



THE NEW TESTAMENT

"We urgently need to grow in our knowledge and love of the Scriptures and of the risen Lord, who continues to speak his word and to break bread in the community of believers. For this reason, we need to develop a closer relationship with sacred Scripture; otherwise, our hearts will remain cold and our eyes shut, struck as we are by so many forms of blindness."

+Pope Francis

Lectio divina is a way of praying with Scripture that uniquely opens our heart to the Lord. With this prayer we enter the Scriptures personally, allowing the original context to touch our everyday lives, lead us into prayer, and call us to action. Each chapter in the New Testament is accompanied by a text that helps you read, reflect, pray, and act inspired by the Word of God.

This special way of praying the Scriptures will introduce you to parts of the New Testament with which you may not be familiar, making them easier to understand and apply to your life. Here the Holy Spirit will surprise you and motivate you to make the Bible an intimate, everyday experience.

God is truly present to us in the Bible. The more we read it, the closer we are to God, and the more God will be reflected in our lives. May the Holy Spirit who inspired the writing of the Scriptures, invite you to that intimate dialogue between God, who speaks, and you who listen.

MATTHEW



Who was Matthew, known also as Levi? We read in the Gospel that he was a tax collector and that Jesus called him to be one of his apostles (Mt 9:9 and Mk 2:13). The earliest witnesses (Papias around the year 130 A.D.; Irenaeus around the year 180 A.D.; Origen around the year 200 A.D.) attribute to him a Gospel written in Hebrew that was still known at the time of St. Jerome (fourth century). We only know the Greek version of this Gospel that must have been written during the same years by Matthew or by one of his collaborators.

In all probability, this Gospel was written in a Christian community both Jews and Greek origin, perhaps in Antioch (see Acts 12:1, 19:1, and 13:1). This was the time when the high priest, Ananias, had James, the Bishop of Jerusalem, stoned to death. At that time, Christians were excluded from the synagogues and were no longer protected by Roman laws that had allowed the Jews not to offer sacrifices to Roman gods. Within a short time, they would be persecuted by Nero (the years 64-65 A.D.).

This Gospel attempts to show that Christians should not be concerned if their own people are rejecting them now. The official community that refused to believe was left outside of the kingdom to which those who acknowledged the Messiah had access. This minority received the “good things of the Covenant” that had been promised by the prophets. From then on, they will have to share them with all believers who will seek to join the Church whatever their origin may be.

From this perspective the whole history of Jesus is presented as a conflict, ending in a separation. The turning point corresponds with the end of Chapter 13 where Jesus no longer speaks to the crowd, but to his disciples.

Matthew had singled out the figure of Jesus as a preacher and as a teacher of Scripture. Matthew is especially interested in the words of Jesus and in his Gospel: Jesus’ words are more numerous than in the other Gospels. On the other hand, his gestures and miracles are presented in the most schematic way possible.

Therefore, we should not be surprised that Matthew built up his Gospel around five “discourses,” in which he gathered the words that Jesus had said on different occasions. These discourses are:

- The Sermon on the Mount: Matthew 5–7. This “Magna Carta” of the children of God is completed by ten signs of power that announce our liberation from sin (Chaps. 8 and 9).
- Instructions to Missionaries: Matthew 10. These instructions are completed by the controversies that oppose Jesus and his adversaries (Chaps. 11-12).
- Parables of the Kingdom: Matthew 13. Then comes the blinding of the Pharisees, while the faith of the Twelve and of Peter enables Jesus to establish his Church.
- Warnings to the Christian community: Matthew 18. The fundamental law of fraternal forgiveness is completed by various instructions. The guides of the Jewish people are closed, showing by contrast what the guides of the Christian people will have to be.
- How to live while waiting for the end of the world: Matthew 24 and 25.

Matthew put the first two chapters on the infancy of Jesus to serve as an introduction. First, he recalls how Joseph adopted the child born of

the Virgin Mary as the son of David. Then we have accounts of a special type, in which Matthew shows little concern for the historicity of the facts, since he intends to present a theological teaching by way of images. These two chapters form a whole (1:1—4:16) with the activity of John the Baptist who introduces the Son of God.

MATTHEW



The family background of Jesus

1 ¹This is the account of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, son of David, son of Abraham.

²Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers.

³Judah was the father of Perez and Zerah (their mother was Tamar), Perez was the father of Hezron, and Hezron of Aram. ⁴Aram was the father of Aminadab, Aminadab of Nahshon, Nahshon of Salmon.

⁵Salmon was the father of Boaz. His mother was Rahab. Boaz was the father of Obed. His mother was Ruth. Obed was the father of Jesse.

⁶Jesse was the father of David, the king. David was the father of Solomon. His mother had been Uriah's wife.

⁷Solomon was the father of Rehoboam. Then came the kings: Abijah, Asaph, ⁸Jehoshaphat, Joram, Uzziah, ⁹Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, ¹⁰Mannasseh, Amon, Josiah.

¹¹Josiah was the father of Jechoniah and his brothers at the time of the deportation to Babylon.

¹²After the deportation to Babylon, Jechoniah was the father of Salathiel and Salathiel of Zerubbabel.

¹³Zerubbabel was the father of Abiud, Abiud of Eliakim, and Eliakim of Azor. ¹⁴Azor was the father of Zadok, Zadok the father of Akim, and Akim the father of Eliud. ¹⁵Eliud was the father of Eleazar, Eleazar of Matthan, and Matthan of Jacob.

¹⁶Jacob was the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, and from her came Jesus who is called the Christ—the Messiah.

¹⁷There were then fourteen generations from Abraham to David, and fourteen generations from David to the deportation to Babylon, and fourteen generations from the deportation to Babylon to the birth of Christ.

MATTHEW 1:1-17

Read: Notice the first verse: Jesus is relevant to the Jews (“son of David”), and the non-Jews, the Gentiles (“son of Abraham”). According to the divine promises, all peoples would be blessed in Abraham (cf. Gen 12:3; 22:18). Also note the mention of women in the passage.

Reflect: The community of Matthew was made up of Jews and Gentiles. All are welcomed into the family of God: men and women, saints and sinners, Jews and Gentiles. In Jesus, the promises of the Old Testament are made. What do the women mentioned have in common?

Pray: Pray for the unity of all peoples, that all will feel as members of God’s people. Pray also that the dignity and role of women in society and in the Church will be duly respected and valued.

Act: What should I do to feel and make those around me feel like they are members of God’s people?

Jesus born of a virgin mother

(Lk 1:27)

¹⁸This is how Jesus Christ was born: Mary his mother had been given to Joseph in marriage, but before they lived together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit.

¹⁹Then Joseph, her husband, made plans to divorce her in all secrecy. He was an upright man, and in no way did he want to disgrace her.

²⁰While he was pondering over this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, descendant of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. She has conceived by the Holy Spirit, ²¹and now she will bear a son. You shall call him ‘Jesus’ for he will save his people from their sins.”

²²All this happened in order to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ²³*The virgin will conceive and bear a son, and he will be called Emmanuel*, which means: God-with-us. ²⁴When Joseph awoke, he did what the angel of the Lord had told him to do, and he took his wife to his home. ²⁵He did not have any marital relations with her. When she gave birth to a son, Joseph gave him the name Jesus.

MATTHEW 1:18-25

Read: Matthew recounts the birth of Jesus, and highlights the role of Joseph. Everything happens as a fulfillment of the Scriptures.

Reflect: Joseph was “just” (he fulfilled the Law), but before Mary, his intuition was more than duty because he considered her innocent of any sin. Reflect on this situation. How does it affect your understanding of the Law?

Pray: Pray that the Holy Spirit will help you with important decisions in your relationship with God, with others, and with yourself.

Act: At peace with yourself, act according to what the Holy Spirit inspires you.

Wise men from the east

2¹When Jesus was born in Bethlehem, in Judea, during the days of King Herod, wise men from the East arrived in Jerusalem. ²They asked, “Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw the rising of his star in the East and have come to honor him.”

³When Herod heard this he was greatly disturbed and with him all Jerusalem. ⁴He immediately called a meeting of all high-ranking priests and teachers of the law and asked them where the Messiah was to be born.

⁵“In the town of Bethlehem in Judea,” they told him, “for this is what the prophet wrote: ⁶*And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, you are by no means the least among the clans of Judah, for from you will come a leader, one who is to shepherd my people Israel.*”

⁷Then Herod secretly called the wise men and asked them the precise time the star appeared. ⁸He sent them to Bethlehem with these instructions, “Go and get accurate information about the child. As soon as you have found him, report to me, so that I, too, may go and honor him.”

⁹After the meeting with the king, they set out. The star that they had seen in the East went ahead of them and stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰The wise men were overjoyed on seeing the star again.

¹¹They went into the house, and when they saw the child with Mary his mother, they knelt and worshiped him. They opened their bags and offered him their gifts of gold, incense, and myrrh.

¹²In a dream they were warned not to go back to Herod, so they returned to their home country by another way.

Escape to Egypt

¹³After the wise men had left, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph, and said, “Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt and stay there until I tell you, for Herod will soon be looking for the child in order to kill him.”

¹⁴Joseph got up, took the child and his mother and left that night for Egypt, ¹⁵where he stayed until the death of Herod. In this way, what the Lord had said through the prophet was fulfilled: *I called my son out of Egypt.*

¹⁶When Herod found out that he had been tricked by the wise men, he was furious. He gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its neighborhood who were two years old or under. This was done, according to what he had learned from the wise men about the time when the star appeared.

¹⁷In this way, what the prophet Jeremiah had said was fulfilled: ¹⁸*A cry is heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation: Rachel weeps for her children. She refuses to be comforted, for they are no more.*

Joseph and Mary return to Nazareth

¹⁹After Herod’s death, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph and said, ²⁰“Get up, take the child and his mother and go back to the land of Israel, because those who tried to kill the child are dead.”

²¹So Joseph got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel.

²²But when Joseph heard that Archelaus had succeeded his father Herod as king of Judea, he was afraid to go there. Joseph was given further instructions in a dream and went to the region of Galilee.

²³There he settled, in a town called Nazareth. In this way, what was said by the prophets was fulfilled: *He shall be called a Nazarene.*

MATTHEW 2:1-23

Read: The Magi, Gentiles, recognize Jesus as the Messiah, not the Jewish authorities.

Reflect: Herod and the high priests and scribes reject the Magi's recognition of Jesus as the Messiah.

Pray: Believing in Jesus as the Messiah is not easy. Faith needs to be accredited by the testimony. Ask God to help you in this.

Act: How do I express my faith in Jesus today?

John the Baptist prepares the way

(Mk 1:1; Lk 3:1; Jn 1:19)

3¹In the course of time, John the Baptist appeared in the desert of Judea and began to proclaim his message: ²“Change your ways; the kingdom of heaven is at hand!” ³It was about him that the prophet Isaiah had spoken when he said: *A voice is shouting in the desert, ‘Prepare a way for the Lord; make his paths straight!’*

⁴John had a leather garment around his waist and wore a cloak of camel's hair; his food was locusts and wild honey. ⁵People came to him from Jerusalem, from all Judea, and from the whole Jordan valley ⁶and they were baptized by him in the Jordan as they confessed their sins.

⁷When he saw several Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he baptized, he said to them, “Brood of vipers! Who told you that you could escape the punishment that is to come? ⁸Let it be seen that you are serious in your conversion; ⁹and do not think: We have Abraham for our father. I tell you that God can raise children for Abraham from these stones! ¹⁰The ax is already laid to the roots of the trees; any tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown in the fire.

¹¹I baptize you in water for a change of heart, but the one who is coming after me is more powerful than I am; indeed, I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹²He has the winnowing fan in his hand, and he will clear out his threshing floor. He will gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with in-extinguishable fire.”

Jesus baptized by John

(Mk 1:9; Lk 3:2; Jn 1:29)

¹³At that time, Jesus arrived from Galilee and came to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. ¹⁴But John tried to prevent him and said, “How is it you come to me? I should be baptized by you!”

¹⁵But Jesus answered him, “Let it be like that for now; so that we may fulfill the right order.” John agreed.

¹⁶As soon as he was baptized Jesus came up out of the water. All at once the heavens opened and he saw the Spirit of God come down like a dove and rest upon him. ¹⁷At the same time, a voice from heaven was heard, “This is my Son, the Beloved; he is my Chosen One.”

MATTHEW 3:1-17

Read: John the Baptist preaches repentance, for the kingdom of heaven is near. He recognizes the divinity of Jesus and baptizes him.

Reflect: Repent means “rethink.” In baptism, Jesus is declared Son of God, and we by our baptism share this condition. Do we constantly “rethink” our way of following Jesus?

Pray: We must always rethink the way we live our faith. Pray to God to help you in this.

Act: Every day is a great opportunity to live our faith, rejecting evil and sin and living with the freedom proper to the children of God. Take advantage of it.

Jesus tempted in the wilderness

(Lk 4:1; Mk 1:12)

4¹Then the Spirit led Jesus into the desert that he might be put to the test by the devil. ²After Jesus fasted forty days and nights he was famished.

³Then the tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God, order these stones to turn into bread.” ⁴But Jesus answered, “Scripture says: *One does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.*”

⁵Then the devil took Jesus to the Holy City, set him on the highest

wall of the temple, and said to him, ⁶“If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for scripture says: *God has given orders to his angels concerning you. Their hands will hold you up, lest you hurt your foot against a stone.*” ⁷Jesus answered, “But scripture also says: *You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.*”

⁸Then the devil took Jesus to a very high mountain and showed him all the nations of the world in all their greatness and splendor. And he said, ⁹“All this I will give you if you kneel down and worship me.” ¹⁰Then Jesus answered, “Be off, Satan! Scripture says: *Worship the Lord your God and serve him alone!*”

¹¹Then the devil left him, and angels came to serve him.

MATTHEW 4:1-11

Read: In life, temptations always arise. Look at what Jesus faces: pleasure (bread), manipulation of the divine (to jump from the top of the temple) and absolute power.

Reflect: What temptations do you face and how do you solve them?

Pray: Ask the Holy Spirit to help you face them.

Act: Identify the temptation that causes you the most problems and take the necessary steps to overcome it.

(Mk 1:14; Lk 4:14)

¹²When Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee. ¹³He left Nazareth and went to live in Capernaum, a town by the lake of Galilee, at the border of Zebulun and Naphtali.

¹⁴In this way the word of the prophet Isaiah was fulfilled: ¹⁵*Land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, crossed by the Road of the Sea; and you, who live beyond the Jordan, Galilee, a land of pagans:*

¹⁶*The people who lived in darkness have seen a great light; on those who live in the land of the shadow of death, a light has shone.*

¹⁷From that time on, Jesus began to proclaim his message, “Change your ways: the kingdom of heaven is near.”

¹⁸As Jesus walked by the lake of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the lake for they

were fishermen. ¹⁹He said to them, “Come, follow me; and I will make you fish for people.”

²⁰At once they left their nets and followed him.

²¹He went on from there and saw two other brothers, James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John, in a boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets. Jesus called them.

²²At once they left the boat and their father and followed him.

²³Jesus went around all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing all kinds of sickness and disease among the people.

²⁴The news about him spread through the whole of Syria; and the people brought all their sick to him and all those who suffered: the possessed, the deranged, the paralyzed; and he healed them all. ²⁵Large crowds followed him from Galilee and the Ten Cities, from Jerusalem, Judea, and from across the Jordan.

MATTHEW 4:12-25

Read: Jesus begins his ministry in his own region: Galilee, a region despised by other Jews. There he calls his first followers and they follow him.

Reflect: Jesus calls his followers to do the same things he does: teach, heal and expel the forces of evil.

Pray: Pray to the Lord to help you continue the mission of Jesus. Teaching and serving others is the sign of all Christians.

Act: May your life be an example to others, and be committed to the fight against injustice.

The Beatitudes

(Lk 6:17)

5¹When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain. He sat down and his disciples gathered around him. ²Then he spoke and began to teach them:

³Fortunate are those who are poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴Fortunate are those who mourn; they shall be comforted.

⁵Fortunate are the gentle; they shall possess the land.

⁶Fortunate are those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they shall be satisfied.

⁷Fortunate are the merciful, for they shall find mercy.

⁸Fortunate are those with pure hearts, for they shall see God.

⁹Fortunate are those who work for peace; they shall be called children of God.

¹⁰Fortunate are those who are persecuted for the cause of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹Fortunate are you when people insult you and persecute you and speak all kinds of evil against you because you are my followers. ¹²Be glad and joyful for a great reward is kept for you in God. For that is how they persecuted the prophets who lived before you.

MATTHEW 5:1-12

Read: The Sermon on the Mount begins. The first great discourse of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew. The beatitudes make reference to that which makes possible the presence of the kingdom, which makes us happy.

Reflect: In the first four verses (3-6), there are situations in which the kingdom breaks out; while in the last four (7-11), attitudes that the disciples must promote are proposed to reveal the irruption of the kingdom.

Pray: Identify a beatitude you need to promote in your life. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you in this.

Act: Promote that beatitude you have identified as important for your life.

Salt and light

(Mk 4:21; Lk 14:34; 8:16; 11:33)

¹³You are the salt of the earth. But if salt has lost its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It has become useless. It can only be thrown away and people will trample on it.

¹⁴You are the light of the world. A city built on a mountain cannot be hidden. ¹⁵No one lights a lamp and covers it; instead, it is put on a lampstand where it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶In the same way,

your light must shine before others so that they may see the good you do and praise your Father in heaven.

More perfect law

¹⁷Do not think that I have come to annul the law and the prophets. I have not come to annul them, but to fulfill them. ¹⁸I tell you this: as long as heaven and earth last, not the smallest letter or dot in the law will change until all is fulfilled.

¹⁹So then, whoever breaks the least important of these commandments and teaches others to do the same, will be the least in the kingdom of heaven. On the other hand, whoever obeys them and teaches others to do the same, will be great in the kingdom of heaven.

²⁰I tell you, if your sense of right and wrong is not keener than that of the Lawyers and the Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

MATTHEW 5:13-20

Read: In his teaching, Jesus uses parables of ordinary life. We must be consistent with what we profess and preach.

Reflect: Think of the images that Jesus uses: salt, light, the city on the mountain, the lamp. What do they suggest?

Pray: Pray that the Church and her members may be like a city on the mountain, reflecting the glory of God for all.

Act: Act in such a way that others can give glory to God for His good works.

²¹You have heard that it was said to our people in the past: *Do not commit murder; anyone who murders will have to face trial.* ²²Now I tell you: whoever gets angry with a brother or sister will have to face trial. Whoever insults a brother or sister is liable to be brought before the council. Whoever calls a brother or sister “Fool!” is liable for being thrown into the fire of hell. ²³So, if you are about to offer your gift at the altar, and you remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴leave your gift there in front of the altar; go at once and make peace with your brother and then come back and offer your gift to God.

²⁵Don't forget this: be reconciled with your opponent quickly when

you are together on the way to court. Otherwise, he will turn you over to the judge who will hand you over to the police who will put you in jail. ²⁶There you will stay until you have paid the last penny.

²⁷You have heard that it was said: *Do not commit adultery.* ²⁸Now I tell you this: anyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

²⁹So, if your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away! It is much better for you to lose a part of your body than to have your whole body thrown into hell. ³⁰If your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away! It is better for you to lose a part of your body than to have your whole body thrown into hell.

³¹It was also said: *Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a written notice of divorce.* ³²Now I tell you is this: if a man divorces his wife, except in the case of unlawful union, he causes her to commit adultery. And the man who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

Oaths

³³You have also heard that people were told in the past: *Do not break your oath; an oath sworn to the Lord must be kept.* ³⁴Now I tell you this: do not take oaths. Do not swear by the heavens, for they are God's throne; ³⁵nor by the earth, because it is his footstool; nor by Jerusalem, because it is the city of the great king. ³⁶Do not even swear by your head, because you cannot make a single hair white or black. ³⁷Let your 'Yes' mean 'Yes' and your 'No' mean 'No.' Anything else you say comes from the evil one.

Love of enemies

(Lk 6:29)

³⁸You have heard, that it was said: *An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.* ³⁹Now I tell you this: do not oppose evil with evil; if someone slaps you on your right cheek, turn and offer the other. ⁴⁰If someone sues you in court for your shirt, give him your coat as well. ⁴¹If someone forces you to go one mile, go two miles with him. ⁴²Give when asked and do not turn your back on anyone who wants to borrow from you.

⁴³You have heard, that it was said: *Love your neighbor and do not do good to your enemy.* ⁴⁴Now I tell you this: love your enemies; and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵so that you may be children of your

Father in Heaven. For he makes his sun rise on both the wicked and the good, and he gives rain to both the just and the unjust.

⁴⁶If you love those who love you, what is special about that? Do not even tax collectors do as much? ⁴⁷And if you are friendly only to your friends, what is so exceptional about that? Do not even the pagans do as much? ⁴⁸As for you, be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.

MATTHEW 5:21-48

Read: Throughout the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus talks about concrete things. His proposals, which exceed the laws of the Old Testament, invite the people to rethink their way of life.

Reflect: Jesus expects his followers to overcome the fulfillment of the Law as well. The generous love of the Father must be our model.

Pray: Ask the Lord to help you overcome the mere fulfillment of the law, that your life be modeled by the generous love of the Father.

Act: Anger is the cause of many problems. Think of a situation that ordinarily angers you, and practice the virtue of patience. Remember that our actions must be the result of the beliefs and values we profess.

Doing good for God alone

6¹Be careful not to make a show of your good deeds before people. If you do so, you do not gain anything from your Father in heaven. ²When you give something to the poor, do not have it trumpeted before you, as do those who want to be noticed in the synagogues and in the streets in order to be praised by people. I assure you they have their reward.

³If you give something to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴so that your gift remains really secret. Your Father, who sees what is kept secret, will reward you.

⁵When you pray, do not be like those who want to be noticed. They love to stand and pray in the synagogues or on street corners in order to be seen by everyone. I assure you they have their reward. ⁶When you

pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father who is with you in secret; and your Father who sees what is kept secret will reward you.

Our Father...

(Lk 11:1; Mk 11:25)

⁷When you pray, do not use a lot of words as the pagans do; for they believe that the more they say, the more chance they have of being heard. ⁸Do not be like them. Your Father knows what you need even before you ask him.

⁹This, then, is how you should pray:

Our Father in heaven,
holy be your name,
¹⁰your kingdom, come,
your will be done
on earth as in heaven.

¹¹Give us today our daily bread.

¹²Forgive us our debts

as we forgive those who are in debt to us.

¹³Do not bring us to the test,
but deliver us from the evil one.

¹⁴If you forgive others their wrongdoings, your Father in heaven will also forgive yours. ¹⁵If you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive you.

¹⁶When you fast, do not put on a miserable face, as do the hypocrites. They put on a gloomy face so that people can see they are fasting. I tell you this: they have been paid in full already. ¹⁷When you fast, wash your face and make yourself look cheerful, ¹⁸because you are not fasting for appearances or for people but for your Father who sees beyond appearances. And your Father, who sees what is kept secret, will reward you.

MATTHEW 6:1-18

Read: Jesus continues to talk about matters of the ordinary life of his people, this time about religious piety (charity, prayer, and fasting). In this context, he teaches his disciples the prayer of the Our Father.

Reflect: Is the practice of charity, prayer and fasting part of your ordinary life? Notice how in the Our Father, we first praise God, then ask for bread, forgiveness (to the extent that we also forgive), and to never see ourselves in a situation that we cannot overcome.

Pray: Pray the Our Father slowly, meditating each part of the prayer.

Act: When you pray the Our Father, especially at Mass, remember that your prayer unites you, as in one voice, with that of all the Christians of the world.

(Lk 11:34; 12:13)

¹⁹Do not store up treasures for yourself here on earth, where moth and rust destroy it, and where thieves can steal it. ²⁰Store up treasures for yourself with God, where no moth or rust can destroy it, nor thief comes and steals it.

²¹For where your treasure is, there also, will your heart be.

²²The lamp of the body is the eye; if your eyes are sound, your whole body will be full of light. ²³If your eyes are diseased, your whole body will be full of darkness. If, then, the light in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

Set your heart on the kingdom

(Lk 12:23; 16:13)

²⁴No one can serve two masters; for he will either hate one and love the other; or he will be loyal to the first and look down on the second. You cannot, at the same time, serve God and money.

²⁵Therefore, I tell you not to be worried about food and drink for yourself, or about clothes for your body. Is not life more important than food; and is not the body more important than clothes? ²⁶Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow, they do not harvest, and do not store food in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are not you more important than they?

²⁷Can any of you add a day to your life by worrying about it? ²⁸Why are you so worried about your clothes? Look at how the flowers in the fields grow. They do not toil or spin. ²⁹But I tell you that not even

Solomon in all his glory was clothed like one of these. ³⁰If God so clothes the grass in the field which blooms today and is to be burned in an oven tomorrow, how much more will he clothe you? What little faith you have!

³¹Do not worry and say: What are we going to eat? What are we going to drink? or: What shall we wear? ³²The pagans busy themselves with such things, but your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. ³³Set your heart first on the kingdom and righteousness of God, and all these things will also be given to you. ³⁴Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Don't be a judge

(Lk 6:37; 11:9; 6:31; 13:23)

7 ¹Do not judge, and you will not be judged. ²In the same way, you judge others, you will be judged; and the measure you use for others will be used for you. ³Why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye and not see the plank in your own eye? ⁴How can you say to your brother, 'Come, let me take the speck from your eye,' as long as that plank is in your own? ⁵Hypocrite, remove the plank out of your own eye, then you will see clearly to remove the speck out of your brother's eye.

⁶Do not give what is holy to the dogs, or throw your pearls before pigs. They might trample on them and then turn on you and tear you to pieces.

⁷Ask, and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened. ⁸For everyone who asks receives; whoever seeks finds; and to him who knocks the door will be opened. ⁹Would any of you give a stone to your son when he asks for bread? ¹⁰Or give him a snake when he asks for a fish? ¹¹However bad you may be, you know how to give good things to your children. How much more, then, will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

¹²So, do to others whatever you would that others do to you: there you have the law and the prophets.

¹³Enter through the narrow gate: for wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many go that way. ¹⁴How narrow is the gate that leads to life; and how rough the road; few there are who find it.

MATTHEW 6:19—7:12

Read: Observe the different sayings presented in this section. All refer to specific aspects of daily life.

Reflect: Can one live without worrying about the necessities of life? How and how much should one correct another?

Pray: Ask for understanding and patience to accept the complexity of life and of people, especially those that are close to you and that can cause you problems.

Act: Practice the golden rule.

The tree is known by its fruits

(Lk 6:43)

¹⁵Beware of false prophets: they come to you in sheep's clothing, but inside they are voracious wolves. ¹⁶You will recognize them by their fruits. Do you ever pick grapes from thorn bushes; or figs from thistles?

¹⁷A good tree always produces good fruit. A rotten tree produces bad fruit. ¹⁸A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, and a rotten tree cannot bear good fruit. ¹⁹Any tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰So then, you will know them by their fruit.

Wise and foolish builders

(Lk 6:46; 13:26; Mk 1:22)

²¹Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord! Lord!' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my heavenly Father. ²²Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not speak in your name? Did we not cast out devils and perform many miracles in your name?' ²³Then I will tell them openly, 'I have never known you; *away from me, you evil people!*'

²⁴"Therefore, anyone who hears these words of mine and acts according to them is like a wise man who built his house on rock. ²⁵The rain poured down, the rivers flooded and the wind blew and struck that house. But it did not collapse, because it was built on rock. ²⁶But anyone who hears these words of mine and does not act accordingly is like a fool who built his house on sand. ²⁷The rain poured, the rivers flooded,

and the wind blew and struck that house; it collapsed and what a terrible collapse that was!”

²⁸When Jesus had finished this discourse, the crowds were struck by the way he taught, ²⁹because he taught with authority, unlike their teachers of the law.

MATTHEW 7:13-29

Read: This section ends the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus invites his disciples to base their lives on solid realities: in listening and practicing his Word.

Reflect: Prayer and good works walk together. Our actions must manifest the values and beliefs we profess. Being coherent is not easy, it always demands sacrifice.

Pray: Pray to the Lord to help you live in coherence with the values and faith you professes.

Act: Try to put into practice that teaching of the Sermon on the Mount that you consider essential in your life.

Cure of a leper

(Mk 1:40; Lk 5:12)

8¹When Jesus came down from the mountain, large crowds followed him.

²Then a leper came forward. He knelt before him and said, “Sir, if you want to, you can make me clean.” ³Jesus stretched out his hand, touched him and said, “I want to, be clean again.” At that very moment, the man was cleansed from his leprosy. ⁴Then Jesus said to him, “See that you do not tell anyone; but go to the priest, have yourself declared clean, and offer the gift that Moses commanded as evidence for them.”

The faith of the centurion

(Lk 7:1; Jn 4:46)

⁵When Jesus entered Capernaum, an army captain approached him to ask his help, ⁶“Sir, my servant lies sick at home. He is paralyzed and suffers terribly.” ⁷Jesus said to him, “I will come and heal him.”

⁸The captain answered, “I am not worthy to have you under my roof. Just give an order and my boy will be healed. ⁹For I myself, a junior

officer, give orders to my soldiers. And if I say to one, ‘Go!’ he goes; and if I say to another, ‘Come!’ he comes; and if I say to my servant, ‘Do this!’ he does it.”

¹⁰When Jesus heard this, he was astonished; and said to those who were following him, “I tell you, I have not found such faith in Israel. ¹¹I say to you, many will come from east and west and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob at the feast in the kingdom of heaven; ¹²but the heirs of the kingdom will be thrown out into the extreme darkness; there they will wail and grind their teeth.”

¹³Then Jesus said to the captain, “Go home now. As you believed, so let it be.” And at that moment, his servant was healed.

¹⁴Jesus went to Peter’s house and found Peter’s mother-in-law in bed with a fever. ¹⁵He took her by the hand and the fever left her; she got up and began to wait on him.

¹⁶Toward evening, they brought to Jesus many people possessed by evil spirits; and with a word, he drove out the spirits. He also healed all who were sick. ¹⁷In this way, what was said by the prophet Isaiah was fulfilled: *He bore our infirmities and took on himself our diseases.*

MATTHEW 8:1-17

Read: Jesus expresses his compassion and solidarity toward those who suffer, reveals his authority not only with words but also with his healing power. Observe the courteous treatment of the centurion.

Reflect: Jesus admires the faith of the centurion. Sometimes the people we think as least are closer to God than ourselves. All religions tend to be exclusive. How would Jesus react to the exclusionary tendencies of our religion?

Pray: The healing performed by Jesus is not only a physical healing but an integral one. Ask the Lord for such healing.

Act: Become aware of the people who need your presence to heal, especially those closest to you.

¹⁸When Jesus saw the crowd pressing around him, he gave orders to cross to the other side of the lake. ¹⁹A teacher of the law approached him; and said, “Master, I will follow you wherever you go.” ²⁰Jesus said

to him, “Foxes have holes and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.”

²¹Another disciple said to him, “Lord, let me go and bury my father first.”

²²But Jesus said to him, “Follow me and let the dead bury their dead.”

Jesus calms the storm

(Mk 4:35; Lk 8:22)

²³Jesus got into the boat and his disciples followed him. ²⁴Without warning, a fierce storm burst upon the lake with waves sweeping the boat. But Jesus was asleep.

²⁵The disciples woke him up and cried, “Lord save us! We are lost!”

²⁶But Jesus answered, “Why are you so afraid, you of little faith?” Then he stood up and rebuked the wind and sea, and it became completely calm.

²⁷The disciples were astonished. They said, “What kind of man is he? Even the winds and the sea obey him.”

MATTHEW 8:18-27

Read: The boat in the middle of the storm is the image of the Church in the midst of tribulations. Like the disciples, the Church must also say: Lord, save us!

Reflect: We all experience storms in life. In this passage, Jesus asks his disciples to be men of faith.

Pray: Pray to the Lord to increase your faith.

Act: Is it easy for you to pray in the midst of difficulties? If it is not, pray the Our Father, paying special attention to the last two petitions: “lead us not into temptation” and “deliver us from evil.”

The demoniacs and the pigs

(Mk 5:1; Lk 8:26)

²⁸When Jesus reached Gadara on the other side, he was met by two men possessed by devils, who came out of the tombs. They were so fierce that no one dared to pass that way. ²⁹They cried out, “Son of God, leave us alone! Have you come here to torment us before the time?”

³⁰Some distance away there was a large herd of pigs feeding. ³¹So the

demons begged him, “If you drive us out, send us into that herd of pigs.”³² Jesus ordered them, “Go!” So the demons left the men and went into the pigs. The whole herd rushed down the cliff into the lake and was drowned.

³³The men in charge of the pigs ran off to the town, where they told the whole story; and also what had happened to the men possessed with the demons. ³⁴The whole town went out to meet Jesus; and when they saw him, they begged him to leave their region.

Jesus cures a paralytic

(Mk 2:1; Lk 5:17)

9¹ Jesus got back into the boat, crossed the lake again and came to his hometown. ²Here, they brought to him a paralyzed man lying on a bed. Jesus saw their faith and said to the paralytic, “Courage, my son! Your sins are forgiven.”

³Some teachers of the law said within themselves, “This man insults God.” ⁴Jesus was aware of what they were thinking; and said, “Why have you such evil thoughts? ⁵Which is easier to say: ‘Your sins are forgiven’ or ‘Stand up and walk’? ⁶But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins,” he said to the paralyzed man, “Stand up! Take your stretcher and go home!” ⁷The man got up and went home.

⁸When the crowds saw this, they were filled with awe and praised God for giving such power to human beings.

MATTHEW 8:28–9:8

Read: Jesus has power over all kinds of evil, be it spiritual, psychological, moral or physical.

Reflect: The expression “Son of Man” is of Aramaic origin and means “man/human.” “Can every person” forgive sins? Remember the Our Father: “Forgive our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.”

Pray: Pray the Our Father slowly, meditating especially on the request for forgiveness.

Act: Think of someone who has offended you and forgive that person from the heart. Think of someone you have offended and seek forgiveness.

Jesus calls Matthew

(Mk 2:13; Lk 5:27)

⁹As Jesus moved on from there, he saw a man named Matthew at his seat in the customhouse; and he said to him, “Follow me!” And Matthew got up and followed him. ¹⁰Now it happened while Jesus was at table in Matthew’s house, many tax collectors and sinners joined Jesus and his disciples. ¹¹When the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, “Why is it, that your master eats with sinners and tax collectors?”

¹²When Jesus heard this, he said, “Healthy people do not need a doctor, but sick people do. ¹³Go, and find out what this means: *What I want is mercy, not sacrifice.* I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”

¹⁴Then the disciples of John came to him with the question, “How is it that we and the Pharisees fast on many occasions but not your disciples?”

¹⁵Jesus answered them, “How can you expect wedding guests to mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them and then they will fast.

¹⁶No one patches an old coat with a piece of unshrunk cloth, for the patch will shrink and tear an even bigger hole in the coat. ¹⁷In the same way, you don’t put new wine into old wineskins. If you do, the wineskins will burst and the wine will be spilt. No, you put new wine into fresh skins; then both are preserved.”

MATTHEW 9:9-17

Read: Jesus calls sinners and eats with them. He also says that there is a time to fast and another time to celebrate.

Reflect: What does “I want mercy and not sacrifices” mean for your personal life? What does that say about “new wine in new wineskins”?

Pray: Ask in prayer for humility to welcome everyone and not to exclude anyone.

Act: Be attentive to those who need to experience forgiveness and welcome.

A woman healed, a child raised to life

(Mk 5:21; Lk 8:40)

¹⁸While Jesus was speaking to them, an official of the synagogue came up to him, bowed before him and said, “My daughter has just died, but come and place your hands on her and she will live.” ¹⁹Jesus stood up and followed him with his disciples.

²⁰Then a woman, who had suffered from severe bleeding for twelve years, came up from behind and touched the edge of his cloak; ²¹for she thought, “If I only touch his cloak, I will be healed.” ²²Jesus turned, saw her, and said, “Courage, my daughter, your faith has saved you.” And from that moment the woman was cured.

²³When Jesus arrived at the official’s house and saw the flute players and the excited crowd, he said, ²⁴“Get out of here! The girl is not dead. She is only sleeping!” And they laughed at him. ²⁵But once the crowd had been turned out, Jesus went in and took the girl by the hand and she stood up. ²⁶The news of this spread throughout the whole area.

²⁷As Jesus moved on from there, two blind men followed him shouting, “Son of David, help us!” ²⁸When he was about to enter the house, the blind men caught up with him; and Jesus said to them, “Do you believe that I am able to do what you want?” They answered, “Yes, sir!”

²⁹Then Jesus touched their eyes and said, “As you have believed, so let it be.” ³⁰And their eyes were opened. Then Jesus gave them a stern warning, “Be careful that no one knows about this.” ³¹But as soon as they went away, they spread the news about him through the whole area.

³²As they were going away, some people brought to Jesus a man who was dumb because he was possessed by a demon. ³³When the demon was driven out, the dumb man began to speak. The crowds were astonished and said, “Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel.” ³⁴But the Pharisees said, “He drives away demons with the help of the prince of demons.”

³⁵Jesus went around all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom; and he cured every sickness and disease. ³⁶When he saw the crowds, he was moved with pity; for they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is abundant, but the workers are only few. ³⁸Ask the master of the harvest to send workers to gather his harvest.”

MATTHEW 9:18-38

Read: Jesus continues to manifest his power over evil, even over death. As a good shepherd, he is compassionate to everyone.

Reflect: What does this sentence suggest to you: “the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few”?

Pray: Pray to the Lord so that through your life the compassion and kindness of Jesus in the world may continue to be present.

Act: Become aware of how God has generously blessed you, your loved ones, and the world around you.

The Twelve apostles

(Mk 3:13; Lk 6:12)

10¹ Jesus called his Twelve disciples to him and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to drive them out and to heal every disease and sickness.

²These are the names of the Twelve apostles: first, Simon, called Peter, and his brother Andrew; ³James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew, the tax collector; James, the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; ⁴Simon, the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, the man who would betray him.

Jesus sends out the first missionaries

(Lk 9:1; 10:1; Mk 6:7)

⁵Jesus sent these Twelve on a mission with the instructions: “Do not visit pagan territory and do not enter a Samaritan town. ⁶Go, instead, to the lost sheep of the people of Israel.

⁷Go and proclaim this message: The kingdom of heaven is near. ⁸Heal the sick, bring the dead back to life, cleanse the lepers and drive out demons. Freely have you received, freely give. ⁹Do not carry any gold or silver or money in your purses. ¹⁰Do not take a traveling bag, or an extra shirt, or sandals, or a walking stick: workers deserve to be compensated.

¹¹When you come to a town or a village, look for a worthy person, and stay there until you leave.

¹²When you enter the house, wish it peace. ¹³If the people are worthy people, your peace will rest on them; if they are not worthy people, your blessing will come back to you.

¹⁴And if you are not welcomed, and your words are not listened to, leave that house or that town, and shake the dust off your feet. ¹⁵I assure you, it will go easier for the people of Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than it will for the people of that town.

MATTHEW 10:1-15

Read: Jesus calls his disciples to collaborate in his mission. Observe how he entrusts them to perform it.

Reflect: How does the mission of Jesus continue in your life? What meaning does peace have in your life?

Pray: Pray that those you meet will be filled with the blessing of God.

Act: Pay attention to the gesture of peace in the mass. That be not an empty rite, but an expression of your decision to work for peace.

You will be persecuted

(Lk 12:11; Mk 13:9; 8:38)

¹⁶Look, I send you out like sheep among wolves. You must be as clever as snakes and as innocent as doves. ¹⁷Be on your guard with people, for they will hand you over to their courts and they will flog you in their synagogues. ¹⁸You will be brought to trial before rulers and kings because of me, so that you may witness to them and the pagans.

¹⁹But when you are arrested, do not worry about what you are to say, or how you are to say it; when the hour comes, you will be given what you are to say. ²⁰For it will not be you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

²¹Brother will hand over his brother to death, and a father his child; children will turn against their parents and have them put to death. ²²Everyone will hate you because of me, but whoever stands firm to the end will be saved.

²³When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next. I tell you the truth, you will not have passed through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.

²⁴A student is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master. ²⁵A student should be content to become like his teacher and the slave like his master. If the head of the household has been called Beelzebul, how much more those of his household! So, do not be afraid of them!

²⁶There is nothing covered that will not be uncovered. There is nothing hidden that will not be made known. ²⁷What I am telling you in the dark, you must speak in the light. What you hear in private, proclaim from the housetops.

²⁸Do not be afraid of those who kill the body, but have no power to kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of him who can destroy both body and soul in hell. ²⁹For a few cents you can buy two sparrows. Yet not one sparrow falls to the ground without your Father knowing. ³⁰As for you, every hair of your head has been counted. ³¹Do not be afraid: you are worth more than many sparrows!

³²Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will acknowledge before my Father in heaven. ³³Whoever rejects me before others, I will reject before my Father in heaven.

³⁴Do not think that I have come to establish peace on earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. ³⁶Each one will have as enemies those of one's own family.

³⁷Whoever loves father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me. And whoever loves son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me. ³⁸And whoever does not take up his cross and follow me, is not worthy of me. ³⁹Whoever finds his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life, for my sake, will find it.

⁴⁰Whoever welcomes you, welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me, welcomes him who sent me. ⁴¹The one who welcomes a prophet, as a prophet will receive the reward of a prophet; the one who welcomes a just man, because he is a just man, will receive the reward of a just man. ⁴²And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones, because he is my disciple, I assure you, he will not go unrewarded."

MATTHEW 10:16-42

Read: The second great discourse of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew: the Mission. Look at the specific instructions given to the Twelve. Pay attention to the images he uses: sheep, snake, and pigeon.

Reflect: What conflicts does the reception of the Gospel generate in your life?

Pray: Abandon yourself trustingly in the hands of God, let Him be your strength and encouragement.

Act: Express your faith in compassionate treatment of others, especially toward the weakest members of your community.

Jesus and John the Baptist

(Lk 7:18; 16:16; 10:13)

11 ¹When Jesus had finished giving his twelve disciples these instructions, he went on from there to teach and to proclaim his message in their towns. ²When John the Baptist heard in prison about the deeds of Christ, he sent a message by his disciples ³asking him, “Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?”

⁴Jesus answered them, “Go back and report to John what you hear and see: ⁵the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are made clean, the deaf hear, the dead are brought back to life, and the poor hear the good news; ⁶and how fortunate is the one who does not take offense at me!”

⁷As the messengers left, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: “When you went out to the desert, what did you expect to see? A reed swept by the wind? ⁸What did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? People who wear fine clothes live in palaces. ⁹What did you really go out to see? A prophet? Yes, indeed, and even more than a prophet. ¹⁰He is the man of whom Scripture says: *I send my messenger ahead of you to prepare the way before you.*

¹¹I tell you this: no one greater than John the Baptist has arisen from among the sons of women and yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. ¹²From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven is something to be conquered and violent men seize it.

¹³Up to the time of John there was only prophesy: all the prophets and the law. ¹⁴And if you believe me, John is indeed that Elijah, whose coming was predicted. ¹⁵Let anyone with ears listen!

¹⁶Now, to what can I compare the people of this day? They are like children sitting in the marketplace about whom their companions complain: ¹⁷‘We played the flute for you, but you would not dance. We sang a funeral song, but you would not cry!’

¹⁸For John came fasting and people said, ‘He is possessed by a demon!’ ¹⁹Then the Son of Man came. He ate and drank; and people said, ‘Look at this man: a glutton and drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet, wisdom is vindicated by her works.”

MATTHEW 11:1-19

Read: The question of the Baptist seems not to take into account what is related in 3:13-15. However, Matthew reveals that Jesus is the true Messiah, God’s anointed (some thought the Baptist was).

Reflect: What kind of Messiah did the people of Israel expect? What kind of Messiah do you expect? Does the Jesus of the Gospel satisfy your hopes?

Pray: Ask God to help you recognize Jesus as the Messiah. And may such recognition push you to work for his kingdom.

Act: May your life be a testimony of Jesus to others.

²⁰Then Jesus began to denounce the cities in which he had performed most of his miracles because the people there did not change their ways. ²¹“Alas for you Chorazin and Bethsaida! If the miracles worked in you had taken place in Tyre and Sidon, the people there would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. ²²But I assure you, for Tyre and Sidon; it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you. ²³And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to heaven? You will be thrown down to the place of the dead! For if the miracles which were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would still be there today! ²⁴But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you.”

Take my yoke upon you

(Lk 10:21)

²⁵On that occasion, Jesus said, “Father, Lord of heaven and earth, I praise you; because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to simple people. ²⁶Yes, Father, this was your gracious will.

²⁷Everything has been entrusted to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

²⁸Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart; and you will find rest. ³⁰For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

MATTHEW 11:20-30

Read: Jesus reproaches the cities where he has most manifested his power. To whom much is given, much is also demanded. Observe Jesus’ invitation to those who are tired and burdened: in him, they will find comfort (28).

Reflect: How is the salvation of God manifested in your life? What does the expression: “Come to me, those who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” tells you?

Pray: Pray to God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Ask for the grace so that you can recognize the saving action of God in your life.

Act: Be kind to everyone, so that your presence inspires confidence and relief and witnesses to God’s love for others.

Jesus, Lord of the Sabbath

(Mk 2:23; 3:1; Lk 6:1; 14:1)

12¹It happened that Jesus was walking through the wheat fields on a Sabbath. His disciples were hungry, and they began to pick some heads of wheat to crush and to eat the grain. ²When the Pharisees noticed this, they said to Jesus, “Look at your disciples! They are doing what is prohibited on the Sabbath!”

³Jesus answered, “Have you not read what David did when he and his

men were hungry? ⁴He went into the House of God and they ate the bread offered to God, though neither he nor his men had the right to eat it but only the priests. ⁵And have you not read in the law how, on the Sabbath, the priests in the temple desecrate the Sabbath, yet they are not guilty?

⁶I tell you there is greater than the temple here. ⁷If you really knew the meaning of the words: *It is mercy I want, not sacrifice*, you would not have condemned the innocent.

⁸Besides, the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.”

⁹Jesus then left that place and went into one of their synagogues. ¹⁰A man was there with a paralyzed hand, and the people who wanted to bring a charge against Jesus asked him, “Is it permitted to heal on the Sabbath?”

¹¹But he said to them, “What if one of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath? Will you not take hold of your sheep and lift it out? ¹²Is a human being less worthy of help than a sheep? Therefore, it is permitted to do good on the Sabbath.” ¹³Then Jesus said to the man, “Stretch out your arm.” He stretched it out and it was completely restored as sound as the other one.

¹⁴Then the Pharisees went out and made plans to get rid of Jesus. ¹⁵As Jesus was aware of their plans, he left that place. Many people followed him and he cured all who were sick. ¹⁶But he gave them strict orders not to make him known.

¹⁷In this way, Isaiah’s prophecy was fulfilled:

¹⁸*Here is my servant whom I have chosen; the one I love and with whom I am pleased. I will put my spirit upon him, and he will announce my judgment to the nations.*

¹⁹*He will not argue or shout, nor will his voice be heard in the streets.* ²⁰*The bruised reed he will not crush, nor snuff out the smoldering wick until he brings justice to victory,* ²¹*and in him, all the nations will put their hope.*

MATTHEW 12:1-21

Read: Jesus puts the practice of good before the observance of the Sabbath. This generates conflicts with the religious authorities, who decide to kill him.

Reflect: Does the exercise of mercy precede any religious, moral or legal precept? There are those who think that this way of proceeding generates many problems, what is your opinion?

Pray: Pray to the Holy Spirit to help you choose life when conflicts arise between the fulfillment of a certain law and the practice of good.

Act: That your observance of the law be always based on the love of God and neighbor.

The unforgivable sin

(Mk 3:22; Lk 11:15)

²²Then some people brought to him a possessed man who was blind and mute. Jesus healed the man; who was then able to speak and see. ²³All in the crowd were amazed and said, “Could he be the Son of David?” ²⁴When the Pharisees heard this, they said, “It is by Beelzebul, prince of the devils, that this man drives out devils.”

²⁵Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said to them, “Every kingdom that is divided against itself is destroyed; and every city, or family, that is divided against itself will not last long. ²⁶So if Satan drives out Satan, he is divided: how then can his reign endure? ²⁷And if it is by Beelzebul that I drive out devils, by whom do your own people drive them out? For this reason, they will be your judges.

²⁸But if it is by the Spirit of God that I drive out devils, then the kingdom of God has already come upon you. ²⁹How can anyone break into the strong man’s house and make off with his belongings, unless he first ties him up? Only then can he plunder his house.

³⁰The one who is not with me is against me, and the one who does not gather with me scatters.

³¹And so I tell you this: people can be forgiven any sin and any evil thing they say against God, but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. ³²The one who speaks against the Son of Man will be forgiven; but the one who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.

³³If you have a healthy tree, its fruit will be healthy; if you have a rotten tree, its fruit will be rotten. You can know a tree by its fruit. ³⁴You brood

of vipers, how can you say anything good when you are so evil? For the mouth speaks what fills the heart. ³⁵A good person produces good things from his good store and an evil person produces evil things from his evil store.

³⁶I tell you this: on the day of judgment people will have to give an account of any careless word they have spoken. ³⁷Your own words will declare you either innocent or guilty.”

Jesus criticizes his own generation

(Mk 8:11; Lk 11:16)

³⁸Then, some teachers of the law and some Pharisees spoke up, “Teacher, we want to see a sign from you.” ³⁹Jesus answered them, “An evil and unfaithful people want a sign; but no sign will be given them except the sign of the prophet Jonah. ⁴⁰In the same way, as Jonah spent three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so will the Son of Man spend three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

⁴¹At the judgment, the people of Nineveh will rise with this generation and condemn it; because they reformed their lives at the preaching of Jonah and here there is greater than Jonah. ⁴²At the judgment, the Queen of the South will stand up and condemn you. She came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon and here there is greater than Solomon.

⁴³When an evil spirit goes out of a person, it wanders over arid wastelands looking for a place to rest, but it cannot find any. ⁴⁴Then it says: ‘I will go back to my house which I had to leave.’ So it goes back and finds the house empty, clean, and in order. ⁴⁵Off it goes again, to bring back with itself this time, seven spirits, more evil than itself. They move in and settle there; so that this person is, finally, in a worse state at the end than he was at the beginning. This is what will happen to this evil generation.”

⁴⁶While Jesus was talking to the people, his mother and his brothers wanted to speak to him and they waited outside. ⁴⁷So someone said to him, “Your mother and your brothers are standing outside; they want to speak with you.”

⁴⁸Jesus answered, “Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?” ⁴⁹Then he pointed to his disciples and said, “Look! Here are my mother and my brothers. ⁵⁰Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.”

MATTHEW 12:22-50

Read: Observe how Jesus' conflict with religious authorities becomes acute. They do not recognize the saving action of Jesus, on the contrary, they reject it by identifying it with the Devil's own actions.

Reflect: What do the following expressions suggest to you: "Any sin or blasphemy can be forgiven to men, but blasphemy against the Spirit has no forgiveness"; "God who created you without you will not save you without you"?

Pray: Ask God to help you have a heart always open to the manifestations of His goodness and love.

Act: Identify the prejudices you have with that person who does not like you. And make a concrete gesture of friendship with her or him.

The parable of the sower

(Mk 4:1; Lk 8:4; 10:23; 13:20)

13¹That same day, Jesus left the house and sat down by the lake-side. ²Many people gathered around him. So he got into a boat and sat down, while the crowds stood on the shore; ³and he spoke to them in parables about many things.

⁴Jesus said, "The sower went out to sow; and as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path; and the birds came and ate them up. ⁵Other seeds fell on rocky ground where there was little soil and the seeds sprouted quickly because the soil was not deep. ⁶But as soon as the sun rose, the plants were scorched; and they withered, because they had no roots. ⁷Again, other seeds fell among the thistles; and the thistles grew and choked the plants. ⁸Still, other seeds fell on good soil and produced a crop: some a hundredfold, others sixty, and others thirty. ⁹If you have ears, then hear!"

¹⁰Then his disciples came to him and said, "Why do you speak to them in parables?"

¹¹Jesus answered, "To you, it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but not to these people. ¹²For the one who has will be given more, and he will have in abundance. But the one who does

not have will be deprived of even what he has. ¹³That is why I speak to them in parables; because they look and do not see; they hear, but they do not listen or understand.

¹⁴In them, the words of the prophet Isaiah are fulfilled: *However much you hear, you do not understand; however much you see, you do not perceive.*

¹⁵*For the heart of this people has grown dull. Their ears hardly hear and their eyes dare not see. If they were to see with their eyes, hear with their ears and understand with their heart, they would turn back, and I would heal them.*

¹⁶But blessed are your eyes because they see; and your ears, because they hear.

¹⁷For I tell you, many prophets and righteous people have longed to see the things you see, but they did not see them; and to hear the things you hear, but they did not hear them.

¹⁸Now listen to the parable of the sower.

¹⁹When a person hears the message of the kingdom but does not take it seriously, the devil comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed that fell along the footpath.

²⁰The seed that fell on rocky ground stands for the one who hears the word and accepts it at once with joy. ²¹But such a person has no roots and endures only for a while. No sooner is he harassed or persecuted because of the word, than he gives up.

²²The seed that fell among the thistles is the one who hears the word but then the worries of this life and the love of money choke the word; and it does not bear fruit.

²³As for the seed that fell on good soil, it is the one who hears the word and understands it; this seed bears fruit and produces a hundred, or sixty, or thirty times more.”

MATTHEW 13:1-23

Read: The third great discourse of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew. Jesus teaches in parables, with them he encourages his followers to embrace the Gospel in their lives.

Reflect: What implications in your daily life does the parable of the sower suggest?

Pray: To accept the word of God and live according to it is not easy. Pray to the Lord to help you in this.

Act: Listen carefully to the Word of God at Mass, and put it into practice.

The parable of the weeds

²⁴ Jesus told the people another parable, “The kingdom of heaven can be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. ²⁵ While everyone was asleep, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away.

²⁶ When the plants sprouted and produced grain, the weeds also appeared. ²⁷ Then the servants of the owner came and said to him, ‘Sir, was it not good seed that you sowed in your field? Where did the weeds come from?’

²⁸ He answered them, ‘This is the work of an enemy.’ They asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull up the weeds?’ ²⁹ He told them, ‘No, when you pull up the weeds, you might uproot the wheat with them. ³⁰ Let them grow together until harvest; and, at harvest time, I will say to the workers: Pull up the weeds first, tie them in bundles and burn them; then gather the wheat into my barn.’”

The mustard seed and the yeast

(Mk 4:30; Lk 13:18)

³¹ Jesus offered them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field.

³² It is smaller than all other seeds, but once it is fully grown it is bigger than any garden plant; like a tree, the birds come and rest in its branches.”

³³ He told them another parable, “The kingdom of heaven is like the yeast that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour until the whole mass of dough began to rise.”

³⁴ Jesus taught all these things to the crowds by means of parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable. ³⁵ This fulfilled what was spoken by the Prophet: *I will speak in parables. I will proclaim things kept secret since the beginning of the world.*

³⁶ Then he sent the crowds away and went into the house. And his disciples came to him, saying, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds

in the field.”³⁷ Jesus answered them, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man.³⁸ The field is the world; the good seed are the people of the kingdom; the weeds are those who follow the evil one.³⁹ The enemy who sows the weeds is the devil; the harvest is the end of time and the workers are the angels.

⁴⁰Just as the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so will it be at the end of time.⁴¹ The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom all that is scandalous and all who do evil.⁴² And these will be thrown into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.⁴³ Then the just will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. If you have ears, then hear.

The treasure, the pearl, and the net

⁴⁴The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field. The one who finds it buries it again; and so happy is he that he goes and sells everything he has in order to buy that field.

⁴⁵Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a trader who is looking for fine pearls.⁴⁶ Once he has found a pearl of exceptional quality, he goes away, sells everything he has and buys it.

⁴⁷Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a big fishing net let down into the sea, in which every kind of fish has been caught.⁴⁸ When the net is full, it is dragged ashore. Then they sit down and gather the good fish into buckets, but throw the bad away.⁴⁹ That is how it will be at the end of time; the angels will go out to separate the wicked from the just⁵⁰ and to throw the wicked into the blazing furnace where they will weep and gnash their teeth.”

⁵¹Jesus asked, “Have you understood all these things?” “Yes,” they answered.⁵² So he said to them, “Therefore, every teacher of the law who becomes a disciple of the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who can produce from his store things both new and old.”

⁵³When Jesus had finished these parables, he left that place.⁵⁴ He went to his hometown and taught the people in their synagogue. They were amazed and said, “Where did he get this wisdom and these special powers?⁵⁵ Isn’t he the carpenter’s son? Isn’t Mary his mother and aren’t James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas his brothers?⁵⁶ Aren’t all his sisters living here? Where did he get all these things?”⁵⁷ And so they took offense at him.

Jesus said to them, “The only place where a prophet is not welcome is his hometown and in his own family.”⁵⁸ And he did not perform many miracles there because of their lack of faith.

MATTHEW 13:24-58

Read: Jesus continues speaking in parables; with them, he highlights two realities: the constant presence of evil (the darnel), and the irruption of the kingdom in history through small things.

Reflect: What things does the parable of the darnel suggests to you? Do you perceive the presence of the kingdom of God in the daily and small events of reconciliation, justice, love, that happens in your day to day?

Pray: Pray the Our Father and pay special attention to the request: “May your kingdom come.”

Act: Promote in your daily life those gestures and actions that, in your consideration, manifest the presence of the kingdom of God in your life.

John the Baptist beheaded

(Mk 6:14; Lk 9:7)

14¹ At that time, the reports about Jesus reached King Herod. ²And he said to his servants, “This man is John the Baptist. John has risen from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in John.”

³Herod had, in fact, ordered that John be arrested, bound in chains and put in prison because of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip. ⁴For John had said to Herod, “It is not right for you to have her as your wife.” ⁵Herod wanted to kill him but he did not dare, because he feared the people, who regarded John as a prophet.

⁶On Herod’s birthday the daughter of Herodias danced among the guests; she so delighted Herod ⁷that he promised under oath to give her anything she asked for. ⁸The girl, following the advice of her mother, said, “Give me the head of John the Baptist, here, on a dish.”

⁹The king was very displeased, but because he had made his promise under oath, in the presence of his guests, he ordered it to be given to

her. ¹⁰So he had John beheaded in prison ¹¹and his head brought on a dish and given to the girl. The girl then took it to her mother.

¹²Then John's disciples came, took his body and buried it. Then they went and told Jesus.

MATTHEW 14:1-12

Read: Observe the action of Herod (political power). His ultimate motivation is not justice, but public approval.

Reflect: Look at your own actions. To what extent do your actions depend on "what people will say"?

Pray: Ask the Lord to give you strength to work for justice more than for "what others will say about you."

Act: Perform the action that should be done by justice, but not by "what people will say."

The first miracle of the loaves

(Mk 6:32; Jn 6)

¹³When Jesus heard of it, he set out by boat for a secluded place to be alone. But the people heard of it and they followed him on foot from their towns. ¹⁴When Jesus went ashore, he saw the crowd gathered there and he had compassion on them. And he healed their sick.

¹⁵Late in the afternoon, his disciples came to him and said, "We are in a lonely place and it is now late. You should send these people away so that they can go to the villages and buy something for themselves to eat."

¹⁶But Jesus replied, "They do not need to go away; you give them something to eat." ¹⁷They answered, "We have nothing here but five loaves and two fishes." ¹⁸Jesus said to them, "Bring them here to me."

¹⁹Then he made everyone sit down on the grass. He took the five loaves and the two fishes, raised his eyes to heaven, pronounced the blessing, broke the loaves and handed them to the disciples to distribute to the people. ²⁰And they all ate, and everyone had enough; then the disciples gathered up the leftovers, filling twelve baskets. ²¹About five thousand men had eaten there, besides women and children.

Jesus walks on the water

(Mk 6:45; Jn 6:16)

²²Immediately, Jesus obliged his disciples to get into the boat and go ahead of him to the other side, while he sent the crowd away.

²³And having sent the people away, he went up to the mountain by himself, to pray. At nightfall, he was there alone. ²⁴Meanwhile, the boat was very far from land, dangerously rocked by the waves, for the wind was against it.

²⁵At daybreak, Jesus came to them walking on the sea. ²⁶When they saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, thinking that it was a ghost. And they cried out in fear. ²⁷But at once, Jesus said to them, “Courage! Don’t be afraid. It’s me!” ²⁸Peter answered, “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.”

²⁹Jesus said to him, “Come!” And Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water to go to Jesus. ³⁰But seeing the strong wind, he was afraid, and began to sink; and he cried out, “Lord, save me!” ³¹Jesus immediately stretched out his hand and took hold of him, saying, “Man of little faith, why did you doubt?”

³²As they got into the boat, the wind dropped. ³³Then those in the boat bowed down before Jesus, saying, “Truly, you are the Son of God!”

³⁴They came ashore at Gennesaret. ³⁵The local people recognized Jesus and spread the news throughout the region. So they brought to him all the sick people, ³⁶begging him to let them touch just the hem of his cloak. All who touched it became perfectly well.

MATTHEW 14:13-36

Read: Jesus feels sorry for the crowd who follows him, he does not abandon them, but he heals, teaches and feeds them. This story is a prefiguration of the Eucharist.

Reflect: What is the miracle: the multiplication of some loaves and fishes or in the fulfillment of the teachings of Jesus: solidarity? Can there be Eucharist outside of the celebration of the Mass?

Pray: Pray to God so that you may fulfill your commitment to live the Eucharist outside of the Mass, in your day to day, with your family, your friends, and colleagues at work.

Act: May your life be Eucharist, a “thanksgiving,” bread shared with others.

God’s command and human tradition

(Mk 7:1)

15¹Then, some Pharisees and teachers of the law who had come from Jerusalem, gathered around Jesus. And they said to him, ²“Why don’t your disciples follow the tradition of the elders? For they don’t wash their hands before eating.”

³Jesus answered, “And you, why do you break God’s command for the sake of your traditions? ⁴For God commanded: *Do your duty to your father and your mother, and: Whoever curses his father or his mother is to be put to death.* ⁵But you say that anyone may say to his father or mother, ‘What you could have expected from me is given to God.’ ⁶In this case, according to you, a person is freed from his duty to his father and mother. And so, you have nullified the command of God for the sake of your traditions.

⁷Hypocrites! Isaiah rightly prophesied of you when he said: ⁸*This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.* ⁹*The worship they offer me is worthless, for they only teach human rules.*”

Washing hands and cleanness of heart

(Mk 7:14; Lk 6:39)

¹⁰Jesus then called the people to him and said to them, “Listen and understand: ¹¹What enters into the mouth does not make a person unclean. What defiles a person is what comes out of his mouth.”

¹²After a while, the disciples gathered around Jesus and said, “Do you know that the Pharisees were offended by what you said?” ¹³Jesus answered, “Every plant, which my heavenly Father has not planted shall be uprooted. ¹⁴Pay no attention to them! They are blind leading the blind. When a blind person leads another the two will fall into a pit.”

¹⁵Peter said to him, “Explain this parable to us.” ¹⁶Jesus replied, “So even you, too, are dull? ¹⁷Do you not see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body? ¹⁸But what comes out of the mouth comes from the heart and that is what makes a person unclean.

¹⁹Indeed, it is from the heart that evil desires come: murder, adultery, immorality, theft, lies, slander. ²⁰These are the things that make a person unclean, but eating without washing the hands does not make a person unclean.”

MATTHEW 15:1-20

Read: Jesus points out that the practice of good and justice comes before the fulfillment of religious traditions.

Reflect: What does this expression suggest to you: “What comes out of the mouth comes from the heart, and that makes a person unclean”?

Pray: Pray to the Lord to help you choose good and justice, and to expel from your heart all the bad feelings that contaminate you.

Act: Look at the religious traditions you practice. Promote those that agree with the teachings of Jesus.

The faith of the Canaanite woman

(Mk 7:24)

²¹Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. ²²A Canaanite woman from the area came and cried out, “Lord, Son of David, have pity on me! My daughter is tormented by a demon.” ²³But Jesus did not answer her, not even a word. So his disciples approached him and said, “Send her away! See how she is shouting after us.”

²⁴Then Jesus said to her, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the nation of Israel.”

²⁵But the woman was already kneeling before Jesus and said, “Sir, help me!” ²⁶Jesus answered, “It is not right to take the bread from the children and throw it to puppies.” ²⁷The woman replied, “That is true, sir, but even puppies eat the crumbs which fall from their master’s table.” ²⁸Then Jesus said, “Woman, how great is your faith! Let it be as you wish.” And her daughter was healed at that moment.

The second miracle of the loaves

(Mk 7:31)

²⁹From there, Jesus went to the shore of Lake Galilee and then went

up into the hills where he sat down. ³⁰Great crowds came to him bringing the dumb, the blind, the lame, the crippled, and many with other infirmities. People carried them to the feet of Jesus, and he healed them. ³¹All were astonished when they saw the dumb speaking, the lame walking, the crippled healed, and the blind able to see; and they glorified the God of Israel.

³²Jesus called his disciples and said to them, "I am filled with compassion for these people; they have already followed me for three days and now have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them away fasting, or they may faint on the way." ³³His disciples said to him, "And where shall we find enough bread in this wilderness to feed such a crowd?" ³⁴Jesus said to them, "How many loaves do you have?" They answered, "Seven, and a few small fish."

³⁵Jesus ordered the people to sit on the ground. ³⁶Then, he took the seven loaves and the small fish and gave thanks to God. He broke them and gave them to his disciples who distributed them to the people.

³⁷They all ate and were satisfied, and the leftover pieces filled seven wicker baskets. ³⁸Four thousand men had eaten, besides women and children. ³⁹Then Jesus sent the crowd away, got into the boat and went to Magdala.

MATTHEW 15:21-39

Read: Jesus puts his previous teaching into practice: he opts for the practice of good and justice rather than for tradition. He welcomes the excluded (foreigners, lame, disabled, blind, mute and many other sick), heals and feeds them: shares the bread with them.

Reflect: Who are the current excluded from our society? Do we welcome them and break bread with them as Jesus taught us?

Pray: Ask the Lord for the courage to share your life and your bread with everyone, especially with those excluded from society.

Act: Collaborate in an initiative of your parish or diocese in which solidarity with the excluded is promoted.

The Pharisees ask for a sign

(Mk 8:11; Lk 11:16; 12:54)

16¹The Pharisees and Sadducees appeared. They wanted to put Jesus to the test and asked him for some heavenly sign.

²Jesus answered, “(When evening comes, you say, ‘It will be a good day, for the sky is red.’ ³And in the morning you say, ‘Stormy weather today, for the sky in the east is red.’ If you know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, why can’t you interpret the signs of the times?) ⁴An evil and unbelieving people want a sign, but no sign will be given them except the sign of Jonah.”

And Jesus left them and went away.

⁵When the disciples went to the other side, they forgot to take bread. ⁶Jesus said to them, “Pay attention and beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” ⁷But the disciples said to one another, “He means the bread we did not bring.”

⁸Aware of this, Jesus said to them, “You of little faith! Why are you arguing among yourselves about having no bread? ⁹Do you still not understand? Do you not remember the five loaves for the five thousand; and how many baskets you took up? ¹⁰Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many wicker baskets you took up?

¹¹How can you not understand that I was not talking about bread when I said to you: Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees?” ¹²Then they understood that he was not talking about yeast for bread, but about the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Peter’s faith; Jesus’ promises

(Mk 8:27; Lk 9:18; Jn 6:69)

¹³After that, Jesus came to Caesarea Philippi. He asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” ¹⁴They said, “For some of them you are John the Baptist; for others Elijah, or Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.”

¹⁵Jesus asked them, “But you, who do you say I am?” ¹⁶Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” ¹⁷Jesus replied, “It is well for you, Simon Barjona, for it is not flesh or blood that has revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven.

¹⁸And now I say to you: You are Peter, and on this Rock, I will build my Church; and never will the powers of death overcome it.

¹⁹I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven: whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you unbind on earth shall be unbound in heaven.”

²⁰Then he ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Christ.

Jesus predicts his death

(Mk 8:31; Lk 9:22; 12:9; 14:27)

²¹From that day, Jesus began to make it clear to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem; that he would suffer many things from the Jewish authorities, the chief priests and the teachers of the law; and that he would be killed and be raised on the third day.

²²Then Peter took him aside and began to reproach him, “Never, Lord! No, this must never happen to you!” ²³But he turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle in my path. You are thinking not as God does, but as people do.”

²⁴Then Jesus said to his disciples, “If you want to follow me, deny yourself. Take up your cross and follow me. ²⁵For whoever chooses to save his life will lose it, but the one who loses his life for my sake will find it. ²⁶What will one gain by winning the whole world, if he destroys his soul? Or what can a person give in exchange for his life?

²⁷Know that the Son of Man will come in the glory of his Father with the holy angels and he will reward each one according to his deeds. ²⁸Truly, I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”

MATTHEW 16:1-28

Read: Peter confesses Jesus as Messiah, but rejects the cross: self-giving, service, and donation for others.

Reflect: What does the expression suggest to you: “Whoever wants to follow me should deny himself, carry his cross and follow me”?

Pray: Ask for the grace to become a faithful disciple of Jesus.

Act: Take on the difficulties of your daily life as a call from the Lord to “carry your own cross and follow Him.”

The transfiguration of Jesus

(Mk 9:2; Lk 9:28)

17¹Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James, and his brother John, and led them up a high mountain where they were alone. ²Jesus' appearance was changed before them: his face shone like the sun and his clothes became white as snow. ³Then suddenly, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Jesus.

⁴Peter spoke up and said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will make three tents: one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah."

⁵Peter was still speaking, when a bright cloud covered them with its shadow; and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, the Beloved, my Chosen One. Listen to him."

⁶On hearing the voice, the disciples fell to the ground full of fear. ⁷But Jesus came, touched them and said, "Stand up, do not be afraid!" ⁸When they raised their eyes, they no longer saw anyone except Jesus. ⁹And as they came down the mountain, Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone what they had seen, until the Son of Man be raised from the dead.

¹⁰The disciples asked him, "Why do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?" ¹¹Jesus answered, "So it is: first comes Elijah; and he will restore all things. ¹²But I tell you, Elijah has already come and they did not recognize him; and they treated him as they pleased. And they will also make the Son of Man suffer."

¹³Then the disciples understood that Jesus was referring to John the Baptist.

Jesus heals an epileptic boy

(Mk 9:14; Lk 9:37)

¹⁴When they came to the crowd, a man approached Jesus, knelt before him and said, ¹⁵"Sir, have pity on my son who is an epileptic and suffers terribly. He has often fallen into the fire and at other times into the water. ¹⁶I brought him to your disciples, but they could not heal him."

¹⁷Jesus replied, "O you people, faithless and misled! How long must I be with you? How long must I put up with you? Bring him here to me." ¹⁸And Jesus commanded the evil spirit to leave the boy, and the boy was immediately healed.

¹⁹Later, the disciples approached Jesus and asked him privately, "Why

couldn't we drive out the spirit?" ²⁰Jesus said to them, "Because you have little faith. I say to you: if only you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you could tell that mountain to move from here to there and the mountain would obey. Nothing would be impossible for you. ²¹(Only prayer and fasting can drive out this kind of spirit.)"

MATTHEW 17:1-21

Read: The transfiguration is a story of encouragement to the disciples who fear the way of the cross. It is an experience of encounter with the divine.

Reflect: Religious experiences occur frequently in life. They cannot be described. Remember yours.

Pray: Feel the presence of the divine at this time.

Act: Contemplate the presence of God in everything that surrounds you.

²²While Jesus was in Galilee with the Twelve, he said to them, "The Son of Man will be delivered into the hands of men ²³and they will kill him. But he will rise on the third day." The Twelve were deeply grieved.

The temple tax

²⁴When they returned to Capernaum, the temple tax collectors came to Peter and asked him, "Does your master pay the temple tax?" ²⁵He answered, "Yes."

Peter then entered the house; and immediately, Jesus asked him, "What do you think, Simon? Who pays taxes or tribute to the kings of the earth: their sons or strangers and aliens?" ²⁶Peter replied, "Strangers and aliens." And Jesus told him, "The sons, then, are tax-free. ²⁷But, so as not to offend these people, go to the sea, throw in a hook and open the mouth of the first fish you catch. You will find a coin in it. Take the coin and give it to them for you and for me."

Who is the greatest? Scandals

18¹At that time, the disciples came to Jesus and asked him, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

²Then Jesus called a little child, set the child in the midst of the disciples ³and said, "I assure you that unless you change and become like

little children, you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. ⁴Whoever becomes humble like this child, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, ⁵and whoever receives such a child in my name, receives me.

⁶If any of you should cause one of these little ones, who believe in me, to stumble and fall, it would be better for him to be thrown into the depths of the sea with a great millstone around his neck.

⁷Woe to the world, because of so many scandals! Scandals necessarily come, but woe to the one who causes a scandal.

⁸If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life without a hand or a foot than to be thrown into the eternal fire with two hands and two feet. ⁹And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to be thrown into the fire of hell with two eyes.

¹⁰See that you do not despise any of these little ones; for I tell you, their angels in heaven continually see the face of my heavenly Father.

¹¹(The Son of Man has come to save the lost.)

¹²What do you think of this? If someone has a hundred sheep and one of them strays, won't he leave the ninety-nine on the hillside and go to look for the stray one? ¹³And I tell you, when he finally finds it, he is more pleased about it than about the ninety-nine that did not go astray. ¹⁴It is the same with your Father in heaven. Your Father in heaven doesn't want even one of these little ones to perish.

Living together in the Church

(Lk 17:3)

¹⁵If your brother has sinned against you, go and point out the fault to him when the two of you are alone; and if he listens to you, you have won back your brother. ¹⁶If he doesn't listen to you, take with you one or two others, so that *the case may be decided by the evidence of two or three witnesses*. ¹⁷And if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the assembled Church. But if he does not listen to the Church, then regard him as a pagan or a tax collector.

¹⁸I say to you: whatever you bind on earth, heaven will keep bound; and whatever you unbind on earth, heaven will keep unbound.

¹⁹In like manner, I say to you, if on earth two of you agree in asking for anything, it will be granted to you by my heavenly Father; ²⁰for where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."

²¹Then Peter asked him, “Lord, how many times must I forgive the offenses of my brother or sister? Seven times?” ²²Jesus answered, “No, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.

The unmerciful servant

²³This story throws light on the kingdom of Heaven: A king decided to settle accounts with his servants. ²⁴Among the first of them was one who owed him ten thousand pieces of gold. ²⁵As the man could not repay the debt, the king commanded that he be sold as a slave with his wife, his children, and all his goods, as repayment.

²⁶The servant threw himself at the feet of the king and said, ‘Give me time and I will pay you back everything.’ ²⁷The king took pity on him and not only set him free but even canceled his debt.

MATTHEW 17:22—18:27

Read: Matthew presents Jesus as the Son of God: he has no obligation to pay the Temple tax. However, he does it to avoid scandal.

Reflect: What does Jesus’ attitude to the Law suggest to you?

Pray: Pray to the Lord so that at all times you may act with justice.

Act: Work according to what the Holy Spirit has inspired you in your prayer.

²⁸When this servant left the king’s presence, he met one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred pieces of silver. He grabbed him by the throat and almost choked him, shouting, ‘Pay me what you owe!’ ²⁹His fellow servant threw himself at his feet and begged him, ‘Give me time and I will pay everything.’ ³⁰But the other did not agree and sent him to prison until he had paid all his debt.

³¹Now the servants of the king saw what had happened. They were extremely upset and so they went and reported everything to their lord. ³²Then the lord summoned his servant and said, ‘Wicked servant, I forgave you all that you owed me when you begged me to do so. ³³Weren’t you bound to have pity on your fellow servant, as I had pity on you?’ ³⁴The lord was now angry. He handed the wicked servant over to be punished until he had paid the whole debt.”

³⁵Jesus added, “So will my heavenly Father do with you unless you sincerely forgive your brothers and sisters.”

MATTHEW 18:28-35

Read: The fourth great discourse of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew. Jesus warns his disciples of the danger of arrogance and resentment, asks them to be humble and willing to forgive. Notice how the authority that Jesus gave to Peter in 16:19 now extends to all the disciples (18:18).

Reflect: What does the expression suggest to you: “Unless you change and become like little children, you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven”? How many times should we forgive?

Pray: Pray to God to give you a humble and willing heart to forgive forever. Pray the Our Father meditating in a special way the supplication: “forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.”

Act: Seek the forgiveness of someone you have offended.

Jesus speaks about divorce

(Mk 10:2; Mt 5:31; Lk 16:18)

19¹When Jesus had finished these sayings, he left Galilee and arrived at the border of Judea, on the other side of the Jordan River.

²Large crowds followed him; and there, too, he healed their sick.

³Some Pharisees approached him. They wanted to test him and asked, “Is a man allowed to divorce his wife for any reason he wants?”

⁴Jesus replied, “Have you not read, that in the beginning, the Creator *made them male and female?* ⁵And the Creator said: *Therefore, a man shall leave father and mother and be joined to his wife and the two shall become one body.* ⁶So, they are no longer two, but one body. Let no one separate what God has joined.”

⁷They asked him, “Then why did Moses command us to write a bill of dismissal in order to divorce?” ⁸Jesus replied, “Moses knew the hardness of your hearts, so he allowed you to divorce your wives, but it was not so in the beginning. ⁹Therefore, I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, unless it be for immorality, and marries another, commits adultery.”

¹⁰The disciples said, “If that is the condition of a married man, it is better not to marry.” ¹¹Jesus said to them, “Not everybody can accept what you have just said, but only those who have received this gift. ¹²There are eunuchs born so from their mother’s womb. Some have been made that way by others. But there are some who have given up the possibility of marriage, for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let the one who can accept it, accept it.”

Jesus and the children

(Mk 10:13; Lk 18:15)

¹³Then little children were brought to Jesus that he might lay his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples scolded those who brought them. ¹⁴Jesus then said, “Let the children be! Don’t hinder them from coming to me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to those who are humble like these children.” ¹⁵Jesus laid his hands on them and went away.

The rich young man

(Mk 10:17-22; Lk 18:18-23)

¹⁶It was then that a young man approached him and asked, “Master, what good work must I do to receive eternal life?” ¹⁷Jesus answered, “Why do you ask me about what is good? One only is good. If you want to enter eternal life, keep the commandments.” ¹⁸The young man said, “Which commandments?” Jesus replied, “*Do not kill; do not commit adultery; do not steal; do not bear false witness; ¹⁹honor your father and mother. And love your neighbor as yourself.*”

²⁰The young man said to him, “I have kept all these commandments. What do I still lack?” ²¹Jesus answered, “If you wish to be perfect, go, sell all that you possess and give the money to the poor; and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come back and follow me.”

²²On hearing this, the young man went away sad, for he was a man of great wealth.

²³Jesus said to his disciples, “Truly I say to you: it will be hard for one who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. ²⁴Yes, believe me: it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of the needle than for the one who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven.”

²⁵On hearing this, the disciples were astonished and said, “Who then can be saved?” ²⁶Jesus looked at them and answered, “For human beings it is impossible, but for God all things are possible.”

²⁷Then Peter spoke up and said, “You see, we have given up everything to follow you. What then will there be for us?”

²⁸Jesus answered, “You who have followed me, listen to my words: on the Day of Renewal when the Son of Man sits on his throne in glory, you also will sit on twelve thrones to judge the twelve tribes of Israel. ²⁹As for those who have left houses, brothers, sisters, father, mother, children or property, for my Name’s sake, they will receive a hundredfold and be given eternal life. ³⁰Many who are now first, will be last, and many who are now last, will be first.

MATTHEW 19:1-30

Read: Jesus reveals the depth of conjugal commitment and commitment to the kingdom (wealth can be an obstacle).

Reflect: What value does he give to marital commitment? What implications does celibacy have for the kingdom? Is wealth an obstacle to follow Jesus?

Pray: Ask the Lord for all the vocations of the Church, so that in their diversity they may manifest the richness of the kingdom.

Act: Live your vocation in constant thanksgiving. Do not cling to your goods, be charitable.

The workers in the vineyard

20¹This story throws light on the kingdom of heaven: A landowner went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. ²He agreed to pay each worker the usual daily wage and sent them to his vineyard.

³He went out again at about nine in the morning and, seeing others idle in the town square, ⁴he said to them, ‘You also go to my vineyard and I will pay you what is just.’ ⁵So they went.

The owner went out at midday, and again at three in the afternoon, and he made the same offer. ⁶Again he went out at the last working hour—the eleventh—and he saw others standing around. So he said to them, ‘Why do you stand idle the whole day?’ ⁷They answered, ‘Because no one has hired us.’ The master said, ‘Go and work in my vineyard.’

⁸When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager,

‘Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last and ending with the first.’⁹ Those who had gone to work at the eleventh hour came up and were each given a silver coin.¹⁰ When it was the turn of the first, they thought they would receive more.¹¹ But they, too, received one silver coin. On receiving it, they began to grumble against the landowner.

¹²They said, ‘These last, hardly worked an hour; yet you have treated them the same as us who have endured the heavy work of the day and the heat.’¹³ The owner said to one of them, ‘Friend, I have not been unjust to you. Did we not agree on one silver coin per day?’¹⁴ So, take what is yours and go. I want to give to the last the same as I give to you.¹⁵ Don’t I have the right to do as I please with what is mine? Why are you envious when I am kind?’

¹⁶So will it be: the last will be first, the first will be last.”

MATTHEW 20:1-16

Read: This parable is disconcerting, but it illustrates well the generous love of God that goes beyond the agreed upon. Like the landowner, God gives us His grace without taking into account our merits, but the acceptance of His call.

Reflect: What things does this parable suggest? Does your generosity remain in what is “just,” or does the Spirit encourage you to go beyond the agreed upon?

Pray: Pray for God to help you have a generous, supportive heart, and free from any envy.

Act: Celebrate the accomplishments of someone close to you and see in it the generous presence of God.

Third prophecy of the passion

(Mk 10:32; Lk 18:31)

¹⁷When Jesus was going to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside and said to them, ¹⁸“See, we are going to Jerusalem. There, the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and the teachers of the law; and they will condemn him to death. ¹⁹They will hand him over to the foreigners, who will mock him, scourge him and crucify him. But he will be raised to life on the third day.”

The mother of James and John asks for the first seats

(Mk 10:35)

²⁰Then the mother of James and John came to Jesus with her sons, and she knelt down to ask a favor. ²¹Jesus said to her, “What do you want?” And she answered, “Here you have my two sons. Grant that they may sit, one at your right hand and one at your left in your kingdom.”

²²Jesus said to the brothers, “You do not know what you are asking. Can you drink the cup that I am about to drink?” They answered, “We can.” ²³Jesus replied, “You will indeed drink my cup, but to sit at my right or at my left is not for me to grant. That will be for those for whom my Father has prepared it.”

²⁴The other ten heard all this and were angry with the two brothers. ²⁵Then Jesus called them to him and said, “You know that the rulers of nations behave like tyrants and the powerful oppress them. ²⁶It shall not be so among you: whoever wants to be great in your community, let him minister to the community. ²⁷And if you want to be the first of all, make yourself the servant of all. ²⁸Be like the Son of Man who came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life to redeem many.”

²⁹As they left Jericho, a great crowd followed them on the way. ³⁰Two blind men were sitting by the roadside; and when they heard that Jesus was passing by, they began to call out, “Son of David, have mercy on us!” ³¹The people told them to keep quiet. But they shouted even louder, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!” ³²Jesus stopped, called out to them, and asked, “What do you want me to do for you?” ³³They said, “Lord, open our eyes.”

³⁴Jesus was moved with compassion and touched their eyes. Immediately, they recovered their sight, and they began to follow Jesus.

MATTHEW 20:17-34

Read: Jesus predicts his passion for the third time. The disciples still do not understand that the kingdom that Jesus announces is love, solidarity, service, and dedication to others.

Reflect: What is Christian glory? For Mother Teresa of Calcutta, it consisted in sharing her life with the less fortunate ones. And for you?

Pray: Ask the Lord Jesus for the grace of being able to follow his path of service and dedication to others.

Act: Collaborate actively and discreetly (without bragging) in a charity action toward the poorest promoted by your parish or diocese.

Jesus enters Jerusalem

(Mk 11:1; Lk 19:28; Jn 12:12)

21 ¹When they drew near Jerusalem and arrived at Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples, ²saying, “Go to the village ahead and there you will find a donkey tied up with its colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. ³If anyone says something to you, say that the Lord needs them and that he will send them back immediately.”

⁴This happened in fulfillment of what the prophet said: ⁵*Say to the daughter of Zion: See, your king comes to you in all simplicity riding on a donkey, a beast of burden, with its colt.*

⁶The disciples went, as Jesus had instructed them ⁷and they brought the donkey with its colt. Then they threw their cloaks on its back, and Jesus sat on them.

⁸Many people also spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut leafy branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹The people who walked ahead of Jesus and those who followed him began to shout, “*Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!*”

¹⁰When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was disturbed. The people asked, “Who is this man?” ¹¹And the crowd answered, “This is the Prophet Jesus from Nazareth of Galilee.”

Jesus expels the dealers

(Mk 11:11; Lk 13:35; Jn 2:14)

¹²Jesus went into the temple and drove out all who were buying and selling in the temple area. He overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the stools of those who sold pigeons. ¹³And he said to them, “*It is written: My house shall be called a house of prayer. But you have turned it into a den of thieves.*”

¹⁴The blind and the lame came to him in the temple and Jesus healed them.

¹⁵The chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things that Jesus did and the children shouting in the temple area, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” ¹⁶They became angry and said to Jesus, “Do you hear what they say?” Jesus answered them, “Yes. But have you never read this text: *From the mouths of children and infants you have perfect praise?*”

¹⁷So leaving them, he went out of the city and came to Bethany, where he spent the night.

MATTHEW 21:1-17

Read: Messianic entrance of Jesus in Jerusalem. People acclaim him. Jesus expels the sellers from the Temple.

Reflect: Recognizing and confessing Jesus as Messiah demands the gift of faith. What would it imply in your daily life to recognize Jesus as Messiah?

Pray: Confess Jesus as Messiah, as Christ, and ask him to help you live as a Christian.

Act: Do what the Spirit inspired you in your prayer.

Jesus curses the fig tree

(Mk 11:12; Lk 13:6)

¹⁸While returning to the city early in the morning, Jesus felt hungry. ¹⁹He noticed a fig tree by the road, went up to it and found nothing on it but leaves. So he said to the tree, “Never again bear fruit!” And immediately, the fig tree withered.

²⁰When the disciples saw this, they were astonished and said, “How did the fig tree suddenly dry up?” ²¹Jesus said, “Truly, I say to you: if you had faith and did not doubt, not only could you do what I did to the fig tree, but you could even say to that mountain, ‘Go and throw yourself into the sea!’ and it would be done. ²²Whatever you ask for in prayer full of faith, you will receive.”

Jesus' response to the authorities

(Mk 11:27; Lk 20:1)

²³ Jesus had entered the temple and was teaching, when the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the Jewish authorities came to him and asked, "What authority have you to act like this? Who gave you the authority to do all this?"

²⁴ Jesus answered them, "I will also ask you one question. If you answer me, then I will also tell you by what authority I do these things."
²⁵ Where did John's baptism come from? From heaven or from people?"

They discussed this among themselves saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say, 'Then why did you not believe him?'" ²⁶ And if we say, 'The baptism of John was merely something human,' we've got to beware of the people, for all consider John to be a prophet."
²⁷ So they answered Jesus, "We do not know."

And Jesus said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things."

MATTHEW 21:18-27

Read: The story about "the dry fig tree" is strange: Jesus acts so capriciously. It was probably a parable that alluded to the people of Israel who rejected the message of Jesus, and that was why it was sterile.

Reflect: Even though this story may have referred to the people of Israel, its message also affects us. Christians must make the fruits of Jesus' message manifest in the world.

Pray: In prayer, ask the Lord to help you discern if your actions correspond to what Jesus expects from his followers.

Act: Examine your conscience, give thanks to the Lord if your actions have manifested the presence of his kingdom, or ask that be manifested the next day.

The parable of the two sons

²⁸ Jesus went on to say, "What do you think of this? A man had two sons. He went to the first and said to him, 'Son, go and work today in my vineyard.'
²⁹ And the son answered, 'I don't want to.' But later he thought better of it and went.
³⁰ Then the father went to his other son and

said the same thing to him. This son replied, 'I will go, sir,' but he did not go.

³¹Which of the two did what the father wanted?" They answered, "The first." And Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you: the publicans and the prostitutes are ahead of you on the way to the kingdom of heaven. ³²For John came to show you the way of goodness and you did not believe him, but the publicans and the prostitutes did. You were witnesses of this, but you neither repented nor believed him.

The parable of the tenants

(Mk 12:1; Lk 20:9)

³³Listen to another example: There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a fence around it, dug a hole for the winepress, built a watchtower, leased the vineyard to tenants and then, went to a distant country. ³⁴When harvest time came, the landowner sent his servants to the tenants to collect his share of the harvest. ³⁵But the tenants seized his servants, beat one, killed another, and stoned a third.

³⁶Again, the owner sent more servants; but they were treated in the same way.

³⁷Finally, he sent his son, thinking, 'They will respect my son.' ³⁸But when the tenants saw the son, they thought, 'This is the one who is to inherit the vineyard. Let us kill him and his inheritance will be ours.' ³⁹So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.

⁴⁰Now, what will the owner of the vineyard do with the tenants when he comes?" ⁴¹They said to him, "He will bring those evil men to an evil end and lease the vineyard to others, who will pay him in due time."

⁴²And Jesus replied, "Have you never read what the Scriptures say? *The stone, which the builders rejected, has become the cornerstone. This was the Lord's doing and we marvel at it.* ⁴³Therefore I say to you: the kingdom of heaven will be taken from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit.

⁴⁴(Whoever falls on this stone, he will be broken to pieces; on whomsoever this stone falls, he will be ground to dust.)"

⁴⁵When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard these parables, they realized that Jesus was referring to them. ⁴⁶They would have arrested him, but they were afraid of the crowd who regarded him as a prophet.

The wedding feast

(Lk 14:15)

22¹ Jesus continued speaking to them in parables:

²“This story throws light on the kingdom of heaven: A king gave a wedding banquet for his son. ³He sent his servants to call the invited guests to the banquet, but the guests refused to come.

⁴Again, he sent other servants, instructing them to say to the invited guests, ‘I have prepared a banquet, slaughtered my fattened calves and other animals, and now, everything is ready. Come to the wedding!’ ⁵But they paid no attention and went away, some to their farms and some to their work. ⁶Others seized the servants of the king, insulted them and killed them.

⁷The king was furious. He sent his troops to destroy those murderers and burn their city. ⁸Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding banquet is prepared, but the invited guests were not worthy. ⁹Go instead to the main streets and invite everyone you find to the wedding feast.’

¹⁰The servants went out into the streets and gathered all they found, good and bad alike, so that the hall was filled with guests.

¹¹The king came in to see the wedding guests, and he noticed a man not wearing a wedding garment. ¹²So he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in without the wedding clothes?’ But the man remained silent. ¹³So the king said to his servants, ‘Bind his hands and feet and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

¹⁴For many are called, but few are chosen.”

MATTHEW 21:28–22:14

Read: Jesus questions the actions of the religious leaders of his time: instead of preparing the people to receive the Messiah, they do the opposite. That is why his vineyard (his people) will be given to those who are ready to welcome it and make it produce fruit.

Reflect: Can you see yourself reflected in any of the parables? How do these parables affect your life?

Pray: Pray to the Lord for the leaders of the Church. May they

be able to prepare the people to accept the message of Jesus and to produce in the world the fruits that he expects.

Act: Pray this week for the leaders of the Church.

Paying taxes to Caesar

(Mk 12:13; Lk 20:20)

¹⁵The Pharisees went away, considering how they could trap Jesus by his own words. ¹⁶They sent to him their disciples, along with members of Herod's party, saying, "Master, we know that you are an honest man and truly teach God's way. You are not influenced by others, nor are you afraid of anyone. ¹⁷So tell us what you think: is it against the law to pay taxes to Caesar or not?"

¹⁸But Jesus understood their evil intentions and said to them, "Hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me? ¹⁹Show me the coin with which you pay taxes."

They showed him a silver coin ²⁰and Jesus said to them, "Whose head is this and whose name?" ²¹They answered, "Caesar's." Then Jesus replied, "So give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and give to God what is God's."

²²Astonished by his answer, they left him and went away.

The resurrection of the dead

(Mk 12:18; Lk 20:27)

²³That same day, some of the Sadducees came to Jesus. Since they claim that there is no resurrection, they questioned him in this way: ²⁴"Master, Moses said that if a man dies without any children, his brother must take the wife and have a child, who will be considered the child of the deceased man. ²⁵Now, there were seven brothers. The first married a woman, but he died; since he had no children, he left his wife to his brother. ²⁶The same thing happened to the second brother, and to the third, until the seventh. ²⁷Then, last of all, the woman died. ²⁸Now, in the resurrection of the dead, to which of the seven will she be wife, for they all had her as a wife?"

²⁹Jesus answered, "You are totally wrong because you understand neither the Scriptures nor the power of God. ³⁰First of all, in the resurrection of the dead, neither men nor women will marry, but they will be like the

angels in heaven. ³¹As for the resurrection of the dead, have you never reflected on what God said to you: ³²*I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?* He is God, not of the dead but of the living.”

³³The people who heard him were astonished at his teaching.

³⁴When the Pharisees heard how Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they assembled together. ³⁵One of them, a lawyer, questioned him to test him, ³⁶“Teacher, which commandment of the law is the greatest?”

³⁷Jesus answered, “*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.* ³⁸This is the first and the most important of the commandments. ³⁹The second is like it: *You shall love your neighbor as yourself.* ⁴⁰The whole law and the prophets are founded on these two commandments.”

The Messiah, Son of God

(Mk 12:35; Lk 20:41)

⁴¹While the Pharisees were assembled, Jesus asked them, ⁴²“What do you think of the Messiah? Whose son is he?” They answered, “David’s.”

⁴³Jesus then asked them, “Why did David, inspired by God, call the Messiah Lord? For David says in a psalm: ⁴⁴*The Lord said to my Lord: Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.* ⁴⁵If David calls him Lord, how can he be his son?”

⁴⁶No one could answer him, not even a word. From that day on, no one dared question him anymore.

MATTHEW 22:15-46

Read: Matthew develops here four controversies that the Jewish people lived at that time: Is it appropriate to pay tribute to the Romans? Can we wait for the resurrection of the dead? What is the most important precept of the Law? And what does it mean that the Messiah will be David’s son?

Reflect: Do such controversies make sense today? Should the Church not interfere in matters of the State? In your daily life, are you aware that life is fragile, but does your faith wait for the resurrection of the dead and eternal life? What does it imply in your day-to-day life that “love” is the most important precept? Describe the messianism you expect from Jesus.

Pray: Pray to the Lord to help you manifest in your daily life that love of God and neighbor is the most important value of your faith. Also, give thanks for the gift of resurrection and eternal life.

Act: Be aware of all the important actions of your daily life and assess whether you are moved by love for God and your neighbor.

Do not imitate the teachers of the law

(Lk 20:45; Mk 12:38)

23¹ Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples,

²“The teachers of the law and the Pharisees have sat down on the chair of Moses. ³So you shall do and observe all they say; but do not do as they do, ⁴for they do not do what they say. They tie up heavy burdens and load them on the shoulders of the people, but they do not even lift a finger to move them. ⁵They do everything in order to be seen by people: they wear very wide bands of the law around their foreheads and robes with large tassels. ⁶They enjoy the first places at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues, ⁷and they like being greeted in the marketplace and being called ‘Master’ by the people.

⁸But you, do not let yourselves be called Master, because you have only one Master, and all of you are brothers and sisters. ⁹Neither should you call anyone on earth Father because you have only one Father, he who is in heaven. ¹⁰Nor should you be called Leader, because Christ is the only Leader for you. ¹¹Let the greatest among you be the servant of all. ¹²For whoever makes himself great shall be humbled, and whoever humbles himself shall be made great.

Seven woes for the Pharisees

(Lk 11:39)

¹³But woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the door to the kingdom of heaven in people’s faces. You, yourselves, do not enter it, nor do you allow others to do so.

¹⁴Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You devour

widows' property; and as a show, you pray long prayers! Therefore, you shall receive greater condemnation. ¹⁵Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel by sea and land to make a single convert; yet, once he is converted, you make him twice as fit for hell as yourselves!

¹⁶Woe to you, blind guides! You say: To swear by the temple is not binding, but to swear by the gold of the temple is binding. ¹⁷Foolish men! Blind men! Which is of more worth: the gold in the temple, or the temple, which makes the gold a sacred treasure? You say: ¹⁸To swear by the altar is not binding, but to swear by the offering on the altar is binding. ¹⁹How blind you are! Which is of more value: the offering on the altar, or the altar, which makes the offering sacred? ²⁰Whoever swears by the altar, is swearing by the altar and by everything on it. ²¹Whoever swears by the temple, is swearing by the temple and by God, who dwells in the temple. ²²Whoever swears by heaven, is swearing by the throne of God and by him, who is seated on it.

²³Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You do not forget the mint, anise and cumin seeds when you demand the tenth of everything; but then, you forget what is most fundamental in the law: justice, mercy, and faith! You should have done these things without neglecting the others. ²⁴Blind guides! You strain out a mosquito but swallow a camel.

²⁵Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You fill the plate and the cup with theft and violence and then pronounce a blessing over them. ²⁶Blind Pharisee! Purify the inside first then the outside, too, will be purified.

²⁷Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, beautiful in appearance; but inside there are only dead bones and uncleanness. ²⁸In the same way, you appear religious to others, but you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness within.

²⁹Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the monuments of the righteous. ³⁰You say: Had we lived in the time of our ancestors, we would not have joined them in shedding the blood of the prophets. ³¹So, you, yourselves, confess to be the descendants of those who murdered the prophets. ³²And now, finish off what your ancestors began!

³³Serpents, race of vipers! How can you escape condemnation to hell?

³⁴Therefore, indeed, I send prophets, wise men and teachers to you; but some you will murder and crucify; some you will flog in your synagogues; some you will drive from one city to the next.

³⁵Because of this, you will be accountable for all the innocent blood that has been shed on the earth, from the blood of upright Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the altar and the Sanctuary. ³⁶Truly I say to you: the present generation will pay for all this.

³⁷Jerusalem, Jerusalem! You murder the prophets and stone those sent to you by God. How often would I have gathered your children together, just as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings; but you refused! ³⁸Look! Your house shall be left to you, deserted! ³⁹I tell you, that you will no longer see me until you say: *Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!*

MATTHEW 23:1-39

Read: Jesus makes a harsh criticism of the Pharisees and lawyers who claim to be “teachers of the Law” and yet live as if they did not know it. Jesus wants his disciples to be coherent with what they preach.

Reflect: What things does the following expression suggest: “You do and do what they (the Pharisees and the lawyers) say, but do not imitate them; because they say and do not”?

Pray: Pray to the Lord to give us the grace of a coherent life, without masks or hypocrisy.

Act: Write down the concrete things you do as an act of faith. Check if they manifest the centrality of Jesus’ message or if they only remain in appearances.

The ruin of Jerusalem and the end of the world

(Mk 13; Lk 21; 17:23; 12:36)

24¹ Jesus left the temple and as he was walking away, his disciples came to him and pointed out to him the imposing temple buildings. ²But he said, “You see all this? Truly I say to you: not one stone will be left upon another here. All will be torn down.”

³Later, when Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples

approached him privately and asked, “Tell us when this will take place. What sign will be given us of your coming, and the end of the world?”

⁴Jesus answered, “Be on your guard; and let no one mislead you. ⁵Many will come in my name, saying: ‘I am the Messiah,’ and they will mislead many people. ⁶You will hear about wars and rumors of wars; but do not be troubled, for these things must happen; but the end is still to come. ⁷Nations will fight one another and kingdoms oppose one another. There will be famine and earthquakes in different places; ⁸but all this is only the beginning, the first pains of childbirth.

⁹Then, they will arrest you; they will torture and kill you. All nations will hate you, for you bear my name. ¹⁰In those days, many will be led into sin; they will betray and hate one another. ¹¹False prophets will appear and mislead many; ¹²and because of such great wickedness, love in many people will grow cold. ¹³But the one who holds out to the end will be saved. ¹⁴The Good News of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world, to all the nations, a Testament to all peoples. Then will the end come.

MATTHEW 24:1-14

Read: Beginning of the last great discourse of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew: the eschatological discourse (about the last days). Jesus leaves behind the temple area (predicts its destruction) and on the Mount of Olives answers the question of his disciples about the end of the world.

Reflect: Do you understand the answers of Jesus to his disciples? How do you think the end of the world will be? What do you think about the end of your time in the world?

Pray: Pray that the Good News of Jesus may manifest itself more and more in your life, in your family, and in your society. The important thing is not to know the date of the end of the world, but to be prepared for it at all times.

Act: Make a list of the most important actions you would like to take on the last day of your life. Try to make them this day.

¹⁵When you see what the prophet Daniel spoke about, *the idol of the invader set up in the temple* (let the reader understand!), ¹⁶then let those in Judea flee to the mountains.

¹⁷If you are on the housetop, do not come down to take anything with you. ¹⁸If you are in the field, do not turn back to fetch your coat. ¹⁹How hard it will be for pregnant women and for mothers with babies at the breast! ²⁰Pray that you don't have to flee in winter, or on a Sabbath; ²¹for there will be great tribulation, such as was never known from the beginning of the world until now and is never to be known again. ²²And if that time were not to be shortened, no one would survive. But God will shorten those days for the sake of his chosen ones. ²³Then, if anyone says to you, 'Look! The Messiah is here! He is there!', do not believe it. ²⁴For false Messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform signs and wonders so great that they would deceive even God's chosen people if that were possible. ²⁵See, I have told you everything ahead of time.

²⁶So, if anyone tells you, 'He is in the desert,' do not go. If they say, 'He is in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. ²⁷For the coming of the Son of Man will be like lightning, which flashes from the east even to the west. ²⁸Wherever the body is, the vultures will gather.

The coming of the Son of Man

(Mk 13:28; Lk 17:20)

²⁹And later, after that distress, the sun will grow dark, the moon will not give its light, the stars will fall from the skies, and the whole universe will be shaken. ³⁰Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven. As all the nations of the earth beat their breasts, *they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven* with divine power and great glory. ³¹He will send his angels to sound the trumpet; and they will gather his chosen ones from the four winds, from one end of the earth to the other.

MATTHEW 24:15-31

Read: Jesus' discourse on the last days continues. Matthew combines events of his time with the teachings of Jesus. The cosmic commotions with bleak images indicate that the final judgment may come suddenly and unexpectedly to everyone, so we must be prepared.

Reflect: Do you think we live in apocalyptic times? Are things worse than before? Remember that there have always been great tragedies in the world. Should we interpret this text to the letter? What does all this suggest?

Pray: Ask the Lord to comfort those who suffer due to natural catastrophes or human unreason like wars or genocides. Also, ask for the grace of having words and gestures that are appropriate for such circumstances.

Act: Find out about the work done by institutions that are dedicated to alleviating the suffering caused by natural disasters, wars or genocides. Collaborate, to the extent of your possibilities, with any of them.

³²Learn a lesson from the fig tree: when its branches grow tender and its leaves begin to sprout, you know that summer is near. ³³In the same way, when you see all these things, know that the time is near, even at the door. ³⁴Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have happened. ³⁵Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

³⁶But, as for that Day and that Hour, no one knows when it will come, not even the angels of God, nor the Son, but only the Father.

³⁷At the coming of the Son of Man, it will be just as it was in the time of Noah. ³⁸In those days before the Flood, people were eating and drinking and marrying, until that day when Noah went into the ark. ³⁹Yet, they did not know what would happen, until the flood came and swept them away. So will it be at the coming of the Son of Man: ⁴⁰of two men in the field, one will be taken and the other left; ⁴¹of two women grinding wheat together at the mill, one will be taken and the other left.

Be on the alert

⁴²Stay awake then, for you do not know on what day your Lord will come. ⁴³Obviously, if the owner of the house knew at what time the thief was coming, he would certainly stay up and not allow his house to be broken into. ⁴⁴So be alert, for the Son of Man will come at the hour you least expect.

⁴⁵Imagine a faithful and prudent servant, whom his master has put in charge of his household, to give them food at the proper time. ⁴⁶Fortunate, indeed, is that servant, whom his master will find at work when he comes. ⁴⁷Truly, I say to you, his lord will entrust him with everything he has.

⁴⁸Not so with the bad servant who thinks, 'My master is delayed.'

⁴⁹And he begins to ill-treat his fellow servants while eating and drinking with drunkards. ⁵⁰But his master will come on the day he does not know and at the hour he least expects. ⁵¹He will punish that servant severely and place him with the hypocrites. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The ten bridesmaids

(Mk 13:35; Lk 13:25)

25¹This story throws light on what will happen in the kingdom of heaven: Ten bridesmaids went out with their lamps to meet the bridegroom. ²Five of them were foolish, and five were sensible.

³The careless bridesmaids took their lamps as they were and did not take extra oil. ⁴But those who were sensible took flasks of oil with their lamps. ⁵As the bridegroom delayed, they all grew drowsy and fell asleep.

⁶But at midnight, a cry rang out, 'The bridegroom is here, come out and meet him!' ⁷All the maidens woke up at once and trimmed their lamps. ⁸Then the foolish ones said to the sensible ones, 'Give us some oil for our lamps are going out.' ⁹The sensible ones answered, 'There may not be enough for us and for you. You had better go to those who sell and buy some for yourselves.'

¹⁰When the bridegroom came, the foolish maidens were out buying oil, but those who were ready went with him into the wedding feast and the doors were shut.

¹¹Later the other bridesmaids arrived and called out, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!' ¹²But he answered, 'Truly I do not know you.'

¹³So stay awake, for you do not know the day nor the hour.

The parable of the talents

(Lk 19:12; Mk 4:25; 13:34)

¹⁴Imagine someone who, before going abroad, summoned his servants to entrust his property to them. ¹⁵He gave five talents of silver to one servant, two talents, to another servant and one talent to a third, to each, according to his ability; and he went away. ¹⁶He who received five talents went at once to do business with the talents and gained another five. ¹⁷The one who received two talents did the same and gained another two. ¹⁸But the one who received one talent dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

¹⁹After a long time, the master of those servants returned and asked for a reckoning. ²⁰The one who had received five talents came with another five talents, saying, 'Lord, you entrusted me with five talents, but see, I have gained five more.' ²¹The master answered, 'Well done, good and faithful servant since you have been faithful in a few things, I will entrust you in charge of many things. Come and share the joy of your master.'

²²Then the one who had received two talents came and said, 'Lord, you entrusted me with two talents; with them, I have gained two more.' ²³The master said, 'Well done, good and faithful servant since you have been faithful in little things, I will entrust you in charge of many things. Come and share the joy of your master.'

²⁴Finally, the one who had received one talent came and said, 'Master, I know that you are a hard man. You reap what you have not sown and gather what you have not scattered. ²⁵I was afraid, so I hid your money in the ground. Here, take what is yours!' ²⁶But his master replied, 'Wicked and worthless servant, you know that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered. ²⁷You should have deposited my money in the bank and given it back to me with interest on my return.

²⁸Therefore, take the talent from him and give it to the one who has ten. ²⁹For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who are unproductive, even what they have will be taken from them. ³⁰As for that useless servant, throw him out into outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

MATTHEW 24:32—25:30

Read: Jesus' discourse on the last days continues. Through parables, Jesus exhorts his followers to be attentive, vigilant, prepared for his second coming.

Reflect: What things do these parables suggest for your daily life? Do you consider yourself ready for the coming of the Lord? Do you invest well the gifts you have (your talents) to make of this a better world?

Pray: In prayer, examine your actions, especially those you consider most important. Are you prepared for the final encounter

with the Lord? Or, on the contrary, do they numb you and take you away from him?

Act: Invest your time and your talents in those things that will help you in your final encounter with the Lord.

The last judgment

(Lk 9:26)

³¹When the Son of Man comes in his glory with all his angels, he will sit on the throne of his glory. ³²All the nations will be brought before him; and as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, ³³so will he do with them, placing the sheep on his right hand and the goats on his left.

³⁴The king will say to those on his right, 'Come, blessed of my Father! Take possession of the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world. ³⁵For I was hungry and you fed me. I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. ³⁶I was a stranger and you welcomed me into your home. I was naked and you clothed me. I was sick and you visited me. I was in prison and you came to see me.'

³⁷Then the righteous will ask him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and give you food; thirsty and give you something to drink; ³⁸or a stranger and welcome you; or naked and clothe you? ³⁹When did we see you sick, or in prison, and go to see you?' ⁴⁰The king will answer, 'Truly, I say to you: just as you did it for one of the least of these brothers or sisters of mine, you did it to me.'

⁴¹Then he will say to those on his left, 'Go, cursed people, out of my sight into the eternal fire, which has been prepared for the devil and his angels! ⁴²For I was hungry and you did not give me anything to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink; ⁴³I was a stranger and you did not welcome me into your house; I was naked and you did not clothe me; I was sick, and in prison, and you did not visit me.'

⁴⁴They, too, will ask, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry, thirsty, naked or a stranger, sick or in prison, and did not help you?' ⁴⁵The king will answer them, 'Truly I say to you: just as you did not do it for one of the least of these, you did not do it for me.'

⁴⁶And these will go into eternal punishment; but the just, to eternal life."

MATTHEW 25:31-46

Read: End of Jesus' discourse on the last days. Jesus offers the ultimate criterion of Christian salvation: love, solidarity toward the fallen and abandoned brother and sister.

Reflect: What does this criterion suggest? Is it not too mundane, that it erodes religious obligations? If the important thing is to do good, why believe in Jesus? Why be Christians?

Pray: Ask the Lord so that, with the strength of the Holy Spirit, you may recognize the face of God in the face of the needy, and can worship Him by raising the fallen dignity of those brothers and sisters.

Act: Visit a relative or neighbor in need and offer your support for free.

26¹When Jesus had finished all he wanted to say, he told his disciples, ²“You know that in two days' time it will be the Passover, and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified.”

³Then the chief priests and the elders of the people gathered together at the palace of the High Priest, whose name was Caiaphas, ⁴and they agreed to arrest Jesus and to kill him. ⁵But they said, “Not during the feast, lest there be an uprising among the people.”

The anointing at Bethany

(Jn 12; Mk 14:9)

⁶While Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, ⁷a woman came up to him, carrying an alabaster jar of expensive perfume. She poured it on Jesus' head as he was at table. ⁸Seeing this, the disciples became indignant and said, “What a useless waste! ⁹The perfume could have been sold for a large sum and the money given to the poor.”

¹⁰Jesus was aware of this, and said to them, “Why are you troubling this woman? What she has done for me is indeed a good work. ¹¹You have the poor with you always; but me, you will not have always. ¹²When she anointed my body with perfume, she was preparing me for my burial. ¹³Truly I say to you: wherever the gospel is proclaimed, all over the world, what she has done will be told in memory of her.”

¹⁴Then one of the Twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, ¹⁵“How much will you give me if I hand him over to you?” They promised to give him thirty pieces of silver; ¹⁶and from then on, he kept looking for the best way to hand Jesus over to them.

MATTHEW 26:1-16

Read: Beginning of Jesus’ passion. The religious authorities of Jerusalem decide to kill him. Jesus is aware that his death is near. Judas betrays the Master.

Reflect: What is bothering you the most about Jesus’ message? If Jesus foresees his death near, why do you think he does not run away from it?

Pray: Pray to the Lord so that in your daily life you may not abandon your commitments for a better world facing the problems and difficulties of life.

Act: Leave yourself in the hands of God. Whenever you remember the problem that bothers you and that you do not know how to overcome it, close your eyes and say inwardly: “In your hands, Lord, I commend my spirit.”

The last supper

(Mk 14:12; Lk 22:7; Jn 13:1)

¹⁷On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus and said to him, “Where do you want us to prepare the Passover meal for you?” ¹⁸Jesus answered, “Go into the city, to the house of a certain man, and tell him, ‘The Master says: My hour is near and I will celebrate the Passover with my disciples in your house.’”

¹⁹The disciples did as Jesus had ordered and prepared the Passover meal.

²⁰When it was evening, Jesus sat at table with the Twelve. ²¹While they were eating, Jesus said, “Truly, I say to you: one of you will betray me.” ²²They were deeply distressed, and they asked him, one after the other, “You do not mean me, do you, Lord?”

²³He answered, “*The one who dips his bread with me will betray me.*” ²⁴The Son of Man is going as the Scriptures say he will. But alas for that one who betrays the Son of Man: better for him not to have been born.”

²⁵Judas, the one who would betray him, also asked, “You do not mean me, Master, do you?” Jesus replied, “You have said it.”

²⁶While they were eating, Jesus took bread, said a blessing and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take and eat: this is my body.” ²⁷Then he took a cup, and gave thanks, and passed it to them, saying, “Drink this, all of you, ²⁸for this is my blood, the blood of the Covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. ²⁹Yes, I say to you: From now on I will not taste the fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink new wine with you in my Father’s kingdom.”

³⁰After singing psalms of praise, they went out to the Mount of Olives. ³¹Then Jesus said to them, “You will falter tonight because of me and all of you will fall. For Scripture says: *I will strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered.* ³²But after my resurrection, I will go before you to Galilee.”

³³Peter responded, “Even though all stumble and fall, I will never fall away!” ³⁴Jesus replied, “Truly I say to you: this very night, before the cock crows, you will deny me three times.” ³⁵Peter said, “Even if I must die with you, I will never deny you!” And all the disciples said the same thing.

MATTHEW 26:17-35

Read: Jesus celebrates his last supper with his family (his disciples) and institutes the Eucharist. Discover Judas as a traitor and announces the abandonment of all of them.

Reflect: What does the celebration of the Eucharist mean to you? Are you willing to share your life, to be Eucharist, with others for the construction of a better world, the kingdom of God?

Pray: As a family, pray that Christians will be the leaven of a better world, in words, but above all, with our way of living.

Act: Manifest today your faith in Jesus Christ not with words (forbidden to make speeches), but with concrete actions and gestures.

Gethsemane

(Mk 14:32; Lk 22:39)

³⁶ Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane and he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I go over there to pray."

³⁷ He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee with him and he began to be overwhelmed by anguish and distress. ³⁸ And he said to them, "My soul is full of sorrow, even to death. Remain here and stay awake with me."

³⁹ He went a little farther and fell to the ground, with his face touching the earth, and prayed, "Father, if it is possible, take this cup away from me. Yet, not what I will, but what you will." ⁴⁰ He went back to his disciples and found them asleep; and he said to Peter, "Could you not stay awake with me for one hour? ⁴¹ Stay awake and pray, so that you may not fall into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

⁴² He went away again and prayed, "Father, if this cup cannot be taken away from me without my drinking it, your will must be done." ⁴³ When he came back to his disciples, he again found them asleep, for they could not keep their eyes open. ⁴⁴ So leaving them again, Jesus went to pray for the third time, saying the same words.

⁴⁵ Then he came back to his disciples and said to them, "You can sleep on now and take your rest! The hour has come, and the Son of Man will be handed over to sinners. ⁴⁶ Get up, let us go! See, the betrayer is here!"

Jesus arrested

⁴⁷ Jesus was still speaking when Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived. With him was a crowd armed with swords and clubs who had been sent by the chief priests and the elders of the people. ⁴⁸ The traitor had given them a sign: "The one I kiss, he is the man; arrest him!" ⁴⁹ Judas went directly to Jesus and said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and he kissed him. ⁵⁰ Jesus said to him, "Friend, do what you came to do." Then they laid hands on Jesus and arrested him.

⁵¹ One of those who was with Jesus drew his sword and struck at the servant of the High Priest cutting off his ear. ⁵² Then, Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back in its place! For all who take hold of the sword will die by the sword. ⁵³ Do you not know that I could call on my Father, and he would at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? ⁵⁴ If Scripture says that these things must be, should Scripture not be fulfilled?"

⁵⁵At that hour, Jesus said to the crowd, “Why do you come to arrest me with swords and clubs, as if I were a robber? Day after day I sat among you, teaching in the temple, yet you did not arrest me. ⁵⁶But all this has happened in fulfillment of what the Prophets said.” Then all his disciples deserted Jesus and fled.

Jesus before the Sanhedrin

(Mk 14:53; Lk 22:54)

⁵⁷Those who had arrested Jesus took him to the house of the High Priest Caiaphas, where the teachers of the law and the elders were assembled.

⁵⁸Peter followed Jesus at a distance, as far as the courtyard of the High Priest; he entered and sat with the guards, waiting to see the end.

⁵⁹The chief priests and the whole Supreme Council needed some false evidence against Jesus so that they might put him to death. ⁶⁰But they were unable to find any, even though false witnesses came forward. ⁶¹At last, two men came forward and declared, “This man said, ‘I am able to destroy the Temple of God and rebuild it in three days.’”

⁶²The High Priest stood up and asked Jesus, “What is the evidence against you? Have you no answer to the things they testify against you?”

⁶³But Jesus remained silent.

So the High Priest said to him, “In the name of the living God, I command you to tell us: Are you the Messiah, the Son of God?” ⁶⁴Jesus answered, “You have said it yourself. But I tell you: from now on, you will see *the Son of Man, seated at the right hand of God most powerful, and coming on the clouds of heaven.*”

⁶⁵Then the High Priest tore his clothes, saying, “He has blasphemed. What more evidence do we need? You have heard the blasphemy!

⁶⁶What is your decision?” They answered, “He must die!” ⁶⁷Then they spat in his face and slapped him, while others hit him with their fists, ⁶⁸saying, “Messiah, prophesy! Who hit you?”

Peter disowns Jesus

(Mk 14:66; Lk 22:56)

⁶⁹Meanwhile, as Peter sat outside in the courtyard, a young servant-girl said to him, “You also were with Jesus of Galilee.” ⁷⁰But he denied it before everyone, saying, “I do not know what you are talking about.”

⁷¹Later, as Peter was going out through the gateway, another servant-

girl saw him and said to the bystanders, “This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.”

⁷²Peter again denied it with an oath, saying, “I do not know the man.”

⁷³After a little while, those who were standing there approached Peter and said to him, “Surely you are one of the Galileans: your accent gives you away.” ⁷⁴Peter began to justify himself with curses and oaths, protesting that he did not know Jesus. Just then, a cock crowed.

⁷⁵And Peter remembered the words of Jesus, “Before the cock crows, you will deny me three times.” And going out, he wept bitterly.

MATTHEW 26:57-75

Read: Religious authorities bring Jesus to trial. They try to condemn him to death with false witnesses, but Jesus declares himself Son of God, and for that reason, he is condemned. Peter rejects any relationship with the Master.

Reflect: Do you consider Jesus guilty of blasphemy? What would it be to blaspheme today? What do you think about Peter? Is your attitude worse than Judas'? Why?

Pray: Ask God so that Christians can confess Jesus as “the Son of God,” and not only with words, but above all, with our way of life.

Act: Manifest today your faith in Jesus Christ not with words (forbidden to make speeches), but with concrete actions and gestures.

27¹Early in the morning, all the chief priests and the elders of the people met together to look for ways of putting Jesus to death. ²They had him bound and delivered him to Pilate, the governor.

The death of Judas

³When Judas, the traitor, realized that Jesus had been condemned, he was filled with remorse, and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders, ⁴saying, “I have sinned by betraying an innocent man to death.” They answered, “What does it matter to us? That is your concern.” ⁵So, throwing down the money in the temple, he went away and hanged himself.

⁶The chief priests picked up the money and said, "This money cannot be put into the temple treasury, for it is the price of blood." ⁷So they conferred together and decided to buy the potter's field with the money and to make it a cemetery for foreigners. ⁸That is why, to this day, that place has been called the *Field of Blood*.

⁹What the prophet Jeremiah said was fulfilled: *They took the thirty pieces of silver, the price which the Sons of Israel estimated as his value,* ¹⁰*and they gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord commanded me.*

Jesus before Pilate

(Mk 15:1; Lk 23:2; Jn 18:28)

¹¹Jesus stood before the governor. Pilate asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" Jesus answered, "You say so."

¹²The chief priests and the elders of the people accused him, but he made no answer. ¹³Pilate said to him, "Do you hear all the charges they bring against you?" ¹⁴But he did not answer even one question so that the governor wondered greatly.

¹⁵At Passover, it was customary for the governor to release any prisoner the people asked for. ¹⁶Now, there was a well-known prisoner called Barabbas. ¹⁷When the people had gathered, Pilate asked them, "Whom do you want me to set free: Barabbas or Jesus called the Messiah?" ¹⁸for he knew that Jesus had been handed over to him out of envy.

¹⁹While Pilate was sitting in court, his wife sent him this message, "Have nothing to do with that holy man. Because of him, I had a dream last night that disturbed me greatly."

²⁰But the chief priests and the elders of the people stirred up the crowds to ask for the release of Barabbas and the death of Jesus. ²¹When the governor asked them again, "Which of the two do you want me to set free?" they answered, "Barabbas!" ²²Pilate said to them, "And what shall I do with Jesus called the Messiah?" All answered, "Crucify him!" ²³Pilate asked, "Why? What evil has he done?" But they shouted louder, "Crucify him!"

²⁴Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere and that there could be a riot. He asked for water, washed his hands before the people, and said, "I am innocent of this man's blood. Do what you want!" ²⁵And all the people answered, "His blood be on us and on our children!"

²⁶Then Pilate set Barabbas free but had Jesus scourged, and handed over to be crucified.

MATTHEW 27:1-26

Read: Judas regrets his action and commits suicide. Pilate sees no reason to condemn Jesus, but yields to the pressure of the crowd that asks for his crucifixion.

Reflect: What do you think of the action of Judas: wait on the mercy of God or despair before the gravity of his sin? What do you think of Pilate's action? In circumstances like Judas or Pilate, how should a follower of Jesus act?

Pray: Pray for God to grant you the grace to trust more in His mercy than in the gravity of sin, and that in the moments of decision making you always decide for the right thing.

Act: Always trust in the mercy of God, and have the courage to stand up for what you think is right.

The way of the cross

(Mk 15:16; Lk 23:11)

²⁷The Roman soldiers took Jesus into the palace of the governor and the whole troop gathered around him. ²⁸They stripped him and dressed him in a purple cloak. ²⁹Then, weaving a crown of thorns, they forced it onto his head and placed a reed in his right hand. They knelt before Jesus and mocked him, saying, "Hail, king of the Jews!" ³⁰They spat on him, took the reed from his hand and struck him on the head with it.

³¹When they had finished mocking him, they pulled off the purple cloak and dressed him in his own clothes, and led him out to be crucified.

³²On the way, they met a man from Cyrene called Simon and forced him to carry the cross of Jesus. ³³When they reached the place called Golgotha, which means the Skull, ³⁴they offered him wine mixed with gall. He tasted it, but would not drink it.

³⁵There they crucified him, and divided his clothes among themselves, casting lots to decide what each one should take. ³⁶Then they sat down to guard him. ³⁷The statement of his offense was displayed above his head, and it read, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." ³⁸They

also crucified two thieves with him, one on his right hand and one on his left.

³⁹The people passing by shook their heads and insulted him, ⁴⁰saying, “Aha! You, who destroy the temple and in three days rebuild it, save yourself—if you are God’s Son—and come down from the cross!”

⁴¹In the same way, the chief priests, the elders and the teachers of the law mocked him. ⁴²They said, “The man who saved others cannot save himself. Let the king of Israel come down from his cross and we will believe in him. ⁴³He trusted in God; let God rescue him if God wants to, for he himself said, ‘I am the Son of God.’”

⁴⁴Even the thieves who were crucified with him insulted him.

MATTHEW 27:27-44

Read: The soldiers make fun of Jesus and then take him to Calvary, where they crucify him with two malefactors.

Reflect: What do you think about teasing? Do you promote them or suffer them? Why do you think Jesus did not get off the cross?

Pray: Pray that Christians will be consistent with our faith, and promote respect for human dignity.

Act: Avoid making fun of others, and promote dignified treatment for everyone in your family.

⁴⁵From midday, darkness fell over all the land until mid-afternoon. ⁴⁶At about three o’clock, Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lamma sabbacthani?” which means: My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? ⁴⁷As soon as they heard this, some of the bystanders said, “He is calling for Elijah.” ⁴⁸And one of them ran, took a sponge and soaked it in vinegar and, putting it on a reed, gave it to him to drink. ⁴⁹Others said, “Leave him alone; let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.”

⁵⁰Then Jesus cried out again in a loud voice and gave up his spirit.

After the death of Jesus

⁵¹At that very moment, the curtain of the temple Sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom, the earth quaked, rocks were split, ⁵²tombs

were opened, and many holy people who had died were raised to life. ⁵³They came out of the tombs after the Resurrection of Jesus, entered the Holy City, and appeared to many.

⁵⁴The captain and the soldiers who were guarding Jesus, having seen the earthquake and everything else that had happened were terribly afraid and said, “Truly, this was God’s Son.”

⁵⁵There were also many women there, who watched from a distance; they had followed Jesus from Galilee and had seen to his needs. ⁵⁶Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of Zebedee’s sons.

The burial

(Mk 15:42; Lk 23:50; Jn 19:38)

⁵⁷When it was evening, there came a wealthy man from Arimathea named Joseph, who was also a disciple of Jesus. ⁵⁸He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus, and the governor ordered that the body be given to him. ⁵⁹So Joseph took the body of Jesus, wrapped it in a clean linen sheet, ⁶⁰and laid it in his own new tomb that he had cut in the rock. Then he rolled a huge stone across the entrance to the tomb and left. ⁶¹Mary Magdalene and the other Mary remained, sitting there in front of the tomb.

The guards at the tomb

⁶²On the following day, which is after the day of preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate ⁶³and said to him, “Sir, we remember that when that impostor was still alive, he said, ‘After three days I will rise again.’ ⁶⁴Therefore, have his tomb secured until the third day, lest his disciples come and steal the body and say to the people: He is risen from the dead. That would be a deception worse than the first.” ⁶⁵Pilate answered them, “You have soldiers, go and take all the necessary precautions.” ⁶⁶So they went to the tomb and secured it, sealing the stone, placing the tomb under guard.

MATTHEW 27:45-66

Read: Darkness covers the earth. Jesus dies as a malefactor. The veil of the temple is torn and the most sacred place of the Jews is exposed. The women remain faithful to the Master and

Joseph of Arimathea buries his corpse. Religious authorities, even after the death of Jesus, fear his words.

Reflect: How do you explain the expression of Jesus: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Do you consider that the ripping of the veil of the temple symbolizes the breaking of the access barriers with the divine? What does all this mean for your life of faith?

Pray: Pray for all the people who have lost loved ones because of the injustice of the world. Ask the Lord not to feel abandoned, and for Christians to work for the justice that announces the Gospel.

Act: Get close to an acquaintance who has lost a loved one and comfort this person with your presence.

Jesus appears to the women

(Mk 16:1; Lk 24:1; Jn 20:1)

28¹After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to visit the tomb. ²Suddenly, there was a violent earthquake: an angel of the Lord descending from heaven, came to the stone, rolled it from the entrance of the tomb and sat on it. ³His appearance was like lightning, and his garment white as snow. ⁴When they saw the angel, the guards were struck with terror.

⁵The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. ⁶He is not here, for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where they laid him; ⁷then go at once and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead and is going before you to Galilee. You will see him there. This is my message for you.”

⁸In fear, yet with great joy, the women left the tomb and ran to tell the news to his disciples.

⁹Suddenly, Jesus met them on the way and said, “Rejoice!” The women approached him, embraced his feet and worshiped him. ¹⁰But Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid! Go and tell my brothers to set out for Galilee; there, they will see me.”

¹¹As the women proceeded on their way, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests all that had happened. ¹²The chief priests met with the elders and decided to give the soldiers a large

sum of money ¹³with this order, “Say that his disciples came by night while you were asleep and stole the body of Jesus. ¹⁴If Pilate comes to know of this, we will explain the situation and keep you out of trouble.” ¹⁵The soldiers accepted the money and did as they were told. This story has circulated among the Jews until this day.

MATTHEW 28:1-15

Read: An angel announces to women the resurrection of Jesus. They run to break the news to the disciples. On their way, Jesus himself comes out to meet them. The tomb guards tell what happened to the religious authorities, who distort the truth of what happened.

Reflect: Do you need pieces of evidence to believe in the resurrection of Jesus? Is an empty grave enough? On what is your faith in Jesus based? Do you need empty graves?

Pray: Ask the Lord for the grace of being able to feel his resurrected presence in daily events, and that he may announce it with his own life. Hallelujah.

Act: Celebrate the resurrection of Jesus by collaborating with some community activity that takes place in your parish.

Jesus sends the apostles

¹⁶As for the eleven disciples, they went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷When they saw Jesus, they bowed before him, although some doubted.

¹⁸“All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations. Baptize them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teach them to observe all that I have commanded you. I am with you always, even to the end of the world.”

MATTHEW 28:16-20

Read: End of the Gospel: Jesus sends his disciples to announce the Good News to all nations.

Reflect: Today, is it necessary to announce the Good News of Jesus to the whole world? Why? How should we do it?

Pray: Pray to God so that Christians may be salt and light for the world, and so that the Good News of Jesus may be present in all of humanity.

Act: May your life always be an announcement of the Good News of Jesus. Hallelujah!

BLANK PAGE 88