

INTRODUCTION

Last week, we prayed on our lives as baptized Christians. Jesus passes by and like John the Baptist we were invited to point to Him and lead everyone to Him. This is the call for this year's theme of the **Year of the Poor** – “**Look at Jesus**”.

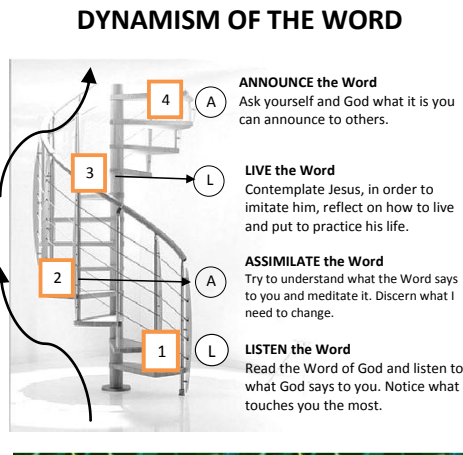
These past days, many big events happened – The feast of the Sto. Niño and the visit of Pope Francis. Jesus was passing by in those events. How has Jesus passed by for you? What do all these events mean to you? These days and perhaps the next few weeks, we will deepen more on these events and the messages transmitted to us.

As the Father looks at us and the realities of the whole world, what was his response? The solution he gave to us in front of the world is a child. **“A child is born for us; a Son is given to us...”** Looking at the image of Sto. Niño, we understand why He is called the **‘Hope for all peoples’** which was the theme for His feast this year because in His being a child, we can draw a lot of concrete things to learn as a Church. The content of this hope is seen as mercy and compassion which was expressed to us through our beloved Pope Francis. Indeed, Jesus is Mercy and Compassion. We have a High Priest who **can sympathise with those who are ignorant or who have gone astray, because he too is subject to the limitations of weakness. (Hebrews 5:2)**

What is mercy and compassion? It is to reach out and accept all peoples in the womb of the Church. It is accepting Jesus as a child and learning from Him by our mercy and compassion to others. **“...I tell you, whenever you did this for one of**

the least important of these followers of mine, you did it for me!” (Matthew 25:40) As Pope Francis said in his message to us before coming here, **“Don’t get tired of bringing the mercy of the Father to the poor, the sick, the abandoned, the young people, and the family. Bring Jesus now into the world of politics, business, arts, science, technology, and social media.”** And as it is said in **(Evangelii Gaudium 114) The Church must be a place of mercy freely given, where everyone can feel welcomed, loved, forgiven and encouraged to live the good life of the Gospel.**

Let us then as disciples of Christ and as a Church, be like the new wineskins with new wine this new year by putting the garment of Christ which is Mercy and Compassion.



MONDAY

A child is the given to us to look up to.

⁵ For a child is born to us, a son is given us; upon his shoulder dominion rests.

They name him Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero, Father-Forever, Prince of Peace.

(Isaiah 9:5)

¹³ People were bringing little children to him, for him to touch them. The disciples scolded them, ¹⁴ but when Jesus saw this he was indignant and said to them, 'Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. ¹⁵ In truth I tell you, anyone who does not welcome the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.' ¹⁶ Then he embraced them, laid his hands on them and gave them his blessing. **(Mark 10:13-16)**

Looking at Jesus as the child given to us, we can learn from Him everything concerning the Kingdom of God. The littleness of a child can teach us his ways of wonder, of simplicity, of pure joy and the power of innocence in the midst of fear and hatred in the world. At the same time, a child though little is not afraid to speak and live the truth in front of all these realities.

TUESDAY

Jesus understands our weakness

Every high priest is taken from among human beings and is appointed to act on their behalf in relationships with God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins; ² he can sympathise with those who are ignorant or who have gone astray, because he too is subject to the limitations of weakness. ³ That is why he has to make sin offerings for himself as well as for the people... ⁷ During his life on earth, he offered up prayer and entreaty, with loud cries and with tears, to the one who had the power to save him from death, and, winning a hearing by his reverence, ⁸ he learnt

obedience, Son though he was, through his sufferings; ⁹ when he had been perfected, he became for all who obey him the source of eternal salvation ¹⁰ and was acclaimed by God with the title of high priest of the order of Melchizedek. **(Hebrews 5:1-3, 7-10)**

Jesus understands all of us because he himself experienced our same weakness in many ways. Those who live with him are gentle, patient and understand others in their weakness. How much do I accept my own weaknesses and of others?

WEDNESDAY

His heart is filled with compassion

³⁵ Jesus went around to all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and curing every disease and illness. ³⁶ At the sight of the crowds, his heart was moved with pity for them because they were troubled and abandoned, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷ Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; ³⁸ so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest."

(Matthew 9:35-38)

³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶ naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.' ³⁷ Then the righteous will answer him and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? ³⁸ When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? ³⁹ When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?' ⁴⁰ And the king

will say to them in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.'

(Matthew 25:35-40)

What is a heart full of mercy and compassion? Those are the ones that is not afraid to reach out and accept all peoples especially the little ones because they know they are accepting Christ himself. Let us enter in this relationship with Christ filled with His mercy and compassion.

THURSDAY

Change your garment to His Mercy and compassion

²¹ No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old cloak. If he does, its fullness pulls away, the new from the old, and the tear gets worse. ²² Likewise, no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the skins are ruined. Rather, new wine is poured into fresh wineskins." **(Mark 2:21-22)**

⁷ And these things made up your way of life when you were living among such people, ⁸ but now you also must give up all these things: human anger, hot temper, malice, abusive language and dirty talk; ⁹ and do not lie to each other. You have stripped off your old behaviour with your old self, ¹⁰ and you have put on a new self which will progress towards true knowledge the more it is renewed in the image of its Creator; ¹¹ and in that image there is no room for distinction between Greek and Jew, between the circumcised and uncircumcised, or between barbarian and Scythian, slave and free. There is only Christ: he is everything and he is in everything.

(Colossians 3:7-11)

As new beings in Christ this New Year ahead, let us put on his garment of mercy and compassion. In order to do this, there is always the call for a daily conversion of taking off the old wineskin. What are the concrete things that I need to kill in me in order that new wine of his mercy and compassion may flow freely?

FRIDAY

Be zealous in bringing my Mercy and Compassion

⁹ And let us never slacken in doing good; for if we do not give up, we shall have our harvest in due time. ¹⁰ So then, as long as we have the opportunity let all our actions be for the good of everybody, and especially of those who belong to the household of the faith. **(Galatians 6:9-10)**

"Don't get tired of bringing the mercy of the Father to the poor, the sick, the abandoned, the young people, and the family. Bring Jesus now into the world of politics, business, arts, science, technology, and social media."

(Pope Francis)

Looking at the example of the Pope these past days, we have witnessed, even though physically he is already very weak, the zeal to show the mercy and compassion of Christ. With all my youth, my energy, the gifts I have received from God, do I easily get tired and give up in showing mercy and compassion? Why?

SATURDAY

Live as the Church full of His mercy.

The Church must be a place of mercy freely given, where everyone can feel

welcomed, loved, forgiven and encouraged to live the good life of the Gospel. **(Evangelii Gaudium 114)**

¹⁰ God would not be so unjust as to forget all you have done, the love that you have for his name or the services you have done, and are still doing, for the holy people of God. ¹¹ Our desire is that every one of you should go on showing the same enthusiasm till the ultimate fulfilment of your hope, ¹² never growing careless, but taking as your model those who by their faith and perseverance are heirs of the promises. **(Hebrews 6:10-12)**

The visit of the Pope is a very clear message for all of us who the Church should be. She must be a place where everyone and everywhere can experience God's mercy freely given. Let us pray that the whole Church can live out always what she was called to be, looking at so many witnesses given to her throughout history.

SUNDAY READINGS

3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Jonah 3:1-5, 10

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 25

2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 7:29-31

Gospel: Mark 1:14-20



Verbum Dei

GUIDELINES FOR PRAYER

"A child is given to us!"

January 19-25, 2015



Objective of the week:

To look at Jesus and live out his mercy and compassion deepening on the feast of Sto. Niño and the visit of the Pope.