

## **INTRODUCTION**

As we continue deepening the theme for our upcoming Easter Encounter: "Courage! I have conquered the world," we are invited this week to have hope of the victory that Christ has won already in our lives. This hope gives us the courage to bear witness with Him and gives us the courage to allow Jesus to be victorious in our daily struggles. We are not only called to walk in the desert of lent but also to walk towards our victory with Jesus ahead of us. He gave Himself as an example for us to follow Him. In Him we are called to fix our eyes. *"Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, on whom our faith depends from beginning to end. He did not give up because of the cross. On the contrary, because of the joy that was waiting for Him, he thought nothing of the disgrace of dying on the cross and he is now seated at the right side of God's throne."* (**Hebrews 12:2**)

Lenten journey is not only practiced during Lenten season but it is also experienced daily. We call it Lenten journey if we associate our daily challenges in the journey of Christ on Calvary. Let us not only gaze our eyes on the pains and discomforts due to our decisions and actions but also the joy of our sacrifices for the sake of others and for God's glory. For Jesus, suffering did not matter to him but what matters is the effect of His sacrifices which is salvation. This is what we are invited for in our daily journey. Let us have a little sacrifice for the reformation of others at the same time for our purification. Jesus' cross brings reflection that there is life after death, a kind of life which every soul is longing for, which is a complete joy because we are in union with our Creator who is our final destiny. *"Since you have*

*accepted Christ as Lord, live in union with Him. Keep your roots deep in Him, build your lives on Him, and become stronger in your faith as you were taught. And be filled with thanksgiving."*(**Colossians 2:6-7**)

*"It was to this that God called you for Christ himself suffered for you and left you with an example so that you will follow his footsteps."* (**read the complete 1 Peter 2:21-25**)

## **MONDAY**

### **Hope in the Victory of Christ**

<sup>17</sup> For look, I am going to create new heavens and a new earth, and the past will not be remembered and will come no more to mind. <sup>18</sup> Rather be joyful, be glad for ever at what I am creating, for look, I am creating Jerusalem to be 'Joy' and my people to be 'Gladness'. <sup>19</sup> I shall be joyful in Jerusalem and I shall rejoice in my people. No more will the sound of weeping be heard there, nor the sound of a shriek; <sup>20</sup> never again will there be an infant there who lives only a few days, nor an old man who does not run his full course; for the youngest will die at a hundred, and at a hundred the sinner will be accursed. <sup>21</sup> They will build houses and live in them, they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit. (**Isaiah 65:17-21**)

*Heaven is a place where everyone has his own slot. However, this slot shall not be taken without working and hoping to gain it. Let us not be stopped with our sufferings, instead, we shall continue living life to the fullest in witnessing Christ wherever we may be, for heaven is a place where each soul longs for. It is where the complete happiness is present. It is the place which we have nothing to crave for, for we are ultimately in union with our father.*

*Do you unite your sufferings with Christ? Do you put your hope in him?*

## **TUESDAY**

### **Hope that Gives Courage in the Daily Life**

<sup>22</sup> We are well aware that the whole creation, until this time, has been groaning in labour pains. <sup>23</sup> And not only that: we too, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we are groaning inside ourselves, waiting with eagerness for our bodies to be set free. <sup>24</sup> In hope, we already have salvation; in hope, not visibly present, or we should not be hoping -- nobody goes on hoping for something which is already visible. <sup>25</sup> But having this hope for what we cannot yet see, we are able to wait for it with persevering confidence. (**Romans 8:22-25**)

<sup>10</sup> that I may come to know him and the power of his resurrection, and partake of his sufferings by being moulded to the pattern of his death, <sup>11</sup> striving towards the goal of resurrection from the dead.

(**Philippians 3:10-11**)

*A person who trod in a Lenten journey would see suffering as beneficial to his soul. The way he sees it has several benefits: it is for sanctification, for purification, for maturity, for realization, increase of faith and the like. Moreover, he is not afraid to face his cross; instead he has the courage to carry it to deepen his relationship with God. It is a concrete witnessing of Christ in his daily life. Do you consider your suffering a Lenten journey?*

## **WEDNESDAY**

### **Hope that gives courage in bearing witness to Him. (St. Pedro Calungsod)**

<sup>8</sup> So you are never to be ashamed of witnessing to our Lord, or ashamed of me for being his prisoner; but share in my hardships for the sake of the gospel, relying on the power of God <sup>9</sup> who has saved us and called us to be holy -- not because of anything we ourselves had done but for his own purpose and by his own grace. This grace had already been granted to us, in Christ Jesus, before the beginning of time, <sup>10</sup> but it has been revealed only by the appearing of our Saviour Christ Jesus. He has abolished death, and he has brought to light immortality and life through the gospel.

(**2 Timothy 1:8-10**)

<sup>24</sup> In all truth I tell you, whoever listens to my words, and believes in the one who sent me, has eternal life; without being brought to judgment such a person has passed from death to life. <sup>25</sup> In all truth I tell you, the hour is coming -- indeed it is already here -- when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and all who hear it will live. <sup>26</sup> For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself; <sup>27</sup> and, because he is the Son of man, has granted him power to give judgment. <sup>28</sup> Do not be surprised at this, for the hour is coming when the dead will leave their graves at the sound of his voice:

(**John 5:24-28**)

*Pedro Calungsod was a man full of humility because despite of his tender age and educational background, he has the courage to spread the good news not only to our country but also to the foreign land. He did not think of any disgrace to happen to him but for the joy that is waiting ahead of him. To bear witness does not need a tough requirement but only willingness and bravery of heart and*

mind to bring Christ into the world regardless of distance, race, age and status in life. Let us not be ashamed to introduce Christ to others for it is through us that the world will know more about God.

Do you think of the joy ahead of you as you bear witness to Christ?

#### THURSDAY

##### Hope towards the goal of the final victory.

<sup>49</sup> 'Sir,' answered the official, 'come down before my child dies.' <sup>50</sup> 'Go home,' said Jesus, 'your son will live.' The man believed what Jesus had said and went on his way home; <sup>51</sup> and while he was still on the way his servants met him with the news that his boy was alive. <sup>52</sup> He asked them when the boy had begun to recover. They replied, 'The fever left him yesterday at the seventh hour.' <sup>53</sup> The father realised that this was exactly the time when Jesus had said, 'Your son will live'; and he and all his household believed. **(John 4:49-53)**

...<sup>23</sup> Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.' <sup>24</sup> Martha said, 'I know he will rise again at the resurrection on the last day.' <sup>25</sup> Jesus said: I am the resurrection. Anyone who believes in me, even though that person dies, will live, <sup>26</sup> and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this? <sup>27</sup> 'Yes, Lord,' she said, 'I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who was to come into this world.' **(read the complete John 11:21-27)**

*There are many times in our lives that we experience death by cooling off our communion with God, by being too busy attending to our chores, preparing our paper works, opening our Facebook, watching movies and listening to chismis.*

Sometimes, we tend to keep ourselves busy but in the end, nothing is done. Another experience of death is when we are down and troubled with problems and it seems that nobody is there for us; we seem to carry the whole world because of too much pressure. We tend to forget about God who suffered and died for us. We tend to disregard His bountiful blessings because we only focus on our death. Let us eventually turn our death into a Lenten journey so that we can focus into the light instead of darkness. However, this is the reality of our journey that sometimes we tend to lax and fail our commitment but let us always remember that we should not forget to rise with Christ. Let us not be afraid to continue our journey with Him to come home to our Father who is our final destiny.

*Did you try to rise again with Christ after your death? Did you consider your suffering significant as Christ's witness?*

#### FRIDAY

##### Hope in Jesus as an example

<sup>16</sup> In the abundance of his glory may he, through his Spirit, enable you to grow firm in power with regard to your inner self, <sup>17</sup> so that Christ may live in your hearts through faith, and then, planted in love and built on love **(Ephesians 3:16-17)**

<sup>15</sup> Here is a saying that you can rely on and nobody should doubt: that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. I myself am the greatest of them; <sup>16</sup> and if mercy has been shown to me, it is because Jesus Christ meant to make me the leading example of his inexhaustible patience for all the other people who were later to trust in him for eternal life.

**(1 Timothy 1:15-16)**

*The real witnessing is to make our heart a home for Christ so that we will not easily give in to our human desires and pleasures, instead, fix our eyes on Jesus who is our model - He who looks not only on the cross but also on the victory behind the cross. Let us put our hope in Him to be victorious in our daily struggles that no matter how difficult it is, we still remain patient and happy as we travel with the same game of life. Do you continue to fix your eyes on Jesus amidst your agony?*

#### SATURDAY

##### Hope in the salvation of the world

<sup>12</sup> So, prophesy. Say to them, "The Lord Yahweh says this: I am now going to open your graves; I shall raise you from your graves, my people, and lead you back to the soil of Israel. <sup>13</sup> And you will know that I am Yahweh, when I open your graves and raise you from your graves, my people, <sup>14</sup> and put my spirit in you, and you revive, and I resettle you on your own soil. Then you will know that I, Yahweh, have spoken and done this -- declares the Lord Yahweh." <sup>1</sup>

**(Ezekiel 37:12-14)**

...<sup>15</sup> Can a woman forget her baby at the breast; feel no pity for the child she has borne? Even if these were to forget, I shall not forget you. <sup>16</sup> Look, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands, your ramparts are ever before me.

**(read the complete Isaiah 49:8-16)**

*We have read in the Old Testament the love story of God to His people how He has shown marvellous deeds to them despite their stubbornness and unfaithfulness to Him. This kind of attribute has never wavered even to the*

point of His death for His love is greater than death. His enormous love can forgive and forget our wickedness. A mother can forget the baby she bore but God our Father can never forget us that we are His children.

*Do we ever forget ourselves for the sake of Christ? Are we brave enough to speak for the truth of how much He loves us? Let us pray and work together for the salvation of the world, for the world has been gradually deviated from the real plan of God and becoming more unfaithful to Him. Who will ever help and guide them back to the Father? It is through our daily witnessing not only in words but also through our deeds.*

#### SUNDAY READINGS

##### 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent.

**First Reading** – Ezekiel 37:12-14  
**Psalm** – Psalm 130:1-8  
**Second reading** – Romans 8:8-11  
**Gospel** – John 11:1-45

# Verbon Dei

## GUIDELINES FOR PRAYER

**Do not be afraid to be my witnesses.** (cf. 2 Timothy 1:8)

**March 31-April 6, 2014**

### Objective of the week:

To deepen on the foundations of our hope in the final victory Christ won for us. This gives us courage.