



Bishop Joseph Grech

Bishop of Sandhurst

A Selection of Reflections and Prayers from Homilies 2005 – 2010

[Homilies - <http://www.sandhurst.catholic.org.au/homilies/>]

PRAYERS

"I thank you God for wanting me from eternity to become like you. Help me to always remember who I am. Help me to understand deep down within me that I am never alone. You are there with me. Help me to experience more and more your life-giving presence within me so that I will continue to be a powerful witness of your presence to those whom I meet. Help me to persevere and to understand that difficulties and problems are moments of growth and maturity rather than moments of discouragement and a reason to give up. Amen" *Thirty Third Sunday in Ordinary Time: Year C Homily 2009*

"Jesus give us a heart that loves like you, feels like you, understand like you, thinks like you and behaves like you. Amen". *Twenty Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time: Year C Homily 2009*

"Lord here I am, may whatever I say now won't be my words but may they be your words. Lord here I am, may whatever I do now not be my actions but may they be your actions. Jesus you lead and teach me what to say and what to do". *Twenty Second Sunday: Year C 2009*

"Lord Jesus Christ, I thank you for my life and for all the good qualities that you have given to me. Help me to use these qualities for my own growth and in helping others. May I be a witness of your resurrection wherever I may be. I know that you honor and bless whatever good I do. May I be a source of your blessing to anyone who I meet every day of my life. Amen" *14th Sunday in Ordinary Time: Year C 2009*

So we pray; "Jesus thank you for caring about me. Thanks for desiring the best for me. At times I find it hard to believe because of what I had to go through or because of what I am going through at this very moment. I want to know you better. Inflammate my heart at this very moment with your touch. I trust you. I want to feel your presence within me. I know that in you I find my rest. I know that only in you and with you I can keep moving forward. May whoever I am, people know that you are there with me too". *Christmas Day 2009*

So we pray. "Lord Jesus here I am today. I thank you for creating me and for calling me to continue your work in this particular place where I live. At times I have doubts about this call. It seems so big and so beyond my reach. I tend to stand back and at times I just cannot believe that you have called me. Yes I know that you promised to walk shoulder to shoulder with me. Help me to continue to walk with you. Help me to remain faithful knowing that with you things will work out ok. I trust you. Use my hands, my feet, my mouth, my eyes and my mouth to bring your healing presence to those who I meet today". *Fourth Sunday of Advent Year C 2009*

"Love is always patient and kind; it is never jealous, love is never boastful or conceited; it is never rude or selfish; it does not take offence, and is not resentful. Love takes no pleasure in other people's sins but delights in the truth; it is always ready to excuse, to trust, to hope and to endure whatever comes. Love does not come to an end" (1 Cor 13:2-7). Put your own name instead of the word "love" and you have the basic ingredient for sainthood. Let's go for it. Today is our feast day." *All Saints day 2009*

"Jesus here I am before you today. You know what is hurting me, what is causing me pain and anxiety, what is worrying me. Come Jesus, put your hands upon me and pour your healing over me. Make me whole and healthy in my mind, heart, body and spirit so that I can continue to work with you proclaiming your powerful and loving presence and helping others to experience your care and your healing touch. Amen" *13th Sunday in Ordinary Time 2009*

And so we pray: "Lord Jesus thank you for my life. Thank you for being alive within me through the presence of the Holy Spirit. Pour out upon me a fresh anointing of your Holy Spirit. Make me a powerful witness of your resurrection so that I can help others to experience their dignity and your presence. Amen". *Pentecost Sunday 2009*

Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus and pray with me. "Jesus take away from my heart anything that does not belong to you. Refresh me with your spirit and with your presence. Make me understand that by staying close to you I become more and more a source of blessing to myself and to others. During this time of Lent help me to renew my commitment to accept you and only you as my guide and shepherd. *1st Sunday of lent year B 2009*

Let us keep repeating the prayer. "Lord Jesus Christ I believe that you are alive within me today. I acknowledge your presence within me. I desire to know you better. I deserve to experience your presence within me. Lord touch my heart at this very moment and anoint me with a fresh outpouring of your Holy Spirit. I desire to know you as my best friend. Make me a powerful witness of your presence, of your care and love to all the people who I meet today. Amen" *3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time: Conversion of St Paul 2009*

When I am in a situation where I feel that I should follow a particular path rather than another my prayer is as follows: "Lord Jesus here I am at this crossroad. This is what my heart is telling me. If this if from you may this desire in my heart increase. However, if this is not according to your heart take it away. Give me the wisdom what to say and what to do". *4th Sunday of advent year A 2008*

"Jesus here I am. You know what I am facing. I have done my best. If there is something else that I need to do, show me. In the meantime I am standing on your promise that you will be always with me. I entrust this situation to you. Walk with me, guide me. Amen" *2nd Sunday of Advent Year B 2008*

"Lord Jesus Christ, here I am today at the table of the Eucharist. You know exactly what is going on in me. You know what I am experiencing at the moment. I come before you – Take my heartaches, my difficulties, my doubts and my fears. Instead you fill me with your Healing Touch and with your healing peace. Lord, I long for you and I desire to experience you in my life in a powerful manner. You be the light in my darkness. You inflame me with the power of your Presence". Be open to our God. Be honest with our God. There is surely a place for you and for everyone at the foot of the cross. *3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time Year A 2008*

Let us never sell ourselves short. Let us never put ourselves down. Like Mary our Blessed Mother we need to keep saying "I do not understand everything. But I know one thing for sure. God is with me. I do what I can to the best of my ability and then I put my trust in this God who is alive within me to see me through what I need to go through". *28th Sunday Ordinary Time Year A 2008*

So I pray, "Lord give us warm and generous hearts so that we may be agents of your compassion to others". *11th Sunday of the Year A, 2008*

Don't worry if your faith is very weak. Use what you have and it will grow. Just repeat this prayer slowly in your heart, "Open my eyes Lord. Help me to see your face. Open my ears Lord. Help me to hear your voice. Open my heart Lord. Help me to love like you. Amen". *9th Sunday Year A 2008*

When your children, parents, husbands, wives, relatives and neighbours come to you sharing a problem or a situation that is causing them anxiety or grief, have the courage to say. "Can I say a little prayer with you?" Then talk to Jesus who is alive in you, about what that person has shared with you. Believe in your prayers. Believe that Jesus Christ can continue to work with you and through you because He is alive. Try it. You will be amazed what we can, all of us, achieve with this God who is here with us. *Easter Sunday 2008*

This is the power of the cross. I finish with the words of St Paul written almost two thousand years ago but still very relevant today. "Here I am preaching a crucified Christ, to the Jews an obstacle that they cannot get over, to the pagans madness, but to these who have been called, whether they are Jews or Greeks, a Christ who is the power the wisdom of God." (1 Cor 1:23-25) *Good Friday 2008*

We have so much to thank God for. We have so many reasons to celebrate "Lord deepen my desire to think like you, to feel like you, to love like you. May I always remember that whatever good I do for others and for myself is at the same time being touched and nourished by you. May I also become more and more conscious that true wisdom consists in the deep conviction and understanding that it is no longer I who lives but that it is you Lord who is living in me. With you in me and with myself united to you, I know that I am a source of your blessing and presence to those around me. Thank you". *4th Sunday of Lent Year A*

Go now, my friend. We commend you to the Lord. You have been such a faithful servant. Go with our love, with our esteem, with our respect, with our faith and also with our sad heart. Pray for us, so that in whatever situation we might find ourselves in we can pray your favourite prayer. "In manus tuas Domine, commendo spiritum

meum. Into your hands oh Lord, I commend my spirit". *Vigil Mass for Monsignor John Duffus*

Let us pray together.

"Guide me, Lord. Keep protection near; keep danger afar

Guide me, Lord. Keep hope within; keep doubt without

Guide me, Lord. Keep light near; keep darkness afar

Guide me, Lord. Keep peace within; keep strife without

Guide me, Lord. Keep love within, keep hate without." Amen *1st Sunday of Advent Year A 2007*

...the worst thing is not to fall, but when we refuse to get up and run back to Jesus, saying "Lord I need you, because on my own I mess things up. Change me so that wherever I am I will be a powerful witness of your presence". *30th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A 2007*

"Come Holy Spirit, touch my heart, inflame me with a passionate love for Jesus Christ. Melt me, mould me, heal me and fashion me so that I may become more and more a powerful witness of the Resurrected Jesus. Come Holy Spirit. You are welcome in heart and in my life". Pentecost Sunday 2007

And so we pray, "Lord Jesus Christ, here I am today. You know very well what gives me joy and what is troubling me. I thank you for the good qualities that you have given to me. Help me to use my talents and gifts to be faithful to my responsibilities and to be of service to others. Deepen my walk with you so that I gradually become more conscious that wherever I am, you are there too. I am never alone." Amen. *5th Week of Lent 2007 Year C, 2009*

Therefore I am going to read what Paul says about love. However I am going to take away the word "love" and put in my name instead. This is where this reading becomes life changing enabling me to love as Jesus loves. Bishop Joe is always patient and kind. He is never jealous, boastful or conceited. He is never rude or selfish. He does not take offence and is not resentful. Bishop Joe takes no pleasure in other people's sins but delights in the truth. He is always ready to excuse, to trust, to hope, and to endure whatever comes, and because of this Bishop Joe will not come to an end. *4th Sunday of Year C, 2007: Reflecting on marriage and loving as Jesus loves.*

So tonight our God is saying to you and me "You are special to me and I love you with such an intensity that I have given to you everything that I have. I have given you Jesus, I have become one like you to make you understand that I desire the best for you. I created you. I created your heart and therefore your heart will not find true rest until it rests in me. So are you ready to commit yourself to me tonight? Are you ready to decide for me? Are you ready to trust me with your whole life? I have given you everything. Love me back. What is your answer? He waits for our reply." *Christmas 2006*

"Lord Jesus I want to take this opportunity today to re-commit myself to you. I choose you again today, to be my guide and my shepherd. I choose only you to be my god and my Redeemer. I trust you and I desire to live my life according to your teaching. I choose to walk with you again today. Amen". *26th Sunday in Ordinary Time 2006*

Who do you say I am? I can only answer this question for myself. "Jesus you are my God. I trust you with my past life, with my present situations and with my future" What is your response? *24th Sunday in Ordinary Time 2006*

How do you pray for healing? Very simply. I give you an example. If you are talking with someone who shares with you that they suffer from depression, pray like this or in a similar fashion. "Lord Jesus, my friend whom you love is suffering from depression. I ask you to come upon him with your gentle touch. Heal the cause of this depression. Help my friend to experience your gentle presence at this very moment. Put your hands around my friend and fill him with your tender care. Lord turn this depression into serenity. We believe that you are here with us and I know that you will do what is best for my friend. Amen" *15th Sunday in Ordinary Time 2006*

The first thing that I learnt is that every day is a gift from God. God cares for us so much that He has given to us each day to live to the full. Each day is a grace through which we can become aware of so much beauty around us and through which we can help all those that we come in contact with. Every morning when I open my eyes I make this prayer. "Jesus, my God, I thank you for the gift of today. Bless whatever I say and do during this day. Make me an instrument of your presence. May the people who I meet today will realize deeper how much you care for us through my presence. May I give hope and peace to those who need it. May I be a source of consolation to those who are affected and may I also be a source of joy and encouragement to all. *14th Sunday*

in Ordinary Time 2006

It is important for parents to teach children simple prayers like the Hail Mary, the Our Father, the Creed, the Gloria, and the Rosary. These prayers taught as children will always remain in the deepest core of our spirits and in turn will enable us to communicate with our God spontaneously in our difficult moments. It is heartening to see that our schools have as their official programme of religious education for the young children the learning and getting familiar with such prayers. As a hospital chaplain I have often found it so wonderful that these basic prayers helped so many people who have not practiced their faith for such a long time, to connect and to relate with ease with our God. *14th Sunday in Ordinary Time 2006*

"Lord Jesus you know what is best for me and I know that you will guide me to what is best for me because you desire the greatest good for me". It is only when I made this act of abandonment that a certain peace descended in my heart. This kept me persevering throughout this time of anxiety and distress. My sickness, at the end, instead of being a moment of tragedy was in reality a time of grace and I am a much better person because of that experience. *21st Sunday in Ordinary Time 2007*

Let us take ourselves and others to Jesus. "If you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask what you will and you shall get it."

"Lord Jesus you have heard my friend expressing his/her need. Come upon him/her with your loving care. Heal whatever needs to be healed and bring peace to this heart. Shower my friend with your consolation and with your touch so that the whole world may know that without you we can do nothing, and with you we can do everything." *5th Sunday of Easter 2006*

Praying this prayer often may be a very good start. "If only the heart was right I could give so much more. But very often Lord my heart is empty, unyielding and weighed down with worry. It is often sad and lonely and very often wounded. Lord touch my heart and heal it, so that I may be able to bear the fruits of love. Whenever the opportunity presents itself to be of service to someone, let us take it and be a servant to the best of our ability. In this way we have taken another step in deepening our knowledge and our relationship with our God. In this manner we have taken another step to become powerful witnesses of the living, resurrected Jesus". *6th Sunday of Easter 2006*

"Take my hand Lord, lead me to die, to all negativity to all my fears and anxieties. Even though I may be surrounded by darkness and uncertainty, I can still feel your touch and your presence. Guide me through this time. I trust you. I know that you will bring me to life." *Good Friday 2006*

As we start this journey of taking stock of our relationship with our God, with ourselves and with others, we are reminded to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus. "Lord take away from our hearts anything that does not belong to you. Refresh us with your spirit and with your presence. Make us understand that by staying close to you we become more and more a source of blessing to ourselves and to others. During this time of Lent help us to renew our commitment to accept you and only you as our guide and shepherd. Amen". *1st Sunday of Lent, 2006*

"Jesus I stand here before you. You know my past. You are well aware of where I am at this moment. I do not know how to pray but I am confident of one thing. You care for me because you died for me. Bless me at this moment. Put your hands around my heart. Heal me. Make me feel your presence. Make me feel your love. I trust you. Thank you for thinking about me. Thank you that you are very generous with me." Amen. *25th Sunday Ordinary Time 2005*

"Lord Jesus Christ, I come before you at this moment. I believe in your promise that you will always be with me, that you will always take care of me. I trust you with my past, with my present and with my future. You know what is in my heart. You are aware of my joys, hopes, dreams, pains and struggles. Come into my heart. Renew my spirit with your life giving presence. Soothe me with your peace. Make me continue to experience the great love that you have for me. Into your hands I entrust whoever I am and whatever I have. I desire to walk with you because only you know what is best for me. Amen." *18th Sunday in Ordinary Time 2005*

Sometimes I wonder how many of us relate to God as and "Abba". I suspect that many of us still have a very wrong impression about our God. Some have the idea of God as being more like a judge or a policeman. Others picture God as an old man with whom you can never draw close. Others again think that you have to maintain your distance from God because as a figure of authority he does not exude feelings of intimacy or welcome. There is a certain aloofness involved and a certain distance to be maintained. It is no wonder that with such ideas being part of the make up of some people, they would never come to an understanding that God is interested and cares for them and that He desires to be with us and assist us especially in these moments of great need.

I am sure that at this very moment you who are reading these words have got situations in your life which are making your hearts heavy and distressed. Just stop for a moment and talk to God from your heart about what you are going through just like a friend talking to another friend. Do not be afraid. God has got broad shoulders and he never holds any grudges. Only remember this. God wants to be with you. God wants to talk to you. It is up to you to respond to this constant invitation. *17th Sunday in Ordinary Time Year C, 2010*

Prayer for Priests

Lord Jesus Christ,
I pray for all the priests of the world
but especially for the priests of my parish.
Continue to touch them with you lifegiving presence.
Make them powerful witnesses of your resurrection.
May they radiate life where there is discouragement,
Hope where there is hurt, perseverance in the midst of upheaval
And strength in the midst of difficulties.
Bless them in their ministry.
Empower those hurting or confused, nurture the lonely, refresh the fervent, enthuse the hardworking
and accompany closely the sick and the dying.
May they continue to love like you, to think like you, and to feel like you and to speak like you.
Mary our mother,
Nurture in the hearts of all priests the same love that you have for your Son Jesus.
Amen.

REFLECTIONS

On Dying and Rising

Every time we let go we are preparing ourselves for our final letting go into the hands of God. This is the greatest healing of all. May we all be able to say with Simon as he held Jesus in his arms, "Now Master, you can let your servant go in peace, just as you promised: because my eyes have seen the salvation which you have prepared for all nations to see".

I am reminded of a story that I read many years ago. It left a deep impression on me. There was a man who was admiring a beautiful scene as he stood at the edge of a cliff. All of a sudden the ground gave way under him and he fell. As he was falling, he managed to grab hold of a branch that jutted out from the cliff. He was left dangling in mid air holding on to this branch with one hand. He started to cry out, "Help, is there anyone up there". He continued to shout for a while and finally a voice came from heaven which said, "Let go". The temptation is to cry out "Is there anybody else up there". Yet in reality, it is only by letting ourselves go in God that we can find rest and consolation when confronted with certain situations in our lives.

This is a great attitude to develop. The more we develop this attitude the more we can understand why Paul in today's second reading could say, "I want you to be happy, always happy in the Lord : I repeat what I want is your happiness.....There is no need to worry : but if there is anything that you need, pray for it, asking God for it with prayers and thanksgiving, and that peace of god, which is so much greater than we can understand, will guard your hearts and your thoughts in Jesus Christ..." (Phil 4:4-7) *3rd week of Advent 2006*

Death is also part and parcel of our human condition. The ultimate healing is when we encounter our death with the hope and the belief in the resurrection. *5th Sunday in Ordinary Time 2006*

Moreover, Paul says that "Jesus Christ is the first fruit of all those who have fallen asleep". What does this mean? The farmer is very keen to have a look at the first fruit of the harvest; because if the first fruits are good

then the whole harvest will be good. If on the other hand, the first fruits are bad, then the whole harvest will be bad. The first fruits give us an indication of what is going to happen to the whole harvest. Now Paul is saying that Jesus is the first fruit of all those that have fallen asleep, of all those that have died. This means that whatever happened to Jesus is going to happen to all of us. If Jesus died then we are all going to die. However, Jesus rose again and we will be experiencing the same reality ourselves. *Easter Sunday 2006*

I am sure that at some stage we have all pondered and reflected on these three questions. Where did we come from? What am I doing living at this particular time? What is going to happen to me when this life finishes for me with death? We need to find an answer for these questions, because they have a great bearing on the purpose and worth of our existence. Only Jesus Christ can give us the answers for these questions. We come from Him as created by God. We are called to live this life based on His teaching to reach our full potential and help others to do the same. We are destined to live for ever with our God after we die. *Easter Sunday 2006*

As I go around our parishes I see this amazing thing repeated over and over again. I see it in the parents who in spite of many difficulties they keep trying their best to give what is necessary to their families. I see it in husbands and wives as they live daily their married lives. I see it in our hospitals as our nurses, doctors and hospital staff use their God given qualities to facilitate healing in so many broken bodies. I see it in our aged care facilities as people advanced in years are helped to live their remaining years in dignity. I see it in so many of us as we try to give hope in times of despair, comfort and encouragement in times of sadness. I also see it as many face their own death totally abandoned in the promise that with our God everything will be O.K., that with our God death does not mark the end of us but marks the beginning of our eternity with our God.

My friends we cannot appreciate fully Easter unless we also enter the tomb of our problems and anxieties with God. Jesus knows exactly what it means to enter the tomb.

"Take my hand Lord, lead me to die, to all negativity to all my fears and anxieties. Even though I may be surrounded by darkness and uncertainty, I can still feel your touch and your presence. Guide me through this time. I trust you. I know that you will bring me to life." *Good Friday 2006*

Baptism and Confirmation

Our baptism and confirmation were not just simple ceremonies. We believe that from that moment, our God started to live in us in an amazing and incredible life giving manner. There is nothing that we cannot face and overcome because of this. This is our Catholic Faith. Let us use it, treasure it and pass it on. *2nd Sunday Year C 2007*

Blessing – for Fathers' Day

Loving God, whom we also call Father, we pray for our own Fathers and all those who are father figures to us. We thank you for their wisdom and care for us. We bless you for their strength and patience. Bless them with peace and joy as we honour them all the days of their life. May they, like the men in the scriptures and Joseph, the foster father of Jesus, be just and true. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen *23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time 2005*

Courage

Courage does not mean that we are not afraid. Yes courageous people are not ruled by fear. Courage claims our freedom to do what is right despite the risk. Brave people are not those who pretend that they have no fear. Rather they are those who know exactly the dangers and the risks involved and still go ahead because it is the right thing to do, because it is the just thing to do. *23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time Year B 2009*

How do we explain courage? Courage is not an impulse which pushes someone to do something daring without fully reflecting on the consequences. The courage that develops through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ implies that we still go through with what we need to do while fully recognizing clearly the consequences of our actions. Being courageous as a gift of the Holy Spirit does not mean that we do not become afraid because of the implications of what our decision or course of action implies. It means being afraid and overcoming that fear. It means carrying on with what we need to face or do in spite of being afraid knowing deep down in our hearts that we are not alone. This God is present within us. Wherever I am or in whatever situation I find myself in, there is also my God enabling, encouraging and guiding me. *32nd Sunday year c 2007*

The Cross – Hardships, Difficulties, Illness

St Paul's letter to the Romans has these powerful words, "We know that by turning everything to their good God cooperates with all those who love him." (Rom 8:28) This is where our security lies. Jesus Christ promised to be with us all the time. As believers, we need to hang on to these promises. It is only our God who can give us the tranquillity and the peace that we long for and desire. Even in the midst of pain and suffering, He is there, healing, encouraging, loving, forgiving and restoring. *17th Sunday in Ordinary Time 2005*

Paul went through a lot of hardships. In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul talks about what he went through because he was a believer in Jesus Christ. He was put into prison, he was whipped and he experienced three shipwrecks. He faced many dangers from thieves and robbers and often experienced hunger and thirst. (2 Cor 11:23-28) Yet at the same time he could say, "I can do everything in Christ who strengthens me." (Phil 4:13) Paul was convinced that because Jesus Christ was with Him through his baptism he will overcome any obstacles, face any difficulties and persevere in his mission.

I can imagine Paul proclaiming with hope and with joy the words that we find in today's second reading from his letter to the Romans, "Who can separate us from the love of Christ? Can trouble do it, or hardship or persecution or hunger or poverty or danger or death?.....No in all these things we have complete victory through Him who loved us." (Rom 8:35-37) *18th Sunday in Ordinary Time 2005*

We are going to be faced with many situations that at times are difficult and painful. When your children, parents, husbands, wives, relatives and neighbours come to you sharing a problem or a situation that is causing them anxiety and grief, have the courage to say, "Can I say a little prayer with you". Then talk to Jesus Christ who is alive, about what that person has shared with you. Believe in your prayers. Believe that Jesus Christ can continue to work with you and because of you because He is alive. Try it. You will be amazed what we all can achieve with this God who is here with us. *Easter Sunday 2007*

When the going gets tough we know fully well that He is very near. As believers in Jesus Christ we are destined to make a difference in our society when we do the ordinary things in life extraordinarily well. *2nd week in Lent Year C 2007*

We all have difficulties to face. We all, from time to time are immersed in situations that can be dilapidating and which suck out from us all our energy and leave us listless and dazed. As people who believe in Jesus Christ when we have our own crises, there are these things that we can do.

Number 1. Let us face situations squarely so that we can work towards the truth, for what is just and right, and for what needs to be righted. This is also the fruit of prayer. It is from taking time to reflect, meditate and be present with our God that our hearts can develop the right openness and attitudes to enable us to desire to make such a decision.

Number 2. We do the best that we can to look at the situation from different aspects and to try to grasp what is really taking place and what is at stake. So we need to seek advice, to talk to people who are mature and who have been through similar situations. We also need to seek professional help at times.

Number 3. Let us proceed with confidence to make the decisions which need to be made knowing full well that Jesus Christ, our Risen Lord is at this very moment praying for you and for me. *Feast of the Ascension: Year C, 2007*

Jesus met Peter and his companions at a very dejected time. They were professional people but after a night of fishing they caught nothing. Jesus did not let them wallow in their negativity but raised them with a challenge. "Throw your nets into the deep". Jesus knew that Peter and his friends had the capability of moving forward. He believed in them and challenged them. In reality he gave them a greater mission, namely to catch people. It is the same with us, Jesus accepts us for who we are, but he also believes that we are capable of more and he challenges us to realize it. Because of Jesus' death and resurrection there is nothing that we cannot face and overcome. After all "Nothing is impossible for God" (Lk 1:37) as the Angel Gabriel said to Mary. This means that everything is possible. *6th Sunday Ordinary Time year C 2007*

The cross is an invitation not to despair when we are beset by all kinds of negative attitudes and feelings but to bring them to the tomb with Jesus so that they will die with him in order to emerge renewed and strengthened with hope and perseverance. *Good Friday 2006*

Moreover sick people are not to be left alone. We need to judge wisely how long and how frequent our visits need to be. Again speaking from personal experience, sick people get comfort and courage when somebody visits them. Jesus held this practice to be very important. "Come, you whom my Father has blessed, take as your heritage the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world.....I was sick and you visited me." (Mt 25: 33-34, 37) When we visit the sick, let us also make sure that we say a little prayer with them.

Prayer is important. However we need to pray believing that our God desires the best for the sick person. Our duty is to pray and then we leave everything else in God's hands. There are various ways in which we can pray for the sick. We can use the popular and traditional prayers that we have learnt since we were children like the rosary and other proper devotional prayers. We can also talk to God about the person who is sick. "Lord this person is sick. Come upon this person with your healing touch. Touch those parts of the body that need to be healed. I know that you are here with me and I ask you to lay your hands and pour your healing power on this person who needs your help. Lord give this person peace of mind and heart. Take care of any anxieties and fears and replace them with your soothing presence. Amen" *5th Sunday in Ordinary Time 2006*

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Decisions

What a lesson for us. Our quality of life as human beings and as believers in Jesus Christ has much to do with the kind of decisions that we make. We can either be a source of negativity and darkness or we can be witnesses of hope and empowerment to ourselves and to others. We can either choose to be swamped by the negative influences that can assail us or we can make a choice against that and to turn what seems to be tragedies into triumphs. This can be achieved through maintaining our daily walk with our God through our prayers, participating actively in the life of the church and through maintaining ourselves formed by attending good conferences, retreats, talks, being part of prayer groups, listening to good music and reading good and solid books about our Catholic faith. We can also become a source of blessing when we take the ordinary situations that come our way and make sure that the way we face these situations is in line with what Jesus has taught us. *26th Sunday in Ordinary Time 2006*

I am a stepping stone when I become a light in somebody else's darkness and when I not only give to someone a cup of water to drink but as we were told in today's gospel, when I lead that person into my own well and shared all that I have with him or her. *Transfiguration, 2006*

St Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits used to say never make a decision either when you are on a high or when you are feeling very distressed or when you are in a panic state. Decisions ought to be made after serious reflection, having the opportunity to examine calmly every facet of the situation with good and solid guidance and in a spirit of prayer. Wise words indeed.

Fr Michael Casey, a monk at Tarrawassa Abbey in Victoria has this to say. "In moments of difficulties and anxiety, change nothing. Let the issues keep coming to the surface. Do not frighten them away, have a good look at them and see if something can be done to integrate them. We cultivate a serenity of heart which means effectively reducing our trust in our own efforts and increasing our confidence in the goodness of God". *21st Sunday in Ordinary Time Year A, 2007*

Making decisions according to the way of God is the fruit of a deep reflection coming from a personal relationship with our God. By giving time daily to talk to our God, by trying to live our lives animated by the values and attitude of our faith we are enabled to make the decisions that are willed by God even in confusing and anxious situations. This gift comes to us as a child comes to a mother in the depths of her being literally transforming her personality and her total way of living. By being conscious of the presence of God within us we gradually develop a way of thinking that is like his we become slowly transformed by Jesus. This in turn will help us to make decisions that are in harmony with what we find in the Old and New Testament and in the constant teaching and guidance of the church. This is how we are going to find the courage to decide to forgive rather than hate, to be a source of life rather than a source of death, to bring hope rather than be prophets of doom, to serve rather than to disempower people and to keep on believing even though it seems that there is no one there for us .

In addition God will give us opportunities to verify whether we have made a decision according to his way or not. God gives us an assurance and powerful signs for this. The angel Gabriel said to Mary "Well I will give you a sign so that you understand that what is happening here is from God". Your cousin Elizabeth, she is elderly now. She had always desired a child but she never had one. Now she is pregnant. Go and see for yourself because nothing is impossible for God". This is the reason why Mary went to see her cousin. I am sure that when she also went to her to help her prepare for the birth of John the Baptist. However the real reason was to ascertain the words of the angel Gabriel. In fact when Elizabeth saw Mary, her first words were, "of all women you are the most blessed and blessed is the fruit of your womb". There we have the confirmation. *4th Sunday of Advent 2008*

Eucharist

The command of Jesus is very explicit. "Do this in memory of me." Do not respond to hurt by adding more hurt. Do not resolve a negative situation by more negativity in the form of hate or vengeance. Rather transform it, by giving yourself totally in service to the one who has hurt you. We can only achieve this by being empowered and constantly nourished by the loving God who resides within us. Being actively involved in the celebration of the Eucharist and being nourished by the Body and Blood of Jesus we become agents of blessing and life giving change in these situations which are full of negativity and death. *Corpus Christi 2007*

Finding God

The most amazing thing is that we do not need to go very far to meet with our God. Yes our God is everywhere, in heaven, in the church, in the tabernacle and during the celebration of the Eucharist and the other sacraments, but what a blessing it is to experience God's presence within us. It took St Augustine a bit of time to learn this. He wrote.

"Late have I loved you, O beauty ever ancient, ever new, late have I loved you. You were within me, but I was outside and it was there that I searched for you. In my unloveliness I plunged into the lovely things that you created. You were with me, but I was not with you. Created things kept me from you, yet if they had not been in you, they would have no being at all. Why do I ask you to come to me when, unless you were with me, I would have no being either".

What a great God we have. What He says to you and to me is: Love me back and in doing so we realize how powerful we are in Him. *Trinity Sunday 2007*

Forgiveness, Reconciliation, Healing

What a great lesson for us. God is patient with us. His intention is to help us realize and put into practice the gifts that He has given to us; the qualities that we are endowed with as we live our various responsibilities. Our God desires the best for us. He desires that we become more and more like Him so that we can continue His work. When we fall short, or when we frustrate His plan for us, He will not abandon us. He starts afresh with us and with patience and compassion He continues to form us and to mould us till we become what He desires for us. This is where the Sacrament of Forgiveness is so vital. It is the time of being nurtured and moulded by the loving encounter with this God. Moreover, along the way we meet various experience some not so pleasant and some very hard to take. There are also moments of grace that help us being fashioned with the heart and the mind of our God. *Trinity Sunday 2007*

We have often been told that it is important to forgive. After all, this is one of the ways in that Jesus invites us to practice in order to be his followers. However, many are at a loss how to forgive. Many ask "How do I know that I have forgiven" or "I will forgive but I will not forget": or "How can I forgive when that person hurt me so much". It is impossible to achieve. These questions are very real. However with regards to forgiveness there are a couple of things that we need to understand very well. In the first place forgiveness has nothing to do with how I feel. If I reason this way "I will forgive when I am ready. I will forgive when the other person makes the first step or I will forgive when I feel OK about it; we will never forgive. Very often the wound is too hard and too deep and from a human point of view, it would be too difficult to take the step towards forgiveness. This leads us to the second point. Forgiveness is a decision like love. It is a question of wanting or not wanting to forgive. *7th Sunday of Year C 2007*

My father died at the age of thirty two when I was six years of age. That event shattered me and paralysed me inside. I knew that the time had to come when I would have to forgive my father for leaving me at such a young age. It was not his fault that he died at thirty two, yet I was left very confused, hurt and very much at a loss. I have found this prayer that I am going to share with you very helpful in forgiving my father and whenever I need

to forgive someone. Please feel free to use it. There is no copyright on this. It has done marvellous things for me and I am sure that it would be do marvellous things for you too.

The first part of the prayer is that I voice aloud what I need to forgive my father for. Dad I forgive you for dying so young, for leaving my mother with three children to fend on her own. I forgive you for the time that I would have liked to talk to you as I was growing up and you were not there. I forgive you that you were not about during very important times as a family, when I graduated from university, when I was ordained, when my brother and sister got married and when their children were born. When we voice what is hurting us and for what we need to forgive a person for, then we are well on our way to forgive.

The second part of the prayer, is when I pray for the person who has hurt me in some way. When we pray for a person, we have forgiven that person. In my case, my father was dead and so I prayed "Lord I give you my dad. Bless him with your love and your presence. Make him part of your family. Make him part of your saints. Do what is best for him at the moment. Give him eternal rest with you". If a person is still alive, ask the Lord to bless that person wherever he/she may be found.

The third part of the prayer is that I ask the Lord to forgive me when I acted in such a negative manner towards him, towards others and towards myself because I was very hurt by that person whom I have decided to forgive.

We are all humans. Even though we pray this prayer in all sincerity, very often as we continue living we would be reminded of the hurt that we had received. There is only one thing to do in these circumstances. "Lord I have already given this person to you; I am going to give him/her again to you. This person is your responsibility now". Let this person rest in the arms of our God.

What a freedom, what strength do we experience when we are able to act in this manner. Moreover, this attitude helps us to encourage others to rise above their negativity and to become a source of blessings wherever they might be. I once heard this quote from a friend of mine, "Love your enemy, it will drive him crazy". What wisdom.
7th Sunday Year C 2007

Holiness

I am sure that many have asked this question "Why has God chosen me from eternity?" What is the reason for this? "To be holy" (Eph 1:4). What does holiness mean? It does not mean that you are serious all the time. It does not mean that you have to go around with your eyes always directed towards the ground and with a very morose look on your face. This has nothing to do with holiness. The word holiness means "to be set apart". In our Christian context it means "to be set apart for God". You and I have been wanted and chosen by God from eternity to belong to Him.

I go a bit further. What does it mean "to belong to God?" It means that we have been created to have the mind, the heart, the feelings, the sentiments of Jesus Christ so that we can continue his mission in this age of ours. As I look at the readings of today, two very common features hit me about our call and mission.

In the first place God does not only choose the highly intelligent, or the super achievers. He chooses anybody who is prepared to let him mould and fashion our hearts and attitudes. *15th Sunday in Ordinary Time Year B 2009*

Hope

What is hope? What is true hope? How can we be saved through hope? Hope is very much a vital part of life. Hope does not mean sitting back and waiting for things to happen. Hope encourages us for action. It is precisely because we have hope that we work so hard. We believe that what we stand for is vital and valuable. We believe that our efforts are worthwhile and our strength and our commitment depends to a large extent on the quality of our hope....

We can easily shatter hope by adopting the attitude of saying, "Ah what's the use of going on". How often there is the temptation to say "We have tried this before, it does not work". or else "Things will never change it is no use". It is easy to be cynical because it does not demand any effort or commitment from our part.

Hope is much more than being optimistic about the future. There is a difference between having hope and being an optimist. Optimism means that things will get better irrespective of what the present situation might be. Hope, on the other hand means, that God will be faithful to His promises in His own time and way. Hope says to us to live in the present, to make sure that we take every opportunity that presents itself to us now, to do the best in

this situation, to bring the values and the teachings of Jesus in the present moment and then let God produce the fruits at the time when He knows best. Hope stresses the importance of the present moment that we can do something with our present situation to make a difference in the lives of so many people because God is here with us now. Because of this every single moment of our lives is an opportunity to do great things very often in small ways. The here and now is sacred. This makes us understand that we should never sell ourselves short or to underestimate what we do day in day out. *3rd Week of Advent 2007*

Jesus Christ – Life in Christ

Let us never underestimate what we can do. Every act of charity, every word of encouragement, every time we walk with each other in time of joy and in time of need, every time we are faithful to our responsibilities, we are bring light in the midst of darkness. It is very easy to be overwhelmed by darkness, it is very tempting to give up. It is very easy to let ourselves be carried by the misfortunes that we encounter. Because of Jesus Christ, alive in us, let us not simply curse the darkness, but let us light up a light. It may be small. It may not seem too much, but at least it is a sign that what seems to be a tragedy can be turned into a triumph. *3rd Sunday of Lent year A 2008*

You and I are called to continue proclaiming this message. We are called to do this by deepening our own relationship with our God to understand how vital and important each one of us is to continue to promote hope to our world. Our call as Catholic people is a call to every person in the world not to give up in achieving peace, justice, basic human rights and dignity and faith in God. Every good and noble action that we do, simple though it might be, has boundless repercussions and effect because after all, it is not just ourselves, who are responsible for these actions but they are also being touched and empowered by our God. Yes we are someone very special because this God who desires to embrace the world is empowering, loving, forgiving and encouraging us to help others realize that their ultimate purpose of life can only be found in a personal and close relation with Him. There is much to celebrate and to be thankful for. *Epiphany Sunday Year A 2008*

We are called to be different. We are called to make a big difference in our society because we are called to think like God. My heart is full of gratitude for all those who through many sacrifices have lived and continue to live according to the way that Jesus taught us. I think of our parents, members of our immediate families, volunteers, members of different church and diocesan organizations, people in our parishes, people involved in education, in health care and in social services. So much is being done. So much is being achieved because it is animated and empowered by the Spirit of our God. Let us never underestimate the work that we do. Let us never sell ourselves short. The more we journey into a deep relationship with our God, the more we become conscious of the opportunities that come our way through which we can make a difference in the life of so many. *4th Sunday of advent 2007*

This is what hope which is the result of our belief in Jesus Christ being alive in us today through our baptism and confirmation helps us to do. At every moment of our lives we are Jesus to someone. Whatever we do and say is important and can be life giving to those who we encounter. This is where our hope lies. I make a difference because Jesus is with me. May we all constantly repeat the great faith of Paul, "It is no longer I who lives but is Jesus who lives in me". (Gal 2:20) *3rd week of Advent 2007*

My friends, let us wake up and stay awake. We are all called to continue this mission of Jesus Christ. Today we are the hands, the face, the feet and the heart of our God. We have been entrusted with such a powerful mission to proclaim that our God is not dead. Our God is alive and doing well. Let us realize that we have this God alive in our hearts and that we are invited to touch others with His love and with His presence. There are so many people living around us, who need their hopes renewed, who need encouragement to keep moving forward and who need to understand the purpose of their living. Only God can satisfy all our deepest desires and dreams. You and I have been entrusted to walk with these people and to take every opportunity to sow the seed of the word and the love of our God in their lives. Let us pray together.

"Guide me, Lord. Keep protection near; keep danger afar
Guide me, Lord. Keep hope within; keep doubt without
Guide me, Lord. Keep light near; keep darkness afar
Guide me, Lord. Keep peace within; keep strife without
Guide me, Lord. Keep love within, keep hate without." Amen *1st Sunday of advent year A 2007*

The amazing truth is that we become more powerful witnesses of the presence of our God the more we have first experienced His living presence within us in the moments of joy and especially in the moments of anxiety and fear. Indeed, with Jesus our Cross becomes our strength. "I am most happy then to be proud of my weaknesses, in order to feel the protection of Christ's power over me. I am content with weakness insults, hardships, persecutions and difficulties for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong". (2 Cor 12:9b-

10) 23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time 2007

In the third place, I learnt that what ultimately matters in life is my personal relationship with Jesus Christ. With all my talents and gifts, and with all the studies that I have done, I was not able to do anything to alleviate my situation except to totally confide in my God. "Lord Jesus you know what is best for me and I know that you will guide me to what is best for me because you desire the greatest good for me". It is only when I made this act of abandonment that a certain peace descended in my heart. This kept me persevering throughout this time of anxiety and distress. My sickness, at the end, instead of being a moment of tragedy was in reality a time of grace and I am a much better person because of that experience. 21st Sunday in Ordinary Time 2007

A radical decision to follow Jesus does not make us immune from difficulties or moments of turmoil. It is rather a certainty that the teaching Jesus challenges to the core certain values and principles that are promoted by some sections of our society. It is always hard to hit back with forgiveness in the face of being judged or treated unfairly. It demands great courage to respond with compassion when you are facing aggression. It takes great strength and perseverance to keep the family together in the face of disappointment and rejection. It takes great faith to respond with love when your whole body is crying out for revenge. It is only with the power of the life giving presence of Jesus Christ within us that we can be powerful instruments of good, honesty, and hope. It is only when we are empowered by the presence of our God in us that we persevere to become more and more a source of blessing to those around us. 13th Sunday in Ordinary Time 2007

We are also called for something which seems impossible to achieve. As Catholics and believers in Jesus Christ we are asked and invited to do the things that Jesus did, and to do even greater things than he did. This is a promise of Jesus that we find in the gospel of St John Chapter 14 Verse 12. We are called to stand for what Jesus stands for. We are called to live whatever we say and do the teachings and the values of Jesus. This may seem very hard to achieve because it is so opposite to what is the opinion and the way of living of so many people around us. Moreover, there is also the very real possibility that people would attack us bitterly and point fingers at us because of what we believe and because of what we hold as important.

This can result in fear and to the tendency of watering down our values and our beliefs. This could result in the tendency to not wanting to be different from the general populace because it can get pretty lonely and very scary at times. These are normal reactions and feelings because everybody desires to be accepted and patted on the back. There would not be any person who deliberately seeks to be unpopular and who relishes in being ostracized or heavily criticized.

Jesus knows all of this. This is why he promised that He will be with us at every stage of our lives. Let us not back off. Let us be faithful to the way of living and believing that Jesus has shown us. When the going gets tough we know fully well that He is very near. As believers in Jesus Christ we are destined to make a difference in our society when we do the ordinary things in life extraordinarily well. 2nd week of Lent year C

I go back to the story when Jesus healed the paralytic man who was brought before him on a stretcher. When they arrived in the house where Jesus was, they found that it was just impossible to enter. However they did not give up. They went up to the roof, made an opening in the roof and lowered their friend in front of Jesus. Jesus was amazed at the faith of these four friends and he was so moved by the whole episode that he healed the paralytic man. As a believer in Jesus Christ, the friends that I have would know exactly what to do with me when I am in need of help. They would not panic. They would not indulge in too many words or throw tantrums. They would not get overly confused or overly discouraged. They would simply take me to Jesus. These are the kind of friends that I as a Christian, as a believer need to have. 5th Sunday of Easter 2006

Jesus made a lot of promises to you and to me. "I will never leave you orphan". "Come to me all you who labour and are overburdened and I will give you rest." "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You trust in God, trust also in me." (Jn 14:1) "In all truth I tell you whoever believes in me will perform the same works as I do myself, and will perform even greater works." (Jn 14:27) "I am the resurrection. Anyone who believes in me, even though that person dies, will live, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die." (Jn 11:25)

These are only a few of the promises that Jesus made. We are in safe hands. In our moments of joy and happiness let us always praise our God for so many marvellous gifts that He has given to each one of us. In our moments of heaviness and confusion let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, holding steadfastly to his promise that He is at our side with his healing presence. Even in our desperate state, everything is not lost. Let us keep reaching out to the outstretching hands of Jesus who is always ready and prepared to take us out of our mud and heaviness. As believers in Jesus Christ this is what keeps us going. This is what fuels our determination to give life where there is death, to bring hope where there is despair and to provide light where there is darkness. 20th Sunday in Ordinary Time 2005

Jesus – Witness to Jesus

Being a witness of Jesus Christ demands courage and swimming against the current of the opinions of our friends and the majority of people. Yet it is a challenge that we cannot escape. Where do I stand in my relationship with my God? Am I a witness to what Jesus Christ stands for? Only in this way I am going to make a difference in my life and in the lives of those with whom I come into contact. *13th Sunday Ordinary Time 2005*

Loved, Graced and Called by God - All invited into closeness to God

So tonight our God is saying to you and me "You are special to me and I love you with such an intensity that I have given to you everything that I have. I have given you Jesus, I have become one like you to make you understand that I desire the best for you. I created you. I created your heart and therefore your heart will not find true rest until it rests in me. So are you ready to commit yourself to me tonight? Are you ready to decide for me? Are you ready to trust me with your whole life? I have given you everything. Love me back. What is your answer? He waits for our reply. *Christmas 2006*

This is God's plan for you and for me, to make a difference in this life. We cannot do this on our own and this is the reason why we are so gifted by His constant presence and power within us. Right from the start, from the first book of the Bible, the book of Genesis, we find God saying, "Let us make man in our own image, in likeness of ourselves...God created man in the image of Himself, in the image of God he created Him, male and female he created them." (Genesis 1:26-27) We are God's work of art. We are the best creation of God. We are the masterpiece of God's work. No wonder that Paul exclaims, "Now to him by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine." (Eph 3:20) Jesus revolutionised the world with twelve disciples. His intent is to continue this revolution all over the world through you and me. His desire is to make every person intimately bound to Him and you and I are in the frontline of this incredible and powerful mission. Yes we have been truly graced, we have been given the seed to produce amazing results. *15th Sunday in Ordinary Time 2005*

Marriage and Family

I salute you parents as you try to give the best to your families. I salute you husbands and wives as you continue to strengthen all of us by the love that you have for one another. I salute all of you who are trying to remain faithful to our responsibilities especially in the midst of discouragement and the feeling of giving up. Whatever we do, influences others. We are all powerful people because we have a heart fashioned by our God and this heart animated by the life-giving presence of Jesus gives hope and courage to all those who we meet. This is where our integrity lies. This is what thinking like Jesus means. *4th Sunday of Lent 2008*

Moreover "Our Father" are the first two words of the prayer that Jesus gave to us. Let us take the opportunity as fathers to pray with our children. This may seem hard to do. We do not seem to know what to say in prayer with our children. Let us keep it simple. When the children come to visit you, or come for lunch or dinner, as they come in welcome them and as you shake their hand or hug them say to them "Gee it is good to see you. May God be with you". In the same manner before they leave and they say to you "Thanks mum, thanks dad see you later", you tell them. "Hang on a minute, come over here and hug them and shake their hands saying, remember that you are special, God is with you and I care for you too". We do not need to graduate from a university to pray with our children and with one another. We simply remember that we are the living image of our God who relates with us as a good daddy does. *17th Sunday in Ordinary Time 2007*

"May the Lord Jesus, who was a guest at the wedding in Cana, bless you and your families and friends. Amen"

"May Jesus who loved His church to the end, always fill your hearts with His love. Amen" *27th Sunday in Ordinary Time 2006 Reflecting on the Vocation of Marriage*

I am going to read what Paul says about love. However I am going to take away the word "love" and put in my name instead. This is where this reading becomes life changing enabling me to love as Jesus loves. Bishop Joe is always patient and kind. He is never jealous, boastful or conceited. He is never rude or selfish. He does not take offence and is not resentful. Bishop Joe takes no pleasure in other people's sins but delights in the truth. He is always ready to excuse, to trust, to hope, and to endure whatever comes, and because of this Bishop Joe will not come to an end. *4th Sunday of the Year C 2007: Speaking of Marriage and Jesus' invitation to love as he loves*

In the first place love is much more than feeling good about someone. Feelings change. I might feel good about someone at one moment, but at the next moment I might not feel so good about that person. So what am I going to do? Stop loving? Unfortunately this is the kind of love that is constantly being portrayed on TV, in the papers and books, and on the radio. It is always a conditional kind of love. I love you as long as I agree with you. I love you as long as we are compatible, as long as you look nice, or as long as you appeal to me. Jesus' love is different from this. He simply loved. His love was not only or simply motivated by feelings, but was the result of a decision. He decided to love whatever the cost entailed. It follows that what Jesus is commanding us to do is to make a decision to love irrespective of how I may be feeling. *6th Sunday of Easter 2006*

We are going to be faced with many situations that at times are difficult and painful. When your children, parents, husbands, wives, relatives and neighbours come to you sharing a problem or a situation that is causing them anxiety and grief, have the courage to say, "Can I say a little prayer with you". Then talk to Jesus Christ who is alive, about what that person has shared with you. Believe in your prayers. Believe that Jesus Christ can continue to work with you and because of you because He is alive. Try it. You will be amazed what we all can achieve with this God who is here with us. *Easter Sunday 2007*

It is therefore so important today to honour in a special way all the people gathered here who through married life have displayed these qualities over so many years of commitment to one another, to their families and friends. I am who I am today as a human person because I had a mother and a father who loved me deeply and who cared for me in a passionate manner. I can love today because I have experienced so much love from my parents. I can forgive today because I have been forgiven so often by them. I can show compassion because they were compassionate to me so many times. I can believe today because they believed in me even when I made my mistakes. I am encouraged to be of service to others because mum and dad simply gave themselves continuously to me. I can have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ because since I was a little child they prayed with me. I am who I am today because of the commitment and care of my parents. *33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time 2008*

Mission

In the second place, we have been called to take an active part in Jesus's ministry. Our mission is an extension of the very same mission of Jesus and we have been given the necessary tools to accomplish this. We have been chosen to be sent and not to keep our faith to ourselves. We are people on the move. Every generation needs to hear this incredible news that we are people of importance because God has chosen us from eternity. Every person in the whole world needs to hear that without Jesus Christ we make a mess of things but with Him nothing is impossible. We are sent so that we can continue to proclaim that Jesus is Lord using the appropriate ways and means so that our people can comprehend this message.

Moreover, like the mission of the first disciples our mission is in the first place a spiritual one to help others to get closer to our God. However it also addresses physical and mental healing. "So they set off to preach repentance, and they cast out many devils and anointed many sick people with oil and cured them". This shows that christianity is concerned with people's spiritual well being and with their physical well being. In other words, with the whole person. *15th Sunday of Ordinary Time Year B 2009*

God has chosen each one of us to continue His mission. He did this not because we are perfect or because we have it all together. It was purely a result of His wish, desire and plan for us. Very often, people have said to me "Why has God chosen me? I am nothing special. There are many others who seem to be better than I do to this work". *11th Sunday in Ordinary Time Year A 2008*

Peace

What does Jesus mean by peace? Peace is much more than the absence of war or dissention. Peace is not simply harmony but a state of inner calm and completeness. It is a state of being in the right relationship with God and with others. This is the reason why Jesus could talk about the experience of peace at the very time when he was in a situation of turmoil and anxiety. At the Last Supper, Jesus was confronting a situation that on face value marked the end of what He was trying to achieve. He knew that He was going to be put to death. He knew that those very intimate followers were going to abandon Him. He knew that the person whom He had chosen to take His place as the leader of the community was going to deny Him and another of his close friends was going to betray Him. How can one talk about being in peace in such circumstances? Jesus was able to do so because peace essentially consists of an inner disposition that is the result of a personal relationship with God. This in turn helps us to keep things in perspective and not panic or be overwhelmed at the very first sign of trouble. *6th Sunday of Easter 2007*

We are called, likewise to be instruments of peace where there is hatred. We are called to bring and preserve

sound solutions when difficulties arise. Difficult times reveal our character and reveal who we are. Providing sound and long lasting alternatives are not achieved by doing a few great deeds but they are the fruit of a lot of little deeds. Great things are not done by impulses or on the spur of the moment, but are a series of little things put together. The more we are prepared every day to hit back with compassion in the face of misunderstanding, with forgiveness and seeking the truth in the face of injustice, with perseverance when everything seems to be shutting down around us and with commitment to what we believe as Catholics in the face of so much lack of belief and a subjective way of living, the more we become instruments of achieving life – changing situations in the lives of so many. *15th Sunday in Ordinary Time Year C 2007*

Pilgrim – Seeing Life as a Pilgrim

The pilgrim sees life as a gift that gradually unfolds as we live it. The pilgrim knows that we can never control what happens during our lifetime. We can plan up to a certain extent, but there is always the unexpected. The pilgrim becomes prepared for the unexpected, but not in fear, rather in trust and in hope. This means that when failure and disappointment occur we do not become despondent or deterred from continuing our journey. Rather so called negative experiences become opportunities for personal and spiritual growth. This attitude goes against basing our lives on what others think or say. Rather it promotes an attitude of celebrating every moment as an opportunity for doing good and to be faithful to our responsibilities. Moreover, it is the realization that ultimately God is in control and while we commit ourselves to our responsibilities we also rely on the ever present God who is guiding, loving, nurturing, healing and forgiving.

Not one life, however short or tragic it might appear when lived with God, is wasted. *19th Sunday in Ordinary Time 2007 year C*

Trust in God

Ultimately we come to realise that our security, our hope and our trust is God. So, I live every day, using all the gifts that God has given me, but also knowing full well that without God I am fooling myself. I live my daily life in constant companionship with my God because with God I have the ultimate victory. *14th Sunday in Ordinary Time 2006*

Word of God

The power of the Word of God. St Paul says that the Word of the God is alive and active. It is like a doubled edged sword. Wherever it touches it cuts and leaves its mark. The Word of God when listened to penetrates the deepest parts of our being and changes us and prompts us to reflect where we are with God. This is the reason why when the Word of God is read during the celebration of the Eucharist we are invited to listen carefully because it is God who is talking to us at that moment. After all at the end of each reading we proclaim “This is the Word of the Lord”. This is also the reason why it is very important that as followers of Jesus we read slowly and then pray some verses of the Bible every day. We do this not to become smart and say that I can quote certain passages of the Bible by heart, but in order to base my life on what we find written. *3rd Sunday of Year C 2007*

The Word of God is indeed life changing. Spend time with the daily readings of the Mass which can be found in any missal. Give yourself a bit of time every day to savor and taste what God desires to say to you. This is where we get the necessary encouragement to continue to be a source of blessing, hope and encouragement in the midst of so much hurt, fear and discouragement. *3rd Sunday Year C 2007*

It is so helpful to get more familiar with the Bible, the Word of God. We do this not in order to be smart so that we will be able to quote different passages. We need to get familiar with the Bible so that we live according to what the Word of God suggests. The more familiar we become with the Word of God, the more familiar we become with God. As a start, we can take a bit of time and read and pray the daily reading that we have at Mass. *28th Sunday in Ordinary Time 2006*

Young People

Jeremiah, the prophet, experienced a great surprise in his life. While he was still a boy, he received the call to be a prophet. The main ministry of the prophet is to speak on behalf of God to the people. The prophet's role is a dangerous one because at times he had to say some things that many people did not want to hear. You would expect God to choose strong, mature, highly qualified people for this ministry. People who would be respected and esteemed in the community, so that what they said would have an impact. No, our God s

different. He chose a child, someone who was not considered as reliable or trustworthy by his contemporary society. No wonder that Jeremiah said to God "Hey why pick on me, I am too young and nobody is going to take notice of me". Yet God's reply was, "Just leave everything to me and you will be a great servant and friend of mine. You will become a powerful witness of what I desire for my people". (Jer 1:7-8) And he did. Jeremiah is one of the giants of the Old Testament. *4th Sunday of Advent 2006*

Very often people, especially young people, come to see me with this statement. I am confused. I say to them why are you confused? I do not know what to do, they would reply. I am torn in different directions because different people give me different advice and ways of acting in order to cope with my situation. No wonder we get confused when we try to follow different points of view. As Christians, as believers in Jesus Christ there is only one voice that we need to listen to. There is only one way that we need to follow, the way and the voice of our Resurrected Lord Jesus Christ. As Christians we do indeed possess the pearl of great price. Jesus Christ. There are many others who are struggling to find this treasure. May we be the instruments of the healing and soothing power of our living God to all those whom we encounter. *17th Sunday Ordinary Time 2005*

Some time back, I was invited to the Presentation day of one of our schools This school caters especially for students who find it very hard to cope with the normal teaching routine available in schools. They need special tuition and special care. As one of the girls was going up to receive her award, she started to cry. It was the first time ever that she was presented with something that said so much in her life. It was the first time that someone had recognized that she had a lot of good in her, that she was able to contribute to the life of the school and therefore that she was not rubbish. On that day she realized that there is another side of her story that there was much goodness in her. Situations like these very often come our way. Let us take every opportunity to affirm and to encourage others. Our task is a simple one: we are to be instruments of Jesus' compassion to others. So I pray, "Lord give us warm and generous hearts so that we may be agents of your compassion to others". *11th Sunday in Ordinary Time Year A 2008*

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Experiencing Illness, Growth Through Difficulties – A Personal Reflection

What are we to do in these situations? The second reading describes very plainly that very often what seems to be negative and hurtful experiences are in fact moments of growth for us. What seems to be tragedies are in fact opportunities for us to become powerful sources of blessings to those around us. The invitation is to persevere in our difficult moments knowing that our God is close to us with healing and encouragement.

This is the story of each of us. If we look at what happened to Jesus we can also understand how to act when we are faced with difficult situations. The life of Jesus had overall a very positive start. He had a great mother and a very loving and caring foster father. His ministry was blessed with so many miracles and great crowds followed him. He built up a strong reputation and people marvelled at what he did and said. People were even prepared to follow him for days on end without feeling the necessity of going to their homes to continue their normal daily life. They were mesmerized by him. However, during his time of ministry, Jesus also experienced opposition. People started to gossip about him. Some tried to put him on the spot through awkward questions whilst others criticized him severely and openly for his teaching and ways of acting. Things got so bad that the chief priests and religious elders plotted to kill him as a criminal. Yet in spite of all this, Jesus persevered, because He was very conscious of what His mission entailed and because of His close relationship and prayer life with God the Father. The key word is perseverance.

Two years ago I got quite sick and spent two months in hospital. It was a particularly difficult time for various reasons. Sickness made me feel very insecure and desiring to find a reason or a solution for what was happening to me. And yet, I could not find a reason for what was happening to me. I felt disempowered and very impoverished as I felt that gradually I was losing control of my own life. I got upset and distressed because all of a sudden I was prevented from going on with my life in the manner that I was used to. I was confined to a hospital room full of uncertainty and waiting for some sort of a light at the end of the tunnel. It was at this very moment when I felt so isolated and unsure of where I was that I hung on to my faith and to my relationship with Jesus Christ. I remember praying constantly. "Lord Jesus, take my hand and guide me through this uncertain period of my life. I trust you and I decide once again for you".

This time of seclusion was a very sobering time and a time for serious reflection on the kind of life that I have been living. It was also a very grace filled experience because gradually as I continued to reflect on what was happening to me I started to learn very basic lessons. I was being presented with an opportunity to take a serious look at my own life and to make the necessary decisions in order to continue with my living in a life giving and meaningful manner. I learnt three very basic lessons. First, I learnt that every day is a gift from God. Therefore, I made a decision to live every day to the full being a source of blessing and life to all those who I meet. I learnt never to take life or each day of my life for granted. Secondly, I discovered that I worry about too many things that I should not worry about. I learnt that my way of living was geared very much towards controlling every facet of what I do. This did not leave me with the necessary freedom for learning and for being open to be surprised by God. I was spending so much energy trying to exercise my ministry as if everything depended on me.

In the third place, I learnt that what ultimately matters in life is my personal relationship with Jesus Christ. With all my talents and gifts, and with all the studies that I have done, I was not able to do anything to alleviate my situation except to totally confide in my God. "Lord Jesus you know what is best for me and I know that you will guide me to what is best for me because you desire the greatest good for me". It is only when I made this act of abandonment that a certain peace descended in my heart. This kept me persevering throughout this time of anxiety and distress. My sickness, at the end, instead of being a moment of tragedy was in reality a time of grace and I am a much better person because of that experience.

Moments of difficulties can never be life giving if we try to pretend that they are not happening. There is a real temptation to hide things under the carpet and to reason that things will soon pass and I will be all right if I can ignore what is going on. I will try to cope with what is happening by having a good time, by drinking a bit more to get my mind off these things or by seeking places where I can get a bit high. We may try to do this, but experience has shown that these difficulties when not faced will keep following us like a shadow until we get desperate enough to face and tackle them, but not on our own.

The other temptation is that in order to find quick solution for what is happening to us, we make very hasty decisions that eventually will make the situation more difficult to handle or to cope with.

St Ignatius of Layola, the founder of the Jesuits used to say never make a decision either when you are on a high or when you are feeling very distressed or when you are in a panic state. Decisions ought to be made after

serious reflection, having the opportunity to examine calmly every facet of the situation with good and solid guidance and in a spirit of prayer. Wise words indeed.

Fr Michael Casey, a monk at Tarrawarra Abbey in Victoria has this to say. "In moments of difficulties and anxiety, change nothing. Let the issues keep coming to the surface. Do not frighten them away, have a good look at them and see if something can be done to integrate them. We cultivate a serenity of heart which means effectively reducing our trust in our own efforts and increasing our confidence in the goodness of God". *21st Sunday in Ordinary Time Year A, 2007*

God Bless.

'Small' and 'Ordinary' - Are Important

Sometimes we forget that small is very important in the Bible. Jesus said that where two or three are gathered in his name He is also present. He fed so many thousands of people with five loaves and two fish. Moreover, he portrayed children as being the ones who truly manifest the qualities that he was encouraging and promoting. Through Luke, Jesus is saying that we can continue his mission not only by being involved in great and well organised and very well attended programs. The mission of Jesus is also accomplished by ordinary people doing ordinary things and being faithful to their responsibilities.

I can still recall my mother and the way she helped me during the time when I had to sit for an important examination. In Malta, you have to sit for an examination in order to be able to attend good secondary schools. Moreover, according to the results that a person achieves would depend whether a person gets a scholarship or not. I was quite young and my father had died a few years before. My mother could not afford to pay for a secondary education and therefore I was under a lot of pressure to do well in the exam so that I could get a scholarship to attend a very good school. I was scared and very afraid. My mother noticed this. She could not help me much with my studies. She grew up during the war and therefore she did not have much of an opportunity to go to school. However, what she did was to come and sit on the other side of the table where I was doing my studies and she would stay there knitting. That was enough for me. Her presence was enough for me. I knew that she cared about me and that she was supporting me. She did not have to say anything. Her presence said it all. That gesture simple and ordinary was a moment of grace and great support for me because it was coming from a heart full of the Holy Spirit. *4th Sunday in Ordinary Time Year C, 2010*

Being Encouraged and Supported – A Personal Reflection

It feels so empowering to be encouraged and supported. It brings out the best in us when we realise that we are being backed and affirmed by those around us, by our peers and by those in authority. Not so long ago, I was at a meeting with our Secondary School Principals. I was sharing with them about where I get my strength in my leadership role as a bishop. I was talking with them about what sustains and encourages me in my ministry. The following day I received a note from one of the people who were present. It was a short note, but it was full of warmth and spontaneity. It read "I was sitting watching and listening to you yesterday and when travelling back later in the day by myself I got to thinking about my feelings at that time, and I wanted to tell you about those feelings. It was pride, simply pride. It felt good to be associated with you, with your attitude, with your passion, with your person. It felt good to see you in full flight exercising your priesthood, your sincerity, your love of people".

Paul was very aware of his limitations yet he always found that courage to persevere in his mission. In his Second Letter to the people of Corinth chapter 4, verses 7-9, he says, "But we have this treasure (Jesus) in jars of clay to show that all surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side but never crushed, perplexed but not in despair, persecuted but not abandoned, struck down but not destroyed. This is who you and I are in God. We are His sons, His daughters, an intimate part of His family and very loved by Him. No wonder that we are called to be a source of blessings to all those whom we encounter every day. Transfiguration 2006

The invitation as people created in the image and likeness of God is not to be afraid to take the plunge and right what needs to be changed. We can do so when we surround ourselves by other people who have sound Christian values and principles and as we seek a deeper and closer relationship with Jesus Christ who is alive in us. Let us keep remembering the words of St Paul as expressed in today's second reading. "You are, all of you, sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. All baptized in Christ, you have clothed yourselves in Christ". So let us take courage. *12th Sunday of year C 2007*

Our Ultimate Security - Reflecting on John 6:1-15

When I was reflecting on the gospel of today, I could not help get past the figure of that young man who had the five loaves and the two fish. When reading this episode, I have often thought about the marvellous gesture of Jesus in feeding so many people with an initial small quantity of food. However, I have seldom thought about the young man and how he might have felt when asked to give up his five loaves and two fish. I wonder what his first reaction was? I would imagine that his first reaction as a human being would have been, "Hey, excuse me, this belongs to me. I have procured the food for myself and for my family. That would have been a very normal initial human reaction. To give up what you possess is not that easy unless you realise that the returns would be far greater than what you are prepared to give up.

This made me reflect deeper on the whole question of security. Where does my security lie? What makes me at peace with who I am? As the end of the day what is that something that I could hold onto, something which gives me the ultimate understanding of who I am. I was in a sense forced to think seriously about all of this when I became sick in 2005. The symptoms of the sickness appeared suddenly and I had to spend a considerable amount of time in hospital. It was my very first experience of being a patient in a hospital. I became very wary every time the specialist came to visit me and I was full of apprehension every time I had to go to another part of the building for tests. I recall very vividly that the first three days were full of tests with different machines and I really got very worried.

During this time I reflected very often. So where is your security? What can you hold on to at this particular moment of your life? God is good and I have learnt three basic lessons from this whole experience. In the first place I came to realise very vividly that every day is a gift. Every day is a grace that is given to me. Therefore I need to make sure that I live each day to the full, trying to be a source of hope and encouragement to every person who I meet and in every situation that I might find myself in. In the second place, I realised that I worry about too many things that I should not worry about. There are situations in life where I can do something to resolve or to come to a just and balanced conclusion. However there are also other situations whose outcomes do not depend on whatever I do. I do my best in the situation where I am at, but at some point I need to let God do his bit. My duty is to seek advice, reflect on what are the possibilities; do whatever is possible but when the outcome does not depend on whatever I do or think I need to take a step back and let God take care of the situation.

The third lesson that I learnt is that ultimately God has a big part in my life. As I lay in bed, I often reflected that ultimately what matters is my relationship with God who is passionately in love with me. Everything passes. What remains is how much I have developed this friendship and communication with my God. I know where my security lies. I can lose everything but nobody can take away the love that God has for me. That is always present. That is always secure.

There is also another factor which emerges for the gesture of this young man. When he was prepared to give whatever he had, that act of kindness became the source of so much blessing. Every little deed that we do in the spirit of kindness can have an amazing and life changing effect on someone. In 1966, a small coloured boy left his hometown with his parents, brothers and sisters to settle in a white neighbourhood of Washington D.C. One day together with his two brothers and sisters he was sitting on the front steps of his house. Many white people passed by but they pretended that they never saw them. Moreover, those who looked at them had a very unwelcome demeanour about them.

This young boy started to feel very unloved and rejected. He started to disdain the fact that they had to move their home. He was told that they were going to live in a very nice part of the capital city. He was told that their social position was going to improve and yet all he was experiencing was a feeling of not being wanted. While he was lost in these thoughts, he noticed a white lady walking on the other side of the street. All of a sudden this woman stopped looked at him and said in a bright voice "Welcome". She went inside her house and after a while she emerged with a tray of drinks, cream cakes and jelly sandwiches. She came over to him and his brothers and sisters and gave them the drinks and whatever else she had on the tray.

That young man, is Steven Carter, at present a Professor of Law at Yale University. That small gesture changed his life. He discovered that the woman was a very religious Jewess. He wrote a book about it entitled "Civility". On page 75, he wrote "Nothing in contemporary secular conversation calls us to give up anything truly valuable for anybody else... Only religion offers a sacred language of sacrifice – selflessness – awe that enables believers to treat their fellow citizens as fellow passengers..... I learned that truth in 1966 and, to this day, I can close my eyes and feel on my tongue the smooth, slick sweetness of the cream cheese and jelly sandwiches that I gobbled on that summer afternoon when I discovered how a single act of genuine and unassuming civility can change a life forever".

Never underestimate the good that we can do. Let us never sell ourselves short. Let us always remember how powerful we are in God who is our ultimate security. *17th Sunday in Ordinary Time Year B 2009*

The Message of Easter

Many years ago, I saw a film that made a deep impression on me. The title is in Greek "Phos" which means light. Part of the film depicted the ceremony that we have just first celebrated this evening. The Easter Candle was brought into the church and the people rushed forward to light the small candles that they held in their hands from the big Easter Candle. In the midst of the crowd there was this little boy who also rushed forward to light his small candle. When he lit it he ran straight to the cemetery and stopped in front of the grave where his father was buried. He put this light in a special glass container and said, "Courage father, Jesus is Risen".

I still visit the grave of a very dear friend of mine. She died relatively young. She was just a few days short of her fiftieth birthday. I visit the grave because somehow I do not desire to lose the connection with someone who I got to know quite well. At times my visit evokes happy memories while at other times my heart becomes heavy and sad. As I look at the photograph on the tombstone I recall a person of great faith, a person who loved life and a person who encouraged and gave hope to all those who she met. Under the photograph there are inscribed the words of Jesus as recorded by St John. "I have come to give you life and life to the full" (Jn 10:10)

Very often during these visits, I often wonder how people can cope and live without a belief in the Resurrection of Jesus. Without faith in the Resurrection my visits would end up in total depression, life beautiful as it is would become meaningless reduced to mere memories and death would herald a total and utter loss. However, it is precisely in a graveyard where death seems to reign supreme that the good news of Jesus's resurrection was first announced.

The unique message of Easter is that God can turn what seems to be tragedies in to triumphs. No one, not even the most brainy and wise person in this world can give us the hope of life after death. Only Jesus can. St Paul speaks very passionately about this reality in his first letter to the people of Corinth, a sizable city in Greece. He cries out "Death where is your sting. Death where is your victory" (1 Cor 15:55). Moreover he calls Jesus the first fruit of all those who died (1 Cor 15:20). What does this mean? The first fruits are important to the farmer. If the first fruits are good and healthy then all the harvest will be good and healthy. However, if the first fruits look sickly and without life, then the whole harvest will display the same qualities. The first fruits show what the harvest is going to be like. This means that when St Paul says "Jesus is the first fruit of all those who have died", he is actually saying, "Look at Jesus, whatever happened to Him is going to happen to all of us". Jesus died and we are all going to die. But Jesus rose again and it will be the same story with each one of us. We are destined for glory. We are destined for eternity. Our God created us in such a manner not to live here forever but to be with Him forever. God Bless. *Easter Sunday 2009*

Parish Life and People of Our Parishes and Diocese

However, what really strikes me about the lives of Peter and Paul is how they were introduced to our own faith. This really gives me and us all a lot of consolation and hope. The Bible is full of people who I call the little people. They are those people about whom we do not know much. They appear briefly and then disappear. However, the consequences of their action are still being felt today. The first one is Ananias, a Christian in the city of Damascus. We do not know much about him. All we know is that he belonged to the community of Christian believers in Damascus. However, if it was not for Ananias we would not have Paul today. It was Ananias who baptized Paul. He also prayed for him for the healing of his blindness and he also prayed for a first anointing of the Holy Spirit to be experienced by Paul.

Paul's encounter with Ananias was a moment of grace. St Paul embarked on his mission with such amazing results as a consequence of the prayer of the unknown man called Ananias. The same thing can be said about Peter. Peter had a brother called Andrew who was also one of the apostles. We do not know much about Andrew. Not many things are said about him in the gospels. He is only mentioned a few times. Yet it was Andrew who introduced Peter to Jesus. It was Andrew who encouraged and persuaded his brother Peter to follow Jesus. If there was no Andrew, there would not have been Peter today. Yes, we are celebrating the feasts of these two great men today, but we are also celebrating the lives and the faith of these two lesser known men, Ananias and Andrew whose influence and faith helped Peter and Paul to be who they are today.

This gives me a great confidence, because in our parishes one can find many people like Ananias and Andrew. Many of us may not be known to a great number of people. Our photos do not appear on the newspaper and we do not appear frequently on TV. However, there are many people in our parishes, people like yourselves who are a source of encouragement and blessing to so many. There are many people in our parishes who might be considered as "little people" who are nevertheless doing a mighty work animated by what we believe as a Catholic community. So many of our people are walking courageously and patiently with others of their family who are seriously sick. There are those who manifest so much faith as they walk with the disabled. There are so many parents who are doing whatever is possible to give their best to their families. There are those who do the shopping for people who are housebound and there are others who frequently visit the sick and those in prison. There are those who are always ready to work for peace and for justice and also those who form the backbone of our parish life.=

There are so many selfless and courageous people who are actively involved in our church organizations like the St Vincent de Paul, Catholic Women's League and Teams of Our Lady. There are so many little and hidden people who are constantly encouraging and giving hope to those around them. So many people who have been working silently yet constantly and effectively to help many of our young people to take part in the World Youth Day Events. There are so many of our young people who have come forward to help other young people express and celebrate our faith meaningfully and powerfully. Indeed there are so many who in the midst of so much darkness are lighting a little light. There are indeed so many in our parishes who instead of lamenting about or cursing the darkness are lighting a little light of hope. It is enough for someone to light a match. Many lit matches provide enough light for all to keep moving forward. I salute you and I thank you. Such attitude and practical involvement provide the necessary encouragement and opportunity for the continued emergence of other Saints like St Peter and St Paul.

Feast of Sts Peter and Paul 2008

I think of all the parents, who constantly try to give their best to their families. I think of all the husbands and wives who constantly strive to love and respect each other with the love that God has for them. I think of so many people in our Diocese who are eagerly giving their best in serving their own families. So many who give so generously as members of the different organizations in the Diocese. I think of the amazing number of our people who do so much to bring the life and the teaching of Jesus Christ to our young people in our schools and of so many others who at the present time are walking with those suffering from the effects of the draught and other situations of anxiety. 2nd Sunday of Lent Year A 2008