



Praying the Scripture - a few simple steps at home

Sunday 16th Feb 2020



1. Start with stillness and quietening down; then gently read the passage, noticing any feelings and connections to your own experience.
2. Read the passage again and spend understand. *The notes in your Bible may be of help at this point.*
3. Read the passage a third time - wondering how you yourself might pray the text over the next few days.
4. Over the next week, set aside times to come back more than once to the passage. You could read it all or part of it again, slowly. Perhaps there is a special word for you in this passage of Scripture? Keep this word or phrase in your thoughts and gently repeat it, bringing it to mind and allowing God to speak to you in your heart.
5. Finally, come back to the text to conclude: What is God in this scripture asking of you this week? What is the one challenge, one little change you are asked to make or the thing you have been asked to do? Then say a prayer of thanksgiving for the good news in the passage. End in quiet prayer.

THIS SUNDAY'S GOSPEL Matt 5:38-48 Love your enemies

[Jesus said:] "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile. Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you. "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.'

A Short Thought

Today's gospel continues the challenge from last week to go deeper into the heart, the seat of hidden thoughts and desires. The call to conversion is a call to give just as we have received: we are loved and so should love; we are forgiven and so should forgive; we are consoled and so should console and so forth. Why is that? Because the love etc. that we have received becomes truly "me" only when I pass it on. Only then have I experienced the message of the prophet: I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. (Ezek 36:26)

SOME POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. Jesus tells us to act out of love and says that acting out of love is better than acting out of revenge. What does your experience tell you?
2. Perhaps you have at times hit back in revenge when you have been hurt or offended. What effect did this have you, on others, and on your relationship with them? Contrast this with the times when you resisted the urge to retaliate. What effect did this have on you, on others, and on your relationship with them...at the time, and in the long-term?
3. From other passages in the gospels, it is clear that Jesus did not mean that we should ignore injustices and never make a stand against others. What lessons have you learned in life on when and how to make a stand? What wisdom would you share with others from your experience?
4. Many times, people will agree with affirmations such as these, and then give a BUT... and proclaim exclusions, exceptions, and limitations. Consider real-life modern situations that suggest an opportunity for "turning the other cheek", "giving more than is asked", eye for an eye", etc. Do you too have a BUT, or ONLY IF limitation in your answer? Would Jesus say the same thing?

Prayer

Loving God, in Christ Jesus you challenge us to renounce violence and to forsake revenge. Teach us to recognise as your children even our enemies and persecutors and to love them without measure or discrimination. We make this prayer through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever & ever. Amen