

Verbum Dei

GUIDELINES FOR PRAYER

“You are my living Gospel”

Week IV

(June 22 – 28, 2020)

General Theme:

Called to be the Word of God in the world of today

General Objective:

To live our identity as Verbum Dei in the world of today, relying on the grace of God.

Specific Objective:

Focusing on Jesus, it's to discover that my life needs to be a living Gospel

INTRODUCTION

The attitude of Jesus with those he has chosen to announce the Good News is of extreme exclusivity and radicality. He does not accept conditions of any nature, neither excuses, nor the most justified reasons— not even a simple delay in accomplishing the most sacred duties or loving tasks. (Fr. Jaime Bonet, Herald of the Evangelizer)

The focus for this week is Jesus, how he, being the Word, the Living Word that reaches to the poor, liberates those who are bound up, extending compassion, and letting others experience life in fulness, is inviting us to live the same.

Following Jesus is not a bed of roses. It is a journey to the cross. There are a lot of crossroads that will try to pull us down and one of those is criticism. Criticism on what we believed in, can come from rational beings, complete strangers, circle of friends, familial circle, and even from our very own self. Practicality sometimes holds us down to stand up for our faith, in planting seeds of doubt that hinders us to live what we believe. Jesus today is telling us to be wary and not to be deluded by false reasons of practicality. It is to be firm in living what we believed in.

It is in our relationship with our God that we gain faith; it is in our faith that we hope for life eternal, and it is in our hope for life eternal that we dedicate ourselves fully to prayer; but, prayer without action is dead. In order for our prayer to be alive, we need to seek reason, understand its meaning, and live its purpose. What are we praying? Why do we pray? What is the use of our prayer?

Jesus asks and commands that we be his witnesses, to the utmost bounds of the earth. That our testimony be valid and give credit to the Gospel in any part of the world and before

people of all conditions and states of life. (From Herald of the Evangelizer).

Our world today needs light, especially in this present situation where people are confronted with depressing scenarios that pull people to death.

MONDAY

(Sts. Paulinus of Nola, John Fisher,
Thomas Moore)

Bringing Good News of Liberation

“One Sabbath Jesus was teaching in a synagogue. A woman there had an evil spirit that had made her ill for eighteen years; she was bent over and could not straighten up at all. When Jesus saw her, he called out to her, ‘Woman, you are free from your illness!’ He placed his hands on her, and at once she straightened up and praised God. The official of the synagogue was angry that Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, so he spoke up and said to the people, ‘There are six days in which we should work; so come during those days and be healed, but not on the Sabbath! The Lord answered him, ‘You hypocrites! Any one of you would untie your ox or your donkey from the stall and take it out to give it water on the Sabbath. Now here is this descendant of Abraham whom Satan has kept bound up for eighteen years; should she not be released on the Sabbath?’ His answer made his enemies ashamed of themselves, while the people rejoiced over all the wonderful things that he did.”

(Luke 13:10-17)

Jesus saw the bent over woman and lets himself be affected. The Word in us, our identity, calls us to free those who are bound by illness, anxiety, ignorance. Situations in the past could held us captive, cutting our life short, not allowing us live the present fully.

In which situation are we invited to free those who are bound, to help them live fully their identity as children of God?

TUESDAY

(St. Joseph Cafaso)

Encountering the fulness of life

“Jesus went on into Jericho and was passing through. There was a chief tax collector there named Zacchaeus, who was rich. He was trying to see who Jesus was, but he was a little man and could not see Jesus because of the crowd. So he ran ahead of the crowd and climbed a sycamore tree to see Jesus, who was going to pass that way. When Jesus came to that place, he looked up and said to Zacchaeus, ‘Hurry down, Zacchaeus, because I must stay in your house today.’ Zacchaeus hurried down and welcomed him with great joy. All the people who saw it started grumbling, ‘This man has gone as a guest to the home of a sinner! Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, ‘Listen, sir! I will give half my belongings to the poor, and if I have cheated anyone, I will pay back four times as much. Jesus said to him, ‘Salvation has come to this house today, for this man, also, is a descendant of Abraham. The Son of man came to seek and to save the lost.”

(Luke 19:1-10)

Jesus did not remain in fascination as to how Zacchaeus found a way to see him. He saw further and deeper in the actions of Zacchaeus. He saw the true restlessness in Zacchaeus' heart. He brought him further from simply gazing at him to knowing him, and to letting him experience what is fulness of life. Knowing Jesus should what marvels us. It should be the very thing that propels us running ahead of the crowd and towards Jesus just like Zacchaeus. This should be visible in us, the amusement of knowing him and welcoming him with joy even in the hard truth of our life.

So, how are we? When people come to us, do we simply remain in their admiration or do we see further? Do we bring them to an encounter that could fill their life with fulness?

WEDNESDAY

(Feast of Nativity of St. John the Baptist)

Receptivity to the needs of others

“After this, Jesus went to Jerusalem for a religious festival. Near the Sheep Gate in Jerusalem there is a pool with five porches; in Hebrew it is called Bethzatha. A large crowd of sick people were lying in the porches - the blind, the lame, and the paralyzed. A man was there who had been ill for 38 years. Jesus saw him lying there, and he knew that the man had been ill for such a long time; so he asked him, ‘Do you want to get well? The sick man answered, ‘Sir I have no one here to put me in the pool when the water is stirred up; while I am trying to get in, somebody else gets there first.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Get up, pick up your mat, and walk.’ Immediately that man got well; he picked up his mat and started walking. The day this happened was a Sabbath.” (John 5:1-9)

Jesus, being truly present to his surrounding made it possible for him to connect to life in big and small details. He does not simply pass by. His whole being is engaged to where he tread. He was on a religious feast where one could enjoy and be merry. However, he also saw many blind, lame and paralyzed people around. He stopped and did something. Healing is what Jesus brings to us .

How about us? Are we able to be truly present to where we are at each given moment of the day? Do we truly enjoy when the occasion calls us to? Do we also allow our eyes to be affected by what we see and allow our being to do something good, life giving for the situation or the person?

THURSDAY

(St. Lucia)

Living one’s identity with compassion

“Jesus spoke up and said to him, ‘Simon, I have something to tell you.’ ‘Yes, Teacher,’ he said, ‘tell me.’ ‘There were two men who owed money

to a moneylender,’ Jesus began. ‘One owed him 500 silver coins, and the other owed him fifty. Neither of them could pay him back, so he cancelled the debts of both. Which one, then, will love him more?’ ‘I suppose,’ answered Simon, ‘that it would be the one who was forgiven more.’ ‘You are right,’ said Jesus. Then he turned to the woman and said to Simon, ‘Do you see this woman? I came into your home, and you gave me no water for my feet, but she has washed my feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. You did not welcome me with a kiss, but she has not stopped kissing my feet since I came. You provided no olive oil for my head, but she has covered my feet with perfume. I tell you, then, the great love she has shown proves that her many sins have been forgiven. But whoever has been forgiven little shows only a little love.’ Then Jesus said to the woman, ‘Your sins are forgiven. The other sitting at the table began to say to themselves, ‘Who is this, who even forgives sins?’ But Jesus said to the woman, ‘Your faith has saved you; go in peace.’ (Luke 7:40-50)

Jesus, instead of reprimanding Simon to what he is missing out or to what he is failing to do, went a step further. He saw that he needed to form the heart of Simon. He showed Simon that compassion and the awareness of how much one has been forgiven is greater than judgment. Our identity as Verbum Dei, disciples of Jesus, children of God is not a superficial identity. It is not an identity out of nothing as it is an identity born from Love; something that should not be taken too lightly, but of confidence and responsibility. Confidence that it is the truth, that it is real, that the spirit of God is in us through the Holy Spirit; confidence to come nearer to Christ and to touch his heart knowing him more and more each day. Responsibility of treasuring and not letting go of this experience of Jesus for others, so they too may believe. Our identity is compassion and we are called to experience it each day so we could embody it.

Do we let compassion and the awareness of how much we are forgiven by God drive us more than our anger or judgement? How do you live your identity today? What hinders you today to live it out?

FRIDAY

(St. Josemaria Escriva)

Revelation of God’s Action

“Jesus then left the neighborhood of Tyre and went on through Sidon to Lake Galilee, going by way of territory of the Ten Towns. Some people brought him a man who was deaf and could hardly speak, and they begged Jesus to place his hands on him. So Jesus took him off alone, away from the crowd, put his fingers in the man’s ears, spat and touched the man’s tongue. Then Jesus looked up to heaven, gave a deep groan, and said to the man, ‘Ephphatha,’ which means, ‘Open up!’ At once the man was able to hear, his speech impediment was removed, and he began to talk without any trouble. Then Jesus ordered the people not to speak of it to anyone; but the more he ordered them not to, the more they spoke. And all who heard were completely amazed. ‘How well he does everything!’ they exclaimed. ‘He even causes the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak!’ (Mark 7:31-37)

“Ephphatha” is the word that Jesus spoke to make the deaf-mute man able to hear and speak. In our daily prayer, the words that God is giving to us are sometimes hard to grasp or to accept that makes us unreceptive resulting in us being unable to hear and speak out like the deaf-mute man. Today, Jesus invites us to beg for this word “Ephphatha,” to seek the grace of “openness” allowing Christ to touch our senses for us to hear the voice of God and to speak out for others to hear.

What is the earnest content of your prayer today?

SATURDAY

(St. Cyril of Alexandria)

Speak through your life to the world

“Soon afterwards Jesus went to a town called Nain, accompanied by his disciples and a large crowd. Just as he arrived at the gate of the town, a funeral procession was coming out. The dead man was the only son of a woman who was a widow, and a large crowd from the town was with her. When the Lord saw her, his heart was filled with pity for her, and he said to her, ‘Don’t cry.’ Then he walked over and touched the coffin, and the men carrying it stopped, Jesus said, ‘Young man! Get up, I tell you!’ The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother. They all were filled with fear and praised God. ‘A great prophet has appeared among us!’ they said; ‘God has come to save his people!’ This news about Jesus went out through all the country and the surrounding territory.” (Luke 7:11-17)

Every word that Christ speaks is life, for it is the same word that comes from the source of life - the life himself. In the same way should be our aspiration for living to bring life to others; though not as to bring the dead back to life, but to guide others to reconnect themselves back to the source and be reborn again - a newer being of the same person. In this way we can fully dedicate ourselves to the work of the Word - to bring life.

In this crisis that we are experiencing these days, have you become light in this world? or you allow yourself to be swallowed by the burdens of this world? What Word coming from God helps you today?

SUNDAY

Thirteenth Sunday in the Ordinary Time
(Pontifical Work of St. Peter, the Apostle)

1st Reading: 1 Kg. 4:8-11, 14-16a
Resp.Psalm: Ps 89:2-3, 16-17, 19-19
2nd Reading: Rom 6:3-4, 8-11
Gospel: Mt. 10:37-42

