

## **INTRODUCTION**

Jesus said to His disciples that whoever wants to follow Him as His disciple has to take up his own cross and follow him. But, first, one may want to sit down and think about what he is actually being asked to do as he may start and eventually quit half way after laying down the foundations, remaining superficial and ridiculed by others (*Luke 14:27-29*). This is a great disaster for those who leave their work half way and for those who depend on them.

Just as Jesus will plant the seeds of life and truth in our hearts until it bears fruit, we too, shall persevere and stay attentive to those who are entrusted to us through His mercy.

We are all called to be His loyal helpers—to tirelessly gather His sheep around Him. At the same time, this is also a call to live an active life of prayer, because what we'll transmit and teach to others is very much a reflection of what we carry inside, “baptizing” them with the same living words that have given us life in the Spirit.

Many times, the Mission is not easy; but the amazing solution lies in discovering how God believes in us. Jesus tells His apostles: “You'll do my works and greater.” Jesus will always stay by our side, encouraging and commanding us to be strong and courageous—not to be afraid nor discouraged—because He will be with us wherever we may go and whoever we may encounter. Not just for us, but also for all those we will lead into the green fields and pastures He promises, of the true Life away from the death of sin.

*Jesus accompanied his disciples faithfully until the very end. We are called to accompany our own disciples in the same way. Our mission is*

*not just praying and preaching but forming apostles and accompanying them until the very end like the good shepherd. How conscious are we of this task? Parents do not abandon their children half way.*

## **MONDAY**

### **Go to where you are told—to the mountain of prayer**

#### **Matthew 28:16-20**

<sup>16</sup>The eleven disciples went to the mountain in Galilee where Jesus had told them to go. <sup>17</sup>When they saw him, they bowed down in worship, though some had doubts. <sup>18</sup>When Jesus came near, he spoke to them. He said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup>So wherever you go, make disciples of all nations: Baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to do everything I have commanded you. “And remember that I am always with you until the end of time.”

To be an apostle, we must first learn how to follow and obey. We must be disciplined, strengthened, and perseverant with our own habits of prayer, remaining faithful to our own times of daily prayer. We go without hesitation to the mountain of prayer to meet Jesus in His word and His presence in the Eucharist. We take and make time to spend time with Him and learn from Him. But we do not remain there like how Peter, James, and John wanted to do on the Transfiguration (Mt 17:4). We meet Him in the silent height of prayer to descend and bring forth what we have learned to others—being the light and salt for a world that is losing its taste of Christianity and developing corners of darkness.

*When you pray, do you hear the call of Jesus to GO? To where is He calling you to GO today? To whom is He calling you today to speak with?*

## **TUESDAY**

### **Walk side by side with your disciples with a listening attitude**

#### **Luke 24:13-27**

<sup>13</sup>On that same day two of Jesus' followers were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, <sup>14</sup>and they were talking to each other about all the things that had happened. <sup>15</sup>As they talked and discussed, Jesus himself drew near and walked along with them; <sup>16</sup>they saw him, but somehow did not recognize him. <sup>17</sup>Jesus said to them, “What are you talking about to each other, as you walk along?” (...)

As Verbum Dei disciples, we may think that our work is finished with preaching or announcing the Word of God to others. However, to speak is just the beginning of what we are expected to accomplish. Just like Jesus on the road to Emmaus, our mission is much more about listening than it is about speaking. For God gave us two ears to listen and one mouth to speak; we shall listen more than speak. We start by listening to what Jesus has to say to us in prayer. We listen to what others are living through their sharing, to what they say behind their words of frustration, pain or complaints.

If you recall your prayer groups, your sharing of faith, and revisions of life, you will understand that you spend most of the time listening to others and only speaking for a few short and sweet minutes. So, learn how to listen attentively while walking side by side with your co-disciples or your own disciples. Fight the temptation to speak over others, to speak for attention, and to speak without praying first.

*Listen attentively to someone whom you spend time with. Maybe during meal time, listen to what your officemates, schoolmates, or family members have to say; even if they will seem foolish and slow to realize the presence of the Lord among them.*

## **WEDNESDAY**

### **Stay with your disciples, “break”and eat” bread with them**

#### **Luke 24:28-35**

<sup>28</sup>As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. <sup>29</sup>But they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.” So he went in to stay with them. <sup>30</sup>When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. <sup>31</sup>Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. <sup>32</sup>They said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?” <sup>33</sup>That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. <sup>34</sup>They were saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!” Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Jesus is a companion [(companis) = com (together with) + panis (bread)], from a Latin meaning, “with whom one eats bread.” He teaches us to accompany others and to eat the bread of life with them—sit down with them and not exclude anyone from our tables. Jesus would sit down with the sinners, enter the home of the tax collectors, eat and drink with those who were outcasts, and search for those who were lost. Most of the time He would do it, he caused shock and awe of the status quo in Jerusalem, in the neighbouring villages, and even His own disciples. Companion is a person who shares the experiences of another, especially when these are unpleasant or unwelcomed.

*When you accompany someone, forming him/her as an apostle, do you turn your back when it is hard to follow through? When sometimes it is embarrassing? When it gets boring and there seems to be no progress? When the person stops replying to your invites, when he/she seems to lose interest, or starts to complain about something and everything? When his/her priorities are with someone or somewhere else?*

## THURSDAY

There are many types of fields,  
not everyone is the same

### Matthew 13:1-9

<sup>1</sup>That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. <sup>2</sup>Large crowds gathered around him. So Jesus got into a boat and sat, while the people stayed on the shore. <sup>3</sup>Then Jesus used stories to teach them many things. He said: "A farmer went out to plant his seed. <sup>4</sup>While he was planting, some seed fell by the road. The birds came and ate all that seed. <sup>5</sup>Some seed fell on rocky ground, where there wasn't enough dirt. That seed grew very fast, because the ground was not deep. <sup>6</sup>But when the sun rose, the plants dried up because they did not have deep roots. <sup>7</sup>Some other seed fell among thorny weeds. The weeds grew and choked the good plants. <sup>8</sup>Some other seed fell on good ground where it grew and became grain. Some plants made 100 times more grain. Other plants made 60 times more grain, and some made 30 times more grain. <sup>9</sup>Let those with ears use them and listen!"

Jesus is clear in this parable that the work of the sower is not easy, especially because out of the four types of fields, there is only one that welcomes the seeds and gives fruits. Three types of soils are not welcoming. They even seem aggressive to the seeds. This is a clear lesson from Jesus that the world is not a welcoming place to His words, and it will not be welcoming to us. Even so, the sower himself does not seem to be discriminating with His sowing. He plants seeds on the roads, rocky grounds, and among thorny weeds. In such way, we are called to be generous with our mission—to open our hearts and extend our tents to all kinds of people, knowing that even if one out of four will welcome the Word of God and give good fruits, our happiness will be great as apostles.

*Do you keep on trying to invite people even when most of the time the response is "NO"? How generous are you with your time, your talents, your charity, your resources, for the mission, even when most of the time it just seems that it is being wasted on dried grounds?*

## FRIDAY

Fortunate are you  
to see and hear

### Matthew 13:10-17

<sup>10</sup>The followers came to Jesus and asked, "Why do you use stories to teach the people?" <sup>11</sup>Jesus answered, "Only you can know the secret truths about the kingdom of heaven. Other people cannot know these secret truths. <sup>12</sup>The person who has something will be given more. And he will have all he needs. But the person who does not have much, even what he has will be taken from him. <sup>13</sup>This is why I use stories to teach the people: They see, but they don't really see. They hear, but they don't really understand. <sup>14</sup>So they show that the things Isaiah said about them are true:

(... Isaiah 6:9-10)

<sup>15</sup>But you are blessed. You understand the things you see with your eyes. And you understand the things you hear with your ears. I tell you the truth. Many prophets and good people wanted to see the things that you now see. But they did not see them. And many prophets and good people wanted to hear the things that you now hear. But they did not hear them.

To form apostles is a slow—sometimes moving backward and forward—process of growth. What we learn and know is not always so obvious for others. Like a teacher, who knows when his students are ready to move to another grade, we shall know as well when it is time for our disciples to take another step in their commitment—offering new experiences of prayer, new activities, and new spaces to learn more about the Verbum Dei family and its charism.

Jesus respects each personal process of His disciples. He is not demanding progress. Even so, He remains with them until they come to fully understand little by little everything that He told them.

*How attentive are you to the growth of those persons you accompany? Have you been aware when it is time for them to step up and to offer more?*

## SATURDAY

Be faithful in sowing

### Matthew 13:18-23

"So listen to the meaning of that story about the farmer. What is the seed that fell by the road? That seed is like the person who hears the teaching about the kingdom but does not understand it. The Evil One comes and takes away the things that were planted in that person's heart. And what is the seed that fell on rocky ground? That seed is like the person who hears the teaching and quickly accepts it with joy. But he does not let the teaching go deep into his life. He keeps it only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the teaching he accepted, then he quickly gives up. And what is the seed that fell among the thorny weeds? That seed is like the person who hears the teaching but let's worries about this life and love of money stop that teaching from growing. So the teaching does not produce fruit in that person's life. But what is the seed that fell on the good ground? That seed is like the person who hears the teaching and understands it. That person grows and produces fruit, sometimes 100 times more, sometimes 60 times more, and sometimes 30 times more."

Jesus is encouraging all of us to remain faithful to our mission of sowing and taking care of the seeds that are sown. If the lion is prowling around, looking for someone to devour (1 Pt. 5:8), we shall also stay alert and sober in Spirit, paying careful attention to those who are entrusted to us—accompanying them with care, compassion, and mercy until they are fully formed and ready to form their own evangelizing communities: in their families, their work places, and schools . . . wherever they may be.

*Are you aware of the transcendence of your faithfulness to your disciples? Do you understand that through them, many others will also come to know Jesus?*

## SUNDAY

17th Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading: 1 Kings 3:5, 7-12

Psalm: Ps 119:57-130

Second Reading: Romans 8:28-30

Gospel: Matthew 13:44-52

# Verbum Dei

## GUIDELINES FOR PRAYER

# "I am with you until the end of time."

July 24-30, 2017

**General Theme:** Here I am with the children God has given me.

**General Objective:** To learn to have an apostolic prayer; to identify and own the accompaniment of specific people

**Objective of the week:** To continue to persevere in accompanying the people God puts in our way