# Sunday 5th April. EASTER SUNDAY

Jn 20:1-9

Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. So she ran, and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." Peter then came out with the other disciple, and they went toward the tomb. They both ran, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first; and stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; he saw the linen cloths lying, and the napkin, which had been on his head, not lying with the linen cloths but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed.

Apparently everyone is rushing around today, from the tomb to Jerusalem and back. After the three saddest days of their lives, His disciples are now all over the place. Could it be possible? Jesus is alive! The tomb is empty!

According to Christian tradition, while everyone else was scurrying around, Our Lady waited expectantly in prayer. During those three days Our Lady had been counting the hours until she could see Jesus alive. And so she was the first to see the risen Body of her Son, to kiss His pierced hands, to caress His open Side, to rest her head on the Sacred Shoulders on which the Cross rested, and to embrace the Glorious Body of her Son and converse with Him... forever.

Let us be with Mary today, and we will see Our Risen Lord.

# Monday 6th April. Easter Monday

Mt 28:8-15

So the women departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. And behold, Jesus met them and said, "Hail!" And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshipped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see me."

They say that the sentence: “\_Don’t be afraid!\_” can be found in the Bible more than 300 times. Good teachers always repeat the message that they want to get across! And You, Lord, every time You show Yourself to your disciples, or You let them know Your Will for them, You said: “\_Don’t be afraid!\_” But what could Mary of Magdala be afraid of now?! I think she had one single fear: the fear of losing her Master again.

Children of God should never be afraid, whatever happens. The disciples were afraid because they had lost Jesus on Good Friday. Their hopes were over; their discouragement stopped them moving forward: fear paralyzes Christians when they don’t see Jesus.

My God, may I never be afraid of anything, except losing You, by sin. And if that happens again - for I know very well how weak I am - I beg You to come and search me out as You did these holy women, and Your frightened Apostles. Please Jesus, come and let me hear Your voice again as you remind me: “\_Don’t be afraid\_”.

“\_*I plead with you-never, ever give up on hope, never doubt, never tire, and never become discourage. Don’t be afraid*\_” (St John Paul II).

# Tuesday 7th April. Easter Tuesday

Jn 20:11-18

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb ... she turned round and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom do you seek?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rab-boni!" (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, "Do not hold me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brethren and say to them, I am ascending to my Father and your Father."

Mary loved Jesus but something prevented her recognising Him. When she heard her name, with that Voice, that tone! We can imagine how she shuddered at the hearing of it. That name she had heard so many times in the lips of Jesus: ”\_Mary!\_”

There are many ways to pronounce a name. Think about the many people that has said your name always differently: your parents, siblings, friends... you could recognize each one of them on the phone just by hearing them saying your name. But even the same person, i.e. your mother: you can tell what’s coming just by listening to her saying your name in the distance...

Jesus didn’t need to say anything else to Mary; just her name. Jesus called everyone by their name. All of them remembered well how Jesus pronounced their names: Peter, John, Andrew, James, Nicodemus, Joseph... and to Our Lady: “\_Mother\_”, and to Joseph: “\_father\_”. And to you... Can you imagine how your name would sound with the voice of Jesus? - because He uses it every day to talk to you in your prayer.

# Wednesday 8th April. Easter Wednesday

Lk 24:13-35

That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, "What is this conversation which you are holding with each other as you walk?" And they stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" And he said to them, "What things?" And they said to him, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him..." And he said to them, "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe..." And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He appeared to be going further, but they constrained him, saying, "Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent." So he went in to stay with them. When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognized him; and he vanished out of their sight. They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the scriptures?"

As it happened then, Jesus is walking at your side even if you don’t see or don’t recognize Him, ready to talk to you. Our hearts burn when we talk to Him, listen to Him, and receive Him in Holy Communion: \_Stay with us, Lord!\_

# Thursday 9th April. Easter Thursday

Lk 24:35-48

As they were saying this, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, "Peace to you." ... And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. ... Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.

First He showed His Wounds; through those Wounds our sins can be forgiven. But those Wounds can’t heal the wounds of your sins if there is no repentance; that is why “\_repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations\_”. That mission was entrusted to His disciples and it’s something that \_should be done\_.

You and I have that mission now, to remind everyone, no matter what sins they have committed, that through His Sacrifice, Jesus can forgive any sin in Confession; there the Wounds of Jesus erase forever the sins that we confess with contrition: A boy went to confess: ‘\_Father, forgive me for I have stolen £7 to buy chocolates... but for the penance put £10\_.’ —‘\_What do you mean?\_’ asked the priest puzzled, ‘\_did you take 7 or 10?\_’. ‘\_It was £7, father\_’ answers the boy, ‘\_but I need £3 more!\_’ Obviously he wasn’t very sorry for his sin. If there is no contrition, there is no forgiveness.

“\_Confession heals, confession justifies, confession grants pardon of sin, all hope consists in confession; in confession there is a chance for mercy\_” (St. Isidore of Seville).

# Friday 10th April. Easter Friday

Jn 21:1-14

Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat; but that night they caught nothing. Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the beach; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, "Children, have you any fish?" They answered him, "No." He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in, for the quantity of fish. That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!"

There were at least 7 disciples of Jesus on the boat. But only one recognizes Him in the distance: \_the Beloved one\_. I can imagine St John frowning and looking at the Man in the shore when he heard those words: "\_Cast the net on the right side of the boat\_”, thinking: ‘I have heard that phrase before. That voice reminds me of...’ Then he saw the amount of fish, and the penny dropped. He smiled first, and laughed afterwards, as someone who has been tricked for a while, and full of joy, as a madman - madly in love - he shouted: *"\_It is the Lord!\_"*

And I keep my eyes today on that teenager, his look clean, his heart in love, his virginal purity allowed him to recognize Jesus in the distance. Sins blind men, and purity gives light.

“\_How I would like — you told me — the young apostle, John, would take me into his confidence and give me advice: and encourage me to acquire purity of heart. If you really would like it, tell him so: and you will feel encouraged, and you will receive advice\_” (St Josemaría).

# Saturday 11th April. Easter Saturday

Mk 16:9-15

Now when he rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene ... they would not believe it. After this he appeared in another form to two of them, as they were walking into the country ... but they did not believe them. Afterward he appeared to the eleven themselves as they sat at table; and he upbraided them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen. And he said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation”.

First there is a reproach; then there is a command. The reproach is that they didn’t believe those whom Jesus sent to them. Then there is a command - going to preach the Gospel to the whole creation. First we need faith, and then we can bring that faith to others; and this is what Jesus has commanded you to do too.

The French Cardinal Roger Etchegaray told once the following story: During His Ascension, Jesus gazed down on earth and saw it in darkness, except for a few tiny lights in Jerusalem. He met the Angel Gabriel, who was accustomed to undertake earthly missions. The Angel asked Him: “\_What are those little lights?\_” “\_They are the apostles that surround my Mother\_,” Jesus answered him. “\_This is my plan: once I return to Heaven, I will send them the Holy Spirit so that these small lights can turn into a great bonfire that will ignite the world with charity.\_” The Angel dared to ask: “\_And if this plan does not work?\_” After a moment of silence, Jesus answered: “\_I do not have other plans!\_”

We are the Apostles now. What we don’t do... remains undone!

# Sunday 12th April. Sunday of Divine Mercy

Jn 20:19-31

Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in his side, I will not believe."

Today is the Sunday of Divine Mercy, when we commemorate the day in which Jesus gave his Apostles authority to forgive sins in His Name. Thomas, however, would only believe if Jesus Himself appeared to them and gave them the absolution.

Once Jesus told St Faustina: \_”*Tell souls to look for relief in the Tribunal of Mercy [Confession]. There the greatest miracles take place [and] are incessantly repeated. To benefit from this miracle, it is enough to come with faith to the feet of My representative [the priest] and to reveal to him one's misery, and the miracle of Divine Mercy will be fully demonstrated. Were a soul like a putrefying corpse so that from a human standpoint, there would be no [hope of] restoration and everything would already be lost, it is not so with God. The miracle of Divine Mercy restores that soul in full. Oh, how miserable are those who do not take advantage of the miracle of God's mercy!*\_”

# Monday 13th April. St Martin I, Pope and Martyr

Jn 3:1-8

Jesus answered to Nicodemus, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born anew.' The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know whence it comes or whither it goes; so it is with every one who is born of the Spirit."

The reference to the water and the spirit here becomes the official presentation of the Sacrament of Baptism. St John the Baptist declared, '\_I baptize in water'\_, and the Messiah will baptize '\_in the Holy Spirit'\_. Water then, is not enough now.

The season of Easter is a particular time to bring the Holy Spirit to the fore. The Risen Jesus is preparing everything to entrust His Church to the care of the Holy Spirit. And now, the Holy Spirit is at work. You don’t see Him, as you don’t see the wind, but you see his effects. St John XXIII said: “\_The saints are the masterpieces of the Holy Spirit\_.” Those who - through water - have been baptized, have the Holy Spirit at work inside.

The Holy Spirit is the Guest of our soul, His temple, as St Paul tells us: what kind of a host am I? Do I talk to Him? Do I listen to Him? Easter is a perfect time to foster my friendship with the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete; to talk and to listen to Him.

# Tuesday 14th April

Jn 3:7b-15

Jesus said to Nicodemus: 'You must be born anew.’... Nicodemus said to him, "How can this be?" Jesus answered him, "Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand this? Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen ... No one has ascended into heaven but he who descended from heaven, the Son of man. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life."

Nicodemus - a doctor of the Law and learned in the Sacred Scriptures - comes at night to ask a few questions to Jesus. But it doesn’t seem as if he understands a word.

You, my Jesus, are the only one Who can reveal the truths that we need to believe. But You can’t get across all these things in just one conversation! Nicodemus probably met and talked with You on many more, because eventually, when all the others left You during Your agony and death, he was there to stand up for You.

That is the effect of regular and frequent prayer. It’s like eating healthily: you don’t notice striking changes after one meal, or one week; but after a time you can tell something has changed, even though you don’t remember your meals. Only over time do we come to see its good. Likewise, to pray every day can be demanding, but only by that daily contact with Jesus can He get across what you need to believe, and transform you into another Nicodemus: faithful when others desert Him!

# Wednesday 15th April

Jn 3:16-21

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him. ... This is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

*\_For God so loved the world\_*... did you get that!? God loves the world. He always did and always will, for He is its Craftsman. Some people think that the world is bad and takes us away from God. But the world is a gift of God to us! Genesis states clearly that “\_God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good\_”. If He Himself said that \_it’s good­\_, who am I to disagree?

Men have sometimes hidden the beauty of the Universe with their sins, but that doesn’t change it. You can crumple a £20 note or step on it with your dirty shoes, but it doesn’t lose a penny of its value. Every artist leaves some trace of himself in his work. Experts can recognize an artist’s work without looking at the signature. Have you ever find yourself astounded looking at the beautiful sunrise, a sunset in fire, a rainbow, the waves caressing the seashore, your reflexion on the surface of a lake, a thin crescent moon hung in a crystal-clear sky...? God made it for you. As a Good Father He loves to see that you love His gifts to you. As good and grateful children take great care of it.

God loves the world so much *that he gave his only Son*, to be part of it; and He gave it to me as a stage for my happiness: I love passionately our world as well. \_*Thank you, Lord\_.*

# Thursday 16th April

Jn 3:31-36

John the Baptist said to his disciples: “He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth belongs to the earth, and of the earth he speaks; he who comes from heaven is above all. He bears witness to what he has seen and heard, yet no one receives his testimony; he who receives his testimony sets his seal to this, that God is true.”

Some people only seem able to view things negatively. One such cynic, watching his friend trying to start his motorbike, commented: “\_That engine will never start\_.” Immediately the engine made a big noise and started. Not wishing to be proven wrong, he held his ground: “\_Anyway... It’ll probably never stop.” He belonged to the earth.

He who is “\_*of the earth belongs to the earth, and of the earth he speaks\_”*; he only knows how to speak calamities, complaints, criticism and sarcasm. But we belong to Heaven, don’t we? We were made for happiness, for love, for paradise. And we must bear witness to it. That’s what a Christian should be. Where a Christian is walking by, Jesus is passing by with him.

Our conversation should reflect our supernatural faith, which will bring others to the realisation that there is more to life than meets the eye; there is a God who loves us so much that He made the world as the anteroom of Heaven. Real Christians overflow with joy.

“\_*How I wish your bearing and conversation were such that, on seeing or hearing you, people would say: This man reads the life of Jesus Christ*\_” (St Josemaría). What can people say of my conversation?

# (

# Friday 17th April

Jn 6:1-15

Seeing that a multitude was coming to him, Jesus said to Philip, "How are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?" This he said to test him, for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, "Two hundred denarii would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little." One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, "There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fish; but what are they among so many?"

You remember what happened next, don’t you? Isn’t it surprising that Jesus asks for help when He can do everything? He transformed water in wine, remember? If He can multiply bread, He surely can transform a few stones in bread and then multiply them... He can change a stone into a thousand fish. He can do anything, can’t He? So why does He ask for help?

Because He wants to need you and me. A mother can let a 3-year-old child to help her baking a cake: beating the eggs, for instance. She could do it herself, of course, in a minute, but she is teaching, and having a great time with her child. And she loves it when dad comes and the little one says: ‘\_we made your favourite cake!\_’ Dad knows that the child has done very little, but he likes the cake all the more for it.

God wants your help; He wants you to become His instrument to feed many with His words; He wants to count on us to distribute what He wants others to receive. To be exact: He doesn’t need us; but He wants our help. What we do is always little, but if we do it, then He multiplies it: ‘the result of the generosity of men mixed with the generosity of God is infinite!’

# Saturday 18th April

Jn 6:16-21

It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. The sea rose because a strong wind was blowing. When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and drawing near to the boat. They were frightened, but he said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid."

They are suffering in the middle of the storm and God comes to help. We don’t know what kind of assistance they were expecting, but certainly not Jesus walking on the waters! They thought it was a ghost.

When the people or Israel were slaves of the Egyptians God sent Moses to release them. But the pharaoh didn’t like it, so he demanded more work from them; and they went to complain to Moses: “\_*you have made us offensive in the sight of Pharaoh\_*”. You see?: They called on God to be released and when God sends help they complained. So often men ask God for help and then don’t like ‘\_that sort of help\_’ He is offering.

There was a flood in a village. A man was trapped on the roof of his house surrounded by water. A man came to rescue him with a canoe, but he replied: —\_Oh! Don’t bother: God will come and rescue me\_. Minutes later another man came in a boat, and few minutes afterwards even a helicopter came, but he gave the same answer: —\_Don’t bother: God will come and rescue me\_. He eventually drowned and met St Peter and complained: ‘\_Why did heaven abandon me?\_’ And St Peter answered: —\_What!? We sent you a canoe, a boat and a helicopter!\_

When God comes, He makes His own conditions, and we need to learn to recognize Him; especially when He comes in the shape of Bread!

# Sunday 19th April

Lk 24:35-48

Jesus said to them, "These are my words which I spoke to you, while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled." Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.*"*

They hadn't understood the Words of Our Lord, you see? So much time spent with Him, so many conversations with Him, so many things Jesus had explained to them... But they still hadn't got it. But now, after His death and Resurrection He "\_opened their minds\_" and then they can see everything. Those days after His Resurrection were spent '\_opening minds\_'.

How many times you and I have read Gospel texts, or listened to them at Mass, or in our prayer, and yet... we don't get their meaning. Then, one day, reading the same text of the Gospel again, you get the sense of something you had read many times but never understood before. That's how Jesus opens your mind if you give Him the chance. And that is also why we should read the Gospel every day and pray with it as we do now.

Resolution: Jesus, I want to read Your Gospel every day, and before I start reading Your Word, I will ask You to \_open my mind\_ and make me discover the meaning of Your Words for me today... ‘so that I may become a ‘\_witness\_’ of Your Word.

# Monday 20th April

Jn 6:22-29

When the people saw that Jesus was not there, nor his disciples, they themselves got into the boats and went to Caperna-um, seeking Jesus. When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?" Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not labour for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life."

Jesus had no problem attracting people to Himself. This text of the Gospel comes right after the multiplication of the loaves and fishes. The people came after Jesus again, but maybe not for the right reason. They ate delicious loaves and fish for free, and perhaps, they just wanted some more! So Jesus invites them not to look for normal bread, but for the bread of Heaven: the Eucharist.

At the end of this sixth chapter of St John we read that “\_many of his disciples drew back and no longer went about with him\_”. There are many like that: they follow Him when there are loaves and fish for free, but not when Jesus is crucified. It is unlikely to find them at Mass, where we commemorate His Death and Resurrection.

Those are not ‘real’ friends of Jesus. They are like the ‘friends’ who turn up to a birthday party without a present, and disappear before it is time to clear up... They just take advantage.

I don’t want to be like that to You, Lord; I want to search for You, find You, and be with You through thick and thin, come what may, for the rest of my life. I want to be a ‘real’ friend of Yours. One of those you can count on, anytime!

# Tuesday 21st April. St Anselm, Bishop

Jn 6:30-35

So they said to him, "Then what sign do you do, that we may see, and believe you? ... Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness..." Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven; my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven, and gives life to the world." They said to him, "Lord, give us this bread always." Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst.*"*

Bishop Van Thuan was imprisoned in Vietnam for more than 9 years in solitary confinement. Years later he wrote: "\_The day I was arrested I had to leave everything behind me. The following day I was allowed to write and ask my friends to bring my clothes, toothpaste, etc. I also asked them to include some wine 'as medicine'. They sent me a little bottle of Mass-wine labelled ‘Medicine for Stomach Aches’. Every night I kept a tiny piece of bread for the following day’s Eucharist\_." He explains how he would ask the guards for a bit of 'medicine', and they will handle him the bottle of wine. "\_And so\_, he told, \_every day for many years I had the joy of celebrating Mass with three drops of wine and one of water in my palm. This was my altar, my cathedral. For me it was the true medicine of body and soul ... Each day in reciting the words of Consecration, I confirmed with all my heart and soul a new pact, an eternal pact between Jesus and me through His Blood mixed with mine. Those were the most beautiful Masses of my life!\_ How is ‘my’ Mass?

# Wednesday 22nd April

Jn 6:35-40

Jesus said to them, "All that the Father gives me will come to me; and him who comes to me I will not cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me; and this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up at the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that every one who sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day."

The Father has entrusted Jesus with a mission: that He \_*should lose nothing of all that the Father has given Him\_*. Not a single person. All are destined to rise with Him at the end. Jesus Himself says: “\_*him who comes to me I will not cast out\_”;* no one who comes to Him will be locked out.

The problem is that they don’t come to You, Lord. You, the Good Shepherd, always go in search of everyone, but some don’t want to be found: They don’t let You \_’chase’\_ them. They want to be saved, but not \_badly\_. They want to go to Heaven, but ‘\_kind of\_’, ‘\_eventually\_’, ‘\_more-or-less\_’. They pray as St Augustine did when he was young, and he wanted to convert, but ‘\_not yet\_’. He was \_fine\_ being a sinner, and he knew he had to change. He explains how he would pray asking You, Lord for help to convert, but always added at the end of his prayer: —“\_but not yet!\_”

My Jesus, I pray today for all those who find it difficult to come to You; who hide from You, those destined to Heaven, entrusted to You by the Father, that they may let You find them and bring them safe to Heaven, their destination.

# Thursday 23rd April. St George

Jn 15:18-21

*"If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also. But all this they will do to you on my account, because they do not know him who sent me.*

One day Blessed Pius IX had a meeting with seminarians. They were all studying theology and the Pope wanted to check how much they knew. He approached one of the students and asked him: —\_*What are the marks of the Church?*\_ The young fellow answered quickly: —*\_She is One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic*\_. Bl Pius smiled and said: —\_*There is another one*\_. The boy looked at him puzzled, and the Pope went on: —‘*Persecuted’. The Church will always be One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic and Persecuted, or she will stop being the Church of Jesus Christ; do you remember?: “If they persecuted me, they will persecute you”\_.*

Jesus was persecuted and killed; the Apostles followed Him and were persecuted as well; millions of Christians have given their lives in persecutions during 20 centuries. And even today Christians are persecuted, imprisoned and killed in many places [think about Syria, Egypt, Libya, Pakistan, China, Nigeria, North Korea, Iraq...]. Jesus said that it was going to happen; but He also said: “\_I will be with you every single day until the end\_”

May all persecuted Christians feel my prayers for them today. St George, martyr of the faith, pray for them!