friend lied and betrayed me. The friendship was damaged almost beyond repair. The incident taught me one great lesson—not everyone is always who they appear to be. Ouch!

Weeks passed. The pain was still there and I wondered if I would ever heal from it. So I prayed and searched my heart for understanding. "Why?" I asked. "It was a mistake," my friend said. Then I found solace in Jesus' example, knowing He Himself was betrayed by Judas Iscariot, one of His closest friends. And yet He still completed His mission, forgiving His enemies even on the cross.

"It is easier to forgive an enemy than to forgive a friend," they say. Forgiveness is no easy feat, so I'm glad I prayed. I realized forgiving is also freeing. Yes, I forgave my friend. Cindy Reynes (reynescpz@gmail.com)

### **reflect**

"Prayer is the key that opens the storehouse of God's infinite grace and power." (R. A. Torrey)

*Lord, help me to set aside time each day to meet with You alone. I desire for a deeper and more intimate relationship with You. Amen.*

St. Francis Borgia, pray for us.

# Oct 11

MONDAY

Romans 1:1-7  
Psalm 98:1, 2-3, 3-4  
**Luke 11:29-32**

## OPEN TO SIGNS

"This generation is an evil generation; it seeks a sign, but no sign will be given it, except the sign of Jonah." – Luke 11:29

A lot of us believe in signs. When a fork drops during a meal, Filipinos will say you should expect a male visitor to show up. When a man gives you a white rose, then he's probably the one for you.

But signs are only as good as how much you are able to recognize them. Today's Gospel shows that all the signs of God's goodness are sometimes right under our nose. But if we decide to be blind to it, then the sign becomes totally useless.

Every day, God sends many signs of His presence and love in our lives. The pandemic that hit the world could be a sign that we should be more mindful of our health and the environment. The beggars we encounter on the street could be a sign for us to be more compassionate and generous to the less fortunate. The sulking teenager in our homes may be a sign for us to listen and focus more on our families. But we can only read the signs if we have an open mind and heart.

Let us pray that our eyes, minds, and hearts may be sensitive to the signs around us so we can recognize God's message for us. [Tessa Mangahas \(mtgmangahas@gmail.com\)](mailto:mtgmangahas@gmail.com)

### reflect

"We want big directional signs from God. God just wants us to pay attention." (Lysa TerKeurst)

*Lord, open the eyes of my heart so I may see and hear You speaking to me.*

St. Placidia, pray for us.

# Oct 12

TUESDAY

**Romans 1:16-25**

Psalm 19:2-3, 4-5

Luke 11:37-41

## YOUR TITLE DEED

"The just shall live by faith." – Romans 1:17

There's a property in the north that my siblings and I have owned for decades. I was assigned to pay for its real estate tax and I've been doing so for many years. None of us have seen

that piece of land, although we know it's across the highway from a beach resort. All we have as proof that the land exists and it belongs to us is a piece of paper called a title deed.

Hebrews 11:1 of the Amplified Bible, Classic Edition defines faith as "the assurance (the confirmation, the title deed) of the things [we] hope for, being the proof of things [we] do not see." Just as that land title is evidence that we own a property we have never visited, faith is our guarantee that we will receive what we are praying for, even if we haven't gotten them yet.

When an infertile married couple prays for a child, their faith is the pledge that they will one day be able to see, touch, smell, and hear their baby. When a single woman prays for a lifetime partner, faith allows her to see an engagement ring on her finger where there is still none. Friend, what does your faith see in your situation? Rissa Singson Kawpeng (rissakawpeng@gmail.com)

### reflect

As water is to fish, air is to man, and faith is to the Christian.

*Lord, teach me to see with my eyes of faith. Amen.*

St. Edwin of Northumbria, pray for us.

# Oct 13

WEDNESDAY

Romans 2:1-11  
Psalm 62:2-3, 6-7, 9  
**Luke 11:42-46**

## LEAD THE WAY

Jesus replied, "And you experts in the law, woe to you, because you load people down with burdens they can hardly carry, and you yourselves will not lift one finger to help them. – Luke 11:46

I serve in the kids and food ministry of The Feast in San Mateo, Rizal. Most of the time, I ask my children to help me prepare the materials and supplies needed for the service. They would carry the coffee cups or arrange the rubber mats for the kids. We have so much fun doing this together.

One day, we had a ministry fair at our Feast to invite attendees to come and serve in the different ministries. I was surprised that my daughters signed up—one as a singer and the other as a greeter. It is my dream for our whole family to be servants of The Feast, but I never pushed them to sign up.

Oftentimes, we're eager for the people around us to change and be who we dream them to be. But life doesn't work that way. If we want people to change, we should start the change in ourselves. If we want others to follow Jesus, then people should see how amazing it is to follow Jesus through the lives we live.

Today, lead the way to Jesus. Mia Bueno (buenos@yahoo.com)

### reflect

How many people have gone back to Church because of you? Are there people who have left the Church because of you?

*Father God, thank You for leading us back to You through Jesus. Help us to do the same for others. Amen.*

St. Romulus, pray for us.



# Oct 14

THURSDAY

**Romans 3:21-30**

Psalm 130:1-2, 3-4,

5-6

Luke 11:47-54

## NO PLACE IN HELL

Whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith. He did this to show his righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over the sins previously committed.  
– Romans 3:25

I was invited to a youth forum at our parish where one of the guest speakers was Cardinal Chito Tagle. During the question-and-answer portion, a young man asked the good cardinal, “Father, what happens to people in hell? Will they be saved?”

Cardinal Chito replied, “*Tho* (young man), I have a problem with your question, because you assume there are people in hell. But the God that I love and serve will do everything He can to save you and bring you to His loving arms in heaven.”

Wow!

His answer sank deep into my heart.

That is God’s message to us all.

He will do everything to save us and will use every resource available to remind us that *we are loved*. So we, His children, should open our hearts and our minds to receive His love. Jan Silan (jcsilan@gmail.com)

### reflect

Do you know God loves you? Do you open your heart to receive His love every day?

*Lord, teach me to receive Your love, to be open to Your grace every day.*

St. Callitus I, pope and martyr, pray for us.

# Oct 15

FRIDAY

Romans 4:1-8  
Psalm 32:1-2, 5, 11  
**Luke 12:1-7**

## YOU ARE LOVED

"So don't be afraid; you are more valuable to God than a whole flock of sparrows."  
- Luke 12:7

I don't know what came over me. I suddenly felt sad, angry, lonely, afraid—all at the same time.

I was trying to figure out what was causing my apparent depression. One thing was sure, it was a dreadful feeling of not being loved. To this day, remembering that feeling sends shivers down my spine.

I guess isolation and the quarantine got the best of me that time.

Then in a desperate move to seek relief, I fell on my knees and cried out to God. "Lord, please show me that You do love me."

At that instant, my phone rang. It was my mom. I immediately got worried thinking there was an emergency. But to my surprise, it was she who was worried. Apparently, she had a sense that I was in trouble so she called to ask if I was OK. I reassured her I was alright.

After hanging up, I sobbed all the more because God just answered my prayer. I felt His embrace through that phone call. I knew I am loved. Jonathan Yogawin (coachj@jyogawin.com)

### reflect

Have you ever doubted God's love for you? Trust Him. He cares for you.

*Lord, embrace me today. Amen.*

St. Teresa of Avila, virgin, pray for us.

# Oct 16

SATURDAY

**Romans 4:13, 16-18**

Psalms 105:6-7, 8-9,  
42-43

Luke 12:8-12

## **CALLED INTO EXISTENCE**

He is our father . . . who gives life to the dead  
and calls into being what does not exist.

– Romans 4:17

Dr. Gloria Polo was an orthodontist who was struck by lightning. The lightning entered her body and exited her right foot, gravely burning her internal organs, breasts, reproductive system, and her flesh. The doctors gave up on her—but not Jesus. She was in deep coma for three days when Jesus appeared to her and told her to return to her body. Against all expectations, Gloria recovered fast. The circulation to her charred legs unbelievably returned and didn't need to be amputated.

Most astonishing was that Gloria bore another child years later, which she breastfed despite her burnt internal organs, reproductive system, and breasts. God revived what no longer functioned. Gloria testifies that it was the prayers of her family and others that saved her and caused Jesus to have mercy on her.

With our faith-filled prayers, we can call forth into being what doesn't exist, just like how God created the earth with His words. Let us put to good use the power we have with our words by praying for others who may need a miracle today.

Ronna Ledesma (ronna\_ledesma@yahoo.com.ph)

### **reflect**

“We must begin to believe that God in the mystery of prayer has entrusted us with a force that can move the heavenly world and can bring its power down to earth.” (Andrew Murray)

*Lord, grant me the grace to touch someone's life today with my prayers.*

St. Ambrose, pray for us.

# Oct 17

SUNDAY

Isaiah 53:10-11  
Psalm 33:4-5, 18-19,  
20, 22  
Hebrews 4:14-16  
**Mark 10:35-45**  
(or **Mark 10:42-45**)

## NOT FOR DWEBBS

"Whoever wishes to be great among you will be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you will be the slave of all . . ." – Mark 10:43-44

Fr. Don Giuseppe Berardelli, a 72-year-old Italian priest from Bergamo, had been suffering from a severe respiratory condition. The parish had previously purchased for him a ventilator machine to help him cope.

Old and immuno-compromised, Fr. Berardelli soon tested positive for COVID-19. With the virus sweeping the country, hospital rooms and ventilators have become scarce. Many were dying with no access to breathing machines.

Fr. Berardelli decided to give up his ventilator for a much younger patient. "I'm old. I've lived a full life. I'm happy to give," he said. He willingly made the ultimate sacrifice. There was no funeral for the priest, but people applauded him from their balconies at noon on Monday, March 16, 2020, as his ashes were carried through the streets of Caserta.

Jesus tells you and me, "Genuine greatness is not for dweebs. I showed you how. I'll give you the strength. And the joys are unimaginable." Jon Escoto (faithatworkjon@gmail.com)

### reflect

What are your opportunities for "greatness" today? They don't have to be dramatic sacrifices. Little acts of service done with great love are big in the eyes of God.

*Father, teach me how to love today. Help me to express it in the most practical way to the people I love. Thank You.*

St. Ignatius of Antioch, bishop and martyr, pray for us.

# Oct 18

MONDAY

**2 Timothy 4:10-17**

Psalm 145:10-11,

12-13, 17-18

Luke 10:1-9

**Feast of St. Luke,  
Evangelist**

## WHO DID WHAT?

But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. – 2 Timothy 4:17

My husband can accurately predict my future. When we were still dating, he predicted I would be a speaker. I was a stutterer back then, so I didn't believe him. But one day, I found myself speaking in front of crowds multiple times a month. For whatever reason, I don't stutter when speaking in public.

He also predicted I would own a marketing agency. I was already happy as an individual consultant then. I didn't want the stress and responsibility of managing a team and pleasing clients. So, I shrugged off his statement. Today, I'm managing a team and serving clients with our own small agency.

I have proven that, oftentimes, my husband is God's messenger. His name is Angelo, by the way, which means divine messenger.

God uses people not just to make His plans known to us, but also to assure us of His presence in our lives. With His strength, He enables us to accomplish His purposes for us. We achieve many things in His Name! Tintin Taton (kristinetaton@gmail.com)

## reflect

"Grace enables you to do what you never thought you could do."  
(Steven Furtick)

*Lord Jesus, may we always listen to Your voice and follow You all our days.*

St. Luke, evangelist, pray for us.

# Oct 19

TUESDAY

Romans 5:12, 15, 17-19, 20-21

Psalm 40:7-8, 8-9, 10, 17

**Luke 12:35-38**

## VIGILANT

"But whenever he comes he will reward the servants who are ready."

– Luke 12:38, NLT

I am the third child in our family. Because I'm the first girl after two boys, my parents were very protective of me. I was brought to school and fetched after classes, and wasn't allowed to commute on my own.

When I was in college, if my dad couldn't bring me to school, Mom would make me ride a cab with our trusted househelp.

When I took up higher studies, my mom would be with the driver in picking me up late at night. Eventually, I was allowed to commute but Mom would be at our gate waiting for me to arrive from work. She'd always be up waiting for me no matter what time I came home.

Remembering my mom gives me a deeper insight into the attitude of the alert maidens in today's Gospel. To wait all night, not knowing the exact time of someone's arrival, means you need unwavering patience to stay alert. We don't know when the Lord will return for us, but I pray for the grace to be found ready when the time comes. Reng D. Morelos

(norinamorelos@gmail.com)

### reflect

Is your lamp lit and ready for the Lord's arrival?

*Lord, let me be vigilant so I may be ready when You come. Amen.*

St. Isaac Jogues and companions, pray for us.

# Oct 20

WEDNESDAY

Romans 6:12-18  
Psalm 124:1-3, 4-6,  
7-8  
**Luke 12:39-48**

## ARE YOU WITH THE LORD?

"From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded." – Luke 12:48

Don't ask me for details, but one day, I offended a friend. She chided me, "To think that you're already with the Lord."

"Already with the Lord" is a jargon which means one has experienced an intense spiritual awakening and so now, one is, yes, already with the Lord. I experienced such a spiritual renewal and I have endeavored to be godly.

Not surprisingly, I fail now and then. And because of my undesirable deeds, I have disappointed people, if not totally caused them to stumble in their own faith journey.

This calling is priceless, enormous grace. But as Luke 12:48 puts it, "From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded."

So, my prayer is that people will see not what I do—or do not do—but what God is doing to shape me up into the person He purposed me to be. It's a long, arduous journey. I can only pray for the grace promised in Romans 6:13-14, "Offer every part of yourself to Him as an instrument of righteousness. For sin shall no longer be your master because you are not under the law, but under grace." Cynthia U. Santiago (loj.cusantiago@gmail.com)

### reflect

It's OK to fail. You can always choose to stand up again.

*Lord, hold me close, forever under your grace. Amen.*

St. Paul of the Cross, pray for us.

# Oct 21

THURSDAY

Romans 6:19-23  
Psalm 1:1-2, 3, 4, 6  
**Luke 12:49-53**

## FIRE IN THE HOLE

"I have come to set the earth on fire, and how I wish it were already blazing!" – Luke 12:49

Four years ago, we started a men's group in our parish called the Upper Room. We meet weekly for fellowship and discussion on various topics that help us in our faith journey. The Upper Room was born from our collective desire to provide a forum where men learn and help each other become better versions of themselves as a Christian, husband, father, and friend.

Our topics are diverse but all relevant today—honoring our wives, guiding our children, the sacraments, religious turmoil, effects of social media on the younger generation, relativism, social injustice, etc. It's heartwarming to see men of various ages and backgrounds being vulnerable, praying, and supporting each other.

The Upper Room also does volunteer work and extends financial support to seminarians and orphans in another country. What drives us to meet weekly and do what we do? Simply put, it's our hearts burning within us. Jesus desires to set on fire the hearts of more men and women so He can transform more lives. Erwin Rocoles (erwin\_roceles@yahoo.com)

### reflect

"One person on fire for God can change the world." (Anonymous)

*Dear Lord, You have set my heart on fire. Help me to keep the flame burning. May You always be present in my thoughts, in my words, and in the things I do. Amen.*

St. Hilarion, pray for us.



# Oct 22

FRIDAY

**Romans 7:18-25**

Psalm 119:66, 68,

76, 77, 93, 94

Luke 12:54-59

## 'DO NOT DISTURB'

For I do not do the good that I want to do. But instead, I do the evil that I do not want to do.

– Romans 7:19

“What’s wrong with what I am doing? Everybody else is doing it.”

It’s a common excuse to pass off

something wrong as acceptable. When we have this attitude, we become spiritually complacent.

This “herd mentality” is a fallacy or a wrong way of thinking. Consequently, it has become acceptable in society for couples to live in without being married, erring citizens bribing the police, women terminating unwanted pregnancies through abortion, and many other immoral issues.

Why have we not been able to recognize this deception and overcome the situation? Maybe we have put up a “Do Not Disturb” sign on the doors of our hearts and shut out the Holy Spirit from our lives. If we don’t make time for God through prayer, Scripture, service, and community, we miss out on the guidance of the Spirit. When we do, we also miss out on God’s promise of an abundant life (John 10:10). [Rolly España \(rollyespana53@gmail.com\)](mailto:rollyespana53@gmail.com)

### reflect

If you want to hear the voice of the Spirit, turn down the sound of the world’s noise.

*O Holy Spirit, always incline my ears to Your leading so I may not lose my spiritual direction. Amen.*

St. Pope John Paul II, pray for us.

# Oct 23

SATURDAY

Romans 8:1-11  
Psalm 24:1-2, 3-4,  
5, 6  
**Luke 13:1-9**

## I'M SORRY

"Unless you repent, you will perish as they did." – Luke 13:5, NRSV

When we were kids, our parents would scold me and my brother for the wrong things we did. To escape punishment, I'd say sorry right away, then point out all the wrong things my brother had done. "I'm sorry but he started it! He slapped me in the face! He was the one who wasn't helping out!"

So, my parents would teach me that whenever I'd express my repentance or my apology, I should neither point out the faults of others nor make excuses for my wrongdoings. Now I'm a grown-up, a Jesuit priest-friend affirmed this saying, "This is how you express your apologies: 'I'm sorry you were hurt.'" Period. Nothing more. Nothing less.

This is what Jesus also reminds us in the Gospel. A sincere repentance is an honest admission of one's faults and shortcomings. We repent not to justify our mistakes, but to be sorry for having hurt others (and ourselves) and to promise to change for the better. To repent and not to blame others.

What's important is a consistent effort to do good—all for our love of God, neighbor, and ourselves. JM Nuqui

(jmnuqui14@yahoo.com)

## reflect

What bad habits do you need to turn away from? What good habits do you need to nurture?

*Dear Lord, grant me a humble and contrite heart. Amen.*

St. John of Capistrano, priest, pray for us.

# Oct 24

SUNDAY

Jeremiah 31:7-9  
Psalm 126:1-2, 2-3,  
4-5, 6  
Hebrews 5:1-6  
**Mark 10:46-52**

## TELL HIM

"What do you want me to do for you?"  
— Mark 10:51

I have kids. More or less, I know what they need and what they want—from their food to their clothes, from the payment of school fees to places they want to go or movies they want to watch.

Yet I still ask them what they want. I don't automatically give them everything or presume to know what they want or need. We still need to talk and listen to each other, nourishing and deepening our relationship in the process.

Moreover, I teach my kids to humble themselves in asking from their dad and realize that I provide for them because I love them.

It's similar when it comes to prayer—we need to tell Jesus what we want. Why? Because He asks us. And also so that when we receive what we ask for, we know it's from Him. By telling Him what we need, we nurture a relationship with Him.

So, go ahead and ask. Jesus knows what you need but He also wants to talk to you. Alvin Barcelona (apb\_ayo@yahoo.com)

### reflect

God knows about it. But He wants to hear it from you.

*Dear God, I know You know my needs even before I ask for them. Yet I still tell them to You now. (Tell Jesus now what you want). I believe You are listening. Let me listen to You, too. Amen.*

St. Anthony Mary Claret, bishop, pray for us.

# Oct 25

MONDAY

Romans 8:12-17  
Psalm 68:2, 4, 6-7,  
20-21  
**Luke 13:10-17**

## BABY CHRISTIAN

The Lord said to him in reply, "Hypocrites! Does not each one of you on the sabbath untie his ox or his ass from the manger and lead it out for watering?" – Luke 13:15

In college, I joined a youth Charismatic group. I fell in love with Jesus, but because I was young, I also fell into wrong beliefs. I would look up to God, but would look down on those who weren't on the same wavelength with me. I would give honor to Him, but I would be a horror to some people. I would go to church, but I avoid the unchurched.

By God's grace, I found my way to The Feast. From its teachings, I slowly learned how God values religiosity but not as much as spirituality. Learning about the saints is futile if we don't strive to be one. Knowing the Holy Spirit is useless if we don't aspire to be holy. Having a crucifix in our homes is pointless if we don't help others carry their crosses.

Today, I am blessed to have come this far from being a baby Christian. But I'm also honest enough to admit I'm still and will always be a work in progress.

Thankfully, I have a God who loves me whether I'm being childish or childlike. [Lala Uy \(laarni.u@svrtv.com\)](mailto:laarni.u@svrtv.com)

### reflect

As a grown-up, are there aspects of your spiritual life that you need to outgrow? What steps do you need to take to do this?

*Jesus, continue to transform me into the kind of Christian You want me to be. Amen.*

Sts. Crispin and Crispinian, pray for us.

# Oct 26

TUESDAY

Romans 8:18-25  
Psalm 126:1-2, 2-3,  
4-5, 6  
**Luke 13:18-21**

## GOD'S SMILE

"It is like a mustard seed." – Luke 13:19

At the very first Mass I attended after my spiritual renewal, I struggled over how much to give as the collection basket came around. I was set on giving P100 but I felt a prompting to give the biggest bill in my wallet. I resisted since I was a stingy person. But hey, a hundred bucks 32 years ago wasn't that bad. But I eventually gave in to the prompting and offered the biggest bill in my wallet. To put it in Tagalog, *nabunutan ako ng tinik*—that's how I felt. But more importantly, I felt God smile.

It was a small act of faith—a mustard seed step—but what came after overwhelmed me. I needed shoes; seven pairs showed up. I wanted to go to Hong Kong to attend a Pentecost celebration; someone gave me money for the trip. I was concerned with our increasing rent; I suddenly got an unscheduled raise. And there were many more.

I'm thankful for the blessings that God continuously pours into our lives. But more important than this is the grace He gives me to pursue the growth of this once mustard-seed faith. So I can know Him more and feel His smile. Ariel Driz

(adriz77@yahoo.com)

### reflect

When was the last time you felt you made God smile?

*Father, in Jesus' name, I desire to be nearer to You—to get close and feel Your smile in my heart. Amen.*

St. Alfred the Great, pray for us.

# Oct 27

WEDNESDAY

Romans 8:26-30

Psalms 13:4-5, 6

**Luke 13:22-30**

## A DEATH SENTENCE?

"For many, I tell you, will attempt to enter but will not be strong enough." – Luke 13:24

I had a sore throat, a runny nose, a headache, some chills, and body weakness. The diarrhea came much later. Ordinarily, I would shrug off a temperature of 37.4°C as a common cold or flu. But this was no ordinary time. The World Health Organization had just declared COVID-19 as a pandemic and the whole Metro Manila was placed on quarantine. Belonging to the most susceptible segment of the population, fear overcame me.

A friend, an infectious disease doctor, said I didn't meet the two criteria to warrant a test—no foreign travel and no direct contact with a COVID-19 patient. I had no choice but to stay at home and nurse myself. I gobbled up glasses of alkaline water, took an overload of vitamin C, and self-quarantined in a room, armed only with prayers and God's grace.

Today is exactly 14 days since, and I feel strong and free from the clutches of COVID-19. I may never know if I was ever positive, but I am certain of one thing: the door is narrow but God's love remains steadfast. Mari Sison-Garcia

(mari\_sison\_garcia@yahoo.com)

### reflect

"The way to God's kingdom is not easy. Strive to enter through the narrow door." (Luke 13:24)

*Lord, give me the grace to persist and to carry on amidst trials. I want to be with You for all eternity. Amen.*

St. Florentius, pray for us.

# Oct 28

THURSDAY

**Ephesians 2:19-22**

Psalm 19:2-3, 4-5

Luke 6:12-16

**Feast of Sts. Simon  
and Jude, Apostles**

## WON BY LOVE

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household.

– Ephesians 2:19, NIV

In 1970, Norma McCorvey wanted to terminate her third pregnancy. Using the pseudonym Jane Roe, she challenged a Texas law that criminalizes abortion. It became a landmark case that reached the Supreme Court. By then, Norma had given birth and put the baby up for adoption.

In 1995, to her horror, Operation Rescue, a pro-life group, moved into the same building as the abortion clinic where she worked. But instead of the harassment she expected, she was invited for pizza and befriended. She developed an unlikely friendship with the pro-lifers and began to doubt her beliefs on abortion. Then in 1998, Norma became a Catholic. She started her own ministry, Roe No More, which speaks out against abortion and offers counseling services to women who have had an abortion or are being pressured into getting one.

“I saw such unity of purpose and love there,” she said. Truly, only by treating each other as brothers and sisters in Christ will we find the love that is needed to heal this world.

Cecil Lim (cez\_lim@yahoo.com)

### reflect

“There can be no authentic dialogue unless we are capable of opening our minds and hearts, in empathy and sincere receptivity, to those with whom we speak.” (Pope Francis)

*Lord, give me a heart that seeks to see You in every person I meet.*

Sts. Simon and Jude, Apostles, pray for us.

# Oct 29

FRIDAY

**Romans 9:1-5**

Psalm 147:12-13,

14-15, 19-20

Luke 14:1-6

## CHOOSE 'AND'

For I could wish that I myself were accursed and separated from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kin according to the flesh.

– Romans 9:3

If there was a model that the Jews could look up to, it was Saint Paul. He was exceptional when it came to living according to Jewish law—a “Pharisee of Pharisees”—and was trained by one of the most esteemed teachers of his time. But Paul had to turn his back on everything he loved and believed in when he became a follower of Christ.

Have you gone through that challenge? To give up something or someone for your faith. To forget yourself and your loved ones in order to follow God. It seemed to me that to follow God’s will was an either-or situation.

But the truth is, God never asked us to choose between our self and Him. So, rather than seeing it as an either-or situation, we must realize that loving God is always an *and* situation. If I love God above all else, then I can love myself and others more as well.

God’s love is so vast and limitless that if I am filled with it, then I will overflow with love for others and the world around me. Orange V. Garcia ([orange.garcia@olpmc.edu.ph](mailto:orange.garcia@olpmc.edu.ph))

### reflect

God’s nature is to give—and to give only the best for us.

*Lord, open the eyes of my heart to see that You only want what is best for me—unconditionally. Amen.*

St. Narcissus of Jerusalem, pray for us.



# Oct 30

SATURDAY

Romans 11:1-2,  
11-12, 25-29  
Psalm 94:12-13,  
14-15, 17-18  
Luke 14:1, 7-11

## CAUGHT UP IN A JAM

"For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted." – Luke 14:11,

I was in an FX on my way to the office. It was a red light. Before I got out, I asked the driver if I could already open the door. He ignored me as he kept counting his bills. I looked left and right, then opened the door when a motorcycle hit it and the biker fell off.

The FX driver began to shout at me and blame me. I was on the verge of crying, too astounded to speak. Good thing, people around me defended me and stopped the driver from hurting me. When the police said I could go, I knelt before the victim to apologize and left with a heavy heart.

I could have raised my voice back at the driver as he shouted at me or simply ran away. But I chose to stay and admit I was at fault, too. I prayed for the forgiving biker as well as the driver who was scared of the consequences and pointed his fingers at me instead.

It's hard to be humble when things are out of control. But when you learn to admit your mistakes and stop judging others, it's when God exalts you. Elle Silvestre  
(marialouise.s@shepherdsvoice.com.ph)

### reflect

How do you behave in the small everyday troubles of your life?

*Father, teach me how to follow Jesus' footsteps—how to be compassionate, more understanding, and more generous in my thoughts and actions.*

St. Alphonsus Rodriguez, pray for us.

# Oct 31

SUNDAY

Deuteronomy 6:2-6

Psalm 18:2-3, 3-4,

47, 51

Hebrews 7:23-28

**Mark 12:28-34**

## LOVE CREATES MIRACLES

"The second [most important commandment] is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."

– Mark 12:31

In the war against a virus, heroes emerged in unexpected ways. Healthcare professionals, delivery truck drivers, policemen, and grocery workers were considered frontliners as the entire country was placed on lockdown.

As the economy grounded to a halt, Filipinos united once again as various individuals and organizations made all sorts of efforts to help and provide for these heroes' needs.

For instance, a mother of four made face masks with friends. As of this writing, they've been able to make and distribute 10,000 face masks. Meanwhile, a lady in her senior years, despite being at high risk for the disease, managed to buy canned goods and was able to feed 186 people every day!

It's also good to know that in those uncertain times, many private companies and organizations offered help to frontliners and those greatly affected by the crisis. They were instruments in spreading inspiration and positive vibes to the country and the world. Kindness really creates a ripple effect! Miracles happen! Gracious B. Romero (graciousromero@gmail.com)

### reflect

Do you show your love for your neighbor as you love yourself?

*Lord, help me to love like You and to love my neighbor as myself.  
Amen.*

St. Wolfgang of Resensburg, pray for us.

# Nov 1

MONDAY

**Revelation 7:2-4, 9-14**

Psalm 24:1-2, 3-4, 5-6

1 John 3:1-3

Matthew 5:1-12

**Solemnity of All Saints**

## PROTECT YOUR PACKAGE

Those who had been marked with the seal.

– Revelations 7:4

Years ago, my friends and I organized a concert for a popular Christian band. They required us to hire professional security for them. So

we did. But on the day of the concert, I was surprised when two humongous guys who looked like gorillas were assigned to me.

I told them, “I’m not the star. You don’t have to guard me.”

But they just crossed their hairy arms and stayed by my side. I decided I wasn’t going to argue with guys whose arms were as large as my waistline.

When the concert was over, the two giants escorted me to my car. When I finally got in, one of them spoke into his radio, “Package delivered, over and out.”

Huh? I was their package.

Friend, here’s the truth: God lives inside you. You must protect your package—because many thieves will try to steal God’s presence from your life.

Guard your treasure as the saints did. God has marked you with His seal. *Bo Sanchez (bosanchez@kerygmfamily.com)*

## reflect

How well do you guard yourself against the evil one?

*Dearest God, I ask for the grace to remember that I am precious to You so I may always protect myself from the evil one. Amen.*

All Saints, pray for us.

# Nov 2

TUESDAY

2 Maccabees 12:43-46

(or Wisdom 3:1-9)

Psalms 103:8, 10, 13-14,

15-16, 17-18

Romans 8:31-35, 37-39

(or Romans 6:3-4, 8-9)

**John 6:37-40**

(or **John 14:1-6**)

All Souls Day

## A CHANGE OF HEART

"For I have come down from heaven to do the will of God who sent me, not to do my own will." – John 6:38, NLT

Before we got married, Agirl told me, "I will be a working mom. I want to work even when we have kids." I was fine with that because I knew she would be a great mom whether she worked or stayed at home.

But when we started planning to have a child, she had a change of heart. She said, "I want to stay home instead. I want to be hands-on in taking care of our children." When I asked her why, she simply said, "I feel deep in my heart that home is where God wants me to be."

I know there have been times when she questioned her worth. When she felt she could help more with the family finances. When she felt that house chores and taking care of the kids were ordinary, menial tasks. But whenever she searched her heart, she always felt God's affirmation. She is exactly where He wants her to be.

Agirl and I now have three adorable daughters. Her yes to God's will is one of the reasons we are having the time of our lives! Joel N. Saludares (joelsaludares@yahoo.com)

### reflect

When you create your plans and dreams, do you seek God's will first?

*Lord, may I always listen to Your voice and seek Your will for my life because I know You always have the best plan for me. Amen.*

All Souls, pray for us.

# Nov 3

WEDNESDAY

Romans 13:8-10

Psalms 112:1-2, 4-5, 9

**Luke 14:25-33**

## CHRIST FOLLOWER

In the same way any of you who does not give up everything he has, cannot be my disciple."

- Luke 14:33

I struggled with the tenets of my former lay community that members must be loyal to the founding elders and be committed to everything that the facilitator says in discernment. Their norms were strict to a point that it also limited my personal interactions with members outside our cell group. I left that community because, being jovial and extroverted, I couldn't follow their norms. Admittedly, I was sort of a shadow follower (to my spouse) but didn't allow their strict norms to dictate my life.

The blessings that community gave me was the conviction to bring Jesus into my life and be His follower, make Christian values the foundation of my family life, and love God above all.

To be a Christian is to be a Christ follower. To humbly obey where God sends us in ministry. To fall on our knees in worship. To let the Holy Spirit take over, using our time, talent, and treasure for God's Kingdom.

As a Christ follower, are you *interested* or *committed*? Interested means being just "*in the rest*," while committed means "*come eat with Christ and be led*." Dean Pax Lapid

(mentors@lead-more.com)

### reflect

"Jesus didn't say, 'Follow Christians.' He said, 'Follow Me.'" (Unknown)

*Lord, call me. I offer to You my ability and my availability. Amen.*

St. Martin de Porres, religious, pray for us.

# Nov 4

THURSDAY

Romans 14:7-12

Psalm 27:1, 4, 13-14

**Luke 15:1-10**

## WE GET TO DO THIS

Tax collectors and other notorious sinners often came to listen to Jesus teach.

- Luke 15:1

At The Feast, one of my closest friends used to be a terrible sinner. He had committed sins in the past that I didn't think were possible to commit. That's how bad his past was. But that's not who he is anymore. Because the love of Jesus has transformed him into a new man.

I thank God I'm part of this Catholic movement called The Feast. I'm grateful I'm able to preach, disciple others, and play my role in building God's Kingdom on earth even if I'm a sinner myself. I don't deserve my leadership role in the ministry, but by God's grace, I'm here and I get to do this.

If you are a sinner like me but are afraid to be judged, The Feast is the best place for you. Because here, we're a bunch of sinners saved by grace and striving to be the people God wants us to be.

I encourage you to go to [www.feast.ph](http://www.feast.ph) and find a Feast near you. Allow them to love you just as they loved me. JPaul Hernandez

(jpaulmh@yahoo.com)

### reflect

No one is too far from God's mercy and forgiveness.

*Jesus, I surrender to You my brokenness. I want to be made brand new. I want Your love in my life. Amen.*

St. Charles Borromeo, bishop, pray for us.

# Nov 5

FRIDAY

Romans 15:14-21  
Psalm 98:1, 2-3, 3-4  
**Luke 16:1-8**

## WISER THAN THE WORLD

And the master commended that dishonest steward for acting prudently. "For the children of this world are more prudent in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light." – Luke 16:8

"Las Vegas has nothing to say but it knows how to say it. The Church has everything to say, but it does not know how to say it." I saw this quote when I attended a preaching course by Arun Gogna years ago. He had a photo of Las Vegas at night with its dazzling lights. Since then, I've tried my best to preach God's Word more creatively than the beautiful Las Vegas.

As "children of light," I believe we have everything to say and offer. After all, God has gifted us with talents and resources. The problem is, sometimes our greatness is misplaced because it's used for worldly things. You might be intelligent, but if you're a swindler, it simply makes you an intelligent swindler. You might be talented, but if you are a thief, it simply makes you a talented thief. You might be eloquent, but if you are a liar, that simply makes you an eloquent liar.

Where are you using your giftedness and greatness?

As children of light, let's use our greatness prudently. Let's market God's truth better than the wisest "children of the world." Velden Lim (veldenlim@gmail.com)

### reflect

Jesus is our Message. Indeed, we have everything to say. May we learn how to say it well.

*Jesus, give me wisdom so I can be Your light in this world. Amen.*

St. Elizabeth, pray for us.

# Nov 6

SATURDAY

Romans 16:3-9, 16,  
22-27

Psalms 145:2-3, 4-5,  
10-11

**Luke 16:9-15**

## DO EVERYTHING WITH GREAT LOVE

"Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much." – Luke 16:10

When I first decided to serve at The Feast, I signed up in the security and logistics ministry. We are the first and last on the scene.

We arrive first in the venue to carry the speakers, fix the chairs, and set up the tables. We also look after the safety and security of the attendees while the session is ongoing.

Others might say that this is one of the easiest jobs at The Feast but that doesn't really matter to me. What matters is I'm able to serve God in whatever way I can.

Years later, I never thought that the guy carrying the speakers would be the speaker. I never imagined myself preaching and leading a Feast. I just gave my all in whatever task was assigned to me and I let God do the rest.

Right now, you may think that what you're doing is not important or your life is not as you had planned it to be. Even so, do everything with great love. Be amazed at how the Lord leads you and brings you from glory to glory. Monching Bueno

(ramon\_bueno@yahoo.com)

### reflect

Wherever you are in your journey, do everything with love and let the Lord lead your way.

*Father, thank You for trusting me. Help me to stay in the path of love and service for You. Fill me with Your love and guide my way. Amen.*

St. Joseph Khang, pray for us.



# Nov 7

SUNDAY

1 Kings 17:10-16

Psalms 146:7, 8-9,

9-10

Hebrews 9:24-28

**Mark 12:38-44**

**(or Mark 12:41-44)**

## MORE THAN ENOUGH

But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents.

— Mark 12:42

In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic hit Manila. Businesses stopped. People were asked to stay home. Everyone was caught off guard. People didn't have enough savings and stocks to last for a month or even a week of being locked down. Because of this, fundraising and donation drives came from left and right all over the country. People were raising hundreds of thousands—even millions—to give to the affected hospitals and families.

My family and I aren't high earners, but we wanted to be of help. We were able to gather a small amount to buy some sacks of rice and canned goods. It might not be as big and as grand as the others are giving, but it came with the biggest of hearts and the grandest of intentions.

We may sometimes feel that what we do is not enough and what we give is not worth much. But the Lord sees more than that. He sees our hearts and our desire to love and to help others. There are no small or big acts of love in Jesus' eyes. So today, just love. It's more than enough. Mia Bueno (buenos@yahoo.com)

### reflect

“Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love.” (Mother Teresa)

*Father God, thank You for knowing my heart. Help me to not think about what others might think and say. Help me to just love the way I can. Amen.*

St. Engelbert, pray for us.

# Nov 8

MONDAY

Wisdom 1:1-7  
Psalm 139:1-3, 4-6,  
7-8, 9-10  
**Luke 17:1-6**

## SOMEONE IS WATCHING

"Things that cause people to stumble are bound to come, but woe to anyone through whom they come. It would be better for them to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around their neck than to cause one of these little ones to stumble." – Luke 17: 1-2, NIV

"Dada, the light was still red!" No, I didn't run a red light. I turned on a green arrow while the stop light was on. My son couldn't tell the difference. Nevertheless, I was surprised that he was actually paying attention. No matter how much I talk to him about God, that incident made me realize that my actions do speak louder than words.

Sometimes, it's not a child who's watching us. It could be a baby Christian, someone still learning about Christ and looks up to us as an example.

With the diverse cultures here in Australia, people don't talk about their faith openly. You never know what religion the next person has or if they have one at all. My officemate who sat right behind me turned out to be a Catholic, but I only found out after a year. That's a year's worth of casual chats with him, overhearing my phone conversations, witnessing the way I conduct myself during stressful times, candidly joking around, and God knows what else.

I wonder if he caught me running any "red lights."

George Tolentino Gabriel (georgetgabriel@gmail.com)

### reflect

Can people tell you're a Christian just by watching how you live?

*Lord, may I be a stepping stone and never a stumbling block.*

St. Castorius, pray for us.

# Nov 9

TUESDAY

**Ezekiel 47:1-2, 8-9, 12**

Psalm 46:2-3, 5-6, 8-9

1 Corinthians 3:9-11,

16-17

John 2:13-22

**Feast of the Dedication  
of the Lateran Basilica  
in Rome**

## MINDFUL LIVING

They will bear every month because their water flows from the sanctuary, and their fruit will be for food and their leaves for healing."

– Ezekiel. 47:12

I was introduced to the concept of mindfulness a couple of years ago. With my co-teachers, I engaged in a few minutes of focused breathing, letting go of tension in my body, noticing my thoughts and feelings without judgment, and “being kind to myself.” I have found that practicing mindfulness is worth the time and effort.

When I consistently spend quiet time doing guided breathing, I am calmer, more at peace, and even more productive throughout the day. I become more understanding and more patient with my students, my family, and myself. But as I take charge of my well-being, I know I need to remember that my very breath, the strength and peace I feel, the productivity and joy that come after, are all from God Himself. It’s when I am connected to His Word that the river of His love and grace can flow.

When we look to God for nourishment, we can be our best self—mindful of His blessings and open to the ways He wants to use me to bless others. Geraldine G. Catral (catral.geegeee@beaconschool.ph)

### reflect

Do you want to bear fruit and live life to the fullest? Connect today to the Great Source of Life.

*Dearest Lord, may my life be a wellspring of goodness, healing, and joy for others as I draw my strength from You. Amen.*

St. Benignus, pray for us.

# Nov 10

WEDNESDAY

Wisdom 6:1-11  
Psalm 82:3-4, 6-7  
**Luke 17:11-19**

## GET RID OF YOUR GARBAGE

"Go show yourself to the priest. As they were going, they were cleansed." – Luke 17: 14

As I coach, I'm astounded at how much loads of garbage from the past that people carry and hold on to.

Then I looked deep inside me only to discover that I, too, carry garbage just like my clients. These are hurts and dark secrets that have plagued my life for the past 40 years. What's worse is I've learned to live with them, hoping things will get better since, as the saying goes, "time heals all wounds."

But there's a danger with this belief. An unresolved past is like burying a zombie without killing it. Eventually, it will rise and continue to create havoc.

Just like the 10 lepers, I pleaded to Jesus to have mercy on me. No, I didn't hear Jesus tell me to go to the priest. But the effort I did to find a cure already gave me the peace that God is in control.

And then one day it happened. I was led and introduced to a coworker in Christ who coached and prayed for me. And in only a matter of minutes, 40 years' worth of baggage was gone. Edwin Marcelo (edwin.m@svrtv.com)

### reflect

Are you carrying loads of hurts from the past? Jesus is ever ready to heal you along the way.

*Lord, cleanse me from my dark past and help me continue my journey of helping others. Amen.*

St. Leo the Great, pope and Doctor of the Church, pray for us.

# Nov 11

THURSDAY

**Wisdom 7:22-8:1**

Psalm 119:89, 90,

91, 130, 135, 175

Luke 17:20-25

## WISE

For God loves nothing so much as the one who dwells with Wisdom. – Wisdom 7:28

I've always been an honor student. I have a lot of academic achievements, certificates, and medals. I have knowledge of a lot of things. People say

I'm intelligent. And maybe I am.

I would often hear my dad say to his friends, "That child is wise," pointing to me. And I used to believe it.

But now . . . maybe, not yet.

I would be wise if I am fully secure and confident in God's promises.

I would be wise if I love what is good and kind to the not-so-good.

I would be wise if I'm more friendly.

I would be wise if I have less worries.

I would be wise if I'm a breath of God's power, a reflection of His goodness.

I would be wise if I'm better than who I am today.

If I become those things, then maybe, just maybe, I can be called wise.

Let's all strive to be filled with the wisdom of God and pray that one day, wise is what we'll actually be. Paolo Galia (pgalia@gmail.com)

### reflect

What more do you need to do for you to be wise in the Lord?

*Dear Lord, thank You for showing us what wisdom truly is. May Your thoughts be our thoughts and may Your ways be our ways. Amen.*

St. Martin of Tours, bishop, pray for us.

# Nov 12

FRIDAY

**Wisdom 13:1-9**

Psalm 19:2-3, 4-5

Luke 17:26-37

## WHAT DO YOU KNOW?

For if they so far succeeded in knowledge that they could speculate about the world, how did they not more quickly find its Lord?  
– Wisdom 13:9

Wash your hands. Don't touch your MEN—mouth, eyes, and nose. Disinfect with 70 percent alcohol.

Sanitize your groceries before bringing them into your house. Don't bring shoes you wore outdoors inside the home. These and many more are precautionary measures we learned during the global pandemic that hit last year.

One meme with a smart-alecky toddler asked, “There's no vaccine for a virus that can be killed by soap?” Baffling! Man has been able to go to the moon, invent self-driving cars, split atoms, dive the depths of the sea, and map the human genome, but couldn't find a quick fix to the coronavirus.

If there's one thing this pathogen taught us, it's that no matter how much we think we know it all and can do it all, we don't and can't. In the face of a microscopic enemy, even those who curse God asked for prayers. Many rekindled their faith, while others found it for the first time.

Have you been studying a lot of things but neglected to deepen your faith? Are you getting to know Jesus more? Do it now—and do it every day. *Rissa Singson Kawpeng (rissakawpeng@gmail.com)*

## reflect

When we keep the main thing the main thing, everything else falls into the right places.

*Lord, I want to draw near to You as You draw near to me. Amen.*

St. Josaphat, bishop and martyr, pray for us.

# Nov 13

SATURDAY

Wisdom 18:14-16;  
19:6-9

Psalm 105:2-3,  
36-37, 42-43

**Luke 18:1-8**

## THE GIFT OF FAITH

"When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?" – Luke 18:8

I once spoke to a friend who considered himself a nihilist. Nihilists believe that life has no purpose, human existence has no objective meaning, and values are falsely invented. He believed there's no right or wrong, no heaven or hell, and no God. My friend lived in a first-world country where they had everything but faith.

Contrast this to the conversation I had with another friend, who saw God's fingerprint on everything she experienced. While praying on her way to work, she saw migrating birds flying in beautiful formation as if dancing to her worship song. She saw God teaching her patience, obedience, and perseverance through her challenges at work. Her faith made her love her family and students more despite the trials she faced, while my other friend suffered a divorce because he believed there was nothing wrong about having an affair.

It struck me how faith makes such a huge difference in a life and it is such a precious gift to those who possess it. A person may have everything, but without faith, sadly, it means nothing. Marjorie Ann Duterte (writersretreatph@gmail.com)

### reflect

Who do you need to share your faith with?

*"Let there be light, open the eyes of the blind. Purify our hearts in Your fire. Breathe in us we pray. Jesus have Your way."*  
(*"Let There Be Light," Hillsong Worship*)

St. Frances Xavier Cabrini, virgin, pray for us.

# Nov 14

SUNDAY

Daniel 12:1-3  
Psalm 16:5, 8, 9-10, 11  
Hebrews 10:11-14, 18  
**Mark 13:24-32**

## EMPTY YET FULL

"But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." – Mark 13:32

As we neared our first wedding anniversary, we discovered that we were pregnant again. Yay! Prior to that, God assured me about the blessing found in emptiness. We claimed that in my empty womb, our rainbow baby would live. Finally, this was it!

Ironically, we discovered that the sac in my womb was literally empty. It was a blighted ovum. So on August 8, 2019—our anniversary—I found myself undergoing another dilation and curettage. My second miscarriage brought so much fear in my heart. I was afraid that at any moment, someone I love would be taken away from me. It was a dark place.

But the healing process broke me only to be remolded to see the blessings in emptiness. First, though it was painful, we thank the Lord that the sac was empty, otherwise it would mean losing another child. Second, the emptiness in my heart gave God the space to embrace and heal me. Finally, I learned I can experience the fullness of life even in emptiness. That's the paradox of His love: we can be empty in so many areas but still live a full life because of who He is. He is always enough.

Maymay Salvosa Trinidad (christiane.trinidad@gmail.com)

### reflect

What are you afraid of? Surrender it to God. He is a good Father and He will never forsake you.

*Father, when fear starts to creep in, calm my heart with Your faithful love.*

St. Clementinus, pray for us.



# Nov 15

MONDAY

1 Maccabees 1:10-15,  
41-43, 54-57, 62-63  
Psalm 119:53, 61, 134,  
150, 155, 158  
**Luke 18:35-43**

## TELL ME WHAT YOU WANT

"What do you want me to do for you?"  
- Luke 18:41, NLT

One of the biggest differences between successful people and those who are still struggling is clarity of vision. The people who are clear about what they want in life know how to create exponential opportunities to achieve their dreams, goals, and aspirations. On the contrary, those who are uncertain and undecided about what they want in life usually take their time in figuring out what kind of life they will pursue.

This clarity challenge is true in my life because I have been involved in a lot of things, pursuing different goals left and right, and window-shopping for the best success strategy that might work for me. Yet one question that matters most remains: *what do I really want in life?*

Ask yourself this question as you write down and plan your new pursuits for next year. What do you really want in life? Are you climbing the right wall? Bestselling author Stephen Covey said, "If the ladder is not leaning against the right wall, every step we take just gets us to the wrong place faster."

Jesus knows what you need but asks you, "What do you want Me to do for you?" JC Libiran (coachjclibiran@gmail.com)

### reflect

What do you want Jesus to do for you?

*Jesus, I need You. I need Your blessings, healing, and miracles in my life. Amen.*

St. Albert the Great, bishop and Doctor of the Church, pray for us.

# Nov 16

TUESDAY

2 Maccabees 6:18-31

Psalm 3:2-3, 4-5, 6-7

**Luke 19:1-10**

## STEP INTO THE LIGHT

"For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save what was lost." – Luke 19:10

Not many people know about my dark past. When I was younger, I led a double life.

I was a Catholic youth group leader, but at the same time, I was involved in impure relationships. I was trapped in a web of lies and deception. I felt so lost and hopeless. I thought I would never be able to break free from the clutches of sin.

But God is so gracious and merciful! He never gave up on me. He used my family and community leaders to bring me back to Him. He sought me out and saved me, and He still saves me to this day, especially when I fall into sin. (Nobody is sinless forever, right?)

Yes, I am still a sinner now but the difference is I have fully accepted Jesus as my Savior. Whenever I fall into sin, I run into His arms, asking Him to forgive me and change me.

Do you feel lost right now? Are you struggling with the darkness of your sins? Come, step into the light. Jesus is waiting for you. He's ready to save you. Tina Santiago Rodriguez

(trulyrichandblessed@gmail.com)

### reflect

"Let no one mourn that he has fallen again and again; for forgiveness has risen from the grave." (St. John Chrysostom)

*Jesus, thank You for Your unconditional love and endless mercy. Come, be my Savior today and always. Amen.*

St. Margaret of Scotland, pray for us.

# Nov 17

WEDNESDAY

2 Maccabees 7:1,  
20-31

Psalms 17:1, 5-6, 8, 15

**Luke 19:11-28**

## THE APPRENTICE

"I tell you, to everyone who has, more will be given, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away." – Luke 19:26

The Parable of the Ten Gold Coins teaches us three lessons.

First, God created you to be a great leader. The king in this story was calling forth the great leadership in each of the servants and gave them vision and capital. In other words, ability. Second, growth is the goal of leadership. The servants who responded grew what was given to them. Leaders grow the dream entrusted to them, the seed of character planted in their spirit, and the relationships they have. Third, more important than growing wealth is what the leader becomes in the process. No wonder, the king gave more to those who already have more. Why? Because those who earned more have become more. They have grown in their Master's vision. They have grown in character and skills as shown by their results. They have grown in love as they nurtured business relationships. Since they have become more, they are ready for more.

Friend, God's will for you is to be more and have more. Take the lead where He has placed you. Get ready for more!

Jon Escoto (faithatworkjon@gmail.com)

### reflect

Is God calling you to lead? Start where you are now. Then you'll grow to be more—and have more.

*Jesus, You are the the one True Leader. May my heart be like Yours. Teach me to lead and to love. Amen.*

St. Hilda, religious, pray for us.

# Nov 18

THURSDAY

1 Maccabees

2:15-29

Psalms 50:1-2, 5-6,

14-15

Matthew 14:22-33

(or Luke 19:41-44)

## REJECTED AND BETRAYED

As he drew near, he saw the city and wept over it – Luke 19:41

There's nothing more painful than loving someone so much, only to be cast aside and denied. When parents endure hardships for their child's well-being, only to be disrespected and taken for granted by their beloved child. When someone puts a loved one's welfare before his own, only to be betrayed, battered, and spurned.

We all experience these moments of despair. Even Jesus Himself was not spared. He experienced deep sorrow and wept over the people of Jerusalem, for He knew He will later be rejected, betrayed, and nailed on the cross by the very same people whom He loved and cared for. Jesus taught and preached the good news of salvation. He fed the hungry, healed the sick, and performed miracles. He did all these out of love but He was crucified.

Jesus still weeps today—when we continue to ignore Him, when we give in to temptation and keep on sinning, when we choose to live in darkness and walk farther away from Him. Jesus gave up His life for us—a willing sacrifice so we may have eternal life. Let's not give Him any more pain. Jane Gonzales-Rauch

(mgr516@gmail.com)

### reflect

If Jesus comes and visits you today, will you welcome Him with excitement or will you reject and push Him away?

*Jesus, forgive us for constantly hurting You. We want to experience Your love once more. Save us from all evil and bring us back into Your fold. Amen.*

St. Anselm, pray for us.

# Nov 19

FRIDAY

1 Maccabees 4:36-37,  
52-59

1 Chronicles 29:10, 11,  
11-12, 12

**Luke 19:45-48**

## BUSINESS AS SERVICE

"My house shall be a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of robbers."

– Luke 19:46

There was a time when I nurtured a perception that most businesses are bad. They focus on profit and usually take advantage of people, especially customers and employees. After years of exposure, I realize that while this is true for some, most genuine sustainable businesses are anchored on service, where profit is a by-product of operations. The “robbers” may succeed for a while, but they never last long.

This is why putting God at the core of our work and business makes sense. When our endeavors are one with God’s purpose, our companies will be anchored correctly. Jesus is not against business but against those that prosper at the expense of other people. In my decades-long experience, I discovered that the businesses that thrive over the long term have a company culture that’s focused on creating value for all stakeholders—customers, employees, owners, the government, and many more. They don’t believe in having a “fixed pie” where benefit for one means decreasing value for another stakeholder. Value creation is “increasing the pie” to get better value for all. Rex Mendoza (rex.mendoza@rampver.com)

### reflect

Do you put God at the center of your work and your company?

*Lord, guide and help us nurture and grow ourselves and our companies in the service of others. Amen.*

St. Mechtildis, pray for us.

# Nov 20

SATURDAY

**1 Maccabees 6:1-13**

Psalm 9:2-3, 4, 6,  
16, 19

Luke 20:27-40

## DELIGHT-FULL

Its temple was very rich, containing gold helmets, breastplates, and weapons.  
– 1 Maccabees 6:2

I gazed in awe at the riches before me—gold, precious artwork, statues, and artifacts. We were at the Vatican

Museum on our Marian Pilgrimage. For 14 days, my eyes and my soul were filled with delight by sights and experiences. I couldn't believe I was ticking off places in my bucket list.

I've been blessed with trips to beautiful places abroad that I had prayed to visit. But I felt those were granted because I pestered God and He reluctantly gave in just to please me. They came with stresses, the last one even traumatic. When this pilgrimage was announced, I was hesitant to badger God again. After deep reflection, I gained a different "soulset." My prayer became, "Lord, if it will delight You to delight me, grant me this." Unlike before, I completely surrendered. God gave His OK to go. This time, I felt the Lord's delight throughout the trip.

More than the treasures we were privileged to see and the churches we visited, God gifted me with bejeweled friendships and golden memories made more enjoyable because they came stress-free.

When you don't hardheadedly insist, God's delightful will persists. [Lella M. Santiago \(lellsams88@gmail.com\)](mailto:lellsams88@gmail.com)

### reflect

"Delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give You the desires of your heart." (Psalm 37:4)

*Father, may my heart never tire of finding delight in only You. Amen.*

St. Edmund Rich, pray for us.

# Nov 21

SUNDAY

**Daniel 7:13-14**

Psalm 93:1, 1-2, 5

Revelation 1:5-8

John 18:33-37

**Solemnity  
of Christ the King**

## WHO IS YOUR KING?

He was given authority, honor, and sovereignty over all the nations of the world

... His rule is eternal—it will never end. His kingdom will never be destroyed.

– Daniel 7:14

Today's feast is a fitting prelude to the season we are about to enter. We're often asked, are our hearts prepared for our Savior King?

For a long time, I've allowed my insecurities to reign over my life. Although I grew up in a very loving family, I couldn't help but compare myself to others. My standards were based on what others deemed perfect or beautiful. I've allowed the opinions of others to loom larger in my life and put so much value on their approval. I've given them power and authority that's supposed to belong only to God, and it has caused various issues in the different areas of my life.

But as I grew deeper in faith, I've also learned to love myself more and to see my worth based on how God sees me. I realized that as soon as we allow God's approval to matter the most to us, the views of others start to lose their grip on us.

Friend, allow God's love to reign over your life today and set you free from any insecurity that this world may bring.

Chai Santiago-Gamo (chaisantiagogamo@gmail.com)

## reflect

What steps are you going to intentionally take to make space in your heart for Christ our King?

*Father, take over my heart, mind, and soul. I allow You to reign over my life today and every day. Amen.*

St. Gelasius, pray for us.

# Nov 22

MONDAY

Daniel 1:1-6, 8-20

Daniel 3:52, 53, 54,  
55, 56

Luke 21:1-4

## FOOD, MIND TEST, SPIRIT TEST

They looked healthier and better fed.

– Daniel 1:15

Because of my angioplasty, I decided to go vegan—no meat, no fish, no dairy, no eggs. Nothing that had a face or a mother. Only plant-based food. It was a difficult decision for me—and my wife—because most of the time, my food had to be prepared at home.

Unfortunately, we live in a place that is not vegan-friendly. During that time, I could count with half the toes on my left foot the number of restaurants within five kilometers from where I live that offer plant-based food in their menu. Some claim that their cows were vegan! Sure, I miss my favorites: Chicken Joy, shrimp *sinigang*, *daing na bangus*, *bulalo*, and *ube* ice cream. Did I mention Chicken Joy already?

I lost a lot of weight, too—nearly 10 kilos and a third of my cholesterol deposits. That I don't miss. But I did gain something I can't quantify—stronger resolve in body, mind, and spirit. I thought if I can be victorious in gastronomic battles, surely I can do more in spiritual and mental struggles. Yes, I am stronger and healthier in all aspects! Rene Espinosa

(drekkii@gmail.com)

### reflect

Test yourself in the physical; be victorious also in the spiritual.

*Lord, help me discipline my mind and body so I may see and hear You more clearly. Amen.*

St. Cecilia, pray for us.



# Nov 23

TUESDAY

Daniel 2:31-45  
Daniel 3:57, 58, 59,  
60, 61  
Luke 21:5-11

## READ BETWEEN THE LINES

"When you hear of wars and insurrections, do not be terrified; for such things must happen first, but it will not immediately be the end."  
- Luke 21:9

The reading today reminds me of a scene from the movie *Taken* (2008) where the father, played by Liam Neeson, was talking to his daughter on the phone right before she got abducted. Years of experience as a former CIA operative led him to the knowledge of what's going to happen to his daughter, and he wanted to prepare her by telling her straight out, "They're going to take you," followed by further instructions that would eventually help him find and save her.

Today's Gospel is a hard read. One might even ask, how is this good news? "Such things must happen first"—it's a difficult truth we cannot escape. It took me a while, though, to realize that even how the verse was constructed was deliberate. The difficult message came with the phrases "do not be terrified" and "it will not immediately be the end."

Jesus offers more than a grim warning. With the calmness and strength of One who knows of the victory ahead, Jesus offers a dependable encouragement: "Do not be terrified." He who knows can do something about it. *Dessie Dela Rosa*

(dessie.delarosa@gmail.com)

## reflect

Where's your focus—the hardships or God's Word?

*In joy and in pain, in victory and in trial, no matter what may come, Jesus, we put our trust and faith in You. Jesus, You are Lord of all! Amen.*

St. Columban, pray for us.

# Nov 24

WEDNESDAY

Daniel 5:1-6, 13-14,  
16-17, 23-28  
Daniel 3:62, 63, 64,  
65, 66, 67  
**Luke 21:12-19**

## INNER STRENGTH

"Stand firm, and you will win life." – Luke 21:19

You know how inner strength, character, values, and virtues are developed? It's through problems and trials, afflictions and persecutions. Even Bruce Lee said, "Do not pray for an easy life. Pray for the strength to endure a difficult one."

Christianity is not a walk in the park. Time and again, it has been proven that life's difficulties are what make you strong. They also make your victory sweeter and more glorious. It's the difference between winning a competition by beating your opponent and winning because he didn't show up.

Are you facing a challenging, difficult situation now? In your family life? In your relationships? In your studies, job, or business? In your finances? In your health? See it as God's invitation for you to grow more in inner strength and to give you sweet victory. The Gospel today promises, "Not a head of your hair will perish." Because God will fight your battles. He will move your mountains.

What you need to do is to "stand firm, and you will win life." Alvin Barcelona (apb\_ayo@yahoo.com)

### reflect

"God is faithful and will not let you be tried beyond your strength; but with the trial he will also provide a way out, so that you may be able to bear it." (1 Corinthians 10:13)

*Dear God, thank You for granting me the inner strength to face my trials in life. Above all, thank You for fighting my battles with me. Amen.*

St. Andrew Dung-Lac, pray for us.

# Nov 25

THURSDAY

Daniel 6:12-28  
Daniel 3:68, 69, 70,  
71, 72, 73, 74  
**Luke 21:20-28**

## HERO OVERFLOW

"But when these signs begin to happen, stand erect and raise your heads because your redemption is at hand." – Luke 21:28

Scenario: "A man was holding a cup of coffee. A woman accidentally bumped the man. Coffee spilled.

Why did the coffee spill?" The typical responses: "Because the woman bumped the man!" or "Because the man was not careful." The answer: "Coffee spilled because the cup had coffee. If the cup had tea, tea would have spilled."

Last year, the thing that bumped the entire world was COVID-19. It bumped out what was inside of us. It revealed a lot of fears and anxieties of many people. Yet the crisis also revealed millions of heroes fighting a common enemy virus.

How did you help in the war against COVID-19? Were you a frontliner? Did you provide personal protective equipment? Did you donate to those affected by the quarantine?

Today, what's stopping you from doing good? Feelings of inadequacy? Procrastination? Insecurities? Whatever is stopping you prevents the flow of good things. In God's storehouse of blessings, the supply never runs out. It's your job to let God's goodness spill out through your words and works. Let the hero overflow! [Edwin S. Soriano \(edwin@edwinsoriano.com\)](mailto:edwin@edwinsoriano.com)

### reflect

What blockages prevent you from seeing or revealing what is good? What good deeds can you do today?

*Lord, Your words build me up. Remove from me any blockages. Let Your goodness and love overflow through me. Amen.*

St. Catherine of Alexandria, pray for us.

# Nov 26

FRIDAY

Daniel 7:2-14  
Daniel 3:75, 76, 77,  
78, 79, 80, 81  
**Luke 21:29-33**

## WORD OF HONOR

"Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away." – Luke 21:33

Have you heard people talk about word of honor? I learned about this value when I was still a little girl. I used to hear my elders say that we should have *palabra de honor*, or else people will not trust us.

*Palabra de honor* or word of honor means keeping your word or honoring what you say. People with integrity keep their word. They're trustworthy and reliable because they speak the truth whoever they talk to or in whatever circumstance they find themselves in.

God is the best example of someone who has word of honor. His Word is always true. His Word remains the same from generation to generation no matter what happens in the world we live in. Since we are called His children, *palabra de honor* should also be one of our traits.

Let's pray to God, our Father, to grant us the grace and strength of character to always honor our word and be trustworthy like Him. This way, we will be good witnesses for Him and His Church. Teresa Gumap-as Dumadag (teregmps@yahoo.com)

## reflect

Do you follow God's example of being true to your word? How reliable are the words that you speak?

*Thank You, Lord, for Your words that are always trustworthy. Your Word serves as our anchor and hope in the storms of life. Amen.*

St. Conrad, pray for us.

# Nov 27

SATURDAY

**Daniel 7:15-27**

Daniel 3:82, 83, 84,  
85, 86, 87

Luke 21:34-36

## GOD IS JUST

For, as I watched, that horn made war against the holy ones and was victorious until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was pronounced in favor of the holy ones of the Most High, and the time arrived for the holy ones to possess the kingship.- Daniel 7:21-22

My friend Andrew once lamented, "Life is so unfair. After I prioritized the needs of others before my own and did my best to put things in order, they still found ways to destroy my day. They blamed me for anything. Is it too much to aim to live a life of positivity?"

I told him, "I've just been there. Don't mind people who do that to others for whatever reason. Offer your efforts to God. He gives us a thumbs-up for all our good intentions."

Sometimes, even with the best of intentions, our actions are met with opposition or even criticism. It can get tiresome to do good. But take heart that whenever you feel that you are unjustly treated, we can find peace in the Lord.

Wait on God.

He is just.

He vindicates the righteous and will keep them with Him through all eternity. *Bella Estrella (blestrella@gmail.com)*

### reflect

"The saints of the Highest One will receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, for all ages to come." (Daniel 7:18)

*Father, give us the grace to always triumph in our struggles against evil. We pray that, in the end, we will be among the saints You will welcome into heaven. Amen.*

St. Severinus, pray for us.

# Nov 28

SUNDAY

Jeremiah 33:14-16

Psalms 25:4-5, 8-9,

10, 14

**1 Thessalonians**

**3:12-4:2**

Luke 21:25-28, 34-36

First Sunday of Advent

## LOVE TANK

May the Lord make your love increase  
and overflow for each other.

– 1 Thessalonians 3:12, NIV

Ria broke down during a life coaching session. It's ironic because she's the coach and her client for that hour was just talking about family issues. Imagine the shock of her client.

Embarrassed, Ria apologized.

Ria's love tank was running low. She was used to giving so much love to her clients who are lost, in pain, and confused. She didn't realize she was almost running on empty because she was having issues with her family. Thus, her breakdown.

She canceled her other sessions to focus on filling her love tank. She did this by spending more time at the Blessed Sacrament chapel to pray, talking to family members, and engaging in activities she enjoys.

Since then, she made it a habit to check if her love tank was full so the love that overflows is what she can share with her clients. Carlo Lorenzo (carloflorenzo@gmail.com)

## reflect

Check your love tank. What can you do to fill it up?

*Heavenly Father, You are love. Fill us generously and increase the love inside us so we can share what overflows to others. Amen.*

St. James of the Marches, pray for us.

# Nov 29

MONDAY

**Isaiah 2:1-5**

Psalm 122:1-2, 3-4,  
4-5, 6-7, 8-9

Matthew 8:5-11

## SEEKING HIS WORD

“Come, let us go up to the Lord’s mountain, to the house of the God of Jacob, That he may instruct us in his ways, and we may walk in his paths.” – Isaiah 2:3

A student approached me after a discussion on electronics and admitted he didn’t understand the lecture. His admission and humility were admirable. We reviewed his notes. When he finally understood, there was a glint in his eye.

Unlike that student, it saddened me that some relatives and friends turned back from being Catholic without seeking answers. They were quick to ask, “Where in the Bible will you find that teaching?” I’m sure if they checked reputable resources like Bishop Barron, Scott Hahn, Steve Ray, and Bo Sanchez, to name a few, they would find God’s truth to better understand our Catholic faith.

If you don’t understand some matters regarding what we believe, pray and offer your doubts to the Lord so He may enlighten you. Then read Catholic books, ask your parish priest, or google reliable Catholic sites. It is necessary for us to have a heart that seeks and acts on His Word to see the light that He shines on our path. Jun Asis (mabuting.balita@gmail.com)

### reflect

Let your doubts and questions about your faith spur you to actively seek answers.

*Lord, may I always be a student who longs to learn from You and yearn for You. Teach me Your ways so I may walk in Your truth. Amen.*

St. Philomenus, pray for us.

# Nov 30

TUESDAY

Romans 10:9-18  
Psalm 19:8, 9, 10, 11  
**Matthew 4:18-22**

Feast of St. Andrew,  
Apostle

## **ACTION, NOT JUST INTENTIONS**

"Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."  
And at once, leaving behind their nets,  
they followed him. – Matthew 4:19-20

Whenever I run relationship workshops, I encounter three different kinds of participants: the Inspired, the Motivated, and the Committed. The Inspired are those whose eyes sparkle with insight after our session, excited about their new discoveries. But after a week they forget their notes and nothing changes.

The Motivated are those who keep their notes and review them. They also ask their friends to help them put their learning into action. But after a couple of months, other priorities take over their life. They sometimes remember what they're supposed to do, but they get so out of practice that they fall back into their old behaviors.

Finally, there's the Committed. They keep their notes till it's tattered from constant rereading. They plan into action, and when they get discouraged, they contact a coach or get support from an accountability partner.

Question: which of them do you think God can bless faster with the changes they're praying for in their lives?

Aileen Santos (coachail eensantos@gmail.com)

### **reflect**

Do you wait passively for good things to happen in your life? Or do you actively cooperate with God in answering your prayers?

*Lord, as I pray for the things I want in life, may I also cooperate with the grace and opportunities You give to make them happen. Amen.*

St. Andrew, Apostle, pray for us.



# Dec 1

WEDNESDAY

Isaiah 25:6-10  
Psalm 23:1-3, 3-4,  
5, 6  
Matthew 15:29-37

## GET READY TO BE DISTURBED

"Where could we ever get enough bread in this deserted place to satisfy such a crowd?"  
– Matthew 15:33

We connect the idea of sacrifice to Good Friday, not to Christmas day. But if you read through the Bible, you will realize that God's biggest sacrifice started nine months before Christmas day. Jesus' name speaks of His mission. Jesus or *Yehoshua* in Hebrew means "God who saves," a sacrifice like no other.

Mary and Joseph also sacrificed. They were going to marry, have kids, and take yearly vacations in Boracay. It was going to be a perfectly normal life. Jesus' disciples experienced massive discomfort, too, as they followed Him.

Do you see my point? When God visits your life, it stops being normal. He comforts the disturbed but disturbs the comfortable. As you follow God, He turns your life upside down. People around you may be selfish, but He calls you to be selfless. They may be greedy, but He calls you to be generous. They may want to be the boss, but He calls you to be the servant.

In a month's time, it will be 2022. As you follow Jesus, are you ready to be disturbed? Bo Sanchez (bosanchez@kerygmfamily.com)

### reflect

"God disturbs our comfortable day-to-day existence. Jesus' kingship goes hand in hand with His Passion." (Pope Benedict XVI)

*Lord, it's not easy to follow You, but it's the only way to be united with You. Help me to persevere. Amen.*

Blessed Charles de Foucauld, pray for us.

# Dec 2

THURSDAY

Isaiah 26:1-6  
Psalm 118:1, 8-9,  
19-21, 25-27  
**Matthew 7:21,  
24-27**

## WHAT'S IMPORTANT TO YOU?

"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"  
- Matthew 7:21

We were in the middle of a business meeting when my client suddenly asked me, "What's important for you aside from work?" I paused. I knew him to be a workaholic. "God, family, my country, people in need like those who are sick, abandoned kids . . . in that order of priority."

I meet different kinds of people both in my business and mission work. Diverse nationalities, faith beliefs, and social status. They are good people. Some of them donate to the church and orphanages or do volunteer work when a major natural disaster happens. Some join medical missions. But there are those who do many good things but miss out on the best.

Yes, we shouldn't stop doing good things, but sometimes doing good satisfies us and keeps us from experiencing the best. Our good works should be the offshoot of the best—that is, accepting Jesus as our Savior and following Him. Prioritizing God should always be what's important for us.

Alvin Fabella (alvinfabella@yahoo.com)

### reflect

"Love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment." (Matthew 22:37)

*Lord, help me to always put You first in my life. Amen.*

St. Eusebius, pray for us.

# Dec 3

FRIDAY

Isaiah 29:17-24

Psalms 27:1, 4, 13-14

Matthew 9:27-31

## BELIEVE AND TRUST

"Do you believe I can make you see?"

- Matthew 9:28, NLT

I believe in my doctor when I consult her. I put my case in her hands knowing she is well educated and has solid medical practice.

I believe in my Grab driver when I book a ride. As I sit at the back, I put my life in his hands, trusting he will bring me safely to my destination.

I believe in my insurance agent whenever I pay my investment. I have confidence that she knows how to handle my wealth better than I do. I trust that she has my best interest at heart.

If you think about it, we believe and entrust a good part of our lives to people we barely know. But why do we sometimes find it hard to believe in and trust God whom we know so well to be good and loving? Why is it difficult to trust that He will bring us to our destination? Why is it easy to forget that He has our best interests at heart?

If you will entrust your life to someone, let it be God. He is Healer. He is the Way. He is the Pearl of Great Price. Veia Lim-Viñas

(veiallim@gmail.com)

### reflect

Listen to "Trust in You" by Feast Worship on Spotify or Youtube.

*Teach us to trust in You. May we always remember that You are a God who can be trusted. Amen.*

St. Francis Xavier, priest, pray for us.

# Dec 4

SATURDAY

Isaiah 30:19-21,

23-26

Psalms 147:1-2, 3-4,

5-6

**Matthew 9:35-10:1,**

**5, 6-8**

## KINGDOM-MINDED

"And as you go, preach this message: 'Heaven's kingdom realm is accessible, close enough to touch.'" – Matthew 10:7, TPT

Recently, I had coffee with an entrepreneur who manages a Christian merchandise and clothing brand. He told me how he comes from a Christian church, but he has been blessed to work with Christians of other sects. He even has mentors who are Jesuit priests. He says that their brand "is for all people—for those interested in Him, those who are on fire for Him, and those who want to die for Him." It's true, his company's apparel that subtly points to Jesus is worn by many people from different churches and denominations. I believe God is using his business to unite the Kingdom, reach the lost, and advance the Gospel.

Friend, the Kingdom is not about one particular church, denomination, or community. It goes beyond that. The Kingdom is the reign of God over all His people. So, in serving God, we are not building our own church, denomination, community, brand, or name. We are building God's Kingdom, the Body of Christ, and proclaiming one Name—Jesus. Let's be Kingdom-minded people. Mike Viñas (mikemichaelfcv@yahoo.com)

### reflect

"One of the main tasks of theology is to find words that do not divide but unite, that do not create conflict but unity, that do not hurt but heal." (Henri Nouwen)

*Lord, grant us the grace to foster ecumenism—to build a closer relationship and understanding with other Christians, so we can build Your Kingdom together.*

St. John Damascene, priest and Doctor of the Church, pray for us.

# Dec 5

SUNDAY

Baruch 5:1-9

Psalms 126:1-2, 2-3,

4-5, 6

Philippians 1:4-6, 8-11

**Luke 3:1-6**

Second Sunday of Advent

## BEAUTY OF THE DESERT

The word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the desert. – Luke 3:2

The desert was where God's chosen people wandered for 40 years on their way to the Promised Land and where God "cared for them, guarded them as the apple of his eye" (Deuteronomy 32:10). The desert was also where "the Word of God came to John," where he lived and began his ministry. As for Jesus, the desert was where He fasted and was tempted by the devil. But the desert was also witness to Jesus overcoming the temptations.

I've had my share of desert experiences when God seemed silent. I was left to face anger, fear, depression, and pain alone. I felt empty and helpless, as if the desert's nothingness were becoming my own. I couldn't pray but longed to hear God's voice and feel His presence. And just like with the Israelites, John, and Jesus, God would transform my desert into a place of rest, its silence and stillness ushering in a renewal through prayer and reflection.

The desert now has become a place where I encounter God's mercy and hear Him speak clearly: I cared for you in the wilderness [desert], in the land of drought (Hosea 13:5).

Dina Pecaña (dina.p@shepherdsvoice.com.ph)

### reflect

"What makes the desert beautiful is that somewhere it hides a well." (Antoine de Saint Exupery)

*Remain with me, O Lord, in the desert of my nothingness and pain. Amen.*

St. Sabas, pray for us.

# Dec 6

MONDAY

Isaiah 35:1-10  
Psalm 85:9, 10,  
11-12, 13-14  
**Luke 5:17-26**

## NO BED LEFT BEHIND

"I say to you, stand up and take your bed, and go to your home." – Luke 5:24

Jesus could have simply said, "Stand up and go home." But He even instructed the paralytic to "take his bed." In another Gospel story of healing of a paralytic, He also said, "Get up, pick up your mat, and walk" (John 5:8).

Why do you need to "take your bed" or "pick up your mat"? Can't you just leave them behind?

In our own life, we want to forget anything that reminds us of a painful past. We want to leave the "bed and the mat." But Jesus tells us to bring them along.

Why? Because He wants us to remember that, once upon a time, we were "paralytics," unable to move because of our trials, problems, difficulties, and challenges.

Now we have been set free by Jesus—and the "bed and mat" will remind us to be grateful. It will also tell people of God's miracle in us. Our "bed and mat" is proof of the miracle Jesus has done and is continuously doing in us.

Proudly carry your "bed and mat." Be grateful because now you're free! Boggs Burbos (boggsburbos@yahoo.com)

### reflect

If God sustained you in the past, He will do so again today. What miracles are happening in your life now?

*I thank You, Jesus, for allowing me to stand. Grant me the grace to walk and tell of Your glory. Amen.*

St. Nicholas, bishop, pray for us.

# Dec 7

TUESDAY

Isaiah 40:1-11  
Psalm 96:1-2, 3, 10,  
11-12, 13  
**Matthew 18:12-14**

## SAINT MAKER

"If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them goes astray, will he not leave the ninety-nine . . . and go in search of the stray?" – Matthew 18:12

In the year 374, Saint Ambrose was compelled to mediate between Catholics and Arians in Milan. They believed in God but not as a Trinity. He was so good at it that they asked him to become the bishop of Milan. He refused—and for very good reasons. He was just a catechumen, an adult student of the faith who was not even baptized!

Forced, not just by the crowd, but by the emperor himself, Ambrose was baptized, ordained, and appointed the bishop of Milan—all in a week's time! Talk about God's timing.

When God appoints—even through a crowd—He anoints!

One day, a young man from out of town who was investigating the faith visited Saint Ambrose. More than the bishop's intellect, the young man was floored by the love of God he saw in the way Ambrose would shepherd his flock. Every time this man arrived in Milan, he'd find Saint Ambrose conversing with the crowd. Long lines of people sought his counsel. That young man would later be known as Saint Augustine. Marc V. Lopez (marcvlopez88@gmail.com)

### reflect

The one to whom you share God's love today could be a saint tomorrow.

*Jesus, to whom do You want me to share Your love?*

St. Maria Giuseppe Rossello, pray for us.

# Dec 8

WEDNESDAY

Genesis 3:9-15, 20  
Psalm 98:1, 2-3, 3-4  
Ephesians 1:3-6, 11-12  
**Luke 1:26-38**

**Solemnity of the  
Immaculate Conception  
of the Blessed Virgin Mary**

## MARY'S FAITH

"Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God." – Luke 1:30

Imagine how hard it was for Mary to believe what the angel said. If I were in her place, I would've complained, "Where is favor in that?"

I do not know any man, but I'll bear a baby in a supernatural way. It'll be impossible to hide my growing tummy. People will surely see it and stone me to death! How could I not be afraid? Oh God, what kind of disaster have You brought upon me?"

God, being God, is difficult to understand. I know He loves me very much, but sometimes I wonder why He allows bad things to happen to good people, why He doesn't say yes to a sincere prayer, and why hard work and sacrifice don't always bear fruit.

I go to Mary when I don't understand God—she who offered herself as God's handmaid, she who never questioned His ways, she who trusted His love despite the painful things she went through as the mother of the Savior. May today's Feast of the Immaculate Conception remind us to have a faith that is as unshakeable as the faith of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Elaine Marie R. Factor (elainemarietfactor@gmail.com)

### reflect

Allow this verse to sink in: "Do not be afraid, (your name), for you have found favor with God." Claim it in your dark times.

*Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen.*

Blessed Virgin Mary, pray for us.



# Dec 9

THURSDAY

Isaiah 41:13-20  
Psalm 145:1, 9,  
10-11, 12-13  
Matthew 11:11-15

## A GOOD THING

The hand of the Lord has done this.  
– Isaiah 41:20

I can't count the times I said, "Mabuti na lang" (It's a good thing).

I hesitated to get a pension plan because I was already paying for an insurance policy, but I purchased it anyway. The plan matured 10 years later—the year my dad passed away. The proceeds of the plan replaced what we spent on his hospitalization, burial and interment, as well as taxes. *Mabuti na lang.*

My car stalled on a busy street. One of the men who approached taught me how to jump-start the car. After they pushed it, the engine started. I went to the battery shop and bought a new battery. I had more than enough money then because I had just withdrawn from the bank. This happened on a daytime and the weather was good. *Mabuti na lang.*

The list goes on. We made a spur of the moment purchase and felt that we were conned. We took a different route on our way to work and we arrived late. We got sick when we have an important presentation to make to a VIP client. I believe that in every situation, the hand of the Lord is present. We just need to learn how to see it with the eyes of faith. Judith Concepcion

(svp\_jmc@yahoo.com)

### reflect

Where do you see the hand of God in a mistake or misfortune? Can you say with conviction, "Mabuti na lang"?

*O Lord, help me see Your hand in the situation I'm in right now. Amen.*

St. Juan Diego, pray for us.

# Dec 10

FRIDAY

Isaiah 48:17-19

Psalm 1:1-2, 3, 4, 6

Matthew 11:16-19

## KINDNESS LEADS TO REPENTANCE

"I am the Lord your God, who teaches you  
what is best for you." – Isaiah 48:17

Sometime ago, my best friend's cruel foster mom was diagnosed with liver cirrhosis. Her abdomen grew to the size of a basketball. After three unsuccessful attempts to drain abdominal fluids, the doctor suggested for a costly CT scan.

On bended knees, we prayed for financial support. True enough, the results revealed a tumor but they could not determine the exact location. The doctor then suggested for a transvaginal ultrasound. It was not a liver disease, after all, but a stage 4 ovarian tumor. "Why, Lord?" Why all those rough moments looking for financial support for a costly procedure when only an inexpensive one sufficed?

God teaches what is best for you. Looking back, those small pockets of time that my best friend spent with her foster mom in the hospital until her demise was a great opportunity for both of them to reconcile. I admire my friend because despite her unimaginable past, she still treated her mom with overwhelming kindness. It must have made her mom realize her maltreatment, which spurred her to go to confession and ask for God's forgiveness. Cindy Reynes (reynescpz@gmail.com)

### reflect

Forgive and forgive, even when it hurts. God knows best.

*Father, liberate the purity of our heart. In the end, You know what is best for us. Amen.*

Pope Saint Gregory III, pray for us.

# Dec 11

SATURDAY

Sirach 48:1-4, 9-11

Psalms 80:2, 3,  
15-16, 18-19

**Matthew 17:9,  
10-13**

## BEFORE YOU SHARE

"As they went down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, 'Don't tell anyone what you have seen until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead'" – Matthew 17:9, NLT

I can just imagine how big the news of the Transfiguration would have been on social media if it happened today. This would definitely go viral and be a trending topic. After all, who doesn't have a social media account these days?

Jesus had to caution His disciples—Peter, James, and John—not to tell anyone about what they had seen. We can surmise that He wanted the event to be seen in the right perspective. He wanted people to see the Messiah as someone who was coming to woo His people with love and sacrifice, and not how the Jews expected—a military leader who would destroy their enemies.

Jesus' discretion should be ours, too, in this social media age. Before we post anything, let's err on the side of caution. Make sure we have the right perspective, the correct information, and the real facts before we click that share button. Reng Morelos (norinamorelos@gmail.com)

## reflect

Don't be an instrument of spreading fake news. Before reposting anything, pause and check if it's the truth. Will it do good or harm? Is it really worth sharing?

*Lord, guide me with Your most Holy Spirit that I may only share what is true and what is according to Your teachings. Amen.*

St. Damasus I, pope, pray for us.

# Dec 12

SUNDAY

Zephaniah 3:14-18

Isaiah 12:2-3, 4, 5-6

**Philippians 4:4-7**

Luke 3:10-18

Third Sunday of Advent

## THE LAST WORRY

Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. – Philippians 4:6

In the last episode of *The Last Dance*, a 10-part docuseries on Michael Jordan and the Chicago Bulls, they were about to play game six of the 1998 NBA championship against the Utah Jazz. Winning this would give them their second three-peat. The Chicago team was exhausted. They had only two days of rest between games, most of it spent in traveling and practice. Knowing this could very well be the last season the Chicago Bulls team would play together added to the pressure to win. When asked how Jordan felt, he answered, “How can I worry about missing a shot I haven’t made?” According to people who knew him, he didn’t allow what was beyond his control to invade his thoughts.

Jordan’s statement highlights the many times we lose sleep over things that haven’t happened yet. We’re anxious over things beyond our control when there’s nothing we can do about them. Saint Paul teaches us how to handle things that are worrisome: *Pray!* When we do, we move the hand of the One who controls all things. Rissa Singson Kawpeng

(rissakawpeng@gmail.com)

### reflect

“Worrying does not take away tomorrow’s troubles. It takes away today’s peace.” (Randy Armstrong)

*Lord, thank You that nothing is beyond Your control. I surrender to You my worries today and trust that You will do what I can't. Amen.*

Our Lady of Guadalupe, pray for us.

# Dec 13

MONDAY

Numbers 24:2-7,  
15-17

Psalm 25:4-5, 6, 7, 8-9

**Matthew 21:23-27**

## MELTDOWN

"And who gave you this authority?"

– Matthew 21:23, NIV

Some years ago, a first-class passenger on a departing flight was given a small unopened bag of nuts as a snack. The passenger screamed that the nuts should have been served on a plate. She called the chief attendant and made him apologize to her on his knees. She fired him after that and ordered the aircraft to return to the departure gate so the attendant could deplane.

Did she have the authority to do all this? Well, her family owned the business conglomerate that the airline was a part of. She may have had the power, but how she used it and the humiliation she caused the cabin crew reached the media.

Ms. Owner's Daughter later made a public apology and served prison time for violating aviation safety regulations. It was a painful lesson in humility.

When we feel we are above the "ordinary" crowd because of our title, assets, or standing, it's a long way down to fall when we stumble.

God is the only true authority in our lives. When we're guided by His wisdom, we will know how to act with grace and goodwill toward others. Gina J. Verdolaga (mgjiver@yahoo.com)

### reflect

When was the last time you made a selfless act?

*Lord, remind me to be a blessing to others, not a burden. Amen.*

St. Lucy, virgin and martyr, pray for us.

# Dec 14

TUESDAY

**Zephaniah 3:1-2,  
9-13**

Psalm 34:2-3, 6-7,  
17-18, 19, 23

Matthew 21:28-32

## TOO CLOSE FOR COMFORT

But I will leave as a remnant in your midst  
a people humble and lowly, Who shall  
take refuge in the name of the Lord.  
– Zephaniah 3:12

*Why did God take away my  
daughter? Didn't I trust Him enough?  
Didn't I draw near to Him?* These and

many other questions were on my friend's mind when she lost her only daughter to cancer at the prime of her youth.

She said her prayers lost their meaning and felt God was so far away and didn't listen to her pleas of sparing her daughter. Her faith wavered and she had a score to settle with God.

Fr. Dennis Paez, SDB said, "Sometimes you can't see God because He is too close for you to see." He put his hand right in front of his face to indicate how close God was. Father Dennis also mentioned that instead of asking why (Why did my child die?), ask where, what, how, and when. "Where is God leading me?" "What can I contribute to help those in the same situation?" "How can I let God use me with this pain?" "When will I choose to live again?"

After two years of grieving well, my friend has put her trust and love back into God and is at peace with her loss.

Score settled. Cheri Roberto (cheriroberto@gmail.com)

### reflect

There are some questions that cannot be answered until we see God face to face.

*Dearest Lord, in times of sorrow, please teach me to grab ahold of  
Your hand and never let go. Amen.*

St. John of the Cross, priest and Doctor of the Church, pray for us.

# Dec 15

WEDNESDAY

Isaiah 45:6-8, 18,  
21-25

Psalm 85:9, 10,  
11-12, 13-14  
Luke 7:18-23

## THE LAST SAY

"I am the Lord, and there is no other."  
– Isaiah 45:6

“Who has the last say?”

That question is what salespersons and negotiators ask when discussing with a client or customer. When negotiating a deal, many things have to be considered: The actual needs and problem of the client, the intricacies of the product or service offered, and the all-important price. There can even be an unspoken agreement of engagement between the negotiating parties. But until the decision maker says yes, nothing will happen.

Life is like that. So many things can happen in our lives that we become worried and confused. We say, “What will happen? What if . . . ?” Our situation can be overwhelming. But as believers, we know that at the end of the day, the Lord still has the last say.

Friend, as we prepare for Jesus’ coming this Christmas, surrender the decision-making to Him. The Lord is still in control. He is “God with us.” He has already decided to love, save, and bless us.

Trust the One who has the last say. Jonathan Jogawin  
(coachj@jyogawin.com)

### reflect

Worry is to claim control over something we don't have control over.

*Jesus, I turn over the controls to You. Amen.*

St. Paul of Latos, pray for us.

# Dec 16

THURSDAY

**Isaiah 54:1-10**

Psalm 30:2, 4, 5-6,

11-12, 13

Luke 7:24-30

## HIS LOVE WILL NEVER FAIL

"For your husband is your Maker."

- Isaiah 54:5

When I was about to turn 29 in 2018, I was so worried and frustrated about still being single. I was surrounded by people my age or younger who were ecstatic over getting engaged, married, or pregnant.

Thankfully, when my next birthday came, the Lord spoke to me through Isaiah 54:1-10. I got emotional as I read it and prayed, "Lord, thank You! I choose to be glad because even if I'm still single at 30, You are my husband. You love me, and that's even more than amazing!" That made me content and happy. I claimed that as the years progress with Mr. Right not yet in sight, God would make me even happier.

Today, I turn 32 years old and I'm still single. The Lord gives me the same passage in the First Reading. It's an assurance that His love will never fail even if my friends are getting married and having families.

So, if you're like me who's still waiting for your one true love, don't fret. Your Maker loves you and He won't ever forget His best plans for your life. [Kring Talladen \(kringtalladen@gmail.com\)](mailto:kringtalladen@gmail.com)

### reflect

In our countdown to Christmas Day, how can you deepen your love for your Lover and Maker?

*Dear God, thank You for being the God of perfect timing. I receive Your love and I surrender my future to You. Amen.*

St. Albina, pray for us.



# Dec 17

FRIDAY

Genesis 49:2, 8-10

Psalms 72:1-2, 3-4,

7-8, 17

**Matthew 1:1-17**

## BEAUTIFUL ENDING

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ,  
the son of David, the son of Abraham.

– Matthew 1:1

In the time and culture when it's supposed to only name the men, why did this list of Jesus' ancestors include women? Of the five women mentioned, three of them have checkered pasts. Tamar slept with her father-in-law, Rahab was a prostitute, and Bathsheba was an adulteress. Four of them—Tamar, Rahab, Bathsheba, and Ruth—are non-Jews and, in their words, have “dirty blood.”

Their stories? Problematic. Their circumstances? Complicated. But look at the end of the genealogy. God's will and purpose prevailed. The ending in Jesus was the most beautiful conclusion of all.

Is your life now problematic and complicated? You failed in business. You lost your job because of a bad decision. You failed in relationships and doubt your ability to love. The ending might be too far to see and too impossible to imagine, but there's no stopping God's plan. Amidst your weaknesses and sins, He's not changing His mind. Surrender all to Him and let Him bring you back to His amazing story.

Take comfort, friend, He is ending this well. Jon Escoto

(faiththatworkjon@gmail.com)

### reflect

Humanity's sin looked like it was beyond fixing, but God resolved it with the coming of a Baby.

*Jesus, I surrender everything to You. Have it Your way. Give me the grace to wait patiently for the beauty You'll be making out of this mess. Amen.*

St. Florian, pray for us.

# Dec 18

SATURDAY

Jeremiah 23:5-8  
Psalm 72:1-2, 12-13,  
18-19

**Matthew 1:18-25**

## DIFFERENT STUFF

Joseph her husband, since he was a righteous man, yet unwilling to expose her to shame, decided to divorce her quietly. – Matthew 1:19

Can you imagine if Joseph had the option to post something on Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter about his relationship with Mary? He could probably have written: “It’s hard to let you go #moveon.” Or maybe this one: “No other option #breakingmyheart.”

It sounds facetious to ascribe these words to Saint Joseph, not only because he didn’t have our daily social media temptation, but also because he was made of different stuff. He was able to recognize that it was wrong for his fiancée to be pregnant, but also didn’t want to shame her publicly, even if stoning an adulteress was legal then. God knows all things so He knew that, as a faithful Jew, Joseph had only one option—to divorce Mary. So God reached out from heaven and sent a heavenly messenger to talk to Joseph in a dream.

Would we be made of the same sturdy and faithful stuff that Joseph had when we face our trials and temptations? Would we be able to recognize what are ungodly, unlawful, or uncharitable actions and decisions? Let’s pray for the grace to discern and act like Saint Joseph. Joyce Roa (jsosoban@gmail.com)

### reflect

What would you have done if you were in Joseph’s shoes?

*Dearest Lord, I want to follow the example of Your earthly father, Joseph, who stood up for what is right and loving even when it was a very difficult thing to do, then to follow Your lead when You spoke. Amen.*

St. Desideratus, pray for us.

# Dec 19

SUNDAY

Micah 5:1-4  
Psalm 80:2-3, 15-16,  
18-19

**Hebrews 10:5-10**

Luke 1:39-45

Fourth Sunday of Advent

## CHRIST FOLLOWER OR TRADITION FOLLOWER?

"Sacrifice and offering you did not desire . . . holocausts and sin offerings you took no delight in. 'Behold, I come to do your will, O God.'" – Hebrews 10:5-7

Would you call yourself a religious Catholic? How often do you go to church? How often do you pray the rosary or a novena? What religious traditions do you follow?

If you are religious, the reading in Hebrews today might shock you. It talks about how God is not pleased with offerings and traditions—animals burned whole on the altar or sacrifices that take away sins. Rather, He is more concerned about whether we follow His will or not. In other words, God is more delighted when we follow Him. Sacrifices and traditions are there to guide us closer to Jesus, but we shouldn't miss the main point: are we becoming Christ-like?

As in any journey, we need a map, a guide, or checkpoints to know that we are near our destination. I believe it's the same in our faith walk. Our traditions are our guide—our map to help us become a true Christ follower.

May our religious traditions not be an end in themselves but help bring us to our final destination of becoming a new creation in Christ Jesus. Erika Ventura (erika.m@svrtv.com)

### reflect

Let your Christmas traditions bring you to true devotion to Jesus.

*Lord, forgive me for the times I just followed traditions without giving my whole heart and soul to You. Work in me so I might become more like You.*

St. Darius, pray for us.

# Dec 20

MONDAY

Isaiah 7:10-14  
Psalm 24:1-2, 3-4,  
5-6  
**Luke 1:26-38**

## TROUBLED, BUT OBEDIENT

But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. – Luke 1:29

God sometimes gives the most confusing instructions. *Resign. Give it up. Let go. Ask for forgiveness. Reach out. Give everything you have. Go.*

He tells us to do these things at a time when it makes the least sense. He asks us to resign when we're enjoying our jobs. He tells us to let go when we're so in love. He tells us to apologize when we've done nothing wrong. He told Mary she would bear a child even though she had no relations with a man.

Mama Mary's faith was so strong that even though she was befuddled and confused, she still said yes. She was so brave that even though this bewildering prophecy would endanger her reputation and even her life, she surrendered herself to God's will. Her sacrifice was so great that, in the end, she had to watch her Son die to save us all.

Let us remember to always honor Mama Mary and look to her as an inspiration. Truly, God's ways are not our ways. His thoughts are not our thoughts. But like Mama Mary, may we always obey God, knowing that His plans for us are far better than what we imagine for ourselves. Karren Renz Seña

(karren@projectbeautifulwords.com)

### reflect

What is your favorite "Mama Mary moment" and how does she inspire you to be a better Christian?

*Mama Mary, your obedience brought you suffering, but it also brought you rewards. Pray for us, so we may also have faith in God's plans for us.*

St. Julius, pray for us.

# Dec 21

TUESDAY

Song of Songs  
2:8-14 (or Zephaniah  
3:14-18)  
Psalm 33:2-3, 11-12,  
20-21  
**Luke 1:39-45**

## THAT AWESOME MOMENT

"Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!"  
- Luke 1:45, NIV

When my sister was pregnant, her doctor in New York broke the bad news. There were findings that the baby in her womb had deformities. He gave her the option to abort the child. My sister fervently prayed about it and told her doctor that she would go on with the pregnancy. Abortion was not an option.

The most awaited, wonderful day came. When my sister had the first glimpse of her baby, all her pains and difficulties for the past nine months vanished. All she felt was unexplainable joy. What's more, she gave birth to a healthy boy!

Yes, he had a club foot, but it wasn't severe. After going through therapy, his foot was totally healed. He even became a football player! Today, my nephew is 26 years old, smart, intelligent, handsome, and good-hearted.

Like Mama Mary and Elizabeth in the Gospel, my sister believed and placed her whole trust in the Lord. And indeed, she was blessed!

God hears our prayers. He performs miracles and He fulfills His promises. You can trust in Him. Sol Saura

(sol\_saura@yahoo.com)

### reflect

Our God specializes in the impossible.

*Father, we believe in You. We place our trust in You. You are bigger than whatever we desire. With You, all things are possible. Amen.*

St. Peter Canisius, priest and Doctor of the Church, pray for us.

# Dec 22

WEDNESDAY

1 Samuel 1:24-28

1 Samuel 2:1, 4-5,  
6-7, 8

**Luke 1:46-56**

## NO BIG AND SMALL FAVORS

"The Mighty One has done great things for me and holy is his name." – Luke 1:49

When I was a child, my mom taught me to pray, lift up my petitions to God, and thank Him for blessings.

As an adult, I came to know the Lord more through our prayer community. I grew in my prayer life, too. I went to Him more often to ask Him for little and big favors.

With small favors, I mean like the perfect ride after school when God would send an empty bus for me to ride in. Big favors are like how He gave me a good husband and two wonderful children.

When I came to know the Lord, I learned that there are no small or big requests. I could just go to Him to ask for anything and everything I need. There were times when what He'd send me was not the answer I was hoping for, but in hindsight, it was the perfect answer for me. There were times, too, that He had answered in a bigger and better way than what I prayed for.

Let's come before the Lord to ask for what we need. Then let's wait on Him to bless us in the way He sees fit. Rissa Espinosa

(rissa\_d\_espinosa@yahoo.com)

### reflect

God's promise stands: "Ask and you will receive." What are you waiting for?

*Father, here are my requests, but bless me with what is best for me. Amen.*

St. Flavian, pray for us.

# Dec 23

THURSDAY

Malachi 3:1-4, 23-24

Psalm 25:4-5, 8-9,

10, 14

**Luke 1:57-66**

## MOMENTS OF SILENCE

"John is his name," and all were amazed. Immediately his mouth was opened, his tongue freed, and he spoke blessing God.  
- Luke 1:63-64

I attended a silent retreat once when I was a full-time missionary serving the youth. For someone who's quite introverted, I thought it would be easy.

While I enjoyed the quiet time, it proved to be harder than I thought. While my lips were silent, my mind rumbled with what seemed like voices of a hundred blabbers. The real experience, I eventually learned, was in silencing your whole being so you can listen and connect to God. Though only for a couple of days, the practice of being silent and fully disposing the self to Him led me to message after message of affirmation and confirmation.

Zechariah seemed to have been punished because of disbelief. It was only after he fully participated in God's plan and confirmed John's name, as foretold, that he was able to speak again. In the same way, I believe God silences us so He can align us with His plans, with His truth, and His being.

And when the fulfilment of His plans come, like Zechariah, may we speak only to bless God. Dessie Dela Rosa  
(dessie.delarosa@gmail.com)

### reflect

This Advent season, take time to be quiet and listen to God.

*Grant us the grace, oh Lord, to use moments of silence to know You and Your ways deeper, and in so doing, be able to align ourselves to Your plans.*

St. John of Kanty, priest, pray for us.

# Dec 24

FRIDAY

2 Samuel 7:1-5,  
8-12, 14, 16  
Psalm 89:2-3, 4-5,  
27, 29  
**Luke 1:67-79**

## A GLORIOUS AND VICTORIOUS CHRISTMAS

"Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel,  
because he has come to his people and  
redeemed them." – Luke 1:68

More than a Merry Christmas,  
I greet you a glorious and victorious  
Christmas! Being merry is good, but it just means being cheerful  
and festive. The danger here is if your Christmas doesn't seem  
"merry," then Christmas becomes sad and meaningless.

That's far from the truth, because the original Christmas  
was more than just being merry. It was actually solemn and  
holy, yet full of glory. Heavenly hosts appeared praising God  
and glorifying Him, together with the shepherds. More than  
anything, Christmas is about God's victory for man, "because  
He has come to His people and redeemed them."

In our *noche buena* tonight and on Christmas Day  
tomorrow, yes, let's be merry. But know that even after the  
merriment—the feasting, partying, shopping, and gift-  
giving—is over, the meaning and the message should remain.  
That should be the reason why we celebrate—because Christ  
was born to this world, we are redeemed!

Let's all claim and live a glorious and victorious life—this  
Christmas and the coming New Year! Alvin Barcelona (apb\_ayo@yahoo.com)

### reflect

Christmas is the time to celebrate God's glory and victory in our  
lives through Jesus who redeemed us.

*Dear God, thank You for sending Your only Begotten Son, my  
Redeemer, whose birth I celebrate this Christmas. Amen.*

St. Adele, pray for us.



# Dec 25

SATURDAY

**Isaiah 52:7-10**

Psalm 98:1, 2-3, 3-4,

5-6

Hebrews 1:1-6

John 1:1-18

(or John 1:1-5, 9-14)

**Solemnity of the  
Nativity of the Lord**

## CHRISTMAS LIGHTS

All the ends of the earth can see the salvation  
of our God. – Isaiah 52:10

In the 1980s, we'd spend our Christmas break in Singapore where my dad used to work. Stores on Orchard Road wouldn't have any Christmas decors except for Tangs, which was owned by a Christian. By the time my dad retired in 1990, Orchard was covered with tinsel and lights in December. Commercialism, rather than Christianity, was the reason for the shift.

Commercialism's goal is to maximize profit. Easily, Christmas is one of the most lucrative times for business, especially for those in retail. But Christianity is on a totally different level. We're called to follow Jesus even if it'd be to our loss. In fact, that's what this whole season is about. It's the story of the Almighty God who made heaven and earth yet gave up His only Son to pay for our sins.

Today, let's make it about about Jesus. Let our Christmas lights shine brighter with our witness so people from every nation and tongue will know the Reason for the season. *Rissa Singson Kawpeng (rissakawpeng@gmail.com)*

### reflect

“God never gives someone a gift they are not capable of receiving. If He gives us the gift of Christmas, it is because we all have the ability to understand and receive it.” (Pope Francis)

*Happy Birthday, Jesus! What gift do You want from me?*

St. Eugenia, pray for us.

# Dec 26

SUNDAY

1 Samuel 1:20-22,  
24-28  
(or Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14)  
Psalm 84:2-3, 5-6,  
9-10  
1 John 3:1-2, 21-24  
(or Colossians 3:12-21)  
Luke 2:41-52

Feast of the Holy Family

## FRIES AND FOREVER

Wives, be subordinate to your husbands, as is proper in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and avoid any bitterness toward them.  
– Colossians 3:18-19

Arnold and I stopped by the office mailroom to get some documents. “Your documents are no longer here,” the guy at the window said. I panicked and retaliated how I was specifically told to get them there. The guy checked again and gave the same answer. Arnold interrupted my heated rebuttal and said we should leave. I had just lost a debate and all because my husband-to-be took the other’s side and not mine.

For the rest of the day, I ignored Arnold even if he tried to chat. He suggested we drive by McDonalds for fries. My weakness failed me. Then he explained his side and I realized my anger over a piece of paper wasn’t worth it. It could have been a great day but I allowed my emotions to take control. I neglected my future husband’s efforts to cheer me up. So, I finally let go. I didn’t want our future married life to be like this.

Friends, anger is a valid feeling, but does every bit of it make life better? You may miss life’s moments if you keep sulking. Life is short. Choose joy. *Osy Erica (osy.eric@gmail.com)*

### reflect

In arguments, ask: Will this matter in five years? If not, let it slide and focus on joy. Wives, be thankful for your patient husbands. Husbands, always be loving.

*Jesus, make me a loving partner and a supportive parent. Amen.*

St. Stephen, first martyr, pray for us.

# Dec 27

MONDAY

1 John 1:1-4  
Psalm 97:1-2, 5-6,  
11-12  
**John 20:1, 2-8**

Feast of St. John, Apostle  
and evangelist

## **SHE KNEW HE WASN'T GONNA BE THERE**

Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed. – John 20:8

It's interesting to see that the Bible doesn't hide the failures of the central characters in salvation history.

It doesn't mince words about their weaknesses and has no need to paint a perfect picture of these saints.

In this particular episode in today's Gospel, we see that John didn't readily believe that Jesus had risen from the dead, just like everyone else. He only believed when he saw the empty tomb.

I believe with the Catholic Church that only Mama Mary was convinced about the resurrection—no questions asked. She is the good soil that received the seed and allowed it to grow and bear much fruit. Her unwavering hope made her look forward to her dearly beloved Son rising from the dead.

That's why we don't see her in the episodes surrounding the empty tomb. She knew that her Son was going to rise again. She knew that she wouldn't find Him there. Stephen Nellas

(hacksfordads@gmail.com)

### **reflect**

Are you frustrated with your unbelief? You're in good company. Let Mary help you in your doubts.

*Jesus, thank You for giving us Your Mother. May she intercede for us frail and doubting people. Amen.*

St. John the Apostle, pray for us.

# Dec 28

TUESDAY

1 John 1:5-2:2  
Psalm 124:2-3, 4-5,  
7-8

**Matthew 2:13-18**

Feast of Holy Innocents,  
martyrs

## RIGHT PLACE

### AT THE RIGHT TIME

"Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him."

– Matthew 2:13

I met Rhea (not her real name), 13, when we had an outreach in Grace to Be Born, The Feast's mercy ministry for pregnant women in crisis. Rhea was raped and had gotten pregnant. She wanted to have an abortion. She asked money from a friend to buy a pill to kill the baby in her womb. But while they were talking, Rey and Myrna Ortega, who happened to be in Rhea's house because of her friend's aunt, overheard their conversation. Rey was a cofounder of Grace to Be Born.

The couple spoke to Rhea and convinced her to continue with the pregnancy under their supervision. Rhea was enlightened and went with them to the Grace shelter where she met other women in the same situation.

It was God's grace that brought Rhea and the Ortega couple to the right place at the right time. After a year, I returned to Grace to Be Born for another outreach. I saw Rhea again and she introduced me to Angel, her beautiful baby. Now, Rhea is actively serving at the shelter where she and her daughter Angel were saved. Monty Mendigoria ([montymendigoria@yahoo.com](mailto:montymendigoria@yahoo.com))

### reflect

In times of troubles, do not run away from God. Instead, run toward God and you will be saved.

*Heavenly Father, use me to protect the unborn. Amen.*

Holy Innocents, pray for us.

# Dec 29

WEDNESDAY

1 John 2:3-11

Psalm 96:1-2, 2-3,

5-6

Luke 2:22-35

## THE MAN WHO CRIED WOLF OR THE MAN OF HIS WORD

But whoever keeps his word, the love of God is truly perfected in him. This is the way we may know that we are in union with him.

– 1 John 2:5

When it comes to keeping our word, I believe we're either like the boy who cried wolf or my friend Rudy. The boy cried wolf three times just because he wanted a good laugh. But on the fourth try, when it really mattered, nobody believed him. In the end, he and his sheep were eaten by the wolf.

Rudy promised to come to our practice for a service. On the day of practice, everyone suddenly begged off for various reasons. I was disheartened and was about to cancel practice when I heard a knock. It was Rudy. He came even if everyone else didn't, because he said he would. So, the two of us shared the savory snack my wife prepared for 10 people.

How often do we spew words without a care? We say, "Oh, I was just going to call you," even if we had no intention of doing so. We profess our faith in God but gladly join our friends in gossip and tell dirty jokes.

When our story ends, will the Lord prepare for us the most delicious feast or will the wolf devour our souls whole?

Jun Asis (mabuting.balita@gmail.com)

### reflect

Is your word a reflection of His Word?

*Lord, may I always speak the truth and may the truth be always what I speak. Amen.*

St. Thomas Becket, bishop and martyr, pray for us.

# Dec 30

THURSDAY

1 John 2:12-17

Psalms 96:7-8, 8-9, 10

**Luke 2:36-40**

## CHANCE ENCOUNTERS

[Anna] never left the temple, but worshiped night and day with fasting and prayer. And coming forward at that very time, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were awaiting the redemption of Jerusalem. – Luke 2:37-38

Fely (not her real name) was the only one left in the office during lunch break. She was about to run out and grab some food when her supervisor's phone rang. She wanted to ignore it, but her professional values won over her hunger, so she answered the phone. The caller was looking for her boss—who was out. What could've been a quick call turned into a conversation.

The caller was impressed that Fely answered the phone during lunch break. He also found her voice charming so he didn't want to hang up. In that one call, they already discovered that they had a lot in common.

Three years later, “random caller” became Fely's husband.

As believers, we know there are no coincidences. God can use situations in our lives to bring about something unexpectedly wonderful. When that happens, however, we still need to respond and take action, so we can grow toward the best ending God leads us to. Aileen Santos (coachailleensantos@gmail.com)

### reflect

Are you making it easier for God to make wonderful things happen in your life by taking action in the direction of His will?

*Lord, help me to cooperate with Your grace and plan. Amen.*

St. Egwin, pray for us.

# Dec 31

FRIDAY

1 John 2:18-21

Psalm 96:1-2,

11-12, 13

**John 1:1-18**

## EXPERIENCING GOD'S UNENDING GRACE

Out of his fullness we have all received grace  
in place of grace already given. – John 1:16

In 2020, my 71-year-old mother got hit by a motorcycle. When I got to the place of the accident, I saw my mother lying on the busy road. I wasn't prepared for it—emotionally, spiritually, mentally, and financially. I prayed the sincerest prayer of my entire life while my mother was in the ambulance.

I'm the breadwinner and was then going through adjustments in my new job. She needed an orthopedic surgery right away so she wouldn't turn into an invalid for the rest of her life. My new work demanded both my time and energy, but I also had to be there for my mother during her one-month hospitalization. My concerns seemed endless!

But God is faithful. I realized He permitted these things to happen to me all at the same time so I could grow in my faith and learn that He is a dependable God. Slowly, I realized the value of gratitude and prayer in everything I do.

We don't know what trials await us in the New Year. But we can rest in the knowledge that whatever lies ahead, God is already there. His unending grace will see us through.

Gracious B. Romero (graciousromero@gmail.com)

### reflect

Life may be hard but God's grace is unlimited.

*Lord, I don't know what the New Year will bring, so teach me to fully trust in Your goodness and plan for my life even if I do not understand. Amen.*

St. Sylvester, pray for us.

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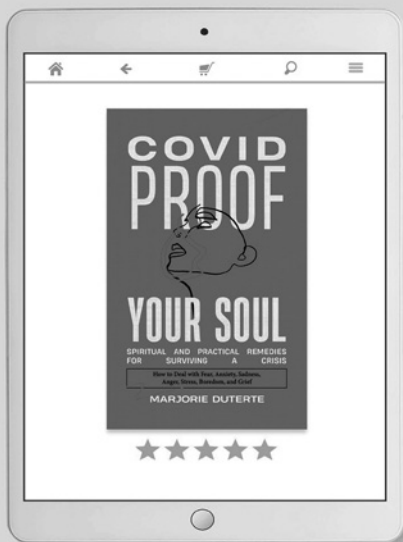


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## Five Steps in Using *Didache*

- 1 **Pray** Pray for guidance from the Holy Spirit: *“Holy Spirit, come into my mind so I may meditate and understand Your Word. Guide me and inspire me as I come before You in prayer today.”*
- 2 **Read** Read the Bible passages assigned for the day in *Companion* and underline words, phrases, or verses that strike you.
- 3 **Reflect** Read the *Didache* reflection for the day.
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- 5 **Pray Again** Thank the Lord for His message and ask for the grace to live it out in your daily life.

*Father, I thank You. Your Word is manna to my spirit. May Your Word that I receive today transform my soul. Make me more like You. Amen.*

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