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Disciples
Making Disciples

The Immensity
of the Soul

15th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Bible Awareness Sunday

12 Jul 2020

Is 55:10-11
Rom 8:18-23
Mt 13:1-23

Today's gospel is popularly referred to as the Parable of the Sower. It is also the first parable from our Lord who spoke in this way because the crowds "look without seeing and listen without hearing or understanding." (Mt 13:13) He said they were like the people God had reprimanded centuries earlier - they "listen and listen again, but not understand, see and see again, but not perceive." The reason for this "deafness" and "blindness" is because "...the heart...has grown coarse, their ears are dull of hearing, and they have shut their eyes." They had chosen to be stonily indifferent to Jesus' teachings and his miracles of healing and exorcism because they fear "they should see...hear...understand...and be converted and be healed..." (Mt 13:14-15; Is 6:9-10)

In other words, they were not the "rich soil" of the parable that could be planted on by our Lord for a continuous harvest. Rather, they had preferred to keep our Lord at a distance by maintaining obstacles (symbolized by the path, rocks and thorns). The parable was meant to alert them to their impenitence as Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI explains, "Jesus'...use of parables [is] precisely to encourage...conversion of the heart...by their very nature parables demand the effort of interpretation, they not only challenge the mind but also freedom." (Angelus, 10 Jul 2011)

The source of our freedom lies in our



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free will. Our will (decision-making) and our intellect (mind or understanding) are the two faculties God has placed in our soul to enable us to know him, love him and serve him. Every human person, therefore, is endowed with the capacity and desire for God but this gift can be forgotten, overlooked or even explicitly rejected as Jesus encountered in the crowds before him in today's gospel (cf CCC 27-29).

The Catechism tells us that our immortal soul is also where we are "most especially in God's image" because "soul" signifies the *spiritual principle* in man." In giving us a *spiritual* soul, God has given us a sign that "from creation man is ordered to a supernatural end... his soul can gratuitously be raised beyond all it deserves to communion with God." (CCC 363 - 367) As such the openness to welcome God's grace - like the rich soil in today's gospel - is necessary if we desire to be eternally in communion with God and share in his divine life.

Fr Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, who greatly influenced "The Universal Call to Holiness" in the Dogmatic Constitution, *Lumen Gentium*, wrote in his book, *"Everlasting Life and the Immensity of the Soul: A Theological Treatise on the Four Last Things - Death, Judgement, Heaven, Hell"*, that it is of profound

importance that we recognise the "immensity" of our immortal soul. In knowing that God has destined us for heaven, we should direct our spiritual faculties of intellect and will to seek God and be "completely filled with the eternal possession of God, Truth Supreme and Sovereign God."

If we will to persevere in seeking God, Fr Garrigou-Lagrange says God will pour out his grace on us so that "the soul aspires more and more to reach its source, to re-enter the bosom of the Father...the depths of God. It aspires more and more to see Him without medium. It experiences ever more keenly that only God can satisfy it."

Today is also Bible Awareness Sunday and in today's first reading, God tells us through the prophet Isaiah that "the word that goes from my mouth does not return to me empty, without carrying out my will and succeeding in what it was sent to do." (Is 55:11) May we prayerfully study the Word of God every day so as to enjoy the freedom and glory as God's adopted children (cf Rom 8:21). Let us not be impervious to God's Word as the crowds in today's gospel were.

May our Blessed Mother, whose will does not differ from the will of God, intercede for us: Hail Mary, full of grace, pray for us sinners!

Announcements

For announcements in the bulletin, send your requests to mmm@sfxchurch.sg by the MONDAY before the weekend, 2359hrs

NEED SOME PRAYERS?

Feeling overwhelmed/stressed or anxious while coping with uncertainty during this period? Fret not! Our SFX Intercessory Prayer Ministry will be standing in the gap to intercede and offer up your prayer petitions at their weekly prayer sessions. You may submit your prayer request to www.sfxchurch.sg/intercessory-prayer. Rest assured that all prayer requests will be treated with the strictest confidence.

TEMPORARY ONLINE MASS OFFERINGS

Please submit your intention **1 WEEK in advance**. Please kindly wait for the Finance Department to contact you and provide you with a "Reference No", MO xxx (eg MO 001) before indicating the given referral number upon making payment via PayNow (**T08CC4033**). These will be offered up during our priests' private masses.

SFX ONLINE ROSARY, HOSTED BY SALT (SERVANTS AT THE LORD'S TABLE)

For the month of July, let's come together as a parish community to pray the Rosary and bring our intercessions to our Blessed Virgin Mary. **Every Tue** from **7 - 28 July, 8.30pm**. Meeting room opens from 8.15pm onwards via <https://tinyurl.com/SFXTueRosary>. Please note that recording of the session is not allowed.

ZOOM MEETING DETAILS
Meeting ID: 867-1052-4234
Password: 465481



SFX CHARISMATIC (ONLINE)

The next Charismatic service via Zoom is on **Mon 13 Jul, 8pm**. Praise and Worship followed by a talk given by Fr Charlie Oasan, CICM on 'Sheltered in the hands of God: Living the crisis with hope'. All are welcome.

ZOOM MEETING DETAILS
Meeting ID: 844 3898 6221
Password: CPGMON1307



GRADUAL RESUMPTION OF SFX MASSES IN JULY

The booking of Masses at the Church of St Francis Xavier will commence at 12pm on Tues 14 July 2020.

1. All parishioners will have to register themselves with the Archdiocese **Mass Attendance Registration System (MARS)** at myCatholic.sg
2. Choose only **ONE** church that you will be attending during this time (Covid-19 Phase 2 onwards). Church 'hopping' is strictly not allowed.
3. Please bring along your NRIC and mobile for verification.

Each Mass is limited to a maximum of 50 registered persons. **Strictly no walk-ins allowed.**

Mass bookings must be made individually. Family bookings are currently not available. For more details on the Resumption of Mass, visit <https://lite.catholic.sg/page/resumption-of-mass>.

The Adoration Room, Columbarium and the Sacrament of Reconciliation remain unavailable for now.

For those who do not have access to a mobile phone, computer or internet, kindly get in touch with the Parish Office and we will assist you. Alternatively, you can ask your family or friends for help.

Online Masses by the Archbishop will continue to be made available.

MASS COLLECTION

Mass collections can be made via:

1. **PayNow** - Launch Paynow service on your bank's app or online website. Select "**Send via Unique Entity Number (UEN)**" and enter "**T08CC4033**". Proceed to check entity Name = **Church of St Francis Xavier**, then key in Amount. Lastly, key in Ref - **Mass Collection**.
2. **Cheque** - Payable to **Church of St Francis Xavier**. Mail cheques to **63A Chartwell Drive, Singapore 558758**.
3. **Giro** - Download **Mass Collection Giro Form** via sfxchurch.sg/donate. Mail completed form to **63A Chartwell Drive, Singapore 558758**.

For more information, visit www.catholic.sg/offertory/.

Step-by-step guide: www.catholic.sg/transfer-funds-via-paynow/

RCIA AND RCIY 2020/2021: A JOURNEY OF FAITH

Do you know of anyone who is interested in embarking on a journey of faith? Or perhaps someone who has felt a stirring in their heart and is seeking answers to questions, or even peace in their struggles? We encourage you to reach out to them and invite them to join us in RCIA and RCIY. Here are some details:

RCIA journey (24 years and above)

Date: every **Fri from 26 Jun***

Time: 7.30pm – 10pm

Register: tinyurl.com/sfxrciasignup

Enquiries: Angela at ast_goh@hotmail.com or call 9626 5960.

RCIY journey (13 – 23 years old)

Date: every **Sat from 4 Jul***

Time: 4pm – 6pm

Register: tinyurl.com/sfxrciysignup

Enquiries: rciy@sfxchurch.sg or contact Angela at 9002 9977; or Mark at 9751 3448.

**RCIA sessions will be conducted every Friday via Zoom for now. Sessions will be moved to Tuesdays, 8pm – 10pm once Circuit Breaker restrictions are formally lifted.*

**RCIY sessions are originally scheduled for Sundays, 10.30am-12.30pm. The current timing on Saturday afternoon is only an interim arrangement for the next month or two.*

BIBLE SUNDAY MESSAGE 2020

READING THE BIBLE WITH THE HEART



We live in a global village where we are easily connected to one another through social media. Why take the trouble to meet a person face-to-face or make a phone call when you could just send an email or message? Sometimes we get so caught up in this virtual reality that we relate quite impersonally to those around us, including our family and friends. It is common today to see family having meals together with eyes fixed on their hand phones rather than on the people in front of them. This could then lead us to relate to one another on a functional level – what a person can do for us, rather than on a relational level – who the person is to us. How do we relate to God? On a functional or relational level?

✦ **The Word of God is Relational, not Functional**

The Word of God is not just a mental concept or an idea or an expression of a thought. It is a living person, “*someone you can touch with your hands, and hear with your ears and see with your own eyes.*” (1 John 1:1), in short, the Word of Life. The Apostles were very sure that what they passed on to us are not ‘myths’ or cleverly invented stories or legends or philosophy or some political system or theory, but Someone with whom they had intimate relationship and of whom they were witnesses (2 Peter 1:16). And they hoped we too would want to “*have fellowship with the Father and with the Son*” (1 John 1:3-4) – a living personal relationship which brings joy. Pope Benedict XVI reminds us that, “*We can encounter Christ in reading Sacred Scripture, in prayer, in the liturgical life of the Church. We can touch Christ’s Heart and feel him touching ours. Only in this personal relationship with Christ, only in this encounter with the Risen One do we truly become Christians.*”¹

✦ **The Word of God enters into a Living Personal Relationship with Us**

Whenever the Word of God is mentioned, remember, we are speaking of a living person, not a concept. Each time we pick up the Bible, we are getting in touch with Jesus who speaks to us and wants to have a personal relationship with us; we are having a conversation with Jesus. Jesus speaks to us, we listen; we speak to Jesus, the Author of Life, who is proclaimed to us (1 John 1:11) e.g. in the liturgy. “*Christ is present in his Word since it is he himself who speaks when the Holy Scriptures are read in the Church.*”² “*This mystery (of faith), then, requires that the faithful believe in it, that they celebrate it, and that they live from it a vital and personal relationship with the living and true God. This relationship is prayer.*”³

✦ **Reading the Bible with the Heart**

We use our heads to read the newspapers, magazines, or study our textbooks or do research work in order to acquire more knowledge; we don’t enter into a personal relationship with books, magazines or newspapers. We don’t talk to them. But when we read the Word of God, we come with our hearts open to receive Him (John 1:1, 12). We read or study the Word of God as much with our hearts, as our heads. When we read the Bible, we are entering into a personal and intimate relationship with Jesus.

- **Personal** i.e., from a person to a person, not mental or conceptual, nor from a person to a concept, idea or to a think-tank from where you can fish out ideas or beautiful thoughts and pick and choose and use them as we please. No, it is person-to-person, from Jesus who loves us and has so much to give to us, to share with us, to reveal to us “*the secrets of the kingdom of heaven.*” (Matthew 13:11).
- **Intimate** i.e., to have a heart-to-heart talk, like holding a conversation between two lovers, exchanging secrets known only to the two! It reaches and touches the depths of our being. The Word of God heals and sets us free from our bondage, be it emotional, physical or spiritual. “*The Word of God is living and active, sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to the dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.*” (Hebrews 4:12).

Personal and intimate relationships are made in the heart. That is why our hearts must be open and receptive to what Jesus wants to reveal to us. He says, “*No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him*” (Matthew 11:27). God’s truth is so often hidden from the human intellect, and is better understood only when God reveals it. And when He does reveal it, we must be ready to receive it, like the two disciples on the way to Emmaus who encountered the Risen Christ.

¹ Pope Benedict XVI, General Audience (3 September 2008).

² Sacrosanctum Concilium (Dogmatic Constitution on Sacred Liturgy), 7.

³ Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2558.



Mass Timings

Opening Hours

WEEKEND MASSES

Suspended until further notice

PARISH OFFICE

Closed until further notice

WEEKDAY MASSES

Suspended until further notice

ADORATION ROOM

Closed until further notice

MASS ON PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

Suspended until further notice

LIBRARY

Closed until further notice

HOLY HOUR

Suspended until further notice

COLUMBARIUM

Closed until further notice

CANTEEN

Closed until further notice

✦ The Word of God Comes Alive in the Holy Spirit

There is a close relationship between the Word of God and the Holy Spirit. Where there is the Holy Spirit, there is the Word of God and where there is the Word of God, there is the Holy Spirit. The angel Gabriel appeared to Mary and announced to her that she was specially chosen by God to become the mother of the Most High (Luke 1:32). She could not understand how she could become a mother when she was still a virgin. The angel Gabriel assured her saying, *"The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you"* (Luke 1:35). This is how the Eternal Word of God *"through whom God made everything that was made"* (John 1:3), became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14) through the power of the Holy Spirit: Emmanuel – God is with us (Matthew 1:23).

The same process goes on in the Sacrifice of the Mass. The priest invokes the Holy Spirit to come down on the bread and wine and together with the words of consecration, the Holy Spirit changes these elements into the Body and Blood of Christ. Thus, Jesus the Eternal Word of God is made present and dwells among us.

Like Mary, our whole person must be open to receive the Holy Spirit for the Word of God to become flesh in us, i.e., for God to speak to us. When the Word of God is acted upon, it releases its inherent power so that our life will be touched, renewed and filled with new energy and power.

Conclusion

"Being a Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction." The Christian life is not simply functional, but relational. It is an encounter with the living person of Jesus who wants to relate to us personally and intimately, enabling us to see all things from God's point of view, to have a divine perspective on all things. He wants to give us life and life in all its fullness (John 10:10). Reading the Bible with our hearts in the power of the Holy Spirit will keep us in touch with Jesus, enabling us to see what he sees, to think what he thinks, and to desire what he desires, to feel what he feels. Like Peter, let us say to him, "To whom shall we go, Lord? You have the words of eternal life." (John 6:68).

Questions for Reflection:

1. How do we relate to God? On a functional or relational level? Why is this important in our Christian life and in the Church?
2. When we read the Bible, we are entering into a personal and intimate relationship with Jesus. How can we make reading the Bible a living encounter with the person of Jesus?

ANOINTING OF THE SICK



The sacrament can be administered to any Catholic awaiting serious surgery, suffering from serious illness or weakened by old age. Anointing may be given before admission for the anticipated medical procedure. Contact the Parish Office to request for a priest. In emergencies, priests of the church nearest to the hospital can be contacted.

INFANT BAPTISM



For more information, please contact the Parish Office for Baptism of Infants.

FUNERAL



Please check with the Parish Office for priest availability and Mass timing before confirming the timing at the crematorium. For prayers at the wake, please contact the Parish Office.

MARRIAGE



Contact the Parish Office 12 months before your intended date to book the church premises and ensure that your presiding priest is able to make that date. Church unavailable from 1 Nov 2018 due to renovations.

MASS OFFERING



Mass offering envelopes are available outside the Parish Office and Church. Submit your envelopes at least two weeks in advance of your intended date. Please write the names clearly, and in block letters.

VOLUNTEER & SHARE YOUR GIFTS!

If you're interested in content curation and design layout, contact mmm@sfxchurch.sg