

# **Time for Reflections**



## **TIME FOR REFLECTIONS**



**VICTOR S E MOUBARAK**

# Time for Reflections



## FOREWORD

Other books by the same author:

“**VISIONS**” (ISBN 978 1 60477 032 2).

“**VISIONS**” is a fictional story of three children who see an apparition of the Lord Jesus on their way to church. They tell their priest, Father Ignatius, about it; and pretty soon news spreads throughout town.

People react to the news in different ways. Some readily believe; others mock and scoff in disbelief, whilst some react violently towards the children and their families.

Parishioners seek guidance from Father Ignatius whereas the Church seeks to hush the whole story in the hope that it goes away; whilst Jesus appears again and again.

“**VISIONS**” challenges readers to ask what they would do in a similar situation – as Christians, as parents or just as onlookers.

A must-read book for everyone ready for a reality check on what they actually believe.

“**GOLDEN DROPS**” The stories chosen in this E book each tell a different tale in the life of Father Ignatius and none of them are taken from the book “**VISIONS**” – they are stand-alone vignettes in their own right.

“**GOLDEN DROPLETS**” is another E Book compilation of stories about Father Ignatius.

“**FELINE CATASTROPHES**” is an E Book compilation of humorous stories about a cat who rules his master.

“**VISIONS**” is available from all good bookstores and on the Internet.

The other three E Books are available **FREE** to download from the author’s website:  
[www.holyvisions.co.uk](http://www.holyvisions.co.uk)

I pray that God blesses each one of you dear readers, old and new, and may He be with you and your families always.

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# Time for Reflections



## ROLE MODELS

I was reading the parable of the lost coin the other day (Luke 15:8) and my thoughts wandered ... what is the greatest loss one can experience in this world? Is it the loss of a worthless trinket with great emotional value to the owner; or an expensive item of jewelry or such like; or great sums of money? Is it the loss of a loved one? Or what?

I concluded that for a Christian the greatest loss is the loss of one's Faith.

I am often saddened by the number of people who say they are losing their faith or belief in God. Why is that I wonder. Is it because we live in a technologically advanced age and people find it difficult to relate to a super-natural omnipotent God whose love they have never actually experienced in their lives?

Or is it perhaps a shortage of good Christian role models? People who set us a good example of how to be Christ-like.

I then realized that we are all role models for others; whether we are parents, teachers, preachers or whatever. We are all unwittingly setting an example for others to emulate.

The magnitude of that realization frightened me. Being a Christian is quite a responsibility you know!

## ADVERSITY

At times of adversity barriers are usually broken between people as they get closer together. They share their feelings, fears and worries and encourage each other.

Could it be that God allows adversity to happen to give us an opportunity to get closer to Him? To share our fears and worries, and to seek His help?

## **Time for Reflections**



### **WHEN THINGS GO WRONG**

When things go wrong, no matter how wrong, it is important to remember that God is still in control. For reasons best known to Himself, He has allowed something wrong in our lives.

Instead of rebelling and blaming Him for what's gone wrong; let us instead thank Him that He is in control of the situation. Let us trust Him that He will help us through it.

### **SAYING THANK YOU**

Remember the story about Jesus healing the ten lepers and only one came back to thank Him? (Luke 17:11). I was reading it the other day and I thought how often in our busy lives these days we too forget to thank those who have been kind to us.

Just think for a moment or two ... I bet there are people around you right now who have been kind to you and you took them for granted. A spouse perhaps, a relative, friend or neighbor ... You may even have done something nice for someone yourself and they forgot to thank you.

We don't mean to be ungrateful of course. We're just too busy ... you know how it is!

Perhaps we should have a National Thank You day when we send each other cards for all those times we forgot to say thank you!

What have you to thank God for today?

### **TEN COMMANDMENTS**

When God gave us the Ten Commandments He meant just that: ten rules or instructions for us to follow in our lives.

He did not mean ten suggestions for us to debate and alter to suit our modern lifestyles.

## Time for Reflections



### ANGELS

Angels are often mentioned in the Bible. They were used by God to announce the birth of Christ. The angel Gabriel appeared to the Virgin Mary and angels appeared to shepherds to tell them that Christ was born in Bethlehem. There are many other references to them in the Bible.

Some people believe that we all have a guardian angel, appointed by God to look after us and protect us.

If this is true – then mine must be very busy looking after me ...

Spare a thought for your guardian angel and thank him/her for looking after you.

### FORGIVENESS

When Jesus taught us to pray – forgiveness is the only petition to God to which He attached a condition.

He said: Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sinned against us.

Let us hope He finds us forgiving when the time comes for us to meet Him in Heaven.

### LIFE'S PUZZLE

There is nothing more frustrating than when you finish a jigsaw puzzle and find a piece missing. Today I finally finished a 1000 piece jigsaw puzzle – and guess what. There's a piece extra in the box.

So if any of you out there have a jigsaw piece missing from your puzzle, maybe it's the one I've got!

Which reminds of something I read somewhere ... life can be a bit like a jigsaw puzzle. Full of doubts, fears, frustrations and confusions ... as well as good times too. If we were to put God right in the middle of our life our jigsaw puzzle would be complete. And what a wonderful picture it would make!

## Time for Reflections



### WHOSE MOVE IS IT?

This man kept praying to God to make him win the lottery. Every day he prayed and prayed but never won a dime.

When he died and went to Heaven he asked God: Why did you not let me win the lottery? Just the once! I prayed to you daily, but you never listened.

God replied with a smile: At least give me half a chance ... you never actually bought a lottery ticket did you?

I suppose that's the same with us. We pray to God and ask all sorts of favors ... good job, promotion, more money and so on. But do we actually do enough for ourselves instead of relying on Him and blaming Him when it all goes wrong?

### HOW TO FORGIVE

Someone asked the other day – I have forgiven but cannot forget the pain and hurt caused to me. Does that mean I've not really forgiven?

Let's examine un-forgiveness. Un-forgiveness is when we harbor thoughts of revenge, retribution and punishment ... when we are angry, and full of hate, ill-will, hostility and ill-feelings towards those who hurt us.

If none of these feelings are within us – then we have truly forgiven.

Of course, the memory of the hurt and pain caused to us will remain. Perhaps forever. But as long as the memories are not accompanied by feelings of ill-will, then we have forgiven.

The mind may not forget but the heart forgives.

Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, if my brother keeps sinning against me, how many times do I have to forgive him? Seven times?" "No, not seven times," answered Jesus, "but seventy times seven." Matthew 18: 21-22

## Time for Reflections



### DOUBTING THOMAS

I visited some friends the other day. It was a warm evening so we sat in the garden chatting. Moments later they both went into the house to prepare some refreshments and left me in the garden alone.

I sat admiring the view when suddenly out of the bushes came a fox. He moved around for a few seconds then hid again.

When my friend came out I told him about the fox. “Can’t be a fox” he said, “we live too far into town for a fox to come here ...”

I said nothing and continued our conversation. Minutes later out came the fox again for a short while.

My friend shouted to his wife still in the house “We’ve got a fox in the back garden!”

Her exact reply was “Can’t be a fox, we live too far into town for a fox to come here!”

He called her a doubting Thomas and laughed it off.

Later that evening I thought about Thomas the disciple. What a service he did for Christianity without realizing it. By doubting Christ’s resurrection Jesus appeared again, and this time Thomas saw Him. The whole event was witnessed by the other disciples and recorded for us to read years later.

Had Thomas not doubted, we would have lost a valuable piece of evidence of Christ’s resurrection.

### BOUQUET

I learnt a lesson from a five year old today. We were out in the countryside and she gave a few flowers she had just picked to her mother. It was a selection of dandelions, daisies, buttercups and a few other weeds.

Life is all about making a bouquet of whatever flowers are available.

## **Time for Reflections**



### **WHY GO TO CHURCH?**

The sermon in church today was all about attending church. We were asked why we go to church. Is it out of habit?

We were asked why we chose that particular church. Was it because we like the singing? Was it because the time is convenient with our busy lifestyles? Or was it because we like to meet the other people afterwards and have a chat and a cup of coffee?

I could see some of the congregation getting uncomfortable and wondering where all this was leading to.

The priest made his point by saying that when we come to church to pray and thank God, we should also have another aim in mind. We should come to change ... to make ourselves better people!

### **WHEN YOU'RE GONE**

At a Christian seminar the lecturer was talking about our contributions to this world and he asked his audience: "Imagine you are lying dead in your coffin and your friends and relatives are passing by to pay their respects. What do you want them to say about you?"

The first volunteer said: "I hope they say I was a good family man and that I helped people less well off than myself."

A second participant said: "I hope they say I used my skills as a doctor to help others."

The third man said: "I hope they say - I've just seen him move!!!"

What will they say about you when you're gone?

### **ETHICS**

Just because you have Christian ethics don't expect everyone else to be the same.



# Time for Reflections



## HEAVEN

Although Heaven is mentioned often in the Bible there's only one instance where we have a glimpse of a description. In John 14:2 Jesus says: In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you.

I suppose Jesus used this description because He wanted an example that his listeners could relate to. They were used to seeing palaces and mansions so He described Heaven as a building.

Some time ago, I came across another description of Heaven. This priest said in a sermon that when we die and meet God, He will sit us on His lap like a little child and He will show us our life all over again. Just like a movie. There, we will see all the good and the bad we have done, all the opportunities we missed when we could have helped others less fortunate than ourselves, all the hurt we have caused by what we have done or said, whether intentionally or not. And there, on His lap, will be our own Heaven or Hell.

Now imagine it is really so ... Imagine seeing your whole life as a movie on a screen ... Imagine you are now a Film Director ... what an opportunity you have to make sure your own movie will have a happy ending !!!

## HATE

This man had tattoos on the fingers of each hand – just near the knuckles. On the right hand the tattoos read the letters L – O – V – E. On the left hand the tattoos were H – A – T. Apparently he ran out of money to complete the tattoos.

If only...

If only we too ran out of money every time we felt Hate towards someone.

# Time for Reflections



## THE SEESAW

We were in the park the other day. It was a beautiful warm sunny day and the children were playing on the swings, the slide, the roundabout and the seesaw.

I decided to replenish my failing reserves of energy by sitting on a bench and soaking the warm sun. It's not that I'm lazy, you know. Believe me, I really love hard work – I could sit there for ages and see others do it time after time and I never tire of watching.

So I sat watching the mothers and (some) fathers pushing their young ones on the swings, or helping the roundabout go round and round. Another man sat next to me and sniggered: "I don't know about you, but I'm getting a little old for all this energetic work!" I smiled back and said nothing.

As I looked at the seesaw going up and down with a child at either end a thought occurred to me.

Life is a bit like that sometimes. You have at one end of the seesaw Worry and Doubt; and at the other end Peace and Certainty.

Sometimes Worry and Doubt are in the ascendant and together what powerful adversaries they make for my poor mind! I start questioning my Faith. What if I got it all wrong? What if there is no God at all! I worry about my family, my friends, myself and my worldly goods. I'm sure you can imagine what it's like.

But at other times, especially after prayers or Bible readings, Peace and Certainty are up in the air. I remember the many times God was there for me and the many situations He saved me from and helped me through. It's at these times that I know for certain that He exists alright, despite what others might lead us to believe.

I suppose we can't control the up and down movement of the seesaw. That's what it was designed to do. But with constant prayers we can ensure that Peace and Certainty are there high up for all to see in our lives for as long as possible.

# Time for Reflections



## REGRETS

Regrets, I've had a few. But then again, too few to mention!

Non, rien de rien. Non. Je ne regrette rien.

To have no regrets could be a sign of arrogance. We all have some regrets of things we have done, or not done. The wise thing to do is to learn from one's regrets.

## INSURANCE POLICY

A man is very sick in hospital having undergone several operations and getting weaker all the time. The doctor approaches him looking very solemn. The patient asks in between deep labored breathing: "How am I doing doc?"

Without raising his eyes from his notes the doctor replies: "Do you believe in God?"

"No ... never; I've never believed in Him or anything like that," replies the sick man.

"Well ... you'd better start believing ... just in case" says the doctor as he walks away.

Now here's a thought ...

Who is God? Is He our Creator, a loving Father, who gave us so much that we could never repay Him back?

Or is He just an insurance policy ... just in case.

## WHO ARE YOU?

What you are is a gift from God.  
What you become is your gift to God.

# Time for Reflections



## TRUST

In every situation of Trust there is always the risk of betrayal. Whether it is a friendship, a business partnership, a marriage or whatever; in every circumstance where two or more people trust each other there is always the risk that someone will betray that trust.

We all know about the greatest betrayal ever – Judas betraying Jesus with a kiss.

So what are we to do? Not trust anyone ever and go through life suspecting everyone. This would be impossible and would jeopardize our every relationship. We have to accept that with trust we become a little more vulnerable and susceptible to abuse of that trust. It's a risk we take as we journey through life.

With one important exception:

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me.” John 14:1 NIV.

## CONTROL

We often strive to control our life's events. We want to be in charge. We want to do it our way because we believe our way is best. We want to proudly say: “I did it my way.”

And in this pursuit of self-will we inadvertently (or perhaps deliberately) put God aside. Momentarily, He does not feature in our plans.

When God is sidelined by us, as we sometimes do, He doesn't stop loving us. Instead, we block an opportunity for Him to influence our efforts for our own and others' good.

“Thy will be done ...”

## PROVERBS 19:3

Some people ruin themselves by their own stupid actions and then blame the Lord.

# Time for Reflections



## ANXIETY

Anxiety is a human emotion. We can't help feeling anxious, sometimes unnecessarily, and in so doing we give way to doubts and worry. It's like meeting three evil witches intent on destroying you: Anxiety, Doubt and Worry.

Like many human emotions, they can get out of control.

We're anxious about the results of some medical tests we've had done. We worry unnecessarily. We fear the worst and doubt whether God loves us. We worry without cause about our loved ones. Will our children do well in life, especially in these difficult times? We worry when they are a few minutes late returning home.

You know what it's like ... anxiety, worry and doubt take turns at turning your stomach into knots and in time can make you ill.

Why does God allow that? Why doesn't He provide us with a switch we can flick and these negative emotions just vanish away. After all, He knows we can't help these emotions creeping on us unawares and playing havoc with our minds. Why can't He provide a switch to turn them off?

Or .... Maybe He has. Whenever we look away from God for a moment that's when we allow anxiety to enter our life and implant the seeds of doubt and worry. Perhaps it's because at that very instant when we look away from God, the devil is ready to pounce and lead us astray.

He's very clever the devil, you know. He leads you to believe he doesn't really exist, but he's there all right. Waiting for the appropriate moment to put negative thoughts in your mind. Adding a sprinkle of worry. Making you anxious about something or other. Before long, you'll begin to doubt that God even exists, never mind love you.

The remedy is to re-focus on God in the sure knowledge that He will not let us down. That's the switch which He has provided to comfort us in our times of difficulties. The certainty that He has conquered evil once and for all. And the knowledge that He will not allow us to perish because He cares for us.

"Look at the birds flying around ... your Father in Heaven takes care of them! Aren't you worth much more than birds?" Matthew 6:26

## Time for Reflections



### ANYONE THERE?

It was a warm and clear night. I sat in the garden for a while just listening to the quiet around me and thinking about nothing in particular. Just thoughts wondering in and out of my mind as they sometimes do. Every so often I could hear the cry of an owl in the distance – perhaps calling for its mate.

I looked up and gazed at the stars. There were hundreds and hundreds of them. The more I looked the more of them I saw as my eyes grew accustomed to the darkness. They made me feel so small.

Here am I in my garden looking up – and there they were, all these stars, shining in the night miles and miles away. There must be millions of them.

And to think that some people believe that they just happened to be out there. Not created by a supreme, omnipotent Being.

My thoughts then wandered on ... am I alone here looking up at the sky at night? Is there someone else on one of these stars sitting in his garden looking at my planet shining like a tiny dot in his dark sky?

And if so, then surely that being looking at me is also created by God; just like me. Did God send His only Son to that being's world too; to die for him, as He did for me?

The cry of the owl brought me back to earth with a bump.

I guess we'll never know the answers to my questions. Perhaps we're not meant to know.

We humans think we're so clever because we've advanced so much in such a short period of time. We thirst for knowledge and the more we learn the more proud we become of our achievements.

Maybe, for our own benefit, and our own good, there are things that He will not allow us to know. No matter how hard we try to find the answers.

## Time for Reflections



### WHEN THINGS GO WRONG

God allows bad things to happen. He does not make them happen.

More often than not, when bad things happen, they are the results of our actions or in-actions, (and our knee-jerk reaction is to blame God).

God allows these things to happen to serve His own purpose in His own time and in His own way. We really do not know why He allows them to happen; but we must trust Him.

When bad things happen, it is important to remember that God is still in control. He knows what has happened, how it affects people close to the event, and even people far away and totally detached from it. He never loses control of the situation.

Our reaction to these events is therefore vital. Our human nature will take over and all our emotions will come to the fore – shock, fear, denial, anger and so on.

However, when we have calmed down a little, we should turn to God and praise and thank Him.

#### **“What did you just say? Praise Him?”**

We are praising and thanking Him for still being in control of the situation - not because He allowed the bad thing to happen.

Our praise acknowledges His supreme power over the whole universe. We are in effect saying that we accept that He allowed the bad things to happen, yet we still trust Him, and trust that His will be done.

When we acknowledge, in such terrible situations, that His will is still paramount; we open a channel, in certain circumstances, for Him to turn the situation to the good.

I have seen this happen several times.

## Time for Reflections



### A DISTANT GOD

At prayer meeting the other day a newcomer, a middle aged man we'd never met before, said he was about to celebrate his 30<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary. We all congratulated him.

He said like all marriages, his had its ups and downs, including arguments and silent treatments, but overall it was OK. For their 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary he took his wife to Paris. He said the last five years were the happiest of his marriage.

“How will you celebrate your 30<sup>th</sup>?” he was asked.

“I'm returning to Paris to bring the wife back!”

Absence makes the heart grow fonder – they say. But this joke takes it to extremes.

Sometimes, wrongly, we feel God has ignored us. He is not listening. Abandoned us even. So we give Him the silent treatment. Stop praying. Stop going to church. And eventually we may drift away.

If only we stop and think. When we feel distanced from God it is only because we have moved away. He has not left us. He is always there. Just a prayer away. Ready to welcome us back in His arms with love and forgiveness.

I will be with you always, to the end of the age. Matthew 28:20.

### REACHING OUT

After twenty five years of marriage a man goes to Court seeking a divorce because his wife keeps throwing things at him when angry: plates, cups, saucers, whatever is at hand she throws. The judge asks: What took you so long to decide on divorce? He replied: Her aim is getting better!

Isn't it funny that after so many years of Christianity we are still not reaching those we should? Is it because our “aim” is not on target? Or is it because we have diluted the message so much that when it is received people are confused and don't know what we stand for?



# Time for Reflections



## THY WILL BE DONE

The Lord's Prayer contains the words: Thy will be done.

What do these words really mean to us? Do they mean: "May God's will be done and I will accept it."

Or do they mean: "Thy will be done as long as it is what I want?"

Why is it that we are sometimes hesitant when we say: "Thy will be done"?

Let's be honest now, all of us, (including me); is it because deep down, in our heart of hearts, we harbor that little doubt that perhaps if His will were to be done it might not be that comfortable for us, it would interfere with our plans, our lifestyles, and with what we really want to do?

Oh ye of little Faith!

## HOSTAGE

A story in a magazine: some people were held hostage in their own apartment. The police were called and thankfully the situation was resolved peacefully.

It set me thinking.

How many people I wonder are held hostage in their own homes by illness or old age? Or because they fear going out at night because of crime?

How many people are held hostage because they are confined to a wheelchair?

Or even held hostage within their own mind because of mental illness?

Let us pray for hostages everywhere – whatever kind.

May God be with them.

# Time for Reflections



## **GOD'S BLUEPRINT**

I asked a Christian doctor friend of mine about his religion and his profession. He explained that being a doctor is very much like being a car mechanic. He learnt about different parts of the body and how to fix them when they go wrong.

However, unlike a car mechanic, he does not have the complete blueprint plan of how the body was made and how it functions. He explained that, thankfully, the Creator decided to keep some parts of the blueprint secret in case we humans ruin the final product completely.

## **SING ALOUD**

Sing to the Lord a new song. Isaiah 42:10.

We sing a lot of hymns in our church. Sometimes they are lively and joyful and sometimes ... well, they could be better.

We don't have a choir as such, just a few people up front and the congregation singing and shouting over each other. (Lord, forgive my uncharitable comments).

Unfortunately, I am not gifted with a good voice, so I just mime and pretend I'm singing. I suppose I'm singing in my heart and not with my mouth. Anyway, I don't see why I should contribute to God's headache!

Does your church make God smile or give Him a headache?

## **PROVERBS**

Don't try to talk sense to a fool; he can't appreciate it. Proverbs 23:9

As Christians how much time do we spend in vain trying to convince unbelievers about the existence of God? Let everyone see you're a Christian by the way you live.

When you were born, you cried and the world rejoiced. Live your life so that when you die, the world cries and you rejoice. — Cherokee proverb.

# Time for Reflections



## EXHAUSTED

There are times in this modern lifestyle of ours when, quite honestly, we are totally mentally and physically exhausted. There are so many things to do and to fit-in in this 24/7 treadmill we are on that we dare not stop for one second lest we fall. And it gets worse – money is tight, prices are going up, demands put upon us increase daily, and, to cap it all, we are getting older every day and we cannot cope as well as we used to, especially when our health fails us.

It's at times like these that we feel like giving up. What is the answer dear Lord?

“Come to me, all of you who are tired from carrying heavy loads, and I will give you rest.” Matthew 11:28.

## DOUBTS

Doubts are necessary to strengthen our Faith.

When God asked us to love Him, He didn't want to force us in

anyway.

He wanted us to choose freely whether to love Him or not.

That's why He allows doubts to creep in our minds from time to time. They help us to get to know Him better. We ask questions, we learn from the answers we find, we get closer to Him. Just like any other relationship; the more you know about the other person the closer you get to him or her.

Of course, too much doubt can make us lose our Faith altogether. The devil would be glad of that. That's why he plays with our doubts and adds more to them; in order to confuse us and lead us astray.

We must learn to control our doubts, and use them to our benefit not the devil's. When we have doubts about our Faith, we should not fear them but we should pray for guidance from our Lord.

## Time for Reflections



### DO NOT BE AFRAID

The devil appeared at the local supermarket one Saturday morning. He stood there by the main entrance looking menacingly and threatening. All the shoppers panicked. They escaped through every available emergency exits, jumped into their cars and drove off at speed.

All except for one shopper. A small, short man, standing there by his shopping trolley holding a long shopping list in his hand.

The devil advanced towards the small man and said angrily: “Do you know who I am?”

“Yes ... I do” replied the shopper.

“Aren’t you afraid of me like all the others?” asked the devil.

“No ... I’ve been married to your sister for 25 years!”

OK ... joke over. Now for the serious stuff.

Isn’t it a shame that we waste so much time afraid of one thing or another instead of sitting down comfortably and confronting our fears? More often than not, when we analyze what is really “bugging us”, what is making us so hesitant and cautious we find that our problem is not so insurmountable after all.

Do not be afraid – I will save you. I have called you by name – you are mine. Isaiah 43:1

### A PRAYER AWAY

A man goes out of his house and drives away. Suddenly he turns round and returns back home to collect the mobile (cell) phone which he had forgotten.

STOP. Don’t you realize that for the first 20, 30 or even 60 years of your life you didn’t have a mobile phone because it was not invented? Why is it so important now?

Thank the Lord that we don’t need a mobile phone to contact Him. He’s only a prayer away and waiting.

## Time for Reflections



### ALONE AGAIN ... NATURALLY

Insecurity, shyness, loneliness, not quite fitting in.

All too often one meets people who, for one reason or another, feel that they are left out from what this world has to offer. They may well be part of a group of friends at work, or at school, college or university, but yet they feel that they don't quite fit in somehow. They are not the center of attention – the funny one that everyone admires, the intelligent one, or the artistic or athletic one.

They are part of the group alright, but they are on the sidelines. The one who never quite gets noticed!

Such inner loneliness and insecurity can be crushing and can so easily suffocate one's soul and one's potential.

Look around you today – is there such a person you recognize? Do the kind thing and include them in your personal world.

True Happiness consists not in the multitude of friends; but in their worth and choice.

### THE BOSS

A class of small children was asked what is the most important job in the world. Someone answered “king”, because he rules the country; or “president” or “leader”.

Others said “pilots” because they make you fly; or “inventor” because they invent things. Several examples were put forward as enthusiasm for the exercise spread throughout the children: “Rich man, doctor, astronaut, cook ... and so on and so forth”.

The teacher noted that young Peter was silent so she encouraged him to contribute by asking: “Peter, what do you think is the most important job in the world?”

Peter scratched his head for a moment or two tilting it sideways, then, as if a light bulb switched on in his brain, he blurted out: “Priest ... because God is his boss!”

# Time for Reflections



## FEAR

Fear is good for you. It stops you from taking un-necessary risks. From being reckless and un-thoughtful in what you do. Fear is natural.

It is a human emotion like all the others. Fear can be real and warranted - we fear punishment and retribution for our crimes, we fear threats from aggressive people, criminals etc...

Or fear can be imagined and unwarranted - we fear the unknown, new places we have to visit, new situations in our lives, new people we have to meet, or we fear change from the comfort we're used to.

So fear, by itself, being natural, is not a sin. But how we react and deal with it can be.

Too much unwarranted fear could be an insult to God in that we do not trust Him enough to look after us and care for us. Prayers are the answer.

Consider carefully what it is that causes your fear and if there is a genuine reason then seek help. Discuss the matter with a trusted relative or friend. If there is cause for concern then do not suffer and worry alone. Get help and let someone else see your problem from their perspective.

If however your anxiety is without foundation; and there is nothing practicable you can do to change the situation; trust in God. Tell Him how you feel and seek His help to calm you down. He has conquered fear. He has conquered the future. As well as evil. Forever.

Do not be afraid – I will save you. I have called you by name – you are mine. Isaiah 43:1

## BLESSINGS

Overheard on a bus: "... you must count your blessings!" I thought about that for a moment or two and then I started counting silently. Pretty soon I ran out of fingers to count on, and had to start again.

It's quite a salutary lesson you know. Counting how blessed we are.

Try it sometime.

# Time for Reflections



## THE WISE RABBI

Once upon a time there was a Rabbi who noticed with concern that his congregation was always worrying about something or other.

“Oh dear ...” said one member, “business is bad and I don’t know how I’ll survive this economic crisis”. “I agree” said another, “I have to go away on a trip and none of my children wants to mind the shop for me. I’ll have to close it and lose business”. “My problem is worse ...” said another. And so it went on week in week out.

One Sabbath the Rabbi decided to do something about it; so when it came to giving a sermon he acknowledged that we all have problems of one kind or another. He suggested that by the following Sabbath everyone should bring with them to the synagogue a stone or a rock to which they should tie securely a label. On the label they should describe briefly the nature of their problem – anonymously of course. The stone or rock should be the size commensurate to the size or magnitude of the problem.

The following Sabbath, sure enough, they all brought their rocks which they left outside the synagogue. There were small rocks, bigger ones, stones of all shapes and sizes and even a few pebbles tied inside a handkerchief to denote a lot of small problems. One or two funny men even brought big boulders in wheelbarrows to show how huge their problems were.

During the sermon the Rabbi said that he had read all the labels tied to the rocks and stones. He said that he had prayed about the peoples’ problems and that God had spoken to him. God promised that if everyone goes out and picks up a rock from the pile outside then their own problems would immediately vanish away. But instead they will take on the problem written on the label tied to the rock they’ve picked up.

So the Rabbi asked them to go out, read the labels, and choose a rock to take home with them.

They all went out, and after reading all the labels, each one of them picked the same rock or stone they had brought with them to the synagogue that morning.

And the moral of the story is: no matter your situation, there is always someone much worse than you.

# Time for Reflections



## OUR ROAD TO EMMAUS

Just after Christ's Resurrection, two of His followers were going to Emmaus. (Luke 24:13-35). They were totally distraught about Jesus' death, and even though there was now news that His tomb is empty and that Christ is alive, they were still down-hearted and confused.

Jesus appeared to them on the way. They did not recognize Him. They spoke with Him and told Him their news. They said that their Lord and leader had been crucified, and there were rumors going around that He was alive again.

Jesus did not tell them who He was but explained to them the prophets' predictions about Him. He walked with them all the way to Emmaus, but still they did not recognize Him. It wasn't until He broke and blessed the bread that they recognized Him.

Why? I ask myself. Why did they not recognize Him when they first saw Him, or when He took the time to explain to them the writings of the prophets? Could it be that their minds were more pre-occupied with their problems and their dilemma rather than listening to Him?

You can just imagine how their mind worked and how concerned they were about their predicament. Their leader is dead. What are they to do now? Is it all over? Every thing He said and taught comes to nothing? And what of the future? What are His followers to do now?

But aren't we just the same.

How often do events touch our lives and turn it upside down. Events perhaps of our making, or events that we did not contribute to but they affect us all the same.

And we panic. What are we to do now? What will happen next? We fear the future, we fear matters getting out of our control and we turn our attention to our problems and our dilemma. Just like those two on the way to Emmaus.

Yet, all the time we are panicking Jesus is there. Walking beside us. Quite literally. Waiting for us to recognize Him and hold His hand in the full knowledge and trust that He will see us through our darkest hour.



## Time for Reflections



### **TWISTING THE WORD**

Once upon a time Jesus was in a synagogue on the Sabbath; and there was a man with a paralyzed hand. (Matthew 12: 9–14).

Some people wanted to accuse Jesus of doing wrong and asked Him whether it is against their Law to heal (work) on the Sabbath.

Jesus asked them if any of them had a sheep which fell into a deep hole on the Sabbath whether they would rescue it. Then to prove His point, He healed the man with the paralyzed hand.

So what is Jesus saying here? Is He encouraging people to break one of the Ten Commandments?

Of course not.

Jesus is saying: Beware of those who would use God's Word for their own ends. They would either take it literally or miss-quote it to suit their own argument and to their benefit.

God has given you a brain. Use it.

It is there to help you discern what is right and what is wrong. The Commandments are there to guide you through life. Not to be used by you and interpreted in such a way so that you can twist their meaning for your own selfish needs.

### **MOANER LISA**

I asked a sick old man how he was doing, just as a conversation starter. He replied: I can't complain ... there are so many others worse than me.

This set me thinking. When we complain about our situation, it may be a big thing, or a small matter ... a little grumble ... you know what I mean. What are we doing exactly? We are opening the door one tiny little bit for the devil to sneak in and play havoc with our thoughts. One tiny complaint leads to another ... and soon we become a Moaner Lisa!!!

If our Walk with Christ is to be perfect we should trust Him in everything. And stop moaning!

## Time for Reflections



### RESPONSIBLE WEALTH

While Jesus was eating, a woman came in with an alabaster jar full of very expensive perfume made from pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on Jesus' head. Some of the people there became angry and said to one another, "What was the use of wasting the perfume? It could have been sold for more than three hundred silver coins and the money given to the poor!" And they criticized her harshly.

But Jesus said, "Leave her alone! Why are you bothering her? She has done a fine and beautiful thing for me. You will always have poor people with you, and any time you want to, you can help them. But you will not always have me." Mark 14 3-7.

It is perhaps significant that no one asked Jesus, "Why? Why will we always have the poor with us?"

Is Jesus saying that God will always allow poverty in this world? Is He saying that all our efforts to help the poor are in vain?

Of course not. He is not saying this.

Jesus is reminding us that there will always be someone worse off than us. Someone who is poor in material things, poor in spirit, poor in health, poor in education or poor in Faith.

He is reminding us of our responsibility towards those in poverty in one way or another.

If we are fortunate to be rich, we should give to those who have not. If we are in good health, we should help those who are sick. And if our Faith is strong, we should help and pray for those who falter and fail in their walk with the Lord.

This is our responsibility to those who are poor in one way or another.

And with this responsibility comes a greater and more onerous one. That is to answer to Him when He asks us: "And what have you done with the riches I gave you?"

## Time for Reflections



### PERCENTAGE BELIEF

A man named Jarius pleaded with Jesus for help because his daughter was dying. (Luke 8:40-56). On His way to Jarius' house, with a crowd following, there was a woman who had been ill for some time and doctors could do nothing for her. She thought: "if only I could get close enough to Jesus and touch His cloak, I'll be healed." And so she did, and she was healed. Jesus felt her touching Him and said to her: "Your Faith has healed you."

As He continued His journey a messenger came and told Jarius that his daughter was dead. "Don't disturb Jesus any further."

Jesus said to Jarius: "Don't be afraid; only believe and she will be well." He then went to the house and raised the child from the dead.

As He was leaving that place, two blind men followed Jesus. (Matthew 9:27-31). They begged Him to be healed. So Jesus asked them: "Do you believe that I can heal you?" "Yes" they answered. Jesus touched their eyes and said: "Let it happen, then, just as you believe!" And their sight was restored.

The common theme in these three incidents is that the individuals concerned believed in Jesus and in His power of healing.

The woman did not even have to ask Him. She believed that touching Him alone would heal her. Jarius must have been devastated to hear of his daughter's death; but Jesus told him to believe. He had a quick choice to make: carry on towards the house with Jesus, or send Him away. He believed in Jesus. The two blind men were asked directly: "Do you believe that I can heal you?"

What a challenge from Jesus Himself. Do you really believe? Or are you here because you may have heard so much about me, or as a gamble that it might work, or for some other reason?

When we earnestly pray to God and ask for something; what percentage in us really believes that He can help us? Or is there that minute 1% of a doubt lurking there, at the back of our mind, making us doubt His willingness, or ability, to help?

# Time for Reflections



## **FOCUS ON GOD'S WILL**

Crises will happen to us from time to time. God permits them for His own purpose and for His own reasons.

Our natural reaction may be to panic.

Our un-natural reaction is to remain calm. Take a deep breath and trust in God. At times of crisis we need to proceed slowly, in the conscious knowledge that God is with us and will protect us.

I repeat: in the conscious knowledge.

We should speak our truth quietly, as the opportunity arises, and as the Holy Spirit guides us. We should avoid needless talk, or needless worries and concerns. But nurture a peace in our hearts that comes from Him, who cares and will protect us. If we allow Him to.

Our prayers should be focused on His will, and His plans for us in this critical situation; in the sure belief that He will see us through it just as He has brought us to it.

## **CHRIST'S PRAYER FOR US**

Just before He was arrested, Jesus prayed for His disciples. (John 17).

Then He prayed for us – yes, you and me. He said:

“I pray not only for them, (the disciples), but also for those who believe in me because of their message. I pray that they may all be one. Father! May they be in us, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they be one, so that the world will believe that you sent me.” John 17: 20-21.

Two thousand years later Christians are still disagreeing with each other.

The more we dispute on minor things the more we throw doubts and confusion on the Christian message to this world.

# Time for Reflections



## GOD WITH US

Intelligence and knowledge increases from one generation to the next. What you and I know, our parents didn't. And what our parents knew, their parents and grandparents didn't. The same applies to relationships and the nature of relationships, I suppose.

Some people today have a personal relationship with God and His Son Jesus. They are not just characters in a book, or in the Bible. They are living Beings with whom we communicate and who communicate with us, help us, guide us, and protect us throughout our lives in preparation for the next. These are no glib words; but a true reality for some people today.

Others, however, believe in God alright, but He is a little distant. Sitting somewhere up there in the clouds, on His throne, looking at us, and ready to help us when we ask Him. They go to church alright, but to them at least, their relationship with their maker is not a close one. Full of reverence, of course, and perhaps tinged with a modicum of fear.

Our grandparents' sermons were full of God's wrath, fire and brimstone, and the dread of eternal damnation in hell. But today, a sermon like that would not go down too well – would it? It would probably not be taken too seriously by church attendants, never mind those who don't go to church.

So how do we communicate God, Jesus, Heaven and hell in today's sophisticated modern world full of cynicism, bitterness and bile?

Some describe hell as being in the complete absence of God for eternity. But then, there are those in this state right now, in this very lifetime; so how can they see or understand the concept of hell, never mind fear it?

Perhaps one way is to accentuate the positive in a personal and close relationship with God. Not then ... in Heaven ... sometime in the future. But here and now, today, and every day.

Through the Holy Spirit. Not much is said about the Holy Spirit in church these days. Yet He is here, living, loving, and ready to guide us in this life, in preparation for an eternity with God, in the next. If we let Him. And these are no glib words ... but meant, quite literally.

# Time for Reflections



## THE HOLY SPIRIT

After Jesus was raised to Heaven, the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples in shapes of flames which touched each person there. They were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to preach in many languages. (Acts 2).

So, who is the Holy Spirit?

We are taught about God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit .... He doesn't seem to have a title or description.

St Hilary of Poitiers, a Bishop in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century AD, described the Holy Spirit as "the gift".

He is the gift given to us by God after Jesus ascended into Heaven. He is the very Spirit of God, God Himself, come back to us on earth to dwell within us and to help us in our Christian life.

That's why He is sometimes referred to as the Helper, the Counselor, God's own Being living within us.

Can you imagine that? God. Living within us. Guiding us. Helping us. Teaching us. Advising us when to speak and when to remain silent. What to say and what to do.

Isn't that wonderful? Or is it too difficult to imagine or believe?

Isn't it a tragedy that in this day and age, many are too willing to believe that the devil can possess an individual unwillingly and reap havoc in their lives; yet ... they find it difficult to understand that the Spirit of God is willing to abide within us and lead us to an eternal better life in Heaven.

But only if we ask Him to.

Thank you Lord for your Holy Spirit. May we grow to understand Him better and welcome Him into our lives.

# Time for Reflections



## THE HUMANITY OF CHRIST

When Jesus came to earth He came as a human to share humanity with us so that we can accept Him and learn from Him. He was born a human baby, grew up a human and shared every emotion we share as human beings.

Imagine for a minute if He came like a God (which He was/is). Imagine if He suddenly appeared like a superman or such other fictional hero. With obvious powers like flying, super strength, X Ray visions, and so on like we see in the movies. The people of the time would have been in total awe of Him and would have obeyed and followed Him out of fear or wonderment. Hardly free choice – is it?

So He came as a human. He humbled Himself as a baby born in poverty in a stable. Grew up with the poor and the down and outs - not as a king. As a human He felt every emotion that we feel. He felt sadness at the death of Lazarus, He felt pity for the ill and the poor, He felt pain when beaten and Crucified. He even felt temptation.

In the desert satan tempted Him: If you are God's Son jump from this temple, turn these stones into bread. Why don't you worship me?

And of course, satan tempts us too; does he not?

Are there not times when, like a bright light in our head, we ask: Is this all real? Is there really a God out there? Jesus? Life after death? And so on? And our mind gets all confused about what we really believe?

That's satan at work; ready to put these and other thoughts in our minds to lead us astray. The closer we come to God the harder the devil works to lead us away from Him. No point in tempting the un-believers is there?

And that's why Christ had to be tempted by satan. In order to share our experiences, but, most important, to be an example to us all on how to fight back these temptations. Through prayer.

Every time He was tempted He prayed to His Father. He was tempted again before He was arrested. He asked: Can all this pass me by? Then, in prayer, He obeyed His Father and said: Not my will, but Yours. What an example for us all to emulate. Not my will, but Yours.

# Time for Reflections



## FACING TOMORROW

Ah ... the future. How does it look to you?

Does it seem frightening sometimes when you look ahead at what could be and what could happen to you and yours? Financial difficulties may lie ahead perhaps; or failing health, or the many other possibilities that we see around us and we fear they may happen to us. There are so many dangers and pitfalls in our very existence these days. It's as if the odds are all stacked against us and we're all alone.

But we're not are we? Alone I mean.

There beside us, every step of the way, no matter what lies ahead, is Jesus ready to take away our fears and to guide us throughout this life and beyond. Only if we let Him.

I don't mean this in a figurative way; but quite literally. Yes, quite literally. He has promised to be with us always right here and right now. And to provide us with whatever help, comfort, encouragement and protection we need as we travel through our journey on this earth towards His Father in Heaven.

How does the future look now? Isn't it exciting, joyful, hopeful and uplifting to have the Son of God by your side as your guide for eternity? And I repeat ... quite literally.

“When I go, you will not be left all alone; I will come back to you.” John 14:18.

## CHOICES

A woman gives her husband two beautiful silk ties for his birthday. In order to please her, he decides to wear one of the ties as they go out to a restaurant to celebrate his birthday. As soon as she saw him wearing the tie she said: “What's wrong with the other one?”

Choices ... In a consumer society we seem to be spoiled for choice. Choice can be a good thing, or a bad thing – it all depends on your perspective and way of thinking. Now let's consider this:

“I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one goes to the Father except by me.” John 14:6. The choice here is simple.



# Time for Reflections



## THE HOLY SPIRIT

There's some logic which sometimes escapes us Christians.

We say we believe in God. We also believe in Jesus His only Son. And ... hesitantly perhaps ... we also believe in the Holy Spirit.

I say hesitantly because most people believe even though they might not know what to believe. And that's not always their fault.

Sure, they've heard what happened at Pentecost, and how the Holy Spirit descended on the apostles. They've heard of the Annunciation and the Virgin Birth, and the Holy Spirit appearing at Christ's baptism. But apart from these and other stories about the Holy Spirit, people are left with a void, a mystery, something or someone to believe in without question. To them, the Holy Spirit is confined to the pages of the Bible, to be believed in and not dwelt upon for too long. The important questions are rarely asked:

Is the Holy Spirit relevant to them today? Is the Holy Spirit here now?

Of course He is. And what is more, He is here to guide us throughout our lives, through difficult times and good ones, showing us the way, and teaching us what to say and do.

Yet many people, Christians in every other respect, are unaware of this fact. Perhaps because they don't understand, they have not been told, they have not been taught. Perhaps too because of their confusion in accepting and comprehending the Holy Spirit in-dwelling within ourselves.

Why is the church sometimes so reticent in proclaiming this – the greatest news and central message of our Christianity?

God, Christ, is/are with us right now. Through the Holy Spirit.

## Time for Reflections



### SEEKING MARY'S HELP

Not much is known about Jesus' childhood. The Bible records the story of His birth in Bethlehem and the early days of His life but not much more.

We are left to wonder what He was like as a baby. Crawling on the ground and then taking His first hesitant steps. I wonder what His first words were when He spoke.

One thing for sure though. He was much loved by His earthly parents, who devoted themselves to His up-bringing, until He was ready to start His work on earth as His Father willed. Like most parents, they must have wished many good things for Him as He grew up, even though they knew who He really was and what His mission in this world was to be.

Mary, however, carried an additional burden in her heart. She knew from those early days what was to happen. Simeon in the temple had told her: "... sorrow, like a sharp sword, will break your own heart". Luke 2: 35. Joseph was there to witness it all.

Can you imagine what they went through as parents? Knowing of the torture and Crucifixion which Christ would suffer.

And Mary, endured that pain even more as she followed her Son on the way to Calvary.

Yet ... despite all that. Despite knowing well ahead what was to happen, despite witnessing the Crucifixion for herself, one thing must have sustained Mary and encouraged her throughout her ordeal: the sure knowledge that Jesus was/is the Son of God and that He will rise again from the dead.

That thought alone should help us when we too go through difficult times. No matter how difficult our situation we should hold on to the fact that our Lord, the one we profess to love and follow, is the Son of God. By His death and Resurrection He has conquered evil once and for all.

And no matter what our situation may be, we can assuredly turn to Mary, and seek her help in bearing the difficulties we go through.

# Time for Reflections



## BASIC INSTINCTS

We all act on instinct from time to time. If we touch something hot or sharp we immediately withdraw in pain. If we taste something unpleasant, the basic instinct is to spit it out. I suppose the same applies when some terrible situation happens to us. The first instinct is probably fear, followed with a multitude of others such as confusion, doubts, worry, anger and so on.

But what if our first instinct in such situations was to immediately turn to God? Instinctively, without thinking, turn to God for help, reassurance, guidance and peace. What if our automatic reflex to any bad situation was an immediate reaching out to God? Before even the negative emotions come into play.

Wouldn't that make our lives that much better? Because after all, God's will for us is to have peace. Christ often greeted His disciples with the words "Peace be with you". So at the first sign of trouble, let's turn to Him and ask: "Lord, grant me your peace in this situation."

God gave us instincts and emotions as part of our human nature. Without instincts, we wouldn't pull away from a situation of danger or increased risk. It is natural therefore, when faced with a sudden crisis if our first instincts or emotions are fear, panic, worry, and similar negative responses to an unexpected traumatic event.

God knows that it's our nature reacting ... naturally. So He forgives our first negative impulses and knee-jerk reactions. But when we've calmed down a little, and taken a deep breath, that's when we should turn to our Lord and, instinctively, seek His help. Not in a panic sort of way, but in the sure knowledge that He is there beside us, in full control of the situation, (even if we aren't), and ready to help us and restore peace in our lives. If we let Him. If on the other hand we dwell on our negative situation, and nurture and harbor our fears and doubts, we do God a great disservice. Because we're implying that we don't really trust Him to solve our situation for us. And that surely is a sin.

"Every test that you have experienced is the kind that normally comes to people. But God keeps His promise, and He will not allow you to be tested beyond your power to remain firm; at the time you are put to the test, He will give you the strength to endure it, and so provide you with a way out". 1 Corinthians 10:13.

## Time for Reflections



### OUR CHOICE

Jesus was discussing with the crowd and said to them “I am the Bread of Life”. “Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood ... you will not have eternal Life”. John 6:25-59.

However, many of the followers of Jesus did not understand what He was saying and grumbled amongst themselves. Many decided to leave Him and follow Him no more. John 6:60-70.

So Jesus gave them a choice. A get out clause in the understood contract they had with each other. He did not follow them or begged them to stay. He did not try to explain what He said, or meant to say, in order to make them change their minds. He just allowed them to go.

Then He turned to His twelve disciples and asked: “And you – would you also like to leave?”

So the choice here seems somewhat clear. We either accept that Jesus is the Way to God. Or we don't.

### PATIENCE

Nothing teaches us patience like waiting.

Remember when you were young and lacked patience? In those days a week was like a year. Especially if you'd been promised something by your parents and you had to wait and wait ...

I suspect the same applies to us when we relate to God. We pray for something and wait ... but God does not work to our timescales. He has His own plans and maybe what we're asking for is not good for us ... just yet.

## Time for Reflections



### WEALTH

Doesn't it sometimes irk you when someone asks for advice and then just ignores it? Jesus had a similar problem one day. He was approached by a rich man who asked Him "what must I do to receive eternal life?"

Jesus advised him to sell all he has and to give the money to the poor; and then to come and follow Jesus. Luke 18:18-30.

On hearing this, the man went away very sad; he was not willing to follow the advice given.

Let's pause here for a minute and reflect. What would you have done?

Let's assume God spoke to you right now, in a dream, or a vision, and you were certain it was Him speaking. Just as certain as Abraham, Moses, Noah, Mary and Joseph were when God spoke to them. You know where I'm getting to ... And God asked you to sell everything and give it to the poor, and become a missionary or a volunteer helper somewhere far off your community.

Would you be able to do it? Would you leave your spouse and family behind and follow Jesus wherever He asks you to go? Would you sell off everything you have, give up your job, leaving your children with nothing; and moved on to a new life? On reflection, perhaps we sympathize a little with the rich man. For we know not whether he had a family, friends and servants who relied on him – although we can assume he had.

Jesus then went on to say: "I repeat: it is much harder for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God than a camel to go through the eye of a needle." Matthew 19:24.

So what is His message here? Is Jesus condemning wealth? Is it wrong to work hard and amass a fortune? Of course not.

Jesus, knowing the rich man's heart, is teaching us wealth with responsibility. He is saying that those fortunate enough to have wealth have a duty to consider those around them who are less well off than themselves, and to help them as best they can. Jesus makes this point most dramatically in the story about the rich man and Lazarus. It is worth reading in Luke 16:19.

# Time for Reflections



## FAILURE

Failure is sometimes necessary if we happen to learn from it. It is only a picture in time when you happen to click your camera and record it for posterity.

When someone fails an exam or a driving test, at that point in time we see failure. But if we move our slide show forward a few more frames that person may well have learnt their lesson and gone on to much greater success.

When Christ hung dying on the cross His followers saw failure. Here is a man whom many followed and listened to – as many as five thousand at one stage when He fed them loaves and fishes. They witnessed His many miracles and expected great things from Him. A new ruler, a new King, someone to bring them freedom from their Roman oppressors. Yet here He is, beaten, tortured, humiliated and dying on a cross amongst thieves.

Failure indeed.

Yet, a few frames forward and we see the Resurrection, the Ascension into Heaven, the sending of the Holy Spirit, a new church born and growing from strength to strength several centuries later.

Everlasting success.

Someone said to me once: I can't understand you Christians reveling in a man dying on a Cross.

He didn't understand that we are not "reveling" in His death; but that this was an essential step in Christ's life and mission on earth leading towards our salvation and forgiveness.

It is perhaps unfortunate that over the years the Cross has become a symbol of Christianity throughout the world. Perhaps a more fitting image would have been an empty tomb or a risen Christ. But we can't re-write history – the Cross it is.

It may have been failure at that moment in time; but no more.

Let us remember this next time a camera clicks to record our personal failures; and let us take courage in the knowledge that, with His help, we can turn our negative moments into positives for others to emulate.

# Time for Reflections



## THE RIGHT WAVELENGTH

I was playing around with an old radio the other day trying to make it work. I'm not particularly good at electronic or electric stuff but that has never stopped me. I plugged the thing in and a small light shone at the front ... ah ... it's alive after all.

Turned the volume knob to the right until it stopped ... nothing.

Pulled out the telescopic aerial from the back and waved it in the air left and right, and in no particular direction. Still nothing happened.

And now the difficult technical bit ... I turned the other knob slowly; you know the one ... it moves a vertical bit of plastic left and right across the small screen.

Success at last ... now I could hear crackle and high pitched whistling every now and then as the plastic bit traveled slowly to the right. You can't quite dance to it but the crackle and whistling were there all right ... very clear too.

Every so often you could hear some faint music or someone talking, sometimes in a foreign language, interspersed with crackle and different music or speech.

Then I noticed something else. Every so often the same bit of speech repeated itself as the plastic bit moved on and picked different stations. Sometimes it was very faint and crackly, sometimes a little clearer and once or twice ... surprise, as loud and as clear as a bell.

A bit like God's voice I suppose.

He is there speaking to us. But sometimes the message is overpowered and stifled by the other noises and temptations that the world throws our way. Sometimes the crackle and hiss of doubts, fears and confusion are louder than the message itself. At times you must really sharpen your ears to even hear what's being said.

Yet ... every now and then ... you can hear Him clearly and you can understand His every Word and His message delivered sharply as if meant for you, and you alone.

All you have to do is be tuned to the right wavelength.